

# **The Advent and Growth of American Baptist Mission and Churches in Assam**

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the  
Award of the Degree of

**Doctor of Philosophy in Missiology**

**By**

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**ID No. 09PHTH101**



**2018**

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Certified that I have personally worked on the research entitled “**The Advent and Growth of American Baptist Mission and Churches in Assam.**” The data mentioned in the research report have been generated during the work, and are genuine. Data/information obtained from other agencies have been duly acknowledged. None of the findings/information pertaining to the work has been concealed. The results embodied in this research report have not been submitted to any other University or Institute for the award of any degree or diploma.

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### CERTIFICATE OF ORIGINALITY

This is to certify that the thesis entitled "The Advent and Growth of American Baptist Mission and Churches in Assam" submitted for the Degree of PhD Theology in Missiology to Sam Higginbottom University of Agriculture, Technology and Sciences, is an original research carried out by **Jonali Doley bearing ID No.09PHTH101** during 209-2017, under my guidance and supervision. No part of this thesis has been submitted for any other Degree.

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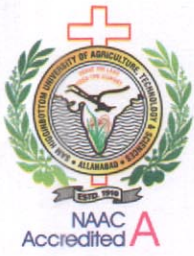
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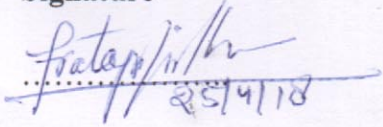
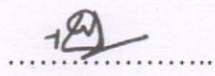
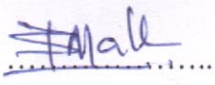
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**CERTIFICATE OF RECOMMENDATION BY STUDENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

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**APPENDIX.....314**

## **List of Abbreviations**

ABC	Assam Baptist Convention
ABM	American Baptist Mission
AD	Anno Domini
BBC	Boro Baptist Convention
BMS	British Missionary Society
CBCNEI	Council of Baptist Churches in North East India
CNI	Church of North India
EITU	Eastern India Tribal Union
GELM	Gossner Evangelical Lutheran Mission
IMC	International Missionary Council
KABC	Karbi – Anglong Baptist Convention
LBC	Lakhimpur Baptist Convention
MBK	Mising Baptist Kebang (Convention)
NEFA	North East Frontier Agency
USA	United States of America
US	United States

## INTRODUCTION

Assam is the gateway to Christianity in North Eastern India. The earliest records of Christian Missionary contact with Assam were made in 1626 by Roman Catholics.<sup>1</sup> Gradually the Christian Mission in Assam received momentum with the arrival of the Serampore Mission under the leadership of William Carey, who initiated the first translation of the New Testament into the Assamese language in 1811.<sup>2</sup> Thereafter, a specific step was taken by the Serampore Mission with launching a mission station and school at Gauhati in 1829. In addition, the political assessment of the British East India Company in the state of Assam has greater influence than any other areas in the country. Hence, the political history of Assam is certainly very important to understand the way British government gradually expanded their territory and assets to Christian missions. Indeed, it was the keen interest of the British government officials that invited the Christian missionaries to do mission work and extended valuable support with their private capacities for the mission enterprises. Accordingly, the American Baptist missionaries reached in Assam in 1836.

Ironically, the first American Baptist Mission stations in Assam were not established for the purpose of evangelizing the peoples of that region. However they had strategic outposts in a campaign to evangelize the Shan community of Northern Burma and Southern China. But, their original plan of the mission went in reverse order and had begun to establish permanent mission stations and evangelizing activities throughout the Assam valley. Apart from evangelistic campaign, there is another area of incredible contribution to the people of Assam which is known as humanitarian service. The most extensive and representative humanitarian act of all include as educational project educate male and female, orphans, medical work especially undertaking relief and healing services in towns and villages. Further, the mission has set striking milestone in the renaissance of the Assamese language and started a new epoch through literary works, translation of the Bible in Assamese and Anglo-Assamese Dictionary. The splendid services

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<sup>1</sup>. S. K. Bhuyan, *Anglo-Assamese relations 1771-1826 a history of the relations of Assam with the East-India company from 1771-1826 based on original English and Assamese sources*, Gauhati: Lawyers book stall, 1949, P.58.

<sup>2</sup>. Frederick S. Downs, *Christianity in North East India Historical Perspectives*, Delhi: ISPCK, 1983, p. 87.

rendered by the American Baptist missionaries are like a pearl which benefitted the people of Assam, both Christians and non-Christians alike. Though the missionaries toiled relentlessly for the sake of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, the sacrificial services of the missionaries did not produce much fruit and stands as almost rocky ground in the spread of the Gospel. The native people had little impact in embracing Christianity in Assam. Thus, the growth of Christianity in Assam remained very slow and feeble till today. Therefore, it is significant to study the factors that hindered the growth of Christianity particularly the American Baptist Mission and Churches in Assam.

## **1. Statement of the Problem**

The Christian Missions came to Assam even before they could reach any other North Eastern state, yet Christian Missions and Churches in Assam experienced a very slow growth and stagnation. Therefore, it is important to examine the factors that led to this sad state of Christianity in Assam and to analyze the causes for the slow progress of Christian mission and churches in Assam. Hence, the problem of this research is to see whether the root cause of the slow growth of Christianity in Assam was religio-political, socio-economic and leadership crises that led to the slow growth of Christian mission in Assam or if there were any other important reasons yet to be investigated?

### **1.1. Elaboration of the Problem**

Evidently, the earliest contact of the Christian missionaries with Assam was made in 1626 by the Roman Catholics. Then the missionary activity gained impetus through Baptist Missionaries of Serampore in 1811 and established a Mission station at Gauhati. Meanwhile, the British government established their rule and administration by forming the Commissionership. It was the British Commissioners who invited the first American Baptist Missionaries to come to Assam to launch permanent Mission stations for the purpose of evangelizing the people in this region. Thereupon, the American Baptist Missionaries landed there and embarked upon missionary activities through preaching and thereby established several Mission fields and Churches. Gradually, they were also engaged in humanitarian services such as education, literature and medical work. The society is highly indebted to missionaries for their contribution. Though these contributions influenced the society and helped in sharing the Gospel, as time

passed these contributions were not yielding the desired fruits and the growth of the Church remained extremely slow. Instead of membership growth, the Churches remained almost static and lacked spiritual empowerment.

The opposition from the Brahmin community seems to be one reason for the slow growth of Christian mission in Assam. The Brahmins and priests created dispute and often manifested a surprising bitterness towards the Gospel. When the Christian scriptural books were offered, they rejected them with scorn, declaring that they would be polluted by the touch. The common people were afraid to send their children to Mission schools lest they would be turned away from the Hindu faith and become Christian. Therefore, the Brahminical influence hindered the people from embracing Christianity because of their fear of losing caste identity as well as socio-economic and religious rights. Bronson, one of the pioneer missionaries, says, “The poorest beggar will receive charity only as it is conformed to the doctrine of caste. The dying man refuses our medicine lest he lose his caste; and let go what will, nothing is so dear as caste. This very doctrine shuts the missionary but of the houses of the people, where he often would otherwise find them ready to listen to the story of Calvary”<sup>3</sup> This attitude went against the missionary and prevented many from accepting the Gospel.

The promotion of opium played a vital role in making the believers lukewarm and jeopardized the churches. Opium was the greatest curse in this land. A large portion of the inhabitants were entirely besotted by it. The most discouraging feature relative to the Christianization of the Assamese and their civilization was the prevalence of the use of opium. The American Baptist Mission Conference Report of 1889 states that opium consumption indicated twice a problem for the churches. Moreover, the opium habit affected the churches because opium users were excluded from the membership in the churches <sup>4</sup> and this obviously dwindles in the boost of Christian mission and churches in Assam.

It appears that the financial crisis and lack of indigenous leadership were also some of the main reasons for the failure of the growth of Christianity. Evidently, because of financial retrenchment the missionaries had no day school or native preachers. The American civil war adversely

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<sup>3</sup>. Bronson to Peck, September 1, 1844.

<sup>4</sup>. Report of the Assam Baptist Missionary Conference, Annual, 1889, p. 11.

affected financial support for the missionary work because the Assam Mission was supported by the American Mission. Due to dwindling funds, the Board limited the number of mission stations. Besides, the mission had also gone through an indigenous leadership crisis. There was a lack of qualified and trained leaders who could shoulder the responsibilities of the mission and churches.

One of the causes for the slow progress of the Christian mission was the reduction of the missionary force due to death and other calamities. The mission was not adequately manned. Two of the three stations were reduced to a single man. Important interests were staked upon the feeble health of one single man; interesting and promising tribes at hand, scarcely visited. Since the field was too broad, the interests and instrumentalities were too numerous and complex for the force employed. Thus, this unsettled state was unfavorable to the successful growth of the Christian mission.

## **2. Justification**

The purpose of the study is to investigate the advent and growth of the Christian Mission and Churches in Assam and the causes for the slow growth of Christian Mission endeavors. As far as the tradition is concerned the origin of Christianity in Assam is traced back to the Seventeenth and Eighteenth centuries by the Roman Catholics. They were the earliest Christian contacts with Assam who brought the Gospel for the first time and established the Christian community in the region. Thereafter, the Serampore Mission started work in the province of Assam with the distinctive idea of evangelizing the Assamese in 1811. But, the Mission station was relinquished and handed over to the American Baptist Mission in Assam. The American Baptist Mission was begun to establish permanent mission stations in 1836 and mushroomed spontaneously in the entire Assam valley. Nevertheless, some of the mission stations and churches had withered and left no memory and hence there are standstill mission fields and Churches in Assam.

On the other hand, there were remarkable contributions made by Christian missionaries in the field of education, literature and medicine to the society. In spite of this, the missionaries could not win the hearts of the native people and the mission remained static in Assam. This puzzling situation calls for serious attention and therefore the researcher has taken up this area for in-depth study to find out the reasons for the slow growth of Christian missions and churches. It is hoped that this study would also help Assamese Christians to learn positive values of the

Christian mission, rectify the negative impact in order to regenerate mission activities according to current needs and explore an appropriate indigenous model to develop effective tools in furthering the growth of mission work with contemporary challenges.

### **3. Objectives**

- To study the advent and growth of the American Baptist Mission and Churches in Assam.
- To analyze the contributions of the American Baptist Mission and its effect in the society.
- To find out the causes of the slow growth of the American Baptist Mission in Assam.

### **4. Scope and Limitation**

This research is primarily done on the advent and growth of Christian mission and churches within the state of Assam. It covers a wide period from A.D. 1826 till the present yet it is limited only to the study of the works of the American Baptist Mission. The research analyses include important areas such as the advent of Christian missionaries, the establishment of mission stations, founding of churches, the Gospel and social transformation, education, literacy and medical works of the American Baptist Mission and Churches.

### **5. Hypothesis**

Christianity came to Assam even before it reached any of its seven sisters of the North East States of India. There were Christian missions that began to work in Assam on various aspects of Assamese life. There was a certain acceptability of Christianity in the early days and many missions and churches were established in Assam. However, when researcher looks into the percentage of the growth of Christian missions and churches in the other six sisters of North East States, it finds that Assam is lagging behind in the growth of Christianity. The chief investigation of this research is to find whether the religious-political and social-economic problems were the root causes of the slow growth of the American Baptist Mission in Assam or not. If it is so, what are the religious-political and social-economic factors that led to the slow growth of Christianity in Assam? Thus, these are the hypothetical reasons for this stagnation of Christianity that need to be scientifically probed in this study for the further growth of Christian mission and churches.

## 6. Research Methodology

The foundation of mission is regarded to be primarily theological – flowing from the very heart of God. Such a theological point of view gives rise to the idea of mission as “extending the reign of Christ,” both by the inward spiritual renewal of individuals and by transforming the face of the earth through filling it with “the knowledge of the Lord.”<sup>5</sup> Thus, this very mission is received by the church. Moreover, the interests of mission of the church of Americans had changed from the Great Awakening. One of the most significant products of the Evangelical Awakening, in both Britain and North America was the founding of societies especially devoted to foreign mission and individual Christians frequently belonging to different churches, banded together for the sake of world mission.<sup>6</sup> The result was the advent of missionaries to India from England and America. Henceforth, William Carey with his trio, Joshua Marshman and William Ward arrived and established Serampore Mission in 1800. This was followed by the extension of operations in Assam. Then the British East India Company’s Governor General invited American Baptist Missionaries to do mission work in Assam.<sup>7</sup> Eventually, they launched mission stations and erected churches. Hence, the mission work is interlinked and interwoven with God (above) and man on earth (below). So the study of the history of Christian Mission has an intimate relationship with the above and below perspectives. Thus, in the process of missiological studies researcher tried to examine the relation of Christian mission with God (Scripture cum church tradition) and man in the context i.e. Missiology from above and Missiology from below.

Thus, the missionaries worked for the establishment of missions and churches along with humanitarian and social services. The foreign missionaries were sent by foreign mission board to evangelize people in India but in course of time they also engaged in the socio-economic struggle of the people to promote better life in the society. On one hand the Bible and on the other hand people in the context. There are well known missionaries like William Carey, known as ‘the father of modern mission’ who involved scripture with social reformation of the society. The American Baptist Mission foresaw the urgent need of the Gospel and thus, served the people through humanitarian work for the sake of the Gospel. So, the missionary enforcements were

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<sup>5</sup>. Bavid, J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*, Bangalore: Centre for Contemporary Christianity, 2006, P. 321.

<sup>6</sup>. *Ibid.*, pp. 350-351.

<sup>7</sup>. H.K. Barpujari, *The American Missionaries and North-East India (1836-1900A.D.) A Documentary Study*, Guwahati: Spectrum Publications, 1986, pp. xii-xiii.

from established bodies of the foreign missions with higher authorities yet they did work for ordinary people in the society. Therefore, the missiology from below is dealt with the local situation and context of the common people. The activities of the missionaries were recorded and documented in the files, dairies, magazines and in the form of books. Although the missionary documents contained mainly, the perspective of the foreign mission organization activities which are generally categorized as missiology from above, it is possible to find elements that contributed missiology from below, that is, from ordinary people's perspective. The empirical studies from below are aimed at bringing out what the common people think about Christian mission in Assam. The causes for the slow growth found from missionary documents, which are the primary sources, are verified through empirical research. Hence, this study is basically a missiology from below approach.

Quantitative approach is followed for the collection of data. The researcher circulated 300 (150 male and 150 female) questionnaires to the mission fields and churches in Assam. The researcher has collected all the available resources from various Christian Organizations in the North East by visiting the offices and browsing through old records and has also collected materials from the libraries in Serampore College, Eastern Theological College, Jorhat, CBCNEI, Guwahati. Various articles that were published and unpublished are also consulted which referred to collections of missionary writings. The researcher has visited pioneer Mission Fields of Assam such as North Lakhimpur, Sibsagar, Jorhat, Golaghat, Goalpara, Majuli Island, Dhemaji, Silapathar and collected various information about the work done by missionaries in the past.

## **7. Structure of the Thesis**

The first chapter is the review of the literature, where the researcher has collected primary and secondary sources on historical studies of Christianity in the North Eastern States in general and Assam in particular.

The second chapter discusses the advent of Christian missions, mainly the earliest Christian contacts of the Roman Catholics, the Serampore Mission, the arrival of the British East India Company, political administration and consolidation. This chapter also deals with British officials, distinctively the British commissioners, who invited the American Baptist missionaries

to launch permanent mission stations and supported them financially to reach the Assamese population with the Gospel.

The third chapter studies the growth of American Baptist Mission and Churches in Assam. This chapter gives a chronological account of the arrival and work of the pioneer missionaries in the mission fields. It also discusses in detail the work of the American Baptist Mission and its establishment and expansion of the mission stations and churches into the entire region in Assam.

The fourth chapter examines the contributions of the American Baptist Mission in the fields of education through founding schools for boys and girls, orphans, the dawn of modern Assamese especially redemption of Assamese language from the clutches of Bengali, literature and the beginning and establishment of the medical hospitals in Assam.

The fifth chapter investigates the causes for the slow growth of the American Baptist Mission and Churches from primary missionary documents by examining religio-political and socio-economic problems in Assam.

The last chapter deals an empirical study of the present status of the American Baptist Mission and churches. The data collected from different mission fields and churches in Assam, pertaining to the causes of the slow growth of the American Baptist Mission and Churches in Assam are analyzed and interpreted. This chapter is also verified the findings from the missionary documents with the results from the empirical analysis.

## CHAPTER 1

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

**S. K. Bhuyan's** work, *Anglo-Assamese Relations 1771-1826 A History of the Relations of Assam with the East India Company from 1771 to 1826 based on original English and Assamese sources*,<sup>1</sup> sought to give descriptive account of the beginning of Ahoms monarchical rule and Assam – Mogul conflicts, Burmese invasion, British entrance to Assam and expulsion of Burmese from Assam by the help of British through making treaty at Yandaboo. He described how the Ahom king was not able to fight against the Burmese foes and thus invited the British to suppress the rival in Assam and thereafter established Anglo-Assamese relations with Assam. Assam passed into the hands of the East India Company's rule and developed British government policy of direct administration by appointing Commissioners, such as David Scott and Colonel Richards. He mentioned about a Rangamati Christian community which is one of the earliest Christian contacts with Assam, though this community is not discussed elaborately. In addition, Bhuyan gives a brief sketch on the discovery of tea plantation in Assam, which has become indirect blessing to the American Baptist Mission because tea planters of the British government officials contributed free will donation for the mission work. But, the author failed to make a critical evaluation of the British rule.

**Manilal Bose's** book, *British Policy in the North-East Frontier Agency*, examines the British policy in the North-East Frontier Agency (NEFA),<sup>2</sup> their land, people and culture. NEFA is presently in the Arunachal Pradesh. Bose deals with British administration in the North-East Frontier particularly consolidation of the British rule in Assam. The military policy and the Assam rifles together with the army were employed mainly to check the tribesmen's propensity to raid the plains. Any violence in the neighborhood has raised an alarm in the border posts and possibility of punitive expedition helped maintenance of law and order in the tribal villages. It is important to note that for the tribal hills of the frontiers, no police force was ever raised. In the sixties and seventies an attempt was made to provide guns to young men of some tribes to guard their own villages against the possible attack on them by the tribes of the interior hills. A little

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<sup>1</sup> S. K. Bhuyan, *Anglo-Assamese relations 1771-1826 a history of the relations of Assam with the East-India company from 1771-1826 based on original English and Assamese sources*, Gauhati: Lawyers book stall, 1949.

<sup>2</sup> Manilal, Bose, *British Policy in the North-East Frontier Agency*, New Delhi: Concept Publishing Company, 1979.

cash payment was sanctioned. The responsibility of watch and ward was regarded as a local responsibility. The Governor-General in Council decided to separate the frontier province of Assam from the Bengal Presidency who had direct control and authority of the Government of India. The study of the British relations with the frontier tribes shows that the British policy was different from the Ahom rule. The British law did not permit the molestation or destruction of property of an absconding criminal or relatives, but in the frontier for the supposed crime of a few sometimes the village and even the whole community suffered. Meanwhile by passing the inner line regulation restricted the entry of the plains people into the tribal hills minimized the contact between the hills and the plains. The British government began a policy of popularizing the British manufactures like wine, cigarette, cloth, tobacco-pipe, copper, salt etc. and thus destroyed tribal cottage industries and crafts. On the other hand, it states how Col. Hopkinson, the British officer urged the government to help and aid the missionaries in their work among the tribes. It means the government favor on Christian mission to evangelize the people of North East India. Therefore, the evaluation of the work of Bose finds that the British policy had both positive and negative impact that benefited and impinged on the native people of their rule in North East India.

**Prafulla Roychowdhury** in his book, *The North East Roots of Insurgency*<sup>3</sup>, presents the British conquest in the North Eastern regions. He describes the Anglo-Burmese War where the British assisted the Ahom king to eject Burmese from Assam and thereafter British stepped into the shoe of Assamese king and gradually established the British imperial rule. He critiques the British policy in the North East as the face of perfidy and the introduction of the inner line regulation to exclude all contacts between the tribals and the inhabitants of the plains. Certainly the demand for a separate tribal state is partly a hangover of this policy. Moreover, the British dealing with the tribal chiefs was based on patronage as well as intimidation. While reviewing British rule in the North East, Roy Chowdhury also provided a clear picture of the mechanism for the economic drain of India and this proved disastrous for the country. The economic tie-up in the interests of the colonial government included the development of communication lines like railways to maintain their domination and desire to secure the best markets and transport raw materials. This led to the direct commercial relationship between India and China through Assam because China

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<sup>3</sup>. Prafulla, Roychowdhury, *The North East Roots of Insurgency*, Calcutta: Firma KLM Private LTD, 1986.

was only two hundred miles from the northern region of Singpho near Sadiya in Assam. That is how Assam became important province only after the discovery and establishment of tea plantation. Assam was exploited economically not only through tea industry but also by imposing taxes on common people. Besides, the policy of British divide and rule in the Northeast where most of the tribal people were without the leaders and workers of the Indian National Congress and perhaps this isolation led them anti-national feelings. Further, the study shows that on the eve of independence many of the tribal people were converted to Christianity; some remained Animists; the Ahoms and the Meiteis were converted to Hinduism. Roy Chowdhury argues that the introduction of western mode of living to the tribal society was the product and influence of some Christian missionaries and foreign spectrum which ill-suited the tribal society. He also mentions the development of a new political party named Eastern India Tribal Union (EITU), recognition of Assamese as official language Bill in 1961 and the announcement of the creation of an autonomous state by the Government of India in 1968. Finally, the British government landing to the North East is a blessing for two reasons. Firstly, there was a discovery of tea plantation. Secondly the coming of American Baptist missionaries to Assam which was through invitation of government officials and that encouraged the Christian mission work in the North East India.

**H. K. Barpujari**'s book, *The American Missionaries and North-East India (1836-1900 A.D.) Part One*<sup>4</sup>, sought to study the work of the American Baptist missionaries in the North East India. The pioneer missionary work among the Shans was initiated by the British commissioner, Captain Jenkins, who stated that the labors of missionaries would be under the protection of the government as well as financial support. The north eastern extreme territory of Assam was occupied by the great Shan family whose dialect was akin to the Siamese and the Burmese. Barpujari described the coming of the Shan in the region during the time of Burmese supremacy which was being established over the original provinces. The Cacharese (Ahoms) are Shans and they were the governing race of upper Assam for many centuries. The Sadiya was selected as mission station of Assam. The mission at Sadiya extends over all the north and west of China and enabled to bear upon other operations of the Board in South-Eastern Asia. Indeed, the

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<sup>4</sup> H.K. Barpujari, *The American Missionaries and North-East India (1836-1900A.D.) Part One*, Guwahati: Spectrum Publications, 1986.

mission work was started shortly after the arrival of the pioneer missionaries with evangelism, preaching, translation-cum literatures and schools in Sadiya. Later, the mission station shifted to Jaipur. Having viewed the sight of the surrounding Sadiya found horrible by insurrection of the Khamtis. The Khamtis attacked the cantonments of the British and immediately firing started. In this fighting several people were killed and hundreds of inhabitants were wounded, including a commanding officer of Khamtis.

The missionaries withdraw from Sadiya and located at Jaipur. After the arrival of missionaries at Jaipur, sickness and necessary cares occupied much of their time. Cholera drove away nearly all the native population from the place. These reasons led the missionaries to leave from Jaipur to Sibsagar. In fact, it is observed that unhealthy weather became chief obstacle for the missionary venture. After mutual consultation it was resolved that a new station should be commenced at Sibagar, which was a better situation for missionary endeavor, in every respect, than Jaipur. Besides, it is found to be a very healthy location and would always have a regular physician. From here the missionary operation has been extended to Nowgong and Gowahati. It seems the population of Nowgong was very dense and the work of preaching the Gospel and distributing tracts in all these villages was arduous. Therefore, it is stated that the local people of all classes were interested to read the Christian tracts. Obviously, few missionaries could not full fill the needs and demands of the people. Barpujari also dealt with the internal affairs where the mission suffered from inadequate missionary personnel, financial crisis and civil war in America. In addition, the mission work has undergone problems and difficulties, such as distance from home, dangerous voyage up the Brahmaputra and lack of transportation, learning foreign language, epidemic diseases, and hostility of the frontiers and conservatism of the local people.

The Company introduced ruinous effects of opium on the native population which degraded missionary labor and became a curse to this land. The impact of Christian education was analyzed and it was pointed out that irrespective of caste, color and gender Christian missionaries have imparted good education to the native people and there was great demand for opening schools in the regions. But, the Brahmans undoubtedly created a prejudice in the minds of the people and induced them to withdraw their children from the Christian schools. Meanwhile, Assamese language was abolished by the British government. But, under the

leadership of pioneer missionary called Bronson, after a long struggle, Assamese language was reintroduced. Indeed, the missionaries were the ones who restored the Assamese language as identity of Assamese community. There was also contribution of missionaries to the literature that played a major role in the society. In other words, the missionaries brought renaissance in literature by providing Assamese Bible, dictionary, and periodicals which captured the minds of readers both Hindus and Christians. Lastly, the work is tedious because the author took lot of pain in gathering primary sources of missionary documents and dealt with the beginning of the pioneer missionary work of the American Baptist Mission and the English government. Yet, the author does only an arrangement of the evidences for the mission fields and not a scientific study. Indeed, it is merely a rough overview of the missionary work and does not critically investigate the findings.

**H.K.Barpujari's** book *American Missionaries and North-East India (1836-1900 A.D.) A Documentary Study*<sup>5</sup> is also a compiled work with documentary sources of the pioneer missionaries from the mission stations. This book is almost similar work to the *American Missionaries and North-East India (1836-1900 A.D.) Part Two*. But this documentary study revised and enlarged the mission work with added contents of the hill tribes and biographical notes of pioneer missionaries as well as few of the early converts. The major concern of this book is a historical overview of the American missionary work with a chronological account of the missionary work. Barpujari begins with the East Indian Company and their political power along with spiritual welfare of its Christian employees and the desire to spread the message of Christ amongst the Indians by appointing chaplains in India. With gradual expansion of Company's possessions the policy towards the missionaries rapidly changed from encouragement to one of indifference and indifference to one of hostility.

The Company became neutral as far as religion is concerned. Perhaps, it is pre-assumed that any interference with the religion of the natives would eventually insure the total destruction of British power, particularly in politics and trade. No wonder, when William Carey arrived in Calcutta, he was prohibited from preaching in its territory but had to make Serampore his

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<sup>5</sup>.H.K. Barpujari, *The American Missionaries and North-East India (1836-1900A.D.) A Documentary Study*, Guwahati: Spectrum Publications, 1986.

headquarters under the Danish flag. On the other hand, the Company's new Charter Act of 1813 which permitted the missionaries to go and reside in India under certain conditions. The Governor-General in Council was, however, enjoined to impress upon the officials of the Company the need for religious neutrality and non-interference in the religions of Indian subjects. Meanwhile, William Carey set up a mission at Gauhati. A missionary was dispatched under the patronage of David Scott, Agent to the Governor-General, North-East Frontier. However, the mission work was not much fruitful in terms of adding new believers in the Lord.

Active cooperation and help notwithstanding, immense were the difficulties that had to be confronted by the missionaries in their operations in Assam. They were to labor in a difficult terrain intersected by hills and trackless forests, communication, languages, an enervating climate wherein malaria, *kalazar* and cholera were endemic, frequently taking a heavy toll of human lives. Considering the population of the valley and the untiring efforts made by the Baptists, small percentage of converts was definitely a sign of the failure of evangelization in the plains. It is viewed that the fundamental difference between Christianity and Hinduism made it difficult for average intelligent Assamese to accept Christianity. Since the introduction of opium was done by the government, the missionaries condemned this policy.

**Victor Hugo Sword's** book, *Baptists in Assam A Century of Missionary Service 1836-1936*.<sup>6</sup> Sword, begins with brief sketch of the geo-political scenario of Assam followed by an explanation of Pre-British rule. The ancient history of Assam is shrouded in darkness because the inhabitants of the province had no idea of history till fourteenth century. Therefore, the accounts of foreign invaders and travelers from incidental references were laboriously pieced together from old inscriptions to write history. The Ahoms, however, who were the ruling race of Assam from the seventeenth century until about end of the eighteenth century, appeared to have possessed the historical faculty. They were good historians and left several precious manuscripts, which might be published later. In regard to early inhabitants in Assam, the Hindu mythological writings mentions that Hinduism existed in Assam at a very early date. In another account it is stated that Hinduism was the state religion and Buddhists were very few. Many hill tops in

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<sup>6</sup>. Victor Hugo Sword *Baptists in Assam A Century of Missionary Service 1836-1936*, Guwahati: Spectrum Publications, 1992.

Assam are crowned with temples that stand on foundations infinitely older than the Ahom rule. Later, the Ahoms abandoned their old tribal customs and ceremonies and adopted Hindu customs.

Hinduism became the predominating religion of the Assam valley. During this period, the Mogul invasion reached Gauhati and they stayed for a comparatively short time. In the meantime, the Moarmarias had made several uprisings and with assistance of the British government, the Ahom king defeated and put down the Moarmarias insurrection in Assam. Then, the Burmese arrived at Assam and utterly overwhelmed the Assamese troops. At this juncture, the war was declared between Burma and the British government. The British force entered Assam and conquered the province and expelled the Burmese from Assam by the treaty of Yandabo. Since the Ahom king did not leave any male heir, his kingdom was annexed by the British and that is how Assam came under British rule. The British government was for all practical purposes in control of the province. When the Brahmaputra valley came under British control it was in the most deplorable condition due to inhuman and barbarous conduct by the Burmese invaders. The whole valley was placed under the control of British authority. The administration of this multi-tribal and multi-linguistic province was not as easy as it might be thought. The people on the plains were constantly in terror because of the raids made by the hill tribes on both sides the Garos, Khasis and Nagas. In order to keep marauders from doing too much damage, the chiefs of the Border States were made responsible for restraining incursions and in return for their services were allowed to hold their estates for a very low revenue. In some other hill tribes, the British government maintained a high degree of order and even respected the prejudices and peculiarities of the people.

**F.S. Downs's** book, *The Mighty Works of God A Brief History of the Council of Baptist Churches in North East India: The Mission Period 1836-1950*,<sup>7</sup> describes the beginning of Baptist Mission in Assam and other parts of the North East India. Though this book deals with the period during which the American Baptist Mission took much of the responsibility for initiating new work, supervising the churches and running the major institutions, this not a history of that mission. He

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<sup>7</sup> F.S. Downs, *Mighty Works of God A Brief History of the Council of Baptist Churches in North East India: The Mission Period 1836-1950*, Gauhati: The Christian Literature Centre, 1971.

argued that it is a history of the church within which the mission and its missionaries played an important part, but only a part. However, the missionaries may have contributed to the general social development of the area and the contributions of some of them were great and their most important function was to be instruments of God in establishing his mission and church. Downs mentioned that the early mission was made by Roman Catholic who visited portions of what is today NEFA. They were probably looking for a way to enter Tibet or China. The first missionary to preach the Gospel in North East India was, appropriately, the first Indian Christian, Krishna Pal from the Serampore Mission. The Serampore Mission has also translated the Bible into Assamese, though it was not understandable by the Assamese people. Later, they could no longer maintain its field and accordingly handed over to the American Baptists. The American Baptist Mission stations in North East India were not established for the purpose of evangelizing the peoples of that area but as strategic outposts in a campaign to evangelize the Shan tribes of Northern Burma and Southern China. It seemed that it would be just as it was impossible to launch a China mission from Burma or Thailand.

The missionaries were asked to come and begin a work at Sadiya in Upper Assam. Soon, the Shan mission was given up due to language problem and few converts. Ultimately the missionaries chose Assam mission. The mission work at Sadiya was disturbed by continual raids from the Khamtis and lastly shifted to Jaipur. In Jaipur too the missionary found it extremely difficult. Meantime, the missionary found Nagas mission promising. However, serious difficulties soon developed, mostly due to illness and mission work was discontinued. Now, the missionaries openly expressed the opinion that they should concentrate their efforts among the Assamese. Eventually, the mission stations were established in Sibsagar, Nowgong and Gauhati and for the next twenty years remained the only stations of the Assam Mission. It is proved that the hard labor of missionaries led to the baptism of first convert Nidhi Levi at Jaipur. The Hindu community did not take much notice of his conversion partly because of his low caste, but more possibly because he had no real connection with his community. However, in another incident the Hindus created great disturbance when a respectable man sought for baptism. Yet, the missionaries continued to work and published Assamese periodical *Orunodoi* which became mouth piece for decades to the Assamese society of both Hindus and Christians.

The formation of Baptist Association of Assam paved the way for unity of the churches. Nevertheless, the mission had gone through crisis one after another, such as controversy between the Home Board in America and missionaries in Assam, illness of the missionaries, financial depression in America, the Sepoy Mutiny, the American Civil War and changing of the education policy. Indeed, it is argued that despite twenty five years of work, Assam field had been unfruitful. But, the ray of hope was dawned among the hills tribals, particularly the Garos. It is evident that the Garo mission was crowned with success through believers and establishment of the churches, development of the education, literature and trained leaders. Downs has also pointed out that during the period between 1861 and 1886 a revival took place among the older churches, leading to tremendous growth in both the Garo Hills and Upper Assam. During this time new work has also begun at three centers in the Naga Hills and among the Mikirs, though in these areas little progress had actually been made by 1886. The revival took place in Gauhati and Nowgong and new believers came up and an Assamese pastor was ordained. In the later part, mission development in the plains and western hills of Assam took place, leading to most extensive numerical expansion among the tea garden laborers, the plains Garos in Goalpara and the Cacharis of North Kamrup.

The American Baptists were also involved in Manipur. But, it was not easy for missionaries to enter because of the Hindu Manipuris (Meitheis) who were probably not willing to propagate Christian faith. So, the missionary could access through a school. It is viewed that though very little progress was made in Manipur during this time of Christian work, good foundations had been laid for the rapid growth of the church which followed the First World War. Besides, there was lack of capable leader to lead congressional or associational level and more seriously, it lacked unity in the churches of Manipur. In 1950, it was by no means certain what form the new era took a united denominational fellowship by the establishment of the CBCNEI. The mission as an organization withdrew from the exercise of executive responsibility for the institutions and programs. Thus, the book is interesting, instructive and inspiring because its subject is the mission of God in North East India. However, the writer focuses on a brief history of Christian Mission in North East India and had often depended on traditional rather than documentary accounts and it may cause inaccuracy. Therefore, he fails to evaluate and bring persuasive results state wise.

**Frederick S. Downs's** book, *Christianity in North East India Historical Perspectives*,<sup>8</sup> seeks to contribute to the subject from the perspective of the history of Christianity, bringing to the study the resources of the Christian community in the North East itself. He deals from political perspective and stated that the Christian movement in North East India was closely related to political developments during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The response to Christian missions and indigenous evangelistic activity must be understood as part of a general reaction to the extensive changes brought about by a series of political events. The first and most important was the advent of British administration. Annexation of the entire region by the British government was a gradual process that continued throughout the nineteenth and twentieth century. He holds that British administration brought to an end the isolation of the region and introduced new elements in its political, economic, social and cultural composition. Nevertheless, it is seen that the identification of Christianity with political activity in the hills areas has had both positive and negative effects. Positively, it has contributed to the development of strong Christian communities.

The Christian involvement, specifically in the rebellions, has reinforced the suspicion of the Indian public that Christians at least in that region are anti-national of Indian nationalism. Consequently, fear of separatist political activity gradually removed missionaries and perhaps prohibited entirely missionary work in Arunachal Pradesh. Despite this, there was support for missionary work among government officials, particularly during the British rule in North East India. A study of David Scott and Francis Jenkins' relations with the American Baptist Mission provides an excellent case study of the way in which a highly placed officer, personally in favor of missionary operations and convinced that they served British interests as well as those of the people, could make a substantial contribution to the advance of Christian missions. However, S.P. Sinha refers to missionary activity in the hill areas and states that missionaries were there not for advocating a faith but for keeping imperialism alive. Downs responds that the missionaries did not see their primary purpose as being agents of the colonial powers; their primary purpose was the propagation of the Gospel. What could be observed is that while each Christian missions and government were there for their own purposes, each might find the other

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<sup>8</sup>. Frederick S. Downs, *Christianity in North East India Historical Perspectives*, Delhi: ISPCK, 1983.

useful. It seems, the relationship between Christian missions and government in the North East could be explained as one in which each party sought some benefit from the other even though their ultimate objectives were different, the question arises as to which benefited the most in the long run. The earliest motive of those officers who supported missionary work was that it would help civilize the head hunters and warlike hills tribes and thus contribute to their appeasement. Though Christianity was established in the North East, the tribal Christians tended to separate from their coreligionists as well as failed to make a meaningful integration of their religion with the rest of the country in India.

**Frederick S. Downs's** third book is entitled *History of Christianity in India North East India in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries Volume V, Part 5*.<sup>9</sup>The present book is a substantially revised and updated version of the author's *Christianity in North East India: Historical Perspectives* published in 1983. In this book he examines the history of the most rapidly growing segment of the Indian church in relation to its political, ecclesiastical and socio-cultural dimensions. The book deals with the relationship between the coming of Christianity and the establishment of British administration, how the government launched missions and thereafter provided security, and financial assistance, particularly for their educational work. However, it is argued that the government was favorable to the mission work because they initially thought that the missions would be useful in pacifying the hills tribes and failing that (in the end it was the force of arms, not Christianity, that pacified the tribes), at least they would be useful in providing cheap education and a loyal Christian community.

The missions were mainly concerned with the propagation of the Gospel and not with promoting British interests. Obviously, they had taken support from government and found it useful for missions work. Looking at the subject from the perspective of the church, it is noted that how a small body of foreigners introduced the Christian faith into the region in its evangelistic form and how, despite great impenetrability's, a thriving Christian community was ultimately established in the area. According to Downs, though, the beginning part was a slow progress, towards the end of the nineteenth century a vigorous movement had developed, distinctively

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<sup>9</sup>.Frederick S. Downs, *History of Christianity in India Volume V, Part 5, North East India in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, Bangalore: The Church History Association of India, 2003.

among the tribal peoples of both hills and plains that becomes one of the fastest growing sectors of the Christian church in India. Lastly, the author deals with the complexities of the relationship between Christianity and social change in a region where it has had an influence on that process far greater than in other parts of the country. So, in his writings, Downs has placed strong emphasis on social history. Further, he has stated that political and ecclesiastical developments alone cannot explain why such large numbers of people were converted to Christianity, or the nature of the impact among people like the Assamese among whom only a few actually became Christians. The social dimension integrates and makes sense of the other two. It helps one to see how Christianity helped people adjust to the entirely new situation created by the advent of the British and resulted in the inculcation of new value system.

The author was concerned with the impact Christianity has had upon the peoples of North East India, especially the tribal peoples inhabiting the hill areas where the chief concentrations of Christians are to be found. Of course, any study of the North East is complicated by the fact that though a relatively small region it has a cultural plurality which mirrors that of the entire nation. Yet, it bore a striking outcome of the missionary labor where large numbers embraced the new faith in certain areas of the region. Nevertheless, it is observed that the missionaries distorted some of the important cultural values through introduction of western mode of living, which the tribals adopted without hesitation. This may be the reason that the Christians of this region imitated western life style and the public considers them as outsider. Sometimes, it causes regionalism or negative impression of Christianity. No doubt, this book is an important contribution to the understanding of the role of Christianity in India. It presents the standards of scholarship and freshness of perspective that have certainly led to the enthusiastic reception both in India and abroad of the earlier volumes that have been published. But the author does not provide satisfactory explanation of the reason why in some of the states of North East India Christianity did not flourish, in contrast to the tribals, such as Nagas.

**Milton S. Sangma** examines *A History of American Baptist Mission in North-East India (1836-1950) Volume-One*.<sup>10</sup> The author seeks to cover the topic in two volumes and the present

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<sup>10</sup>. Milton, S. Sangma, *A History of American Baptist Mission in North-East India (1836-1950) Volume-One*, New Delhi: Mittal Publications, 1987.

volume deals with the origin of the Baptist Church in Europe, its spread to different parts of the world, its development in USA and the arrival, establishment and expansion of the American Baptist Church in different parts of North-East India till 1950 when the entire management of the Church was handed over to the local Christians. Sangma examines the origin and activities of the various Christian missions from the west in the North East India. He stated that these Christian Mission Societies were not Government Agents. The societies were formed by the individual believers and supporters of the mission. Neither did they come to North-east on their own. Initially, they were invited by the British government officials in their private capacity with a view to use them as instruments of taming and controlling those fierce and warlike tribes. This would make their rule and administration easier. Similarly, the missionaries had their zeal and enthusiasm for spreading the good news of Jesus Christ. They accepted the protection for their life and property promised by the government officials. As a result, each one of them wanted the other in the process of carrying out own respective mission agendas. Certainly, it was under these circumstances that the American Baptist Foreign Mission Society in USA dispatched their Mission to North-east which was to play a great role in bringing about a socio-cultural revolution through evangelism and established churches in the regions. Eventually, he has described the coming of pioneer missionaries and establishment of the mission stations state-wise in chronological order.

The book deals with the Assam Valley Mission where the earliest first permanent mission station was established at Sadiya and began the mission work by the American Baptist Mission. The missionaries started the mission work and gradually expanded their operations and mission fields along with planting the churches almost in entire Assam. So, it is observed that during the time of the mission period, the missionary labor increased and new mission stations and churches were added. The mission work was fruitful among the plain tribals and tea garden laborers. However, there were only few Assamese who embraced Christianity. Since, the populations of the inhabitants were predominantly Hindus and even later part the tribal groups found to be assimilated into Hindu tradition and thus made stronghold of Hindu religion in Assam. This type of Hindu orthodoxy created great difficulty in the progress of the mission work. There were also other obstacles that hampered the missionary operations and out of these most prominent are the

abuse of opium, natural calamities, wide spread of epidemic diseases where vast numbers of the population died and lack of capable leaders. Therefore the mission fields remained with few leaders after the departure of the missionaries from the mission stations and undeniably they could not shoulder the responsibilities effectively. The American Baptist Mission had extended their mission activities among the hills tribes particularly in Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Nagaland and Manipur. Unlike the mission among Assamese, the hills mission became more successful, except in Arunachal Pradesh. Indeed, it is evident that the beginning of Christianity took root hardly with few converts by the pioneer missionaries.

**Milton S. Sangma's** second book, *A History of American Baptist Mission in North-East India (Volume-Two)*,<sup>11</sup> focuses chiefly on the American Baptist Mission's various activities in four States of North East India. While the American Baptist Mission commenced their missionary work in the Brahmaputra valley, they initiated with open preaching in the *bazaars*, streets and villages where hundreds of people were assembled. But, when this method failed to bear any fruit, they switched on to other methods, such as opening of schools, publication of literatures on local languages, translation and publication of Christian religious texts and the Bible, and the opening of dispensaries and hospitals and other humanitarian works. These methods were adopted by them as modes of evangelization. Sangma commented that the missionary work was to convert people into Christianity. The missionaries were the ones who sacrificed their lives and engaged to restore and transform the people from ignorance, illiteracy and unhygienic conditions in order to make them better human being by preaching the love of God. Thus, they were involved in both soul and life saving mission.

The educational work was done extensively and it had great impact in the society. When the mission first started schools in the North East, their main object was to use it as auxiliary to the work of evangelization. The schools were to teach people to read and impart correct moral and religious ideas, expose false science, give opportunity for direct inculcation of the Gospel and to raise up local authors. The schools' work found to be more demanding and fascinating by the local people. At the same time, the multitudes of the natives were soon found not easy to be won

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<sup>11</sup>. Milton, S. Sangma, *A History of American Baptist Mission in North-East India Volume-Two*, New Delhi: Mittal Publications, 1992.

for Christianity particularly in Assam. It was this seeming impenetrable wall that led missionaries to change their mode of missionary work. Instead of preaching in the open place, they turned their attention towards the education of the youth. Because it is evident from the missionary statement that if they had to do anything for Assamese, they might rescue the youth and children. It was almost impossible for the elderly people of this community to change their minds and to accept Christ. Therefore, right from the commencement of their mission in Assam, the American Baptist missionaries did their best to elevate the position and status of the Assamese women by undertaking various measures, like offering education and nursing training.

**C. Becker's** book, *History of the Catholic Missions in Northeast India*,<sup>12</sup> translated and edited by **G. Stadler & S. Karotemprel**, examines the establishment and the beginning of the prefecture Apostolic of Assam, the development of the missionary work in the Brahmaputra valley and in the Surma valley. Throughout the vast Surma valley the Christian village of Bondashill was the only settlement of Catholics for decades and formed what they might call an oasis in the midst of a pagan population. On the other hand, it is stated that there was some disadvantages. Floods during the rainy season and the waves caused by the modern steamers which cruise along the Barak River eroded the mission compound continually and consequently it decreased in size. But, the origin of this Christian settlement is wrapped in obscurity. There are no documents available about its early history. The earliest existing documents date back to 1828. The author claims that this document was written in the Urdu language with some Persian characters. The Christian community in Bondashill had to face circumstances that made the mission work more difficult. The Christians had to resist the attraction of pagan customs and avoid the religious fanaticism of the Muslims. There were also many circumstances and situations which the simple folk could not withstand in the long run, as for example, the fear of evil spirits and even this Christians tried to protect themselves by superstitious practices, such as carrying all kinds of 'mantras,' amulets and talismans. It is indicated that this community was stagnant when they were without pastors. Then the mission work was extended among the hill tribes of Assam such as Khasi Hills and Manipuri. Another distressing event took place in the Catholics mission was the outbreak of the first World War which sounded an ominous warning

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<sup>12</sup>. G. Stadler & S. Karotemprel edited book on *History of the Catholic Missions in Northeast India*, Calcutta: Firma KLM Private Limited, 1980.

and a discordant moment in the very promising mission of Assam in 1914. The Jesuit superior insisted that they could not continue the administration of the Assam Mission for lack of personnel during the war and post-war even for their own missions in Calcutta and Bengal. Later, the Propaganda entrusted the Assam Mission to the Salesians of Don Bosco in 1921. The book does not mention the expansion of Catholic Missions and church planting movement and its impact in North East India.

**C. Becker's** second book, *Early History of the Catholic Missions in Northeast India (1598-1890)*,<sup>13</sup> translated and edited by **F. Leicht & S. Karotemprel**, dealt with beginning of Catholic missionary work in Assam. The first missionaries to preach the Gospel here were the Augustinian Fathers. The Jesuits followed in 1576 and towards the year 1597 the Dominicans. Through the activities of these Religious Orders, there developed step by step the Christian communities of Rangamati in Assam. The Christian communities were also founded by the Portuguese in Sylhet and Cachar, probably when they were about to leave East Bengal. These territories were part of the Vicariates Apostolic of East Bengal right from the establishment and now these territories formed part of the Prefecture Apostolic of Assam. But, there is no trace of any proper Portuguese missionary activity up to now. Individual Catholic Europeans and Catholics of mixed origin might have dared to enter this region, however, there is no mention of any kind of missionary activity among the local people. It suggests that even for the new European Catholics, the Vicar Apostolic of Bengal could not provide priests because of the great distance from Calcutta and the poor means of communications. Afterwards, the first French missionaries reached at Gauhati and Major Jenkins, the representative of the British government, took great care of the newcomers. It commented that they were very active and had a well-equipped printing press with a newspaper in the Assamese language. Nevertheless, they could gather very few converts. For example, they had worked for fourteen years and received only forty Christians. The missionaries too tried to reach Tibet through Assam and through Bhutan and finally through the territory of the Mishmis. While the two Catholic missionaries attempted to reach Tibet via Mishmi mountains, unfortunately they were killed by the Mishmis. In the midst of all the grief over the loss and cruel death of the two brave missionaries, the superior of the

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<sup>13</sup>. F. Leicht & S. Karotemprel edited work entitled on *Early History of the Catholic Missions in Northeast India (1598-1890)*, Calcutta: Firma KLM Private Limited, 1989.

Mission Seminary in Paris did not forget that it was much more Christian to implore God's mercy and His blessing instead of vengeance at the open grave of these two great heroes. Later, Milan Mission Seminary began work and followed by Italian missionaries in Assam. The Catholics mission suffered from missionary personnel crisis, lack of pastoral care and brutal attack of missionaries and it affected the development of the mission work. The existing mission fields were not up to the mark. Finally, the book gives historical account of Catholics mission from a new perspective.

**Maheswar Neog's** work, *The Resuscitation of the Assamese Language by the American Baptist Missionaries*<sup>14</sup>, compiled by **Pranavsvarup Neog**, sought to examine the American pioneer missionary work, particularly the controversy over Assamese language in Assam. In this book, he finely describes how the American missionaries, Reverend Dr. Nathan Brown and Dr. Miles Bronson, were honored as great linguists by entire Assamese community. The missionaries not only preached the Gospel and established mission fields, but also did humanitarian services, particularly restoration of Assamese identity through re-establishment of the Assamese language. The British government passed orders that Bengali, and not Assamese, would be the language of the courts and schools of Assam. It was argued by the missionaries that in spite of the laws of 1837, circulation of Bengali in the schools and law courts instead of Assamese in Assam was a conspiracy for destroying the Assamese language. So, the missionary wrote in a journal that this makes it pretty certain that the Assamese, as a distinct language, would in course of a few generation, become extinct and Bengali will take its place. This project had been for some time in contemplation, and now that government had set about the work vigorously. On the other hand, the Baptist missionaries saw that without the Assamese language they could not do any work of propagation and the general population of Assam understand only that language. Indeed, the American missionaries who were alone proceeded to fight that battle. The American missionaries of Assam, like their worthy brethren of Serampore, have been the zealous supporters of the Assamese language during that period. These missionaries tried to build a dam against the strong current of conspiracy of the government by publishing *Orunodoi*, an Assamese journal, *Friends of India* and other printed materials. Later, Bronson had to shoulder the

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<sup>14</sup>. Pranavsvarup, Neog, Compiled *The Resuscitation of the Assamese Language by the American Baptist Missionaries*, New Delhi: Omsons Publications, 2008.

responsibility as the only missionary for building up an agitation in favor of Assamese language with a view to its reinstatement in schools and courts. Despite various problems, his long struggle bore fruit when the government gives a new life to the Assamese language. The whole hearted desire of the missionaries was to restore the language of the people of this land with scientific study and therefore they agitated for its restoration. They succeeded at last in resuscitation Assamese in administration and education and for culturing the language along modern lines, endowing it with a grammar, a dictionary and a large mass of writings in modern prose. Besides, they set remarkable milestone in literature, like translation of the Bible into Assamese and introduction of the periodicals, particularly first Assamese periodical “*Orunodoi*” which has become the chief literary vehicle to capture and transmit to the vast populations both Christians and non-Christians in the state. Further the author has compiled several articles written by scholars along supported by documentary sources. Those articles are the discoveries of modern *Asamiya* literature the preliminary facts of the period, missionary and the language controversy in Assam, new perspective on the missionary role in the nineteenth century language agitation in Assam, social influences on nineteenth-century Baptist Missionaries in India, the establishment of the American Baptist Assam Mission, 1836-1841, origin of Christianity in the Garo hills of Meghalaya, missionaries and manuscripts, missionaries and dictionaries: An annotated bibliography of linguistic works prepared by American Baptist missionaries in North East India, the *Orunodoi*, preface by Dr. Miles Bronson: A dictionary of Assamese and English. Thus, the author dealt extensively about restitution of Assamese language through the valuable support of the American Baptist missionaries. However, he did not critique the impact of Christian missions particularly in response to Christianity, despite its remarkable contribution to Assamese society. Nevertheless, this book gives details of the pioneer missionaries work on reinstatement of Assamese language and primary information and hence, it is a great asset for society as well as researchers.

**Jan A.B. Jongeneel’s** work, *Missiological Encyclopedia, Part One: The Philosophy and Science of Mission in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries*,<sup>15</sup> is onmissions studies. Jongeneel, a former Dutch missionary in Indonesia, is professor of mission at Utrecht University. The book does not

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<sup>15</sup>. Jan A. B. Jongeneel, *Missiological Encyclopedia Part One The Philosophy and Science of Mission in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries*, Bangalore: Centre for Contemporary Christianity, 2006.

provide a comprehensive survey of mission(s), but rather a comprehensive view of the study of mission(s). In other words, it is not primarily interested in the phenomenon of mission(s), however, in the way in which it has been studied. The work is organized broadly around three foci – concepts, methods and branches of missiology. The first three chapters try to clarify what missiology is all about from philosophical, theological and biblical points of view. Chapter four deals with methods of missiology and the final chapter is concerned with the branches of missiology. It is astounding to see how prolifically widespread the branches of missiology are extending themselves into numerous non-theological fields such as history, linguistics, geography, statistics, ethnology, anthropology, law, sociology, economics, psychology and pedagogics. One praiseworthy character of this book is its methods of mission studies, such as metaphysics and empiricism, deductive and inductive methods, descriptive and normative missiology and missiology from above and missiology from below. This variety is important in mission studies, especially the philosophical study of mission. He stated that it must be divided into two basic types: the scientific or empirical study of mission (mainly inductive) and the theological study of mission (ultimately deductive). Jongeneel claims that the empirical study of mission start and end ‘on earth’, whereas the theological study of mission start and/or end ‘in heaven’. Missiology from above refuses to start in heaven. Although liberal theologians and missiologists prefer a theology and missiology ‘from below’, they cannot deny that, like the conservatives, they ultimately depend also upon the ‘above’, because God’s revelation in Jesus Christ as the ultimate norm comes finally from beyond human experiences and reflection. He argued that in the past and at the present, the empirical study of mission is sometimes mixed with theological insights. For instance, Nicolas Poulain’s study of the history of Christian mission (1867) not only deals descriptively with the historical matters of fact in mission, but also makes abundantly clear that God is mightily at work in human history. He interprets the history of Christian mission as the history of God’s great works. This normative interpretation of Christian mission in the framework of human history is a theological interpretation. He concluded with a short list of dates in which the aforesaid names of ‘missiology from the methodological point of view’ are mentioned for the first time. Thus, the scope and approach are ecumenical, international and comprehensive. Every section has a rich bibliography and there are indexes of names and subjects. Wherever missiology is heading for the 21<sup>st</sup> century, Jongeneel has greatly contributed to the discipline with the creation of a primary tool for missiology research. The

price will put it out of range for many individual scholars, like missiologists as well as theologians and obviously it will be an essential acquisition for every theological library. On the other hand, he tries to deal descriptively with little explanation or elaboration.

**David J. Bosch's** book, *Transforming Mission Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*,<sup>16</sup> sought to study New Testament models of Mission with the aid of the idea of paradigm shifts in mission. The title "transforming" might be an adjective describing "mission." In this case, mission is understood as an enterprise that transforms reality. Transforming can, however, also be a present participle, the activity of transforming of which mission is the object. Here, mission is not the enterprise that transforms reality, but something that itself is being transformed. The study is, however, not simply descriptive. It does not set out merely to portray the development and modifications of an idea, but also suggests that mission remains an indispensable dimension of Christian faith and that, at its most profound level, its purpose is to transform reality around it. Mission, in this perspective, is that dimension of our faith that refuses to accept reality as it is and aims at changing it. Bosch opines that an inadequate foundation for mission and ambiguous missionary motives and aims are bound to lead to an unsatisfactory missionary practice. If there is no possibility of ignoring the present crisis in mission, or any point in trying to circumvent it, the only valid way open to us is to deal with the crisis in utmost sincerity yet without allowing ourselves to succumb to it. Crisis is the point where danger and opportunity meet. Some see only the opportunity and rush on, oblivious of the pitfalls on all sides. Others are only aware of the danger and become so paralyzed by it that they back off. We can, however, only do justice to our high calling if we acknowledge the presence of both danger and opportunity and execute our mission within the field of tension engendered by both. He suggests, then, that the solution to the problem presented by the present failure of nerve does not lie in a simple return to an earlier missionary consciousness and practice. Clinging to yesterday's images provides solace, but little else. And artificial respiration will yield little beyond the semblance of returning life. Neither does the solution lie in embracing the values of the contemporary world nor attempting to respond to whatever a particular individual or group chooses to call mission. Rather, we require a new vision to break out of the present stalemate toward a different kind of missionary

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<sup>16</sup>. David, J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*, Bangalore: Centre for Contemporary Christianity, 1991.

involvement which need not mean jettisoning everything generations of Christians have done before. The bravest among missionary thinkers have already for some time begun to sense that a new paradigm for mission was emerging. Further, he has quoted Hendrik Kraemer where Kraemer said that we had to recognize a crisis in mission, even an “impasse.” And yet, he said, “we do not stand at the end of mission”; rather, “we stand at the definite end of a specific period or era of mission, and the clearer we see this and accept this with all our heart, the better.” We are called to a new “pioneer task which will be more demanding and less romantic than the heroic deeds of the past missionary era.” Bosch suggested that mission is God’s “yes” to the world. This was submitted in the conviction that there is continuity between the reign of God, the mission of the church and justice, peace and wholeness in society and that salvation also has to do with what happens to people in this world. In this way, Bosch leaves us a rich inheritance. In my opinion we owe it to him to start working at a proper inventory, description and evaluation of his missiological work. His vast and profound body of work will continue to be an inspiration for many readers and scholars. Therefore, he gives clear understanding of mission paradigm shifts which will help us to develop relevant missiological paradigm to the contemporary situation.

**Joseph Mattam and Krickwin C. Marak**’s edited book, *Missiological Approaches in India Retrospect and Prospect*<sup>17</sup> which is a record of the papers, responses and reports of the group discussions that took place in the annual meeting at Nagpur, 3-6 January, 1999. The scholars have touched upon some unconventional themes such as urbanization and modernity, ecological degradation, socio-economic reality, free legal aid, reflection on the missiological approaches to the tribals, mixed marriages and challenges for the church, Christian response to the reality of caste and missiological methodologies. The missiological methodologies are studied by F. Hrangkhuma. It is a reflection on and systematization of various approaches, attitudes and the underlying principles of missionary work. He scrutinizes the existing literature beginning with the work of Jonganeel (1995); areas like Missio(no)graphy, various minor and major names given to mission and missiological concepts. He ends with missiological trends in the contemporary world, which are influenced by various factors such as the two world wars, the resurgence of religious, the overthrow of colonialism, the rise and fall of communism, the

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<sup>17</sup>. Joseph Mattam and Krickwin C. Marak eds. *Missiological Approaches in India Retrospect and Prospect*, Bombay: St. Pauls, 1999.

development of the critical approach to the study of the Bible, the ecological crisis, the development of the Third World and liberation theologies, and the ecumenical movement among the churches. Jonganeel and van Engelen argue that it is no longer the sole domain of missiology from above, but increasingly the concept is made use of by proponents of the missiologies from below. Further he states that Salvation-Historical missiology was propounded by Oscar Cullmann. According to Cullmann's view, salvation history was not concluded by the incarnation of the Word but continues until the second coming. Ecclesio-centric missiologies have been at the centre of Roman Catholic missiology. Missiologies from above as a rule are more ecclesio-centric than missiologies from below. It agrees that both emphasize the concept of the kingdom of God as central to God's mission. But the difference is that missiologies from above situate the kingdom of God within the church, while missiologies from below situate the church within the kingdom. On the other hand, missiology from below stresses the idea of presence, humanization, pro-existence, conscientization as the means and goals of mission. The author proposes a model of relationship as one of the best approaches to a holistic missiology. Humanity exists in three dimensional relationships namely, in relation to God, in relation to other human beings and in relation to other creation. Due to the disobedience of humanity, humanity's relationship with God has been broken, and as a result the other two dimensions of relationship have been broken as well. The holistic approach in mission emphasizes all the dimensions of human existence and relationship and proposes new and more healthy attitude. However, the author did not bring to the light all methods of missiologies and their merits and demerits in the course of mission studies. Nevertheless, this book is an attempt to study mission within the contemporary situations in the Indian context and it is a relevant and important work for missiological studies.

**Frederick S. Downs's** article, *New Perspective on the Missionary Role in the Nineteenth Century Language Agitation in Assam*,<sup>18</sup> highlights the circumstances under which American Baptist missionaries were involved in the agitation to restore Assamese as the official language of the courts and schools of Assam in the middle of the nineteenth century. Although it is not completely clear as to precisely when the British replaced Assamese with Bengali as the

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<sup>18</sup>. Frederick S. Downs, "New Perspective on the Missionary Role in the Nineteenth Century Language Agitation in Assam," *Indian Church History Review*, XXX, 1 (1986).

language of the courts and schools, the policy was certainly being implemented by the time the first American Baptist missionaries reached in Assam in the late 1830s. The writer states that the decision to reinstate Assamese in the courts and schools was taken by government in 1873. These two events, namely the suppression and restitution of Assamese, had remarkable impact upon this modern history of Assam. Moreover, it is mentioned that all scholars who have written on the issue agreed that the Government decided to reinstate Assamese in response to an agitation within Assam. The people also admitted to the leading role of the American Baptist missionaries who had worked effectively for the agitation for Assamese language in Assam. As the Baptist historian, Kenneth Scoot Latourette puts it, ‘Most of them (Baptists) humble in the sight of the world and usually found no place in enduring human memory. Nevertheless they were great souls who dreamed and built better than they knew. It has been a special privilege given to the Baptists, more than any other body of Christians of comparable size, to preach the gospel to the poor.’ Further, it is interesting to note that two most marked changes among the Hindu, in these years, were the diffusion of education among the masses and the giving of women the privilege of learning to read. Perhaps the missionaries believed that it would pave the way for a conversion movement towards Christianity.

**Frederick S. Downs’** article, *Social Influences on Nineteenth-Century Baptist Missionaries in India*,<sup>19</sup> examines contemporary developments in the historiography of Christianity in India. He observes that during the past two decades a new historiography has developed itself among many professional historians of Christianity in India. The main perspective of this developing historiography is not that of the expansion of the western Church, but of people in place in a particular cultural, political and social context receiving Christians from abroad. As a result, foundation of Christian Churches was laid resulting in the growth of a sizable Christian community. On the other hand, Christian missionaries such as Bronson and his colleagues were unsuccessful in converting the Assamese to Christianity. Nevertheless, they had ideological presuppositions for involvement in the Assamese language agitation and could have a profound effect on the Assamese. It was the missionaries who taught the Assamese to have a social conscience. Bronson argues that the only way of progress in Assam was to educate the masses. It

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<sup>19</sup>. Frederick, S. Downs, “Social Influences on Nineteenth-Century Baptist Missionaries in India,” in *American Baptist Quarterly*, VIII, 4 (1989).

is also certainly true that William Carey struggled for social changes to reform Indian society. Mirroring Bronson, the Baptist editor of the newspaper (*The Friend of India*, established by William Carey), in the editorial said that their object was not to give a refined and classical education to the upper classes but to sow the seeds of knowledge and improvement among the lower classes. Indeed, the object of the missionaries was to conscientize them through the liberating power of education: a kind of pedagogy of the oppressed.

**Frederick, S. Downs'** another article, *The Establishment of the American Baptist Assam Mission, 1836-1841*<sup>20</sup>, deals with the work of American Baptist missionaries in Assam, who began by establishing a mission station at Sadiya in the upper extremities of the Brahmaputra valley. The missionary labor among the Khamti and the Singpho tribes of what is today North East Frontier Association was looked upon as a tactical beginning in a key strategy of evangelizing the Shan peoples of northern Burma and China. The chief interest was not in North East India itself. During the five years between 1836 and 1841 the difficulties encountered in attempting to implement the Shan Mission convinced the missionaries that the Assamese was more realistic for their attentions than the Shan in the distant jungle. The Nathan Browns and Oliver Cutters arrived at Sadiya in 1836 in response to an invitation by the Commissioner of Assam, Capt. Francis Jenkins for the purpose of undertaking educational enterprise among Khamti and Singpho tribes. Shortly, they started a school with twenty boys and Brown prepared some materials. In 1837, reinforcement for the Shan Mission was added by Miles Bronson and Jacob Thomas families. Unfortunately, Thomas was killed by a tree which fell on a boat in which he was sitting. The death of Thomas seriously weakened the Mission's force. Bronson was the only missionary actively engaged in an attempt to work for the Shan Mission while Brown began to conduct regular religious services and translation of the Gospels. The author points out that a sudden serious blow fell when Khamti warriors raided Sadiya and killed number of people along with the British officer. It was impossible to remain at Sadiya and they moved to Jaipur. Bronson had still hope for the Nagas and took up residence with his family in Namsang village. He had started a school in 1840. Unfortunately the Shan Mission and Naga Mission withered. 1840 marked the end of the Shan Mission. The Baptism of an young Assamese named Nidhiram at

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<sup>20</sup>.Frederick, S. Downs, "*The Establishment of the American Baptist Assam Mission, 1836-1841*," *Indian Church History Review*, Vol. VI, No 1, June 1972.

Jaipur in 1841 marked the beginning of the Assam Mission. Then Sibsagar was taken up first a permanent Station and in 1841 a mission station in Nowgong was launched. For long periods one or another of the three Stations remained unmanned due to sickness and lack of reinforcements of missionary staff.

**George Gillespie's** paper, *Missionaries and Manuscripts*<sup>21</sup> is a worthwhile investigation. A number of old manuscripts, primarily Assamese and Sanskrit *puthis*, passed through the hands of early American Baptist missionaries in Assam. Nathan Brown collected up to forty manuscripts between 1840 and 1850. Besides, it is also claimed that the first attempt to collect Assamese manuscripts was done by Rev. Nathan Brown and other pioneers of the American Baptist Mission residing at Sibsagar. He also believed that Nathan Brown got a "Shan manuscript." The Mission eventually published the *buranji* which are old historical chronicles of Assam. The *puthis* were considered as manuscripts and turned over to the Department of Historical and Antiquarian Studies of the Government of Assam by 1931. Apart from these, there were also found Manipuri manuscripts, Shan chronicle and Khamti sacred book through American Baptist missionaries which is a valuable treasure to writers as well as modern Assamese society.

**George Gillespie** has contributed a second article, *Missionaries and Dictionaries: An Annotated Bibliography of Linguistic Works Prepared by American Baptist Missionaries in North East India*<sup>22</sup>, which examined the incredible contribution of missionaries in the field of literary work. Indeed, he pens it in honor of recorded Miles Bronson who had toiled for the accomplishment of his manuscript for Assamese-English dictionary in 1866. The American Baptist missionaries came to Northeast India in the nineteenth century and identified themselves among a rich assortment of people, cultures and languages. Since language study was important for communication and most of the linguistic work had not been previously attempted, they themselves became pioneers in the work of language analysis, and the preparation of dictionaries and grammar. This work became useful to the missionaries, the local people, government officials and later scholars. Hence, the work with language is a real part of Church history of Northeast India, for it exhibits the entry of the church into history, life and culture of a people.

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<sup>21</sup>. George, Gillespie, "Missionaries and Manuscripts," *Indian Church History Review*, XIII, 2 (1979).

<sup>22</sup>. George, Gillespie, "Missionaries and Dictionaries: An Annotated Bibliography of Linguistic Works Prepared by American Baptist Missionaries in North East India," *Indian Church History Review*, Vol. XI, No. 1, 1977.

When concerned foreign Christians began breaking down the linguistic walls of isolated people, many doors to new relationships and ideas were opened. Moreover, changes came, both good and bad, due to what was done to communicate the gospel of Christ. Due to the American Baptists missionaries' work a great number of useful books were printed. Besides, it has also listed bibliography of the books and articles of the language. In this regard, the author has given detailed information of the pioneer missionary work in the form of writings which are useful for doing research in the field of Christian Mission.

**George Gillespie's** third paper, published in *The Orunudo*<sup>23</sup> has studied about Assamese news paper and mission. The author comments that the *Orunudo* which published by American Baptist missionaries beginning in January, 1846, was the first periodical in the Assamese language. The Assamese name was *aurunodoi sambad patra* in 1850 and from January 1851 it was called merely *arunodoi* and its English spelling as printed on the periodical. *Orunodoi*, a written monthly paper, was devoted to religion, science, and General Intelligence. It was printed and published at the Sibsagar Mission Press by O.T. Cutter, for the American Baptist Mission in Assam. It had two forms, the magazine and the newspaper. The price was one rupee a year. The contents of the *Orunudo* were very varied. The paper covered local and foreign news, descriptions of the tribal people of Assam as well as of foreign countries, sciences, machines, animals of the world, the stars, coins, European and Hindu mythology, old Assamese manuscripts, book reviews, Christian teaching, and some news of the Assam Christian community. The paper also called for many reforms, such as widow remarriage. For the Assamese people, it was the only source of news from outside Assam. There was no other periodical published in Assamese until 1871. The bound copies of the *Orunudo* are available today in various libraries are in the magazine form. It had a larger circulation among the public. Furthermore, some important old Assamese manuscripts (*puthis*) were collected by missionaries and first published in the *Orunudo*. These included a history and chronicle of Assamese rulers. Indeed, *Orunudo* played an important role in the renaissance of the Assamese language and literature in the nineteenth century. And also, he has mentioned the circulation figures of the monthly subscribers and publication figures, number of volumes and listed editorships.

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<sup>23</sup>.George, Gillespie, "Orunudo," *Indian Church History Review*, XII, 1 (1978). First published in the *Journal of the University of Gauhati*, XXVI-XXVII: Arts 1975-1976.

**M. Bronson** was one of the American Baptist pioneer missionaries to Assam. He wrote an article, *Preface by Dr. Miles Bronson: A Dictionary of Assamese and English*<sup>24</sup>, particularly depicting the Assamese language. The writer says that Assamese is the language usually spoken by the entire population of the Brahmaputra Valley. Unfortunately an impression has prevailed that Assamese and Bengali are identical. Thus all the schools, courts and official business of every kind are conducted in Bengali. This has greatly retarded the cause of education and general progress among the masses. After thirty years of familiar acquaintance with the people, he was fully persuaded that it is a mistake to ignore their language. He realized that if suitable encouragement were given, the educated Assamese would soon supply vernacular schools books, and a new interest in favor of education manifested itself among the masses. In regard to the translation work, it was the first Dictionary of the language ever published and it was a difficult task. With lots of effort, the writer had to consult the oldest and best informed people and Assamese *pundits* to learn the actual pronunciations and words. This dictionary became great asset to Assamese society and common people could read and learn and apply it in the academics field, since in this period only few local people received opportunity for learning basically in Sanskrit and vast majority of them were ignorant and illiterate. Indeed, this type of translation work definitely provided new and wider knowledge to the readers. Lastly, Bronson expressed thankfulness for the improvement of the work and his liberal contribution to the society. In addition, he has also shown zeal to come back and complete a second volume of English and Assamese work. However, it is not clear whether he came back and completed the work or not. The future researchers of the Assamese people shall ever cherish Bronson's sleepless and untiring labor and writings.

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<sup>24</sup>. M. Bronson. (1867): Paper written on "*Preface by Dr. Miles Bronson: A Dictionary of Assamese and English*," in Pranavsvrup, Neog, Compiled *The Resuscitation of the Assamese Language by the American Baptist Missionaries*, New Delhi: Omsons Publications, 2008.

## CHAPTER 2

### THE ADVENT OF CHRISTIAN MISSIONS IN ASSAM

#### 2.1. INTRODUCTION

St. Thomas, the Apostle, is considered as the first Missionary to bring Christianity to India, though there is another opinion ascribing the first coming of Christianity in India through the enterprise and merchants of the East-Syrian or Persian Church.<sup>1</sup> Western tradition says, St. Thomas, following the well-established trade routes, arrived in India sometime in the middle of the first century. He preached the Gospel in Parthia and India, converted many to Christianity and suffered martyrdom in India.<sup>2</sup> Indian tradition comments, St. Thomas came by sea, and first landed at Cranganore around A.D. 52. Then he moved to Coromandel, and suffered martyrdom.<sup>3</sup> The next contact was made by the Persian or the East-Syrian Church whose Bishops claimed to have evangelized the Indian people around 300 A.D.<sup>4</sup> These Missions were followed by the Portuguese missionaries beginning from the close of the 15<sup>th</sup> Century A.D.<sup>5</sup> Another Christian Mission that landed in India was the Danish Mission hereafter followed by Serampore Mission. Ironically, Assam is seldom thought of as an important Mission field. In fact, only few Christian workers knew anything about Assam, although the missionary martyr, Winfrid of Germany, is said to have prayed in the eight century for Assam and quoted his prayer as “O merciful God, who willest all men to be saved. And to come to the knowledge of the truth. Have mercy upon the Assamese, Hindus and Mohammedans, and all the inhabitants of Assam.”<sup>6</sup>

Indeed, God displays His divine intervention in His own appointed hour which seemed to be like an answer to the prayer of Winfrid of Germany. The Christian missionary impetus began to appear in the land. Hence, in this chapter, the researcher is going to study the Advent of Christian Missions, particularly the earliest Christian contacts with the Roman Catholics, the Serampore

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<sup>1</sup>. A.M. Mundadan, *History of Christianity in India, From the Beginning up to the Middle of the Sixteenth Century (Up to 1542)*, Vol. 1, Bangalore: Church History Association of India, 1984, p. 21.

<sup>2</sup>. Ibid, p. 25.

<sup>3</sup>. Ibid, p. 29.

<sup>4</sup>. Ibid, p. 78.

<sup>5</sup>. Cyril, Bruce firth, *An Introduction to Indian Church History*, Serampore: The Senate of Serampore College, 1961, p. 49.

<sup>6</sup>. Victor Hugo Sword, *Baptists in Assam A Century of Missionary Service 1836-1936*, op.cit., p. 11.

Mission and British Government Officials assessment to Christian Mission especially invitation of American Baptist Mission in Assam.

## **2.2. Early Christian Correspondence with Assam**

The earliest recorded contact of the Assam with the Christian missionaries was made in 1626 by two Jesuit missionaries known as Father Stephen Cacella and Father John Cabral, who were looking for a way to go to Tibet and China. They travelled as far -east as Pandu a few miles West of Gauhati which was then stretched to Hazo the head quarter of the Moghul territories of Kamrup with the Ahom kingdom.<sup>7</sup> On 4<sup>th</sup> October 1627 in a letter written by Cacella from Cambirasi, Bhutan, he gave an account of their visit what is today the portions of the districts of Goalpara and Kamrup in Assam. This letter, however, does not provide any evidence of any Christian communities at that time.<sup>8</sup>

Meanwhile, in 1635, a Feringhi was captured by the Ahoms when he inadvertently wandered into their territory.<sup>9</sup> He was an European, connected with the Moghul army and not a missionary. There are also evidences to the visit of four Europeans to the Ahom capital at Rangpur in 1739, who offered fascinating gifts to the ruling king, Siva Singha.<sup>10</sup>

## **2.3. A Christian Community at Rangamati in Goalpara**

At the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the references support that a large Christian community found in this area, i.e., on the Moghul frontiers with the Ahom kingdom. In 1682 the Chronicle of the Augustinian friars of Bandel, near Hooghly in Bengal, gives references to a flourishing community of 7,000 Christians at a place named Rangamati. It was the earliest Christian community known to have been established in Assam. Moreover, there is ample evidence pointing to the extent to which Christians were connected with Moghul enterprises. In 1696 an Augustinian, Frey Sicardo, produced further remarks to a Christian community at

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7. S. K. Bhuyan, *Catholic Anglo-Assamese Relations 1771-1826*, Op.cit., p. 58. Also George Kottupallil in *The Catholic Church in North East India 1890-1990*, edited by Sebastian Karotemprel, Calcutta: Firma KLM, "A Historical Survey of the Catholic Church in Northeast India from 1627 to 1969" Private Limited, 1993, p. 31.

<sup>8</sup>. F. S. Downs, Rangamati, *Indian Church History Review*, Vol.XII, No. 2, 1978

<sup>9</sup>. Edward Gait, *A History of Assam*, Op.cit., pp. 115-116.

<sup>10</sup>. Milton S. Sangma, *History of American Baptist Mission in North-East India (1836-1950) Volume- One*, Delhi: Mital Publications, 1987, p. 15.

Rangamati “In the camp of Bencomatis on the confines of Assam, in the country subject to the King of the Mughls there are two churches, one dedicated to Our Lady of the Rosary, the other to Our Lady of Guadelupe.”<sup>11</sup>

Sicardo did not mention Rangamati by name but he has definitely pointed to the same community which was revealed in the chronicle of his own Mission fourteen years before. Sicardo’s citation to two churches indicates a moderately large and well organized community.

In January, 1715, Bishop F.T. Laynez of S. Tome-Mylapore, spent twenty five (25) days at Rangamati. It is evident from the statement of Fr. C. A. Barbier, who accompanied the Bishop Laynez when the Bishop had confirmed one thousand persons during his visit. Fr. Barbier also gives citation to a church at Rangamati dedicated to Our Lady of the Rosary, henceforth ratifying the writing of Fr. Sicardo<sup>12</sup>.

Regarding the location of Rangamati scholars have identified with the evidence as follows: Fr. Frey Sicardo states that it is in the camp of Bencomatis on the confines of Assam, in the country subject to the King of the Mughls. Hambye indicates, it is at the place where the river Jamuna branches off from the Brahmaputra. Fr. Barbier comments, it is at the further limits of the states of the Great Moghal. Padre Marco Dell Tomba’s, account between 1758 and 1769 remarks, between the lands of Cambo and those of Industan towards Daka, there is another Raja, called Raghmati, who would seem to be East of Nepal, beyond the lands of Kirat, where they say there are many Christians. Fr. Joseph Tieffenthaler, writing to Fr. Duperron in the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, comments, “Rangamati was formerly a populous town, with a church. It is situated on the Northern bank of Lokia, 2 miles from the banks of the Brahmaputra. It has 5 miles in length, 2 miles in breadth, is situated on sandy hills and in valley; 20 miles from Gohati which separates the district of Daka from the country of Ascham.”<sup>13</sup> Therefore, an evident proved that Rangamati was the place which was settled by the first Christian community in Assam.

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<sup>11</sup>. Frederick S. Downs, “Rangamati: A Christian Community in North-East India During the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> Centuries” in *Essays on Christianity In North-East India* edited by Milton S. Sangma and David R. Syiemlieh, New Delhi: Indus Publishing Company, 1994, pp.40-41.

<sup>12</sup>. Ibid., pp. 40-41. See also Mathew Muttumana, *Christianity in Assam and Inter- Faith Dialogue*, Indore: Satprakashan Sanchar Kendra, 1984, pp. 6-7.

<sup>13</sup>. Frederick S. Downs, “Rangamati: A Christian Community in North-East India During the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> Centuries” in *Essays on Christianity In North-East India*, Op.cit., p. 42.

The remnant community had been abandoned by their Portuguese fathers in the flesh, and even by their spiritual fathers, the priests of Dacca. Most of them were possibly assimilated into the local population. M'Cosh states of their inter-marriage. But the remnant community of Rangamati seems to have finally disappeared within a generation from the establishment as the first permanent Catholic church in Assam in the second half of the Nineteenth century. At the same time, the mystery of the Rangamati Christians remains unknown and much work is still to be done.<sup>14</sup>

#### **2.4. Roman Catholic Community at Bondashill in Cachar**

Another, Christian contact was in Bondashill village of Cachar district in Assam. Bondashill is situated on the left bank of the Barak River. Throughout the vast areas, this was the only settlement of the Roman Catholics community for decades. The origin of this Christian settlement is wrapped in obscurity. However it is viewed that these Christian soldiers of Bondashill were under the service of the Emperor of Delhi and were sent by him from Meerut to Bengal and Sylhet to fight against the British who were trying to take away these territories from the Mughal Emperor. Later on, in 1765, Bengal and Sylhet were lastly transferred to the British, they found shelter in the kingdom of the Raja of Cachar and it might be considered the beginning of the Christian village at Bondashill. According to a tradition, their ancestors were Christian soldiers who, around the year 1790, immigrated from Meerut under the guidance of a petty prince. Their number was about 500. There were also about 600 Muslim soldiers under the same command. There was warfare between the Moghuls and the British, and these Roman Catholics had emigrated into the Surma valley and settled at Bondashill. The Catholic soldiers of Bondashill gave considerable help to the British and thereby became British subjects. Still, the common family names of Pinero, Fernandez and the like clearly indicate their Portuguese origin. Thus, this Roman Catholic community still exists today<sup>15</sup>.

Ecclesiastically, the Christians of Bondashill belonged to the Vicariate Apostolic of West Bengal at Calcutta when it was built. Therefore, they were too far from Calcutta and it was impossible for the Vicar Apostolic to dispatch a priest to them, although was known to him. Rarely, a priest

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<sup>14</sup>. Ibid., p. 48.

<sup>15</sup>. C. Becker, *History of the Catholic Missions in Northeast India*(1890-1915), Calcutta: Firma KLM Private Limited, 1980, pp. 99-103

was sent to them from Dacca to conduct the Sacraments. From 1870 onwards a priest resided for a short time. Fr. Fourmond served the longest period for three years. After his exodus the community again remained without a priest.

Besides, the unfortunate events like unhealthy climate caused of typhoid, fever, chronic malaria to missionaries and due to this reason they could not stay for longer periods. On the other hand, the Christian community had to face many circumstances and situations of pagan customs and religious fanaticism of the Muslims. Later, they could not withstand in the long run and was influenced by superstitious practices. Economically, also, the Christian community of Bondashill was static. In the beginning, they were well-to-do. Gradually they learnt to distill alcohol and earned a lot of money. Thus, they sold out the land and lost the source of their income.<sup>16</sup> Therefore, they were pulled down economically. Hence, the evidence portrays that the earliest Christian associations with Assam were made by the Roman Catholic missionaries and the first Christian communities in Assam were also the Roman Catholics.

## **2.5. Serampore Mission at Gauhati**

William Carey landed in India in 1793. Soon, he had set a notion of Christian influence that should spread much farther than he or his associates ever dared to dream. Thereupon, he was indirectly responsible for the genesis of Christianity into a number of provinces in India. Through Carey's Mission, work was started in Burma, and it was through Serampore, the headquarters of the Carey Mission, that Assam received its first Christian momentum.<sup>17</sup> The earliest interest of the region was portrayed when an Assamese *pandit*, named Atmaram Sarma of Kaliabar in the Nowgong district, was appointed for the translation of the Bible into Assamese in 1811. The Assamese New Testament was published in 1819, and the whole Bible in 1833. But the translation was found to be unintelligible to the Assamese people.<sup>18</sup>

A definite step was taken by the Serampore Mission when they started a Mission and a school at Gauhati in 1829, at the motivation of David Scott, the Commissioner of Assam.

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<sup>16</sup>. Ibid., pp. 104-107.

<sup>17</sup>. Victor Hugo Sword, *Baptists in Assam A Century of Missionary Service 1836-1936*, Op.cit., p. 34.

<sup>18</sup>. Frederick S. Downs, *Christianity in North East India Historical Perspectives*, Delhi: ISPCK, 1983, p. 87.

James Rae<sup>19</sup> was the first missionary of the Gauhati Station. Rae worked for several years as Superintendent of public works. In July, 1829, Rae and his wife and a little child were on their way to Gauhati guided by an Indian assistant known as Ram Chundra Nath. In the beginning, he was very excited to be in the service and in 1830 he recorded that he had under his charge “twelve interesting youths, three Khasis and nine Garos, committed to his care by Mr. David Scott, Commissioner of Assam.”<sup>20</sup>

On the other hand, as far as documents are concerned, he also opened a door for preaching where everyone could hear the gospel and many were ready to accept Christianity. But there was a fear for religious persecution and social downfall. Thus, they could not declare their faith in public domain. Rae, therefore, was visited by many inquirers, who were interested in the new religion, and he distributed many New Testament in the Assamese language, and a number of Bengali tracts were circulated widely. Mr. Rae also had great zeal to place a New Testament in every Hindu temple. He reported from Gauhati that the people were amicable and the work was very successful.

In 1836, Rae was inspired by the baptism of six members along with the formation of the first Christian church in the Assam valley. In addition, Rae wrote that “A chapel has been prepared and an additional missionary is greatly needed.”<sup>21</sup> The church was founded with twelve individuals, including the missionaries. He expressed in his writing that only for some time, much prosperity was enjoyed by it, since the church did not exist for more than a year because of the suspension of two members from communion due to their immoral living. The people who earlier, had listened heedfully to the preaching had become accustomed to white preachers. Indeed, Rae was utterly discouraged and disgusted and he remarks, “they make sport of the

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<sup>19</sup>. John Hughes Morris, *The History of the Welsh Calvinistic Methodists' Foreign Mission to the End of the Year 1904*, Carnavon, U. K., 1910, p. 72. Cited in Morris, James Rae was born at Dumfries in Scotland in 1803 and came out to India as a soldier and was stationed at Dacca (Bangladesh). While he was there, he had a deep religious experience and subsequently offered himself for Missionary service. He, therefore, felt that he was not qualified for the profession. So in 1827 and 1828, he studied at Serampore College to prepare himself for the Missionary work, after which, he was ordained for Gospel ministry and came with his family as a Missionary to Gauhati.

<sup>20</sup>. Ibid. see also Mathew Muttumana, *Christianity in Assam and Inter Faith Dialogue: A Study on the Modern Religious Movements in North East India*, Pune: Satprakashan Sanchar Kendra, 1984, p.17.

<sup>21</sup>. Victor Hugo Sword, *Baptists in Assam*, Op.cit., p. 38.

whole and declare they care not for hell or God's wrath."<sup>22</sup> What Rae expressed here is that the missionaries did preach the gospel of salvation, commandments, heaven and hell to the people but they failed to preserve and maintain good Christian ethical lives. Thereby, the missionary life styles and preaching made contradiction and it led to a doom of destruction and obstacles for the growth of the Christianity.

After various appeals, a second missionary, Mr. Robinson was sent to Gauhati. During his time, number of schools had been established. Rae now had several missionary tours in the province by distributing tracts and gospels. Mr. Robinson also made a tour to Nowgong where he immediately solicited funds to open an English School and to begin a new mission station. But, this undertaking project, was for a short period and it came practically to a standstill, because of discouragement at Gauhati or lack of re-enforcement of the work.<sup>23</sup>

Later, another missionary named William Robinson arrived to reinforce the Gauhati Mission. However, Rae had been in depression for the demise of his wife and returned of his helper, Ram Chundra Nath. Because of his unfavorable health and disinterested members of the church, the school was closed down. Soon, after the advent of the American Baptist missionaries to Assam, Rae retired from the missionary service and engaged in the educational work under the control of the British Government.<sup>24</sup>

In 1837-1838, when the Serampore Mission Stations were amalgamated with the Baptist Missionary Society, it was consented to relinquish the Assam and Arakan fields to the American Baptist Mission. Robinson too left Assam for the work in Bhutan. Later, he came back to Assam and became the Superintendent of the Government schools. The Serampore Mission Station at Gauhati was ultimately handed over to the American Baptist Mission. Vigorous efforts were being attempted to convince the American Baptist Mission of the whole Brahmaputra valley. Shortly, a crisis of the financial stringencies of the Home Board in America and lack of

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<sup>22</sup>. Ibid., p. 38.

<sup>23</sup>. Ibid., p. 39.

<sup>24</sup>. Ibid., pp. 37-39.

missionary personnel in the field appeared in the way of wrapping the entire valley. The church organized by Rae disappeared.<sup>25</sup>

## **2.6. British Government and Christian Mission**

The genesis of British government is a momentous episode in Assam, since the British political assessment in the state of Assam had greater influence than any other areas in the country. The British arrived at Assam and established their sovereignty all over the Assam valley within a single political rule and administration. Indeed, the British held notable administrative function and economic power. On the other hand, the intention of examining the political history of Assam is significant to look at the way how the British government was introduced and gradually expanded their territory and rule and assets to Christian mission. So, an understanding of the British political scenario is quite relevant and inevitable to study the history of Christian mission in Assam. In this regards, the study is going to deal with the landmark of the British, Anglo-Burmese War, Annexation and Consolidation of the British Rule and the British government officials who had pious zeal on Christian mission and bestowed remarkable support and contribution to the missionaries for establishment of the American Baptist Mission in Assam.

### **2.6.1. Landmark of the British Presence in Assam**

The British came to India in A.D. 1600 as traders. Englishmen were attracted by the fabulous wealth of India, influenced by the adventurous maritime activity of the Elizabethan era, and were eager to establish commercial contracts with the East. To facilitate such a venture, some of the enterprising merchants of England formed the Company. The Company secured for it a Charter from Queen Elizabeth in December, 1600 A.D. which settled its constitutions, powers and privileges. The Charter vested the management of the Company to the hands of a Governor and twenty four (24) members who were authorized to organize and send trading expeditions to East India. The Charter granted the Company a monopoly for trade with the East. Thus, the first settlement of the Company was at Surat in 1612, Madras in 1639 and Mahanadi Delta in 1690.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>25</sup>. Frederick S. Downs, *Christianity in North East India*, Op.cit., pp. 93-94, also Victor Hugo Sword, *Baptists in Assam*, Op.cit., pp. 39-40.

<sup>26</sup>. Prafulla, Kumar Mahanta, *The Tussle Between the Citizen and Foreigners in Assam*, New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House Pvt. Ltd., 1986, p. 37.

In 1682 the Court of Directors of the East India Company constituted Bengal into a separate presidency (Presidency meant the few factories and trading marts scattered throughout the province) having a Governor and Council residing in Calcutta (Kolkata).<sup>27</sup> In 1765 the Company obtained the *dewani* (revenue collecting authority) of Bengal and its power reached the borders of Sikkim, Bhutan, Cooch Behar, Assam and Arrakan (an independent kingdom adjoining the South-East part of Bengal), beside the Garo and Khasi hills. George Bogle was sent to Bhutan in 1774 with instructions to open a mutual and equal communication of trade between the inhabitants of Bhutan and Bengal.<sup>28</sup> The Bhutan event furnished the Company with the information about Assam trade, which the Board of Directors had been looking for. The Company had curiosity in further knowledge about the trade and in 1774, appointed Hugh Baillie as the Company's agent at Goalpara.<sup>29</sup>

J.N. Chowdhury noted that the decline of the Ahom monarch had prevailed great confusion and chaos in the middle of the eighteenth century and thus paved the way for the advent of the British. In 1769 and in 1778, the Moamarias raised revolt against Ahom monarch. The Ahom king Gaurinath Singha sought the help of British<sup>30</sup> and Lord Cornwallis sent a detachment under Captain T. Welsh to put down the rebellion.<sup>31</sup> The Moamarias were completely defeated on 29<sup>th</sup> November 1792. This was probably the first time that British support was asked to put down the rebellion and had ushered the way ultimately for extension of British hegemony over Assam.<sup>32</sup> On the other hand, the minutes of Cornwallis (3<sup>rd</sup> October 1792) says that:

The Company's first intervention in Assam was in 1792, at the request of the king of Assam and for the commercial advantages that Bengal may obtain by a friendly and open intercourse with that country. Captain Welsh, the commander of the expedition, made a detailed report on the prospects of trade in Assam and hoped

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<sup>27</sup>. Prafulla, Roy Chowdhury, *The North East Roots of Insurgency*, Calcutta: Firma KLM Private Ltd., 1986, p. 12.

<sup>28</sup>. S. K. Chaube, *Hill Politics in Northeast India*, New Delhi: Orient Longman Limited, 1973, p. 3.

<sup>29</sup>. *Ibid.*, p. 4.

<sup>30</sup>. J. N. Chowdhury, *Arunachal Pradesh (From Frontier Tracts to Union Territory)*, New Delhi: Cosmo Publications, 1983, p. 92.

<sup>31</sup>. Birendra, Chandra Chakravorty, *British Relations with the Hill Tribes of Assam (Since 1858)*, Calcutta: Firma KLM Private Ltd., 1981, p. 15.

<sup>32</sup>. J. N. Chowdhury, *Arunachal Pradesh (From Frontier Tracts to Union Territory)*, *Op.cit.*, pp. 92-93.

that a communication with the neighboring nations might be rendered beneficial to commerce, with proper encouragement.<sup>33</sup>

This special relationship with Assam till 1826 at any cost, was quite congenial to their flourishing trade.<sup>34</sup> Perhaps, the British might have come to Assam at the request of the Ahom king to suppress the rioters.

### **2.6.2. Anglo-Burmese War**

The actual association of the British with Assam was leading ultimately to the intervention against the Burmese who swept down the Ahom kingdom. According to history, it was Badan Bar Phukan who became jealous of the power of the BorGohain, the Ahom Prime Minister. When he failed to obtain help from the British, he went to Burma for assistance. A Burmese army of sixteen thousand reached Assam towards the end of 1816. The Burmese were victorious in their first attempt at Chiladhari. In this juncture, the able Ahom Prime Minister died and was succeeded by his eldest son who was new and inexperienced in the conduct of the affairs of the state. The Burmese continued their triumphant march and the BorGohain fled to Guwahati.<sup>35</sup> Taking advantage of the weakness of the central authority in Assam the Burmese conquered the land in 1819.<sup>36</sup> The BorGohain who suspected the Ahom king Chandrakanta, (now a puppet in the hands of the invading army) of having conspired to throw him over to the Burmese and hence invited an Ahom prince PurandarSingha and installed him as a pretender to the Ahom throne. Chandra Kanta ran away to the British territory across the frontiers from the clutches of the Burmese.<sup>37</sup> Purandar Singha sought British help for driving out their foes, the Burmese.<sup>38</sup> Meanwhile, the invading Burmese tyranny brought great havoc by its indiscriminate massacre of innocent people, wanton destruction of property, desecration of temples and burning villages.<sup>39</sup> The Burmese continued to give trouble to the British across the borders. In 1822, again, the Burmese troops under their *Maha Bandula* (Commander-in-chief) conquered Assam.

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<sup>33</sup>. S. K. Chaube, *Hill Politics in Northeast India*, Op.cit., p. 4.

<sup>34</sup>. Ibid., p. 4.

<sup>35</sup>. J. N. Chowdhury, *Arunachal Pradesh (From Frontier Tracts to Union Territory)*, Op.cit., p. 94.

<sup>36</sup>. Birendra, Chandra Chakravorty, *British Relations with the Hill Tribes of Assam (Since 1858)*, Op.cit., p. 16.

<sup>37</sup>. J. N. Chowdhury, *Arunachal Pradesh (From Frontier Tracts to Union Territory)*, Op.cit., p. 94.

<sup>38</sup>. Prafulla, Kumar Mahanta, *The Tussle Between the Citizen and Foreigners in Assam*, Op.cit., p. 38.

<sup>39</sup>. Edward, Gait, *A History of Assam*, p. 341. See also S.K. Bhuyan, *Anglo-Assamese Relations 1771-1826*, Gauhati: Lawyer's Book Stall, pp. 551-553.

They captured *Arakan*<sup>40</sup> and extended their territorial claim to Chittagong, Dacca and Murshidabad. The Burmese troops conquered Manipur, Cachar and Jaintia and frightened the British district of Sylhet (Bangladesh).

The capture of the Sahapuri Island off the shore of Chittagong brought forth the war.<sup>41</sup> Lord Amherst, the Company's Governor-General<sup>42</sup> declared war upon Burma on 5th March 1824.<sup>43</sup> The British had sent two expeditions from Calcutta, one to take Assam and the other to capture Rangoon in Burma.<sup>44</sup> Bruce was sent to Assam to negotiate treaties with the tribal Chiefs, and overtures of friendship were offered to the princes of Manipur, Cachar and Jaintia by David Scott.<sup>45</sup> The war lasted for almost two years.<sup>46</sup> The Burmese were defeated. Rangoon was conquered by the British.<sup>47</sup> The Burmese army retreated before the superior power of the British,<sup>48</sup> and the Treaty was signed at Yandabo. The king of Burma submitted to the British. The Anglo-Burmese war came to an end<sup>49</sup> on 24th February, 1826.<sup>50</sup> According to the Treaty of Yandabo, the king of Burma ceded Assam, Tenasserim, and part of Arakan to the Company. The king also promised not to interfere with the province of Cachar.<sup>51</sup> Finally, the Burmese were ejected from Assam. Thus, Assam came under the control of the British and laid down the foundation of British rule. Henceforth, Assam was annexed to British India.

### **2.6.3. Annexation and Consolidation of the British Rule**

The situation of the Brahmaputra valley at the time of expulsion of the Burmese was most deplorable. The expression of native authority stated about the Burmese that the invaders, by their barbarous and inhuman conduct, taken away as slaves, harassment and oppression, fatal dissensions and repeated civil wars for several years had destroyed more than one-half of the

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<sup>40</sup>. Prafulla, Roy Chowdhury, *The North East Roots of Insurgency*, Op.cit., pp. 19-20.

<sup>41</sup>. Prafulla, Kumar Mahanta, *The Tussle Between the Citizen and Foreigners in Assam*, Op.cit., p. 38.

<sup>42</sup>. Prafulla, Roy Chowdhury, *The North East Roots of Insurgency*, Op.cit., p. 20.

<sup>43</sup>. J. N. Chowdhury, *Arunachal Pradesh (From Frontier Tracts to Union Territory)*, Op.cit., p. 95.

<sup>44</sup>. Prafulla, Roy Chowdhury, *The North East Roots of Insurgency*, Op.cit., p. 20.

<sup>45</sup>. Prafulla, Kumar Mahanta, *The Tussle Between the Citizen and Foreigners in Assam*, Op.cit., p. 38.

<sup>46</sup>. J. N. Chowdhury, *Arunachal Pradesh (From Frontier Tracts to Union Territory)*, Op.cit., p. 95.

<sup>47</sup>. Prafulla, Roy Chowdhury, *The North East Roots of Insurgency*, Op.cit., p. 20.

<sup>48</sup>. J. N. Chowdhury, *Arunachal Pradesh (From Frontier Tracts to Union Territory)*, Op.cit., p. 95.

<sup>49</sup>. Prafulla, Roy Chowdhury, *The North East Roots of Insurgency*, Op.cit., p. 20.

<sup>50</sup>. Birendra, Chandra Chakravorty, *British Relations with the Hill Tribes of Assam (Since 1858)*, Op.cit., p. 16.

<sup>51</sup>. Prafulla, Roy Chowdhury, *The North East Roots of Insurgency*, Op.cit., p. 20.

Assamese population.<sup>52</sup> In this context, the Assamese hailed the advent of the British as a god-send. A contemporary Assamese ballad recording says, "The hearts of the people became glad at the coming of the English." Anandaram Dhekial Phukan, the first Assamese gentleman penned, "Our country-men hailed the days on which British supremacy was proclaimed in the Province of Assam, and entertained sanguine expectations of peace and happiness from the rule of Britain."<sup>53</sup>

Meanwhile, its management was entrusted to David Scott in 1823, who had been appointed an Agent to the Governor-General for the North East Frontier.<sup>54</sup> In 1826 David Scott was deputed as Commissioner of Assam.<sup>55</sup> He made two alternative suggestions: first, the Brahmaputra Valley of Upper Assam should be restored to an Ahom prince who should pay subsidy; second, the area as far as Biswanath should be annexed to Bengal. But the Supreme Government was ordered for the annexation of the entire province.<sup>56</sup> During the first few years of their rule, it was noticed that they restored Matak, Sadiya, Cachar, Manipur, Jaintia and Upper Assam to their lawful rulers. But, the actual design of the imperial system of government had revealed itself early.<sup>57</sup> British Government had raised hopes in the minds of the people of Assam when they had declared on the eve of the Anglo-Burmese war that they would retain no part of the Brahmaputra valley and that they would be established in Assam, a Government adapted to their wants and calculation. But they went back on their words and turned down.<sup>58</sup> Soon after the restoration of peace, they embarked on a policy of annexation one after another.<sup>59</sup>

The kingdom of Cachar was originally ruled by an independent native dynasty. During the time of Govinda Chandra the Burmese invaded it. Govinda Chandra sought the military help of the British who expelled the Burmese from Cachar in 1826 and restored the kingdom and the suzerainty of the British was accepted

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<sup>52</sup>. Edward, Gait, *A History of Assam*, Op.cit., p, 341.

<sup>53</sup>. S.K. Bhuyan, *Anglo-Assamese Relations 1771-1826*, Op.cit., pp. 552-553.

<sup>54</sup>. Edward, Gait, *A History of Assam*, Op.cit., p, 342.

<sup>55</sup>. S. K. Chaube, *Hill Politics in Northeast India*, Op.cit., p. 5.

<sup>56</sup>. M.L. Bose, *Social History of Assam Being a Study of the Origins of Ethnic Identity and Social Tension during the British Period 1905-1947*, New Delhi: Concept Publishing Company, 1989, p. 21.

<sup>57</sup>. Promatha, Nath Dutta, *Glimpses into the History of Assam*, Guwahati: Bina Library, 1962, p. 236.

<sup>58</sup>. Rebati, Mohan Lahiri, *The Annexation of Assam (1824-1854)*, Calcutta: Firma KL Mukhopadhyay, 1975, p. 121.

<sup>59</sup>. Promatha, Nath Dutta, *Glimpses into the History of Assam*, Op.cit., p. 236.

by him.<sup>60</sup> In 1830 Govinda Chandra died without any heir, Tularam laid claim to his territory. The British annexed it in 1832 and Tularam was given pension. In 1853, the whole of Cachar was added to the British territories.<sup>61</sup> In the wake of the Burmese attack, the British extended with a treaty “protection” to the semi-independent tribal of Khasi Jaintia king and secured, from the chief of Nongkhlow, Tirot Singh, permission for the construction of a sanatorium and a road from Sylhet to Kamrup through his territory<sup>62</sup> in 1826. But later, Tirot Singh grew suspicious of the British intention. He was joined in his resistance to the penetration by some other Khasi chiefs in 1829, but surrendered in 1833. The Khasi chiefs had to enter into subordinate alliances with the British government.<sup>63</sup> In 1835, the Jaintia king was removed and his territory annexed to British territories.<sup>64</sup>

David Scott’s advice for the restoration of Upper Assam to a subordinate monarchy was accepted by the Supreme Government after a series of discussions.<sup>65</sup> On June 27, 1833, on the recommendation of Robertson, successor of David Scott, Purandar Singh was installed in charge of Upper Assam and he agreed to pay an annual tribute. But Purandar proved unsatisfactory in the payment of tribute to the British and was defaulted. He was pensioned off and his territories were placed under direct administration of the British in 1838. The tract of Upper Assam after annexation was divided into two districts of Sibsagar and Lakhimpur.<sup>66</sup>

Sadiya was entrusted to the care of a Khamti chief who promised an allegiance to the British. In 1835, there was dispute between the Sadiyakhowa Gohain and Bar Senapati regarding the tract of land. Sadiyakhowa Gohain refused to appear before the political agent. Hereafter, the post of Sadiyakhowa Gohain was abolished and Sadiya was added to the British territory.<sup>67</sup> Matak was given to a chief Bar Senapati. The Bar Senapati was succeeded by his son Maju Gohain who

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<sup>60</sup>. V. Venkata Rao, *A Century of tribal Politics in North East India 1874-1974*, New Delhi: S. Chand & Company Ltd., 1976, p. 21.

<sup>61</sup>. M.L. Bose, *Social History of Assam Being a Study of the Origins of Ethnic Identity and Social Tension during the British Period 1905-1947*, Op.cit., p. 22.

<sup>62</sup>. S. K. Chaube, *Hill Politics in Northeast India*, Op.cit., p. 6.

<sup>63</sup>. M.L. Bose, *Social History of Assam Being a Study of the Origins of Ethnic Identity and Social Tension during the British Period 1905-1947*, Op.cit., p. 23.

<sup>64</sup>. S. K. Chaube, *Hill Politics in Northeast India*, Op.cit., p. 6

<sup>65</sup>. Ibid, p. 5.

<sup>66</sup>. M.L. Bose, *Social History of Assam Being a Study of the Origins of Ethnic Identity and Social Tension during the British Period 1905-1947*, Op.cit., pp. 21-22.

<sup>67</sup>. V. VenkataRao, *A Century of tribal Politics in North East India 1874-1974*, Op.cit., p. 22

refused the new terms offered to him. In 1842, by an official declaration, Sadiya and Matak were annexed into the British administration. Both the states were merged into the district of Lakhimpur.<sup>68</sup> Hence, the British had extended direct rule over the entire Brahmaputra valley.

The annexation of the Brahmaputra valley and the valley of Surma were followed by the extension of the British rule to the tribal hills of the Naga, Garo and Lushai hills (Mizo hills). Between 1864 and 1899, the Angami, the Lotha and the Ao Naga lands were annexed. In 1873, the Garo hills were occupied.<sup>69</sup> In 1898, the whole of the Lushai hills were added to the administration under the Assam government.<sup>70</sup> Hence, the whole of Assam, including both plains and hills passed under the direct rule of the British.

The advent of the American Baptist Mission in Assam was part of a general reaction to the changes brought by political developments. The political assessment in the state of Assam had greater influence, probably than any other areas in the country, in the growth of the American Baptist Mission. The momentous political episode was the advent of the British who brought the whole region under their sovereignty within one hundred years. In fact, it was not only the entire region brought within a single political system, but also brought with it, an administrative structure with its own centre of paramount power. Thus, the British came to hold notable administrative and economic power. So, the motive of describing the political history of Assam is significant to have some basic understanding of the way in which British government had introduced and gradually expanded their territory and assets to Christian Mission. Moreover, an understanding of the political situation is always relevant and inevitable to the study of the history of Christian Mission in Assam. Hence, this chapter will investigate the landmark of the British, consolidation, administration and association of the British government with Christian Mission especially the committed government officials who had pious zeal on Christian Mission and provided remarkable support and contribution to the missionaries for the establishment and growth of Christian Mission in Assam.

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<sup>68</sup>. M.L. Bose, *Social History of Assam Being a Study of the Origins of Ethnic Identity and Social Tension during the British Period 1905-1947*, Op.cit., p. 22.

<sup>69</sup>. Promatha, Nath Dutta, *Glimpses into the History of Assam*, Op.cit., p. 238.

<sup>70</sup>. M.L. Bose, *Social History of Assam Being a Study of the Origins of Ethnic Identity and Social Tension during the British Period 1905-1947*, Op.cit., p. 26.

#### **2.6.4. British Government Official Policy Towards Christian Mission**

Coincidentally with the activities of the British Government, another force called missionaries had contributed to the amelioration of the society. No doubt, the Christian mission and churches were received with ample support through government officials which benefited from the beginning of the British rule in Assam. Nevertheless, it is also important to know the actual Government Official Policy and its relation towards missionary work. To have a clear understanding of the Official Policy of the Company for the mission activity, it is necessary to look and it could be found adequately from the Company's Charter where it describes precisely about official policy of the decree in regard to missionary work. Henceforth, to unfold the authentic facts and the attitude of the Company towards mission, it is cited in East India Company's Charter of 1813 in which it is distinctively defined as:

Ever since Wilberforce's proposals to make education and 'religious improvement' a responsibility of the company in India were defeated in 1793, Evangelicals within the Company and the British Parliament had agitated to change the policy. When the Company Charter was revised again, in 1813, they were largely successful. Though the company was not to assume direct responsibility for missionary work it was now directed to allow missionaries sent by other British agencies to work its Indian territories; and the Company was made responsible for the maintenance of a religious establishment for the benefit of the British residents.<sup>71</sup>

The charter ascertained Government protection to each person who had thus arrived in India.<sup>72</sup> Shortly, thereafter the Christian missionaries had begun to reach and commenced mission works in India. The tremendous expansion of the Protestant and Roman Catholic missionary activity and the result was the growth of the Christian missions during the nineteenth century. In the same way, it was even simultaneously related to the advent and consolidation of British rule in regard to Christianity in Assam. Indeed, it might be technically true, in terms of official policy

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<sup>71</sup>. M. K. Kuriakose, *History of Christianity in India: Source Materials*, Delhi: ISPCK, 1999, p. 88.

<sup>72</sup>. Meena, Sharma Barkataki, *British Administration in North East India 1826-74: A Study of their Social Policy*, Delhi: Mittal Publications, 1985, p. 84.

that the British were neutral in religious matters, but there were numerous ways in which highly placed representatives of the British Government Officials facilitated Christian mission work.<sup>73</sup>

In brief account, simultaneously the British political dimension of Assam had greater influence in the growth of Christian mission than any other regions in the country. The fact is that the British were neutral in religious affairs, yet extravagantly placed representatives of the British Government Officials assisted Christian mission. A distinctive mention may be made of two Commissioners named David Scott and Francis Jenkins along with other who dominated and ushered British administrative rule into Assam between 1826 and 1861. They were the ones who embarked and perfected the idea of a specialized government. They were both evangelical Christians who achieved much to encourage missionary work. They viewed conversion to Christianity through educational project as serving British interests in the hilly areas whereas they were mostly interested in the educational work in the plains.<sup>74</sup> The situation and context of the plains was much more different from the hilly regions. The hilly people were more responsive to Christianity than the plains people. In the plains, people were more interested and even attentive to education than to listen to and embrace Christianity.

#### **2.6.4.1. Assessment of David Scott to Christian Mission**

David Scott<sup>75</sup> had been trained with a strong evangelistic conviction by the eminent pioneer Protestant missionary of Bengal, William Carey, who furnished a striking example of how a highly placed officer during that time had supported the missionary work in spite of the official disapproval of the East India Company. Before Scott was appointed as Commissioner of Assam he was entitled with other responsibilities, the first Agent to the Governor General in the North-East Frontier, and special Civil Commissioner of North- East Rangpur. Accordingly, he was responsible for the British interests from Sikkim in the North to Cachar and Sylhet in the South, with special duties in connection to Goalpara district and the Garo hills. Scott not only laid the foundations of the resultant administrative policy in North East, but also became interested in

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<sup>73</sup>. Frederick, S. Downs, *History of Christianity in India Volume V, Part 5, North East India in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, Bangalore: The Church History Association of India, 2003, p. 29.

<sup>74</sup>. Frederick, S. Downs, *History of Christianity in India Volume V, Part 5, North East India in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, Op.cit., p. 33.

<sup>75</sup>. David Scott was a student of Carey's at the Fort William College in Calcutta and thereafter maintained compact communication with him. He was a regular donor to the Serampore mission, especially its educational enterprise. Frederick, S. Downs, *History of Christianity in India Volume V, Part 5 North East India in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, 1992, Op.cit., p. 33, hereafter cited Frederick, S. Downs.

missionary activity among the Garos as intends to serve both evangelical Christian and Government wills.<sup>76</sup> However, before the occupation of Assam, when Scott was the Commissioner of Rangpur, he had desired to establish a mission in the Garo hills. In addition, the attitude of the supreme Government was also favorable. Lord William Bentinck (1828-35), the Governor-General of India and Lady William were enthusiastic towards missionary works.<sup>77</sup> Early in 1819 Scott had sent three Garo boys to study in the newly established Serampore College, and it was recorded that he used to distribute copies of the New Testament in Bengali Language among the plains Garos in his district.<sup>78</sup> Therefore, he suggested the Government to permit to invite missionaries to begin humanitarian services among Garos in 1819,<sup>79</sup> and an approval had been received. In 1822 Scott wrote to the Serampore missionaries requesting them to take up this work. They refused. After several years Scott again raised the question<sup>80</sup> and in a letter written on 27<sup>th</sup> April, 1825 to Mr. W.B. Bayley, Secretary to the Government, he mentioned, “In a reply to a commission that I sent to my Agent in London for one or more missionaries of the sort suited to convert the Garos.” He preferred two or three 'Moravian Missionaries of the old School' who could teach some useful art to the people besides religion. The Agent favored evangelization among the hill tribes rather than the natives of the plains.<sup>81</sup> He, therefore, solicited that rude tribes were more likely to benefit by the teachings of the Gospels than Hindus and Muhammadans in whose hearts religious notions were ingrained from childhood.<sup>82</sup>

In an official letter it was stated that the secretary had granted Scott to contact missionaries to civilize the people but cleared it to him at the same time that the Government would give financial support in the form of a salary to the people who might be appointed as school teachers

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<sup>76</sup>. Ibid, p. 34.

<sup>77</sup>. Meena, Sharma Barkataki, *British Administration in North East India 1826-74: A Study of their Social Policy*, Op.cit., p. 84.

<sup>78</sup>. Shibanikinkar, Chaube, *Hill Politics in North East India*, Op.cit., p.47.

<sup>79</sup>. Meena, Sharma Barkataki, *British Administration in North East India 1826-74: A Study of their Social Policy*, Op.cit., p. 84.

<sup>80</sup>. Frederick, S. Downs, *History of Christianity in India Volume V, Part 5 North East India in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, Op.cit., p. 34.

<sup>81</sup>. Meena, Sharma Barkataki, *British Administration in North East India 1826-74: A Study of their Social Policy*, Op.cit., p. 85.

<sup>82</sup>. S.K. Bhuyan, *Anglo-Assamese Relations 1771-1826*, Op.cit., p. 573.

and not as missionaries.<sup>83</sup> Early in 1827 Scott opened a school for Garo boys at Singimari,<sup>84</sup> a plains centre near the hills where he had already established an Out- Station for dealing with Garo affairs. On the advice of Heber, a non- Clergy teacher Mr. B.W. Henley was appointed the teacher for his knowledge of medical science so as to help in imparting medical education.<sup>85</sup> Another teacher, Fenwick was employed in 1827 to instruct the pupils in husbandry and the arts.<sup>86</sup> The Agent further stressed to the Government on the requirement of missionaries qualified in “various European improvements in agriculture, mechanics and arts” to humanize the ferocious people of this religion, to win their faith and to achieve in the program of evangelization.<sup>87</sup> Henley resigned in September and was replaced the following year by one James Fernie whose death, soon after his appointment for all practical purposes, brought the work to an end, after running for nearly two years. According to Mackenzie, the evidence states that the Government had granted sanction for the teachers of the Garo School in 1829, but this may have been a reference to the grant made the previous year. Chaube comments this as the first Government grant bestowed to a Christian mission in Assam.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>83</sup>. Meena, Sharma Barkataki, *British Administration in North East India 1826-74: A Study of their Social Policy*, Op.cit., p. 85.

<sup>84</sup>. The accurate date of the opening and site of the School are somewhat uncertain because several locations were discussed from time to time. Meena Sharma Barkataki, *British Administration in North East India 1826-74*, Barkataki did not mention the date and he says that Scott established a school at Goalpara with forty Garo boys. Frederick, S. Downs, *History of Christianity in India Volume V, Part 5 North East India in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, 1992, p. 35. (Hereafter referred to Downs, *History of Christianity*) in a letter to C. A. Fenwick, registrar to the local Records Committee, Sylhet, dated 7<sup>th</sup> March, 1827, Scott mentions the opening of the school, which probably took place earlier in the same year. As to location, Barooah thinks that it was in Goalpara town. Nirode K. Barooah, *David Scott in North – East India: A Study in British Paternalism 1969*, p. 178. (Hereafter referred to as Barooah, Scott). Barpujari, however, locates it at Singimari, a place between Rangpur and the military cantonment on the Brahmaputra at Jamalpore. H. K. Barpujari, *Problem of the Hill Tribes North East Frontier 1822-42*, 1970, p. 26 (Hereafter referred to as Barpujari, *Problem of the Hill Tribes*) in a letter to a British official named Shakespear dated 10<sup>th</sup> July, 1827, Scott notes the Rangeera mountain as the site chosen, but this probably refers to plans for the later development of the project in the garo Hills proper. Barooah

seems to have confused the district with the town, though actually Singimari was within Rangpur district. Singimari, a remote place, is certainly to be preferred to Goalpara town because the first headmaster resigned due to depression over “residing amongst the savages.” Barpujari, *Ibid*, p. 67. William Carey (A descendent of Serampore) also locates the school at Singimari. William Carey, *The Garo Jungle Book*, revised, 1966, pp. 40-41. (Hereafter referred to as Carey, *The Garo Jungle Book*). From the above mentioned evidences can be presupposed that the possibility of the opening of the school might be dated in 1827 and the location perhaps refers at Singimari in Goalpara district.

<sup>85</sup>. Meena, Sharma Barkataki, *British Administration in North East India 1826-74: A Study of their Social Policy*, Op.cit., pp. 85-86.

<sup>86</sup>. S.K. Bhuyan, *Anglo-Assamese Relations 1771-1826*, Op.cit., p. 573.

<sup>87</sup>. Meena, Sharma Barkataki, *British Administration in North East India 1826-74: A Study of their Social Policy*, Op.cit., p. 86.

<sup>88</sup>. Shibanikinkar, Chaube, *Hill Politics in North East India*, Op.cit., p.48.

Scott was also very keen on introducing missionary activities in Assam. Thereafter the occupation of Assam in 1826, Scott advocated the establishment of a mission in Gauhati and pleaded for the opening of a Mission School here. In 1829, the Baptist Missionary Society or the English Baptists began their works in Assam by establishing a branch of the Serampore Mission in Gauhati at the appeal of Scott.<sup>89</sup> Scott himself used to distribute copies of the New Testament translated into Assamese by Dr. Carey which was published in 1811.<sup>90</sup> Gradually, the Gauhati Mission School was also established at the initiative of Mr. Adam White, assistant to the Commissioner in Lower Assam. This School was a product of the collaboration of the local authority and missionaries, where Mr. White was assisted by James Rae a missionary<sup>91</sup> from the British Missionary Society (B.M.S.) in Serampore and some other European gentlemen from Gauhati. James Rae became the master of the School later on. According to James Rae's report, the School enrolled twelve students in 1830, three Khasis and nine Garos.<sup>92</sup>

Nevertheless, there are people who refused to agree the official support of the missionary work by the British Government. To those who said that the British Government did not officially support missionary work undoubtedly would have been pleased to learn that in 1831 the Court of Directors in London finally got around for condemning the use of Government funds in support of Scott's project, especially when the expenditure of funds was involved. In a dispatch dated 2<sup>nd</sup> February of that year, the Directors reminded the authorities in Calcutta that their policy was one

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<sup>89</sup>. Meena, Sharma Barkataki comments that Scott's request established a branch of Serampore mission school at Gauhati in 1829 and operated by Serampore mission. Meen, Sharma Barkataki, *British Administration in North East India 1826-74*, 1985, p. 86. (Hereafter referred to as Meena, British Administration). Barooah proposes that Scott similarly established the school at Guwahati (in 1829) that was functioning by appointees of the Serampore mission, after his Singimari efforts had failed. That school, he expresses, "was founded in 1829 chiefly through his (Scott's zeal and enterprise." Nirode, K. Barooah, *David Scott in North – East India: A Study in British Paternalism* 1969, p. 187. Hereafter cited to as Barooah, Scott). J. H. Morris refers as his authority V. Sword, *Baptists in Assam*, 1992, pp. 36-37, who is in turn citing J. H. Morris, *The History of the Welsh Calvinistic Methodists' Foreign Mission*, 1910, pp. 72-73. Morris, in the original, does it quite clear that the station at Guwahati was established by the Serampore Mission. Scott undoubtedly encouraged that mission in this enterprise, and was sufficiently interested in it to have sent three Khasi and nine Garo boys to make up its first class.

<sup>90</sup>. S.K. Bhuyan, *Anglo-Assamese Relations 1771-1826*, Op.cit., p. 573.

<sup>91</sup>. James Rae, a Scotch man, came to India as an officer of the East India Company. Afterwards he was fascinated by religious activities, and resigned from Company's service and joined the B.M.S. As Rae had no theosophical training, he undertook a year's course at Serampore College. In 1829, he was sent to Gauhati with his family to do missionary work. Rae was the first Serampore graduate to serve in the North Eastern India.

<sup>92</sup>. Meena, Sharma Barkataki, *British Administration in North East India 1826-74: A Study of their Social Policy*, Op.cit., p. 86-87. (Hereafter cited to as Barkataki, British Administration)

of religious neutrality.<sup>93</sup> In spite of that fact, it displays the way in which local British officials could support missionary work while working for a Government although it claimed religious neutrality. Lastly, Singimari School was closed down because Scott became preoccupied with the Anglo-Khasi War and after which he breathed his last<sup>94</sup> on August 20, 1831.<sup>95</sup> Consequently, none of the students found record of the Singimari School, or those sent by Scott to Serampore College or, after, the Guwahati School run by Serampore, embraced Christianity.<sup>96</sup>

#### **2.6.4.2. Role of Francis Jenkins in Launching New Mission Station**

On 23<sup>rd</sup> January, 1834 Francis Jenkins succeeded Robertson as the Commissioner of Assam and Agent to the Governor- General in the North- East Frontier.<sup>97</sup> Jenkins was the son of an English clergyman and had pious evangelistic convictions. During his time, the first two permanent Protestant Missions started work in Assam, namely the American Baptist Mission and the Welsh Presbyterian Mission. Worthwhile to note was his meritorious service as Commissioner where he was a highly placed officer personally in favor of missionary enterprises and convinced that they had served both in British interests as well as for the promotion of Christian missions.<sup>98</sup>

Jenkins had vibrant religious notion and thirst for the advancement of Christian mission which is supported by evidence. In 1834 Jenkins wrote a letter to Reverend William H. Pearce of the British Missionary Society (B.M.S.) of Calcutta and Mr. Charles E. Trevelyan, Deputy Secretary to the Government, making them known the behavior and condition of the people, as he was appointed to administer and urged them to invite some missionaries to come and establish in Assam. The petition was followed by an offer that on their coming, Jenkins would contribute one thousand rupees in aid of the mission and one thousand more for the settlement of a printing press. The petition was acknowledged, but instead of sending British missionaries, Reverend Pearce suggested that the American Baptists, already working in Burma, had a curiosity to work

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<sup>93</sup>. H. K. Barpujari, *Problem of the Hill Tribes North East Frontier 1822-42, Vol. I*, Gauhati: 1970, pp. 66-67.

<sup>94</sup>. Frederick, S. Downs, *History of Christianity in India Volume V, Part 5 North East India in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, Op.cit., pp. 37-38.

<sup>95</sup>. S.K. Bhuyan, *Anglo-Assamese Relations 1771-1826*, Op.cit., p. 574.

<sup>96</sup>. Meena, Sharma Barkataki, *British Administration in North East India 1826-74: A Study of their Social Policy*, Op.cit., p. 87.

<sup>97</sup>. Ibid, p. 26.

<sup>98</sup>. Frederick, S. Downs, *History of Christianity in India Volume V, Part 5 North East India in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, Op.cit., p. 38.

among the Shan people, and they should be invited to Assam. Consequently, Jenkins addressed the proposal to the Home Board of the American Baptist Mission Society. An invitation was made to the members of the mission at Maulmain in Burma, and the letter again forwarded to the Home Board for their consultation.<sup>99</sup> He further assured that the mission would be under “the protection of our government and would not be liable to those checks which the Rangoon mission has constantly suffered from the jealousy and barbarity of the Ava (Burmese) government”.<sup>100</sup> He also mentioned the many countries accessible from Sadiya that “are open to the messengers of the Gospel.”<sup>101</sup>

Ironically, a new route of India was not in the minds of the Baptist fathers a hundred years ago however, it was a road to China. The needs of China through the work of Robert Morrison, had attracted the attention of the Missionary world, and weighed heavily upon the members of the Triennial Convention in 1835. Before the Board had voted to open a Mission in China “so soon as God’s providence shall put the facilities for so doing within our reach,”<sup>102</sup> the great ports cities of the Celestial Empire were closed to the commerce of the world. The corresponding secretary of the society obviously felt that “God’s providence” might work through him. He wrote a letter to Rev. William H. Pearce, Secretary of the English Baptist Mission of Calcutta. It was by a strange coincidence that about the same time, Major Jenkins, Governor-General’s agent and British Commissioner of Assam, came to feel that some of his barbarous subjects might be in need of a spiritual reformation. From his head quarters at Gauhati, spelled in those days Gauhati, he wrote another letter on March 10, 1835, of which the following is cited from his letter as:

The ground which I would particularly wish to bring to their attention (American Baptists) is the north-eastern district of Assam occupied by two tribes of the great Shan family, the Khamtis and the Sing-phos. The dialects of these tribes differ very little from the Siamese and Burmese, and the characters in use are essentially the same; and, in consequence of the supremacy of the Burmese being established over the original provinces whence our Shan came, with the inhabitants of which they are in constant communication, the Burmese language is

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<sup>99</sup>. Meena, Sharma Barkataki, *British Administration in North East India 1826-74: A Study of their Social Policy*, Op.cit., p. 88.

<sup>100</sup>. *BMM*, XVI, pp. 19-20.

<sup>101</sup>. *Ibid.*, p.21.

<sup>102</sup>. Dana M. Albaugh, *Between Two Centuries*, Philadelphia: The Judson Press, 1935, p. 49.

in a measure known to all these tribes.” Here is an ample field; it extends all over the north and west of China.<sup>103</sup>

The station, proposed to commence mission operations, was Sadiya, situated in the Northeastern extremity of Assam, about 400 miles north of Ava (Burma), and at the Northern most point of territory was inhabited by the great Shan family.<sup>104</sup> The Shans were a much finer and more intelligent people than the Burmese, and ten times as numerous. The Cacharese are Shans; and the governing race of Upper Assam for many centuries, the Ahoms are a tribe from the highest Eastern sources of the Irrawaddy and until very lately they kept a communication with their parent stock.<sup>105</sup> The Shan language, which is near akin to the Burmese and Siamese, and belongs to the Chinese family, furnishes a ready means of intercourse with perhaps a greater number of people than any other languages in the world, except Chinese itself. The people of upper Assam were predominantly Shans having much affinity to the tribals of Burma. An extension of the mission could help the rapid growth of Christianity throughout this area.<sup>106</sup>

In the Meantime, Adoniram Judson (missionary at Burma) had dreamed of the possibility of establishing several mission stations in the territory north of Burma and south of China, and when the plans for starting the work in Sadiya were proposed, he expressed his thrilling soul with great excitement in a letter at home:

My heart leaps for joy and glows with gratitude and praise to God. When I think of brother Jones at Bangkok, in the southern extremity of the continent, and brother Brown at Sadiya in Assam on the frontiers of China ... immensely distant points, ... and of all the intervening stations. Ava, Rangoon, Kyouk- Phyoo, Maulmein, and Tavoy, and the churches and schools that are springing up in every station and throughout the Karen wilderness. Happy lot, to live in these days.<sup>107</sup>

In addition, another correspondence says that it was the purpose of the British Government to send a mission to China by the Assam route to make an “inquiry about the culture of the tea

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<sup>103</sup> . Ibid., p. 49.

<sup>104</sup> . H. K. Barpujari, *American Missionaries and North-East India (1836-1900 A. D.) A Documentary Study*, Guwahati: Spectrum Publications, 1986, p. 1.

<sup>105</sup> . Ibid., p. 2.

<sup>106</sup> . Ibid., pp. 3-4.

<sup>107</sup> . Victor, Hugo Sword, *Baptists in Assam A Century of Missionary Service 1836-1936*, Op.cit., p. 42.

plant.” The significant inquiry is indicated about Assam by *the Indian Year – Book* for 1932-1933 verifying that “in less than a hundred years the British Empire has become the tea – garden and the tea – shop of the world.”<sup>108</sup> It was A.C. Bruce, an evangelical Anglican and afterwards a Baptist in-charge of Tea experimental Plantation around Sadiya, who proposed to the Commissioner of Assam by requesting the missionaries to work in Assam. Bruce and his wife were interested in the Khamtis and the Singphos whom they believed to be closely related to the Shans of Burma. Mrs. Bruce founded a school for children and further claimed to have converted some of them to Christianity. In 1834, Bruce convinced the Commissioner of Assam, Captain Jenkins and the Company’ s Officials in Calcutta by urging the missionaries to Sadiya for the aim of starting schools for the tribals.<sup>109</sup>

Jenkins also wrote another letter to Mr. Charles Trevelyan, a Civil Official in Bengal, requesting the Baptists to do Christian work “in the northeast district of Assam occupied by two tribes of the great Shan family, the Khamtis and the Singhpos.”<sup>110</sup> Mr. Pearce, the secretary of the English Baptist, wrote to the missionaries in Rangoon expressing:

It appears evident that an effectual door is opened for the establishment of a branch of your Mission to the northeast of Assam. I must confess I shall feel truly happy if you feel inclined to enter it. Its geographical situation with relation to your Mission seems to render it particularly desirable.<sup>111</sup>

Thus it is worthy to acknowledge the true spirit of Christian kindness from Messrs, Pearce and Trevelyan who had interested themselves for the introduction of the proposed mission, and their prompt and zealous cooperation in furthering the designs of the Board. With an anticipation of the formal action of the Board, they made direct communication for the success of their efforts both to the Board and to their missionaries at Maulmein (Burma). The board seemed to have been moved by the enthusiasm, distinctively from the Burma missionaries and also by the request of Captain Jenkins. In fact, it was also a matter of grateful acknowledgement that God has risen up for the furtherance of His gracious plans in the commencement of a mission to the Shans, so valuable an auxiliary in the gentleman named Captain Jenkins first addressed by Mr.

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<sup>108</sup>. Dana M. Albaugh, *Between Two Centuries*, Op.cit., p. 50.

<sup>109</sup>. *Baptist Missionary Magazine*, 1835, Vol. XVI, p. 19.

<sup>110</sup>. *Baptist Missionary Magazine*, 1837, pp. 19-20.

<sup>111</sup>. Victor, Hugo Sword, *Baptists in Assam A Century of Missionary Service 1836-1936*, Op.cit., p. 42

Trevelyan. The Board agreed by the enthusiasm of the Burma missionaries and by the request of Captain Jenkins who was represented of very high esteemed of the Government and further by generous offer of him made possible in establishing a mission station at Sadiya.<sup>112</sup>

Indeed, one of the Missionaries in Burma known as Nathan Brown was approached and showed his willingness to make the attempt and embraced the proposal with great zeal. On December 16, 1835, the Board wrote to Captain Jenkins with the signature of Lucius Bolles, corresponding secretary, granting the invitation and informed him of their action regarding the appointment of Brown for the work. Meanwhile, they had also decided the immediate location of a mission station at Sadiya. The Board further entrusts Mr. Brown about Captain Jenkins as being a man of strict integrity, enlarged views, adorned with Christian kindness, and would prove himself deserving of favorable regard. Hence, the venture of mission was possible to launch at Sadiya<sup>113</sup> in Assam<sup>114</sup> as the frontier mission station because of its closeness to the Upper Burma and the doorway into the “Celestial Empire,” China.<sup>115</sup>

## **2.7. American Baptist Mission**

### **2.7.1. Shan Mission**

Originally the first American Baptist Mission Station in Assam was not established for the purpose of evangelizing the peoples of that region but as strategic outposts in a campaign to evangelize the Shan tribe of Northern Burma and Southern China as mentioned earlier. The first missionaries of this society were sent to Assam because of the interest among American Baptist to evangelize China too. It was just at this time that the Burma Mission received an invitation from India. It had offered them the possibility of both evangelizing the Shan tribe of Northern Burma and gaining entrance to China. The missionaries were asked if they would be willing to

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<sup>112</sup>. *Baptist Missionary Magazine*, Vol. XVI, p. 21.

<sup>113</sup>. Victor, Hugo Sword, *Baptists in Assam A Century of Missionary Service 1836-1936*, Op.cit., pp. 41-43.

<sup>114</sup>. Assam: “The plan of establishing a mission in Assam was also recommended by other important considerations. It was hoped that beneath the protection afforded by the East India Company, the missionaries might join the caravans, that yearly traded to the interior of China, and thus while the jealous mandarins were excluding foreigners from the ports, they might plant Christianity in the heart of the empire.” H. K. Barpujari, *American Missionaries and North-East India 1836-1900 A.D.*, Guwahati: Spectrum Publications, 1986, p. 5. (Hereafter cited to as Barpujari, American).

<sup>115</sup>. Victor, Hugo Sword, *Baptists in Assam A Century of Missionary Service 1836-1936*, Op.cit., pp. 42-43.

begin work at Sadiya in Upper Assam,<sup>116</sup> since, Sadiya is situated in the Northern extremity of Assam, inhabited by the great Shan family.<sup>117</sup>

In 1807 an English missionary, Robert Morrison, had received permission to live in Canton on the Eastern coast of China. The Chinese were extremely suspicious of all foreigners and even restricted them to learn the language, particularly the missionaries. Morrison was only permitted to remain because he offered valuable services to the British East India Company which had a trading outpost there. Books written by him awoke the interest of Christians in the West. This interest was further kindled by the publication of a book entitled *Journal of Two Voyages Along the Coast of China*, in 1831 and 1832. The author of this book was an independent missionary named Charles Gutzlaff who had enthusiastic and optimistic desires about the prospects of embarking mission in China. It was published in 1834.

Therefore, this book made a positive impact to the debates of American Baptists who had been discussing about a Mission to China for some years. Now the Mission Board began to take a keen interest in the project. Indeed this interest was due to the fact that their missionary in Bangkok, John T. Jones, had already begun successful work among the Chinese inhabiting in that city. There was one major hurdle to mission work in China. The Chinese authorities were strongly against it. No foreigners were permitted to move out of the Eastern coastal cities and only traders were allowed to remain there. The vigilance of the authorities was largely directed towards the eastern coast which led the Mission Board to think that it might be possible to cross into China over the relatively unguarded southern borders. Hence the Home Board wrote to Jones in 1834 asking him if he thought it possible to enter China from northern Thailand. He responded that unsettled conditions in that region did not make such an approach practicable.<sup>118</sup> Thereupon, concentration was turned to Burma as a possible base for a China Mission.<sup>119</sup> The Burma field was the first Mission of the American Baptist Foreign Mission Society. Yet, before the formation of this society the American public had become ambitious on the possibilities of

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<sup>116</sup>. F.S. Downs, *The Mighty Works of God A Brief History of the Council of Baptist Churches in North East India: the Mission Period 1836-1950*, Gauhati: The Christian Literature Centre, 1971, pp. 14-16.

<sup>117</sup>. Baptist Missionary Magazine, 1837, pp. 19-21.

<sup>118</sup>. F. S. Downs, *The Mighty Works of God A Brief History of the Council of Baptist Churches in North East India: the Mission Period 1836-1950*, Op.cit., pp. 14-15.

<sup>119</sup>. Ibid., p. 15.

mission work in India through the correspondences of the Serampore missionaries.<sup>120</sup> Indeed, the 1800s opened with zeal among the different denominations to form some kind of a common bond on a national level. It was the first sign of a countrywide cooperation. In 1810, a new impulse was given to the missionary spirit in every denomination of Christians by the formation of the *American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions* organized by the Congregationalists, the Presbyterians and the Baptists<sup>121</sup> which was generated from the pious zeal of several young men such as Adoniram Judson and Luther Rice. They sought the London Missionary Society for guidance and support to begin new mission fields in Asia. LMS supported them till they could raise sufficient funds in America. On February 6<sup>th</sup> 1812, the Board held a historic service at Salem to set the first group of missionaries namely Messers, Adoniram Judson,<sup>122</sup> Samuel Newell, Samuel Nott, and Gordon Hall for the sake of Christ and the promotion of His Kingdom in some Asiatic field. In addition, to these four Congregationalists a fifth one joined at the last moment known as Luther Rice. Judson and Samuel Newell with their wives Nancy and Harriet respectively sailed for India on 19<sup>th</sup> February 1812. Luther Rice and the others sailed after two weeks. The moment the Judsons landed in Calcutta<sup>123</sup> on June 17, 1812, where they were to be the guest of the British Baptists, and particularly William Carey welcomed them at Serampore.<sup>124</sup> During this period, they came to the conviction that the New Testament Baptism ought to be only by immersion. A few weeks later of their reaching in Calcutta, they renounced their Congregational allegiance, and made an appeal to the British Baptists for Baptism by immersion. Consequently, they were immersed in the baptistery of Carey's Calcutta

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<sup>120</sup>. Mathew Muttumana, *Christianity in Assam and Inter-Faith Dialogue A Study on the Modern Religious Movements in North East India*, Indore: Satprakashan Sanchar Kendra, 1984, p. 21.

<sup>121</sup>. Joseph, Puthenpurakal, *"Baptist Missions in Nagaland,"* Shillong: Vendrame Missiological Institute, 1984, p. 48.

<sup>122</sup>. Mathew Muttumana, *Christianity in Assam and Inter-Faith Dialogue A Study on the Modern Religious Movements in North East India*, Op.cit., p. 21. Adoniram Judson: (August 9, 1788 – April 12, 1850) The first Baptist foreign Missionary from the United States of American to Burma was Judson, son of a congregational minister and a graduate of Rhode Island College (Brown University). He entered Andover Seminary in 1808. His thoughts soon turned to the Missions, and with other Andover students, he petitioned the General Association of Massachusetts for advice as to how they might realize the desire to take the Gospel to the "heathens." In 1810 this Congregational group responded by organizing the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, the first agency to send foreign Missionaries from the United States. They sent Judson and his friends to India where he became a Baptist and worked for many years in Burma as a Baptist Missionary. In 1850 he died during an ocean voyage which had been prescribed as a treatment to his chronic illness. He was buried at sea in the Bay of Bangal on April 12, 1850. Cited in Mathew Muttumana, *Christianity in Assam and Inter- Faith Dialogue* (1984), p. 21. (Hereafter referred to as M. Muttumana, *Christianity*).

<sup>123</sup>. Joseph, Puthenpurakal, *"Baptist Missions in Nagaland,"* Op.cit., p. 48

<sup>124</sup>. Mathew Muttumana, *Christianity in Assam and Inter- Faith Dialogue A Study on the Modern Religious Movements in North East India*, Op.cit., p. 22.

Lal Bazar Chapel on 6<sup>th</sup> September 1812 by Rev. William Ward who conducted the Ceremony. Hence, the Judsons became the first two American Baptists in India. A few days later, Luther Rice arrived and he also took baptism on the 1<sup>st</sup> of November 1812.

Meanwhile, the war broke out between England and America in 1812, and the new missionaries in Calcutta were commanded by the English either to return to America or to encounter the trouble of being deported to England. The same time, the news of the conversion of the Judson and Rice to the Baptist was received with unhappiness by their former fellow Congregationalists at home, and it created a missionary awareness among the Baptists of America. The Judsons and Rice discontinued their membership and embarked to seek after new possibilities for founding independent mission stations with the support of the Baptists. Consequently, a new Baptist Society for Propagating the Gospel in India and other regions were established on February 8<sup>th</sup> 1813. Before his appointment, Judson had left India owing to the hostilities of the East India Company, who were totally against American missionaries settling down in India. He arrived at Rangoon, as a guest of Felix Carey, the son of William Carey, who was doing mission work at Rangoon in Burma. There he took over the abandoned mission<sup>125</sup> house of the British Baptists in 1813. Meanwhile, Luther Rice returned to America in search of supporters and funds for the new mission in Burma.

The Baptists in America had decided to sponsor the Judson as their first foreign missionary couple, and to accept Burma as their first foreign mission field. In May 1814 they formed the denomination's own society: The General Missionary Convention of the Baptist Denomination in the United States of America for Foreign Missions with its Executive Board, The Baptist Board for Foreign Missions for the United States. The following thirteen years, the American Baptist Burmese mission had to undergo persecutions and hostilities of the local rulers. On June 27, 1819, Mounng Nay, an ex-Buddhist priest was baptized as the first Buddhist convert of the American Baptists and founded a church in Rangoon. Because of the conversion movements

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<sup>125</sup>. Ibid. Abandoned Mission: The Judsons were able to make a home in the abandoned Mission house that had been erected by the English Baptist Mission Society, when in 1807 William Carey had sent two Missionaries, Chater and Mardon, to Rangoon. Later in the year, Mardon was replaced by Felix Carey, son of William Carey. Four years later, Chater retired to Cylon. When Felix Carey entered as employee to the government, the Mission was deserted. Cited in Mathew Muttumana, *Christianity in Assam and Inter- Faith Dialogue* (1984), p.23. (Hereafter referred to as Mathew Muttumana). Cf. Walter, Sinclair Stewart, *Early Baptist Missionaries and Pioneers, Baptist Missionaries and Pioneers Volume II*, Philadelphia: The Judson Press, p. 96.

among the local people, the Burmese Government became too much suspicious and the missionaries found further stay in Burma rather dangerous. Moreover, the Judsons were left alone and other missionaries went to Chittagong which was under the British dominion. In the bitter conflict between the British and the Burmese (1822-26), Judson was imprisoned for many months. Judson's hard work did not give him encouragement until he started his work among the Karens.

From 1827 onwards the American Baptist missionaries took real interest in the mission work among the Karens, who were a large number of masses who responded to Christianity. This unexpected result persuaded the missionaries to search for the brethren of Karens all over the area stretching from the borders between India and China to Laos and Vietnam.<sup>126</sup> This achievement inspired the American Baptist Mission to dispatch their missionaries to Assam in 1835 and to expand their services all over Assam which was actually under the British power.<sup>127</sup> Since, it had long been the desired of the missionaries in Burma to "introduce the gospel among the Shans ... an interesting family of tribes inhabiting unexplored regions to the north and east ... and through them it was expected by inland route to reach to China," whose seaports were prohibited to board foreigners.<sup>128</sup>

Thereupon, two families of the first American Baptist missionaries namely Rev. Messrs Nathan and Eliza Brown and Oliver and Harriet Cutter arrived at Sadiya on 23<sup>rd</sup> March, 1836.<sup>129</sup> They soon began their work and much of their time had been spent learning the Shan language. There were different tribes living near Sadiya such as Assamese, Khamtis and Singphos. Major Jenkins sent a Shan teacher to meet them at Goalpara, and soon they worked diligently at the study of the language. But the first disappointment of the missionary to his surprise was that, he found the Shan language that he learnt was quite different from the languages of the Khamtis and the Singphos. The second discouragement for the missionary was that shortly after their arrival at Sadiya, with the company of an English Officer went to visit the villages, Brown discovered to his surprise and disappointment that the only Shans within reach were a few scattered Khamti

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<sup>126</sup>. Ibid., pp. 22-23.

<sup>127</sup>. Ibid., p. 24.

<sup>128</sup>. Victor Hugo Sword, *Baptists in Assam A Century of Missionary Service 1836-1936*, Op. cit., p. 41.

<sup>129</sup>. *Baptist Missionary Magazine*, 1838, p. 159.

hamlets, and that the main body of the people was beyond the mountains, and they were even smaller in numbers. In addition, only a few of the Singphos who lived some distance away were even remotely related to the Shans of Northern Burma.<sup>130</sup> Besides, now the Home Board had over extended itself, having started three new fields in 1836, and was not in position to open yet another field. It became increasingly apparent to those fields that they could not have both a Shan Mission and a Brahmaputra Valley Mission. They would have to choose between the two. The Shan Mission was also faced with turmoil and raids largely which went beyond the control of the missionaries. Finally, combined circumstances ultimately made the Shan Mission officially abandoned in 1841<sup>131</sup> and concentrated Mission among Assamese at Sadiya in Assam. In other words, it is also known as Assam Mission established by American Baptist Mission as the first permanent Mission field.

#### **2.7.1.1. Generous Donation for Mission Work**

The Board seems to have been moved by the eagerness on the part of the Burma missionaries and also by the invitation of Captain Jenkins who is represented as a “man of activity, intelligence and benevolent feeling, whose character and exertions stand very high in the estimation of government.”<sup>132</sup> Therefore, the very generous offer of Jenkins had made in connection with the opening of a station at Sadiya and cited his statement as:

No attention of mine,” he wrote, “should of course be wanting to make the place comfortable to any missionaries and I will be willing to contribute my mite to their establishment. You may mention that I will subscribe 1,000 rupees, if a family is settled as a mission at Sadiya; and whenever they have had a press at work for six months I will be happy to double that sum’ if I remain in charge of the province.<sup>133</sup>

In 1835, the proposals of Jenkins was reached to the manager and after sometime accepted by the American Baptist Mission Foreign Society. In responding to the government keenness and assurance of protection, two families of American missionaries arrived and started missionary

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<sup>130</sup>. Victor Hugo Sword, *Baptists in Assam A Century of Missionary Service 1836-1936*, Op. cit., pp. 47-48.

<sup>131</sup>. F. S. Downs, *The Mighty Works of God A Brief History of the Council of Baptist Churches in North East India: The Mission Period 1836-1950*, Op.cit., pp. 18-21.

<sup>132</sup>. *BMM*, XVI, p. 21.

<sup>133</sup>. Victor, Hugo Sword, *Baptists in Assam A Century of Missionary Service 1836-1936*, Op.cit., pp. 41-42, see also *BMM*,XVI, p. 21, *BMM*, XVIII, p. 8; XIX, pp. 6, 57; XX, p. 218; XXI, p. 28.

work in the region. They were the first American missionaries in Assam. Jenkins welcomed them and as promised earlier, contributed one thousand rupees in aid of the mission and another thousand for establishing a printing press.<sup>134</sup> Indeed, Jenkins made an annual contribution to the mission of Rs. 500 throughout his life (if he remained in Assam following his retirement in 1861, settling in Guwahati) and secured Government grants for a new Assamese type of press, and also for educational and literary work.<sup>135</sup>

Therefore, the people from everywhere were greatly interested in the project; and friends, both in India and America, sent funds to launch mission. Major White Rs. 200; Mr. Bruce, a Tea Planter and Lieutenant Charlton Rs. 100 each, Mr. Bird from Allahabad Rs.250; Captain Jenkins Rs. 3,000 and others contributed towards the beginning of this enterprise. It revealed to them that both from commercial and religious spheres, Sadiya would give promise of becoming a great centre through which international intercourse between China and India would take place.<sup>136</sup>

Besides, there were also other British officers who had assisted the Christian mission. It is significant to note that the Government servants and the tea planters of that early year were truly interested in the missionary activities and aided the missions both with financial and moral support.<sup>137</sup> A letter of Bronson, June 5, 1838 had mentioned their contribution.<sup>138</sup> A. Charles Bruce,<sup>139</sup> the Superintendent of the Government experimental tea-plantation in Upper Assam,<sup>140</sup> offered distinctive contribution financially, by paying full expenses for the missionary services at Sadiya and Jaipur.<sup>141</sup>

Captain and Mrs. Simon F. Hannay<sup>142</sup> had offered for mission their valuable premises containing a brick bungalow with a go- down or store- house<sup>143</sup> for the press when it had shifted its centre of

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<sup>134</sup>. Meena, Sharma Barkataki, *British Administration in North East India 1826-74: A Study of their Social Policy*, Op.cit., p. 89.

<sup>135</sup>. Frederick, S. Downs, *History of Christianity in India Volume V, Part 5 North East India in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, Op.cit., p. 42.

<sup>136</sup>. *Baptist Missionary Magazine*, 1835, Vol. XVI, p. 195.

<sup>137</sup>. Victor, Hugo Sword, *Baptists in Assam A Century of Missionary Service 1836-1936*, Op.cit., p. 71.

<sup>138</sup>. H. K. Barpujari, *American Missionaries and North-East India 1836-1900 A.D.* Op.cit., p. 12.

<sup>139</sup>. A. Charles Bruce discovered the tea-plant in Assam. H. K. Barpujari, *American Missionaries and North-East India 1836-1900 A.D.* Ibid, p. 7. (Hereafter referred to as Barpujari, American).

<sup>140</sup>. Ibid, p. 7.

<sup>141</sup>. Victor, Hugo Sword, *Baptists in Assam A Century of Missionary Service 1836-1936*, Op.cit., p.71.

<sup>142</sup>. Simon Frasser Hannay was the Commandant of the First Assam Light Infantry with its headquarters at Dibrugarh. He was in this capacity for 20 years. Hannay died at Dibrugarh on January 9, 1861, at the age of sixty. Meena, Sharma Barkataki, *British Administration in North East India 1826-74: A Study of their Social Policy*, Op.cit., p. 97. (Hereafter referred to as Barkataki, British).

operations from Jaipur to Sibsagar. Later, a new station had been established at Nagaon in 1841, the mission received vast support from Captain and Mrs. Gordon who had been mentioned earlier. Ultimately it became the start of a missionary work at Tezpur by Germans of the Basel Mission.<sup>144</sup>

### **2.7.1.2. Focus on Educational Project**

The educational project was an indirect media of evangelism. It was crystal clear from the work and correspondence that they did. In a letter referred to Trevelyan dated 27<sup>th</sup> July, 1834, Jenkins stated<sup>145</sup> that while he was mostly interested in the educational project in which the missionaries would be occupied, he surely did not object if that work produced the conversion of the people. It should be marked that he was addressing work among tribals, not the Hindu Assamese. Jenkins and the Government of Assam in particularly made a difference between evangelistic work among the hills tribes and among the Hindu and Muslim inhabitants of the plains. Thus, in 1847, Captain Gordon sponsored a personal mission to the Bhutias which later changed to work among the Kacharis. The Government made funds for a half dozen schools it. While justifying the Government policy, William Ward of the American Baptist Mission penned in 1856,

... a grant of money to establish Schools among tribes where there is no established religion, so that even though Christianity is taught, the government cannot be regarded as interfering with the religion of the people. It only requires that the scholars be taught to read, write, etc., and the missionary is at liberty to teach whatsoever else he wishes.<sup>146</sup>

Hereby, it becomes a one bullet shoots two birds focusing in evangelistic campaign as well as in educational enterprise. The reports and correspondences of the missionaries during the following fifteen years made constant reference to the ways Jenkins had been displayed his interest to mission work. He always did cordially welcome the missionaries in his residence at Gauhati and often discussed by them.<sup>147</sup> A few references will suffice to elucidate this point. In a letter of 20<sup>th</sup> July, 1836, Nathan Brown cites to an offer, made by Jenkins, to grant the mission some waste

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<sup>143</sup>. Ibid, p. 97.

<sup>144</sup>. Frederick, S. Downs, *Christianity in North East India Historical Perspective*, Op.cit., pp. 68-69.

<sup>145</sup>. *Baptist Missionary Magazine*, Vol. XVI (Jan., 1836), p.67.

<sup>146</sup>. *Baptist Missionary Magazine*, Vol. XXXVI (Dec., 1856), p. 460, see also Frederick, S. Downs, *Christianity in North East India Historical Perspective*, Op.cit., pp. 62-63.

<sup>147</sup>. *BMM*, XVII, p. 173, refer also XVIII, p. 160, see also Frederick, S. Downs, *History of Christianity in India Volume V, Part 5 North East India in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, Op.cit., p. 43.

land “for the sake of establishing a Christian colony, somewhat on the plan of the Moravians,<sup>148</sup>... and would be a radiating point whence a religious influence might be extensively spread.”<sup>149</sup>

### **2.7.1.3. Proposal for Extension of Mission Stations**

Soon looking at the promising tribes ahead to visit and reach out with the Gospel, Major Jenkins realized the urgent needs of the extension of mission stations in the province. In 1837, Jenkins had written to a missionary of the American Baptist Board in recommending the establishment of a station at Gauhati, with a special view to the Garos; but the claims of larger tribes farther up the valley seemed of more importance. Since, Gauhati had been already one of the stations of the Serampore Mission.<sup>150</sup> On 10<sup>th</sup> May, 1838, a letter of Brown and Cutter commented that it was Captain Jenkins’ wish that not less than two missionary families should be sent to Gauhati by the Board.<sup>151</sup> In 1838 Jenkins wrote a letter in detail to the Home Board in Boston requesting to increase its missionary strength. He started by commenting how the Government has determined to resume Upper Assam and to place it on the same footing as Lower Assam under British officers. He believed that this arrangement would be for the benefit of the people in all respects and urged the Board on the prospects it opened; of extending the usefulness of mission, by the protection and assistance afforded to it by the European officers.<sup>152</sup> He proposed that two more missionary families should be dispatched for work among the Namsanghea Nagas, the Miris (Mishings) and the Abors (Adis) - all tribal peoples.<sup>153</sup>

### **2.7.1.4. Government Support to Roman Catholics Missionary**

The Government had intimated a relationship and supported not only with Protestants but also made provisions for the settling and security of the Roman Catholic missionaries as mentioned before. When Father Rabin, Father Bernard and Father Krick of the Paris Mission reached in

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<sup>148</sup>. The inhabitants of Moravia, now a part of Czechoslovakia, the Moravians were protestant who sent missions to backward areas with the object of spreading the gospel with useful education. Cited in H. K. Barpujari, *American Missionaries and North-East India 1836-1900 A.D.* Op.cit., pp. 8-9. (Hereafter referred to as Barpujari, American).

<sup>149</sup>. Ibid, pp. 8-9.

<sup>150</sup>. William Carey, *AGaro Jungle Book*, p. 57.

<sup>151</sup>. H. K. Barpujari, *American Missionaries and North-East India 1836-1900 A.D.* Op.cit., pp. 15-16.

<sup>152</sup>. H. K. Barpujari, *The American Missionaries and North-East India 1836-1900 A.D.* Part One, Guwahati: Spectrum Publications, 1986, p. 18.

<sup>153</sup>. Ibid, pp. 21-22.

Guwahati in 1850<sup>154</sup> they were cordially welcomed by Jenkins who had also provided accommodation for them. Meanwhile, Krick arrived at Saikowa to begin his first attempt to reach Tibet in 1851 and they lodged in the house of the British commander.<sup>155</sup> But that journey was ill-fated followed for the missionaries. They were brutally killed by Mishmis. When, after the murder of Krick and his companion, Bourry, the Government sent an expeditionary force to capture the Mishmi chief. Becker records that Captain Dalton wrote to Jenkins pleading action against those responsible on the grounds to punish the murderer. Consequently, there were killings of a number of Mishmis as well as the burning of houses. Of course, the mission did not favor the Government's unruly revenge and merciless intervention.<sup>156</sup> But there extended support from British Government irrespective of denominations who received.

### **2.7.1.5. Close Relations between the Christian Missionaries and British Government**

#### **Personnel in the Mission Work**

The vast support for missionary work through Government Officials was distinctively visible especially during the first 35 years of British reign. Moreover, it has been observed that the missionaries of different denominations also received the patronage delightfully.<sup>157</sup> This is the reason that the intimacy of missionaries with British officials was seldom misunderstood about missionary activity. Thus it is stated by S.P. Sinha about missionary work in the North Eastern regions as "in fact Christian missionaries are there not for advocating a faith but keeping imperialism alive."<sup>158</sup> According to evidence, the objectives were absolutely different between the missionaries and the colonial Government, although they had closed relations with one another. The legacy of the colonial power was to have dominion in economics, politics, culture and to establish the British Empire. But the missionaries did never claim themselves to be an Agent of the colonial power but rather considered themselves as an Agent of the Lord Jesus Christ with having the chief goal of proclamation of the gospel. As a result, it was the missionaries who evangelized the people and established the Christian community in Assam and other North Eastern Regions. While, S. Chaube, who thinks a closer relationship between

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<sup>154</sup>. C. Becker, *Early History of the Catholic Missions in Northeast India (1598-1890)*, Calcutta: Firma KLM Private Limited, 1989, pp. 105-106.

<sup>155</sup>. Ibid, p. 112.

<sup>156</sup>. Ibid, p. 155.

<sup>157</sup>. Frederick, S. Downs, *History of Christianity in India Volume V, Part 5, North East India in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, Op.cit., p.30.

<sup>158</sup>. Singh, K. Suresh, ed., *The Tribal Situation in India*, Simla, 1972, p.620.

government and missions was in fact the case, is understandably puzzled, given his presupposition, by the evidence that there was very small amount of missionary activity in the North East by the Church of England, which one might have expected to be the logical agency of imperial interest as far as religion is concerned.<sup>159</sup> What might be said to this is that while each other like Christian mission and Government were there for their own purposes, each one of them might be found useful with one another. Government saw the missions useful, or so they hoped, in pacifying the hills tribes and providing education at minimal cost; the missions found the Government useful in underwriting, in many cases, their educational work, evangelism, financial aid and in providing security for both themselves and their converts.<sup>160</sup> No wonder, they had cordial relationships and it unfolds very clearly through their activities how they were closely involved together for the venturing and establishment of mission.

Henceforth, the association between the mission and the Government might be more appropriate to be expressed as collaboration particularly with mutual coincidence. Nevertheless, it did not mean that they always had a compromising spirit of same minds and policy. There were conflicts between them sometimes, since they also had different opinions and thoughts in which they had been encountered in a series of opposition and arguments with each other by considering certain matters. It was particularly seen in the case of language replacement and opium trade. In regard to the matter of replacement of Assamese language with Bengali in the courts and schools of Assam was opposed by the missionaries<sup>161</sup> to the British. The affair of the state opium monopoly and encouragement of the use of this drug were also confronted<sup>162</sup> by the missionaries. Thereby these two historic events especially the redemption of Assamese language was successful only through help of the missionaries. Moreover, the missionaries campaigned against opium use in order to stop it being sold in the open market and to cancel the opium license in the commercial sector. Though, the sold of the drug was somehow minimized but it could not get rid of its usage fully,<sup>163</sup> where its addictions are still prevalent in the present society.

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<sup>159</sup>. Shibanikinkar, Chaube, *Hill Politics in North East India*, New Delhi: Orient Longman Limited, 1973, p. 50.

<sup>160</sup>. Frederick, S. Downs, *Christianity in North East India Historical Perspective*, Delhi: ISPCK, 1983, p. 51.

<sup>161</sup>. Meena, Sharma Barkataki, *British Administration in North East India 1826-74: A Study of their Social Policy*, Op.cit., pp. 69-70.

<sup>162</sup>. Frederick, S. Downs, *Christianity in North East India Historical Perspective*, Op.cit., p. 51.

<sup>163</sup>. Frederick, S. Downs, *History of Christianity in India Volume V, Part 5, North East India in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, Op.cit., p. 33.

Further, the missionaries in Assam were occasionally stressed by the difficulties created for their work by the ungodly lives of nominal Christian officers. In 1845 Brown wrote that, "one of the most formidable obstacles in the way of Missionaries, is the ungodly lives of those who bear the Christian name ...". Bronson too denoted emotional feelings in a letter to the Home Board in 1852. He explained his point with reference to an encounter with a Muslim in Gauhati, "Do you Christians follow Christ? Did he drink and be drunken or commit adultery?"<sup>164</sup> Possibly, it might have hampered mission work and created hindrances by nominal Christian among British Officers, particularly the lower positions were far outweighed.

Besides, a peaceful intercourse between the missionaries and the people was not free from obstacles. The antagonism came mostly from the influential section of the Assamese society, called the Hindu Brahmins who had created an impenetrable wall to access the hearts of the common people. It prevented the flow of Christianity.<sup>165</sup> So, the missionaries changed the mode of their work due to the failure of the primary object of evangelism. Later, they tried to shape in the British imperial policy as an educational agency with an indirect humanitarian service.<sup>166</sup>

The Hindu hostility towards the missionary endeavors raised a suspicion in the Government that this resistance might have possessed discontent with the administrative authority towards the preachers. On 21<sup>st</sup> April, 1847, the Court of Directors in a dispatch to the Governor- General of India in Council directed all public officers to abstain from support or countenance on their part to missionary enterprises. Emphasizing on a policy of religious neutrality and it stated:

It is obviously essential to the due observance of that principle, that it should be acted upon by our servants, civil and military. The Government is known throughout India by its officers, with whom it is identified in the eyes of the native inhabitants and our servants should therefore be aware that, while invested with public authority their acts cannot be regarded as those of private individuals.<sup>167</sup>

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<sup>164</sup>. Ibid, pp. 45-46.

<sup>165</sup>. Meena, Sharma Barkataki, *British Administration in North East India 1826-74: A Study of their Social Policy*, Op.cit., pp. 97-98.

<sup>166</sup>. Ibid, p. 99.

<sup>167</sup>. Ibid. p. 100.

Thus, the complete promotion of the missionary work or total disapproval was not possible at the state of relation with the missionaries and created some controversies at different official levels. There were different missionary schools opened at various places at the initiative of the Government officers with due support and protection in Assam. In 1846, a native monthly news paper “*Arunodoi Sambad Patra*” became the first vernacular news paper in Assamese to be published with the facilitation of the local British officers who patronized by private donations.<sup>168</sup> *Arunodoi* served as a peaceful media of the missionaries to support the Government policies against the social injustices example, education of the masses, and upliftment of the status of women.<sup>169</sup> Meanwhile, the Hindus were not happy to receive the proselytes to their community and were averse to the gospels of the better- faith.<sup>170</sup>

Hereupon, these factors conceived some hindrances to the Home authorities to make definite recommendation on the issue of relation between Government and missionaries in spite of the policy of religious neutrality. Yet they were unwillingly to prohibit their servants from contributing their private funds towards the advancement of Christianity, because the common feeling of the officials was closely linked with the interest of true religion. Therefore, the Court of Directors resolved that in spite of the present cooperative attitude of the Government officers towards the missionaries, “they should be cautious not to excite uneasiness and alarm among the non- Christian subjects, no missionary meetings should be organized in the official buildings and in no way their relation should manifest the appearance of having an official sanction.”<sup>171</sup> Hence, the relation between the Government and the missionaries could not be broken wholly. A dispatch sent in April of 1858 addressed this matter again, restricting the non- official contribution of the Christian officers to missionary for mission work. The Home authority proclaimed that these officers should carry out the official intention of the Government. They should not be over zealous in their private activities.<sup>172</sup>

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<sup>168</sup> Ibid.

<sup>169</sup> Frederick, S. Downs, *History of Christianity in India Volume V, Part 5 North East India in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, Op.cit., p.51.

<sup>170</sup> Meena, Sharma Barkataki, *British Administration in North East India 1826-74: A Study of their Social Policy*, Op.cit., p. 101.

<sup>171</sup> Frederick, S. Downs, *History of Christianity in India Volume V, Part 5 North East India in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, Op.cit., p.51.

<sup>172</sup> Meena, Sharma Barkataki, *British Administration in North East India 1826-74: A Study of their Social Policy*, Op.cit., p. 117.

In the same month, Lord Ellenborough, the President of the Board of Control, sent a dispatch which suggested that officials should discontinue any relationship, official or private, with missionary enterprises. In this regards, he was commenting particularly to schools. The disadvantages of supporting mission run schools were greater than the advantages and it was referred as:

The benefit which can be derived to education from ... aiding the schools of missionaries is, the danger ... to the peace of the Empire, by exciting as we practically do, the apprehension that the Government desires, through education, to convert the people.”<sup>173</sup>

He, moreover, proposed the entire withdrawal of Government aid from mission schools. This proposal, a complete reversal of Wood’s Dispatch of 1854, was not implemented as Government policy, therefore, things continued as before.<sup>174</sup> In November 1858, the transfer of power took place from the Company to the Crown of England, after the conquest of the mutiny and Queen Victoria issued a proclamation, on a policy of religious neutrality. She gave a guarantee to the people of India that the Government had neither right nor the desire to impose Christianity on them. As a result, it had caused a handicap especially in the applicability of the grants-in-aid to the missionary schools and gave birth to a new system of subsidizing the schools with some allowance which were eager to impart knowledge.<sup>175</sup>

## **Conclusion**

The above discussion depicted that the earliest Christian contacts were made by the Catholics who established a Christian community in this region. Unfortunately, this Christian community did not prosper and remained remnant. Then, followed the Serampore Mission and founded a mission station and church with the translation of the first Assamese Bible through William Carey. Later the Serampore Mission station was handed over to the American Baptist Mission. Shortly the British Government landed and annexed entire regions and consolidated a British rule in Assam. On the other side, they brought degenerating impact of opium culture which

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<sup>173</sup>. Referred to by the British as the Sepoy Mutiny of 1857, p. 117.

<sup>174</sup>. Frederick, S. Downs, *History of Christianity in India Volume V, Part 5 North East India in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, Op.cit., p.52.

<sup>175</sup>. Meena, Sharma Barkataki, *British Administration in North East India 1826-74: A Study of their Social Policy*, Op.cit., p. 118

affected it badly. But one cannot deny the truth of the great and monumental anticipation and contribution of the British officers to the mission enterprise through generous donation for missionary work for the sake of the Gospel to save the perishing souls. Thus, the Christianity penetrated and expanded permanent mission stations and churches which will be discussed in the next chapter. Therefore, an un-quenching spirit and untiring efforts rendered by Christian missionaries and British Government officials to the Christian Mission endeavor is not a matter of ordinary event. They have ploughed the virgin soil to sow the seed of the Gospel and shall remain ever cherishing in Assam.

## CHAPTER 3

### GROWTH OF AMERICAN BAPTIST MISSION AND CHURCHES

#### 3.1. INTRODUCTION

The genesis of Christian missionary input was received in Assam by the Roman Catholics in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Then, in the early part of the nineteenth century missionary interest in Assam was given by the Baptists Missionaries of Serampore.<sup>1</sup> Thereafter, the first American Baptist Mission arrived at Assam with the anticipation of the British government officials. Paradoxically, the American Baptist Missionaries came to Assam not to establish mission stations for the purpose of evangelize the peoples of Assam, but to set up a strategic outpost in the campaign to evangelize the Shan tribes of Northern Burma and Southern China. Indeed, this venture would facilitate them with the possibility of both evangelizing the Shan tribe of Northern Burma and gaining entrance to China through Assam. Thereafter, the missionaries were asked to begin work at Sadiya in Upper Assam,<sup>2</sup> since, Sadiya is situated in the Northern extremity of Assam, inhabited by the great Shan family.<sup>3</sup> The first missionaries of this society were sent to Assam.<sup>4</sup> Finally, the original plan of Mission went into reverse order and then diverted to Assam and was located as a permanent mission field by the American Baptist Mission.

Hence, in this chapter, the researcher is going to examine the Growth of American Baptist Mission and Churches particularly the gradual expansion and establishment of Mission Stations and Churches which began to mushrooms by the work of the pioneer American Baptist missionaries in different districts in Assam.

#### 3.2. Sadiya Mission Station

More than a hundred years ago just as today, the surroundings of the fort at Sadiya on the extreme northeast frontier is picturesque and was in the possession of the British regime in

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<sup>1</sup>. Frederick S. Downs, *History of Christianity in India Volume V, Part 5, North East India in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, Op.cit., pp. 64-65.

<sup>2</sup>. F.S. Downs, *The Mighty Works of God*, Op.cit., pp. 14-16.

<sup>3</sup>. Baptist Missionary Magazine, 1837, pp. 19-21.

<sup>4</sup>. F.S. Downs, *The Mighty Works of God*, Op.cit., p. 14.

India,<sup>5</sup> since, Sadiya had been under English rule from 1826.<sup>6</sup> Colonel White, the officer in charge of the post, was a young man. He had come to India in the service of the Crown and had been sent to Sadiya to hold this portion of the newly acquired Province of Assam.<sup>7</sup>

The eastern hill frontier of Assam was selected for the commencement of Missionary activities and Sadiya was considered to be the most suitable place for its headquarters.<sup>8</sup> Sadiya is beautifully situated in the centre of a spacious plain, surrounded by mountains, which form a regular amphitheatre, and bound by the horizon on all sides, except for a short distance at the southwest. The climate is temperate and healthy, and the soil is extremely fertile and capable of producing almost every variety of fruit. The population, therefore, was sparse, as compared with the other parts of Assam, owing to the Burmese and other wars which formerly depopulated the country. The villages were scattered around at a distance of two or three miles from each other. The old village of Sadiya (contains only about thirty or forty houses) consists mostly of Assamese, with a few Khamti or Shyan families.<sup>9</sup>

Meanwhile, Nathan Brown and his wife Eliza Brown were appointed as Missionaries to Burma. They voyaged from America on December 22, 1832. When they reached Calcutta, William Carey had welcomed them and imparted valuable counsel and advice for mission endeavor and they then departed for Burma. On June 15, 1833, Brown met Judson at Moulmein (Burma). Now, the events of great significance were the coming of eleven new missionaries and the letter of an English officer, Captain Francis Jenkins a Commissioner of the Governor-General of India for Assam, as mentioned earlier. In 1834, Jenkins wrote a letter to the English Baptist Missionary Rev. W. H. Pearce, in Calcutta urging the American Baptists to send missionaries into Assam. Finally, with the consent of the Foreign Board, Judson recommended Brown as a missionary to Assam from Burma.<sup>10</sup> Thus, responding to the British Commissioner's zeal and assurance of

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<sup>5</sup>. A. C. Bowers, *Under Head – Hunters' Eyes*, Philadelphia: The Judson Press, 1929, p. 5.

<sup>6</sup>. Walter Sinclair Stewart, *Early Baptist Missionaries and Pioneers, Baptist Missionaries and Pioneers Volume II*, Philadelphia: The Judson Press, p. 62.

<sup>7</sup>. A. C. Bowers, *Under Head – Hunters' Eyes*, Op.cit., p. 5.

<sup>8</sup>. Meena, Sharma Barkataki, *British Administration in North East India 1826 – 74: A Study of their Social Policy*, Op.cit., p. 89.

<sup>9</sup>. Journal of Brown, Sadiya, March 23, 1836 (Excerpts), H. K. Barpujari, *American Missionaries and North – East India (1836-1900 A.D.) A Documentary Study*, Op.cit., p. 6. Thereafter cited from excerpts.

<sup>10</sup>. Walter Sinclair Stewart, *Early Baptist Missionaries and Pioneers, Baptist Missionaries and Pioneers Volume II*, Op.cit., pp.

protection, they started their journey for Calcutta. Two American Missionaries Rev. Messrs Nathan and Eliza Brown and Oliver and Harriet Cutter were invited to proceed to Sadiya. In September 1835, they reached Calcutta with their families. After their arrival they were provided with a printing press, a hundred reams of paper and other material for printing. They were further promised to be provided with an additional press and a complete apparatus soon.<sup>11</sup> They began for Sadiya by the river Brahmaputra on the 20<sup>th</sup> of November, 1835. They had procured three Bengali boats, one for each family and one as a floating kitchen and storehouse, each vessel being some five or six feet in width, and twenty or thirty feet in length. A canopy of split bamboos and palm leaves, built over the center afforded the travelers shelter at night and during the day, protection from the burning tropical sun. These boats were manned by a *manji* or captain, with six or eight men under him, who walked in a foot-path along the bank of the river, pulling the boat after them by means of ropes. Where there was no path, these men would push the boats by means of poles. Sometimes their craft would be whirled about by the current and headed down stream; again it would be dashed and torn by wind and rain. Sometimes the travelers were forced to halt, due to shallow water and were compelled to transfer all their goods into small dugouts. On January 18, 1836, or near two months later, Brown penned from below Gauhati, "We should have been up much farther, had it not been for shallow water in passing from the Hoogly to the Ganges..."<sup>12</sup>

For seventeen weeks they were pushed and pulled through dense jungles and unknown country, completely cut off from all civilizations outside covering about 1280 kilometres. When the journey began, they were occasionally visited by British Officials, but as they advanced up the river they no longer visited them. Hence, with great difficulty which was almost intolerable to any man, with the spirit of martyr and feeling of allegiance to another kingdom, they sailed till they arrived their destination.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup>. Meena, Sharma Barkataki, *British Administration in North East India 1826 – 74: A Study of their Social Policy*, Op.cit., p. 89

<sup>12</sup>. Victor, Hugo Sword, *Baptists in Assam A Century of Missionary Service 1836-1936*, Op.cit., pp. 44-45.

<sup>13</sup>. Ibid. pp. 44-45.

After a tedious voyage of four months in the Brahmaputra, these two families of the missionaries had reached Sadiya on 23<sup>rd</sup> March, 1836.<sup>14</sup> They were the first American Missionaries in Assam. Captain Jenkins received them cordially to this country and as promised earlier, contributed one thousand rupees in aid of the Mission and another thousand for establishing a printing press.<sup>15</sup> During that time, the mission station was more or less in turmoil. Jenkins noticed that the Kamptis at Sadiya were not only a nuisance, but treacherous, tricky and demon worshippers. He was convinced that “the only thing that will make them better is Christianity.”<sup>16</sup> The Khamtis had made several raids; but the missionaries were welcomed by the officials in the station and the bungalow of Captain Charlton, who had gone to Calcutta for treatment of wounds, getting injured in one of the conflicts with the Khamtis, was put at the disposal of the missionaries.<sup>17</sup> Shortly after their arrival at Sadiya, missionaries began to learn Shan language but Brown discovered that it was quite different from the languages of the Khamtis and the Singphos. With no other option, a new language must be learned in order to work among the people around them. So Nathan Brown wrote, “This region providentially opens before us; and after long and tedious journey, we have at length arrived upon the ground where we shall have no doubt spend the remainder of our days.” In His faith, Assam remained unshaken. He commented of Assam as “One of the most important and encouraging fields in all the east.”<sup>18</sup>

The people around Sadiya were Assamese and spoke a Bengali language with Bengali characters. In a short time, the missionaries feverishly studied Assamese. There were also the Singphos, the Miris, the Mishmis, the Abors, the Nagas and other savage tribes who had no written language or books.<sup>19</sup> The erection of a mission compound and the buildings, both for the housing of the missionaries and the schools had begun.<sup>20</sup> Mrs. Cutter and Mrs. Brown started the first School at Sadiya. Mrs. Brown taught the boys and Mrs. Cutter the girls. The numbers of

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<sup>14</sup>. *Baptist Missionary Magazine*, 1838, p. 159.

<sup>15</sup>. Meena Sharma Barkataki, *British Administration in North East India 1826 – 74: A Study of their Social Policy*, Op.cit., p 89. Also Walter Sinclair Stewart, *Early Baptist Missionaries and Pioneers, Baptist Missionaries and Pioneers Volume II*, Op.cit., pp. 60 -61.

<sup>16</sup>. Puthuvail, Thomas Philip, *The Growth of the Baptist Churches in Nagaland*, Guwahati: Christian Literature Centre, 1976, p. 50.

<sup>17</sup>. *Baptist Missionary Magazine*, December, 1836, Vol. 16, p. 295.

<sup>18</sup>. Victor, Hugo Sword, *Baptists in Assam A Century of Missionary Service 1836-1936*, Op.cit., pp. 47-48.

<sup>19</sup>. Eliza, Whitney Brown, *The Whole World Kin: A Pioneer Experience Among Remote Tribes, and Other Labors of Nathan Brown*, Philadelphia: Hubbard Brothers Publishers, 1890, p.111.

<sup>20</sup>. Victor, Hugo Sword, *Baptists in Assam A Century of Missionary Service 1836-1936*, Op.cit., p. 48.

boys were six in beginning and increased to twenty, five of whom were learning English. The teaching materials of elementary books were published by the American Sunday School Union, like the Union Primer and Nursery-Books. A collection of these books were generously furnished by Mr. Trevelyan at Calcutta. These were considered as the best books to use in teaching scholars in English of simplistic style with religious notion. Further, one or two hundred copies of each of the elementary works; the Spelling Book, Primer, Nursery-Book, Scripture Lessons, Two Lambs and Simple Rhymes with a good supply of New Testaments, printed in fair type to be used in Mission Schools which might prove to be of incalculable value.<sup>21</sup> The Mission Compound was procured on the North Bank of the Kuril River, one mile from the cantonment, about two miles from the old village of Sadiya. The routine work of preaching and teaching had then begun. Mr. Brown had the opportunity to work among the Assamese. Meanwhile, he had also keenly desired to work for the Khamtis and the Singphos. The Abors, a warlike tribe, also pleaded with Brown to work among them near Sadiya.

Mr. Brown had been engaged in producing books. He soon found the translation of the Assamese Bible that was furnished by Carey in Bengali and Sanskrit. The ordinary Assamese could not read it. Thus, in January, 1838, he started to work for a new translation, since the errors were too numerous. For the Sermon on the Mount, he had made no less than two hundred and thirty alterations. He had prepared two hundred and thirty pages and 4,850 copies, or a total of 135,850 pages printed, apart from thirteen Chapters of Mathew. These were in Assamese, Tai, English and Khamti Catechism of one thousand copies soon to be supplied. After a few years, the Bengali Character had been abandoned and they used the Roman Characters whether there were in Assamese, Khamti, Abor, or Singpho. The natives did not have any objections, but rather preferred them.<sup>22</sup>

Henceforth, with the work of Mr. Brown and Mr. Cutter along with their two missionary's wives several schools were founded in the neighboring villages. *Zayats* (little preaching booths) were also built at different places where people could come and hear the Gospel message and inquired into the mysteries of the new faith. Mrs. Brown and Mrs. Cutter had gathered a few half-

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<sup>21</sup>. Journal of Brown, Sadiya, March 23, 1836 (Excerpts), *Baptist Missionary Magazine*, 1838, p. 159-60.

<sup>22</sup>. Victor, Hugo Sword, *Baptists in Assam A Century of Missionary Service 1836-1936*, Op.cit., pp. 48- 49.

frightened boys who were advanced in the reading of simple sentences in class which had astonished them evidently.<sup>23</sup> A little boy named Nidhi was a bright, intelligent and later helped in the printing office. He had obtained a fair knowledge of English. He was the first convert after five years of missionary effort in Sadiya and took the name of Levi Farwell but was usually called as Nidhi Levi.<sup>24</sup> Another young priest sought for entrance and left his saffron robe and became a student of the school. He adopted a Christian name, Elijah Hutchinson. This was the beginning of giving the convert new name in Assam. Why did Missionary change the name of the native convert? An answer to this question is cleared by Mr. Brown's intention of the changed from below citation:

The native children themselves are not only pleased with it, but it gives them a spur to greater exertion than their besotted opium smoking and bigoted companions can ever be induced to make. By adopting this course, we should not only do away with the vulgar associations connected with such names ... and still more exceptional names of their heathen gods.<sup>25</sup>

Further, the people were very improvident, and they had the **opium habit**.<sup>26</sup> The greatest curse of this state was opium. A large portion of the inhabitants were completely besotted by it. It carried off immense numbers to an untimely death.<sup>27</sup> Nevertheless, unfailingly Cutter and Brown set the work to do the task to which they had been appointed.<sup>28</sup>

Besides, the girls also were taught in the art of handicraft. Mrs. Cutter gained their confidence and a large number of them attended her classes.<sup>29</sup> Mr. Brown wrote a small Romanized Assamese and Khamti spelling books for their use.<sup>30</sup> Hence, Christian literature paved an entrance into many nearby homes. The schools were the chief means of imparting knowledge

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<sup>23</sup>. Ibid. p. 50.

<sup>24</sup>. Harriette, Bronson Gunn, *In a Far Country A Story of Christian Heroism and Achievement*, Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1911, pp. 53-54

<sup>25</sup>. Victor, Hugo Sword, *Baptists in Assam A Century of Missionary Service 1836-1936*, Op.cit., pp. 50-51.

<sup>26</sup>. Walter Sinclair Stewart, *Early Baptist Missionaries and Pioneers, Baptist Missionaries and Pioneers Volume II*, Op.cit., p. 62.

<sup>27</sup>. Eliza, Whitney Brown, *The Whole World Kin: A Pioneer Experience Among Remote Tribes, and Other Labors of Nathan Brown*, Op.cit., p. 138.

<sup>28</sup>. Walter Sinclair Stewart, *Early Baptist Missionaries and Pioneers, Baptist Missionaries and Pioneers Volume II*, Op.cit., p. 62.

<sup>29</sup>. Victor, Hugo Sword, *Baptists in Assam A Century of Missionary Service 1836-1936*, Op.cit., p. 51.

<sup>30</sup>. Eliza, Whitney Brown, *The Whole World Kin: A Pioneer Experience Among Remote Tribes, and Other Labors of Nathan Brown*, Op.cit., p.135.

and of gaining the confidence of the local people as well as the propagation of the Gospel. Thus, through the very genesis of Christianity, education was emphasized. The strong conviction of the early pioneers had given uttermost importance and effort in school projects which was aimed to evangelize the primitive tribes.

### **3.2.1. Reinforcement of Missionaries**

The need for more missionaries was realized and letters were drafted and dispatched to the Board, pleading for missionaries as far as the needs were concerned. Captain Jenkins wrote to them in regard to the work done by the missionaries in Sadiya. He expressed hopeful to embark schools and stated to have more missionaries in highest rates in 1838. In response to the several urgent petitions, Rev. and Mrs. Jacob Thomas and Rev. and Mrs. Miles Bronson were sent to associate with Brown and Cutter. These two families had reached safely at Calcutta on 11<sup>th</sup> April and at Gauhati in Assam on 3<sup>rd</sup> June 1837. But the remaining journey was followed by illness, untold hardship and unfavorable fate. They had unfortunately started their long and tedious voyage up the Brahmaputra Valley at the beginning of the rainy season. The current of the river was a turbulent whirlpool which made navigation extremely difficult. In the later portion of their journey, Mr. Bronson fell dangerously sick from jungle fever. Mr. Thomas was deputed to Sadiya for aid. When Thomas was only three hours from Sadiya and within the sight of the Mission premises, a large tree fell on his boat and killed him. He was pinned to the canoe and the men could not extricate him. The tragedy of the watery grave of Thomas brought gloom with sadness and discouragement to the missionaries. In grief, Mr. Cutter expressed his feelings in a poem and sited as:

“Death like an overflowing stream, Sweeps us away: our life’s dream,  
An empty tale, a morning flower, Cut down and withered in an hour.”<sup>31</sup>

The fatal accident of Thomas was blanketed with melancholy and distress to the missionaries who still kept their ever ceasing vision alive and toiled day and night with compassionate heart to win the people for Christ.

In July 17, 1837, Thomas’s afflicted widow and companions had finally arrived at Sadiya. Mrs. Thomas had continued to join in the mission with Mr. and Mrs. Bronson, and became a part of

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<sup>31</sup>. *Baptist Missionary Magazine*, Vol. 18, p. 67.

their family.<sup>32</sup> The next two years were full of remarkable events that proved to be of great significance for the growth of the missionary endeavor in Assam. The struggle which these missionaries had undergone to sustain lives for the sake of Christ was not small, and sickness and death were their ever-near companions. They were frequently jeopardized by the antagonist raids of the Khamtis and the Singhpos. The missionary operations were inspected by continuous tribal warfare; and their hopes to enter among the hill tribes were shattered. The death of Sophia and illness with fever or dysentery of the only remaining child brought sadness and sorrows to the Brown family. In addition, Brown had to work hard for translation as well as preaching along with caring for the sick family.

1836 to 1840 was marked by conflicts and rumors of wars. The Hill Tribes were warring, suspicious and defiant among themselves and robbing and burning cities and villages created panic among the plain people.<sup>33</sup> In January 1839, the Khamtis were confronted the British by attacks and slaughters them at Sadiya.<sup>34</sup> Colonel White, the commanding officer was killed on the spot. The missionaries were in constant peril. They had to keep alert, every moment expecting an attack from the savages who might be lying in wait to rush upon and massacre them, or take them as slaves. Mr. Brown had expressed in writing the pathetic condition of the place. The sight became horrible. The dead and dying were scattered in every direction. The trees were clouded with flocks of vultures, which collected from all quarters to feast upon the slain.<sup>35</sup> The mangled bodies of the dead, the groans of the dying who were weltering in pools of blood, were scenes and sounds which would make even the less squeamish soldiers turn away; and which haunted Mrs. Brown for months. In the midst of this terrible situation, sometimes the missionary lost their conscience and puzzled to choose right and wrong decisions, and exactly Mr. Brown wrote in the following lines:

I cannot think that when I lie down and take my two little ones by my side, that I am acting contrary to the Gospel, by putting my sword and double-barrelled gun

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<sup>32</sup>. *Baptist Missionary Magazine*, 1838, pp. 160.

<sup>33</sup>. Victor, Hugo Sword, *Baptists in Assam A Century of Missionary Service 1836-1936*, Op.cit., pp. 55-56.

<sup>34</sup>. F. S. Downs, *Mighty Works of God*, Op.cit., p. 21.

<sup>35</sup>. *Baptist Missionary Magazine*, Vol. 19, p. 228.

under my pillow; nor could I in conscience hesitate to use them, if pushed to the last extremity.<sup>36</sup>

In the course of time, there was sudden riot broke out in the region. Brown and his wife rushed to the English Company stockade for protection. Indeed, Sadiya became a less and less aspire station to do missionary work. At the same time, the sickness crowded in the cantonments where missionaries were located. A persistent, dreadful odor of the virulent small-pox made it a deadly place. Meanwhile the population of Sadiya and its vicinity was fleeing daily. Fields and villages were deserted. Khamtis, Singphos, and Mishmis combined and plundered and carried off the peaceable inhabitants.<sup>37</sup> The Khamtis among whom missionaries were especially ambitious of laboring had also been completely dispersed. Hence, Sadiya was left behind because of its sad experiences. It turned out to be a barred door rather than an open gateway to China. Brown revisited Sadiya after a couple of years and found the place with bleaching bones of peasants, soldiers, prospectors and as the abode of jackals and wild beasts. Brown stated of Sadiya as a melancholy spot – a place which he had no desire or wished ever to visit again. The headquarters of the British Government had also been moved from Sadiya to Sibsagar.<sup>38</sup>

Missionaries, soldiers and all moved from Sadiya to Jaipur as the object and hope for further missionary enterprises. Moreover, there were no conversions for three years of services, but had many inquirers. Thus, Sadiya became a desolate village and station. It was abandoned “to tigers and jackals.”<sup>39</sup>

### **3.3. Jaipur Mission Station**

Jaipur was one of the military outposts of the East India Company. In fact, Jenkins had already taken some steps to launch a Mission Station at Jaipur to evangelize the adjoining hilly people like the Singphos and the Nagas. In 1838, Bronson transferred to Jaipur with his family. He was received cordially by Capt. Hannay and Mr. Robert Bruce,<sup>40</sup> who had been there as an agent for promoting the culture of the tea plant, a new project of the Company in Assam. The arrival of the

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<sup>36</sup>. Nathan, Brown, *The Whole World Kin: A Pioneer Experience Among Remote Tribes*, Philadelphia: Hubbard Brothers Publications, 1890, p. 182.

<sup>37</sup>. *Baptist Missionary Magazine*, Vol. 19, p. 228.

<sup>38</sup>. Victor, Hugo Sword, *Baptists in Assam A Century of Missionary Service 1836-1936*, Op.cit., pp. 58-59.

<sup>39</sup>. Walter Sinclair Stewart, *Early Baptist Missionaries and Pioneers, Baptist Missionaries and Pioneers Volume II*, Op.cit.,pp. 63-64.

<sup>40</sup>. *Baptist Missionary Magazine*, June 1839, pp. 147-148.

missionary delighted the local European officers by financial support to aid the infant Mission Station. The wives of the British Officers helped the missionaries in establishing schools and teaching the ignorant children.<sup>41</sup> Lastly, in 1839, Mr. Brown and his wife had at last ended to relinquish Sadiya and left homes, *zayats*, and school houses and moved with their goods as well as printing press for the further missionary endeavors at Jaipur.<sup>42</sup>

It became more than ever a center from which to do the missionary project. Everything seemed to be in its favor; and the missionaries embraced the hardships connected with the moving and re-locating as a God- sent opportunity. They looked upon the new places of service with greater excitement than they had looked upon Sadiya. Its proximity to the Naga Hills and Burma re-emphasized the old plan of connecting Burma with Assam and this was in the minds of the missionaries. The burden of evangelizing the people of the hill seemed to be obviously important. In addition, shifting the Mission to Jaipur meant they moved from the Abors and Mishmis; but that fact did not seem to have disturbed them greatly because they argued, “that when Books in Abor and Mishmi were ready for the press, the inconvenience of printing them at Jaipur would be no greater than it was to print Singpho and Naga Books at Sadiya. Thus, they had a firmed faith that the reason would be advanced by the removal of mission station to Jaipur. Jaipur was a district and the tea enterprise had been embarked on in a large scale. Brown comments the location of Jaipur as beds of coal. Assam was likely to be proved as the richest state in India. Besides tea, iron, and coal in immense quantities, the state abounds in sum. Bronson too stated about a station Jaipur which would become one of the first in importance fair. Through the beginning of 1840, the three missionary families were Bronson, Cutter and Brown established at Jaipur.<sup>43</sup> They looked upon Jaipur as a permanent abode and as a place where they would be able to achieve works which they had not been able to fulfill before. For the smooth function of this activity, they divided their work as follows: Cutter remained with his printing and educational work: Brown gave most of his effort in preaching and literary task: while Bronson gave his whole concentration to the Nagas.

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<sup>41</sup>. William, Gammell, *History of American Baptist Mission*, Boston, 1849, pp. 213-14.

<sup>42</sup>. Victor, Hugo Sword, *Baptists in Assam A Century of Missionary Service 1836-1936*, Op.cit., pp. 58.

<sup>43</sup>. Ibid. pp. 60-61.

In the plains Cutter was extensively involved in the educational project. In spite of that, he expressed dissatisfaction about the lack of progress in the school. It had been found from his correspondence that the work did not prosper as he had expected. In addition, Jaipur occupied a strategic center, was not big in size, nor were they large-scale for villages in the district. Moreover, Cutter commented that “Jaipur is ... a good (Mission) station for preaching, but not so favorable for schools as many other parts of the country.”<sup>44</sup> On the other hand, the Rev. Joseph Paul wrote in 1899 that the school was progressing at Jaipur and had as many as three hundred pupils. Victor Hugo Sword viewed that it seemed to be a bit positive according to the letters of Cutter, Bronson and Barker because it indicated that they maintained the school with difficulty. The services were conducted both in English for all the Europeans and the native assemblies of all kinds of crowd in vernacular.<sup>45</sup>

On the other hand, Brown had undergone much suffering because of sickness in the family; and the situations at Jaipur had increased his burden. His wife and ill child had to spend much time in Calcutta, and his own poor health hampered the development of mission.<sup>46</sup> Cutter had also struggled in the shifting of population as well as to maintain a school. In Jaipur, what they discovered was not the paradise they had hoped it would be. Brown wrote:

We have been disappointed in our expectation regarding Jaipur – instead of increasing in population it has rather diminished ... owing in great part to the unhealthiness of the place, and the sparseness of the population in the immediate neighborhood makes it a very discouraging situation for Missionary labor.<sup>47</sup>

Indeed, this statement unfolds the facts that Jaipur had few inhabitants and an **unhealthy location** and it most certainly hindered missionary labors. For several years of the missionary labor, there were no visible fruit seen in Jaipur. Later, there was a sign of promise that dawned to the missionary work. A new epoch of Assam Mission had reached the missionary horizon. Nidhiram Farwell, usually called as Nidhi Levi Farwell, an Assamese youth who studied at Sadiya and who was appointed in the printing press, became interested in

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<sup>44</sup>. *Baptist Missionary Magazine*, 1841, Volume, 21, p. 220.

<sup>45</sup>. Victor, Hugo Sword, *Baptists in Assam A Century of Missionary Service 1836-1936*, Op.cit., p. 64.

<sup>46</sup>. Walter Sinclair Stewart, *Early Baptist Missionaries and Pioneers, Baptist Missionaries and Pioneers Volume II*, Op.cit.,pp. 64-65.

<sup>47</sup>. Victor, Hugo Sword, *Baptists in Assam A Century of Missionary Service 1836-1936*, Op.cit., p. 66.

Christianity.<sup>48</sup> On May 13, 1841, he was the first convert of the mission baptized by Bronson at Jaipur,<sup>49</sup> and became much rejoicing for the Europeans, and real curiosity among the locals who had gathered to witness the baptismal act. Indeed, almost after six years, amid most untiring circumstances, the efforts of the missionaries were rewarded. It is important to note that the first convert to Christianity was an Assamese. In fact, it possibly led the missionaries to turn their interest to the Assamese rather than to the hilly people, which was to characterize the missionary labor for many decades to come.<sup>50</sup> Nevertheless, the missionaries never stopped the vision to evangelize the Naga hill.

### 3.4. Namsang Mission Station

Bronson had a great zeal to commence a Mission Station among the Nagas. In this venture he found this more arduous than he had first expected. The inaccessibility of the Hills soon became visible. There were no roads. The paths used by the local people were not constructed for foreigners, but led up and down the precipitous mountain sides which was almost impossible for the missionary to make any extended tours to the villages. Moreover, the Nagas were suspicious of the white man and did not look with favor upon his intrusion.<sup>51</sup> In 1840, Bronson had succeeded in entering into Namsang through a small village in the hills, located in today's Tirap district of Arunachal Pradesh, about two days' journey from Jaipur. He had erected a house for his family.<sup>52</sup> Besides, there were a number of hindrances that prevented the foundation of schools among them. The notion was that only young men and relatives of the chief were capable to learn and read. It was observed that the ordinary people could not be benefited by books. In addition, the girls were prohibited to teach. The progress of education was slow but it had been made acquainted with the rudiments of learning with zeal later on.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>48</sup>. Eliza, Whitney Brown, *The Whole World Kin: A Pioneer Experience Among Remote Tribes, and Other Labors of Nathan Brown*, Op.cit., pp. 212-213.

<sup>49</sup>. A. K. Gurney, on "History of the Sibsagar Field," *The Assam Mission of the American Baptist Missionary Union, Paper and Discussions of the Jubilee Conference held in Nowgong, December 18-29, 1886*, Guwahati: Spectrum Publications, 1992, p. 22.

<sup>50</sup>. Victor, Hugo Sword, *Baptists in Assam A Century of Missionary Service 1836-1936*, Op.cit., p. 67.

<sup>51</sup>. F. S. Downs, *The Mighty Works of God*, Op.cit., p. 22.

<sup>52</sup>. Victor, Hugo Sword, *Baptists in Assam A Century of Missionary Service 1836-1936*, Op.cit., p. 61.

<sup>53</sup>. *Baptist Missionary Magazine*, 1841, Volume, 21, p.116.

Bronson seemed to have become keenly interested in the Nagas and he urged for a missionary to come and work among them. He expected one man for the Nagas and another for the Singphos. He wrote and had put before the Board for the great need of missionaries. Unluckily, Bronson and his family were sick most of the time. Medical aid was not available; and it soon became clear that the work among the Hills would endanger not only his health, but also his usefulness as a missionary for the entire future.<sup>54</sup>

Nevertheless, in response to the appeal of the missionaries Rev. and Mrs. Barker and Miss Rhoda Bronson were sent to work among the Nagas. But after reaching the station a change was proposed to Barker and thus the labor among the Nagas never materialized. Moreover, an unfortunate event followed the missionaries immediately after their arrival, particularly the death of Miss Bronson on the mission field. She was gravely at Jaipur. The isolation of the Namsang field among the hills as well as the sparse of the inhabitants jointly pushed Mr. Barker to give up Hills Mission and turned into possibilities of the valley mission and hence decided in favor of the plains in Assam. The small missionary group was more or less bewildered by the conditions in which they found themselves. Still, Mr. Barker made several visits to Sibsagar and Jorhat. The places fascinated him due to the dense population and the easy accessibility to the fields. He had shown interest to launch a mission in either one of these two places. After a consultation with the brethren at Jaipur, Barker was appointed to serve in the plains. Finally, Bronson also had to relinquish his hope of missionary enterprise among the Naga Hills due to some perplexing circumstances including climate. He was weak and shivering with fever and had to go to Sibsagar for medical aid.<sup>55</sup> Indeed, the missionary vision of mission to hill remained unaccomplished and diverted to Sibsagar.

### **3.5. Sibsagar Mission Station**

The shifting of Mission Station from Jaipur was expected to be either Jorhat or Rangpur near Sibsagar, one of the ancient towns and the capital of Ahom kings during that time in Assam. Consequently, Sibsagar was selected as the site for the Mission Station. After making several trips in these districts, Mr. Barker became firmly persuaded that either Sibsagar or Jorhat was the

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<sup>54</sup>. Victor, Hugo Sword, *Baptists in Assam A Century of Missionary Service 1836-1936*, Op.cit., pp. 62-63.

<sup>55</sup>. *Baptist Missionary Magazine*, 1842, Volume, 22, p.62.

most advantageous location from which to carry on the missionary enterprise. Hence, he brought the matter before his fellow missionaries based on the following reasons in which he believed Sibsagar was the area from where to begin the future mission. First of all, Sibsagar had every advantage over Jaipur in reference to place, as it was only a few hours journey from the Brahmaputra River which served as the chief thorough-fare and was two days travel with a good road from Dibrugarh. The road to Jorhat was too broad and a one day journey from Sibsagar. Jorhat was the most densely populated district of the province, and also the capital. Secondly, the populous area of North Lakhimpur, a district on the opposite bank of the Brahmaputra, could be visited from Sibsagar better than from any other place. Thirdly, Sibsagar had a physician, was amicable to the missionaries and gave all needed medical attention freely. Fourthly, Barker felt that he could more safely leave with his family in Sibsagar, while he was distributing tracts in various communities than in any other place. Fifthly, the principal Government of the district was lodged in the Court of Sibsagar, which brought together the most active, learned, and intelligent people and afforded an important channel of communication with the whole district. Sixthly, the headquarters of the army was there; and because of that a monthly expenditure of Rs. 10,000 to Rs. 12,000 was being made. This gave a strong impulse to trade and contributed to the permanency of the population. There were also a hospital, a Jail, and a number of brick edifices in the process of construction. A Government School was to be launched, similar to the one at Gauhati, in which English and Bengali were to be instructed.<sup>56</sup>In addition, Captain Jenkins too had given his view that there was no likelihood of the headquarters ever being changed from Sibsagar, at least not for many years to come.<sup>57</sup> At the same time, Cutter also expressed his thought that Gauhati, Nowgong or Sibsagar was a more interesting and inviting field than Maulmain.<sup>58</sup>

Hence, with the hope of bright prospect and after a mutual consultation, it was resolved that a new station was to be commenced at Sibsagar, and Mr. Barker had been appointed as missionary to that Field.<sup>59</sup> On May 24, 1841, Mr. and Mrs. Barker, the new missionaries, had reached to make this location as their permanent residence. After a few weeks the Brown family arrived for

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<sup>56</sup>. Journal of Barker, November 1840 to May 1841: Also *Baptist Missionary Magazine*, 1842, pp. 64 ff. (Excerpts).

<sup>57</sup>. Victor, Hugo Sword, *Baptists in Assam A Century of Missionary Service 1836-1936*, Op.cit., pp. 68-69.

<sup>58</sup>. Mrs. A.K. Gurney, "History of the Sibsagar Field," Jubilee Reports, 1886, p. 22.

<sup>59</sup>. Journal of Brown, April 14, 1841, H. K. Barpujari, *The American Missionaries and North-East India (1836-1900A.D.)*, Part One, Op.cit., p. 34.

medical treatment and having a consultation with other Brethren the Browns were recommended to stay in Sibsagar. Perhaps, Bronson was unwilling to leave the Naga Hills, yet was convinced by Sibsagar. He was soon to see his usefulness as a missionary and was enhanced by the view of turning this station as headquarters. Indeed, he had surrendered the work among the Nagas with the hope of winning the Assamese. Therefore, he had an optimistic ideology towards the Nagas that they too would come to the knowledge of Christ. Ironically, Sibsagar had been the headquarters of native kings for several centuries as indicated above; and in 1839, when the British conquered the Government from the Ahom king they also shifted headquarters to Sibsagar. Thus, it became the Capital of Upper and Central Assam. Brown wrote in 1841, it was possibly the largest village in this side of Gauhati.<sup>60</sup>

The mission station was situated on the banks of the beautiful artificial Siva's sea. The missionaries established with peace to achieve the mission project ever since their arrival at Sadiya in 1836. Lastly, the expression of Barker led to understand that their hope seemed to be accomplished; he stated jubilantly and as referred to him in below:

No thunder edicts are promulgated against out entering this interesting field; but the doors are thrown wide open. The people are in peace, and none molest or make afraid. A beginning had been made. Books are circulated, and the people are becoming interested to know what they contain. A great many who can read, and a great many by hearing them read, have become acquainted with the contents, and wish to know more about the religion of Christ.<sup>61</sup>

The above citation shows that the native peoples were amicable, interested, learned and willing to know more about Christ. There was no such opposition and riot by the coming of missionaries and thus they could be settled peacefully and take part in the missionary activities. Henceforth, the glorious doors were opened to the Gospel.

The people from the higher ranks of society, therefore, invited the missionaries daily for inquiry and discussion of the religious affairs. Brown had been engaged in translations and preaching and Barker in learning the language. A school for girls shortly progressed under the direction of

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<sup>60</sup>. Victor, Hugo Sword, *Baptists in Assam A Century of Missionary Service 1836-1936*, Op.cit., p. 69.

<sup>61</sup>. Barker's Journal, *Baptist Missionary Magazine*, 1842, Volume, 22, p.66.

Mrs. Barker, by the help of Ramsagar, a local assistant. Meanwhile, Mr. Cutter made arrangements for the protection of the mission property in Jaipur and Cutters family with their two converts, Montan<sup>62</sup> and Nidhi, who arrived on December 8, 1841. The following Sunday, in December 11, was a commemorate day in **Sibsagar, the sacred waters of Siva's sea were for the first time consecrated to Christianity and Mr. Brown baptized Montan**, while a number of Europeans and natives stood on the banks and watched. Further, Brown recorded this event as:

Montan, the second convert, had come under Missionary influence while he was a student at Sadiya. He did not prove to be of much comfort to the Missionaries as according to old church records, he was suspended from the fellowship of the church a few months later because of immoral conduct. The scene was solemn and affecting. The sound of sacred music, rising above the calm and peaceful waters, brought vividly to mind the remembrance of similar scenes in our native land. May this beautiful expanse of water, long since dedicated to the heathen deity but now consecrated to the service of Christ be often thus honored by the footsteps of willing converts.<sup>63</sup>

Gradually, there were signs of fruit yielding in the field. Batiram Dass was from a respectable family and of the *Kaist* or writer caste. He also attended the Mission School at Sadiya and worked in the press. He came with the Press to Jaipur and lastly to Sibsaagar in 1843.<sup>64</sup> Indeed, the missionaries no longer thought of the work in terms of a tribe or of a particular district; but they aimed their task for the whole province. Thus, **Assam for Christ** became their slogan, and with that notion they pressed forward in all lines of missionary endeavor. In November 15, 1843, Mr. and Mrs. Cutter brought the printing press from Jaipur and established it in Sibsaagar. Books and tracts were brought to thousands, while Mr. Brown labored feverishly to keep the press running with his translations, revisions and compositions of Assamese literature.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>62</sup>. Victor, Hugo Sword, *Baptists in Assam A Century of Missionary Service 1836-1936*, Op.cit., p. 70. Hereafter cited Victor, Hugo Sword. Montan, the second convert, had come under Missionary influence while he was a student at Sadiya. He did not prove to be of much comfort to the Missionaries as according to old church records, he was suspended from the fellowship of the church a few months later because of immoral conduct.

<sup>63</sup>. Ibid. pp. 70-71.

<sup>64</sup>. Mrs. A. K. Gurney, "History of the Sibsaagar Field," Jubilee Reports, 1886, pp. 22-23.

<sup>65</sup>. Victor, Hugo Sword, *Baptists in Assam A Century of Missionary Service 1836-1936*, Op.cit., pp. 71-72.

On the 9<sup>th</sup> of March, **1845, the Sibsagar branch of the Baptist Church was founded** in Assam.<sup>66</sup> In 1845, the waters of Siva's Sea saw baptism three times; firstly, the baptism of an Assamese convert named Batiram Dass (renamed Batiram D. Peck). Secondly, Calibor, a *dhobi*, or washer man, who had considered Christianity for several years, was baptized. He served the Sibsagar Church for more than forty years and was the father of **Godhula Brown, the first Assamese Missionary to the Nagas**; and thirdly, Ramsing, a cousin of Batiram, who had an enmity to Christianity, lastly decided to follow his cousin's example and was baptized.

Meanwhile, Mission suffered from agitation and war. The conversion brought forth **bigger protests and agitations among the leaders of the Hindu community**. The Hindu leaders argued that Christianity was a Foreign Religion which attracted only the low castes people who were interested in the improvement of their material and social positions though they had not been materialized.<sup>67</sup> In addition, the **American Civil war** pre-occupied the Americans with domestic issues of Slavery, losing interests in far-flung areas like Assam. The American Baptist Churches had been divided into Northern and Southern Conventions in 1845. The mission in Assam was now supported only by the Northern Churches in America and its support was reduced and failed to meet the bare requirements.<sup>68</sup> Certainly the mission was affected financially.

However, the Missionary report says that there were 3,740,100 pages printed in 1845. Much of the expense of the press was defrayed by the proceeds of "job" work and generous donations from friends. It is a striking event to recognize that the Government servants and the tea planters of the early days were wholeheartedly interested in the missionary activities and aided the mission both with financial and moral support. Captain S. F. Hannay offered to the mission his valuable premises containing a brick bungalow with a "go-down" or store-house, while Major Jenkins gifted the mission with a font of Bengali type for the printing press. When the mission had failed its funds banked, Mr. Bruce lent the mission Rs. 1000 without interest.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>66</sup>. Eliza, Whitney Brown, *The Whole World Kin : A Pioneer Experience Among Remote Tribes, and Other Labors of Nathan Brown*, Op.cit., p. 237.

<sup>67</sup>. Mrs. A. K. Gurney, "History of the Sibsagar Field," Jubilee Reports, 1886, pp. 22-23.

<sup>68</sup>. Eliza, Whitney Brown, *The Whole World Kin A Pioneer Experience Among Remote Tribes, and Other Labors of Nathan Brown*, Op.cit., p. 433.

<sup>69</sup>. Victor, Hugo Sword, *Baptists in Assam A Century of Missionary Service 1836-1936*, Op.cit., pp. 71-72.

Besides, the densities of populations of the neighboring villages were **prosperous for the educational programs** which were embarked upon by Mr. and Mrs. Cutter. After their coming in Sibsagar they reported the establishment of six schools; and that the people were frequently requesting for more schools. The number increased until in 1845, they reported fourteen, with an average attendance 381. Many of the villages supported their own teachers and erected their own school houses. While, Brown and Barker were planning the work at Sibsagar, Bronson, by general approval of the missionaries, was contemplating work at Nowgong.<sup>70</sup>

In 1846, Mr. and Mrs. S.M. Whiting had reached to assist the Sibsagar mission station. Brown and Cutter engaged themselves in translating, printing, teaching and preaching both in and around Sibsagar. In 1846, the **first Assamese News Paper, “Orunodoi”** was printed from the press at Sibsagar. In 1851, the Sibsagar Church had 17 local members and there were 23 baptisms since the Formation of the Church.<sup>71</sup> The first Association was held on October 30, 1851 at Sibsagar and elected Mr. Brown as moderator. The Association was named as the Baptist Association of Assam.<sup>72</sup> In 1853, the missionaries had been encountered with difficulty of providing material support to the converts, since, the local converts were fully or partially dependant on the missionaries. Thus, the missionaries had great difficulty to fulfill their material requirements nor did they find it possible to give them employment. The missionaries also realized that giving them all support would not be conducive to promote independent life. So the portion of land was given for cultivation to a few Christian families by missionaries and somehow they managed to earn and find work<sup>73</sup> for their livelihood.

Meanwhile, the mission field had under gone some crucial and sad circumstances. In 1853, Oliver Cutter who was one of the founder Missionaries and who had served for almost twenty years, became involved in questionable personal relationships and was dismissed from the mission. Hence it gave a negative impact upon the morale and lives of the native Christians.<sup>74</sup> In 1885, there was another blow to the mission when the pioneer missionary Nathan Brown left

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<sup>70</sup>. Victor, Hugo Sword, *Baptists in Assam A Century of Missionary Service 1836-1936*, Op.cit., p. 72.

<sup>71</sup>. Mrs. A.K. Gurney, “History of Sibsagar Mission,” Jubilee Reports, 1886, pp. 23-24.

<sup>72</sup>. Victor, Hugo Sword, *Baptists in Assam A Century of Missionary Service 1836-1936*, Op.cit., p. 78.

<sup>73</sup>. Mrs. A.K. Gurney, “History of Sibsagar Mission,” Jubilee Reports, 1886, pp. 23-24.

<sup>74</sup>. Victor, Hugo Sword, *Baptists in Assam A Century of Missionary Service 1836-1936*, Op.cit., p. 83.

Assam on furlough due to ill health, after twenty-two years of missionary service without any vacation. So, Brown's leaving was a great shock and loss of a well experienced pioneer missionary staff and spiritual father who was called so by local Christians.<sup>75</sup>

After Brown's departure in 1855, Danforth and his wife arrived at Sibsagar and helped Whitings for one year, after which he was replaced by Ward in the Gauhati Mission Station. In 1857, there were only two missionary families in the Assam field, the Danforths and the Whitings in Gauhati and Sibsagar respectively. The Bronsons were just leaving for America on furlough. It was the year when the great **Sepoy Mutiny** began in April.<sup>76</sup> There were threats on the lives of both the Missionaries and the local Christians and Islam sought to be re-instated.<sup>77</sup> In 1858, the Whiting family was the only missionary in the whole of Assam station at Sibsagar.<sup>78</sup> All these events perhaps made a great setback to the progress of the missionary labor in Assam. In 1861, eleven persons were baptized at Sibsagar. In the same year, Dr. and Mrs. Ward came to relieve the Whitings. Ward directed the church, school and printing works. In 1865, Bronson was at Sibsagar working on his dictionary and this was issued from the press in 1866.<sup>79</sup>

During this period, the mission had never fully relinquished contact with the Nagas after the abandonment of the Namsang labor in 1841. In the midst of this operation, two Nagas had been baptized at Sibsagar prior to 1861. The first Naga Christian was a boy named Hubi who was baptized by Brown at Sibsagar on 12<sup>th</sup> September, 1847. He was basically from near Jaipur but his tribe did not record. He died of cholera within a month of his conversion.<sup>80</sup> The second Naga Christian was Longjanglepzuk, an Ao of Merangkong village and his conversion bears with various dates from 1850 to 1857 and the correct date is possibly in 1851. He resided near Sibsagar. Unfortunately, in 1853, he was killed in the Konyak raid.<sup>81</sup> However, the mission did not take up work among Nagas systematically until 1870s.<sup>82</sup> The reconsidering of the Naga work

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<sup>75</sup>. Eliza, Whitney Brown, *The Whole World Kin A Pioneer Experience Among Remote Tribes, and Other Labors of Nathan Brown*, Op.cit., p. 433.

<sup>76</sup>. Mrs. A.K. Gurney, "History of Sibsagar Mission," Jubilee Reports, 1886, p. 24.

<sup>77</sup>. Victor, Hugo Sword, *Baptists in Assam A Century of Missionary Service 1836-1936*, Op.cit., p. 83.

<sup>78</sup>. Ibid. p. 90.

<sup>79</sup>. A.K. Gurney, on "History of Sibsagar Field," Jubilee Reports, 1886, pp. 23-26.

<sup>80</sup>. F.S. Downs, *The Mighty Works of God*, Op.cit., p. 63.

<sup>81</sup>. Baptist Missionary Magazine, XXXV of 1854, pp. 69-70.

<sup>82</sup>. F.S. Downs, *The Mighty Works of God*, Op.cit., p. 63.

was made by two great figures namely Godhula Brown and E.W. Clark. In 1868, Dr. Ward baptized seven Assamese. In 1869, he left for America by handing over the care of the press and the mission to Mr. E. W. Clark who joined in the same year at Sibsagar to work among the Assamese. In 1871, Clark had also involved work among the tea garden laborers and baptized the first four Kols. In 1872, nine more were baptized and thirty more in the next year, coming to a total of 43 Kols.<sup>83</sup> During these years he had become desirous in the Nagas mostly Aos who were frequently attended the Sibsagar *bazaars*.

Godhula Babu was usually known by his Christian name, Rufus Brown, and was the son of Kalibor, a dhobi at Sibsagar. He enrolled in the Orphan Institute School and completed his studies in 1853, however this did not help him much to improve his behavior. Slowly, he had a deep spiritual experience which drove him to surrender his life for Christ ministry. In 1858 he volunteered to serve with Apinta, the first Cachari Christian at Jhargong village in North Kamrup. Several years later he returned to Sibsagar and married. Both he and his wife taught in a school until 1866. They volunteered to go to Majuli Island, the centre of Assamese Hindu orthodoxy to establish a school and evangelism ministry. After several years, the local opposition pushed them to end this work. Shortly, after his return from Majuli, he had talked to Clark about his interest for the Nagas. Godhula had made an extraordinary tour to the Ao hills in October, 1871 and he was received with hospitality at Haimong village. Godhula and his wife had spent six months among the Aos and nine of them accompanied Godhula to Sibsagar for Baptism. On 11<sup>th</sup> December, 1872, they were baptized by Clark and were added as members of the Sibsagar church. Soon on 18<sup>th</sup> December, he baptized 15 more young men and on 23<sup>rd</sup> December, these converts were organized into a branch church at Sibsagar. Though it remained for several years as a branch church, this was the first church founded for the Naga Hills.<sup>84</sup> In 1880, Godhula Brown was ordained by the Sibsagar church in connection with the work among the Ao Naga. In 1882, he was succeeded by Sonaram Thomas a pastor of the Nowgong church.<sup>85</sup> In 1872, Ward returned to Sibsagar and died a few months later. In 1874, Clark was appointed to the Naga work and Mr. A.K. Gurney and his wife were employed to Sibsagar for the completion of the

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<sup>83</sup>. A.K. Gurney, on "History of Sibsagar Field," Jubilee Reports, 1886, pp. 23-26.

<sup>84</sup>. F.S. Downs, *The Mighty Works of God*, Op.cit., pp. 64-65.

<sup>85</sup>. Ibid. p. 57.

translation of the Bible into Assamese which began thirty years before. In 1876, Clark handed over the Assam work and press to Gurney and left for Naga Hills.

Between 1876 and 1886, there was hope for the mission on Kols who imported tea-garden laborers from Chota Nagpur.<sup>86</sup> The branch churches were formed for Kols at Teok. Early in 1880, Gurney toured three times to Teok and baptized 54 members. In 1881, eight Kols were baptized and in 1882, seven more were added. In May, 1883, Gurney departed Sibsagar for America. Mr. and Mrs. Witter and Mr. and Mrs. Rivenburg arrived to replace Gurney at Sibsagar early in 1884.

Early in 1885, Gurney came back to Sibsagar and baptized seven at Mokrung. In the same year, the Witters fell sick and Rivenburgs went to Molung for Nagas and only the Gurneys remained at Sibsagar. In 1886, two more Kols were baptized adding a total of 154. But the number of **Kol Christians was fluctuating because of their migratory character** which led the mission work to be less promising than it at first existed.<sup>87</sup> In June, 1889, Mr. Petrick reached Sibsagar and during this year, the total number of Christians in the Sibsagar district was 159, of whom 133 were Kols and the rests were Assamese.<sup>88</sup> In 1893, C.E. Petrick reported that the total number of churches in the Sibsagar district was six, with a membership of 354, out of whom , 38 were Assamese and the remaining were the Kols. The income of the churches was paid to local preachers. Thus, no church had been sound in self-supporting so far.<sup>89</sup> In 1895, the Sibsagar mission station was reinforced by the coming of Reverend O.L. Swanson and the Sibsagar church had a membership of 124. Out of these, 33 were Assamese and 51 Kols.<sup>90</sup> In 1899, Reverend C.E. Petrick reported that the Sibsagar field had 12 churches, of which there were 10 Kols churches and 2 Assamese churches.<sup>91</sup> The field had been served by Mr. and Mrs. Petrick till 1900 and Reverend O.L. Swanson followed after him. In 1901, Mr. and Mrs. Paul took charge of

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<sup>86</sup>. A.K. Gurney, on "History of Sibsagar Field," Jubilee Reports, 1886, pp. 23-26.

<sup>87</sup>. Ibid. pp. 27-30.

<sup>88</sup>. A.K. Gurney, 'Report from the Sibsagar Field,' Historical Papers of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Triennial Conference, held at Gauhati in December 21-30, 1889.

<sup>89</sup>. C.E. Petrick, 'Report from the Sibsagar Field,' Historical Papers of the third Triennial Conference, Tura, 1893.

<sup>90</sup>. O.L. Swanson, 'Report from the Sibsagar Field,' Historical Reports at the 4<sup>th</sup> Triennial Conference, Sibsagar, Dec. 14-22, 1895.

<sup>91</sup>. C.E. Petrick, 'Report from the Sibsagar Field,' 4<sup>th</sup> Triennial Conference, Dibrugarh, February 11-19, 1899.

the station from Swanson.<sup>92</sup> In 1905, Petrick reported of a Miri woman who became a believer at Dihingbutch and one Assamese (Ahoms) whole household were baptized.<sup>93</sup> In 1910, Petrick reported that there were 16 churches in the Sibsagar district and four large churches each of which had more than 100 members.<sup>94</sup> In 1917, U.M. Fox was the missionary on the field and reported to have baptized 15 persons.<sup>95</sup> A.C. Bowers, missionary in the Sibsagar station reported in 1926, it had 64 Christian communities and 27 organized churches. There were also educated people who inquired from missionaries to know about Jesus Christ.<sup>96</sup>

By 1936, the number of churches in Sibsagar district dwindled to 40. There were good number of strong and fine churches, but the greater numbers of churches were very weak and required nurture and pastoral care. When Rev. and Mrs. R. Wickstrand left home in **1936, the station remained without a resident missionary** and Rev. R. Holm from Golaghat station had to look after the field.<sup>97</sup> In 1937, John Selander, missionary in the Sibsagar field reported a baptism of 71 persons and approved for ordination of Methuel.<sup>98</sup> Rev. J.M. Forbes report of 1938 comments, that there was a negligence of producing an educated leadership. Among the local Christians, only Oriya Christians were alive although more baptisms conducted. The Miri (Mishing) people had expressed their keen desire to know about Christianity. There were 39 churches with a membership of 2108.<sup>99</sup> In 1944, R.W. Holm reported of having no residential missionary at Sibsagar and he had to look after them from Golaghat station.<sup>100</sup> The Sibsagar field was without a residential missionary until 1946.<sup>101</sup> According to John Selander's report in 1947, Rev. Methuel Castle nurtured the churches in peace as well as in evangelism and baptized 50 persons. In the same year, the Sibsagar Association celebrated its Jubilee.<sup>102</sup> Finally, in 1950, the American Baptist Foreign Mission Society charged over to the local bodies. The local church

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<sup>92</sup>. Joseph, Paul, 'Report from the Sibsagar Field,' 7<sup>th</sup> Session of Assam Mission of the American Baptist Union, Gauhati, December 27, 1902 to January, 1903.

<sup>93</sup>. C.E. Petrick, 'Report from the Sibsagar Field,' 8<sup>th</sup> Session of Assam Mission of the A.B. Mission, Gauhati, December 24, 1904 to January 1, 1905.

<sup>94</sup>. C.E. Petrick, 'Report from the Sibsagar Field,' 10<sup>th</sup> Biennial Session, Gauhati, January 8-17, 1910.

<sup>95</sup>. U.M. Fox, Sibsagar Field Report, 15<sup>th</sup> Session of the Missionary Conference, Sibsagar, January 15-22, 1917.

<sup>96</sup>. A.C. Bowers, 'Sibsagar Field Report,' Missionary Conference, Golaghat, November 23 December 1, 1927.

<sup>97</sup>. R.W. Holm, 'Sibsagar Field Report,' Missionary Conference, Gauhati, December 1-6, 1936.

<sup>98</sup>. John, Selander, 'Sibsagar Field Report,' Mission Conference, Sadiya, December 8-13, 1937.

<sup>99</sup>. J.M. Forbes, 'Sibsagar Field Report,' Gauhati, 1938.

<sup>100</sup>. R.W. Holm, 'Sibsagar Field Report, Nowgong, November 9-13, 1944.

<sup>101</sup>. J. Selander, 'Sibsagar Field Report,' Gauhati, December 6-10, 1946.

<sup>102</sup>. J. Selander, 'Sibsagar Field Report,' 44<sup>th</sup> Session, Jorhat, December, 10-14, 1947.

leader, Rev. Methuel Castle reported that there were 3000 Christians along with 48 churches in the Sibsagar station.<sup>103</sup>

Further, the extension of the mission operation was already in the minds of British Commissioners as well as pioneer missionaries. Thus, by the general approval of the missionaries, Bronson was designated as missionary to Nowgong.

### **3.6. Nowgong Mission Station**

Reverend Miles Bronson and his wife boarded all their belongings on a raft made of small native canoes and had begun their long voyage of about two hundred miles down the Brahmaputra River on September 22, 1841.<sup>104</sup> They arrived on the Kullung River at Nowgong on October 2, 1841. The flock of multitudes appealed to Bronson; and the heartfelt love and passion for the Nagas mission were soon forgotten because of his busy schedule in establishment and other activities. Eventually, he began preaching and touring the numerous villages of the surrounding areas of Nowgong. On November 10, he bought a bungalow and premises which he procured with funds received from the sale of the previous mission property at Jaipur. Bronson soon discovered the multitudes of people at Nowgong,<sup>105</sup> which was not easy task to be won over to Christianity. After two years of his arrival, he penned: "I am not yet permitted to report to you the conversion and baptism of multitudes."<sup>106</sup> In contrary to this, he complained of the **callousness of the hearts of the Hindus** and the power which the Hindu priests had over their subjects. Perhaps, the crowds were turning to the teachings of the Gospel and accepted Jesus Christ as their savior and it might be assimilated that their culture and religion could finally be established through Christianity. But the Orthodox Hindus might have feared of losing their culture and Hindu religion. It was possibly this reason for prohibiting in the report of conversion and baptism.

Perhaps, **Hindus made an impenetrable wall for Gospel** which led Bronson to change his mode of missionary work. Instead of preaching, he diverted his concentration towards the

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<sup>103</sup>. M. Castle, 'Sibsagar Field Report,' 46<sup>th</sup> Session, Golaghat, January 3-9, 1950.

<sup>104</sup>. Victor, Hugo Sword, *Baptists in Assam A Century of Missionary Service 1836-1936*, Op.cit., p. 72.

<sup>105</sup>. Journal of Bronson, Nowgong, October 2, 1841, H.K. Barpujari, *American Missionaries and North-East India (1836-1900 A.D.) A Documentary Study*, Op.cit., pp. 35-37.

<sup>106</sup>. Journal of Bronson, Nowgong, October 2, 1841

Education of the youth.<sup>107</sup> The Nowgong mission school under the patronage of the American Baptist Board of Foreign Mission was established. From its commencement the number and influence of the school had generally increased. The school house had been erected with a capacity of 100 scholars. The school had a satisfactory progress and the vernacular was mainly taught for a few and the rest were in the English classes.<sup>108</sup> He mentioned in a letter by saying, if they would do anything for this people, they must rescue the youth and children. Thus, he began to start a school in which he asked the children of the community and in particular he summoned the poor and homeless children, hoping that by reaching them he would create a new society that would have as its basis, Christianity rather than paganism. Shortly, Bronson examined that the foundation of common schools did not have the beneficial effects desired, owing to the inability of obtaining children entirely under the influence of Christianity. So, that is how, he developed this new method with the hope that it would nourish the mission with favorable opportunity to impart continuous instruction and enable pupils to live in a Christian Compound and in a Christian atmosphere. Indeed, it would help them to absorb the Christian philosophy of life and soon they might forget the old instruction of the primitive ways and beliefs of their parents. Therefore, he had a great heart for the destitute and abandoned children as indicated earlier and one could understand from a below description as:

My mind has been led to the establishment of the proposed orphanage institution where I may collect all the friendless and destitute, but promising orphan children ... into large boarding school where they may constantly be kept under the influence of Christianity for ten or twelve years. In general, I propose to confine myself to children between the ages of three and eight years. When they enter-caste is broken: for they live and eat in common. I propose receiving boys and girls, and thereby introduce the education of the female sex, which is wholly neglected in this country.<sup>109</sup>

After all, the Nowgong was being a central position and had a favorable position in many respects and hence it was selected for the establishment of Orphan Boarding School in 1843.<sup>110</sup> The object of the Institution was to gather orphan and destitute children from every part of

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<sup>107</sup>. Victor, Hugo Sword, *Baptists in Assam A Century of Missionary Service 1836-1936*, Op.cit., pp. 72-73.

<sup>108</sup>. Letter of Bronson, November 12, 1843, Report of American Baptist Mission to Assam, pp. 253.

<sup>109</sup>. Victor, Hugo Sword, *Baptists in Assam A Century of Missionary Service 1836-1936*, Op.cit., p. 73.

<sup>110</sup>. F.S. Downs, *The Mighty Works of God*, Op.cit., p. 34.

Assam, and trained them under a careful Christian influence; all who manifested a good degree of ability, would receive an education that would qualify them to become competent teachers and catechists; and those who manifested less ability, would be taught, in connection with an elementary and Christian education, such trades and employments as would enable them to earn their own bread, and become useful member of the society.<sup>111</sup>

Meanwhile, a **Baptist Church had been established in Nowgong in 1845**, with six constituent members along with Mr. and Mrs. Bronson.<sup>112</sup> In **1846, the Nowgong Revival began.**<sup>113</sup> The spark of wild fire burst into a great flame through Orphanage School. Hence, the work of the Orphanage had proved to be most effective than any other institute. Like in one bullet shoots two birds basically in education and in soul saving. The children became very proficient in the rudiments of learning and after five years, it yielded a spiritual harvest that had gone beyond Bronson's expectation. The revival fire broke out and spirit flooded among the students and it was recorded that many of them confessed their sins with tears; while the interest became so great that the school was suspended; and morning, noon and night the pupils assembled for conversation on religious topics. Mr. Bronson's heart was thrilled with overwhelming joy for the intervention of God among His people and paved the way for the gospel and wrote the following lines in this auspicious occasion:

Day and night, whichever way I turned, I could hear the voice of prayer or the song of praise. The wondrous love of God in dying for sinful men seemed to be the theme which filled every heart. Almost every member of the most advanced class has been received into the church, and a number express their desire to preach the Gospel to their countrymen.<sup>114</sup>

Moreover, this revival was also marked another milestone in the growth of faith and the first group of women were baptized, one of them being betrothed to Nidhi Farwell, the first Christian convert from Sadiya. Mr. and Mrs. Bronson had given much of their time and energy in teaching the Boy's and Girl's Departments of the School till 1848. Mr. and Mrs. Stoddard had reached to

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<sup>111</sup>. Letter of Bronson, November 12, 1843, Report of American Baptist Mission to Assam, pp. 253.

<sup>112</sup>. Rev. P.H. Moore, 'Nowgong Field Report,' Mission Jubilee Conference, Nowgong, December 18-29, 1886.

<sup>113</sup>. F.S. Downs, *The Mighty Works of God*, Op.cit., p. 35.

<sup>114</sup>. Victor, Hugo Sword, *Baptists in Assam A Century of Missionary Service 1836-1936*, Op.cit., p. 74.

relieve them and were appointed as superintendent of this institution. During this time Mr. and Mrs. Bronson, with unfavorable health, were obliged to take leave for America.

After the arrival of Mr. Stoddard established church and school and these were became two evangelizing forces that already at work. The whole load of the work fell on his shoulders after the departure of Mr. Bronson. Early in 1850, the missionary force was increased by adding Mr. G. C. Dauble, a missionary of the German Lutheran Mission at Tezpur who had embraced Baptist views of baptism and church polity. He was baptized by Mr. Brown at Tezpur, and immediately joined the Mission at Nowgong, first as missionary teacher and later as an ordained missionary.

In 1851, Mr. and Mrs. Bronson came back along with Miss Shaw, who was to help as a teacher in the Orphan School. In all of its history, Nowgong was the strongest in the missionary enforcement. The missionary band known as Mr. and Mrs. Bronson, Mr. and Mrs. Stoddard, Mr. Dauble and Miss Shaw, who became Mrs. Dauble in 1851, were labored whole heartedly and successfully. The Orphan Institution was progressing with good numbers in both Boy's and Girl's Department. The heavy construction of residential building had been made for completion, and village preaching was organized vigorously. It was also a time of reaping and harvesting where baptisms were conducted often. In 1851 the church for the **first time issued license two of its members, Lucien B. Hayden, and James Trippto preach.** Moreover, 1854 was an eventful year. Rev. Dr. Peck was sent out as a Deputation to visit the Asiatic Missions of the American Baptist Missionary Union. He landed at Gauhati in 1853, and reached Sibsagar. In 1854, all Assam Missionaries were assembled for consultation at Nowgong. In the meeting all the interests of the Assam Mission were considered, but the Nowgong Orphan Institution was mostly discussed with a different opinion.

In 1855, Mrs. Dauble was compelled by poor health to leave for America, and the Stoddards followed her in the same year. In fact, Mr. and Mrs. Bronson became alone again in the field. In **1855, Ghinai was licensed to preach and became the third licentiate** of this church. In 1857, sickness pushed the Bronsons to take their second furlough to America, and the **field was left without a missionary for twenty months.** The work was given in the charge of **Charles**

**Sonaram Thomas, their third local assistant.** The **Church declined remarkably in this period. By deaths, exclusions and scattering of members,** it was reduced to five resident members – one less than when it was established. Later, in 1859 Rev. and Mrs. C. F. Tolman reached. They had been looking forward with special attention to work among the Mikirs, but had to take charge and responsibility of the station. Yet he made an attempt to tour the Mikirs and here Mr. Tolman was **affected by malaria,** which broke down his health and he left to America in 1861, after serving in the station for only two years. In fact, before his departure, in 1860, Mr. and Mrs. Bronson had returned to Nowgong from America and Mrs. Tolman remained with them. Later, Mrs. Tolman also went back to meet him in 1862 and the field was again left to Mr. and Mrs. Bronson alone. In 1863, when Rev. E. P. and Mrs. Scott landed, they had been appointed particularly to the Mikir area. The first attempt was made **Out-Stations** by a local assistant in 1863. A **native man called Bhubon was licensed for the same** and resided in his own village in Darrang. But he failed to maintain the assigned responsibility due to his unfaithfulness. The first Mikir convert was baptized in 1863. Mr. and Mrs. Scott rendered hearty service into this community. But the **malaria soon became a dreaded enemy for all Europeans** in Assam and drove them to leave for America within two years of their arrival.

Mr. Bronson, apart from school and preaching work, labored with his pen to give the Assamese a Christian literature which is evident from the number of **Hymns and Tracts** that bore his name. He had also taken up the great project of literary work, the so called the Assamese **English Dictionary** and published it in 1867. In 1868, he was again reinforced by the return of the Scotts. Yet, the double burden had worn him and he was compelled to go again for America early in the same year. The Scotts were now left single-handed in the station. In addition, **Mr. Scott died of cholera** in Nowgong. Nevertheless, Mrs. Scott had courageously carried the mission task alone till the return of Mr. Bronson. Mrs. Bronson died in America in 1869. Mr. Bronson on his return was accompanied by his daughter Miss Marie Bronson, who had been his helper in 1870. The work continued till Rev. R. E. Neighbor, who was appointed as Mr. Scott's successor in the Mikir region in 1871. The second attempt was to work an Out-Station by local assistants, by putting Charles and Besai at Nonoi, seven miles from the field. By the coming of Rev. and Mrs. R. E. Neighbor the station was again manned with two missionary families and Mrs. Scott had been transferred to Gauhati in 1871.

During this time, Mr. Bronson married Mrs. Danforth, widow of the late Rev. A. H. Danforth of Gauhati. Shortly, she died in Burma in 1874. Besides, this distress was soon added by another, Miss Marie Bronson a daughter of Bronson, who had accompanied Mrs. Bronson to Burma, **died of cholera** on the steamer near Goalpara, on her return to Nowgong and was gravely at Goalpara. Immediately, Mr. Bronson's double affliction made him to shift to Gauhati. Mr. Neighbor remained alone in charge of the entire district till 1875, when Miss Sweet had been sent by the Woman's Society of the West to take up **Zenana Work** and Girl's Schools here. Miss Sweet's ill health did not allow her to continue the work.

In 1877, the **first ordination of Assamese converts** to the work of the Gospel Ministry took place. **Kandura R. Smith of Gauhati and Charles Sonaram Thomas** of Nowgong were ordained and appointed by a Council of Missionaries and Churches which was held in Gauhati. Charles was appointed as pastor of the church at Nowgong till his death in 1881. Mr. Neighbor went back to America in 1878 and pleaded Miss Keeler to proceed to Nowgong from Gauhati. Miss Keeler bore the great responsibility with unshrinking spirit in the field alone even though the care and anxiety had overshadowed her life, until the coming of Rev. P. H. Moore's family. In 1880, Rev. P. H. Moore and wife reached from America and Keeler handed over the charge of the mission station to them and engaged herself in the Women's Department.

In **1882, Tuni J. Goldsmith was ordained** and became Charles successor as pastor of the church. In 1882, the church had been renovated and Rs. 300 was donated for this work. Miss A. K. Brandt shifted to be associated with Miss Keeler in 1881. But she could not stay long in Assam. Moreover, Miss Keeler also took a break and left for America. Mrs. Moore took charge of the Women's Department during her two years and eight months' absence, teaching in the Girl's School and going out with the *Zenana* women. In 1883, the church made an attempt for financial support by choosing a native evangelist named Sarlok by paying Rs. 8.00 (Eight) per month to preach among the Mikirs. In 1885, this system gave an idea of self-support. Thereby, the church agreed to designate Rev. Tuni John Goldsmith as pastor to serve three days (Friday, Saturday and Sunday) in a week by paying Rs. 10.00 (Ten) per month. Leaders were also selected, such as three deacons along with a pastor who were to serve and maintain the functions of the church. Perhaps, it was hope of the church that it might lead to true independence. In 1885,

Miss Keeler returned to the mission station and was accompanied by Miss N. L. Pursell who had been associated with her and had taken up the project of language study. Further, a great milestone was set through education. The value of education had been advanced considerably. The report of education indicates 153 schools in different grades, enrolling a total of 5,377 pupils. The diffusion of education was a great possibility to mission work, by unlocking the door using tracts and religious books which then opened the eyes of undermining the religious superstitions.

On the other hand, the **constant change of missionary personnel and few incompetent untrained local workers had crippled** to the aggressive prosecution of the work. A large number of people did not hear of Jesus Christ, and the common view among those who had heard of Christianity, was a modern religion that had come intending to break their **caste**; that meant to destroy their social status among their countrymen. Therefore, it was observed that some had heard the gospel and secretly believed, and if caste could have no role or abolish, and they might feel free to decide and act as they thought and would be preferred to be called Christians rather than Hindus.<sup>115</sup> At the same time, teachings of the gospel were foreign to the thoughts of the native people and required another half century of evangelism before they fairly began to apprehend them.

In 1887, the Foreign Missionary Force was consisted of Rev. and Mrs. P.H. Moore, Miss Orrel Keeler and Miss Nettie Pursell at Nowgong. In 1887, Miss Keeler left the Nowgong station and became Mrs. Mason of Tura. In the same year, Miss C.E. Pursell arrived at Nowgong to assist her sister, Nettie Pursell. In 1889, Nettie Pursell handed over the charge of the Woman's Department to C.E. Pursell. During this year, Mrs. P.H. Moore with her daughter Clara left Nowgong for America. Now, Rev. P.H. Moore worked in the General Department and Miss C.E. Pursell, in the Woman's Department engaged in Bible class, training camps and touring for evangelism. The lady missionaries had been devoted to work among women and children and had accessed the villages with Bible Women for evangelistic work.

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<sup>115</sup>. Rev. P.H. Moore, 'Nowgong Field Report,' Mission Jubilee Conference, Nowgong, December 18-29, 1886.

During **1887, 1888 and 1889, there had been a steady decline with the number** of members of the Nowgong church to 98, 95 and 87. So, the mission had gone through a period of pruning rather than progress. The root cause of the decrease in number was the **habit of opium** which caused the greatest number of exclusions from the membership of the church.<sup>116</sup> In 1890, Mrs. P.E. Moore was in America due to sickness and only Mr. P.E. Moore and Miss C.E. Pursell remained in the mission station. Later, Miss L.A. Amy assisted the women's work from America. In 1891, Rev. and Mrs. P.H. Moore returned to Nowgong from America. Miss Pursell became the wife of P.E. Moore and deputed to the Mikir field. In the same year, Miss N.M. Yates arrived at Nowgong from America. Hence, at the end of 1893, the Nowgong field had three males; two were married and two single lady missionaries.<sup>117</sup>

Nehemiah was an evangelist. In 1895, he was appointed as station pastor to Balijuri church. The members of Udmari and Balijuri churches were Mundas and Santals and their meetings were conducted in Hindi and Mundari languages.<sup>118</sup> In 1899, there were only three churches in Nowgong district three years before.<sup>119</sup> In 1900, there were still only three churches in the Nowgong field, i.e., Nowgong, Udmari and Balijuri. The station church at Nowgong had remained much the same like before. The Udmari church was divided into two factions. The Balijuri church also withdrew from this church and merged into the Society for the Propagation of Gospel Mission and had a pastor from Tezpur S.P.G. Mission. The **Kalazar** was spread at both Balijuri and Udmari and it swept a heavy toll on the lives of the people at Nowgong district.<sup>120</sup>

In 1901, Mr. Carvell was in-charge of the Nowgong mission station along with his assigned work among Mikirs. During this year, Miss Daniels and Miss Long had also joined in the Woman Department. The report of Rev. P.H. Moore stated that there were five churches in the Nowgong district in 1902. The Annual Association meeting was organized in February, 1906 and it was a distinguished event for the **ordination of Henry Goldsmith** to the ministry. There were several young people from Kachari village who sought their interest to become Christians

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<sup>116</sup> P.H. Moore, 'Nowgong Field Report,' 2<sup>nd</sup> Triennial Conference, Gauhati, December 21-30, 1889.

<sup>117</sup> P.H. Moore, 'Nowgong Field Report,' Third Triennial Conference, Tura, January 14-22, 1893.

<sup>118</sup> P.H. Moore, 'Nowgong Field Report,' Fourth Triennial Conference, Sibsagar, December 14-22, 1895.

<sup>119</sup> P.H. Moore, 'Nowgong Field Report,' Fifth Triennial Conference, Dibrugarh, February 11-19, 1899.

<sup>120</sup> P.H. Moore, 'Nowgong Field Report,' Sixth Session of the American Baptist Missionary Conference, Gauhati, December 22-31, 1900.

but a **storm of opposition and persecution** had broken out.<sup>121</sup> In addition, the **Tea Garden churches had to suffer the fate of their transitory and migratory** life of the membership. Besides, the **problem of consecrated, trained and competent leadership was another drawback.**<sup>122</sup>

Moreover, proper care could not be taken by the missionaries to the eight small churches at Nowgong district. During 1911-1912 there was a mission work among the Mikirs.<sup>123</sup> In 1915, P.H. Moore reported that the **condition at Nowgong was really desperate.** The churches were in open revolt against one another due to negligence in the past few years.<sup>124</sup> The missionary report in 1917 states, that there were three noteworthy events that took place in 1916 at Nowgong district. The **first, “All Assam Baptist Convention”** held at Nowgong. The **second** was the **death of the missionary, Rev. P.H. Moore on March 3<sup>rd</sup> in Calcutta** who served for 36 years in Nowgong. The **third event** was the **ordination of Sri Probhu Dayal**, a devoted worker.<sup>125</sup>

The field report of 1926 commented that there were 14 established churches of the Baptist denomination in the Nowgong district. Out of these, 13 had their own church buildings and the rest were under construction.<sup>126</sup> In 1936, Rev. U.S.G. Sension left Nowgong on furlough to America and had given the responsibility to Rev. W.R. Hutton who was also charged for the Mikir work.<sup>127</sup> In 1937, the Annual Association decided to release Michael Christopher for full time work among the Assamese. Two evangelists were chosen to visit the churches.<sup>128</sup> The missionary report of 1938 said that the Nowgong station had never been encouraging and still seemed to be the same. Many of the mission workers had been lost or terminated for various reasons.<sup>129</sup> In 1940, Hutton reported that the process of shifting from one locality to another was carried on to form small Christian groups in new places. There were 5 evangelists working in the

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<sup>121</sup> P.H. Moore, ‘Nowgong Field Report,’ Ninth Biennial Conference, Gauhati, January 5-12, 1907.

<sup>122</sup> P.H. Moore, ‘Nowgong Field Report,’ Tenth Biennial Session, Gauhati, January 8-17, 1910.

<sup>123</sup> P.H. Moore, ‘Nowgong Field Report,’ 12th Biennial Session, Gauhati, January 4-13, 1913.

<sup>124</sup> P.H. Moore, ‘Nowgong Field Report,’ 13th Session, Golaghat, January 9-18, 1915.

<sup>125</sup> G.R. Kampfer, ‘Nowgong Field Report,’ 15<sup>th</sup> Session of Missionary Conference, January 15-22, 1917, Sibsagar.

<sup>126</sup> G.R. Kampfer, ‘Nowgong Field Report,’ Missionary Conference, Jorhat, December 2-10, 1926.

<sup>127</sup> W.R. Hutton, ‘Nowgong Field Report,’ Missionary Conference, Gauhati, December 1-6, 1936.

<sup>128</sup> W.R. Hutton, ‘Nowgong Field Report,’ Missionary Conference, Sadiya, December 8-13, 1937

<sup>129</sup> W.R. Hutton, ‘Nowgong Field Report,’ Missionary Conference, 1938.

field. The mission had also secured from the Government a Dispensary for Leprosy and other diseases at Malasi. The scourge of **leprosy was so severe** in that region that the missionaries addressed the place the “**Valley of the Shadow of Death.**”<sup>130</sup>

The missionary report of 1941 says that the churches in the Nowgong district were very low with poor and indifferent attitudes towards church attendance and low standard of conduct yet it was not altogether hopeless.<sup>131</sup> The Assam Baptist Missionary Conference reported in 1944, that there were 18 Churches in the Nowgong Association, but only one was in sound condition. **Drinking and loose ideas** regarding marriage bore endless problems. One church had the same pastor for over 20 years and it developed a monotonous leadership.<sup>132</sup> In 1945, Rev. Hutton reported that there was plan to complete the Udmari church building.<sup>133</sup> In 1946, Miss E.R. Paul was stationed at Nowgong and reported that the field remained without any missionary yet they had proved a praiseworthy spirit of self-reliance.<sup>134</sup> During 1947, most of the 18 Churches in the Nowgong district were visited by Comfort Goldsmith as well as two evangelists. Many booklets, gospels and tracts were sold and the young Assamese and the tribal students were interested to know more about Christianity.<sup>135</sup>

The missionary report of 1949 states, that the Christian community in Nowgong town was one of the largest fields in Assam and an economically independent field. There were 18 churches with a membership of 1297. The Nowgong Baptist Association sponsored two evangelists and Michael Christopher supervised the station.<sup>136</sup> In 1950, the Nowgong field had one evangelist who was also pastor in the Nowgong church. The Association subsidized two evangelists and celebrated the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Nowgong Church. There were a total 15 small churches

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<sup>130</sup>. W.R. Hutton, ‘Nowgong Field Report,’ Assam Baptist Missionary Conference, 37<sup>th</sup> Session, Jorhat, January, 4-9, 1940.

<sup>131</sup>. E.R. Paul, ‘Nowgong Field Report,’ Assam Baptist Missionary Conference, Golaghat, December 4-9, 1941.

<sup>132</sup>. W.R. Hutton, ‘Nowgong Field Report,’ Assam Baptist Missionary Conference, 41<sup>st</sup> Session, Nowgong, November, 9-13, 1944.

<sup>133</sup>. W.R. Hutton, ‘Nowgong Field Report,’ Assam Baptist Missionary Conference, 42<sup>nd</sup> Session, Jorhat, November, 8-12, 1945.

<sup>134</sup>. Miss E.R. Paul, ‘Nowgong Field Report,’ Missionary Conference, 43<sup>rd</sup> Session, Gauhati, December 5-10, 1946.

<sup>135</sup>. Miss E.R. Paul, ‘Nowgong Field Report,’ Assam Baptist Missionary Conference, 44<sup>th</sup> Session, Jorhat, December 10-14, 1947.

<sup>136</sup>. Dr. V.H. Sword, ‘Nowgong Field Report,’ Assam Baptist Missionary Conference, 45<sup>th</sup> Session, Jorhat, January 11-16, 1949.

in the Nowgong field.<sup>137</sup> In addition to that, the commencement of mission stations in other parts was steadily planned and implemented in actual order. Thus, Gauhati the most important city of Assam, situated at the entrance of the Brahmaputra Valley, was looked upon as a strategic missionary center from its very existence. It was expected by Brown that the Board would appoint Mr. Robinson who resided in the post of the Government educational service and who had served for some time under the English Baptists too. But such a transfer never materialized. Mr. Bronson too shared his view “of the importance of the Board’s positioning themselves at Gauhati without delay.” Gauhati revealed to him “to bear the same relations to other mission stations in Assam that Maulmein does to other mission stations in Burma.”<sup>138</sup> Henceforth, definite and precise steps were taken to commence the Mission Station at Gauhati.

### **3.7. Gauhati Mission Station**

The American Baptist Missionary Union hand book comments about the Gauhati Mission as being founded in 1837, the year of the beginning of the mission to Assam. But the Missionary Magazine states that among the changes promptly accompanied the breaking up the station at Jaipur late in 1843. Whatsoever, one can assume that the initiative work must have been done in 1837, because the Gauhati field had already begun with the Serampore mission before the coming of American Baptist Mission. Afterwards, this field was handed over to the American missionaries. Seemingly, the systematic work might have started from 1843 as far as the incident was concerned rationally. Mr. Bronson left the Naga Hills for Nowgong and the Cutters moved to Sibsagar.

Hence, the whole of upper Assam was evacuated and the principal strategy of the mission was almost entirely reversed. Just before Cutter’s reaching at Sibsagar, Rev. Cyrus Barker handed over his bungalow with the hope of launching a new mission station at Tezpur on the Banks of the Brahmaputra situated between Sibsagar and Gauhati. Therefore, he stayed there for only two months. In 1843, he took up residence at Gauhati. Certainly but little had been done before Mr. Barker’s arrival at Gauhati.<sup>139</sup> As evidence says that an effort had been made by the Serampore

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<sup>137</sup>. Miss E.R. Paul, ‘Nowgong Field Report,’ 46<sup>th</sup> Session of Assam Baptist Missionary Conference, Golaghat, January 3-9, 1950.

<sup>138</sup>. Victor, Hugo Sword, *Baptists in Assam A Century of Missionary Service 1836-1936*, Op.cit., p. 74.

<sup>139</sup>. Ibid. p. 75.

Mission Society, but certain circumstances led to its early withdrawal.<sup>140</sup> After he had spent one year in Assam, his labors extended to Jaipur, Sibsagar, Tezpur, and Gauhati. The transfer of Barker from upper Assam left Mr. Brown with a deep sense of loneliness. He also realized that there were ample fields for harvesting but laborers were few and he had expressed his unshakable vision for mission in the form of writing as cited below:

This movement will leave all of upper Assam, our original field, without a Single preaching Missionary and this, after the Mission has been established Seven years, so that brother Cutter and myself are now quite as solitary as When we first came to Burma ... we feel it our duty to stand by our post so long as life is spared us ...<sup>141</sup>

Mr. C. Barker was the first American Baptist missionary stationed at Gauhati and the first pastor of the Gauhati Baptist Church.<sup>142</sup> In **1845, a church was founded**, which now consisted of 27 members. Within two years, the church members were only twenty-seven and a few of them had been baptized at Gauhati since the beginning of the mission. He labored much of the time with feeble health, until 1849, less than six years, when he left the mission field and was soon called to his heavenly abode before arriving in America. Rev. A.H. Danforth reached in 1848 and was joined by the Rev. W. Ward in 1851, before the departure of Mr. Barker. Since then, the work of the mission field had been under the supervision of these brethren. Another brick bungalow was erected under his care, and a New Chapel building for English and native worship. The expense of this sum, 200.00 rupees was furnished by the mission and the good will of the English residents at Gauhati and remaining Rs. 1,21,145.00 paid by local subscriptions. Periodical writings from missionaries indicated that much attention was given to English preaching in former years, but the consequence of this work was unknown. Earlier, the average attendance of the church had been from 20 to 40 and the latter from 20 to 30. Mr. Ward was associated with Mr. Danforth at Gauhati, for at least one year. Mrs. Danforth and Mrs. Ward conducted the Sabbath School, including the station school along with two more schools, one Boarding School for Girls and a Day School for Boys.<sup>143</sup>

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<sup>140</sup>. Eliza, Whitney Brown, *The Whole World Kin: A Pioneer Experience Among Remote Tribes, and Other Labors of Nathan Brown*, Op.cit., p. 265.

<sup>141</sup>. Victor, Hugo Sword, *Baptists in Assam A Century of Missionary Service 1836-1936*, Op.cit., p. 75.

<sup>142</sup>. C.E. Burdette, 'History of the Gauhati Field,' Jubilee Reports, Nowgong, December 18-29, 1886.

<sup>143</sup>. Mission papers, Baptist Missionary Magazine March 1855, p. 75.

**The School Work:** Early in 1850, the station found a good brick building. A Girls' School was established almost totally by the support of European residents at Gauhati, and there seems to have assembled a flourishing school. The numbers were forty in the Boys' School. In 1855, Mrs. Danforth and Mrs. Ward gained reputation for their zealous service to this enterprise. Later, Mrs. Scott also rendered good service in this department, and during that time, Dr. Bronson founded a promising Boys' School in the station. The Girl's School was handed over to the care of Kandura's wife at Gauhati by the missionaries of the Nowgong. The labor had been toiled at best, but had never received results advance beyond expectation. The Garo Christians who had studied in this school increased. A small Boy's School was reopened in 1886. A few Garo girls who accompanied with Mrs. Burdette from Tura and a few Assamese girls from the town saw the embarking of a New Town School for girls.

**Outside work:** Mr. Barker's previous knowledge with the language was helpful and made the mission work possible. Outside the town, special interest was given to village preaching. In 1850, there was impressive attention among the Garos of Kamrup district, and requests were received by the missionaries to launch Christian Schools in their villages. It appeared that there was a good number of Garos in the Town Schools in Gauhati, and it was possibly brought them to have an interest in Christianity.

**Tract Distribution:** The tract distribution was mentioned in seldom. In 1850-51 four thousand two hundred and thirty-eight persons were furnished with a religious book by Mr. Danforth.

**Advancement of the Operation:** All departments of the work as earlier viewed, received attention; but it wasn't possible to push all, or many at the same time, with sufficient strength to accomplish large or permanent success in all. A suitable approach seems to have been made through symmetrical prosecution of the work, as said in the missionary report of 1855, where it is commented that Mr. Danforth occupied a *zayat* in the town near one of the *bazaars* and was preaching in it. Mr. Ward was spending most of the dry season in the surrounding villages, and Mrs. Ward was teaching two hours a day in the Town School. Nevertheless, Mr. Danforth stayed for a short time and transferred to Sibsagar, on account of Brown's return to America and he resumed his preaching again after returning to Gauhati. In three or four years he returned to

America and for **seven years there was no Missionary** in the Gauhati Field, and such work must have flagged. During Bronson's time, the *bazaar* preaching was conducted, and after Bronson's departure, Kandura and his helper, Apinta gave much effort to run it for the first years.

In 1867, the following memorandum was prepared by Dr. Bronson. On April 17, 1867, the Reverends Stoddard and Comfort with their wives reached at Gauhati, took charge of the mission church and property, and gathered ten persons as members of the Gauhati Church, two of whom, were Omed and Ramke, the first Garo converts who went to Garo Hills to establish a church. The Gauhati field was in the hands of Mr. and Mrs. Stoddard who had newly arrived. Taking the entire responsibility of the mission work was not an easy task without experience or acquaintance of the language to restore life and reform corruption which had accumulated during seven years of evacuation of the station. However, they devotedly served the mission field. According to the Annual report of 1867, the low state of the church had been noticed by the new missionaries. Although the annoyed disciples who lived in the mission station had become a sorrow, but doubtless ordained of God's faithful servants were found to be active. In 1874, the membership of the Gauhati Church and Out-Stations were recorded as eighty-two, diminished by six deaths, leaving 76. There were baptism programs from time to time at Gauhati, but most of the converts were from different villages and came to take baptism in the mission station. Various members of the older Christian families had been received, but none of them seemed to have added into membership of the church except one or two new names which had been enrolled from outside.

**Out Station Mission work** was hardly less promiscuous. Assamese, Muslims, Hindus, Kacharis, Rabhas, Garos and Mikirs in small numbers along with imported Kohls were objects of missionary work. The mission work among the Garos of the Kamrup district was directed by the missionaries from Gauhati or Nowgong. Thereafter, the Garos of Kamrup district had recently started to accept Christianity in large numbers when Bronson departed. First, in 1873 and then in 1874, at Baraigaon, over 50 people were baptized. Since, 1878 about 150 more, and then till 1886, 500 more have been baptized. The Garo Christians, a new organization was formed in January 1886. After Mr. Danforth departure, **seven or eight year's passed before the work was**

**taken** up again by Messrs, Stoddard and Comfort. They seemed quite upset by seeing the long neglected mission field, but Mr. Stoddard already knew the language and had experience in mission work, and this probably enabled him to prosper in the work soon. Meanwhile, Mr. Stoddard was urgently demanded for the work among the Garos in Goalpara. So after five months, he left and Mr. Comfort had remained alone where he served about seven years in the mission field. During the time of Mr. Comfort, the mission field was reinforced by the transfer of Mrs. Scott from Nowgong, temporarily, in the absence of Mr. and Mrs. Comfort on the grounds of impaired health. Mrs. Scott was obliged to go back to America accompanied by Mrs. Comfort, her absence made deplorable, since the total work of the village Schools was carried on her shoulders.

In the course of time, Mr. Bronson reached Gauhati immediately after the withdrawal of Mr. Comfort. He was astonished to find the mission station without residential missionaries while he was stationed in Nowgong. Soon before the transfer of Mr. Bronson from Nowgong, Miss Mary D. Rankin landed from America, and had the charge of the work promptly after Mr. Comfort's exit. Shortly, she became Mrs. Bronson and later she returned to America with her husband where she had remained thereafter. Miss Orrell Keeler arrived to the field in 1875 and had dedicated faithful service which Dr. Bronson heartily acknowledged in his report. For more than two years she was asked to take up the work which Mr. Neighbor had laid down at Nowgong.

After the exodus of Dr. Bronson in 1878, the field was rested upon the care of Rev. Kandura R. Smith generally called as Kandura. He was purchased from his parents while a boy, and was reared in the Nowgong Orphan Institution. He seemed to have acquired extra-ordinary ability, and was given charge of the mission field with full authority as a missionary and the Girls' School to his wife, besides his added charge of the Nowgong Mission. The villages of the Kacharis and Rabhas could reach few by the Christian teachings and those few were also less susceptible to the gospel message. They confined their knowledge to the purposes of trade and when they attended the markets they did visit to the mission station. So, the Rabhas and Kacharis had keen attention and expectation to the missionaries from the beginning, such that Mr. Danforth spoke of their willingness for the gospel. He commented that already a number of Schools and Religious Books were inaugurated as Text-Books. In addition, Dr. Bronson states

that if the gospel once again began to take hold of the hearts of these Rabha Kacharis, multitudes would follow. The baptism of about eighty Hindus was recorded since 1878, probably from these communities. Rev. Endle of the Society for Propagation of Gospel Mission in Tezpur says that a great advantage was gained in working amongst these people by the use of their own languages instead of Assamese.

In fact, the Kols had not been the aim of direct effort for the missionaries. They did not seem to be numerous in the Kamrup district, though considerable companies might be met with some tea gardens. In October 1883, a company of 13 Kols came to Gauhati and were baptized by Kandura. In 1886, efforts were made to secure a teacher for them from their own tribe but could be not fulfilled. In the fall of 1885 Mr. and Mrs. Burdette were transferred from the Garos in Tura, and possibly returned for the previous work of Mr. and Mrs. Stoddard. Kandura continued to act as their assistant, and was in charge of all the Assamese services until the time of his voluntarily resignation in 1886. His skill full knowledge of English and ability to conduct religious services made his assistance highly esteemed to the new missionaries. For the proper functioning of the operation, the work was divided into Mission Station Work and Out Station Mission Work.

Owing to the areas, Guahati was found as the most important city in the whole of the province in Assam in 1886. Government buildings, the Church, School houses and the European residence had been occupied by the South Bank of the River and some adjacent land. Tea-planters and civil officers formed a good congregation when there was English preaching. The North side of the station was occupied by various races like Assamese, Rabhas, Kacharis, Garos, Nagas and even one village of Manipuris. The European and the Anglo-Indian population had the benefit of the services of a Chaplain of the Church of England who divided their time between Shillong and Gauhati. During the time of the Missionary Conference in 1886, apart from the **transient membership** of boys and girls in the mission station schools, there were but one Assamese Christian woman and one illiterate Garo and his wife who manifested a lively interest. One educated member of the Nowgong Church who resided in Gauhati, had proved to be a truly

devoted individual, and ten more who enrolled for membership might be counted as ciphers or worse.<sup>144</sup>

After the Missionary Conference in 1886, Kandura resigned from Mission work as he was dissatisfied with his pay and he also felt uncomfortable by the new missionaries and took away all the members except Garos from the membership of the church. Hence, the whole responsibility was rested upon the missionaries alone. The Gauhati Church was quite small in 1889, and numbered only four residents at Gauhati and fifteen Kols from the tea garden and two from Nowgong Church who lived in Gauhati. The evangelistic work at the station had consisted of almost *bazaar* preaching and Burdette who was assisted by his helpers Samuel and Kandura. Indeed, the resignation of Kandura had compelled the temporary relinquishment of work which might have otherwise been hopefully undertaken, and left the Assamese Department of the work altogether dependent on the leisure time of a missionary who was but imperfectly acquainted with the language and customs of the people. Thus, the work among the Assamese in the Gauhati field did not rapidly prosper.<sup>145</sup> The Missionary report of 1893 states that although the membership of the Gauhati mission station church was very small, the regular worship and prayer meeting continued to run. The street preaching was always listened to by an attentive crowd but the result was unknown. Among the Garo and Rabha villages, there were three self-sustaining churches. Mr. and Mrs. Burdette pursued the policy of self-support to make the local Christians to take own church responsibility for the evangelization of their heathen neighbors. The last Missionary Conference in 1889 saw years of real progress in the life of these churches as per the records. During this period, 156 had been baptized and the total membership in 1893 was 436.<sup>146</sup>

In 1895, there were five independent churches in the Gauhati mission station, one in the mission station, and four located in the Garo villages and the major part of the work was focused on the the Garos. Each of the four Garo churches became a centre for Christian influence and activity reaching out to a number of villages through which Christian schools and Christian services were

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<sup>144</sup> C.E. Burdette, 'History of the Guahati Field,' Jubilee Reports, Nowgong, December 18-29, 1886. January, 1903.

<sup>145</sup> C.E. Burdette, 'Report from Guahati Field,' Missionary Conference, Gauhati,, December 21-30, 1889. January, 1903

<sup>146</sup> C.D. King, 'Report from Gauhati Field,' A.B. Missionary Union, 3<sup>rd</sup> Triennial Conference, Tura, January 14-22, 1893.

maintained. The readiness to support a school also led to willingness to accept Christianity. Missionary C.D. King recommended Rikman's ordination and he became a sort of Bishop among Garos, in a large section of the field.

The Gauhati mission station church was numerically very small. One or two local Christians of more than average intellectual ability received all aid that the missionaries could give through their spiritual influence, but it was small.<sup>147</sup> The Missionary report of 1900 comments, Sunday *bazaar* preaching and a Garo preaching services were combined to the regular Assamese service. Moreover, attendance of the church meeting was small and seemed less spiritual.<sup>148</sup> By 1903, there were only five churches and of these four village churches comprised of 17 villages where schools were also situated.<sup>149</sup> In 1904, one of the village churches had decided to pay its own pastor a monthly salary but at the same time, some of the village churches found low spirituality. Mr. Burdette and Mr. Tuttle had toured the heathen villages mostly on the North Bank.<sup>150</sup> According to the Missionary report of 1907, he commented that there had been an increase in membership of 112 and two more churches had selected pastors to nurture believers and to improve in evangelistic campaign. The Association resolved to keep evangelists among the Rabha and Kachari village in 1905 but failed to attempt the same. During 1906, a worker was employed for ministry as well as teachers in five non-Christian villages. Thus, it resulted in a good number of conversions. Despite that, the **Mission Station had suffered much from epidemic diseases** in the past two years. **Dysentery and cholera** had carried away many members of the Christian community. The big loss of death was Rev. Rikman N. Sangma, an ordained pastor of the Mission.<sup>151</sup> There were five churches in the district with a membership of 1,026 at the end of 1908 and there were 21 branch churches.<sup>152</sup> The Missionary report in 1913 says that the growth had particularly characterized the educational department of the work however; the **spiritual condition of the churches was very unsatisfactory.**<sup>153</sup> The Missionary

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<sup>147</sup>. C.D. King, 'Report from Gauhati Field,' 4<sup>th</sup> Triennial Conference, Sibsagar, December 14-22, 1895.

<sup>148</sup>. C.E. Burdette, 'Report from Gauhati Field,' 6<sup>th</sup> Session of A.B. Missionary Conference, Gauhati, December 22-31, 1900.

<sup>149</sup>. C.E. Burdette, 'Report from Gauhati Field,' Missionary Union, Gauhati, December 27, 1902 to January, 1903.

<sup>150</sup>. A.J. Tuttle, 'Report from Gauhati Field,' Missionary Union, Guahati, December 24, 1904 to January 1, 1905.

<sup>151</sup>. A.J. Tuttle, 'Report from Gauhati Field,' A.B. Missionary Union, 9<sup>th</sup> Biennial Conference, Guahati, January 5-12, 1907.

<sup>152</sup>. A.E. Stephen, 'Report from Guahati Field,' A.B. Missionary Union, 10<sup>th</sup> Biennial Session, Gauhati, January 8-17, 1910.

<sup>153</sup>. A.E. Stephen, 'Report from Guahati Field,' 12<sup>th</sup> Biennial Session, Gauhati, January 4-13, 1913.

report of 1916 bore the establishment of the **Ward Memorial Church** on March 7, 1915. Regular evangelistic tours were made to the railway station, steamer *ghat*, *bazaars* and villages. In 1917 it was reported that there were ample fields to evangelize those who had never heard the gospel in some of the Garo areas.<sup>154</sup>

According to the Missionary report in 1926 states, the stations in Lower Assam had been left vacant by leaving Kampfer on furlough. Stephen and Swanson had taken charge of the fields in Upper Assam.<sup>155</sup> In 1927, it was reported that, the evangelistic work was handed over to A.J. Tuttle from O.L. Swanson.<sup>156</sup> The report of 1936 says, in the Garo work of Kamrup district, there were 23 churches and 32 branch churches with a membership of 1,805, while the Assamese had 6 churches with 8 branch churches.<sup>157</sup> In 1937, it was reported that the numbers of churches remained the same in the Assamese Association. But the Garo Association had become the stronger ones and reported to have six Christian Endeavor Societies.<sup>158</sup> In 1940, the Missionary report mentioned that the Garo churches appointed Kheong O. Sangma as an evangelist for one year, village teacher for three years and leader of his local church. Further, the first ordination among the Kamrup Garo churches was Rev. Ramkhe O. Sangma.<sup>159</sup>

Besides, in 1941, Horeswar Bordoloi was appointed as pastor in the Gauhati church.<sup>160</sup> In 1944, the report shows, that there was normal growth of the churches by baptisms from Christian families and schools. There was a good attendance of Indian soldiers and regular services in Assamese, English, Urdu and Tamil too. Minaram Basumatari was pastor in-charge of Assamese services.<sup>161</sup> In 1945, Mr. Edward Singha, a local Christian leader became engaged in the mission service. The Gauhati station church had crowded in the attendance of the services with men and women during war days and was reverting to the past. The Garo Association had 9 main

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<sup>154</sup>. A.E. Stephen, 'Report from Guahati Field,' Missionary Conference, 15<sup>th</sup> Session, Sibsagar, January, 15-22, 1917.

<sup>155</sup>. O.L. Swanson, 'Report from Gauhati,' Missionary Conference, Jorhat, December 2-10, 1926.

<sup>156</sup>. A.J. Tuttle, 'Report from Gauhati Field,' Missionary Conference, Golaghat, November 23- December 1, 1927.

<sup>157</sup>. A.J. Tuttle, 'Report from Gauhati Field,' A.B. Missionary Conference, Guahati, 34<sup>th</sup> Session, December 1-6, 1936.

<sup>158</sup>. A.J. Tuttle, 'Report from Gauhati Field,' A.B. Missionary Conference, 35<sup>th</sup> Session, Sadiya, December 8-13, 1937.

<sup>159</sup>. A.J. Tuttle, 'Report from Gauhati Field,' Missionary Conference, 37<sup>th</sup> Session, Jorhat, January 4-9, 1940.

<sup>160</sup>. J.M. Forbes, 'Report from Gauhati Field,' Missionary Conference, Golaghat, December, 4-9, 1941.

<sup>161</sup>. J.M. Forbes, 'Report from Gauhati Field,' Missionary Conference, 41<sup>st</sup> Session, Nowgong, November, 9-13, 1944.

churches with 29 branches and 19 Christian Endeavor Societies.<sup>162</sup> The 1946-47 report says that the Garo Association had almost given up the ministry to Rabhas due to their indifferences. It also emphasized on family and good Christian homes. The last Assamese Association was held at Moirapur and supported 8 Primary Schools and one M.E. School.<sup>163</sup> During 1948-49, the South Kamrup Garo Association reported that the Garo churches had focused chiefly on their non-Christian Garo neighbors through schools. The Assamese Association reported of two sponsored evangelists, one served for the tea garden coolies and the other among the Garos, Rabhas and Kacharis.<sup>164</sup>

More than former days, there were added a considerable number of educated natives who could understand English preaching. There was a still larger number who happily attended English services, but who would have more benefitted by imperfectly delivered message in their own language. Further, many of the people professed to believe but couldn't due to family and caste ties that could not break, and it supposed many of them remained secret disciples.

The expansion of the missionary enterprises throughout the valley was kept alive with the aim of attempting to reach out to the people of the plains and it became a presumptuous program. Thus the missionaries carried out for many decades to wrap the entire regions with the gospel and subsequently established several mission stations. They were still yet to commence to many more areas in the following years. Accordingly, the mission was enlarged to Mangaldai areas.

### **3.8. Mangaldai Mission Station**

The mission endeavor was embarked at Gauhati in 1843, and the Christian converts had been numbered 1204 in the Kamrup district, but not a single one of them was from the Northern region.<sup>165</sup> This consideration was vigorously in the mind of the missionary and enhanced its importance shortly by occupying this field. They recommended two missionaries for Mangaldai, one for the Assamese, and one for the Cacharis. This recommendation had been made by the

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<sup>162</sup>. Edward, Singha, 'Report from Gauhati Field,' Missionary Conference, 42<sup>nd</sup> Session, Jorhat, November, 8-12, 1945.

<sup>163</sup>. E. Singha, 'Report from Gauhati Field,' Missionary Conference, 44<sup>th</sup> Session, Jorhat, December, 10-14, 1947.

<sup>164</sup>. E. Singha, 'Reports from Gauhati Field,' Joint Conference, of the Missionaries and the Delegates of Assam Baptist Convention, 46<sup>th</sup> Session, Golaghat, January 3-9, 1950.

<sup>165</sup>. G.R. Kampfer, 'Report from Guahati North Bank,' Missionary Conference, 12<sup>th</sup> Biennial Session, Gauhati, January 4-13, 1913.

mission two years ago, and every year they impressed upon them to increase with the importance of taking immediate possession of this station.<sup>166</sup> Thus, the missionary labor of this area was not a new attempt and it had already rendered services excessively by the missionaries stationed at Gauhati and possibly without result.<sup>167</sup>

In 1914, the two members of this field were Kacharis. In 1915, there were two churches, and one un-ordained pastor and 296 members of the church. A school had been started for about a year and a teacher had been appointed to teach as well as preach. The school premise, church building and two small Boys' Dormitory were erected by the local people. The neighboring villages and *bazaars* noticed the converts preaching with great enthusiasm.<sup>168</sup> During 1915, there were 67 baptisms, but in 1916, 53 had been baptized and others were still waiting. The total membership was 367 in 1915. There were six established churches, and they raised funds for their own work (Rs. 457.00, and spent Rs. 314.00). Most of the churches had been engaged in cultivation jointly, in order to meet the need of the church. According to report of 1916, there was a privilege for the missionaries to work among the Assamese in Mangaldai, but the work was mostly encouraging among the Kacharis.<sup>169</sup> In 1917, the evangelistic services were conducted for the Assamese but after a few months they were suspended. The mission project among the Kacharis was continued to progress steadily. The missionary had also visited the Christian community at Tezpur. They were able to build a chapel with their own expenses and soon formed into a church with 19 memberships.<sup>170</sup>

The Missionary report in 1926 viewed that Rev. Tanuram Saikia was accompanied by Ranuka Marak who visited and made tours in the Mangaldai mission station. They decided to set aside their differences and worked together harmoniously for the future. Gradually, this field had increased in number and held greater baptism program.<sup>171</sup> In 1927, it was reported that 20

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<sup>166</sup>. Mission papers, Baptist Missionary Magazine, 1855, p. 177.

<sup>167</sup>. G.R. Kampfer, 'Report from Guahati North Bank,' Missionary Conference, 12<sup>th</sup> Biennial Session, Gauhati, January 4-13, 1913

<sup>168</sup>. G.R. Kampfer, 'Report from Guahati North Bank,' Missionary Conference, 13<sup>th</sup> Session, Golaghat, January 9-18, 1915.

<sup>169</sup>. G.R. Kampfer, 'Nowgong Field Report,' February, 17-24, 1916.

<sup>170</sup>. G.R. Kampfer, 'Report from Mangaldai Field,' Missionary Conference, 15<sup>th</sup> Session, Sibsagar, January 15-22, 1927.

<sup>171</sup>. O.L. Swanson, 'Report from Gauhati,' Missionary Conference, Jorhat, December 2-10, 1926.

schools by the Mangaldai Church Association were supported.<sup>172</sup> In 1931, in the population of 1,94,326 in the Mangaldai Mission Field, there were 4,678 Christians.<sup>173</sup> The Missionary report in February 1936 indicates that there were 47 churches. The field was shouldered to Tuttle when Mr. and Mrs. David left for America.<sup>174</sup> The Missionary report in December 1936 stated that 51 churches were added with 3,891 members and 98 baptisms. The Kacharis were more interested in Christianity even though the mission had done very little for them. The missionaries were spared for a short time and the church had to depend on their own leadership for a large area and thus the church could not give the best result. There were four evangelists in the field and the women had also begun the Gospel Teams. One of them named Colporteur was sponsored by the Bible Society.<sup>175</sup>

According to the report in 1937, the constant flow of evangelization suffered in this field for many years due to lack of qualified preachers to instruct the Christians and thus failed to promote inspiration. In addition, some of the churches did not perform the communion service for many years because the church had **no ordained pastor**.<sup>176</sup> In 1938, shows Romanus, the general evangelist who was old and was appointed two preachers to assist the mission work by the Association but both were poorly trained. There were 55 churches and about 3,880 members.<sup>177</sup> In 1940, Romanus was still taking care of the churches and **most of the churches had no pastor. However, many of the churches had gone through persecutions and hardships**. Nevertheless, the field planned to **celebrate their 25 year jubilee**.<sup>178</sup> In 1941, the main obstacle to the growth of Christianity in this region was the underlying desire to perpetuate the **Kachari customs**. The question was not, what was best for Christianity but what was the custom of the

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<sup>172</sup>. O.L. Swanson, 'Report of North Kamrup Fields,' Missionary Conference, Golaghat, November 23-December 1, 1927.

<sup>173</sup>. O.L. Swanson, 'Report of North Kamrup Fields,' Missionary Conference, Jorhat, December 2-8, 1931.

<sup>174</sup>. A.J. Tuttle, 'Report from Mongoldai Field,' Missionary Conference, Jorhat, February 3-6, 1936.

<sup>175</sup>. V.H. Sword, 'Report from North Kamrup Fields,' Missionary Conference, 34<sup>th</sup> Session, Gauhati, December 1-6, 1936.

<sup>176</sup>. V.H. Sword, 'Report from Mongoldai Field,' Missionary Conference, 35<sup>th</sup> Session, Sadiya, December 8-13, 1937.

<sup>177</sup>. Ibid. 1938.

<sup>178</sup>. V.H. Sword, 'Report from Mongoldai Field,' Missionary Conference, 37<sup>th</sup> Session, Jorhat, January 4-9, 1940.

tribe. Hence, it became one of the problems in the beginning of Christianity.<sup>179</sup> Moreover, the field had also under gone a crisis **on missionary staff**.<sup>180</sup>

In 1945, reports states that Romanos Daimari had continued to be a leading evangelist in the field. The field had 61 churches and a membership of 3,472.<sup>181</sup> In 1946, the Mangaldai district was divided into three sections, each supervised by an evangelist designated by the Association. Finally, due to the **lack of funds and missionary staff**, the Mangaldai field had been abandoned by the American Baptist Foreign Mission Society and the field had been taken over by another American Mission known as the General Conference.<sup>182</sup>

### 3.9. Goalpara Mission Station

In the beginning, Jenkins had urged the American Baptists to start a school for Garo boys at Goalpara in 1837, but they had renounced that on the ground of distance, since, it was quite far from their chosen field of Upper Assam. Notwithstanding, in 1847, Jenkins began a Government School for Garos at Goalpara. This school did not last long, but it was instrumental in preparing the path for the Christian enterprise among the Garos. Two of the students of that school, Omed and Ramkhe of watrepara village, were baptized at Gauhati in 1863. Thus, they were persuaded of the value of Christianity thought for their own people and went back to work among them in 1864.<sup>183</sup> On the invitation of Omed, Bronson visited the Garo region for the first time in 1867<sup>184</sup> and eventually, Goalpara which was first located as a mission field. In November, 1878, Mason departed Goalpara for Tura. Since then there had been **no missionaries stationed at Goalpara**. In January, 1893, Craighed was designated to Goalpara and soon left to Calcutta. There he was married to Miss Ida M. Kushmore of Burma Mission. They returned to Goalpara and due to the non-availability of quarters, took residence in Dhubri until they could build a house. Craighed had devoted his time to study the Bengali language as well as preaching in the

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<sup>179</sup>. V.H. Sword, 'Report from Mongoldai Field,' Missionary Conference, Golaghat, December 4-9, 1941.

<sup>180</sup>. J.M. Forbes, 'Report from Gauhati Field,' Missionary Conference, 41<sup>st</sup> Session, Nowgong, November, 9-13, 1944

<sup>181</sup>. Miss M. Burham, 'Report from Gauhati Field,' Missionary Conference, 42<sup>nd</sup> Session, Jorhat, November 8-12, 1945.

<sup>182</sup>. V.H. Sword, 'Report from Mongoldai Field,' Missionary Conference, 43<sup>rd</sup> Session, Gauhati, December 6-10, 1946.

<sup>183</sup>. William, Carey, *Garo Jungle Book*, pp. 51-80.

<sup>184</sup>. Frederick, S, Downs, *History of Christianity in India Volume V, Part 5*, Op.cit., p. 79.

*bazaar*. In September, 1893, Craighed was assisted by Stephen and both had made several tours to Goalpara, preaching in the *bazaar*.

The Goalpara field had also begun a separate field for missionary services in 1893. Rev. Thangkan Sangma had been visited to the Rabhas of Goalpara district and requested for the deputation of a separate missionary for the Rabhas. The American Baptist Missionaries for the Garos had also reported about a large population of Rabhas. He also reported of their villages with Garo Christian villages, and their willingness to listen to the gospel. The local Christians were also took active part in the evangelism campaign among the Rabhas. Paturam of Nishangram was a Rabha, who was designated as an evangelist to the Rabhas in 1893. In January, 1894, Mr. and Mrs. Craighead were forced to leave for America on ill health. In March, 1894, Arin of Resu, a Garo, began to work as an evangelist. In the same year a school was established, and Brinda, a Garo Christian who worked as teacher also did evangelistic work. Finally, the school was closed. A Bengali evangelist worked in Dhubri for four months, preaching in the *bazaar* and touring to the neighboring villages, but the work was **discontinued due to the evacuation of missionary** in Dhubri.

The Conference in 1895 recommended to have dispatched missionary shortly to the Rabhas in the Goalpara district. In February, 1895, Paturam and Arin both resigned from the service due to sickness and requirement of the domestic cares for the families. Stephen had learned the Rabha language with Brinda as a teacher. Later, they had compiled a small vocabulary in a manuscript.<sup>185</sup> In 1896, the location was selected by clearing a jungle, to erect buildings for launching a new field. In December 1896, Boggs from Tura joined them in visiting the Goalpara district and was cheered up by the prospect of the service among the Rabhas. In April 1897, the missionary bungalow was completed and the Stephens moved to the new mission house. But, an unfortunate event took place soon. The **great earthquake had ruined the building**. There was damage to things and instead of going out for preaching, it left them busy in repairing and rebuilding work.

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<sup>185</sup>. A.E. Stephen, Report from Goalpara Field, 4<sup>th</sup> Triennial Conference, Sibsagar, December 14-22, 1895.

In 1898, the missionary effort in evangelistic services was increased both in the town and other areas of the district. The evangelist to the Rabhas named Janing had been preached since May, 1896. The Garo churches had also appointed one evangelist.<sup>186</sup> In 1900, a report shows that Mr. and Mrs. Stephen, two evangelists and one village school teacher had worked among the Rabhas. A young Hindu man professed to believe in Jesus Christ but did not confess publicly. So, there had been no baptism and no churches were formed. On December 10, 1900, Janing had resigned from his work owing to family problems.<sup>187</sup> During 1903-1904, Mr. and Mrs. Stephen, one village school teacher and one Bengali evangelist served in this mission station. In 1903, Stephen was joined by Dadu Sangma who studied in the Goalpara Government High School and assisted in the preaching for the Rabhas and the Garos.<sup>188</sup> In 1907, the report indicated that the labor in this field did not furnish any remarkable progress although in many places there were interests projected more than before. The missionaries were preached in the *bazaar*, distributed tracts and sold over thousand gospels. Brindabon Marak taught in school and resumed in preaching.<sup>189</sup> The report of 1910 states, that people of eight different tribes had been baptized in this field. In 1908 an extensive tour of the workers was made and out of these 82.3 per cent worked among Bengali. There were a large number of Kachari villages but neither the missionaries nor workers knew their language, so they used common Bengali language. One church was organized with four branches in the villages. Except few, the baptisms were from heathen villages. But, a few converts had not been able to resist **drinking habits**, and some had been excommunicated for other faults too.<sup>190</sup>

According to a report in 1913, it was a year of launching Motor, which helped the mobility of missionary for Mission Trips.<sup>191</sup> In 1915, it was reported that there had been a steady and normal growth of services. Unlikely, the Rajbangshis who had accepted Christianity was to turn for business concerns and the collecting of money for the **betterment of their temporal conditions rather than for seeking spiritual growth**. Further, the same intention and desire was seen in other places too. The scattered number of Santhalis in the North-West of the district had been

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<sup>186</sup> . A.E. Stephen, Report from Goalpara Field, 5<sup>th</sup> Triennial Conference, Dibrugarh, February 11-19, 1899.

<sup>187</sup> . A.E. Stephen, Report from Goalpara Field, 6<sup>th</sup> Session, Gauhati, December 22-31, 1900.

<sup>188</sup> . A.E. Stephen, Report from Goalpara Field, 8<sup>th</sup> Session, Gauhati, December 24, 1904 to January 1, 1905.

<sup>189</sup> . A.E. Stephen, Report from Goalpara Field, 9<sup>th</sup> Biennial Conference, Gauhati, January 5-12, 1907.

<sup>190</sup> . A.C. Bowers, Report from Goalpara Field, 10<sup>th</sup> Biennial Session, Gauhati, January 8-17, 1910.

<sup>191</sup> . A.C. Bowers, Report from Goalpara (Dhubri side), 12<sup>th</sup> Biennial Session, Gauhati, January 4-13, 1913.

baptized. There were 1500 Santhal Christians in the Rangpur district. The majority of the Christians on this field were the Garos. There were three organized churches.

Nonetheless, the **Hindus and Muslims had listened respectfully but never promised to become Christians.** Hindi, English, Garo, Assamese Bibles and Kachari gospel were sold. Besides, ten thousand tracts were distributed each year.<sup>192</sup> Meanwhile, the Christian community started to grow slowly around Dhubri but as the missionary stationed was far away at Goalpara, correspondence became difficult and the work could not progress rapidly. In 1915, there were 4 churches with a total membership of 250.<sup>193</sup> During 1916, Bowers spent almost 8 months touring the Northern side of the Brahmaputra. He had spent much time in Dhubri. There were Bible Classes and 30 baptisms. Yet, the missionary found it impossible to develop a church in Dhubri because there were no missionary personnel who resided in Goalpara. The village mission schools had been closed and the evangelists were assigned on half-time. In addition, the missionary suggested in 1916, that the Dhubri Centre be relinquished or handed over to some other Mission, owing to the **lack of quarters and a full-fledged missionary.** In 1917, it was reported that Bowers did not have time for touring the Goalpara district as he was in charge of the Sadiya Field for 8 months.<sup>194</sup> **The strongest mission on the Northern Bank of the Brahmaputra was among the Kacharis of the Goalpara district.** This work had been paid attention by Mr. Minaram Basumatari and his wife.<sup>195</sup> In 1936, Sword felt sorry for he could not provide full-time missionary personnel for the Baptists of North Bank. He was highly impressed by the huge gathering of the Annual Association meeting under the able leadership of Minaram.<sup>196</sup> In 1937, the missionary staff visited this mission station only once and the service was shouldered by Minaram.<sup>197</sup> In 1938, the Goalpara region continued to be their mission field and the work was progressing.<sup>198</sup>

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<sup>192</sup>. A.C. Bowers, Report from Goalpara Field, 13<sup>th</sup> Session, Golaghat, January 9-18, 1915.

<sup>193</sup>. A.C. Bowers, Report from Goalpara Field, 14<sup>th</sup> Session, Nowgong, February 17-24, 1916.

<sup>194</sup>. A.C. Bowers, Report from Goalpara Field, 15<sup>th</sup> Session, Sibsagar, January 15-22, 1917.

<sup>195</sup>. A.J. Tuttle, 'Report from Goalpara Field,' Missionary Conference, Jorhat, February 3-6, 1936.

<sup>196</sup>. V.H. Sword, 'Report from Goalpara Fields,' Missionary Conference, Gauhati, December 1-6, 1936.

<sup>197</sup>. V.H. Sword, 'Report from Goalpara Fields,' 35<sup>th</sup> Session, Sadiya, December 8-13, 1937.

<sup>198</sup>. V.H. Sword, 'Report from Goalpara Fields,' 36<sup>th</sup> Session, Sadiya, December 8-13, 1938.

In 1940 it was reported that, the Annual Association was organized in 1939.<sup>199</sup> In 1940, the mission school had continued to develop good services through its educational program.<sup>200</sup> In 1941, it had been reported to have several New Church buildings were inaugurated.<sup>201</sup> The Missionary report in 1944 commented that this field was quite far from Gauhati and faced difficulty in trip and thus it had been neglected. The people were Boros and Baptists.<sup>202</sup> They had **no trained leaders** among them and there were only a few literate women. Consequently, some of the older men had reverted to the custom of keeping more than one wife, and the **habit of drinking rice beer became a disrupting** force in the village churches.<sup>203</sup> Lastly, the American Baptist Mission handed over the field to the Australian Baptist Mission. In 1946, two Australian Baptist Missionaries were deputed to work in this field.<sup>204</sup> Then the mission was focused to the North Lakhimpur.

### 3.10. North Lakhimpur Mission Station

The Executive Committee of the Home Board and the whole Baptist Brethren emphasized the need for the designation of a missionary family to the Kols work in the Sibsagar district. This need was fulfilled by the appointment of Mr. Petrick, who was at that time a missionary under the “**Gossner Evangelical Lutheran Mission**” in central India. He was ordained at the request of the Gauhati Church in 1889 and appointed a missionary under the American Baptist Foreign Mission Society designated to the Sibsagar district.<sup>205</sup> In 1890, he dispatched two preachers from Sibsagar district to North Lakhimpur to look on the numerous tea gardens for the possibility of preaching in the vicinity. They visited several gardens but could not obtain permission. In March, 1891, Petrick sent them for the second time and received permission to visit Joyhing tea garden. He found a village of Bengali speaking people near North Lakhimpur, who were willing to hear the gospel. Hence, this encouraged both the missionary and the local preachers. In November, 1891, Petrick himself visited North Lakhimpur and conducted baptism for the first batch of Christians in the Ronga River. The baptism programs were increased and

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<sup>199</sup> V.H. Sword, ‘Report from Goalpara Field,’ Missionary Conference, 37<sup>th</sup> Session, Jorhat, January 4-9, 1940.

<sup>200</sup> V.H. Sword, ‘Report from Goalpara Fields,’ Missionary Conference, Kohima, January 22-28, 1941.

<sup>201</sup> V.H. Sword, ‘Report from Goalpara Fields,’ Missionary Conference, Golaghat, December 4-9, 1941.

<sup>202</sup> J.M. Forbes, ‘Report from Goalpara-North Kamrup, Nowgong, November 9-13, 1944.

<sup>203</sup> Miss M. Burham, ‘Report from Goalpara Field,’ Missionary Conference, Jorhat, November 8-12, 1945.

<sup>204</sup> V.H. Sword & Burham, ‘Report from Goalpara Field,’ Missionary Conference, Guahati, December 6-10, 1946.

<sup>205</sup> Victor, Hugo Sword, *Baptists in Assam A Century of Missionary Service 1836-1936*, Op.cit., p. 121.

made tour twice a year. At the end of 1892, Nathanael was dispatched from Teok to locate permanently in North Lakhimpur. As a result, conversions raised and a few people of Joyhing garden began to pay attention. Thus, Petrick wrote to America in 1893, urging a missionary for North Lakhimpur. The same year in December, John Firth and his wife arrived in Assam and was appointed to North Lakhimpur. Since, there was no residence at North Lakhimpur, Mr. and Mrs. Firth were put up in Sibsagar. In January, 1894, John, the ordained preacher from Sibsagar visited the field and baptized 25 members, and 20 of them were from Joyhing. In April, 1894, Firth toured again to Joyhing and procured a piece of land in North Lakhimpur for a Compound, and in October, 1894, Mr. and Mrs. Firth occupied a small house in the Mission Compound at North Lakhimpur and the building work began shortly.

The construction of the missionary bungalow was completed and shifted on June, 1895. But the missionaries soon **suffered from severe fever**. In the beginning of October, 1895, Firth started visiting and explored a western side of North Lakhimpur where no missionary or preacher had ever visited before and there he found a large number of tea garden coolies who were Lutherans from their birth place in Nagpur. They **had no missionary with them for the last ten or twelve years** in Assam and **had gone back to their heathenism**. Among them, only one man and his wife had not been fully denounced because he had been a preacher at Nagpur. These people were determined to accept Christianity again and were baptized in November and was designated a preacher. The new converts formed a new Christian village in the Ronga River and were Bengali speaking people. They were coming from their village to attend services in the missionary bungalow and sometimes, there were held in their village. Firth had toured often to the Christians in Ronga and Joyhing gardens. In 1895, there was one church and 73 Christians in this mission station.<sup>206</sup>

In 1896, Mr. and Mrs. O. L. Swanson had deputed to join Firth in North Lakhimpur. Swanson had given untiring labor in erecting his bungalow, chapel and evangelism. Mrs. Swanson was visiting door to door. Thereafter, they had established churches in different places where Christians were residing. Each church selected one pastor from their own members and deacon, and the work seemed to flourish. The Christians were mostly **Mundaris** from Nagpur in this

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<sup>206</sup>. John, Firth, Report from North Lakhimpur, Sibsagar, December 14-22, 1895.

mission field. In 1899, there were 40 Bengali speaking people and some other different castes had been baptized. They were Hindus and many of them had turned **back to their old faith because of the earnest request of their relatives**. Nevertheless, John Firth also requested for a missionary to the Daplas. But instead of a missionary from America, the Garo Hills assigned a young man named Tosin, who already had begun the work among them by establishing a small school in a village.<sup>207</sup>

In 1900, the mission endeavor was growing in this station but many of them were just **nominal Christians**. In spite of this, one village erected a chapel with their own funds. In addition, there was another church which was grounded on strict church discipline and suspended all members who were irregular in attending church services and did not pay money for the support of the pastor. Obviously, the disciplinary action made the church sound and stronger.

The Nepalis from Nepal including men, women and children between Dibrugarh and Tezpur inhabited large villages. John Firth baptized a man and his wife. The man was an opium consumer and they helped him to get rid of the habit through medicine. A Dapla young man also was baptized. The Garo Baptists had sponsored a missionary among the Daplas for almost three years. Miss Firth reached North Lakhimpur with the vision to serve among the Daplas. Since, the door was not opening for her and she did labor particularly for the Daplas in the mission field itself.<sup>208</sup>

Mrs. Firth returned to America in the spring of 1901. Rev. and Mrs. H. B. Dickson arrived at North Lakhimpur in November of the same year. **The German Lutherans had served for two years** in this mission station and created confusion among people. The chapels and six churches had been organized themselves with **Gongs**. On other side, the services of the **three tea gardens had been closed since the manager of the garden prohibited** the laborers from attending the services. Thus, **two abandoned chapels had been collapsed. Four churches had been destroyed by the Lutherans** and there was only one village church prospering at Doolakat in

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<sup>207</sup>. John, Firth, Report from North Lakhimpur, 5<sup>th</sup> Triennial Conference, Dibrugarh, February 11-19, 1899.

<sup>208</sup>. John, Firth, Report from North Lakhimpur, 6<sup>th</sup> Session, Gauhati, December 22-31, 1900.

the entire mission field.<sup>209</sup> H.B. Dickson worked hard by encouraging the churches to send their boys to school and raised funds to support a preacher. Indeed, Rev. and Mrs. Dickson could save the mission from the dark period. Thus, there were few baptisms that took place in 1903. In January 1904, Joseph Paul accompanied a preacher from the Upper Assam Association. He had visited North Lakhimpur among Miris in the Subansiri River and hundreds of them flocked to listen the preaching. They received with thankful hearts, medical help and a sack of rice. Thereby, the missionary was urged by them to visit again. The same year of 1904, Paul had visited the Darrang district and the North Lakhimpur field. In All these tours, they had visited villages, markets, road-side crowds, gardens and preached, sold books, distributed tracts, answered queries and baptized a few. In the summer season, the mission station school boys had accompanied the missionary to visit nearby markets and sang gospel songs which attracted a large number of people. Henceforth, it encouraged the neighboring churches through music ministry.

### 3.10.1. Opium addiction

Opium addiction was rampant among the people. There were 25 per cent of the Christians, most backward ones, who had indulged in opium habits at North Lakhimpur in Upper Assam. In November, 1904, an important meeting was held on issue of opium use and a firm decision was taken to resolve it – (i) before baptism a candidate was scrutinized carefully; (ii) any member of the church who was using opium was warned and if anyone was not free from this abuse, he/she would be excluded from the church membership.

The missionary continued to labor in the **Darrang district** as well as in the tea gardens. But missionary was dismayed by looking at a **large number of people coming with Christian names and heathen hearts**. Interestingly, the missionary is description stated them as “**drunken beggars with a false notion of what Christianity was. A Mission to them was a golden Cow which must be milked lest she die.**”<sup>210</sup> Mr. and Mrs. Paul had continued to be in-charge of this mission station. In 1907, it was reported that there had been a great change in the condition of the churches in the station. As a result, the number of boys and girls came out with new life from the

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<sup>209</sup>. John, Firth, Report from North Lakhimpur, 7<sup>th</sup> Session, Gauhati, December 27, 1904-January 1, 1905.

<sup>210</sup>. Joseph, Paul, Report from North Lakhimpur, Gauhati, December 24, 1904-January 1, 1905.

station school. 1906 was considered the best year because of the formation of the North Lakhimpur Association which marked a blessing to the young people of different churches who united and preached to non-Christian neighbors. The **Miris (Mishings) had been the most attentive listeners but none of them sought to take baptism.** Yet, during 1905 and 1906, there had been 43 and 114 persons baptized.<sup>211</sup> Unfortunately, in 1908, a natural catastrophe had visited the mission field. **Cholera, small-pox and fever affected the people and it caused the mission field work to be in a standstill.** But in 1909, the condition improved and Bible Classes were held by the missionaries to instruct workers and local Christians. Hence, the North Lakhimpur Baptist Association became a vigorous body in meeting annually. The different Christian communities organized themselves into churches and each had its own pastor in this mission field. There were 11 churches in this mission field in 1910.<sup>212</sup>

The Missionary report of 1913 stated that there were 9 churches with pastors in the field. Sunday Schools, Prayer Meetings and Disciplinary actions were maintained regularly. The North Lakhimpur and Bishnath churches organized an Association and had sponsored 4 evangelists. In 1912, the total membership was 529 with 14 churches.<sup>213</sup> In the report of 1915, there were 15 established churches with a total membership of 594. The pastors were farming to support their families as well as shepherding the sheep of the churches. They were committed and had a spiritually sound doctrine and a vibrant evangelistic zeal. The churches had also produced capable deacons with Bible training to assist pastors. In 1913, Rev. M. Paulus, a Mundari, was ordained and four evangelists designated to work in the mission field. The Roman Catholics, Lutherans and the S.P.G. also worked nearby them.

During 1914, the five churches in **Darrang** had organized into an Association. They raised funds and had begun to work in both Darrang and North Lakhimpur mission stations.<sup>214</sup> In 1916 it was reported to have 87 persons baptized and labor extended to a number of new places. Two infant churches were established. There were 640 members in these two fields in 1916. Unfortunately, one church **excommunicated 14 members for consuming opium** and several members

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<sup>211</sup>. Joseph, Paul, Report from North Lakhimpur, Gauhati, January 5-12, 1907.

<sup>212</sup>. John, Firth, Report from North Lakhimpur, Gauhati, January 8-10, 1910

<sup>213</sup>. John, Firth, Report from North Lakhimpur, Gauhati, January 4-13, 1913.

<sup>214</sup>. John, Firth, Report from North Lakhimpur, Golaghat, January 9-18, 1915.

including one deacon returned to heathenism after working for a quarter of a century. Later, they had been restored. The evangelistic services in both stations were managed by the Association.<sup>215</sup> Sometimes, unexpected disaster visited the mission station. In 1917, the natural calamities had hampered the steady advancement of the churches. There had been a **large number of deaths from cholera, flood** and this led to the complete desolation of the mission field. There was also coaxed of baptized six families by the German Lutherans. Nevertheless, the North Lakhimpur-Darrang Mission Field reported of Missionary who toured to village churches and schools and established new churches and several chapels in these two fields. However, the **Darrang** Association was **drained of qualified leaders**, since most of the capable leaders had died and those existing ones did not have interested in the church leadership.

Yet, a delightful moment dawned on the mission field by the arrival of new missionaries, Rev. and Mrs. Bengt Anderson, who had been appointed to North Lakhimpur to assist Mr. and Mrs. Firth due to ill health ground.<sup>216</sup> In 1927, the report says that, Rev. B.I. Anderson accompanied Firth in the visits of the Darrang and started to learn the language. He also assisted Firth in the baptism of 26 persons. In the mission church, Anderson noticed that there were only missionaries and the *Chaukidar* (watchman) who appeared to listen to the words of the preacher. The actual results were often nil because the missionaries did not understand the sermons of the preacher and the *Chaukidar* remained in slumber throughout the service. Later, the station school was opened and there had been different programs organized, such as Sunday Schools, Mid-Week Prayer Meetings and Preaching in the Markets as well as in the Gardens. In these meetings, there were 300 gospels sold and over a thousand tracts distributed. But the result was not so great. In 1927, there were 21 churches and about 700 members at North Lakhimpur district, while in the Darrang district, there were 11 churches and 437 members. The most pursuing feature of the evangelistic task for the missionaries had been the keen attention shown by the **Miris** in Christianity, though they did not yet publicly accept the new faith.<sup>217</sup>

In 1936, the North Lakhimpur and Darrang clapped together and there were 49 churches, 1830 members and 10 Christian Endeavour Societies. They were all self-supporting and self-

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<sup>215</sup>. John, Firth, Report from North Lakhimpur, Nowgong, February 17-24, 1916.

<sup>216</sup>. John, Firth, Report from North Lakhimpur-Darrang Fields, Jorhat, December 2-10, 1926.

<sup>217</sup>. B.I. Anderson, Report from North Lakhimpur, Golaghat, November 23-December 1, 1927.

propagating churches. The funds were raised from every believer from their farms and domestic animals. In March, 1936, J. W. Cook, the missionary reached to **Harchurah** tea estate and baptized 46 people.<sup>218</sup> In 1937, R.W. Holm took charge of the North Lakhimpur and Darrang districts. Holm along with Cooks toured for the evangelization of the neighboring areas.<sup>219</sup> In 1938, the Darrang Association was held at Singimari with over 200 delegates. There were 23 churches, 748 members, 81 baptized and contributions to a total of Rs. 1,240, of which over Rs. 700 was earmarked for the construction of a new church. The Lakhimpur Association was held at dekiajuli with an attendance of 1000. It had 34 churches, 972 members, collected Rs.911.00 baptized of 85.<sup>220</sup> In 1939, the missionaries toured North Lakhimpur and found a hopeful sign in the formation of a “**Gospel Team**” for the growth of the churches. The team of the **Doolibil** church sold over 1,000 gospels in one year. There were 42 churches and baptisms numbered over 150. Along with this, a Women’s Association was also organized in North Lakhimpur under the zealous leadership of three women Rohini, Monica and Mary.<sup>221</sup>

The report of 1941 commented, that there were 52 churches scattered in the North Lakhimpur and **Darrang** with a membership of 1933 and 22 Christian Endeavour Societies in the churches. There were 9 evangelists and the baptized numbered to 132.<sup>222</sup> In 1944, there were 46 churches, 2,350 members and 117 baptisms. There were 13 active evangelists in the North Lakhimpur and Darrang Fields.<sup>223</sup> In 1945, it had reached to 30 organized Baptist Churches at North Lakhimpur and six Christian Endeavour Societies but services declined. The Darrang Field had 25 churches with six evangelists. Indeed, the Christians of these mission stations had been **waiting for a full-fledged missionary**.<sup>224</sup> Consequently, the missionary could not be dispatched to them and thereupon, the North Lakhimpur mission station could **shoulder the responsibility no longer by the native Christians**. Finally, the mission went through a crisis of no trained missionary staff and no qualified leader. Yet, the missionaries were also interested to work among Miris in Pthalipam and hence began to do so respectively.

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<sup>218</sup>. J.W. Cook, Report from North Lakhimpur, 34<sup>th</sup> Session, Gauhati, December 1-6, 1936.

<sup>219</sup>. R.W. Holm, Report from North Lakhimpur, 35<sup>th</sup> Session, Sadiya, December 8-13, 1937.

<sup>220</sup>. C.E. Hunter, Report from North Lakhimpur, 36<sup>th</sup> Session, Sadiya, December 8-13, 1938.

<sup>221</sup>. J.W. Cook, Report from North Lakhimpur-Darrang, Jorhat, 37<sup>th</sup> Session, January 4-9, 1940.

<sup>222</sup>. J.W. Cook, Report from North Lakhimpur-Darrang, Golaghat, 38<sup>th</sup> Session, December 4-9, 1941.

<sup>223</sup>. J.W. Cook, Report from North Lakhimpur-Darrang, Nowgong, 41<sup>st</sup> Session, November 9-13, 1944.

<sup>224</sup>. R.W. Holm, Report from North Lakhimpur-Darrang, 42<sup>nd</sup> Session, Jorhat, November 8-12, 1945.

### 3.11. Pathalipam Mission Station

The commencement of the mission field in **Pathalipam** was recommended by the Missionary Conference in 1893 to dispatch two men at North Lakhimpur, one for the Bengali speaking peoples, and the other, for the Miris.<sup>225</sup> Thereafter, Paul had been designated to work among Miris, a hill tribe, many of whom lived on the banks of the river. It had been reported by a tea planter that the Miris were open to the gospel, and if a missionary were to be sent among them many would become Christians. It was upon this glowing report that Mr. Petrick requested to the Conference for a missionary for the Miris, and the Conference in return made the appeal to the Board which bore positive results and Mr. Paul was sent out to accomplish this need.<sup>226</sup> It was stressed by John Firth, who had also seen a number of Miris surrounded the North Lakhimpur and the prospect of introducing Christianity among them. He continued to plead for a missionary to be sent urgently.

Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Paul were sent from America and arrived at North Lakhimpur in January, 1895. Shortly, Paul had visited and found numerous Miris in Assam speaking Assamese language and discovered that the only way access their villages was by boat. Accordingly, after the rainy season, Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Paul along with a native preacher visited by boat and preached in the Miri Villages on the Ronga and Subansiri Rivers. In November, 1895, a location was selected for a Mission Compound at Pathalipam, a little village on the Subansiri River, in the North-East of North Lakhimpur,<sup>227</sup> at the foot of the Himalaya Mountains. In October, 1896, Mr. and Mrs. Paul had shifted to Pathalipam to a temporary house. The following six months were spent in gathering materials and building a bungalow. Meanwhile, on Sundays, they toured the villages and preached to the Miris, Bengali, Assamese and others. Four persons inhabited near the mission compound professed in faith and were baptized in the Subansiri River. As a result, **two returned back to their old religion** because they had a false notion and **expected worldly gains** while accepting Christianity. The other two remained faithful but had moved to Sibsagar.

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<sup>225</sup>. John, Firth, Report from North Lakhimpur, 4<sup>th</sup> Triennial Conference, Sibsagar, December 14-22, 1895.

<sup>226</sup>. Victor, Hugo Sword, *Baptists in Assam A Century of Missionary Service 1836-1936*, Op.cit., p. 123.

<sup>227</sup>. John, Firth, Report from North Lakhimpur, 4<sup>th</sup> Triennial Conference, Sibsagar, December 14-22, 1895

Consequently, there were many signs of genuine interests in Christianity in the neighboring villages and it was assumed from their enquiries that many would accept Christianity, but when it came to the total surrendering of their old religion, it all withered away. They expressed gladness for the missionary visits and made arrangements for their lodge and comforts, by voluntarily offering firewood, eggs, chicken and milk for free. They fixed a time for the gathering and came on time to listen the word of God. They accompanied the missionary after the meeting with further enquiries at the boat. They spent late night on the cold river bank asking questions about Christianity. They would visit again early in the morning seeking for books to help them to recollect what they had been heard. Some of them would confess the vacuum of Hinduism, their sins and the need of salvation. They confessed more than which had shown a genuine interest in Christianity. It is astonishing to note that some of these persons sailed by boat and on foot, over a hundred miles to enquire a Tea planter. Either the missionary was preaching the Truth, and **whether they had to expect money, cattle and other helps if they would become Christians.**

In the beginning of 1897, Paul had visited every village again along the Subansiri River. John, the local preacher, who had been greatly annoyed because of the deceit and cunning ways of the Miris, came back to his native town. Whatsoever, Paul persevered to reach many villages and received keen listeners. The same year in November, Paul again moved out and camped in the midst of several Miri villages. As a result, several young men were convinced and willing to renounce Hinduism, but the **separation from homes, relatives and friends stood as barrier** in the acceptance of Christianity. In fact, Paul had constant zeal for the Miris. In another village, Paul pursued and convinced an influential man who was an **opium consumer**. In spite of the threat from a Gohain, he continued steadfast in his new faith.<sup>228</sup>

But Mr. Paul soon found that the mission field of the labor was far from promising and in April, 1898, he wrote to the Board that a great mistake has been made in placing a bungalow at Pthalipam, and suggested setting up a mission station elsewhere. In another letter, Mr. Paul wrote the impracticability of continuing service among the Miris. He had visited several times to the Dibrugarh district several times with Firth and Swanson, who were so impressed by the big

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<sup>228</sup>. Joseph, Paul, Report from Pthalipam, 5<sup>th</sup> Triennial Conference, Dibrugarh, February 11-19, 1899.

city and its strategic condition as well as by the number of large tea gardens, that they at once owed Paul to relocate there. Finally, in 1898 the Board sanctioned Paul's transfer to Dibrugarh and a compound with a bungalow was purchased and Dibrugarh made another mission field for the North Lakhimpur district of the South of the Brahmaputra River<sup>229</sup> in Assam. Thus, Paul returned to Sibsagar and met Messers Gurney, Petrick, Swanson and Firth<sup>230</sup> and thereafter Paul arrived to live in the Dibrugarh mission station. Subsequently, after his transfer, the Pathalipam mission station was abandoned.

### 3.12. Dibrugarh Mission Station

Miles Bronson resided for a short time in Dibrugarh during 1878-1879. After that, there was no further attempt made in the Dibrugarh mission station by the American Baptist Missionary till the Pauls arrival there from Pathalipam mission field in January, 1898. So, the actual Mission enterprise started only in January, 1898 at Dibrugarh and the first baptism of three Bengalis was performed in February of the same year in the Brahmaputra River. There were already four baptized members and these three organized into a small church. There were good number of preaching tours in the *bazaars* and about twelve hundred portions of Scripture and Tracts had been sold and distributed. In the town six persons were diligent enquirers, one of whom was a young Brahmin.

Meanwhile Dr. Duncan granted some amount for the settlement of the missionaries in Dibrugarh but the money was ever received. In spite of that, Joseph Paul embarked to labor among the Tea garden workers. Paul established amity with Tea Planters and obtained permission to work among the Tea gardeners, and started a prayer meeting at **Tallap Dak** Bungalow in October 13, 1898 along with two Nagpur preachers. Hence, within a few days, they had accessed over 34,000 Coolies. The work was led by the baptism of 82 persons and the **formation of four small churches** with a membership of 92. The task of evangelization was carried out easily with the German Lutheran Mission and other Missions who had already ploughed the ground.<sup>231</sup>

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<sup>229</sup>. Victor, Hugo Sword, *Baptists in Assam A Century of Missionary Service 1836-1936*, Op.cit., pp. 123-124.

<sup>230</sup>. Joseph, Paul, Report from Pathalipam, 5<sup>th</sup> Triennial Conference, Dibrugarh, February 11-19, 1899

<sup>231</sup>. Joseph, Paul, Report from Pathalipam and Dibrugarh, 5<sup>th</sup> Triennial Conference, Dibrugarh, February 11-19, 1899

Besides, Paul had been in charge of the Dibrugarh mission station till the coming of a new missionary, Rev. A. J. Parker on July, 1899. Subsequently, the numbers of Baptist churches were six with a membership of about 150. Rev. Parker was assisted by Benjamin, a strong and effective native preacher and Monsid, the Mundari preacher had toured and preached at Christians congregations and sold hundreds of Scriptures in the weekly markets. There were interested enquirers and applications for baptisms. Before the construction of the Dibrugarh Baptist Church, the services had been organized in the mission bungalow by Benjamin and Parker, and afterwards the small beautiful chapel was built by the members.<sup>232</sup> The missionaries also visited the villages but most of the time remained in the town due to sickness. Nevertheless, there were 72 persons baptized in 1902. Here, it is worthwhile to mention the labor of Reuben, a native preacher as he served for eight months in the **Oriya** church which assembled new converts in Dumduma. He also instructed and preached in the Bengali language. Benjamin was the only other evangelist appointed by the mission and produced a good work but sickness forced him to be bedridden. Each of them was paid Rs. 16.00 per month. Indeed, the overall view of the mission field did not seem to be budding to the missionary.<sup>233</sup>

By the end of 1903, Paul was again in charge of the Dibrugarh mission station, after which, he had been transferred to North Lakhimpur. Petrick was assumed charge of the Dibrugarh field along with charge of the Sibsagar field. Petrick travelled by trains to most of the tea gardens near the railways at Dibrugarh. Thus, the visiting of the gardens in this field was easier than other districts. Petrick had baptized 11 persons in two places, 8 at Pekewijan and 3 at Samdeng. There were **three churches in the Dibrugarh** district, Pekewijan, Bisekoja and Samdeng. But the prospect was not auspicious in those churches than the other. In the Dibrugarh town, there were only three members in the church, one was baptized at Dibrugarh and the other two elsewhere. The missionary did not find Dibrugarh town to be was a flourishing for the mission project. There were three members at Robung-Tallap, and two at Aborpathar near Dibrugarh. These two places of Christians were Santhals. Sri Diba was a member of a Baptist church of Aborpathar and Charles Chuntu of Robung was formerly a Catholic. Both were found to be excellent,

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<sup>232</sup>. A.J. Parker, Report from Dibrugarh Field, Guahati, December 22-31, 1900.

<sup>233</sup>. Joseph, Paul, Report from Dibrugarh Field, Guahati, December 27, 1902-January 1, 1903.

intelligent and sincere Christians.<sup>234</sup> Petrick visited Dibrugarh mission field for 64 days in 1905 and 55 days in 1906. He had baptized 21 members during the last two years. A new church was established at Ledo. Ledo was a mission station of the Arthington Mission. This mission aimed to open a station for the Hill Tribes but hardly spared. Only a few **Singpho and Fakial villages** were near enough to Ledo to work from there. The Arthington Mission had gained no converts and no baptisms. Later, the work of this mission was abandoned.

Nevertheless, the mode of work had been changed to continue this field. So Petrick began work in different basis at Ledo. The result of this new style of work had been the baptism of four members; three **Mundas** and one Caste Hindu. This small Christian community, along with the preacher and his family, was the beginning of the foundation of a strong church in Ledo. There were 4 churches and 128 members.<sup>235</sup> The report of Petrick in 1910 commented that the labor of the Dibrugarh mission station had **faced difficulties** for the growth of the mission. **Most of the converts were on tea gardens and thus, the work was more unstable** than in the Sibsagar Mission Field.

Meanwhile, the climate was also not so much favorable to the people as in the Sibsagar mission station. For example, in the Sibsagar district, it had more than 1,000 members in the previous year, only 18 deaths, which was a very low death rate for Assam. But in the Dibrugarh, it had 150 members and 12 deaths, which indicated a **high death rate**. Indeed, all these factors declined the membership growth and posed as a great obstacle to the vigorous development of the enterprise. In spite of the fact, Petrick had offered untiring services to the mission field. He spent two months in 1907 and also in 1908 toured and about a month in 1909. The membership of the churches in the Sibsagar district was 1,069, but in the Dibrugarh district, 154.<sup>236</sup> The missionary had spent 48 days in 1912. The report of 1913 stated that the **Roman Catholics have hindered the growth** of some of the churches, and had **decoyed a score or members away**, yet there had been a baptism program added aggregating 214 in the Sibsagar and Dibrugarh stations. The churches were self-supported by paying the salary of their pastors and erected chapels.

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<sup>234</sup>. C.E. Petrick, Report from Dibrugarh Field, 8<sup>th</sup> Session, December 24, 1904-January 1, 1905.

<sup>235</sup>. C.E. Petrick, Report from Dibrugarh Field, 9<sup>th</sup> Biennial Conference, Guahati, January 5-12, 1907.

<sup>236</sup>. C.E. Petrick, Report from Sibsagar and Dibrugarh, 10<sup>th</sup> Session, Guahati, January 8-17, 1910.

Therefore, **two infant churches had been constituted** and regular services were held in six new places in these two mission fields.<sup>237</sup>

In **1916, there were four churches** in the Dibrugarh mission station. The entire mission field was carried out **single handedly**, by Tanaram Saikia. He had to tour to the churches and run the school too with much difficulties in the remote areas.<sup>238</sup> During this intervention, the missionaries also aimed to open a mission field in Golaghat.

### **3.13. Golaghat Mission Station**

The American missionary consultations decided that the missionaries were to set apart some of their time to the Golaghat sub-division too. Shortly, they came to the solution that it was best for Mr. O.L. Swanson to devote his time to the Golaghat Mission Station, and as a result, he made his first missionary tour in the district in 1898, accompanied by three native assistants.<sup>239</sup> One of them was Johan, the ordained native preacher. They had spent one month in touring tea gardens, *bazaars* and villages, distributing tracts, selling gospels and telling stories of Jesus in Golaghat. Subsequently, there were 39 persons baptized in three different places. The project became so bright that it enforced Swanson to visit a second time in March, 1898. Here, he had a prime aim of following up the work begun and there were the converts who established churches. In Mookrung, Tea Estate, there were six Christians who belonged to **Bebejia** church. These were together with the new converts founded into a separate church.

Now the recommendation letters of launching Golaghat as a mission field were dispatched to Boston and initiated to procure a land for a compound. Several applications were made for a site but finally with the help of the Commissioner, the compound was secured. Rev. and Mrs. Paul had vacated the mission bungalow at Pathalipam Firth, Paul and Swanson decided to shift that bungalow to Golaghat and rebuild it. The voyage started along with bungalow materials in April and Swansons had reached on 21<sup>st</sup> September, 1898 from North Lakhimpur to Golaghat. The reconstruction of the bungalow began in the following month and the Swansons were able to occupy part of the house in the 11<sup>th</sup> of December 1898, while the completion of the work had

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<sup>237</sup>. C.E. Petrick, Report from Sibsagar and Dibrugarh, 12<sup>th</sup> Biennial Session, Guahati, January 4-13, 1913.

<sup>238</sup>. O.L. Swanson, Report from Sibsagar and Dibrugarh, Nowgong, February 17-24, 1916.

<sup>239</sup>. Victor, Hugo Sword, *Baptists in Assam A Century of Missionary Service 1836-1936*, Op.cit., pp. 122-123.

been finished in the 7<sup>th</sup> January, 1899. Swanson visited the churches and made visit of two weeks in the lower part of the district where he had the privilege to preach to the Assamese, Bengalis, Mikirs and Garos. In **1899, there were four churches** and 111 members.<sup>240</sup>

The core aim of the mission was to evangelize the masses with the gospel message by preaching in the markets, villages and in the coolie lines. They had also sold religious literature. The separate gospels in Assamese, Bengali, Hindi and other languages had been produced for sale. In **1900, there were 15 churches**. In 1899, 169 people had been baptized and in 1900, 166 people baptized. The total membership of this station was 542. The mission neither helped in building nor supported their pastor. The mission had taught all the churches for self-governing, self-supporting and self-propagation. The pastor was generally chosen from their own members and payment received from collections.<sup>241</sup> In November, 1901, Mr. and Mrs. A.J. Tuttle landed and took charge from the Swansons who went on furlough in March 1902. Swanson's ceaseless attempt in evangelistic work had shown good results all over the district. Mr. and Mrs. Tuttle learned the language and directed the work of the Station Mission School and preachers. The vigorous modes of the **evangelistic work had been checked**, yet every church was visited twice, performed Holy Communion, marriage, baptism, discipline and instruction imparted. The local evangelists also rendered good services, the visiting new places and shepherding as pastor in the churches. Still, notwithstanding the hardships and problems, the two years had shown signs of progress by increase in large numbers and the striking diffusion of Christian knowledge.<sup>242</sup>

According to the report of 1905, Swanson was assisted by native preachers and extended tour to markets, villages and tea gardens. They had preached, sold gospels and distributed tracts of thousands. As a result, a man sought baptism from *bazaar* preaching and a couple also found their faith in Jesus Christ. Two new churches had been erected, adding a total of 14. Therefore, there were 6 to 7 places where services had been held. Five new churches had been built, three by the church members and two by the Tea Planters.<sup>243</sup> The churches were self-supporting. It was reported in 1907 that almost all the churches were added with new members. The churches

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<sup>240</sup>. O.L. Swanson, Report from Golaghat Field, Dibrugarh, February 11-19, 1899.

<sup>241</sup>. O.L. Swanson, Report from Golaghat Field, 6<sup>th</sup> Session, Gauhati, December 22-31, 1900.

<sup>242</sup>. Joseph, Paul, , Report from Golaghat Field, Gauhati, December 22-31, 1900.

<sup>243</sup>. O.L. Swanson, Report from Golaghat Field, Gauhati, December 24, 1904 to January 1, 1905.

at Badulipur and Golaghat had been well-advanced. There were revival meetings where both young and old wept for forgiveness of sins. The number of 101 and 70 people had been baptized during 1905 and 1906 particularly.<sup>244</sup>

The Missionary report of 1910 stated that, the missionaries devoted most of their time in nurturing the churches and preaching to the non-Christians. In 1906, the **revival in the churches of Badulipur and Golaghat** had been manifested along with many other centers. Several churches had held *Sabhas* or Annual Conferences for the growth of the spiritual life. The women contributions increased and thus, the Association Committee had sent and supported seven evangelists. Six workers had been designated by the mission. Among these, **Tonuram Saikia was ordained** and being a devoted man he proved himself to be a high estimable assistant in every work.<sup>245</sup> According to the report of 1913, seven evangelists had been appointed and another six employed by the mission and 250 persons baptized after 1911. The Annual Bible Class was held at Jorhat in 1911 and a good number attended and received valuable instructions in Assamese.<sup>246</sup> In 1915 it was reported that the missionary and the local evangelists had spread the gospel to the multitude and found willingness of the people to hear the message of Christ. The gospels and tracts had been sold and distributed to many thousands. There were 29 churches, almost all had their selected pastors and conducted regular services. During the last two years, 332 persons had been baptized. The total membership was 1,346 and contributed Rs. 3,072 for the support of their pastors, teachers and evangelists.<sup>247</sup>

A report of Swanson in 1916 states that he toured not only in the Golaghat mission station but also in the Sibsagar, Dibrugarh, and Sadiya stations. He also visited once to Kohima and Nowgong district. There were 30 churches and almost all these churches had their own pastors. There had been 122 members baptized and a total of 1,467 apart from the Mikir area of the Golaghat mission field. The Golaghat mission field of the Upper Assam Association had supported four evangelists to the ministry of non-Christians as well as visiting the weaker churches. Indeed, it sparked the missionary labor to launch bands of Christian men and women

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<sup>244</sup>. O.L. Swanson, Report from Golaghat Field, Gauhati, January 5-12, 1907.

<sup>245</sup>. O.L. Swanson, Report from Golaghat Field, 10<sup>th</sup> Biennial Session, Gauhati, January 8-17, 1910.

<sup>246</sup>. J.M. Carvell, 12<sup>th</sup> Biennial Session, Guahati, January 4-13, 1913.

<sup>247</sup>. O.L. Swanson, Report from Golaghat Field, Golaghat, January 9-18, 1915.

to tour the villages, tea gardens and markets for preaching. The first Union Bible Class of Christian workers were organized in the mission field. It was the biggest gathering ever conducted. The Christian delegates participated from Sibsagar, Dibrugarh, Golaghat, Nowgong and Mongoldai stations and ended with great success.<sup>248</sup>

In 1917, the Missionary report commented that the year of 1916 had been a year of great activity 190 new converts were added and three new churches were erected, two of which were in the tea gardens. The third church was built in Naojan by the local Christians. A new church building was in process of being built by the people at Bebejia. The missionary and his assistants were prohibited by the Manager to enter into the tea garden coolies with Christianity. But he was released and a new manager was appointed and he assisted every possible way. Thus, the mission work was misunderstood by the Assamese and made a negative mark and it is surprising to see that they called the American Baptist Mission as “**The Cooly Mission.**” In response to that, O.L. Swanson answered, “From Golaghat, the Gospel is being preached to all people, even to higher castes of Assam.”<sup>249</sup> Whatsoever, one of the distinguishing events in Golaghat Mission Field was the organization All Assam Baptist Bible Conference for Christian ministers and taken participation about 120 Christian workers from nine districts of the province.<sup>250</sup>

According to the report of Swanson in 1926, there was evidence for the growth of the churches but no sign of a mass movement towards Christianity. Two hundred or more converts were added to the churches with continuous personal toil by pastors and evangelists. The church building had been constructed without the mission’s funding. The expense of these church buildings was around Rs. 1,500.00. It was a kind of “**Indigenous Church**” growth. The Golaghat and Jorhat Association gathered annually with the Barpasi church and attended candidates increased to over 900. There were 11 evangelists in Golaghat Mission Field and they toured for preaching to the unreached villages. The Gospel message was attracted to many places. Thus, people from villages urged them to come with the Magic Lantern to show pictures and preach so that the women and children would have the privilege to watch and listen to the Gospel message. Indeed, the missionary was unable to fulfill the demands of the people because

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<sup>248</sup>. O.L. Swanson, Report from Golaghat Field, Nowgong, February 17-24, 1916.

<sup>249</sup>. O.L. Swanson, Report from Golaghat Field, Sibsagar, January 15-22, 1917.

<sup>250</sup>. Ibid.

of **insufficient funds** for evangelistic ministry. Hence, Swanson grieved due to the money received for the support of the evangelists in this mission field was not adequate to pay the salary of two of his leading evangelists. In spite of that fact, the Annual Bible Conference remained a chief feature of the year. It was conducted and participated over 150. The resource persons were experienced men like V.H. Sword, Selander, Nyai Chandra Das, Tonuram Saikia and Minaram Gogoi, all of who had experienced Indian life, religions and contributed great assets to this Conference.<sup>251</sup>

The report of 1927 comments, that the missionary had not been able to visit and give sufficient times to his own field due to his heavy engagement in the fields of the Lower and Upper Assam. **A number of the smaller churches had ceased to survive** because of removals but the number remained the same, as new Centers had opened. The total churches were sixty. The people had erected several new churches by themselves. Moreover, the amount of Rs. 1,800.00 was collected by the churches for evangelistic ministries for the support of the workers, Bible Conference expenses and printing of tracts and donation to the Jorhat Schools. The Annual Association meeting held and attended many races spoken numerous languages and the Association sponsored 15 evangelists to preach to the non-Christian people. Meanwhile, several tea garden churches which were surrounded by the Hautley Tea Estate conducted a small *Sobha* or Annual Conference called “**The Pentescotal Shova**” and this was participated by many delegates. The Golaghat Annual Bible Conference was also organized and presented delegates from five districts as North Lakhimpur, Dibrugarh, Sadiya, Darrang and Golaghat. But the work among **caste people failed to continue because of inadequate finance and men**. The evangelistic endeavor of preaching, distributing tracts and selling Christian literature was carried throughout the mission station.<sup>252</sup>

In 1936 reported of 76 churches with 4,000 members in this mission station. The Annual Association gathered at the village of Nagajuri and presented over 1,500 people. The Association funded over Rs. 2,000.00 for benevolent purposes and the churches became self-supporting. The evangelistic band was constituted of men of different races who camped and reached out to many

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<sup>251</sup>. O.L. Swanson, Report from Golaghat Field, Jorhat, December 2-10, 1926.

<sup>252</sup>. O.L. Swanson, Report from Golaghat Field, Golaghat, November 23 December 1, 1927.

villages with the gospel. Therefore, the Bible Conference was also held and about 200 men and women attended from all parts of Upper Assam.<sup>253</sup> The winter season of 1936, Rev. and Mrs. Swanson made their last visit to the churches and bid them farewell as he was retiring from service in Assam. There were **71 established churches**, and 64 of them had their own pastors. The 30<sup>th</sup> Annual Bible Class was organized in October at Golaghat in which over 200 participants joined from most of the districts in Upper Assam.<sup>254</sup>

In 1937, the mission was concentrated on the evangelistic achievement in the district. They organized bands of Assamese preachers and had toured to the non-Christian Assamese neighboring villages for preaching. There were many Assamese who had been interested in Christianity but due to **home ties they were not able to break** away and uphold new faith. The Annual Association gathered and 82 churches had sent their representatives. In addition, the 40<sup>th</sup> Annual Bible Conference was conducted in October at Golaghat with participants numbering to 189.<sup>255</sup> According to the record of 1938 it was stated that the missionary had toured 53 of the 86 churches and baptized 170 in the district. The churches had raised funds to almost Rs. 2,200.00 for their evangelists and the village schools. The missionaries were greatly assisted by Tonuram Saikia and Dehiram, but their **ill health affected** them for a long period.<sup>256</sup> In 1940, the Golaghat and Jorhat mission fields had 87 churches. The nine different races were represented in the churches of Golaghat mission station. There were 19 evangelists who did hard labor for bringing over 200 converts in that year. Miss Lewison was helped by an evangelist and two **Bible Women** and had done wonderful work in the vicinity of Golaghat. In the Jorhat area, Mr. Cook and the others travelled with boys and girls of the Bible Schools. In spite of all these efforts, there was still **room for more laborers**.<sup>257</sup>

In 1941, they had dedicated three new church buildings, where one of them was in the Leper Colony at Jorhat. There were 17 evangelists and three Bible Women involved actively in evangelism. One evangelist was a Nepali and several Nepali families accepted Christianity that year. They had conducted Bible Class for 8 days. One Roman Catholic had entered Golaghat

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<sup>253</sup>. O.L. Swanson & R.W. Holm, Report from Golaghat Field, Jorhat, February 3-6, 1936.

<sup>254</sup>. R.W. Holm, Report from Golaghat Field, Gauhati, December 1-6, 1936.

<sup>255</sup>. R.W. Holm, Report from Golaghat Field, Sadiya, December 8-13, 1937.

<sup>256</sup>. John, Selander, Report from Golaghat Field, Sadiya, December 8-13, 1938.

<sup>257</sup>. R.W. Holm, Report from Golaghat Field, Jorhat, January 4-9, 1940.

mission field for the first time.<sup>258</sup> In April, 1944, there was chaos created by the arm regiments around the mission compound and the evangelists remained for several months at homes. Later, the work resumed and the Association and the mission supported in employing 24 evangelists. **The Golaghat Mission Station had 96 churches.** Few years ago, a small group of Thadou-Kuki Christians in the Mikir Hills near Dimapur sought help and fellowship with the Golaghat Association. The Golaghat churches accepted him and a teacher had been appointed for years to teach the boys and girls in one of their villages. Two years ago a Kuki preacher was assigned to minister for their needs.<sup>259</sup>

The evangelistic ministry had been handed over to the active and faithful evangelists in the Golaghat Mission Field because the missionary also had to look after the fields in Upper Assam. Twenty-four evangelists were appointed collaboratively by the Association and the mission. Rev. Tonuram Saikia had served for many years as a rewarded evangelist and also ministered as pastor of the local church in Golaghat. In 1945, they had sent three young men to the Jorhat Bible School, two of whom were Nunda and Stephen. They also appointed a young man for full-time work. Colporteur distributed literature among Christians and non-Christians. In the meantime, the **war had waned the spiritual life** of the many churches. **Drinking** and its attendant evils came in the community. Many people began to earn a great deal of money working on Military projects. Then the money was gone, the work had ceased and the village life was getting back to normal. The believers returned to the Gospel who violated Christ commands. In 1944, there were over 250 baptisms and in 1945, 177 baptisms.<sup>260</sup> In 1946, Selander did regular trips to Golaghat and visited 15 churches in the district. The chief goal was to restore the property safely for the re-opening of the Swanson Memorial M.E. School. In September, they began with 3 teachers and 7 boys. In October, they held the Bible Conference and presented about 240 people. It was also a year that marked the 15<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Association.<sup>261</sup>

In 1950, thirteen evangelists began working in the villages, *bazaars*, highways and narrow lanes to proclaim the gospel to all people. Further, about 3,500 books were sold. However,

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<sup>258</sup>. R.W. Holm, Report from Golaghat Field, Golaghat, December 4-9, 1941.

<sup>259</sup>. R.W. Holm, Report from Golaghat Field, Nowgong, November 9-13, 1944.

<sup>260</sup>. R.W. Holm, Report from Golaghat Field, Jorhat, November 8-12, 1945.

<sup>261</sup>. John, Selander, Report from Golaghat Field, 43<sup>rd</sup> Session, Gauhati, December 6-10, 1946.

unfortunately, one disappointing experienced of pastor's wife who fell into serious sickness and who were unable to be cured because the medical aid was not available. Hence, the pastor went out and sacrificed a chicken to heal his wife. Finally, both the **pastor and his wife were excommunicated from the church**<sup>262</sup> and what happened after that was not known. Eventually, in the course of time, there was also an eye opening to look for the future prospect to locate Mission Field in Jorhat district.

### 3.14. Jorhat Mission Station

The launching of mission station was initiated by Rev. S.A.D. Boggs at Jorhat. In January 12, 1905, Rev. S.A.D. Boggs pitched his tent at Jorhat and began to open a mission station by preparing the site for a Mission Compound and the bungalow for missionary residence.<sup>263</sup> They were able to occupy on January 9, 1906. From the beginning, Prayer and Bible instructions meetings were conducted, and three members were baptized in the first year. In the early part of the second year, six more were baptized, one of whom was the mission raised little girl called Louise, and a **church was also established.**<sup>264</sup> In April, 1906, the **Rev. Henry Goldsmith Babu, an Assamese approved worker**, reached to Jorhat to be Mr. Boggs' assistant in the Bible School that was being started. In 1907, Mr. Boggs reported regarding Henry Badu: "His coming has been a great help in every way, and was the beginning of the work for which we had gone to Jorhat to inaugurate."<sup>265</sup> **The mission school began in April** with five young men in the second year class and thirteen in the beginning. The students came from the various districts in the Province, six came from Golaghat, two from Kamrup, one from Jorhat, four from the Mikir Hills, one from North-Lakhimpur, four from Nowgong and one from Sibsagar. From a racial point of view they were Assamese, Garos, Kacharis, Mikirs and Mundaris.<sup>266</sup> The Christian Endeavour Society was formed among the young men to proclaim the gospel. Thereupon, the church membership was altogether 11 at Jorhat in 1906.<sup>267</sup>

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<sup>262</sup>. Miss, Tait, Report from Golaghat Field, 46<sup>th</sup> Session, Golaghat, January 3-9, 1950.

<sup>263</sup>. Victor, Hugo Sword, *Baptists in Assam A Century of Missionary Service 1836-1936*, Op.cit., p. 131.

<sup>264</sup>. S.A.D. Boggs, Report from Jorhat Field, Gauhati, January 5-12, 1907.

<sup>265</sup>. Victor, Hugo Sword, *Baptists in Assam A Century of Missionary Service 1836-1936*, Op.cit., p. 131.

<sup>266</sup>. Ibid. p. 131.

<sup>267</sup>. S.A.D. Boggs, Report from Jorhat Field, Gauhati, January 5-12, 1907.

The 1910 report stated that the church services had been operated regularly. The following year they had conducted the Preaching Services, Sunday Schools, Evening Prayers, Sunday Services, Church Prayers on Wednesday Evenings and Christian Endeavour meeting on Friday Evenings. Besides, the Jorhat Christian Endeavour Society had sent two delegates to the **World Convention in Agra. A Bible Woman had been appointed** for two years to visit and teach the village homes. In 1907 and 1908, the teachers and the missionaries along with a group of boys visited the neighboring villages. The total membership of the Jorhat church was 19 in 1910.<sup>268</sup>

A group of boys of the school organized a Preaching Band and planned especially on Sunday each month for singing and preaching in the *bazaars*. They visited surrounding villages and broadcasted the gospel message. As a result, 21 boys of the school were baptized during that year.<sup>269</sup>

Since, Jorhat was a hub of Education, Medical Care, other Technical Education; the evangelistic ministries were imparted through these institutions. In 1938, it was reported that three Bible Women had toured faithfully to the nearby villages of Jorhat with the gospel message. In addition, to visiting Hindu villages, they had been teaching a group of young women who were recently baptized and also visited some solitary Christian homes. Three Association Meetings and the Assam Baptist Convention in Harisingha at Mongoldoi district were participated by the Bible Women. Each of these had special meetings with the women and children and in the Convention, over 600 presented in the women's meeting on Sunday. In 1932, it was decided for all the Christian women to give four *annas* a year for the Women's Union along with hand-rice (it is collected rice from each meal while cooking) and offerings of the church. Indeed, the result was fruitful and the remaining balance was Rs. 225.00, out of which Rs. 100.00 was contributed to the Gauhati Orphanage.<sup>270</sup>

The Report of 1940 says that, the village work yielded interesting experiences. They had visited many villages with gospel preaching and thus, several times, some non-Christians reached out to the missionary bungalow for further inquiry on Christianity. The missionaries were not permitted to preach in the villages frequently, yet they had received admission in another village at the

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<sup>268</sup> . S.A.D. Boggs, Report from Jorhat Field, Tenth Biennial Session, Gauhati, January 8-17, 1910.

<sup>269</sup> . Victor, H. Sword & J.A. Ahlquist, Report from Jorhat Field, Jorhat, December 2-10, 1926.

<sup>270</sup> . E.R. Paul, Report from Jorhat Field, 1938.

same day.<sup>271</sup> The Bible School students organized themselves into groups for doing practical work in which they received experience in various areas, like *bazaar* preaching, hospital visitation, conducting Sunday services and teaching.<sup>272</sup> According to the Report of 1944, the evangelistic enterprise had not been carried out vastly in the village churches and in the districts. But they had toured the neighboring villages and participated in the Association Meetings in Darrang, North Lakhimpur and Golaghat.<sup>273</sup> In 1946 it was reported that the Bible School Boys toured for preaching as their curriculum required that of their practical works each week.<sup>274</sup> The missionaries were accompanied by the Bible School students and visited the villages closed to the compound. Weekly Bible Study and Sunday School Classes were also conducted. For instance, people became interested to purchase a copy of the Bible. Thus, they had sold the Gospels in Bengali, Oriya, Hindi, Urdu, English, Assamese and Nepali languages. Moreover, the women of the Christian Community raised funds for over Rs. 1,000.00 for charitable works.<sup>275</sup> Therefore, the documentation of the missionary report of 1949 claimed that many tours were made for preaching to other zones. The teachers in the Bible School, for example Longri Ao, Raising K. Marak and Clement Saikia assisted largely in the evangelistic ventures and school work<sup>276</sup> and witnessed the Gospel for the sake of Jesus Christ as committed missionary teachers and faithful evangelists. But, there is no record evidence of their later part of the works and places. Yet, the legacy carried by them as native servants of the Lord has been continuing till now although the vigorous impact of the Christianity is not penetrating to the hearts of the local people in the town as well as the neighboring villages.

### **3.15. Formation of Baptist Conventions in Assam**

The field work in Assam was largely the activity of the American Baptist Mission until 1950. In fact, the Mission could not handle the full obligation of the area and so in the 1940 the area on the North Bank of Brahmaputra river was handed over to the care of the Australian Baptist Mission (for Goalpara district) and to the General Baptist Conference (for Darrang and North Lakhimpur districts). From the early days of the missions in North-East India there were joint

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<sup>271</sup>. E.B. Christenson, Report from Jorhat Field, Jorhat, January 4-9, 1940.

<sup>272</sup>. J.W. Cook, Report from Jorhat Field, Golaghat, December 4-9, 1941.

<sup>273</sup>. E.B. Christenson, Report from Jorhat Field, Nowgong, November 9-13, 1944.

<sup>274</sup>. J. W. Cook, Report from Jorhat Field, Gauhati, December 6-10, 1946.

<sup>275</sup>. E.B. Christenson, Report from Jorhat Field, Jorhat, December 10-14, 1947.

<sup>276</sup>. J. W. Cook, Report from Jorhat Field, Jorhati, January 11-16, 1949.

meetings of missionaries and nationals to plan the work. In 1914, the National Churches formed themselves into Assam Baptist Christian Convention. This organization grew in its stature, and finally in January 1950, the Council of Baptist Churches in Assam (CBCA) was formed by the amalgamation of Assam Baptist Missionary Conference under the leadership of its First General Secretary, Rev. A. F. Merrill. Later the name was changed to CBCAM, and finally, the **Council of Baptist Churches in North-East India** on geographical grounds. Almost all the Baptist Churches in Assam, Arunachal, Manipur, Meghalaya and Nagaland were brought within the Council. So since the year 1950 the field works has been brought under the ministry of the Council of Baptist Churches in North East India (CBCNEI).

Over the years the CBCNEI has grown to now over 7000 Churches in 100 organized Associations. They are administered under six regional Conventions namely, Assam Baptist Convention, Arunachal Baptist Church Council, Garo Baptist Convention, Karbi Anglong Baptist Convention, Manipur Baptist Convention, and Nagaland Baptist Church Council.<sup>277</sup> Again under Assam, different Baptist Conventions are founded such as:

### **3.15.1. Assam Baptist Convention**

The Assam Baptist Convention traces its origins back to the work of 19th Century Baptists missionaries in Assam<sup>278</sup> such as Krishna Chandra Pal, Nathan Brown, Oliver Cutter and Miles Bronson. The first Assamese baptized into the Baptist faith was Nidhi Levi baptized in 1841. The Baptist Church of Assam was formed in 1845 with its headquarters at Gauhati. There was a small revival in Nidhi in 1847, but as of 1861 the Assam Baptist Church had only 31 members.<sup>279</sup> The Assam Baptist Convention currently operates a school in Nagaon<sup>280</sup> and another in Golaghat. Assam Baptist Convention (ABC) is a Baptist church based in Assam, India, with more than 37,000 members and 300 congregations as per the record of 2018.<sup>281</sup>

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<sup>277</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Council\\_of\\_Baptist\\_Churches\\_in\\_Northeast\\_India#cite\\_note-3](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Council_of_Baptist_Churches_in_Northeast_India#cite_note-3)

<sup>278</sup> . Muttumana, Mathew (1984). *Christianity in Assam and inter-faith dialogue: a study on the modern religious movements in north east India*. Satprakashan Sanchar Kendra. p.108.

<sup>279</sup> . Moffett, Samuel Hugh (2005). *1500 to 1900* (2nd rev. and corrected ed.). Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books: Harper SanFrancisco. pp. 425–427.

<sup>280</sup> . World Baptist Convention report on various international projects

<sup>281</sup> . [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Category:Christianity\\_in\\_Assam](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Category:Christianity_in_Assam) "Statistics". *Bwanet.org*. Archived from the original on 2013-10-31. Retrieved 2013-12-12.

### 3.15.2. Boro Baptist Convention

In 1914 Rev. George Richard Kampfer of the American Baptist Foreign Mission Society (ABFMS) who was stationed in Gauhati came to Borigaon and established the first Baptist church. It was in the year 1914 under the guidance of Rev. Kampfer, the Baptist churches of Udalguri district (then Mangaldai Sub division) of Assam came together unitedly and formed a Christian Organization called "Mangaldai Baptist Christian Association". At the time of formation there were only 5 churches. In the year 1983 when Darrang district was divided into two districts by the government it was in that pattern the association was renamed as "Darrang Baptist Christian Association". Again while the Bodoland Territorial Council was created by the Central government as separate administration for the Boros it was then called "Boro Baptist Convention" in 2003.<sup>282</sup>The American Baptist Foreign Mission Society (ABFMS) missionaries were in charge of the "Mangaldai Baptist Christian Association" (MBCA) till 1945 when they handed over the MBCA to the Baptist General Conference, USA. Rev. Johnson of the Baptist General Conference built the present mission center at Harisinga. The Harisinga Mission School was developed and the Baptist Christian Hospital was constructed. The missionaries left in 1969 and handed over the administration of the association to the locals.

The Boro Baptist Convention (BBC) was established in 1914 and completed its centenary celebrations in 2014. Boro Baptist Convention or BBC is a Baptist churches convention founded in Assam, India, with more than 52,000 members and 354 congregations as of 2014. It has its headquarters at Harisinga in Udalguri District of Bodoland, Assam. It is affiliated to the North Bank Baptist Christian Association. The Union is made primarily of Bodo people, an indigenous ethnic group of Assam.<sup>283</sup>As of 2014, the convention had 92 full time workers including departmental secretaries.

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<sup>282</sup>. The Canaan, Souvenir, Centenary Jubilee Celebration, Boro Baptist Convention, 2014. See also [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bodo\\_Baptist\\_Convention#cite\\_note-2](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bodo_Baptist_Convention#cite_note-2)

<sup>283</sup>. "Archived copy". Archived from the original on 2016-03-03. Retrieved 2013-11-26. Refers too [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bodo\\_Baptist\\_Convention#cite\\_note-1](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bodo_Baptist_Convention#cite_note-1)

### 3.15.3. Lakhimpur Baptist Convention

Lakhimpur Baptist Convention (LBC) is a Baptist church of India belonging to the American Baptist Mission and was established on 6<sup>th</sup> December, 1903. It has 100 churches and 8 branch churches and 50,000 members at present.<sup>284</sup>

### 3.15.4. Mising Baptist Kebang (Convention)

Mising Baptist Kebang (MBK) is a Baptist Churches convention based in Assam, India. It has six associations and is spread across six districts of Assam.<sup>285</sup> It is an Associate member of the Council of Baptist Churches in North East India (CBCNEI),<sup>286</sup> where over hundred churches are affiliated under MBK. The MBK is founded primarily of Mising people, an indigenous ethnic group of Assam. According to report of 2018, it has 150 churches and 4300 members.<sup>287</sup>

### 3.15.5. Karbi-Anglong Baptist Convention

Karbi Anglong Baptist Convention (KABC) is a Baptist convention founded in Assam, India. It is affiliated to the Council of Baptist Churches in Northeast India<sup>288</sup> and the Baptist World Alliance. KABC has 32,192 baptized members and 314 churches at present.<sup>289</sup> The Karbi Anglong Baptist Convention comprises of thirteen associations. Rev. Davidson Ingti is the Regional Secretary of the convention.

### Statistics of Baptist Conventions, Churches and Baptized Members in Assam in 2018

Sl. No.	Convention	Churches	Baptized Members
1.	Assam Baptist Convention (ABC)	300	37,000 <sup>290</sup>
2.	Boro Baptist Convention	354	52,000
3.	Lakhimpur Baptist Convention	100	50,000

<sup>284</sup>. Mr. Lazar Horo interviewed an Assistance Executive Secretary of Lakhimpur Baptist Convention on 30<sup>th</sup> April 2018.

<sup>285</sup>. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Category:Christianity\\_in\\_Assam](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Category:Christianity_in_Assam)

<sup>286</sup>. CBCNEI Associate Members

<sup>287</sup>. Rev. Abhijit Pegu interviewed General Secretary of Mising Baptist Kebang on 23<sup>rd</sup> April, 2018.

<sup>288</sup>. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Karbi-Anglong\\_Baptist\\_Convention#cite\\_note-cbcnei-1](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Karbi-Anglong_Baptist_Convention#cite_note-cbcnei-1)

<sup>289</sup>. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Karbi-Anglong\\_Baptist\\_Convention#cite\\_note-2](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Karbi-Anglong_Baptist_Convention#cite_note-2)

<sup>290</sup>. "Statistics". *Bwanet.org*. Archived from the original on 2013-10-31. Retrieved 2013-12-12.

4.	Mising Baptist Kebang (Convention)	150	4300
5.	Karbi-Anglong Baptist Convention	314	32,192 <sup>291</sup>
Total	1,218		175,492

Altogether at present there are 1,75,492 members in the five different Baptist Conventions in Assam, namely Assam Baptist Convention (ABC), Boro Baptist Convention (BBC), Lakhimpur Baptist Convention (LBC), Mising Baptist Kebang (MBK) and Karbi-Anglong Baptist Convention (KABC). These Conventions are fruits of the labored of pioneer missionaries of the American Baptist Mission who planted and spread the seed of the Gospel in the entire region till 1950. Then the mission work was handed over to the local leaders and the foreign missionaries were gradually left Assam and whole responsibility of the mission and church activities have been carrying by native leaders under an umbrella named Baptist Convention till present.

## CONCLUSION

More than a century of pioneer missionary works are inestimable endeavors which particularly ploughed the ground and sowed kernels of the gospel to sprout Christian mission stations and churches among different tribes and languages in various parts of the region in Assam. Spontaneously, the numerous mission fields and churches were founded throughout the valley. The churches were established under one umbrella of Baptist Mission however, all these churches are coming under Baptist Conventions in Assam. Thus, the credit is bestowed to missionaries for their ceaseless labor and patience during weary hours of services in this remote land. No doubt, they have embraced perils of lives such as hardship, suffering, sickness, martyr, war, famine, poverty, death and opposition in order to spread Christ is kingdom. There is indeed great inspiration that one can get from the daring personalities of the missionaries who have carried the burden in the sweltering heat of the day, irrespective of favorable and unfavorable circumstances. They circulated tracts, gospels and preached incalculable sermons in the entire region of Assam. On the contrary, there are disappointing factors degenerating in regard to the faithful toil of the missionaries. In fact, many of the mission fields and churches dimmed the growth was extremely slow and some of the fields had even withered without roots in the

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<sup>291</sup>. [www.kabc.in/p/about-kabc\\_15.html](http://www.kabc.in/p/about-kabc_15.html) KABC website

ground. Owing to the impending hurdles supposed to be posed in the mission fields, it obviously hampered in the development of the mission which are identified as deficient missionary staff, un-stability of missionary to remain longer period in the stations due to illness, sheep without shepherd, financial crisis, rival, un-suitable mission location, epidemic, lack of committed local leaders and believers, unhealthy climate and excessive consumption and addiction of opium by the native people. Yet, there are existing mission fields and churches but they were too slow and nearly static in the progress.

Hence, there are many more milestones to set to accomplish the unfinished task of the mission. Nevertheless, missionaries flamed the light of the gospel to dispel darkness through various incredible contributions to the society which I am going to investigate and unlock their monumental work in the next chapter considerably. No doubt, the gospel has been spreading and blooming but speedy growth of the Christianity needs to gear up much more faster to envelope the entire region with the Good News of Jesus Christ in the Post Modern Era.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE AMERICAN BAPTIST MISSION**

#### **4.1. INTRODUCTION**

A much more persuasive description is that the American Baptist Mission paved a new hallmark ushering the modern scientific phenomenon specifically in the traditional belief and in social and cultural domain. Evidently, early Christian teaching emphasized a distinctive new life style and the pioneering missionaries were too strongly sought to preach the good news of Christ and they engaged in rebuilding and transforming the traditional society through various activities for the betterment and development of the society. The missionaries opposed the derogatory practice of slavery and ruinous consumption of opium which was prevalent in the society. Moreover, the education and literature agencies of the missionary contributions were undoubtedly the most significant. Obviously, the peoples of Assam are accredited with high esteem to the American Baptist Mission which had played a vital role in the preservation and renaissance of the Assamese language, literature and education. Furthermore, humanitarian service became another vibrant agency of Christian influence which was mainly based on medicine, since the medical aid was unknown to the people. With the help of the Christian Mission, dispensaries and hospitals were launched and gradually sprang up throughout the Assam valley although they did not operate in a large scale. Due to the prevalence of disease and the ignorance of medical treatment, the people had miserable life. The only hope that dawned to the people was through the missionaries who were involved inevitably at least simple way of medical service from the very inception, no matter what their qualifications were for it became great asset. Thus, this chapter is going to study the chief contributions of the American Baptist Mission and Churches in the society which is categorized as the gospel and social transformation, education, literature and medical enterprise.

#### **4.2. Gospel and Social Transformation**

The American Baptist Missionaries tremendously emphasized not to use opium because it was a serious social problem in the region in which they had been involved vigorously in the campaign against this evil practice. The Assamese social reformer, Anandaram Dhekiyal Phukan who had given keen interest and worked closely with the American Baptist missionaries for this issue

along with other matters had described the pathetic situation of the opium abuse in Assam in 1854. Since the widespread consumption of opium started only in the late eighteenth century, having been introduced by the British expeditionary force of 1792, he further described its serious effects by the middle of the nineteenth century onwards as cited below:

The universal use of opium has converted the Assamese, once a hardy, industrious and enterprising race, into an effeminate (sic), weak, indolent, and a degraded people. It has been universally the sole cause of undermining the health and physical constitution of the whole population. It is used by the young as well as the old. Women themselves are often not excepted; and in many parts of the country, opium is freely administered to infants and children. It is therefore high time for the Government to provide speedy and effectual remedies to preserve the country from utter ruin and degradation.<sup>1</sup>

Thereby, the missionaries worked constantly to stop this abusive intoxicated situation and took steps extensively. Firstly, it was to abolish its use within the Christian community. Secondly, there was an opposition to British Government for support of the opium trade, which was a profit making source of revenue. Often resolutions were being adopted at mission meetings, and representations made to the Government in the last nineteenth century and beginning of the twentieth centuries.<sup>2</sup> Possibly, the outcome of this campaign was not very fruitful in Assam compared to the hilly regions.

In Assam the opposition was not only against the use of opium but also the use of country liquor (rice beer). Of these two, opium was found as the most serious hindrance to the society particularly the Christian community for the growth of the Church in the nineteenth century. In the American Baptist Mission Conference report of 1889, opium eating is twice mentioned as a main problem for the churches. Its use was considered as an excommunicable offense and its users were most frequently given disciplinary action for this reason. In addition, this was the reason for the exclusion of thirty persons from the membership of the Nagaon church between

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<sup>1</sup>. A.J. Moffatt Mills, *Report on Assam*, 1854, reprint. Delhi, 1980, pp. xliii-xliv.

<sup>2</sup>. *ABMC*, 1893, p.8. See also *ABMC*, 1904-05, pp. 17-18.

1887 and 1889 P.H. Moore's report bore evidence that in most of the cases it was due to "the opium habit".<sup>3</sup>

Tyrannically, its continuous use by converts was one of the principal reasons for static Christianity in the region. Needless to say, the doctrine was important but valueless if not projected with a transformed life. Hence, it was addressed to missionaries and native converts to bear adorable testimonial lives for the approval of the society to conquer life for Christ. Henceforward, a typical statement of the understanding of Christianity was illustrated by P.H. Moore, an American Baptist missionary resided at Nagaon, in 1903 and refers to Moore as:

To the Christian missionary, and in Mission business generally, character is a chief asset-purified, sanctified, transformed character, perfected on the lines of the divine model, "to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ." To the extent to which such character is realized, both in himself and the converts, is the missionary a success and his business a success... The leading purpose of the mission is the glory of God the Father, through the production of the Christ like character in the millions in Assam for whom Christ died.<sup>4</sup>

Henceforth, continuous persuasion was given to the members to maintain a certain standard of behavior and conduct in order to remain sound and maintain full membership of the church as well as for those who wished to come to Christ.

Another area of focus made by missionaries was the slavery system in the society. Since, the missionaries of this period had Western Evangelical background and this spirit caught on to them to become sensitive to social evils known as slavery. Slavery was a widespread problem in Assam during the beginning years of the British rule, but the official policies had been endorsed before the Baptist missionaries had taken much influence.<sup>5</sup> The fact that the Government was forced to take steps towards abolition of slavery due to pressure was brought to witness by the "philanthropists of England."<sup>6</sup> Those 'philanthropists' were the Evangelicals with whose views the American Baptists were in full consent. In that time, slavery was being debated in Assam and

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<sup>3</sup>. *ABMC*, 1889, p.11.

<sup>4</sup>. *ABMC*, 1902-1903, p. 71.

<sup>5</sup>. Nirode, K. Barooah, *David Scott in North-East India: A Study in British Paternalism*, New Delhi: 1970, pp. 132-202.

<sup>6</sup>. *Ibid.*, p. 150.

a hot controversy on this matter took place in the United States and in 1845 it would lead to the division of the Baptist Church in U.S. (and, for that fact, to a civil war between northern and southern states largely over this issue 15 years later). The Baptist missionaries in Assam had all come from the northern part of the U.S. and strong supporters of the anti-slavery group. Thus, one of the pioneer Baptist missionaries, Nathan Brown, who was to become prominent in the anti-slavery movement by his returned to the U.S. In 1857, soon after his return to America, wrote: “(American Baptists are) intensely opposed to slavery in every form, and to all other kinds of moral evil.”<sup>7</sup> Indeed, it is worthwhile to admit the truth of the leading hero, Nathan Brown, other Baptists and Baptist missionaries who publicly voiced this issue and by whose vigorous support, the liberation of Assamese slaves held by Singphos could become successful.

### **4.3. Educational Enterprise**

#### **4.3.1. Policy of the British Government on Education**

In the beginning of British rule in Assam the policy of the Company was one of strict non-interference in the religion and institutions of the people. But in order to improve the general condition of education which was “deplorable in the extreme,” in 1813 the British Parliament decided on a resolution that, it is the duty of this country, to promote the interest and happiness of the native inhabitants of the British dominions in India, and that such measures ought to be adopted that may tend to the introduction of useful knowledge among them, for religion and moral improvement. By the Section 43 of the Charter Act of 1813, the Parliament granted a yearly sum of Rupees one lakh for education in India, and it made the subject of education in this country a state responsibility of the British Government. The same section specified that the amount should be spent with the aims of:

- Revival and improvement of literature,
- Encouragement of the learned natives of India, and
- Introduction and promotion of knowledge of science among the inhabitants of the British territories in India.

Before further revision of the Government policy was made on the subject of native education, David Scott, the first Commissioner of Assam, who was also the Agent to the Governor-General

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<sup>7</sup>. Eliza, Whitney Brown, *The Whole World Kin: A Pioneer Experience Among Remote Tribes, and Other Labors of Nathan Brown*, Op.cit., p. 456.

in the North Eastern Frontier, received a sanction from the Government of India to promote the indigenous system of education by assignment of lands, in October 1826. Therefore, Scott had founded eleven public schools in addition to Gauhati, Jorhat and Darrang.<sup>8</sup> In fact, the Christian missionaries were also the chief vehicles for the fulfillment of this project along with the British officials.

#### **4.3.2. Objectives of the Mission Schools**

Soon the Christian mission began in the province of Assam and the education system also followed from the very foundation. The objectives of the Mission Schools were to use it as an auxiliary in the work of evangelization. Their first and topmost obligation was to convert the people to Christianity and perhaps the educational institutions and other schemes undertaken by them were intended to help in accelerating the process of conversions. The ways in which Schools were to be an auxiliary were enumerated in the following: (i) They teach the people to read, and thereby enable them to benefit by the printed word and religious tracts, (ii) They help to impart correct moral and religious ideas, and to also facilitate the right apprehension of religious terms used by the preacher, (iii) They expose false Science inwrought with idolatry and help overthrow it, (iv) They give opportunities for direct inculcation of the gospel, that is, for preaching to the pupils and others associated with them. The above objectives could be achieved only at the Primary level. Two other objectives could be achieved at an advanced stage of education. (a) They help to raise up a body of local authors who may give to their people a vernacular Christian literature, and (b) They are necessary to the proper training of a local Christian ministry.<sup>9</sup>

Eventually, the pioneer missionaries had highly emphasized the value of education over and over again from the very inception of their mission services. Certainly, one should acknowledge the fact that each missionary from the time of Nathan Brown in the mission field had been profoundly interested in the training of the Indigenous Christians because they realized that without an educated constituency and trained leadership, there was no hope of building a

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<sup>8</sup>. Meena, Sharma Barkataki, *British Administration in North East India 1826-74: A Study of their Social Policy*, Op.cit., pp. 20-21.

<sup>9</sup>. Extract from the Report of the Foreign Secretary, Baptist Missionary Magazine, February 1855, p. 85.

permanent Christian community.<sup>10</sup> Besides, the Government was also interested from the very beginning that the mission would take charge of the educational projects as far as they were in a position to run it effectively. The mission was also having same mind like Government and thereafter agreed to begin School work with **grant-in aid** as early as possible. The Government conceded willingly that the mission was at freedom to bestow as much religious instructions in the Schools as the mission requires.<sup>11</sup>

Hence, Mission Schools had become a foremost important tool in imparting knowledge in both religious and secular realms. Indeed, the impact of these Schools cannot be underestimated in the region where an educational explosion was taking place and new state governments were being formed with only a few well educated people to fill the many posts thus created. The educational enterprises were set up and adjuncts to the chief purpose of evangelization by the American Baptist missionaries. Thereafter, the schools had commenced in the province of Assam valley.

#### **4.3.3. Serampore Baptist Mission School**

The first definite step for the missionary enterprise in Assam was taken by the Serampore Baptist Mission for the extension of their mission in Bengal in 1829. Favorably for all concerned in the Christian endeavor, the Government Officials of the province in those days were persons vigorously interested in the education of their newly acquired subjects. Thus, Mr. David Scott, the first Commissioner of Assam, requested for a school to commence at Gauhati. James Rae and his wife with little child started their journey to Gauhati in July 1829. He began a school at Gauhati and in 1830 it was reported that he had under his charge twelve interesting youths, three khasis and nine Garos committed to his care by Mr. David Scott, Commissioner of Assam. Rae was helped in his works by a native called Ram Chandra Nath but he went back to Serampore soon after being unable to encounter sufferings.<sup>12</sup>

A second Missionary, Mr. Robinson was sent to Gauhati after owing several petitions. Soon, after his arrival he started opening several schools. Robinson also visited Nowgong and made request for funds to establish an English School there. But due to the discouragement of labor at

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<sup>10</sup>. Victor, Hugo Sword, *Baptists in Assam A Century of Missionary Service 1836-1936*, Op.cit., pp. 128-129.

<sup>11</sup>. E.G. Phillips, *Educational Work among the Garos*, Jubilee Report, 1886, p. 68.

<sup>12</sup>. Victor, Hugo Sword, *Baptists in Assam A Century of Missionary Service 1836-1936*, Op.cit., pp. 36-37.

Gauhati or lack of re-enforcements, the work at Nowgong virtually remained in a standstill. Shortly, after the reaching of the American Baptist Mission, James Rae retired from missionary service and devoted himself fully to educational works. Afterward, Robinson also departed from Assam for service in Bhutan. Finally the Serampore Mission Station School in Assam was surrendered on March 7, 1838 and handed over to the American Baptist Mission. Thus, the whole of Assam was in the charge of the American Baptist Mission.<sup>13</sup>

#### 4.3.4. American Baptist Mission Schools

The frequency with the subject of education has been brought up already and its central importance in the process of acculturation which Christianity contributed historically in Assam. The missionaries therefore used the **Schools as an evangelizing agency**. So, there was no single mission station of Christian work in the region that did not embark on educational endeavor. The pioneer missionaries of the American Baptist Mission, Reverend Dr. Nathan Brown and Oliver T. Cutter were accompanied by their wives and reached Sadiya on March 23, 1836.<sup>14</sup> Immediately after the arrival of Brown and Cutter at Sadiya, their first task was the establishment of a School. Moreover, Adoniram Judson, an outstanding Baptist missionary of Burma, penned to the missionaries at Sadiya soon after their reaching emphasizing the significance of school work and he said as: I am glad to hear also that you are setting up schools. In your situation, schools and elementary works, ought, I think, to engross almost your whole attention. I hope that you will soon see schools flourishing around you in every direction.<sup>15</sup>

The first school was established by the Serampore Mission at Gauhati and followed by the American Baptist Mission at Sadiya. Shortly Mrs. Brown and Mrs. Cutter gathered a few half-frightened, wholly unclad young primitive children and began the first school on the 7<sup>th</sup> of June, 1836. Mr. Brown had furnished a small Romanized Assamese and Khamti Spelling-Book for their use. Mrs. Brown reports, "They appear to be bright, intelligent boys and very anxious to learn."<sup>16</sup> Therefore, Mr. Brown had continued with his work for the Assamese and Khamtis, having prepared in January, 1837, a tract consisting of the Parables of Christ, which was placed into immediate use as a Text-Book in the schools. The pupils were taught daily memory lessons

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<sup>13</sup>. Ibid, pp. 39-40.

<sup>14</sup>. Eliza, Whitney Brown, *The Whole World Kin: A Pioneer Experience Among Remote Tribes, and Other Labors of Nathan Brown*, Op.cit., p. 125.

<sup>15</sup>. Ibid. p. 237.

<sup>16</sup>. Ibid. pp. 134-135.

from the Parables. The Sermon on the Mount and a Catechism followed too.<sup>17</sup>The pupils were reading and writing in English, Assamese and Tai, and Arithmetic; with such instruction of suitable books allowed. The school made diligent endeavors to imbue the minds of the scholars with the truths of Christianity. Thus, the proficiency of the scholars had been highly gratified.<sup>18</sup>The letter of Mrs. Brown to Mrs. Lyman, February 2<sup>nd</sup> 1838 says: There is a good number of scholars in the schools now, and we trust they are gradually gaining a little light. Mr. Brown is at work night and day translating the Scriptures and preparing books for the schools in the Shan and Assamese languages.<sup>19</sup>

Obviously, it shows that there was a flourishing signs in the school endeavor. Some more schools were expected to be established shortly in some of the adjoining villages. Gradually, several schools sprouted up around Sadiya as well as in Jaipur. A prominent aim of the schools was to train up particularly native school-teachers too. Great attention was paid to the religious instruction of the pupils. The missionaries earnestly requested that an individual be sent out for obtaining teaching. The number and character of the schools would have a powerful influence on the usefulness of the missions at large, because a very small portion of the population was able to read during that time. At the same time, there was great encouragement to labor in this field, from the general desires and aptitude of the natives to learn. The enterprise was carried especially by the liberal support of the British Official named Francis Jenkins who has been repeatedly acknowledged in the history of Christian Mission<sup>20</sup> in Assam.

The system of education was not only to produce an intellectual individual but also to impart a skillful knowledge of improving on the temporal condition of the people. So Messrs, Brown and Cutter submitted to the Board, at the suggestion of the Commissioner, Capt. Jenkins, a proposition to connect a farming establishment with the mission and it is cited as:

For the double purpose of relieving the missionaries from embarrassments in providing the common necessities of life, by which they were now much impeded in their appropriate work; and also of improving the temporal condition

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<sup>17</sup>. Ibid. p. 143.

<sup>18</sup>. Annual Report, Assam, 1837 (Excerpt), *Baptist Missionary Magazine* 1838, p. 160.

<sup>19</sup>. Eliza, Whitney Brown, *The Whole World Kin: A Pioneer Experience Among Remote Tribes, and Other Labors of Nathan Brown*, 1890, Op.cit., p. 152.

<sup>20</sup>. Annual Report, Assam, 1838, *Baptist Missionary Magazine* 1839, p. 145.

of the natives, by teaching them the useful arts, and introducing the culture of foreign plants.<sup>21</sup>

In a short time, such an establishment, in various ways, doubtless, proved a valuable auxiliary to the mission in later days. There was a clever little boy called Nidhi from Mrs. Brown and Mrs. Cutter's school at Sadiya. He made remarkable progress in his Assamese studies and obtained a good knowledge of English and remained with missionaries at Sadiya. Later he accompanied them to Jaipur as a printer. He was the first convert and took the name of Levi Farwell and was commonly called Nidhi Levi.<sup>22</sup>

In addition, the pioneer missionaries who dedicated for the cost of Mission and Churches had been highly involved in educational enterprise because their primary goal of evangelism was through education. So, in response to this call, they always engaged schools in close association with conversion. For an example, it means a single coin with two sides. In one side, to educate the natives with secular worldviews and in another side, Scriptural knowledge that would help them to become intellectual and spiritual beings with the teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ. Here is a more convincing statement to quote of A.T. Embree's description of why education was given so much important in the nineteenth century Evangelicals as:

Their basic concept was that the character of man was a product, not of his physical, but of his moral environment, and that salvation could be achieved and the individual could be totally transformed by a direct assault on the mind. Education followed by personal conversion would change the whole nature of society.<sup>23</sup>

Definitely, this idea of evangelism through education was given uttermost important and thus missionaries had rendered a weighty service in the school project. Likewise, Bronson had also opened a Mission School at Nowgong in 1842.<sup>24</sup> From its commencement, its number and influence had gradually increased. A school house was erected with an accommodation for 100 scholars. The instruction of the school proved excellent and thus the scholars had made a very

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<sup>21</sup>. Annual Report, Assam, 1837 (Excerpt), *Baptist Missionary Magazine* 1838, p. 160

<sup>22</sup>. Eliza, Whitney Brown, *The Whole World Kin: A Pioneer Experience Among Remote Tribes, and Other Labors of Nathan Brown*, 1890, Op.cit., p. 213.

<sup>23</sup>. Nirode, K. Barooah, *David Scott in North-East India: A Study in British Paternalism*, New Delhi: 1970, p. 179.

<sup>24</sup>. Milton, S. Sangma, *A History of American Baptist Mission in North-East India (Volume-Two)*, New Delhi: Mittal Publications, 1992, p. 5.

satisfactory progress. The vernacular language was mainly taught in the schools and only a few of them advanced were into the English classes. A public examination was conducted at the end of the year and prizes were awarded to those who had excelled. The following books read, in the Bengali classes were the Barnamala, Gyanruday, Arithmetic, Monoranjan Itihas, Nitikatha, History of Bengal and chapters of Matthew's Gospel. The classes in English had read Worcester's Primer, Worcester's Second Reading Book, Arithmetic (simple rules) and part of Genesis. There were also large classes in Assamese and another in Hindi along with the first ten chapters of the Scriptures. The study of the Scriptures formed a part of the daily duties of the school. These schools under the patronage of the American Baptist Board of Foreign Mission were founded.<sup>25</sup>

Shortly, one school with an enrolment of 40 students had to be closed down due to shortage of funds at Nowgong in 1844, but only one village school was in operation. In winter, the numbers of pupils were 40 but during the cultivation season, it was decreased to 20. On the other hand, Nowgong was densely situated with villages, a considerable location for schools and the mission was frequently begging for the establishment of schools but insufficient funds compelled them to ignore their petitions.<sup>26</sup>

During 1844-1845, there were in the vicinity of Nowgong, 14 mission schools with an average attendance of 381.<sup>27</sup> Moreover, it was reported in 1886, the response of education was advanced favorably. Thus, the report of education indicated that there were in the district of Nowgong 153 schools of different grades, enrolling a total of 5077 pupils.<sup>28</sup> A dozen village schools were under the supervision of Miss Pursell in 1890; of R.H. Moore in 1891 and of P.E. Moore in 1892. All the Village Lower Primary Schools were supported completely by the Government grants.<sup>29</sup> The schools had also been launched at Sibsagar. The people surrounding Sibsagar were mostly cultivators and required the labors of their children in the cultivation field for the greater portion of the year. It was found difficult to keep the schools in successful operation. This had proved very detrimental to their prosperity and efficiency, and a difficult endeavor to keep up three or

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<sup>25</sup>. Letter of Bronson, November 12, 1843, Report of American Baptist Mission to Assam, pp. 252-253.

<sup>26</sup>. Report of American Baptist Mission to Assam, 1845, p. 253.

<sup>27</sup>. *Baptist Missionary Magazine*, 1846, p. 251.

<sup>28</sup>. P.H. Moore, Report of Nowgong Field, Jubilee Issue, 1886.

<sup>29</sup>. P.H. Moore, Report from Nowgong, Missionary Conference, 1889.

four throughout the coming years, even attendances were declined. These schools had been generously made by the liberal contributions for the support of residential missionaries in Assam. During 1844-45, there were in this vicinity, fourteen schools connected with the mission; with an average attendance of 381 in 1845.

Hereafter, the reading materials were furnished for pupils. After completing the alphabet and spelling lessons, the pupils commenced the Catechism, and assured that when they could complete the reading, they were rewarded a copy of the First Reading Book or First Arithmetic. Afterwards the History of Joseph, the Gospels, and other portions of Scripture were placed in their hands. Later, few objections had been raised to the study of the religious books especially the Brahmins had created a prejudice in the minds of the people, and induced them to withdraw their children from the Mission Schools.<sup>30</sup>

Similarly, soon after the arrival of the Barkers in the autumn of 1843, Mrs. Barker commenced a Day School collecting the neglected girls from the *bazaar* Gauhati. Within a few years, five Boy's Schools were also in full operations, and except one, they continued throughout the year. The expenses had been defrayed by the benevolence of the missionary friends from Gauhati and Tezpur. Two of the schools were situated at Gauhati, one was at Sialkhusi, on the opposite side of the river, and about 60 Brahmin boys were admitted. Another school was established at Herapara and the other at Palasbari where the Gossains assisted in the building of the school house. A public examination was conducted in the presence of the Commissioner and other gentlemen, numbering about 160 boys.<sup>31</sup> In 1850, there was a visible interest among the Garos of Kamrup district who sought for school to be established in their respective village. The village schools had been maintained. A number of schools had been set up in the Rabha and Kachari areas. In 1886, the mission tried to obtain a Khol teacher for the Khol pupils but could not materialize.<sup>32</sup> In 1871, the work for the Mikirs began and much interest had given to school work with grants-in-aid from the Government of Rs. 1500.00 per year.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>30</sup>. Report of the American Baptist Mission to Assam, 1845, *Baptist Missionary Magazine*, August 1846, p. 251.

<sup>31</sup>. H.K. Barpujari, *The American Missionaries and North East India (1836-1900A.D.)*, Part One, Op.cit., pp. 105-106.

<sup>32</sup>. C.E. Burdette, *History of Gauhati Field*, Jubilee Issue, 1886.

<sup>33</sup>. P.H. Moore, *History of Nowgong Field*, Jubilee Issue, 1886.

Meanwhile, the number of village schools that had been founded varied considerably in the Gauhati station. Only three schools had been continued steadily since 1886. But the establishment of new village schools had been hampered due to lack of competent teachers. The maintenance of the schools has been transferred gradually upon the villages, apart from securing the aid from the Government. A new rule had been implemented that no new school would be founded unless the villagers support their teachers until Government aid was received.<sup>34</sup>In this field, there were 16 village schools. As a rule, each school obtained a small grant-in-aid from the Government. The labor of these schools had been unsatisfactory because of the shortage of trained teachers in 1896.<sup>35</sup>

During 1899-1900, Mr. Boggs took full charge of all the schools work in the Gauhati field. Misses Morgan and Wilson had taken their full share of the school work during those years. All school projects were running with funds raised on the field, apart from Government grant-in-aid, mostly given by the churches. The number of village schools was 16 with an average daily attendance of 222.1 and 220.3 respectively. The Government grant-in-aid was Rs. 984.00 for both the years.<sup>36</sup> In 1906, there were 23 village schools with 323 boys and 163 girls, in 1907, 19 schools with 311 boys and 136 girls, and in 1908, 20 schools with 339 boys and 147 girls in the Gauhati field. Although the number of the schools had been declined, the attendance had steadily increased. The schools were growing in efficiency, and the teachers had begun to realize that the academic standard of the schools absolutely relied on their hard labors.<sup>37</sup>

The South Bank of the Gauhati Field Schools during 1913-1914, several Lower Primary Schools had performed excellent results and the Government Sub-Inspectors had praised these schools.<sup>38</sup> The conditions of education in the Assam valley reported by the mission during 1917-1926 as in the Gauhati, North and South Banks, Goalpara and Mongoldoi Mission Fields, that the schools were fairly well-attended.<sup>39</sup> According to the report of Assam Mission for 1945, the Gauhati-South Kamrup Field had 22 Government aided Primary Schools and 11 unaided with a total

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<sup>34</sup>. C.E. Burdette, Report from Gauhati, Missionary Conference, 1889.

<sup>35</sup>. C.D. King, Report from Gauhati, 1896.

<sup>36</sup>. C.E. Burdette, Report from Gauhati Field, Missionary Conference, 1889.

<sup>37</sup>. P.H. Moore, Report from Nowgong Field, Missionary Conference, 1900.

<sup>38</sup>. A.E. Stephen, Report from Gauhati, South Bank, Missionary Conference, 1915.

<sup>39</sup>. F. Gilson, Report from Nowgong, Goalpara, Mongoldoi, 1926.

enrolment of 1,144 pupils.<sup>40</sup> The Missionary report of 1947 mentioned, that the Church Association of the Gauhati-South Kamrup maintained 8 Primary Schools. There were 38 Primary and M.E. Schools under the joint management of the mission and the churches.<sup>41</sup> Hence, the number of schools had been established in several places. In 1900, a school was started in a Rabha village but they had been seeking a teacher for several years in the Goalpara field. Meantime, Peta Marak assisted the missionaries in the school for three years as a teacher and was paid Rs. 2.00 per month. There was a fair attendance during that year with 26 boys.<sup>42</sup> In the North Lakhimpur field, during 1899- 1900, there were 45 boys and 5 girls and 39 boys and 7 girls considerably with three Primary Schools.<sup>43</sup> In the Mikir field, in 1899 and in 1900, a Day School was established at the mission headquarters and the highest attendance was 14.<sup>44</sup> In 1899, the Golaghat field had 3 Primary Schools with 73 boys and 24 girls and in 1900, 4 schools with 62 boys and 14 girls. Out of these schools, one was instructed in Assamese and another was in Bengali medium.<sup>45</sup>

The Goalpara North Bank of 1940 says, Tukrajhar M.E. School was the only educational center in the whole of district. This was the only means of spreading education among the Boro-Kacharis. There were 65 boys and girls in this school.<sup>46</sup> In 1944 it was reported, the Tukrajhar School was still run by the people with some mission grants. But they had few reliable women leaders in the community in the Goalpara station.<sup>47</sup> In the Lakhimpur-Tezpur stations, the fruit of the schools were not satisfactory but there was a sign of hope through the ceaseless interest and co-operative attempts succeeded to organize some distinguished schools. There were altogether 11 schools in these fields.<sup>48</sup> No doubt, missionaries used the schools as an evangelizing agency, and all mission stations that have begun since then continued through teaching the boys and the girls with the principles of the Christian faith. For a number of years, each missionary carried on his/her own individual educational program. For the first fifty years of the mission work, there

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<sup>40</sup> E. Singha, Report from Gauhati-South Kamrup, Missionary Reports, 1945.

<sup>41</sup> E. Singha, Report from Gauhati-South Kamrup, Missionary Conference, 1947

<sup>42</sup> A.E. Stephen, Report from Goalpara Field, Missionary Conference, 1900.

<sup>43</sup> John Firth, Report from North Lakhimpur Field, Missionary Conference, 1900.

<sup>44</sup> P.H. Moore, Report from Mikir Field, Missionary Conference, 1900.

<sup>45</sup> O.L. Swanson, Report from Golaghat Field, Missionary Conference, 1900.

<sup>46</sup> V.H. Sword, Report from Gauhati-North Kamrup, Missionary Conference, 1940.

<sup>47</sup> J.M. Forbes, Report from Goalpara North Bank, Missionary Conference, 1944.

<sup>48</sup> J.W. Cooke, Report from Lakhimpur-Tezpur, Missionary Conference, 1944.

was no unified effort, saved for the Nowgong Orphanage. It was not because of inability on the part of the missionaries to work together that prevail this condition, but because of the great distances between the mission stations as well as the numerous languages from which the children would have to be drawn.<sup>49</sup> Thus, the missionaries often faced difficulties to achieve the target as they expected to attempt.

During the Missionary Conference in 1889, E.W. Clark too discussed that “Only by teaching the children can we hope to have any Church members who will read the Scriptures.”<sup>50</sup> It was not until 1905 that the mission lastly came to the conclusion that, if a lasting work was to be built, a definite educational program must be adhered. Illiteracy in the province was appalling, not merely among the non-Christians, but also among the Christians, whose constituency were children, not merely in faith, but in intellect too. They were unable to read or write and even the pastors were illiterate, and were therefore, incapable of making any progress in the instruction of their flocks.<sup>51</sup>

Often, the Missionary reports stated that the significance of education was stressed repeatedly in the process of conversion and training of a local convert. One of the reports on education was submitted by W.F. Dowd, an American Baptist Missionary, to the Missionary Conference in 1907 quoted as below:

For the conversion and training of the individual we need Christian education; but Christian education is absolutely indispensable if we are to have an intelligent, independent and growing Christian community. An ignorant Church is a superstitious and weak Church, and it is never ready for wisely directed independent work ... I am sure that we can never be satisfied until the rank and file of our churches can at least read the Bible intelligently.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>49</sup>. Ibid. p. 129.

<sup>50</sup>. E. W. Clark, Second Triennial Conference, 1889, p. 39.

<sup>51</sup>. Victor, Hugo Sword, *Baptists in Assam A Century of Missionary Service 1836-1936*, Op.cit., p. 129.

<sup>52</sup>. W.F. Dowd, 9<sup>th</sup> Biennial Conference, Gauhati, January 5-12, 1907. See also Eliza, Whitney Brown, *The Whole World Kin: A Pioneer Experience Among Remote Tribes, and Other Labors of Nathan Brown*, 1890, Op.cit., p. 29.

Notwithstanding, Mr. Dowd, in a paper entitled “*The Educational Situation in Assam*,” presented to the Assam Conference in 1907, commented that the percentage of children in school were depressing when they considered the attainments of the pupils, the situation seems a good deal in the worse. The facts were given by Mr. Dowd pertaining for the most part to the Government. The mission, therefore, was not much better; if anything, it was worse because of its work being handicapped by financial difficulties, it was unable to supply the necessary teachers and equipment, and social ostracism put the Christian on a lower level in public estimation. Further, Mr. Dowd points, the four primary causes of the educational backwardness of the province were mainly poverty, climate, ignorance, and false religious beliefs. Suffice it to say that if the Christian community was not to disintegrate a united effort was needed to consolidate all the educational work; thus, plans were laid by which it would be possible to establish a school in some central station on the plains, to which all the missionaries could send such students as had received a Primary and Middle English training in their own districts. Thereupon, Jorhat was selected as a Central Mission Station for the educational purpose.<sup>53</sup>

In 1919, Mr. Boggs had reported regarding the development of a Normal Department. After the selection of the School Board, in 1908, it was decided to raise the grade of the school to the Government Middle English standard and also to add a Primary Boarding Department. The School Board felt the necessity of this department later because of the backward condition of education in the Christian communities. It had found to meet present conditions and the mission hoped that it could be dispensed with in a decade.<sup>54</sup>In 1911, an Education Commission appointed by the Assam Mission submitted its findings and made recommendations on certain conditions.<sup>55</sup> This recommendation formed the foundation upon which the Jorhat Christian Schools were established. Several minor changes have been made. The Bible School, the Middle English School, the Normal Training School, and the High School were under the direction of one Superintendent and were governed by an elected board. But the Primary Boarding Department has been discontinued. Hence, from the above brief sketch of the educational history of Assam it

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<sup>53</sup>. Victor, Hugo Sword, *Baptists in Assam A Century of Missionary Service 1836-1936*, Op.cit., p. 130.

<sup>54</sup>. Ibid. p. 131.

<sup>55</sup>. Ibid. p. 133.

was found that an attempt had been made to maintain a standard of Middle English School in all the main mission stations.<sup>56</sup>

In link to Cotton College, a Government Institution was located at Gauhati. Here a hostel was made available for Christian students. This dormitory was under the direction of a missionary, Dr. W.E. Witter, who was the first to supervise it. Students were instructed of the Christian principles of life, not merely by word of mouth, but by the method of praxis oriented living in the hostel.<sup>57</sup>

#### **4.3.5. Industrial Training School**

Another phase of education was the growing demand of Industrial Training among the Christian boys and girls. Mr. Brown pioneered in this project and saw at the very beginning the urgency of a school in which the Christians could be trained to till their soil better in order to produce greater crops. In fact, each school on the plains as well as those in the hills emphasized the dignity of labor and all boys were required to work for two to three hours daily, partly to defray expenses of the school, but also to teach them how to adapt themselves more usefully in a growing industrial world.<sup>58</sup>

Out of all the Mission Centers in the plains of Assam, the American Baptist Mission has established its small Industrial Department at Jorhat. Rev. and Mrs. S.A.D. Boggs procured the new bungalow at Jorhat on January 7, 1906 to begin a new Mission Centre there and it was actually after two years, in May, 1908, that the need of manual arts culminated and thus an Industrial Department was organized in Jorhat.<sup>59</sup> It is evident from the report that the first adventure of Industrial Training was established to a large extent on a commercial basis. But it was defeated in its purpose to produce Christian men and women that would be able to cope better with the domestic problems of their rural environment. Besides, in 1919, Mr. C.E. Blanc was also the mission builder founded, a large Industrial School Building. This school was equipped with machinery from the United States; a modern technical school and boys were

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<sup>56</sup>. Ibid. p. 135.

<sup>57</sup>. Ibid. p. 136.

<sup>58</sup>. Ibid. p. 132.

<sup>59</sup>. Rev. S.A.D. Boggs, Reports from Jorhat Field, Missionary Conference Tenth Biennial Session, Gauhati, Jan. 7-10, 1910.

offered various branches of manual arts. In 1922, the institution was greatly impressed by the modern achievements of this venture. Unfortunately, there arose a need for an educational budget and appropriateness of this training was doubted. Further, the educational features of the schools were overwhelmed by the production of building material and thus led to the school to be closed down in 1925.

#### **4.3.6. Agricultural Training**

By the arrival of Mr. Charles Tilden in 1909, Agricultural Training was focused on too but a combination of circumstances hampered the progress of this branch. Hence, it was closed down in 1921.<sup>60</sup>

#### **4.3.7. Nowgong Orphan Institute**

The Nowgong Orphan Institution was established by Reverend Dr. Miles Bronson during the summer of 1843<sup>61</sup>; the object of the Institute was to gather orphan and destitute children, both boys and girls from every part of Assam and train them up under careful Christian influence, and also to prepare the more capable to be teachers. This institution was one of the most important and permanent branches of the missionary operations.<sup>62</sup> Therefore, the Assam missionaries were a unit in the conviction that the Orphan Institute of Nowgong School was a wise and Scriptural agency for propagating Christianity.<sup>63</sup> Financial support had been received from local British residents, including the Commissioner. The condition of orphan children especially due to the prevalence of disease and the lack of medical facilities was bad. There were many of them in those days which were extremely unfavorable. Frequently, among the poorer people, they were sold by the relatives to others and sometimes kept by relatives as unpaid servants. They were not better than slaves and had often been exploited. From time to time the missionaries had taken orphans to their homes, nurturing and educating them until they could find some employment for them. Many of the 'graduates' of the Orphan Institution were employed by the Government. Sometimes, the orphans would be turned over to the mission voluntarily by relatives or

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<sup>60</sup>. Victor, Hugo Sword, *Baptists in Assam A Century of Missionary Service 1836-1936*, Op.cit., pp. 132-133.

<sup>61</sup>. Maheswar, Neog, *The Resuscitation of the Assamese Language by the American Baptist Missionaries*, New Delhi: Omsons Publications, 2008, p. 5.

<sup>62</sup>. Eliza, Whitney Brown, *The Whole World Kin: A Pioneer Experience Among Remote Tribes, and Other Labors of Nathan Brown*, 1890, Op.cit., p. 260.

<sup>63</sup>. Ibid. p. 425.

guardians; sometimes they would only give them on payment of money. Their feature of the Orphan Institution had a great social significance because of its coeducational system. Bronson became a strong advocate for women education. At first, the girls were under the care of a missionary wife but later unmarried Women missionaries were employed for this task. The prime purpose of the Institute was evangelistic, as the boarding school, which the Institute vitally was, provided scope for continuous Christian influence as mentioned earlier. Consequently in 1846, some senior students of the Institute pleaded for baptism, and after scrutiny by the few missionaries in Assam seven of them and three others from Sibsagar were baptized. This process was repeated every subsequent year and it was a marked of a Spiritual Awakening called “Nowgong Revival.”<sup>64</sup>

On the other hand, the fifties were a critical decade for the missionaries due to an unseemly controversy between them and the Union in America, the First War of Indian Independence, the Civil War and the Economic Depression in America. In January-February 1854 the Home Board Secretary, Dr. Solomon Peck, was deputed to come to inspect the work of the missionaries in the field. He totally disapproved of the missionaries’ program of running schools, and in particular, wanted Bronson’s Orphan Institute pulled down. This was too much especially for pioneer laborers like Brown and Bronson to bear; but while the former took up an attitude of question and protest and finally resigned from the mission in 1856, his dear Orphan Institute died. For fear of effects of the “Sepoy Mutiny” Bronson fled with his family in a boat to Gauhati, where the Europeans had planned to assemble and live together.<sup>65</sup> Subsequently, the sudden thunder in the normal weather gloomed and it so happened as expected to the Institute. Hence, the mission was relinquished in 1856 due to the blunt interference of the Baptist Missionary Union in America.<sup>66</sup> Nevertheless, in 1861, it had been an extremely difficult decade involving illness, controversies in the Home Board, missionary resignations and dismissals, disruption due to the Rebellion of 1857 and uncertainty about the continuance of the Assam Mission. Thus, there was very little development for twenty-five years of missionary work.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>64</sup>. Maheswar, Neog, *The Resuscitation of the Assamese Language by the American Baptist Missionaries*, Op.cit., pp. 5-6.

<sup>65</sup>. Ibid. p. 7.

<sup>66</sup>. Ibid. pp. 5-6.

<sup>67</sup>. Frederick, S. Downs, *History of Christianity in India Volume V, Part 5 North East India in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, Op.cit., p. 71.

Whatsoever, the diffusion of knowledge was exploded throughout of the region. There was an ever-expanding network of Educational Institutions of high quality. In connection to this, Fr Thomas Menamparampil pens:

The boarding houses in Shillong, Gauhati and Dibrugarh have played an important role in the evangelization of the region. They formed lay leaders and well-instructed religious teachers. Every year a good number from among the senior students were baptized. It was precisely these youngsters that helped plant the Church in the Garo Hills, in Nagaland, Manipur, and to some extent in Mizoram. The experience of the Baptists in the Orphan school in Nowgong was to repeat itself again and again in dozens of our institutions to our own day.<sup>68</sup>

Indeed, the Educational Mission has contributed extensively for the enhancement of knowledge and evangelism in the region by both Protestant groups and Roman Catholics.

#### **4.3.8. Education Among the Women**

Female education had sparked and blossomed more vigorously in character and the development has been greater than that attained for boys. With the foundation of the various Mission Stations, Schools for girls were too established. The attempt to elevate womanhood to a higher social level among the people appealed to the Christian constituency in America, who supported the missionary endeavor. Single Lady Missionaries were employed to organize and superintend the education of indigenous girls. So, it happened when the Nowgong Orphanage was closed that a school for girls was established. This training School for women had produced teachers who have drawn nothing but the highest commendation from the Government officials. Alike, Female Schools were founded at Gauhati and Golaghat. In every mission station two or more Lady Missionaries have been regularly in charge with the exception of the last two or three years when the missionary personnel had been reduced because of insufficient funds. Not having been encumbered with other duties such as supervising churches, these Lady Superintendents have been able to pay their concentration upon their primary task of education.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>68</sup>. Thomas, Menamparampil, *Church in North-East India: A Study, 1974*, a Privately Published by the Provincial Office, Gauhati, 1974, p. 28.

<sup>69</sup>. Victor, Hugo Sword, *Baptists in Assam A Century of Missionary Service 1836-1936*, Op.cit., pp. 136-137.

Gradually the question of education for the native women became important for Lady Missionaries to think about, after all, an example of Nowgong Mission School always had a fair number of girl students. But there was a problem of the indigenous religious order, because if it was not for religious predilections of the *Vaishnava gossains* (priest) who raised objections to the secular and non-secular education conducted by the missionaries, more women would have come forward for educating themselves. But the school kept going work, especially because of the low-caste and tribal girls, since they had more mobility and less taboos than the upper castes women.<sup>70</sup> Mr. and Mrs. P.H. Moore arrived in Assam in January 1880. Soon after their reaching she started learning the Assamese language from a native *Pundit*.<sup>71</sup> Mrs. P.H. Moore felt that girls' interest in education should be generated since the parents did not take any initiative on that question; rather they believed that it was unnecessary for girls to know how to read and write. In spite of that, women missionaries had caught the spirit of zeal to eliminate darkness to light through education and thus carried their school works in teaching and in sewing to the girls.<sup>72</sup>

Shortly, Mrs. Moore had started learning Assamese, and after a while she also started translation of work initially small passages, then reports of the conferences, hymns, and writing for an Assamese Magazine *Dipti*. In this way she popularized the Biblical Stories and Lessons of morality and faith among a wider public. She was of course following a long tradition among the American Baptist Missionaries in Assam who used the regional language and the print to spread not just Religious Knowledge but also Secular Scientific Knowledge. Her contribution in printing literature is mentioned in the Annual Report between 1911 and 1913.<sup>73</sup>

But more than anything else, her Diaries, which she sincerely kept, are also a documentation of not only her daily life and her husband's work but also a history of evangelization and spread of education. When the School Inspector and the Chief Commissioner visited the school in 1916

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<sup>70</sup>.Mrs. E.G. Phillips, 'The Work for Missionaries' Wives' in The Assam Mission, *The American Baptist Missionary Union: Papers and Discussions of the Jubilee Conference* held in Nowgong on December 18-29, 1886, Spectrum Publishers, Guwahati, 1992, p. 59.

<sup>71</sup>. Rev. P.H. Moore, *History of the Nowgong Field*, Reports of the Conference, p. 37.

<sup>72</sup>. Mrs. E.G. Phillips, 'The Work for Missionaries' Wives' in The Assam Mission, *The American Baptist Missionary Union: Papers and Discussions of the Jubilee Conference* held in Nowgong on December 18-29, 1886, Spectrum Publishers, Guwahati, 1992, p. 59.

<sup>73</sup>. Mrs. Moore, *Stray Leaves from Assam*, p. 36.

they saw 300 girls. In the 36 years of her stay in Assam such a change had come where women like her and others had tremendously contributed to make even though possibly not so successfully, to conversion. In addition, this momentum was crowned for the cause of imparting valuable education to the ignorant and culture bound women. Here, Rev. P.H. Moore was posthumously awarded the *Kaiser-I-Hind Medal* by the British Government for his work for the cause of female education, which would not have been so successful if not for Jessie Moore and other Women Missionaries who rendered to him tireless efforts in running the Nowgong Mission. Jessie T. Moore did not claim a separate identity for herself and it was through her husband's presence that she made her presence felt.<sup>74</sup> Thus, one can recall her and others as an example of an Ideal Missionary Wives and Ladies who had never taken the credit and the limelight for themselves.

The Report of Miss Hay of the Nowgong Mission Girls Training School says that, the total enrollment was 300 of whom 96 were Christians, 118 Hindus, and 86 Muslims. There were 68 girls in the Christian Hostel including 17 Mikirs and 10 Assamese girls as well as some Garos, Kacharis, Mundaris and others. There were 16 Hindu girls in the Hindu Training Girls' Hostel. There were 10 resident teachers making a total of 94 in the Hostels. But soon there appeared a drawback in the boarding. Many girls were prevented from coming to the hostel because of high boarding fees. Moreover, the school was running on a closed budget and could not afford the needs. The condition of the school was good. The extra- curriculum activities had been carried on regularly. Seven girls of the hostel and six from the community were baptized, one from a non-Christian home.<sup>75</sup> Henceforth, Assam had splendid schools for girls, each one well equipped with buildings and apparatus; and all of them accredited by the Government. A High School for girls had been organized in coherence with the school at Golaghat. Within the short period of three years it is impossible to estimate what leading qualities might be stood by it. In 1932, a

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<sup>74</sup>. Suryasikha, Pathak, "Home away from Home: The Work of Missionary Wives in the Evangelical Project in Colonial Assam: Life and Times of Mrs. P.H. Moore," edited by T.B. Subba, Joseph Puthenpurakal & Shaji Joseph Puykunnel, *Christianity and Change in NorthEast India*, New Delhi: Concept Publishing Company, 2009, 355.

<sup>75</sup>. Miss Hay, Report on Nowgong: Mission Girls Training School, pp. 85-86, American Baptist Foreign Mission Society, Joint Meeting Assam Baptist Missionary Conference and Delegates of Assam Baptist Convention Report, Forty-sixth Session Conference, Golaghat, Assam, Jan, 3-9, 1950.

new project was suggested to the mission, namely, a Hostel for Girls, in connection with Cotton College and its positive effect fell upon the educated womanhood of Assam.<sup>76</sup>

Needless to say, the Women Missionaries have laid a firm foundation of establishing historic girl's Hostels and Schools in Assam. Out of these, there were some that were reported in the Missionary Conference. In Gauhati White Memorial Hostel was an Annual Report that stated that there was the largest number ever accommodated and yet many had been refused due to insufficient seats. The girls came from several hilly areas and from the plains. There were two Muslim girls. Fifteen tribes or racial groups were represented. It had one Abor girls, one Lotha Naga and one Lushai. There were eight Post-Graduate University students. Thirty nine girls were attended Cotton College and fourteen the R.H. Girls' College. They conducted evening and morning prayers and Bible classes. The Christian girls actively took part in the Student Christian Movement. There was also a vital challenge on how to manifest Christian witness among so many non-Christian girls.<sup>77</sup>

According to the Report of Miss Paul on Gauhati, Mission Girls' M.E. School commented that it had consciousness of the promise of constant care inscribed in a verse on the Chapel wall. It was also known as "*Satribari*" meaning a **Garden of Girl Students**. The enrollment was in 289, of whom 89 were Christians, 145 Hindus, 52 Muslims and 3 others. Nine racial groups and seven Districts were represented with Garos and Kacharis from Kamrup and Darrang leading, among the 68 girls in the Boarding Department. The usual activities were carried on, with Christian Endeavor and World Wide Guide Chapters in the Boarding and Girl Guides, Junior Red Cross and Temperance Societies in the School. Ten girls were baptized from the school. Bible teaching with the help of visual aid had been emphasized in the daily chapel and evening prayer services as well as Bible classes in the school.

While attending the Kamrup Garo and Assamese Bible classes it was a delight to find so many former *Satribari* girls as teachers, leaders and homemakers in their clean and progressive

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<sup>76</sup>. Victor, Hugo Sword, *Baptists in Assam A Century of Missionary Service 1836-1936*, Op.cit., p. 137.

<sup>77</sup>. Miss Nichols, Report on Gauhati: white Memorial Hostel, p. 79, American Baptist Foreign Mission Society, Join Meeting Assam Baptist Missionary Conference and Delegates of Assam Baptist Convention Report, Forty-sixth Session Conference, Golaghat, Assam, Jan, 3-9, 1950.

Christians villages. It had turned to see the fulfillment of the purpose of their school when they had produced beautiful and bright flowers of women from *Satribari Garden* and placed them in the villages. Thereafter, these women were illuminated and flourished the village environment.<sup>78</sup> In the Report of Golaghat Mission Girls' High School, Miss Evans mentioned that the enrollment has been the largest in the history of the school, a total of 302, of whom 144 were Christians. 65 were in the High School classes, of whom 49 were Christians. Of the total, 120 were from rural areas, 45 were from the aboriginals, 58 from ex-tea garden tribes. 99 girls had been in the boarding. Louise Singh from Gauhati has been nursing the school since 1945, was in charge of Supervision of the Boarding and taught two hygiene classes. A deepening of the spiritual life of the girls on the compound was the most important thing which has taken place. For some, it was a born again experience and for others a dedication of their lives. There were seven baptisms of Boarding Girls. Miss Robinson had given some time in addition to her language study in teaching scripture in the school and other religious activities. She also trained some teachers and girls to hold Daily Vacation Bible Schools in their villages.<sup>79</sup>

#### **4.3.9. Commitment for Zenana Work**

As far as the evidence is concerned, the Lady Missionaries visited the local women when their husbands had been away at work. It was also observed by the Missionary Wives that often women have shown interest to listen to the gospel and know about Jesus Christ. But, it was difficult a task for Lady Missionaries because they wrote, 'very often husbands are strongly opposed to our religion and do not want their wives to hear it.'<sup>80</sup> Indeed, this was a mode of indigenous life. Nevertheless, the Missionary Women did not give up and had continuous effort to penetrate and transform the private sphere which their husbands opposed and which the male missionaries had no access. Likewise, they gradually adapted to work among women.<sup>81</sup> Moreover, in the labor-scarce fields of Assam the Male Missionaries had become

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<sup>78</sup>. Miss Paul, Report on Gauhati: Mission Girls' M.E. School, pp. 79-80, American Baptist Foreign Mission Society, Joint Meeting Assam Baptist Missionary Conference and Delegates of Assam Baptist Convention Report, Forty-sixth Session Conference, Golaghat, Assam, Jan, 3-9, 1950.

<sup>79</sup>. Miss Evans, Report on Golaghat: Mission Girls' High School, pp. 81-82, American Baptist Foreign Mission Society, Joint Meeting Assam Baptist Missionary Conference and Delegates of Assam Baptist Convention Report, Forty-sixth Session Conference, Golaghat, Assam, Jan, 3-9, 1950.

<sup>80</sup>. Mrs. P.H. Moore, *Twenty Years in Assam or Leaves from my Journal*, 1<sup>st</sup> Published 1901, 1982, p. 22.

<sup>81</sup>. *Ibid.* p. 23.

effective and successful workers with their Female Missionary's dedication not just as supportive wives but also as active co-workers.

Mrs. Jessie T. Moore continued with the school work and accompanied Miss Keeler to do *zenana* (women) work. She also began to use evening walks to go around calling on her 'Assamese Christian sisters'.<sup>82</sup> She, along with the Bible Women, started in about 1885, a Women's Prayer Meeting, which met every Wednesday at the Moore's bungalow. But the Bible Women and she herself faced lots of opposition from the Hindu women they worked with, which was due to societal pressures and family disputes. In spite of this fact, Jessie Moore took it as a part of her trials and tribulations and it was, therefore, surprising to know about the statement of Hindu women what they said to Jessie, as cited:

If we had been true to our old (Hindu) religion, we should not have trouble now. It is because you have brought this new religion that we have trouble. We don't want your new religion. The Hindu religion was good enough for our fathers and it is good enough for us.<sup>83</sup>

Indeed, the missionaries had to go through various obstacles even to the extent of getting blame for the sake of Christ. These were not the only problems. The mission also suffered from the lack of trained workers, ill health and fund problems. To facilitate the condition it is appropriate to quote the statement of Mrs. Moore as she writes in early 1908:

We now have 50 girls ... We could get more girls if our dormitory were larger, and we had more money to feed them. Some of the girls have parents, and get enough money from home to buy their clothes and books. We want to raise the tuition to Rs. 2 per month for all who can afford to pay that amount.<sup>84</sup>

Still most of the women and girls stayed outside the ambit of education. In her tours she met more and more women who showed interest in not just education but also about the gospel. But it was often difficult for women to oppose their traditional society and several times they had to be mere silent observers. Hence, Mrs. Moore had expressed her strong feeling and reservation about the existing marriage systems, which made women more subservient thus she says: 'I feel

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<sup>82</sup>.Mrs. E.G. Phillips, 'The Work for Missionaries' Wives' in The Assam Mission, *The American Baptist Missionary Union: Papers and Discussions of the Jubilee Conference* held in Nowgong on December 18-29, 1886, Spectrum Publishers, Guwahati, 1992, p. 59.

<sup>83</sup>. Mrs. Moore, *Autumn Leaves from Assam*, p. 4.

<sup>84</sup>. *Ibid.* p. 4.

very sorry for some of the suffering women of this land. Such early marriages (girls at 12 years old are often married) lead to suffering.’<sup>85</sup>

#### **4.4. Dawn of Modern Assamese**

##### **4.4.1. Literature**

Another agency of Christian influence was literature which had displayed a tremendous role. The dawning of the Modern Assamese Literature was the assessment of the American Baptist Missionaries whether Christian or non-Christian and it is true to admit to be the product of the nineteenth century.<sup>86</sup> Thus, to suffice it, the Modern Literature in Assamese tuned by missionaries in which rightly penned by P.H. Moore in 1907 as:

The modern literature in Assamese, whether Christian or non-Christian, may be said to be the product of the last sixty years of the nineteenth century. Brown, Bronson, and Nidhi Levi are the trio of names that stand out pre-eminently as the founders of Assamese Christian literature. Brown was the translator of the New Testament into the Assamese, and saw it through three editions. Bronson’s chief literary effort was an Assamese-English Dictionary, which he published in 1867, and which was the only Assamese Dictionary printed until the year 1900. His name is also connected with several tracts, leaflets, and hymns.<sup>87</sup>

The missionaries had rendered the tireless efforts from scratching to learn, read and write new letter or alphabet and made incredible contributions to the development of Modern Literature as well as Education.

##### **4.4.1.1. Resuscitation of the Assamese Language**

The impact of Christian Mission on literature was amazingly historic. Even among the Hindus of Assam, the American Baptist Mission is credited to have played a substantial role in the preservation and renaissance of the Assamese Language and Literature. To advocate this renaissance, Hem Barua, an authority on the subject, has penned:

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<sup>85</sup>. Mrs. Moore, *Twenty Years in Assam or Leaves from my Journal*, p. 133.

<sup>86</sup>. Maheswar, Neog, *The Resuscitation of the Assamese Language by the American Baptist Missionaries*, Op.cit., p. 242.

<sup>87</sup>. Victor, Hugo Sword, *Baptists in Assam A Century of Missionary Service 1836-1936*, Op.cit., p. 138.

In fact, the American Baptist Mission is the torch-bearer in this new literary epoch in our language... The redemption of the Assamese language in fact came at the hands of the American Baptist Mission who not only gave the language of the people a fresh lease on life, but also gave it a due share of justice and recognition in all their institutions.<sup>88</sup>

The renaissance was fostered by two activities of the mission. Firstly, was its outspoken and ultimately successful opposition to the Government's efforts to introduce Bengali as the Official Court and Educational Language? Secondly, and more important by was the publication of a monthly journal, called *Orunodoi*, from 1846. Therefore, for some years it was displayed as the chief vehicle of the Assamese renaissance, published contributions from non-Christian as well as Christian sources.<sup>89</sup> Brown, Bronson and Nidhi Levi were the trio of names that stand out pre-eminently as the founders of Assamese Christian Literature.<sup>90</sup>

Since, the time of arrival, the Browns and Bronsons in Sadiya, had found the banishment of the Assamese Language in the province. It was replaced in Schools and Courts by Bengali in Assam.<sup>91</sup> The Baptist Missionaries had undergone lots of struggle for the revival of the Assamese language which was one of the most valuable contributions to the Assamese nationality among other works. The chief of the Baptists, Dr. Nathan Brown, carried with him the notion that Assamese was considered only a patois of Bengali, but it was not true. As the expert linguist in him became firmly convinced about the beauty, power and originality of the Assamese Language he noticed that in spite of the laws of 1837, circulation of Bengali in the Schools and Law Courts instead of Assamese in Assam was a conspiracy for destroying the Assamese Language. He had realized the terrible situation arising out of the fact that in spite of the criminal procedure act, which states that the language of the soil was to be used in Judicial and Revenue proceedings, the rulers passed orders that Bengali and not Assamese was to be used.<sup>92</sup> So in the 29<sup>th</sup> October 1838, he wrote in a journal:

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<sup>88</sup>. Hem, Barua, *Assamese Literature*, New Delhi: National Book Trust, 1965, pp. 134-135.

<sup>89</sup>. Shibanikinkar, Chaube, *Hill Politics in North-East India*, Calcutta: Orient Longman, 1973, pp. 56-59.

<sup>90</sup>. Maheswar, Neog, *The Resuscitation of the Assamese Language by the American Baptist Missionaries*, Op.cit., p. 242.

<sup>91</sup>. Ibid. p. 7.

<sup>92</sup>. Ibid. p. 17.

This makes it pretty certain that the Assamese, as a distinct language, will in course of a few generations, become extinct and Bengali supplied its place. This project has been for some time in contemplation, and now that government had set about the work thus vigorously, there can be little doubt that they will ultimately succeed in effecting the change.<sup>93</sup>

Moreover, the Baptist missionaries saw that without the Assamese Language they could not do any enterprise for propagation and the general population of Assam understood only Assamese language. But during that time the entire people of Assam were in deep sleep. It was the American Baptist missionaries, a God sent agent, who marched forward to fight for the redemption of the Assamese language. It was the role played by the missionaries for the resuscitation of the Assamese Language from a state of ban in administration and educational programs and into as a medium of modern literary tool.<sup>94</sup> The movement against this measure began slowly by the American missionaries, who realized how great harm was being done to Assam. They saw very clearly that the Assamese people could be approached only through the Assamese language. By this time, the missionaries already started to employ Assamese in the writing of the religious books and as medium of instruction in the vernacular schools. Accordingly, they dispatched their objections to the Government at Calcutta but with no result.<sup>95</sup> In the meantime, a young dynamic Assamese Officer, Anandaram Dhekiyal Phukan, came as Sub-Assistant to Nowgong and had constant contact with Bronson and other missionaries in Assam. In addition to recalling this young man what he said about the American missionaries in 1855, the American Missionaries of Assam like their worthy brethren of Serampore, have been the only zealous supporters of the Assamese language during the last twenty years. Therefore, Phukan had received much encouragement and help particularly from Bronson and boldly represented the case for Assam and the Assamese in a memorandum as well as in writing to Judge A.J. Moffatt Mills, who came on deputation to report on Assam's administration (1853), and published a book, "*A Few Remarks on the Assamese Language and on Vernacular*

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<sup>93</sup>. Journal of Brown, October 10, 1838, H.K. Barpujari, *The American missionaries and North-East India (1836-1900 A.D.) A Documentary Study*, Op.cit., p. 125.

<sup>94</sup>. Maheswar, Neog, *The Resuscitation of the Assamese Language by the American Baptist Missionaries*, Op.cit., pp. 17-18.

<sup>95</sup>. Bronson to Halliday \*, November 13, 1854, H.K. Barpujari, *The American Missionaries and North-East India (1836-1900 A.D.)*, Part One, Op.cit., 1986, p. 135. \*Halliday, Federick James, Lieutenant Governor of Bengal. Hereafter cited H.K. Barpujari, *The American Missionaries and North-East India (1836-1900 A.D.)*, Part One, p.135.

*Education in Assam*,” (1855), printed at Sibsagar by the American Mission Press,<sup>96</sup> prior to Reports of A.J. Moffatt Mills,<sup>97</sup> was published in 1854. It was known to all that his unhesitant recommendation to the use of Assamese in Government Schools and Law Courts instead of Bengali but neither the mango nor the stick thrown for it, came to hand. Both the Bengal Government and the Council of Education were silent on this matter.<sup>98</sup> Besides, these valuable attempts had no effect on the Government. The pages of the *Orunodoi*, a monthly journal, were opened up for the Assamese people to argue the case for their own language right.

Nevertheless, in the absence of a pious missionary leader Brown, Bronson had taken upon himself the task to carry on further accomplishment for the resuscitation of the Assamese language. Unfortunately, Phukan, could not see his labors in bearing any fruit and then, he died in 1859. Thus, Bronson was left completely alone to lead an agitation on behalf of the Assamese. He took to a new method of filing public representations to the Government from different quarters. He acted as the “President of the Community” and sent up to the Government well-formed, arguments in Nowgong. Apart from continued warfare he waged for the reinstatement of the Assamese language in Schools and Law Courts in Assam. Later, this agitation increased in the early 1870s, and due to this uprising campaign the Government went back to the use of Assamese in the Courts and Schools. Hence, this change was brought as a result of continuous maintained agitation led by the missionaries, especially by Bronson in 1873.<sup>99</sup> The Judicial Department notified on 25 July 1873 under the Provisions of Act XXIX of 1837, empowering the Governor-General to prescribe by an Order in Council that the language and script of Assamese was to be used in Courts Judicial and Revenue Proceedings as well as Schools.<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>96</sup>. Bronson to the Editor, “Friend of India,” Nowgong, May 25, 1855 (Excerpts). It has been inadvertently printed in the 42<sup>nd</sup> Annual Report of the Assam Mission (1956) as *Assamese Language and Vernacular Education in Assam*, H.K. Barpujari, *The American Missionaries and North-East India (1836-1900 A.D.)*, Part One, Op.cit., pp. 141-143.

<sup>97</sup>. A.J.M. Mills, Judge *Sadar dewani Adawlat*, paid a visit to enquire into the administrative affairs at Assam in June 1853. The report which he submitted to the Government, popular as the *Mill’s Report on Assam* (1854), forms an invaluable source material on East-India Company’s administration in Assam, cited to H.K. Barpujari, *The American Missionaries and North-East India (1836-1900 A.D.)*, Part One, Op.cit., p. 137.

<sup>98</sup>. Maheswar, Neog, *The Resuscitation of the Assamese Language by the American Baptist Missionaries*, Op.cit., p.18.

<sup>99</sup>. Ibid. pp. 8-9.

<sup>100</sup>. Ibid. pp. 58- 59.

#### 4.4.1.2. Translation of the Assamese Bible

Dr. William Carey of British Baptist Mission at Serampore in Calcutta, with the help of Atmaram Sarma, an Assamese Brahmin from Kaliabar in the Nowgong district, had translated the Bible into Assamese. Sarma had received his baptism earlier as he was returning from a Hindu pilgrimage and was engaged in translation work. They published the New Testament from the Serampore Mission Press in 1813, when Assam was still an Independent State ruled by the Ahoms, and the Old Testament in 1833. Carey's emissaries, Rae and Robinson carried this Bible to Assam along with them when they commenced a Christian Mission Station at Gauhati. But the labor was soon proved to be abortive.

Meanwhile, Dr. Nathan Brown arrived at Sadiya in 1836 and the Assamese language was to be used as medium of preaching. So, he procured to use Carey's Assamese Bible, but found it practically unintelligible to the ordinary Assamese, being "full of Bengali and Sanskrit word" and with all theological terms misinterpreted as they were entirely based upon the Hindu religion. Shortly, Brown began to learn Assamese and started translating the Bible afresh into the language. In 1837 he was able to preach and teach in Assamese and in 1838 he rendered for the translation of the Scripture and soon the gospel of Matthew was ready.<sup>101</sup> Brown also aimed to translate three other gospels of Mark, Luke and John. In 1848, Brown published his Assamese New Testament.<sup>102</sup>

Later, the translation of the Old Testament had begun. From Genesis to the 31<sup>st</sup> Chapter of Exodus were translated by Dr. Ward and the first edition was printed at the Mission Press, Sibsagar in 1869. The Psalms translated by Dr. Ward was first printed at the Mission Press, Sibsagar in 1863. The books of Jude, Joshua and Ruth were translated by A.K. Gurney and were printed in a book at the Mission Press, Sibsagar in 1880. The books of Samuel and Kings were translated by Nidhi Levi Farwell; Isaiah by Rev. Whiting; Proverbs, Job and some of the Minor Prophets were printed too. From the 31<sup>st</sup> Chapter of Exodus, Chronicle, Nehemiah, Ezra, Esther and the Minor prophets had been translated but were not printed by 1886. The books of Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Samuel, Ecclesiastics, Song of Solomon and Lamentation were yet to be

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<sup>101</sup>. A.K. Gurney, *The Bible in Assamese*, Jubilee issue, 1886, see also *Journal of Brown, Sadiya*, May 1, 1837.

<sup>102</sup>. Nathan, Brown, *The Whole World Kin*, Op.cit., pp. 412-413, see also H.K. Barpujari, *The American Missionaries and North-East India (1836-1900 A.D.)*, Part One, Op.cit, p. 153.

translated by 1886.<sup>103</sup>In addition, A.K. Gurney, as a Hebrew scholar, had completed the translation of the Old Testament into Assamese after many years of tedious toil and printed it in 1899.<sup>104</sup>So the completion of the whole Bible took quite a long time and the simple and complete Bible was translated and printed into Assamese before the close of the nineteenth century.

#### **4.4.1.3. Writing of Religious Books, Tracts and School Text Books**

Eventually, the missionaries were able to start writing Religious Books, Tracts and School Text Books right after the finishing of the translation of the Bible. Thereafter, the Books and Tracts have been published in Assamese by June 20, 1838 such as (i) A Spelling Book in English, Assamese and Tai (48 pages), (ii) The Alphabets and Spelling Lessons (16 pages), (iii) The Parables of Christ (32 pages), (iv) Sermon on the Mount (16 pages), (v) Catechism in Assamese (16 pages), (vi) The Alphabets (1 page), (vii) Catechism in Tai (18 pages), (viii) A Hymn in Assamese (1 page), (ix) Worcester's Primer in Assamese (56 pages), (x) History of the Flood (14 pages) and (xi) History of the Creation (12 pages).<sup>105</sup>

#### **4.4.1.4. Juvenile Tracts in Assamese**

The writing of tracts was produced by the mission with translations and adaptations and their publications, in a few pages, were for the purpose of religious preaching. The first Tract was printed on "The Holy Incarnation" translated by Bronson and was regarded to be one of the best Tracts. The content of the Tract was a comparison between the Ten Principal Incarnations of the Hindus and Christ. Another Tract was "The Rewards of Intemperance," and highlights of the evil of using opium and intoxicating liquors, and drugs of all kinds.<sup>106</sup> There were also other Tracts as: (i) True Refuge, (ii) The Deluge, (iii) The Creation and Fall, (iv) Letter to Mahommadans, (v) Way of Salvation, (vi) Pandit and Preacher, (vii) Error Refuted and (viii) Wanderings of a Pilgrim<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>103</sup>. A.K. Gurney, The Bible in Assamese, Jubilee issue, 1886

<sup>104</sup>. N.P. Mason, These Seventy Five Years, Tura, March 31, 1911.

<sup>105</sup>. *Baptist Missionary Magazine*, 1839, p. 145.

<sup>106</sup>. Letter from Bronson, September 1, 1844, H.K. Barpujari, *The American missionaries and North-East India (1836-1900 A.D.) A Documentary Study*, Op.cit., p. 154.

<sup>107</sup>. Statement of Printing: American Baptist Mission Press, Sibsagar, January 1, 1846 to September 30, 1851, Thirty-eight Annual Report of the Mission to Assam, BMM, July, 1852: Excerpt, H.K. Barpujari, *The American Missionaries and North-East India (1836-1900 A.D.)*, Part One, Op.cit, p. 166.

#### **4.4.1.5. Children's Literature**

From 1850-57, Mrs. Brown had prepared for the Assamese children, a series of 12 short illustrated narratives, mainly translations from English and Bengali with some additional original matter of her own which listed such as (i) Old Souls, (ii) African Prince, (iii) The Warrior Chief Converted, (iv) The Orphan girl, (v) The Eagle's Nest, or a Mother's Love, (vi) Memoir of Huke, the little Naga boy, (vii) The Beautiful Garment, (viii) Account of Rangoti, (ix) Account of Rabi, (x) The Pious Villager, (xi) Account of Rajon and (xii) Early Piety<sup>108</sup>

#### **4.4.1.6. Publication of Periodicals**

There were two types of periodicals introduced and ever printed news by the American Baptist missionaries. These periodicals captured the minds of the masses in the society and fascinated greatly through its writings in various matters. Moreover, it became a literary mouthpiece to communicate multiple information to the common people and left a major impact in the society as a whole.

##### **4.4.1.6.1. *Orunodoi* (Dawn of Day)**

In January, 1846, Dr. Brown had furnished the first number of the *Orunodoi* (Dawn of Day), a "Monthly Newspaper cum Magazine devoted to Religion, Science, and General Intelligence," which he wrote into Assamese language during his remaining years at Sibsagar. Moreover, he was the chief editor of this Magazine. It was printed and published at the Sibsagar Mission Press by O.T. Cutter, for the American Baptist Mission in Assam. This was the first ever newspaper and journal in the Assamese language. Dr. Bronson became one of its contributors and wrote especially about Nowgong Orphan Institute matters. The native readers of the public were delighted by this eye opening Magazine. The Brahmins had also found it pleasing and acquired some ideas in fascinating form along with information on issues of general interests. Such matters appeared as Turko-Russian hostilities, the War in China, Revolution in Spain, Telegraph from Calcutta to Bombay, etc. elucidated articles on Astronomy, Geography, Social, Political History, Natural History, Science and Scientific discoveries communicated useful and important instructions, while temperance, veracity, self-reliance, family life and other relevant subjects

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<sup>108</sup>. Nathan, Brown, *The Whole World Kin*, Op.cit., p. 386. Eliza, Whitney Brown, *The Whole World Kin: A Pioneer Experience Among Remote Tribes, and Other Labors of Nathan Brown*, 1890, Op.cit., p. 416.

received awareness. Through its columns, Christian hymns, translation of Psalms, Pilgrim's Progress, History of the Apostles, Parable of the Sower, etc., found their way into the non-Christian lives where Christian Scriptures could not have been acknowledged. Hence, for some years *Orunodoi* was the main conveyance of the Assamese renaissance which gained access into the minds of the Assamese<sup>109</sup> by publishing contributed sources from non-Christians as well as Christians.<sup>110</sup>

The most voluminous contributor to the *Orunodoi* was Nidhi Levi Farwell, the first convert from Sadiya station in Assam.<sup>111</sup> His signature appeared for the first time in the first number of March in 1846 and as a writer of the article on the prophet Daniel in the printing-press. Even in his small capacity as a press worker he seems to have been the right hand of the editor, Dr. Brown. Nidhi wrote both prose and verse in various topics. He introduced Christ's apostles like St. Paul and recounted various tales and resets characters from the Bible. Nidhi had contributed his share to the first series of the Christian Hymnal and his Songs are still used in the Church services all over the Brahmaputra valley and some other hills too. He seems to have added some of the versified tail-pieces of the journal; but this was done anonymously.<sup>112</sup> Moreover, Nidhi as a native assistant was employed "Assistant Preacher, First Class" for Sibsagar, and rendered excellent missionary service too. Besides, he continued his work in the Mission Press and with his association with the editing of the *Orunodoi*, he becoming an influential personality to reckon with. Thus, he proved to be one of the most dedicated and faithful Christian workers at Sibsagar, where he died early in 1873. His grave exists still in the Christian Cemetery at Sibsagar town.<sup>113</sup> It bears testimony with the following inscription on a Marble Tablet at the southern end of the stone: Nidhi Levi Farwell, the first Convert in Assam, died Jan. 28<sup>th</sup> 1873, age 50. Indeed the

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<sup>109</sup>. Letter from Brown to Danforth, July 4, 1850 enclosed in H.K. Barpujari's *The American Missionaries and North-East India (1836-1900 A.D.) A Documentary Study*, Op.cit., p. 156. See also Nathan, Brown, *The Whole World Kin*, Op.cit., p. 419. As refer also G. Gillespie, "Orunodoi", *Journal of the University of Gauhati*, XXVI-XXVII: Arts. Reproduced in *ICHR*, XII, I (June 1978).

<sup>110</sup>. Cyril, Bruce Firth, *An Introduction to Indian Church History*, Serampore: The Indian Theological Library, 1976, p. 284.

<sup>111</sup>. Morris, John Hughes, *The History of the Welsh Calvinistic Methodists' Foreign Mission, to the End of the Year 1904*, Carnarvon: C.M. Book Room, 1910, pp. 124-125.

<sup>112</sup>. Maheswar, Neog, *The Resuscitation of the Assamese Language by the American Baptist Missionaries*, Op.cit., pp. 240-241.

<sup>113</sup>. F.S. Downs, *The Mighty Works of God*, Op.cit., p. 32.

different roles of Nidhi as a literary man are set out here “writer, preacher, poet and translator” in which “he showed uncommon ability and great fidelity.”<sup>114</sup>

Meanwhile, the *Orunodoi* was in circulation with occasional breaks until 1880 and edited in succession after Nathan Brown by Danforth, Whiting, Bronson, Mrs. Ward, Clark and A.K. Gurney. The subscribers increased with the development of education among the Assamese. But prejudice rose against its religious character, and still they had no substitute for it, because they had the utmost confidence in its statements being reliable.<sup>115</sup>The *Orunodoi* was the first Assamese Periodical and was the only one of its kind for many years, till other Secular Journals were published.<sup>116</sup>Hence, in a brief account of the striking effect of the missionaries in the literary endeavor, B.K. Barua says:

The missionaries definitely achieved one thing. Up till now Assamese literature was more or less an oral literature confined to the villages and the Ahom court. Now it takes a definitely urban complexion, and at Gauhati, Sibsagar, Nowgong and such other headquarter towns literary circles sprang up. The old religious tone was replaced by a more secular one, and there grew up a literature dealing not with a mythical world of gods and nymphs but with the life and society of the “moral millions” here and now. Western ideas began to spread along with the progress of English education in the land. In every town a literary society was born. Old beliefs, ways and concepts yielded place to new ones. The influence of western ideas began to be keenly felt in the domain of literature, which now enters a period of varied creative activity.<sup>117</sup>

Clearly, the missionaries tilled the soil and sowed the seeds of high breed with much labor to germinate the plant, to produce healthier and finer fruits. As a result, the missionaries refined and sharpened the old literature to bring into new shape better and educative dimension along with restoring of the Assamese Language as well as the Ancient Manuscripts.<sup>118</sup>Thus, it is worthwhile to distinguish the missionaries, particularly Nathan Brown, who was not only an eminent figure,

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<sup>114</sup>. Maheswar, Neog, *The Resuscitation of the Assamese Language by the American Baptist Missionaries*, Op.cit., pp. 241-242.

<sup>115</sup>. *Fifty-fifth Annual Report, Assam Mission, BMM, July 1868*, pp. 261-262; look also G. Gillespie, “Orunodoi”, *Journal of the University of Gauhati*, 1975-6, pp. 125 -139.

<sup>116</sup>. Victor, Hugo Sword, *Baptists in Assam A Century of Missionary Service 1836-1936*, Op.cit., p. 138.

<sup>117</sup>. B.K. Barua, *History of Assamese Literature*, Delhi: 1964, pp. 106-107.

<sup>118</sup>. G. Gillespie, “Missionaries and Manuscripts,” *ICHR*, XIII. 2 (December 1979), pp. 157-169.

but also the first editor of *Orunodoi* and an internationally acknowledged authority on the Languages of Northeastern India.<sup>119</sup>

#### **4.4.1.6.2. *Dipti* (Light)**

The second periodical in the Assamese language was published by the American Baptist Mission in Assam and was called “*Dipti*” (Light). It began in 1907 with Rev. S.A.D. Boggs as its editor and was published by the All Assam Baptist Convention. It was largely circulated and became well known media like *Orunodoi*.<sup>120</sup> Nevertheless, the report of 1911 stated that the “*Dipti*,” the Assamese Christian Monthly News Paper had been ceased owing to increasing debts on the paper. Moreover, nobody made any attempt to revive it. For many years, it was the only newspaper read by hundreds of Christians and non-Christians. It was also served as a unifying agent in the mission work. Indeed, the missionaries were deeply sorry for not being able to print larger and supply Tracts in Assamese. The percentage of the Assamese readers was continuously increasing and there was a growing demand to read Christian books. Subsequently, the mission had neither the money nor the writers who could shoulder on this literary mouthpiece.<sup>121</sup> Gradually, it was diminished.

#### **4.4.1.7. Publication of Anglo-Assamese Dictionary**

Miles Bronson published an Anglo-Assamese Dictionary in 1867. It is known as Bronson’s Assamese Dictionary, which was the only Assamese Dictionary printed until the year 1900. His name is also identified with several tracts, leaflets, and hymns.<sup>122</sup> Rev. P.H. Moore was also another American Baptist missionary who resided at Nowgong and wrote the Modern Literature in Assamese in 1911 which might be claimed to be the product of the last sixty years of missionary labors of the nineteenth century.<sup>123</sup>

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<sup>119</sup>. Eliza, Whitney Brown, *The Whole World Kin: A Pioneer Experience Among Remote Tribes, and Other Labors of Nathan Brown*, 1890, Op.cit., p. 602.

<sup>120</sup>. S.A.D. Boggs, Report from Jorhat Field, 10<sup>th</sup> Session, Gauhati, January 8-17, 1910. Refer to also Victor, Hugo Sword, *Baptists in Assam A Century of Missionary Service 1836-1936*, Op.cit., p. 138.

<sup>121</sup>. N.P. Mason, *These Seventy Five Years*, Tura, March 31, 1911.

<sup>122</sup>. Victor, Hugo Sword, *Baptists in Assam A Century of Missionary Service 1836-1936*, Op.cit., p. 138. See also N.P. Mason, *These Seventy Five Years*, Tura, March 31, 1911

<sup>123</sup>. N.P. Mason, *These Seventy Five Years*, Tura, March 31, 1911.

#### **4.5. Concentration on Medical Enterprise**

The origin of Christian Mission in Assam was also followed by the Medical work which was taken into a serious consideration because of the needs of the suffering people. Shortly, the missionaries were realized the urgent task of caring for the sick with medical aid as Jesus Christ was portrayed a great role model in the Bible. He had an extravagant love of compassion to the great multitude especially to the sick and destitute and administered to them along with preaching the word of God. Likewise, same foot step was taken by the pioneer missionaries and had rendered the esteemed service by sacrificing themselves for the cost of humanity. Thus, whoever arrived as a missionary, each missionary was equipped with the First Aid Medical Course and tried to extent medical services with whomever they had a contact with. In course of time, the value of modern medicines and surgery became more appreciated in America and it was also felt that such demand of needed aid should be dispatched to other mission fields and thereby the best available healing methods went hand in hand. Hence, the supplement of preaching of the gospel by word and care had become obligatory to fulfill the Command of the Lord Jesus Christ, for instance, preaching the gospel and healing the sick.<sup>124</sup>

##### **4.5.1. Foundation of Medical Enterprise by American Baptist Mission**

Convincingly, the Medical enterprise has played a significant part in developing the social structure of both the Christian and the extra Christian communities. From the beginning of the first seventy years, the region was enveloped with people ignorant of modern scientific medical treatment. In this juncture, the missionaries utilized the opportunity to use the simple way of healing with meager training of medical aid which had been practiced to cure the sick and dying people and become a great asset to the Christian Mission work.<sup>125</sup>

As soon as the missionaries reached a mission station and found widespread diseases among the native people. Indeed the place was extraordinarily unhealthy in both natural and political factors. Looking back to 1853, several factors made difficult to induce people lives to relocate to the areas that had been abandoned due to rebellions in Upper Assam at the end of the eighteenth century. Subsequently, it was the Burmese occupation, an Assamese gentleman called

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<sup>124</sup>. 125<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Jubilee Papers, 1961.

<sup>125</sup>. Victor, Hugo Sword, *Baptists in Assam A Century of Missionary Service 1836-1936*, Op.cit., p. 140.

Anandaram Dhekiyal Phukan who writes of one of the reasons of unhealthiness in the Brahmaputra valley and thus quoted as:“Since the last few years the ravages of sickness, and specially of cholera, have been so great that the annual deaths in some localities are supposed to have exceeded twenty percent!”<sup>126</sup> This had materially impeded the progress of population in Assam. Besides, along with cholera, malaria (though it was not yet known as such) and *kalaazar* (Black Fever) were major causes of illness and death.<sup>127</sup> In this respect the American Baptist missionary, M.C. Mason remarked after observing the disease that healing the sick was an important element in Christ’s own ministry on which he says in 1886:

And it is axiomatic that we should have the same spirit, and practice like kindness, so far as it is in our power. The principle of charitable relief and care for the sick, is quite generally and wisely accepted as one of the more effective means of gaining the attention, sympathy, and goodwill of the people. Good hospitals cannot fail of having a salutary influence.<sup>128</sup>

Thus, a serious epidemic of *kalaazar* during the last two decades of the nineteenth century heavily depleted the population. The *Provincial Gazetteer on Eastern Bengal and Assam* of 1905 (reprinted in 1979 as *Gazetteer of Bengal and North East India*) hence described the results of this epidemic as cited:

Between 1881 and 1891 the population of the Goalpara subdivision decreased by 18 per cent.; and the population recorded in Kamrup in 1891 was estimated to have been less by 75,000 people than it would have been had there been no deaths from *kalaazar*. During the next decade the population of Kamrup decreased by 7 per cent., that of the Mangaldai subdivision of Darrang by 9 per cent., of Nowgong District by 25 per cent., and of the North Sylhet subdivision by 4 per cent.; and the excessive mortality indicated by these figures was, at any rate in the Assam Valley, chiefly due to this disease.<sup>129</sup>

In addition, the death of missionaries and early converts to Christianity was very common in the region. In some extents the hilly areas were healthier than the valleys, but even there was

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<sup>126</sup>. Mills, Report, p. xIv.

<sup>127</sup>. Mills, Report on Assam, p.46.

<sup>128</sup>. The Assam Mission of the ABMU, Papers and Discussion of the Jubilee Conference held in Nowgong, December 18-29, 1886, p. 99

<sup>129</sup>. Mills, Report on Assam, p. 46

widespread disease and medical treatment was almost unknown.<sup>130</sup> The early missionaries encountered with such widespread, human suffering and often acquired an elementary knowledge of first aid medicine, treating the illness in the simplest of ways as best as they could do. In fact, hundreds and thousands of patients were treated in this simple way. The demand was so great that the practice of missionaries without medical qualification affording medical services of a simple sort continued even after regular medical programs had started to be launched.<sup>131</sup>

According to the Missionary Report of 1904-05, the medical services had expanded into a way of selling medicines. Various kinds of medicines have been received by Rev. A.E. Stephen of the Goalpara station from Dr. Croziers of Tura station.<sup>132</sup> Both Sibsagar and North Lakhimpur Districts have also used medicines. The Christians too had their usual portion of medicines who had been highly encouraged to opt<sup>133</sup> and continued to obtain medicines from Dr. Croziers of Tura station.<sup>134</sup> In 1906-09, a large number of sick people had been treated in the Goalpara district and the number would not have been less than fifteen hundred. It had sold and given free, more than Rs. 300.00 worth of medicines.<sup>135</sup> The same year, in the Jorhat Field, medical aid to the sufferings saw much work being done and developed awareness, although the missionary was not a medical man. In the first two years of the foundation of the mission field at Jorhat, there was little attention for medicines but one or two came and then the gathering became larger gradually. In 1909, the mission started to charge money for medicines from patients, yet it did not lead to decrease in the demand for medicines and seemed to prefer receiving medicines from the mission station on payment rather than go to the Government Dispensary to take treatment and medicine free<sup>136</sup> of cost.

During 1907-08, Rev. Jackman visited the Miris and Abors and in these trips, thousands of Miris and Abors had been treated with medicines but the detailed record was not maintained in the

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<sup>130</sup>. Ibid. p. 46.

<sup>131</sup>. Assam Baptist Missionary Conference of the American Baptist Missionary Union, Report of the Tenth Biennial Session, held at Gauhati, January 8-17, 1910.

<sup>132</sup>. Rev. A.E. Stephen, Report from the Goalpara Field, 8<sup>th</sup> Session of the A.B.M.U., Gauhati, December 24, 1904 to January 1905.

<sup>133</sup>. Rev. Joseph Paul, Report from Lakhimpur Field.

<sup>134</sup>. Rev. A.E. Stephen, Report from Goalpara Field, 9<sup>th</sup> Session of A.M.B.U., Gauhati, January 5-12, 1907.

<sup>135</sup>. Rev. A. C. Bowers, Report from Goalpara Field, 10<sup>th</sup> Biennial Session, Gauhati, January 8-17, 1910.

<sup>136</sup>. Rev. S.A.D. Boggs, Report from Jorhat Field, 10<sup>th</sup> Biennial Session, Gauhati, January 8-17, 1910

mission.<sup>137</sup> In 1907, Rev. H.W. Kirby and his wife left for Sadiya to embark on Medical Mission work. Shortly after their arrival, they took from the Government, the Charitable Dispensary along with a grant of Rs. 400.00 per year, on agreement that the mission would maintain the Government Records and prepare an Annual Report. In the first year, they treated 4321 patients; the second year, 7123; and in 1909, 6041. In the beginning, they treated all free modes, but slowly, they started to charge those who were capable of paying. The running of medical work was the aim of the missionaries to make Sadiya a Medical Centre, as helpful as possible to the surrounding mission stations. Hence, it had been made a center and more than half of the Assam mission stations had obtained support from Sadiya. In 1909, Dr. and Mrs. Kirby visited 11 villages within 13 days and treated 650 patients. They treated everyone freely, only charging for special quantities of medicines. But they received gifts from the people more than what was spent for the expenses of their tour. Dr. and Mrs. Kirby visited the Kampti regions and found prosperous village and at the same time opium eaters. The Kampti King had linked to the Political Agent to ask him to use his influences to persuade Dr. Kirby to visit them again and to break the chain of opium abuse.

The 1910 Conference of American Baptist missionaries, Rev. A.C. Bowers of Goalpara reported to have treated not less than 1,500 persons for various ailments during the previous two years,<sup>138</sup> Rev. S.A.D. Boggs of Jorhat reported of treating large numbers of people<sup>139</sup> and he stated the following observation about his medical work in 1910, “While we can, at present, see no direct fruit (in the form of conversions) from this work, there are indirect results, which may at any time prove to be vitally important in the advancement of the Kingdom of God among our Assamese neighbors.”<sup>140</sup> In fact, it is true in the case of the Assamese in Assam. Boggs also added in saying that “people seem to prefer to get medicine from us for pay rather than go to the Government Charitable Dispensary and get treatment and medicine free”<sup>141</sup> as indicated earlier. Such evidences might show that the missionaries had a more sympathetic and caring attitude than the Government employed personnel. Notwithstanding, the people too had superstitious

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<sup>137</sup>. Rev. L.W.B. Jackman, Report from Sadiya Field, 10<sup>th</sup> Biennial Session, Gauhati, January 8-17, 1910.

<sup>138</sup>. Assam Baptist Missionary Conference of the American Baptist Missionary Union, Report of the Tenth Biennial Session, held at Gauhati, January 8-17, 1910, p. 28.

<sup>139</sup>. Ibid. p. 58

<sup>140</sup>. ABFMU Conference Report, 1910, p. 58.

<sup>141</sup>. Ibid. p. 58.

belief systems. So, it was viewed that the traditional association between religion and curing disease, for some people prefer treatment from those who healed them in the name of their gods and religion. The fact that some of them really believed that sickness or disease was caused due to malevolent spirits and lack of religious rituals. Nevertheless, Rev. L.W.B. Jackman of Sadiya stated to have made tours during the last three years “hundreds, and probably thousands, of people have been treated with medicines.”<sup>142</sup>

Henceforth, an empowerment of the medical service in its policy statement of 1917, the American Baptist Foreign Mission Society (successor to the American Baptist Missionary Union) foothold the path and cites, “Medical work follows Christ’s example in the relief of suffering, trains native Christians to do like work, and gains access to the hearts and homes of the people, opening the way for evangelistic work.”<sup>143</sup>No doubt, the outcome of the medical enterprise had bounced up and bloomed throughout the regions with grand impact.

#### **4.5.1.1. Extension of Dispensary**

And across the river lies a weekly market ten kilometers from Sadiya and regular tours were made between 1908-09. The generous friends of the Home Church in America had donated money for a Branch Dispensary and obtained permission from the Deputy Commissioner and erected a good building where they could well-stock the medicines.<sup>144</sup>In 1909, Dr. and Mrs. Kirby procured a new building although the construction was not completed. The total amount of Rs. 4500.00 was sanctioned by the Arthington Trustees for a Hospital and equipment, out of which, about Rs. 1000.00 was spent for equipment, the remaining on the building and yet there was a need for Rs. 500.00 more. Moreover, the expenses were provided by Rs. 700.00 from the Government, Rs. 480.00 from Boston and Rs. 34,743.00 from local sources in 1910. The Dispensary expenses averaged Rs. 38,713.00 per month, yet the chief receipts averaged only Rs. 22.00 per month. In 1911, the medical service for the Mishmis, Singphos and Kamptis were 3922 patients treated in the Sadiya Dispensary, 871 in camp, apart from 66 operations. There was an increasing amount of medical work in every year. In 1911, it was dispatched by V.P.P. and

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<sup>142</sup>. Assam Baptist Missionary Conference of the American Baptist Missionary Union, Report of the Tenth Biennial Session, held at Gauhati, January 8-17, 1910, p. 69.

<sup>143</sup>. Foreign Mission Policies (1917), p. 6.

<sup>144</sup>. Dr. H.W. Kirby, Report from Sadiya Field, 10<sup>th</sup> Biennial Session, Gauhati, January 8-17, 1910.

Rail, medicines to the worth of Rs. 11,67,150.00. In the same year, the total expenses were Rs. 3,26,973.00. In 1912, the total of 7328 patients were treated and 98 operated. The total Rs. 4,65,430.00, over Rs. 4000.00 was spent for medical supplies.<sup>145</sup>

During 1911-12, there were Six Christian Compounders and their wages of Rs. 78.00 per month. These Compounders comprised a group of three persons and visited the surrounding villages, preaching and healing the sick. The Siakwa Branch Dispensary ran with many problems because of unqualified staff as well as farness from station.<sup>146</sup> The Report of 1913 states, a large amount of medicines were distributed free of charge in the Sibsagar and Dibrugarh Mission Stations.<sup>147</sup> In 1915, the medical work had reached out to the various parts of the Assam fields. In addition, the main Dispensary and Hospital at Sadiya, Medical Aid had been distributed to the Abors and Miris and weekly market at Saikwa.<sup>148</sup> In 1916, the Gauhati field had sold as many as quantities of medicines and the popularity of medicines grew.<sup>149</sup> Thus it created attention to the missionary and their assistant to dispensing medicines amounting to Rs. 500.00.<sup>150</sup> But, the Sadiya station was without missionary till Dr. Kirby came back in December 1915. Thus, the medical works were at a standstill. Besides, as far as the report is concerned, the medical work was dwindled due to the lack of committed Christian life of the Compounder in charge in the mission field.<sup>151</sup> Possibly, it could be assumed two reasons such as **unfaithful in service and dishonest in management.**

The Mongoldoi mission station had reported, by the missionary in charge, Rev. G.R. Mampfer in 1917, that the station was extremely unhealthy. The report of 1915 says, the total number of 350 people were nurtured and 10 died and out of 448 people, 12 died in 1916. The medicines were sold for Rs. 391.00 and 1257 persons were treated in 1916.<sup>152</sup>

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<sup>145</sup>. Dr. H.W. Kirby, Report on Work for Mishmis, Singphoes and Kampties, These Seventy Five Years, Tura, March 31, 1911.

<sup>146</sup>. Dr. H.W. Kirby, Report on Work for Mishmis, Singphoes and Kampties, 12<sup>th</sup> Biennial Session, Gauhati, January 4-13, 1913.

<sup>147</sup>. Rev. C.E. Patrick and Joseph Paul, Report from Sibsagar and Dibrugarh Field, 12<sup>th</sup> Biennial Session, Guahati, January 4-13, 1913.

<sup>148</sup>. Rev. L.W.B. Jackman, Report of the North East Frontier, 13<sup>th</sup> Session, Golaghat, January 9-18, 1915.

<sup>149</sup>. Rev. A.E. Stephen, Report from Gauhati South Bank, 14<sup>th</sup> Session, February 17-24, 1916.

<sup>150</sup>. Rev. O.L. Swanson, Report from Golaghat Field, 15<sup>th</sup> Session, Sibsagar, January 15-22, 1917.

<sup>151</sup>. Rev. H.W. Kirby, Report from Sadiya Field, 15<sup>th</sup> Session, Sibsagar, January 15-22, 1917.

<sup>152</sup>. Rev. G.R. Kampfer, Report from Mongoldoi Field, 15<sup>th</sup> Session, Sibsagar, January 15-22, 1917.

#### 4.5.1.2. Commencement of the Jorhat Hospital

Dr. and Mrs. Kirby had reached from Sadiya to Jorhat with a vision of commencing a medical project in that region in 1919. There were medical missionaries for the people of the Garo Hills and Naga Hills for the last twenty years. But there was yet to operate, a medical mission for the millions of the people in the Brahmaputra valley. Hence, having an earnest zeal of great compassion for the suffering of the masses, Dr. Kirby secured a plot of pasture land about two miles from the Center of Jorhat town in 1924. At present it is known as the Jorhat Christian Hospital and Leper Colony Compound. But many disagreements of opinion turned up due to the distance from the populous center and from the main Mission Compound. In spite of these all, Dr. Kirby established his Dispensary in that remote spot and fulfilled his dream into reality.<sup>153</sup> The Dispensary was constructed with bamboos and thatches. So Dr. Kirby was able to accommodate the new building only by 1925. The Dispensary had seven main rooms with a verandah on three sides and a roof corrugated with iron sheets.

Further, spontaneous growth took place and more out-patients started to visit the Dispensary for treatment.<sup>154</sup> The evidence stated that this was one of the best buildings and the best equipped Dispensary that the American Baptist Mission had among all the mission fields. The medicines that had been dispatched from the Jorhat Dispensary reached at least 20,000 patients in a year. The total number, patients treated a year was 4663 patients in the Golaghat Dispensary, 2897 in the **Jorhat Bazaar Dispensary** and 1482 in the **New Borbhetta Dispensary**. Records of sending medicines to all the mission stations in Assam and Burma were also kept. The work started to grow day after day as many patients visited from the surrounding villages adding women. Dr. Kirby was also invited by people to their houses to treat patients. The Dispensary had been served by an Assamese nurse called Grace Mary who held a **training of four years in the Women's Hospital** at Nellore. Another young man named Daniel with a **Compounder's training** at Calcutta assisted the Golaghat Dispensary. The medical receipts for the year were Rs. 12,39,743.00 and the expenses excluding building were Rs. 1,31,71,333.00.

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<sup>153</sup>. 125<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, Jubilee Report, 1961.

<sup>154</sup>. Dr. H.W. Kirby, Report from Jorhat-Gplaghat Fields, Jorhat, December 2-10, 1926

Visibly, the medical services were appreciated by the native people. But the Hindu priests had created a barrier, forbidding people from visiting the Dispensary. In 1926, the Government of Assam also inspected the Dispensary and extended the word of appreciation and approval which credited moral boosts to the missionaries. The Jorhat Christian Hospital was the infant and largest medical endeavor of the American Baptist Foreign Mission Society in the province. Dr. Kirby and Dr. Ahlquist were in charge of a large hospital with a well equipped dispensary and a medical project in Assam. The evidence says that the Jorhat Dispensary distributes medicines to all parts of India while the people of Upper Assam had to come to the hospital for the treatment due to the special care and love of the Christian Medical Staff.<sup>155</sup> Perhaps, it fascinated the hearts of the common people and their lives too. Needless to say, it portrays a great impact to the society, although many of them disliked embracing Christianity as their personal faith.

In Jorhat, there were two separate compounds. The medical compound had a hospital building, a ward building, a large dispensary, assistants' quarters, nurses' home, and a number of subsidiary buildings.<sup>156</sup> In April 1947, the **Jorhat Nursing Training School** had sent the first group of Intermediate students of Shillong for the Mid-Training Examination performed by the Government Examination Board. All the seven students had passed successfully with an average of 70 percent or higher.<sup>157</sup> The most distinguished feature of that year was the astonishing support of finance obtained from local sources for the extension and development of the Hospital facilities.<sup>158</sup> In the same year from the Government of Assam, Sir Akbar Hydari visited the colony and was greatly impressed by seeing the Leper Home. He became an instrument of blessing through him received a gift for the Colony and assured to increase the Government Grant.<sup>159</sup>

In 1950, it was reported by Dr. O.W. Hasselblad, that the year has marked the days of expansion in physical equipment and resources for work. It signed the beginning of an era in which the channel of service would run deeper if not broader. The **Hospital Chapel built** and held a

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<sup>155</sup>. Victor, Hugo Sword, *Baptists in Assam A Century of Missionary Service 1836-1936*, Op.cit., pp. 140-141.

<sup>156</sup>. Ibid. p. 142.

<sup>157</sup>. A. Eastlund, Report on Jorhat Nurses Training School, Missionary Conference, 44<sup>th</sup> Session, Jorhat, Dec. 10-14, 1947.

<sup>158</sup>. O.W. Hasselblad, Report on Jorhat Christian Hospital, Missionary Conference, 44<sup>th</sup> Session, Jorhat, Dec. 10-14, 1947.

<sup>159</sup>. H.W. Kirby, Report on Jorhat Leper Colony, Missionary Conference, 44<sup>th</sup> Session, Jorhat, Dec. 10-14, 1947.

service every morning with whole Medical Staff along with other various Week days and Sunday services. Apart from it, eighty- seven patients had been treated in the **New Tuberculosis Sanatorium** and forty five were treated with Artificial-pneumothorax. Many had adjunctive surgical treatments including Thorascopy and cauterization of adhesions as well as Phrenic nerve operations. The hospital had possessed and used the only Thorascope in Assam, which displays very well in spite of the inadequacy of the weapons with which to fight Tuberculosis. Of course, the Jorhat Christian Hospital's equipment and facilities in the **Sanatorium** were better than any that existed elsewhere in Assam. An appeal for admission sought from all parts of Assam and rotation was adhered in the waiting list. A large percentage of the patients had been Christians. A good number of patients have been discharged and came regularly to the out-patient Department for continued treatment<sup>160</sup> and check- up. Dr. C. Momin has performed excellent work, fully aided and supported by two Staff Nurses and a corps of assistants.

Finally, the Statistical Report shows the highest volume of work ever had been taken care at this hospital, 2164 patients were treated as in-patients, of whom 98 were Europeans. A total of 974 operations were conducted, 162 eye operations were performed, all of these by Dr. Sen Gupta. Obstetrical cases totaled 75. X-ray work was enormous and laboratory procedures expense, numbering thousands. Rs. 2,12,970.00 was the total income from all sources. Of this Rs. 38,984.00 has been contributed from earnings as Medical Office of the Jorehaut (Jorhat) Tea Co. and the Moriani Medical Association.<sup>161</sup>

#### **4.5.1.3. Leprosy Colony Compound**

Traditionally leprosy was considered a contagious disease and lepers, untouchable and they were kept in isolation particularly away from family, relative and society. There was no proper caring and love for these people and they were almost counted as equivalent to the animal. People were completely ignorant and never knew of medical treatment and the only thing was to wait for their death. But in that occasion, it was missionaries who brought a new ray of hope and life to restore

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<sup>160</sup>. Dr. O.W. Hasselblad, Report from Jorhat: Christian Hospital, American Baptist Foreign Mission Society, Joint Meeting Assam Baptist Missionary Conference and Delegates of Assam Baptist Convention Report, Forty-Sixth Session Conference, Golaghat, Assam, Jan. 3-9, 1950, p. 63.

<sup>161</sup>. Ibid. pp. 64-65.

and repair from the doom of suffering and death. The suffering souls were precious in the sight of the Lord Jesus Christ and this love was demonstrated by the committed and sacrificial missionaries through medical treatment to rebuild the suffering humanity of the society.

Thus, by 1924, the perseverance spirit of Dr. Kirby was commenced the Leprosy Colony Compound along with the foundation of Jorhat Hospital.<sup>162</sup> Now, this is named as Jorhat Leper Colony. The report of Dr. H.W. Kirby in 1950 comments that in the Leper Colony, there were 208 in residence of whom 34 were Hindus and the rest of them being Christians. The patients who had serious infections in leprosy continued to be treated with injections of Chaulmoogra Oil, Promin, Diasone and Sulphetrone and some of the recent drugs, have been used with great success. The additional recreations were also being conducted in the Colony for example, good food, work, recreation and education carried on hand in hand in order to promote health and happiness to these people. Not an exaggeration, the church had become a chief vehicle in the realm of spiritual journey through medical mission and the resultant yielded fruits by adding a number with the great joy of Good News to see 26 persons who had confessed Christ and taken baptism.<sup>163</sup>

#### **4.5.1.4. Women's Hospital at Gauhati**

The launching of another wing known as Women's Hospital was planned at Gauhati which had become an enormous credit to the women folk especially the vast majority of the women who were considered less important and under privileged from the main stream of the male dominated society. The women were not paid serious attention for training as Nurse and Doctor because of cultural prejudices. But it was the missionaries who broke the barriers and looked upon the transformation of the society with equal rights of men and women in the ground of medical training too. It unfolds a new chapter and a new era to the women of the world. The hidden potentialities of women were unveiled and this extended opportunities to administer to the people where ever it was required.

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<sup>162</sup>. 125<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, Jubilee Report, 1961.

<sup>163</sup>. Dr. H.W. Kirby, Report from Jorhat: Leper Colony, American Baptist Foreign Mission Society, Joint Meeting Assam Baptist Missionary Conference and Delegates of Assam Baptist Convention Report, Forty-Sixth Session Conference, Golaghat, Assam, Jan. 3-9, 195, p. 65.

Thus, the *Satribary* or the Women's Hospital was established in 1925 in Gauhati. The missionaries had administered to the needs of the people even before their arrival in that place. Besides the missionary in charge, there was also Hospital Staff for one Assamese Lady Doctor, Miss Bhuyan who had joined the hospital in October 1926 and four Nurses in Training. But there was discouragement by the Hospital Staff due to the less number of patients who visited the hospital. Probably, the reason could be identified as the hospital not functioning well or some other matters. Yet, the staff had always exhibited willingness and shown helpful nature in their services. The erection of hospital buildings and other infrastructures had been completed in 1926. The basic requirement of the equipment like twelve beds for the hospital, were bought and several tables had been furnished for the use for nurses. These nurses received instructions in nursing care daily and two hours a week of Bible Study at the school. The missionaries also attended the Measles epidemic at Nowgong followed by the long serious sickness of Miss Marvin's (Missionary in charge, *Satribary*) with cholera. Two of the nurses were deputed to Nowgong to assist the sick for a month and nursed about 15 or 20 patients. During that year, there had been treated, 945 new cases of which 159 were out-patients. Hospital cases of total 4484 were treated with 26 hospital patients and they also took some outside care for the serious matters in their homes. A humble beginning with the limited resources had been attempted and with unveiling love of compassion and dedicated spirit this ushered a cherishing role in the mitigation of human sufferings and diseases in the province.<sup>164</sup>

In 1927, the Mission Report says that Miss Marvin had the heavy burden in nursing the sick, conferring a training to the nurses and translating the nurses Text Book for the use in the classes. Dr. (Miss) Gifford of the Burma Mission had reached to assist the labor in the *Satribari* Hospital and credited productive results by recovering three serious patients. Hence, the sick people in the hospital were treated and calculated from the educated classes to the sweeper caste and were listed as Christians, Hindus and Muhammedans. The Report of that year claimed to have admitted a total of 95 patients and out of them 39 per cent were non-Christians. The determination and the increase of the number of pupils in Nurses' Training had been a sign of motivation by the missionaries.<sup>165</sup>

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<sup>164</sup>. M.M. Marvin, Report on Woman's Hospital, Jorhat Conference, December 2-10, 1926.

<sup>165</sup>. E. Stever, Report on Woman's Hospital, Golaghat Conference, November 23- December 1, 1927.

The Women's Hospital in Gauhati has been approved by the Government as a Prominent Institution. The care and hospitality served in this hospital among the Assamese was astonishing. Both Europeans and Indians had performed their duties in excellent ways. Apart from these institutions, there were also Small Christian Dispensaries that rendered large services in various stations superintended by the missionaries or by some Indian Trained Doctor or Compounder.<sup>166</sup> The year 1946 had marked the beginning of another new event being the Registration of Nurses in Assam and 27 out of 41 of the Graduates in Nursing were also registered. The Gauhati Nurses Training School enrolled 11 probationers and a total of 45 students for the year.<sup>167</sup> In 1947, the Doctors of the Gauhati Mission Hospital visited to help the patients in the Association Meetings and the mission opened a Branch Dispensary at Boko. Hence, the report comments that, all phases of the labor indicated a growing trend.<sup>168</sup>

In addition, in Gauhati, the medical project includes a hospital, a dispensary, a nurses' home, laundry, cook house, morgue, and other subsidiary buildings had been established.<sup>169</sup> Thus, the result of the missionary service in medical field at Assam has established a number of medical stations in the province. Some of these were equipped to care for two or more missionaries and others were only for one. The number of main and permanent Dispensaries and Hospital buildings were erected in each mission station.<sup>170</sup>

Thereupon, an ample medical field had sprung up in different zones of the State. During 1927, in the Golaghat Small Dispensary, 3412 patients had been treated. Dr. J.A. Ahlquist had experimented by taking weekly tours to that Dispensary and found it expensive for the project. Later, Dr. Ahlquist returned to Jorhat and had operated 40 persons and a majority of these patients were cataract operations. Epidemic diseases such as cholera, dysentery and small-pox had been the common diseases in surrounding vicinity of Jorhat. Sporadic cases of *Kalazar* and Beriberi were too seen among the people. The Missionary Doctors toured voluntarily to their

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<sup>166</sup>. Victor, Hugo Sword, *Baptists in Assam A Century of Missionary Service 1836-1936*, Op.cit., p. 141.

<sup>167</sup>. M.M. Marvin, Report on Gauhati Nursing School, Missionary Conference, 43<sup>rd</sup> Session, Gauhati, Dec. 6-10, 1946.

<sup>168</sup>. M. Kirby, Report on Gauhati Mission Hospital, Missionary Conference, 44<sup>th</sup> Session, Jorhat, Dec. 10-14, 1947.

<sup>169</sup>. Ibid. p. 143.

<sup>170</sup>. Ibid. pp. 141-142.

homes free of cost without charging even for petrol expenses. In the same year, they also proposed to open a Branch Dispensary at Horupattar but the result of the actual opening was not known.<sup>171</sup>

#### **4.5.1.5. Medical Centre at Alipur**

In Cachar, Dr. Crozier, who had been resigned from the American Baptist Mission after having transferred<sup>172</sup> from Tura to Kangpokpi in Manipur, founded a Medical Center at Alipur under the auspices of the recently established Baptist Mid-Mission. Casually, once founded these hospitals, which offered some of the best medical treatment available in the area, expanded their facilities and the larger and better equipped ones were established as Nursing Schools.

#### **4.5.1.6. Hospital at Tezpur**

After the Second World War, Christian Medical Missions were further flourished by increasing the size of the older hospitals, by involving into village health schemes, and by the foundation of new work by other missions. The New Zealand Baptists began a small hospital at Agartala in Tripura and the General Conference Baptists (of the U.S.A.) started a Medical Endeavor in the North Bank region of the Brahmaputra Valley, centering on a hospital at Tezpur. Thereafter the CBCNEI (Council of Baptist Churches in North East India) which had been taken over from the American Baptists established a hospital at Impur in Nagaland.<sup>173</sup>

#### **4.5.1.7. St. Luke's Hospital at Tinsukia**

St. Luke's Hospital was established at Tinsukia in 1929, which is presently owned by Church of North India (CNI).

#### **4.5.2. Anglican Dispensary at Chabua**

In 1923 the Anglicans too embarked in medical service on the plains with the commencing of a Dispensary at Chabua in Upper Assam under the Supervision of a Trained Nurse. This

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<sup>171</sup>. Dr. J.A. Ahlquist, Jorhat Medical Report, Missionary Conference, Golaghat, November 23- December 1, 1927.

<sup>172</sup>. Frederick, S. Downs, *Christianity in North East India Historical Perspectives*, Op.cit., p. 236.

<sup>173</sup>. Ibid. p. 237.

Dispensary had functioned with the support of the Medical Mission Department of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel and a Doctor was eventually charged to this work.<sup>174</sup>

#### **4.5.3. Roman Catholic Medical Work**

The Roman Catholics had also started to engage extensively in medical work in Assam as well as in North Eastern regions. In 1935 the *Catholic Directory* stated that there were only four Dispensaries being run by Catholic Missions, but in the 1970s far-ranging medical service began. Whereas in 1972 the Catholic Directory reported two Hospitals and six Dispensaries, in 1977 five Hospitals and 70 Dispensaries were listed.<sup>175</sup> Along with this they also cooperated with the State Government in extending Nursing service at the Medical College in Dibrugarh.<sup>176</sup> In fact, an awesome and lives giving tribute made by Missions and Churches and it will remain ever cherishing by the entire Assamese community.

#### **4.6. Strategic Conflicts of the Missionaries, Home Board and British Government**

There were strategic conflicts of the missionaries and the home board and sometime with the British government too that seems to become identical issues in the work of the mission fields. The issues how conflicted in the mission operation are briefly discussed under the following:

##### **4.6.1. Conflict Between Missionaries and Home Board on Educational Policy**

The policy of education was central point in the process of acculturation of Christianity. Thus, the beginning of Christian mission, the educational enterprises were extensively carried out in the region. As it is observed how the British government commissioners invited American Baptist Mission and started mission work through opening schools. The missionaries were begun evangelism along with side by side establishment of schools. The educational work was given indispensable priority because it aims to use as auxiliary in the work of evangelization. Hence, the primary task was to win people through education to Christianity and that is how the educational institutions were set up with being intended to help in accelerating the process of conversions. Moreover, the educational bodies were possible to teach the people how to read

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<sup>174</sup>. Ibid. p. 236.

<sup>175</sup>. Ibid. p. 237.

<sup>176</sup>. The Assam Mission of the ABMU, Papers and Discussion of the Jubilee Conference held in Nowgong, December 18-29, 1886, p. 99.

printed word and religious tracts, impart correct moral and religious ideas, expose false science and eliminate them from idolatry and direct inculcation of the Gospel. For that reason, the missionaries were deeply interested in the training of the indigenous Christians. Because they understood value of education and without learned constituency and skilled leadership, there would have less hope of building a permanent and well-informed Christian community and society. Therefore, the schools were founded under the patronage of the American Baptist Board of Foreign Mission. Similarly, the government was also paid attention to the missionaries to take charge of the educational schemes as far as they were in a position to run it successfully. Gradually, the educational institutions were established with grant-in-aid as early as possible and the government approved freedom to give a great deal of religious instructions in the schools as much as mission wants. Meanwhile, the preaching of the Gospel was not contributing satisfactory response. Alike, the Brahmins were also assumed to be found suspicious towards the missionary work. Hence, the missionaries were opted to change the method of mission work from direct evangelism to education and in meanwhile, the public people had appeared to find interest in the education. However, the school work was too not free from prejudice of the Brahmins who were seldom developed agitation to school project and noticed the withdrawal of their children from mission schools because of the fear of influence to Christianity. Whatsoever, the system of education was taken as an opportunity by the missionaries to witness Christ particularly focused had been given to the younger generations. So, it was a moment to turn the history from darkness to light and ignorance to intellectual humanity of the society. However, an un-fateful moment followed the missionary venture before it reaches to the accomplishment.

There was a critical decade for the missionaries in the beginning part of fifties because of unseemly storms such as controversy between missionaries and Union in America, the first war of Indian independence, the civil war and the economic depression in America. The Home Board Secretary, Dr. Solomon Peck, was appointed to come to inspect the work of the missionaries in the fields. He completely disapproved of the missionaries' program of operating schools and in distinctively wanted to close down Orphan Institute at Nowgong. He doubted much whether the mission schools should be multiplied to retain their role as auxiliaries in consideration of heavy financial cost and labor involved. It was brought Home to the Assam Mission that schools were not a pre-requisite to the preaching of the Gospel and that the demand for common school would

be met at no distant day by the civil government and that language in these schools would be the vernacular as soon as suitable textbooks could be obtained. Thereafter, the radical change of policy and consequent retrenchment have found shrink the number of schools. The first object was the Orphan Institute which finally ceased to exist as a result of the blunt interference of the Baptist Missionary Union in America and it brought great loss to the mission. The fact is that the Orphan Institute was drawing large numbers of children from all corners and thus, it became influential factor for conversion and uplifting educated society. The enrolment of the mission schools were also dropped down with immediate effect. This type of hasty decision became too much for pioneer missionaries as well as a kind of humiliation to the missionary horizon. However, the rushed resolution without reasoning the real status of the mission work surely observed to be diminished in the progress.

Added tempest at mission work was also received for its final blow on the transfer of power to the Crown when the authorities in England reverted to the policy of religious neutrality in education with a feeling that the missionaries were no less responsible for the outbreak of the Mutiny. The missionary institutions were placed under supervision and control of secular officials and religious courses were totally excluded from the curriculum of studies. A sudden change was, however, considered unwise in the areas of Assam wherein teaching in the Bible and scriptures was considered neither objectionable nor dangerous. Without adhering to the directives, therefore, the Director of Public Instruction, Bengal, rendered grant-in aid to the Baptists for the spread of education and hence, the emphasis of scriptural instructions became neutral.

#### **4.6.2. Language Controversy Between Missionaries and British Government**

Ever since the time of arrival of the missionaries in Assam, the language of the land, Assamese had been in banishment. The Assam schools and courts were replaced by Bengali. The movement against this measure was too slow to come and it began only through the American missionaries who painfully comprehended how great damage was being done to Assamese. For they saw very clearly that the Assamese people could be addressed by, and themselves could approach, the word only through the Assamese language which the missionaries employed in the writing of the religious books and as medium of instruction in the vernacular schools. They

dispatched their objections to the British government at Calcutta however, there was no effect. The pioneer missionaries of Assam were like Nathan Brown and Miles Bronson who did zealous supports of the Assamese language and they have courageously represented the case for Assam. Anandaram Dhekiyal Phukan, an Assamese gentleman wrote about the Assamese in a memorandum to Judge A. J. Moffatt Mills, who arrived on deputation to report on Assam's administration and published a book, *A Few Remarks on the Assamese Language*, printed at Sibsagar by the American Mission Press. However, these painstaking efforts bore no result on the government. Thereafter, the pages of the *Orunodoi* were written and circulated to the Assamese people to argue the matter for their own language. Now, Bronson was left totally alone to lead an agitation on behalf of the Assamese. He took up the modern method of filing public representations with the Government from different quarters. He acted as the President of the Community and sent up to the government well-formed arguments. So, the struggle that the Baptist or Bronson undergone for the recovery of the Assamese language was a more valuable gift to the Assamese nationality than any literary work they have rendered. The leader of the Baptist known Brown carried with him the idea that Assamese was only a patois of Bengali. However, the expert linguist in him became confidently convinced about the beauty, power and originality of the Assamese language and saw that in spite of the laws of 1837, circulation of Bengali in the schools and law courts instead of Assamese in Assam was a conspiracy for destroying the Assamese language. Brown figured the appalling situation arising out of the fact that in spite of the criminal procedure act which states that the language of the soil was to be used in judicial and revenue proceedings, but, the rulers approved orders that Bengali, and not Assamese. Brown wrote in a journal pretty of it that the Assamese, as a distinct language, would in course of a few generation, become extinct and Bengali supply its place. This task was being for some time in contemplation, and now that government suggested to have set about the work so strongly, there could be little doubt that they would eventually succeed in implementation the change. The American missionaries alone continued to fight the battle. These missionaries tried to build a dam against the strong current of conspiracy of the government by publishing *Orunodoi*, a grammar of the Assamese language, the Bible in Assamese and books in other languages and religion. Bronson was to take the responsibility as the only missionary of building up a campaigning in favor of Assamese language with a view to its reinstatement in schools and courts. Bronson began his agitation by provoking Robinson, who was the key person of the

language controversy because he was in favor of introducing Bengali instead of Assamese in the education system of Assam. Robinson assumed to be remarked incorrectly the language spoken in Assam which he believed to be basically the same as Bengali. Bronson argued strongly and claimed the Assamese language was dear to the hearts of Assamese people and altogether different from Bengali. The whole hearted support of Bronson proved incredible in there storing language for the people with scientific study who protested for so many years. Therefore, he paid long lasting price especially reinstatement of the Assamese language in Assam's schools and courts, which was ultimate victory of Bronson. Thus, the Baptist won the battle with government notification to resuscitate and thereupon gives a new life to the Assamese language as well as identity of the people.

#### **4.6.3. Issue of Opium Monopoly Between British Government and Missionaries**

The British government began from the very foundation to pursue a policy of popularizing the British manufactures and they were found to present articles of their products to the tribal chiefs hitherto to secure good will of the native people through opium, wine, cigarette and tobacco-pipes. So, it is clear from the facts that the British government was the one who introduced spirituous drugs known as opium for the first time in Assam. The policy of presenting particularly opium as gift was encouragement of the habit of ardent spirits and hence, it certainly aggravated direct affect on innocence and poor people as well as the American Indians. It has pointed out that how the strong drink made awfully ruinous the native church and because of this reason the church was banned for the used of the opium. No doubt, it is well documented that how the opium became a curse in the state. It seems the native converts sometime were intoxicated with heavy dose and appeared to find fallen on the street. And it is observed from the missionary writing that the situation was too distressing to think and said that none were conscientious for its beginning into this land as those who bore the Christian name. As far as the evident concerned, the taking of drugs among the English officials, high and low was universal. The environment assumed to fashion in such a way if any one wholly self-denied was rather looked upon as a confession of weakness. In addition, all the Eurasian community was observed to be addicted to its employ, many of them even to debauchery. Many of the higher classes of the natives who had forsaken the Hindu faith virtually if not apparently, took to drink, and as a general thing with natives the use of liquor was dissipation and ruin. Normally, its use among the

English, there were many who kept themselves under a wholesome restraint. However, such was not consonant with the native character. One can therefore think the influences by which they were surrounded. They were all tend in one direction and end with another direction. The government had rather encouraged the opium consumption by licensing its sale and made the license a source of revenue. Consequently, there was alarming demand for the article. The study unlocks that the huge sum of money was credited to the government treasuries. Therefore, this act of government has done more than anything else to spread the use of opium and put far off the day of fat things. The missionaries had sought to rescue the native people from heathenism but, this indulgence made them very saddening in their labors. It was almost hopeless, that a confirmed opium eater would ever leave off the use of the article. A large segment of the inhabitants were completely besotted by it. It carried off immense numbers to an untimely grave. The disease which attacks opium eaters was commonly dysentery and was almost sure to be fatal, no medicine being of any avail discovered. In addition, the Foreign Secretary reported that it enfeebles a body and mind and prepares the way for that fearful scourge, the cholera, whose victims in Assam in the past years were numbered by tens of thousands. Therefore, he goes on saying how this luxury became most discouraging feature relative to the Christianization of the Assamese and their civilization as it presents to him, was the prevalence among them of the use of opium. The poppy has been extensively cultivated in Assam for generations. Besides, the British government has exploited the people of Assam in terms of opium revenue more than its capacity. That was the reason why C. F. Andrews denounced the government of Assam as an “opium government.”<sup>177</sup> The missionaries were extended their healing hands to protect and save from this ruinous habit through teaching the word of God but, there is no such persuasive evident that could give clear picture of the successful accomplishment and might be partially being restored. Moreover, the involvement of the missionaries in the opium addiction is barely bearing any supporting evident where they have organized any campaign against this indulgence, provoking to eradicate from damaging dissipation, creating awareness to the public domain and movement against British government policy of opium. However, there are ample instances where the missionaries were expressed deep sorrow for being drained vast majority of the inhabitants from opium both Christians and non Christians because of the government policy.

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<sup>177</sup>. Arun, Chandra Bhuyan & Sibopada De, eds. *Political History of Assam 1920-1939*, Volume Two, Gauhati: Government of Assam, 1978, p. 205.

Indeed, one can suppose that they might have thought government as revenue making administrator who did not see the harmful affect on the lives of the people for generations. Thus, the Assamese society converted into opium eater and still finds with noxious addictions that they are totally susceptible condition to overcome from it.

## **Conclusion**

The foregoing chapter depicts the **incredible contributions** of the Christian missionaries and churches and could be summed up under the **following themes** as the **Gospel and a new lifestyle, education, literature and medical enterprises**. Clearing the thick forest and jungle, erecting the mission tents and bungalows, preaching sermons in dusty *bazaars*, the long miles tramped on muddy roads, sowing the seeds of **Christianity, campaigning against opium abuse and slavery practices** were vested interests rendered by missionaries. Yet, the labor of the missionaries did not yield much fruit in regard to conversion in Assam. The early missionaries emphasized an educated Christian constituency and society. To them, the education was essential for boys and as well as for girls and **raised the position of womanhood**. They **established educational schools and institutes** and brought the high profile of Christianity to the society. One of them is Cotton College at Gauhati which stands as a reputed and monumental institute till today. The American Baptist Mission is credited for the role played in the **redemption of Assamese language** from Bengali and the preservation and **renaissance of the Assamese language and literature**. Thus, the mission became a torch-bearer in this **new literary epoch**. The **translation of the Assamese Bible, monthly journal cum only newspaper and Anglo-Assamese Dictionary became chief vehicles for the renaissance of the Assamese society**. Lastly but not the least, the **medical missions, the doctors and nurses paid regular tours** to the villages dispensing medicine, offering simple treatment followed by establishing dispensaries and hospitals. The desperate life of the leper received new hope by the missionaries. Therefore, these medical hospitals received a high standard of value based services and still stood as mostly reputed Christian Institutions in the Assam valley.

**CHAPTER 5**  
**CAUSES FOR SLOW GROWTH OF THE AMERICAN BAPTIST**  
**MISSION AND CHURCHES**

**5.1. INTRODUCTION**

The century of Baptist missionary work among the Assamese has proved to be a momentous event in the history of Christianity in Assam. The missionaries had toiled day and night by clearing jungles, collecting raw materials from forest to construct their residence and school, preaching, teaching, literature and medical work with sleepless night, hunger and thirst in this far-flung province after leaving their comfort zone. Many times they had to undergo turmoil and peril of lives by losing their dear and loved ones, where there was no other option except trusting the almighty God alone. They kept alive their faith, vision, commitment and continued to serve the mission tasks in spite of all hardships and difficulties. However, the sweat of the labor had not yielded a satisfactory fruit that was expected. So, there are some of rational questions which arise. Why did Christianity not grow in Assam? What were the major obstacles that eclipsed speedy growth? Therefore, it lays on various pre-suppositional circumstances which might have overshadowed and dimmed the missionary enterprise. It all together moved in a tortoise motion as a missionary statement depicted the outcome of the mission activities as a “The stone is in motion.”<sup>1</sup> It indicates almost stagnation or exceedingly slow growth of Christianity. Evidently, the difficulties of pioneer work are many, and of long standing importance of, in every direction of the region. As a result, the present disabled state of the missions and churches with the hopes and plans of former years is too painful to reflect upon. Hence, the researcher will critically examine the root causes for the slow growth of the American Baptist Mission and Churches particularly to investigate the chief problems such as religious, political, social, economics and leadership that crippled the missionary labors from rapid growth.

**5.2. Religious Problem**

The religious problems have become principal hindrances that paralyzed the progress of the mission work. How did the religious problem impede the growth of the Christian Mission and Churches? What were the primary causes hampered in the promotion and advancement of the

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<sup>1</sup>. Letter from Mrs. Bronson, Sibsagar, August 8, 1865, Baptist Missionary Magazine, June 1866, p. 5.

missionary endeavors? Here some of the foremost religious problems are going to be scrutinized critically, especially that which depleted the growth of the American Baptist Mission and Churches from a far reaching achievement as mentioned under the following:

### **5.2.1. Hindus Orthodoxy**

The Assamese were apparently orthodox and crafty by nature; preaching and talking seemed to have had no effect upon them. Sometime they listened attentively and respectfully to the words of the preacher, while others refused to hear; some were full of argument, others said scarcely anything; some ridiculed; many professed to be ignorant. Here one incident is cited below to prove the real mind of the Hindus which they encountered a missionary. One day while Gurney, A.K. was talking to a Hindu whom he met on the highway; he asked him what is meant by salvation. He answered, "How can I say?" He was very reticent and tried to hide himself behind his ignorance and the ways in which the Hindus answered the preacher were various; the most frequent was to assent to all the preachers what they said and quoted as:

To say, "Yes, yes, all that is true," "Your honor speaks the truth." One said to me, "Christianity is true: why shouldn't it be?" If I ask, "Why do you not accept Christianity, then?" they will reply, "Christianity is good for you, *sahib*, but not for me." To say "Yes, yes," to all one says, is with them a favorite expedient to get rid of one.<sup>2</sup>

Indeed, they were inclined to show formality to missionaries by uttering the word as true. Sometimes, after admitting, they would express the difficulty of embracing Christianity on account of their parents or relatives. Perhaps, in most cases this was merely an excuse made to get rid of the missionary; but some might have been genuine. Nevertheless, there were very few of those particularly those who had obtained an English education who had come to view Hinduism as effete, and thus they had lost reverence for it.

Notwithstanding, the missionaries had persuaded many Hindus in regard to Christianity as being true, but they were far from embracing it. But then, some of them regarded Hinduism as equally true, and were disposed to cling to it. Henceforth, they have an accommodating theory that all religions are true. In this respect, on another occasion a missionary came across a Hindu while he

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<sup>2</sup>. Gurney, A.K., *Baptist Missionary Magazine*, July 1877, pp. 269-70.

was having conversation and recorded how a Hindu expressed their religious notion as often and it is cited to authenticate the fact as:

Christianity is true, so is Hindooism, so is Mohammedanism. I regard Hindooism as true, you regard Christianity as true: Hindooism is true for me, Christianity for you.” “For the European,” they say, “Christianity is good; for the Hindoo, Hindooism; for the Mussulman, Mohammedanism.”<sup>3</sup>

Definitely, this might be, and is also a mere subterfuge; but there is no doubt in regard to this, many would consider equally as true. Hence, this understanding might have enabled them to cling to their old faith where Christianity could not take root in their hearts and replace the old belief. Possibly, from the above explanation, one can assume that they might consider Christianity as Europeans or white men religion and good and suitable for white men and not for the native people. Thus, they might find insignificance for Christianity to be upheld. Since they thought that they have their own age old religious belief and practice and it was true, good and satisfactory for them perhaps it grounded them to stand in an accommodation theory.

### **5.2.2. Prejudice of Brahmins and Priests**

The Brahmins and priests had been constituted an irony blockage to the missionary labor in the fields. The occasional visitors were known mostly of the higher ranks. As far as evidence is concerned, they normally came to dispute, and often manifested a surprising bitterness towards the gospel. If the books were offered, they rejected them with scorn, declaring that they would be polluted by the touch. They would say, “We are afraid to send our children (to school) lest being turned away from Hindu faith, they become Christian.”Of course, some of the Brahmins, were found very respectful, and appeared reasonable in discussion.<sup>4</sup>

Besides, the dominion of the Hindu priesthood was more in the district of Nowgong than any other parts of Assam. They were exceedingly numerous, and bitterly opposed to all missionary efforts. The Government also had provided much to uphold them in power, by decreeing to them immense tracts of rent-free lands, and possibly the Assam *Rajahs* formerly employed these grants for religious purposes. This act of the Government has turned out to be the main prop of Hinduism. The people infer that the Government favored the priests above all others in the

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<sup>3</sup>. Ibid. pp. 269-70.

<sup>4</sup>. *Journal of Brown*, October 30, 1841, *Baptist Missionary Magazine*, September 1842, p. 242.

province, because they were regarded as worthy. The priests themselves knew very well how to turn this matter to the extension of their own avaricious aims and self-aggrandizement. Consequently from these people, arose the greatest hindrances to missionary enterprises. They would go so far as to collect the books which missionary had distributed among their disciples, and destroy them. Sometimes they had threatened to impose a fine upon all who should go to hear missionary addresses or receive their books; and by every means this erected prejudice in the minds of the common people against the missionaries. In addition, one strange sentiment occurred that the Brahmins were always teaching that the common people should not aspire to become educated, but content themselves with a toilsome life, and look off themselves for all necessary knowledge in matters of science and religion. When missionary approached and urged the common people to attend to Religious Teachings, they often replied to missionaries to go and talk to their priests. In fact, the common and very ignorant races understood these tricky matters but there was no way of exit. The people were also taught wrong ideas of obtaining salvation and quoted what they said, “when we have paid our yearly tax to them, and worshipped the idols, they will attend to all other things necessary for our salvation.”<sup>5</sup>

Thereupon, the poor and ignorant masses were kept under the domain of so the called Brahmins and priests who controlled the whole society and misguided the common people by inserting norms and rules in the name of religion. The common people were considered always as lower rank or status and made mandatory to serve the Brahmins and priests. Thus, they were kept under the slavery of darkness by Brahmins for centuries and they could receive neither freedom in religion nor education.

On the other hand, the people were ready to hear missionary preaching and they even applauded, but none were ready to sever the last link that connected them with their long-cherished superstitions. In the meantime, the reading of the Bible even was stoutly opposed by the Brahmins. Thus, here once again a new and dangerous foe to Christianity sprung out from the darkness of heathenism. For an example, in one village, it was said that a poor Hindu was unmercifully beaten for receiving and reading Christian scriptures. The Missionary School had

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<sup>5</sup>. *Letter from Bronson*, September 1, 1844, *Baptist Missionary Magazine*, June 1845, pp. 121-2.

also been opposed, but due to yielding good result, numbers were not materially diminished.<sup>6</sup> A considerable light has been shed, and many understood the principles of the Christian Religion. But, the missionaries seemed to have faced strong oppositions. The priests had bound their disciples so strongly in the fetters of caste, that there were many cases where perusal of Scriptures have opened the eyes of some to see the truth in Christianity, and where they have been deterred from embracing it, knowing that these priests would subject them to the loss of all intercourse with their dearest friends, and render them, in the fullest sense of the word, “outcaste.” This was one of the strongest obstacles to the success of the missions work in Assam. Thus, if ever Christianity was introduced into this land, it must be through the rising generation that could be enlightened. Since, the old people were so much rigid with their tradition and belief it was as hard as for them as it was for them as it was for the camel to enter through the eye of the needle. Here is a relevant statement to the Assamese remarked by the missionary and cited, “It is as hard for the grown up Assamese to alter his customs, as it is for the Ethiopian to change his skin, or the leopard his spots.”<sup>7</sup>

Another customary hindrance was the strong attachment of the people to the customs and world views of their ancestors. In the past, the work among the races seemed to have set their faces like flint against all innovation, while their ignorance and indolent habits united to oppose missionary efforts for their good. The foundation of common schools did not have all the beneficial effects desirable, owing to missionary inability to obtain children fully under their influence, or to keep them in attendance at school sufficiently for long periods to capture their minds with truth. In fact, the parents were always anxious to know situations as soon as they could perhaps earn a little, or else, fearful of the consequences of missionary instructions, were cautioning them, or take off them altogether. Hence, the same scholar could seldom be kept under missionary influence for more than two or three years; then the pupil was taken out again into the heathen world before the person had acquired sufficient light and firmness to stand on the solid ground of truth. So, the resultant of the missionary labors was being repeatedly proved to be abortive.<sup>8</sup> Apart from those factors, the work among Assamese had also degenerated with difficulties and less encouragement because large numbers of them were adherents to Hinduism.

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<sup>6</sup>. Letter of Bronson, April 10, 1843.

<sup>7</sup>. *Letter of Bronson*, November 12, 1843.

<sup>8</sup>. *Ibid.*

This does not mean that the Assamese work was the least important. Factually, Assamese society is strongly influenced by Hinduism. The society has caste rules which seemed very rigid, an overbearing and dominant priesthood and a weak conception of sin. Here it is interesting to note a Hindu professor from Cotton College at Gauhati says, “There is nothing wrong in worshipping idols which are made of earth because earth is God.”<sup>9</sup> Hereby, Brahmins and priests decree has monopolized the society for the sake of own benefits and laid down a big wood log to prevent missionary work.

### 5.2.3. Ignorance and Superstition<sup>10</sup>

Traditionally, many of the native peoples would say if a person dies he or she dies because of sorcery (*dainikha'le*), the way in which they generally account for any sudden and violent disease, since it resists the power of medicine and hence suffer. Some of them attributed the death of their loved ones to the same cause. Basically, they believe two kinds of sorcerers, *dainiand bhutia*, the former found only among the Khamti's, the latter one among the Ahoms, or Assamese.

The Bhutias corresponded more nearly to the witches of western nations, and familiar spirits. The familiar spirit, or demon, which they call *bhut*, is fed and supported by the sorcerer, whose body he makes his ordinary place of repose, entering in an invisible state, and remaining until summoned to execute some errand of malevolence, which takes place whenever the sorcerer has a quarrel. The demon then enters the body of his victims, generally through the medium of some article of food, where he begins gnawing upon the vitals, causing immediate sickness, and ultimate death, unless dispossessed by a *muntra*, (charm), or propitiated by an offering. Whenever, a native is seriously ill, he almost invariably imagines himself attacked by an evil spirit, and immediately sets about dispossessing him, by reading over his mantras, or by making a feast and offering a pig, duck, or fowl, with rice, milk, eggs, etc., which he exposes on the highway, in the direction in which the *bhut* is supposed to have come. If the demon is appeased, the person recovers; otherwise his sickness continues, and the ceremony is repeated.

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<sup>9</sup>. Dana, M. Albaugh, *Between Two centuries, A Study of Fourth Baptist Mission Fields Assam, South India, Bengal-Orissa and South China*, Philadelphia: The Judson Press, 1935, p. 64.

<sup>10</sup>. *Orunodoi*, May 1847, pp. 36-37. Cf. “Superstitious Fear of the Assamese in times of Cholera” cited as *Orunodoi*.

Tyrannically, these superstitious notions are established in the life of the native, one of continual fear and torment, rendering them excessively timorous.<sup>11</sup> Though education opened up the minds of the educated ones and sought medical help, majority were in the bondage of this tradition. So, this superstitious practice affected the entire Assamese society and even till today it has been practiced. The belief of spirit and propitiation is vigorously performed in the time of sickness in order to restore health as well as to receive prosperity in all walks of their lives. They have regarded it as one of the prime power and authority and through this only they believe to have obtained healing not by the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Hence, these superstitious practices have brought dim light to Christianity.

#### **5.2.4. Extreme Traditionalist and Willful Heart of the People**

The toil of this field had not been crowned with large degree of success as compared to some other Hill Missions. Particularly, it has been identified with two causes by missionaries: Firstly, the people were too **traditionalist and had a willful heart** and had been always exceedingly **timid of innovation** as far as history is concerned. When the faith of Muslims swept like flood over Southern Asia, it never won a strong foothold in Assam. Approximately, only about one in ten of the population follows that faith. Even Hinduism seems never to have been able to complete its conquest. In this period many of the natives still cling to the old primitive forms of religion, like spirit worship and the offering of propitiations to their gods and Supreme Being and later assimilated to Hinduism.

Subsequently, this extreme **traditionalism and stubbornness** has been one of the **principal hindrances to the growth of Missions**. Obviously, it has been next to impossible to place the gospel before them. The sources state that they would run like terrified children at the approach of a Christian preacher. Mr. Burdette wrote during the past year, of a person he had come across while he was preaching in one of the market-places, the people at first gathered about him in large numbers, when someone in the assembly shouted out: “These men will make you all Christians.”<sup>12</sup> In a moment the people fled as for their lives.

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<sup>11</sup>. *Journal of Brown*, October 22, 1838.

<sup>12</sup>. Grant, Rev. R.D. ‘Report of the Committee on Missions in Assam,’ *BMM*, 1891, p. 203.

Possibly, this type of spirit might be hampered in the rapid progress of the mission and the churches. In addition, the Assam Mission report bore surprise in the decreasing of huge numbers who fell away from the Christian faith. In such cases, it would be probable that the old influences were much stronger and under the powerful spell of the traditions of the past who turned back to the paths of their forefathers.

### **5.2.5. Ungodly Life of Nominally Christian Officer**

Evidently, the missionaries in Assam sometimes made reference to the difficulties created for their work by the “**ungodly lives**” of nominally **Christian officers**. In 1836, James Rae had formed the first Church at Gauhati in the Assam Valley. The church had not been survived for more than a year when its progress was partly checked and the outlook dimmed. Two of the small number constituting the membership in the church, were suspended from communion because of immoral lives. The people who formerly had listened attentively to the preaching had become accustomed to the white preacher, and Rae was discouraged and disgusted because, as he said, “they make sport of the whole and declare they care not for hell or God’s wrath.”<sup>13</sup> Perhaps, they might bear identity as Christians but might fail to yield good testimony in which the missionary labor became unproductive. Moreover, evidence comments, due to the discouragement or lack of re-enforcement the mission work at Gauhati, became practically standstill.<sup>14</sup>

In 1845 Brown, therefore, penned that, “one of the most formidable obstacles in the way of missionaries, is the ungodly lives of those who bear the Christian name ...”<sup>15</sup> In addition, Brown addressed the issue and elucidated the matter very clearly and presented it to the Executive Committee at Sibsagar in 1840 and cited Brown:

I conceive an erroneous impression exist, (as to) the favor and patronage offered us by the English officers in Assam. Of the principal officers in Assam (there may be about 20 civil and military officers of the First Class) there is not one who Dissents or Dissenters with the slightest cordiality or approbation much less Baptists ... there are very few of them who believe in communion in our sense of

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<sup>13</sup>. Victor, Hugo Sword, *Baptists in Assam A Century of Missionary Service 1836-1936*, Op.cit., p. 38.

<sup>14</sup>. Ibid. p. 39.

<sup>15</sup>. *Baptist Missionary Magazine*, XXV, p. 230.

the term, very few who have any higher idea of missions than as a means of civilization, and still further many of these also stand foremost in the ranks of civilization and improvement are themselves persons of open and known immorality. It is not that I wish to proclaim the errors and faults of those who have patronized us – I would gladly be silent, but it is important that the Committee should know facts ...<sup>16</sup>

Perhaps, it is one of the reliable proofs where the mission **lost its spirituality or religiosity** to attract the **minds** of the common people. It might have brought a low standard of morality, inappropriate to local culture and thereby native people looked down towards Christianity as **cheap religion or lower caste religion**. Indeed, the mission lost the real **flavor of its saltiness and light** and thus it distorted the missionary effort. In addition, Bronson had also expressed same feelings in a letter to the Home Board in 1852. He illustrated an incident where he had stumbled upon a Muslim in Gauhati and cited below:

While at Guwahati I went out into the bazaar with Mssrs. Danford and Ward. In the crowd addressed was a respectable and unusual well-informed Mohammedan. He was also unusually candid and possessed an inquiring mind. When I was pleading the superiority of the claims of Christ over those of Mohammed, and the certainty of his obtaining salvation if he believed in Christ and obeyed His commandments, he replied, “Do you Christians follow Christ? Did he drink and be drunken, or commit adultery? You Christians, I see, do it everywhere.” I had no alternative but to wipe off the stigma thus cast upon our holy religion, by telling him that such had no right to the name of Christian, and that God’s holy Word plainly declared that such could never enter the kingdom of heaven.<sup>17</sup>

Thus, from the above statement one can easily rationalize that from the very beginning of the Christian mission in Assam, there was conceived a hurdle by so called nominal Christians among British Officers of the lower ranks was far outweighed and thereupon it dwindled the missionary enterprises.

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<sup>16</sup>. Brown to Executive Committee, Sibsagor, April 29, 1850 (Excerpt).

<sup>17</sup>. *Baptist Missionary Magazine*, XXII, p. 418.

### 5.3. Political Problem

The political unrest of mutiny created havoc in the normal activities of the missions and churches. The missionaries were warned for their lives and it caused agitation throughout the province. In addition to this, there was also the American civil war which affected the Assam Mission.

#### 5.3.1. Wave of Sepoy Mutiny

It was a period of chaos, great turmoil and havoc existed in the province. In 1857, a kind of disturbance completely different phenomena, appeared to the mission field known as **Indian Mutiny**. “Wars and rumors of war” characterized the whole of India. For a long time it was expected that Assam would escape the flame of insurrection which raged wildly in Bengal, since it was so remote from the center and since the people of the province in the whole were of a rather peaceful character; but the spark of rebellion was shortly fanned into a flame which enveloped Assam too. The secret news had been dispatched to the province notifying the natives of the day and date when a general uprising was to take place. A compact plan was made to massacre every white person in Assam. The former *Rajah* (King) had been selected as the one who would lead the rebellion; but the English Officer in Command, Major Holeroyd, found the plot in time and nipped it in the bud by arresting the king and taking him to Calcutta as a prisoner.

Needless to say, it was a moment of awful suspense for the missionaries in the field. Threats were made on their lives and they had to undergo with great risks from every direction. The Mohammedans threatened the native Christians by sending intimation that they would first attack the missionaries by killings and then the native would be the next objects of their vengeance, and Islam would be re-instated. The most atrocious deeds were reported to be prevalent in the region. There was not a single European soldier in Assam except the Officers in charge of native troops; thus, the protection of European life against a general insurrection was very meager. Thereafter, the plans had been made for the Europeans to gather at Gauhati; but Gauhati was many miles from Sibsagar and Nowgong where the missionaries were resided. The only possible way, was if they ventured to undertake the long tedious journey down the Brahmaputra. Lastly, Bronson decided to take refuge at Gauhati; and under the cover of the dark night he with his family,

slipped quietly out of Nowgong in a native canoe down the Kullung River to the Brahmaputra, and on to Gauhati.<sup>18</sup> While Bronson was on his journey, he wrote from his little craft on the river explaining the brutality of the episode in Assam and cited as:

A general feeling of insecurity is spread all over the country. All feel that it is emphatically true now that we know not what 'a day or an hour may bring forth.' It would be utterly impossible for me to tell you the horrors of this mutiny, or the refinement of cruelty' practiced upon all, even unoffending and helpless women and children, that fell into the hands of the merciless savages.<sup>19</sup>

When Mr. Bronson reached Gauhati, he found Danforth was in a soldier's garb, drilling morning and evening, resolved to defend his family and the mission property because the situation called upon him to do so. For more than six weeks, wrote Danforth, "I have done military duty daily, and that, too, directly in front of a large company of sepoy many of whom were known to be mutinous."<sup>20</sup> Most of the times the least occasion would have caused an outbreak.

At the mission station at Sibsagar, the Whittings were alone. They had been advised to leave the village, and a comfortable little boat was put at their disposal so that they could easily move out on the river and hence be out of the reach of the cantonment at Sibsagar. Whiting had contemplated going up the stream and taking shelter among the hill tribes who had not been affected by the mutiny. He utterly submitted his life to Lord alone and expressed his deep concerns for lost souls in a writing, "If I escape its fury, I may be able to collect some of the remnants of the mission." The storm blew over, the missionaries once again settled down, but the uncertainty of life and the departure of missionaries left the entire burden of the labor on a much depleted missionary personnel.

Besides, Bronson was obliged to depart the little Christian group in Nowgong under the charge of a native leader who had little training of the Christian ministry. During this time the record of after eighteen months the membership had been dwindled to five; leading one less than it was when the church was established. Other missionaries, owing to the strain of mutiny and disease, were compelled to take furlough so that in 1858 there was only a single missionary who

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<sup>18</sup>. Ibid. pp. 88-89.

<sup>19</sup>. *Baptist Missionary Magazine*, 1858, p. 17.

<sup>20</sup>. Victor, Hugo Sword, *Baptists in Assam A Century of Missionary Service 1836-1936*, Op. cit., pp. 89-90.

remained in all Assam.<sup>21</sup>Hence the **1850s were the most critical period in the history of American Baptist Mission works** in Assam. In fact, it was even proposed to close down the Assam Field, however, for the eloquent plea made by Bronson who was in America on furlough at that time. Finally, the Assam Mission was retained and supported only by the Northern Convention with very little financial grants.<sup>22</sup>Subsequently, the desolating wave of mutiny had more or less hampered missionary operations in that period, and such was its reduced state that out of three stations two were left in the labor of one man while the third was completely vacant. Allowing to sink the stations any lower would have been equivalent to strike it from the union's list of Missions altogether. Thus, a serious question arises here. Will the churches let it die or will they make it over to the English Baptists from whom they received a portion of it? <sup>23</sup> No matter, the devastating riots of the vast region brought missionaries a nightmare to their ceaseless labor and effort however, the missionaries kept alive their goal which Bronson illuminated his uncompromised love, commitment and passion for mission cited from Bronson's family papers:

Shall we retire from the field? Shall we abandon the little churches (and) see those mission houses and ground sold to government officers, those chapels converted into warehouse ... Methinks (and) I hear every lover of mission answer "no." The mission is advanced too far to retire without dishonor and crime. To abandon those little flocks implies treachery and criminality. To retire now is to dishonor the cause of Christ and give the triumph to Enemy – let us rather arise and build up the wall and repair the breaches that be no more a reproach.<sup>24</sup>

Undeniably, all these events had formed a great setback to the advancement of the missionary endeavor in Assam. The tough situation and life threatening circumstances had surrounded the missionaries yet it was taken as a challenge for the uncompromised call for missions and remained to the end of their lives. It is worthy to acknowledge their sacrificial services offered for the Assamese and its momentum stays alive for Christ till today.

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<sup>21</sup>. Ibid. pp. 89-90.

<sup>22</sup>. F. S. Downs, *Mighty Works of God*, Op.cit., pp. 43-44.

<sup>23</sup>. Bronson to Peck; Ship Radiant off St. Helena, January 26, 1858, (Excerpts).

<sup>24</sup>. Bronson Family Papers, Box 6, see Assam Mission; Its past, present and future.

### 5.3.2. Civil War in America

Unfortunately, the civil war in America became a growing phenomenon and a highly alarming issue for missions and churches and thus they received unpleasing news from America. The Americans became pre-occupied with domestic issues, losing interests in afar-flung areas like Assam. The American Baptist Churches themselves had been divided into Northern and Southern Conventions in 1845 on the issue of Slavery.<sup>25</sup> The affairs between the North and the South were becoming more and more complicated and that a fierce and protracted civil war was inevitable. Thereupon, every individual was asked to give way to the duty of saving the country from the rebels and traitors and thereafter it became the watch word of the country. The result of the war was now supported only by the Northern Churches in America and its support was much reduced, failing to meet the bare requirements of the Assam Mission. It has been also observed that this warfare most seriously affected the course of Foreign Missions. In addition, the Union already had a debt of \$20,000 and work was called to look at the question of reducing the missions and of giving up for the present less successful stations. To suffix and quote the missionary statement where it is elaborated clearly as:

Missionary hope, notwithstanding, the pressure of the present crisis they might not be compelled to recede; but in case war should make it possible for missionaries (you) men and means what should be done for Assam missions ... one station should be kept up and one mission family and to the station all support possible should be given instead of dividing it up of two or three parts.<sup>26</sup>

Thus, the war compelled the missionaries to combine all mission stations into one and the duty was assigned to a single missionary family in order to reduce the financial budget. Along with mental anguish, repeated discouragement and hope frequently deferred had not been without their physical affects too. The field became too large in the vast areas and thereby absolutely single human strength might not have been sufficient to look after all the stations and this perhaps led to the deterioration of the missions and churches.

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<sup>25</sup>. Eliza, Whitney Brown, *The Whole World Kin: A Pioneer Experience among Remote Tribes, and other Labors of Nathan Brown*, Op. cit., p. 433.

<sup>26</sup>. Bronson to Warren, Nowgong, August 6, 1861.

### 5.3.3. Insecurity of the Frontier Tribes Due to Attacks, Violence and Killing

Sadiya was the first pioneer Missionary Station established by American Baptist Missionaries in 1836. Unfortunately, hostility of the frontier tribes was soon rampant at Sadiya. From the very inception of the missionary work, there had been constant rumors or attacks, suspicion and defiance meditated upon this place by the Singphos. The disturbances of the Singphos were found often. There was a surprise attack at night in which about twenty persons were killed and wounded. The missionaries were to take refuge in the cantonments of the British.<sup>27</sup> In the morning of the 28<sup>th</sup> of January, 1839, about three or four o'clock, the station was attacked by the Khamtis. They captured the place completely and surprisingly, and after cutting down the sentries, at first outset made themselves masters of the stockade, and magazine. The same instant, four or five bands attacked the place from different directions, firing the houses and murdering indiscriminately all whom they met, men, women and children. Nearly the entire village and cantonments were soon in flames by Khamti war. Col. White, the Commanding Officer, rushed out of his house, and was making his way to the magazine, but was met and surrounded by a party of the enemy, who overpowered and killed him on the spot. The *sipahis* killed and wounded, thirty-four; but including women and children, who were killed and wounded during the fight, the number cannot be less than one hundred. Thirty Khamtis were also left dead on the field.

Meanwhile, the enemy passed through the village nearly a mile from cantonments where missionaries were living. They massacred several inhabitants while passing, but they did not touch the missionary house. When the yell from cantonments was heard by the missionary, they immediately got into the canoe, with their two little children and pushed out into the river, and remained till the firing had ceased. They kept upon the river till about day-break, when the welcome sound of the bugle met their ears, and they soon arrived in. The place around them was truly horrible. The dead and dying were scattered in every direction, hundreds were left without a shelter for their heads, and scarcely a rag to protect them from the cold. While Brown was writing, he viewed that the trees were clouded with flocks of vultures, which had collected from all quarters to feast upon the slain. The bodies found the next day, had been buried or thrown into the river and many remained undiscovered. And there were doubtless many dead in the jungles

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<sup>27</sup>. Journal of Brown, Sadiya, January 8, 1838.

that no one knew of.<sup>28</sup> Besides the mangled bodies of the dead, and the groans of the dying who had weltered in pools of blood, there were scenes and sounds which would make even the less squeamish soldiers turn away: and which haunted Mrs. Brown for months. In this juncture, the missionary was often confused to take the decision of what is right and wrong and this exactly Mr. Brown wrote his struggle and is cited as:

I cannot think that when I lie down and take my two little ones by my side, that I am acting contrary to the Gospel, by putting my sword and double-barreled gun under my pillow; nor could I in conscience hesitate to use them, if pushed to the last extremity.<sup>29</sup>

The frequent terror prevailed in the region and the missionaries were in constant peril. Thus, missionaries had constructed a small building at the cantonments, for a temporary residence in which they restored goods of the mission. They had to remain at cantonments expecting every day another attack. However, they were to have the safest spot they could find and said, “In God is our only help.”<sup>30</sup>

Similarly, since the attack on the 28<sup>th</sup> January, the place had become a state of continual commotion. The Khamtis, Singphos, and Mishmis combined, had been plundered and carried off the peaceable inhabitants, while the troops of the Government had been scouring the country in various directions in search of the enemy, and several sharp engagements had taken place in which the Khamtis and Singphos had met with considerable loss. The weary missionary prospects for the mission were quite blasted; many of the inhabitants had fled; and the Khamtis, amongst whom the missionaries were desirous of laboring, were wholly dispersed. And difficult tranquility had been overruled.<sup>31</sup> Hence, the present state of the mission station was really deplorable. Doubtless, many poor natives of the state were carried off and sold into slavery.<sup>32</sup>

Thereupon, Sadiya became less and less desirable as a mission station which aimed to do missionary labor. Sickness increased and crowded in the cantonments, where the missionaries

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<sup>28</sup>. Letter of Brown, Sadiya, February 8, 1839

<sup>29</sup>. Eliza, Whitney Brown, *The Whole World Kin: A Pioneer Experience among Remote Tribes, and other Labors of Nathan Brown*, Op. cit., p. 182.

<sup>30</sup>. Letter of Brown, Sadiya, February 8, 1839.

<sup>31</sup>. Letter of Brown, March 29, 1839.

<sup>32</sup>. Extract from a letter of Bronson, Jaipur, April 10, 1839.

were now situated. A persistent dreadful odor of virulent small-pox made it a deadly place. At the same time, the population of Sadiya and vicinity was daily fleeing. Fields and villages were deserted. Here Mr. Brown remarked after he observed the pathetic condition of the field and wrote, there “is no prospect that Sadiya will recover ... for many years to come: and we have at last concluded to relinquish that port at present and to locate ourselves at the more central situation at Jaipur.”<sup>33</sup> These were the reasons that induced the missionary to retire from Sadiya. On account of its contiguity, Sadiya was abandoned and the missionaries were located at Jaipur. Finally, Sadiya which was the important and first pioneer station for the American Baptist missionary had greatly shrunk and displaced.

#### **5.4. Social Problem**

The human being is a social animal. They have always lived in a particular region or area as a group with their relatives, friends and community members in same tradition, practice and belief system through interdependency with one another. There was no life without community or society. The society is the topmost important component to live as a community with certain principles through abiding rules and regulations of the society. Unless they followed, they were considered as out caste of the society. No doubt, this type of binding rules certainly blocked the ways.

##### **5.4.1. Rigidity and Fear of Caste System**

Caste system was another awkward feature that staggered the missionary services in the vicinity. The practice and observance of caste system was so deeply rooted and bound in the society that it became an almost impenetrable bar to access the gospel to win the hearts of the public people. So in the missionary statement it was mentioned like opium, caste was also a curse to this state which seems to envelope this province with darkness.<sup>34</sup> Bronson had also illustrated about this strong tie which brought a shadow over missionary innovativeness and to suffice it quoted him as:

But what shall I say of caste; that legion of evils combined, - that stronghold of the devil, - which so boldly defies all our efforts, - all our powers of persuasion, - and all our acts of kindness and love. The poorest beggar will receive charity only

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<sup>33</sup>. Victor, Hugo Sword, *Baptists in Assam A Century of Missionary Service 1836-1936*, Op.cit., p.58.

<sup>34</sup>. *Whiting to Peck*, April 6, 1858

as it is conformed to the doctrine of caste. The dying man refuses our medicine lest he lose his caste; - and let go what will, nothing is so dear as caste. This very doctrine shuts the missionary but of the houses of the people, where he often would otherwise find them ready to listen to the story of Calvary.<sup>35</sup>

Generally, common people believe caste as a rank and status of the society. Once they break and associate outside of their fold, certainly they will lose their caste and be excommunicated from their mainstream society. There was fear of losing caste as well as superstitious belief of impurity by associating with Christian missionaries and that was the reason, why native people often **refused to take medicine from the hands of the missionaries**. In case of getting in touched with the missionary, they would **perform a purification ceremony** in order to become pure from impurity for retaining caste and re-entree into the society. On the other hand, many of them professed to believe but could not break the family and the caste ties, and it may well be supposed that not a few were secret disciples.<sup>36</sup>

Alike, there was an old Brahmin in Sibsagar, who deeply read Sanskrit, and his appearance was that of a staunch Hindu, although he had probably no thought of ever renouncing Hinduism; yet in private conversation he freely confessed that he does not believe much that is written in their sacred books, and he believes in worship of only one God. He was bound hand and foot by the chains of custom and caste, like the old man, but he also seemed to have a conviction that there is truth in the New Religion, and that he must seek for it. He asked the missionary on an another day for a Bible, saying, "I have long wished for one, and now I think it will be a good time to read it, as I can ask you to explain any part I do not understand." At the same time he begged the missionary to keep the fact of his having a Bible in his possession a secret; "for," said he, "I could not keep it, if it was known." He admitted the truth in his heart,<sup>37</sup> but could not confess publicly due to the caste bar.

In another occasion, a well educated Brahmin *pundit*, served the missionary as *pundit* for several months, and the missionary was deeply interested in him and often had opportunities for conversation at Nowgong. At last, with much hesitation, he asked the missionary for a Holy

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<sup>35</sup>. Bronson to Peck, September 1, 1844.

<sup>36</sup>. Victor, Hugo Sword, *Baptists in Assam A Century of Missionary Service 1836-1936*, Op.cit., p.76.

<sup>37</sup>. Letters from Mrs. Bronson, Sibsagar, August 8, 1865, BMM, June 1866, p. 5.

Bible, begging that it might be a small copy, as he should be obliged to conceal from his friends the fact of having the forbidden book in his possession.<sup>38</sup> From these incidents one can come to an assumption that there was often fear of losing caste and society and thus it had them prevented strongly from embracing Christianity. Moreover, from the very genesis of mission field at Nowgong in 1841, and till 1886, after 45 years of mission labor in this mission station, many of the people had not even heard the name of Jesus and the common impression among those who heard, was that Christianity was a modern religion that had come **intending to break their Caste**, that was, merely to **destroy their social standing** among their countrymen. The Missionary Report of 1886 says, some have heard of the teaching of Jesus and believed secretly, and if caste was done away, and they felt free to act as they thought, they would be called Christians instead of Hindus.<sup>39</sup> Certainly, it seems to have built an admissible door and veil in the hearts of the natives that prevented them to reach the gospel and this might lead eclipse the missions and the churches.

#### **5.4.2. Opium Addiction**

Although the use of rice beer was hitherto common amongst the backward border tribes, wine-drinking was unknown to the Assamese in the plains.<sup>40</sup> But a strong drink and its use was a bane of the native Christian church, and was a curse in this land as it was in all other lands, and it was a sad moment to think that none were responsible for its introduction into this state as those who bear the Christian name. Drinking of wine among the English Officials, high and low, was universal. All the Eurasian community was addicted to its use, many of them even to dissipation. Moreover, the British Government had rather encouraged the consumption by licensing its sale and making that license a source of revenue to the Government treasuries. This act of the Government had done more than anything else to spread the use of opium, and put far off, the day of fat things. Many of the higher class natives who had abandoned the Hindu faith virtually, if not ostensibly, indulged in drink, and as a use of liquor, this led to dissipation and ruin. Among the English, there were many who kept themselves under a wholesome restraint. The influences could be seen by which they were surrounded. They all tended in one direction, and there was no wonder that the native converts sometimes fell. The missionaries tried to prevent it, both by

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<sup>38</sup>. Letters from Mrs. Bronson, Nowgong, January 16, 1866, BMM, June 1866, pp. 164-5, excerpts).

<sup>39</sup>. Rev. P.H. Moore, 'Nowgong Field Report,' Mission Jubilee Conference, Nowgong, December 18-29, 1886.

<sup>40</sup>. *Orunodoi*, June 1846, pp. 45-6; July 1853, .p 105, July 1854, pp. 103-4.

teaching and example: but the demon of strong drink comes and takes its victims among those whom missionaries have sought to rescue from the dangers and degradation of heathenism; and that fact was very saddening to them in their labors.<sup>41</sup> Indeed, it was almost hopeless, that a confirmed opium-eater would ever leave off the use of the article.<sup>42</sup>

Hence, the major affect of opium was repeatedly described by missionaries as the greatest cursed of this province. A large portion of the inhabitants were entirely besotted by it. It carried off immense numbers to an untimely grave. The disease that contracted an opium-eater was generally dysentery, and was almost sure to be fatal, no medicine being of any avail.<sup>43</sup> Besides, what did the Foreign Secretary Reported about opium eater and it is a thought-provoking statement to quote his remark as he said, “The most discouraging feature relative to the Christianization of the Assamese and their civilization ... as it presents to me, is the prevalence among them of the use of opium.”<sup>44</sup> Perhaps, the report bears the influence of western culture and lifestyle where native people might adopt irrationally as a fashion of living standard and indulged themselves without knowing its major affects to their lives as well as society. Further, it enfeebles a like body and mind, and prepares the way for that fearful scourge, the cholera, whose victims in Assam the past few years were numbered by tens of thousands.<sup>45</sup>

The Jubilee Report in 1886 had also commented on the use of opium by people and its difficulty of reckless that this hardcore substance brought in the Sibsagar station.<sup>46</sup> The American Baptist Mission Conference Report of 1889 states, opium eating was indicated twice as a problem for the churches. Opium use was regarded as an excommunicable offense and was often the most frequent reason for such disciplinary action being taken. Describing the reason for the exclusion of thirty persons from the membership of the Nowgong church between 1887 and 1889, P.H. Moore reported that in most cases it was due to “the opium habit.”<sup>47</sup> The result of this article was a steady declined in the number of members of the Nowgong church. Indeed, the mission

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<sup>41</sup>. *Report of Comfort, BMM*, 1863, p. 247.

<sup>42</sup>. *Letter from Whiting*, April 6, 1858.

<sup>43</sup>. *Journal of Brown*, May 23, 1836, *BMM*, 1855, p. 4.

<sup>44</sup>. *Report of the Foreign Secretary, BMM*, 1855, p. 4.

<sup>45</sup>. *Ibid.* p. 4.

<sup>46</sup>. Mrs. A.K. Gurney, ‘History of the Sibsagar Field,’ Jubilee Reports, 1886, pp. 22-23.

<sup>47</sup>. *Reports of the Assam Baptist Missionary Conference, Annual*, 1889, p. 11.

had undergone a period of pruning rather than of growing. The opium habit hampered the biggest number of exclusions from the membership of the church.<sup>48</sup>

In addition, the North Lakhimpur field had also indicated that the most backward ones in Upper Assam, 25 per cent of the Christians indulged in opium habits. An important meeting was held on this issue in November, 1904 and took a firm stand to resolve the use of opium.<sup>49</sup> There were 640 members on the Darrang and the North Lakhimpur fields in 1916. One church excluded 14 members for the opium eating.<sup>50</sup> No wonder, from these glimpses one can roughly sum up that the excessive intoxication of opium brought abnormality and degradation to the growth of the churches.

#### **5.4.3. Learning Foreign Languages**

In early days the whole North Eastern regions was known as Assam. Shortly, after the arrival of missionaries began to learn language. Firstly, they labored Shan language to evangelize but was disappointed as there were few in numbers. Thus, another language was to be learned i.e., Assamese. It was a written language, but without a dictionary or grammar and there was no interpreter. Pointing to an object, Mr. and Mrs. Brown would catch the name from the lips of a native, and write the sounds in Roman letters, enlarging their **vocabulary** of nouns day by day, and immediately picking up verbs and modifiers with imperative momentary necessity of using them.<sup>51</sup> Apart from Assamese, there were also some books for the plain tribal dialects being produced. So Assam has numerous dialects and the missionaries had to spend lots of time in learning dialects and in translation work to furnish reading materials. But it was difficult for the missionaries to learn them all, except for a few of the dialects. Moreover, they also faced problem in effective communication of the gospel to the foreign languages and perhaps it descended the mission work.

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<sup>48</sup>. P.H. Moore, 'Nowgong Field Report,' 2<sup>nd</sup> Trinnial Conference, Gauhati, December 21-30, 1889.

<sup>49</sup>. Joseph, Paul, Report from North Lakhimpur, Gauhati, December 24, 1904- January 1, 1905.

<sup>50</sup>. John, Firth, Report from North Lakhimpur, Nowgong, February 17-24, 1916.

<sup>51</sup>. Ibid. pp. 130-1.

#### 5.4.4. Migratory Nature

The work among the immigrant class had begun in 1872. Some of them had already been under Christian instruction before migrating northward and they formed a small colony around which further activities could be developed. These people were imported by the tea companies for labor purposes and after their contracts had expired many of them made Assam as their permanent home.<sup>52</sup> The most prosperous missions work in Upper Assam has been among the immigrant population living in tea gardens or in villages. The number of tea gardens is largest in the Sibsagar and North Lakhimpur districts. Originally, these immigrants were aborigines from Western Bengal, Chota Nagpur and Central India. This was a large field, ripe for the harvest. In a few years the work among these people had produced fruits in great quantities in Sibsagar, North Lakhimpur, Golaghat, Dibrugarh and Nowgong.<sup>53</sup>

In 1886, it is said to have had considerably good numbers of the Kol Christians in the Sibsagar field. However, the number of Kol Christians were very fluctuating for the reasons that many of them worked in the tea gardens on contract basis and once their contract was completed, some of them returned to their native country, while others left the gardens and went to other parts of Assam to distant gardens or engaged in cultivation. The agreement of the contract was normally only two or three or five years. Once the term was over, they used to migrate to other places. So, the mission work among them was naturally unstable and fluctuating, and thus the migratory character of the people led the work of the missions to be less promising than it appeared at first.<sup>54</sup>

The Dibrugarh field had a good number of baptized members among Santhals and Mundas. Petrick reported in 1910 that the labor in the Dibrugarh station, however, met with considerable difficulties. In most of the places, where they worked, there were found other Christian denominations too working among them. Since, most of the converts were on tea gardens, the work lacked stability than in the Sibsagar district.<sup>55</sup> In addition, the report of P.H. Moore in 1910 stated that the Nowgong field also suffered the same fate from so many tea garden churches, on

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<sup>52</sup>. Ibid. p. 65.

<sup>53</sup>. Petrick, Rev. C.E., *Tea Garden Coolies*, see *Report on the Fifth Triennial Conference, 1899, Assam Mission, BMM*, pp. 67-9.

<sup>54</sup>. A. K. Gurney, 'Jubilee Reports,' 1886, pp. 24-30.

<sup>55</sup>. C.E. Petrick, Report from Sibsagar and Dibrugarh, 10<sup>th</sup> Session, Gauhati, January 8-17, 1910.

account of the transitory and migratory life of the membership. However, during the last three years, the churches moved from the tea gardens to villages and there were now more hopeful tokens of permanence and growth.<sup>56</sup> Indeed, the mobile nature of the community affected the church membership and probably also degenerated the advancement of the churches and the mission projects.

#### **5.4.5. Distance from Home**

Normally, missionaries were to take long and tedious journey to reach desired mission stations. It was quite expensive travelling in the steamer and in the course of their journey so many articles had to be destroyed by coming up the river in small boats. The duration of their journey for an example:

Missionaries were in the ship Cato 138 days, - in Calcutta twenty-seven days, - on the steamer to Gowahatti seventeen, - in G. eleven, - in small boats, from G. to Nowgong, eight days, - in all from Boston 201 to Nowgong in Assam.<sup>57</sup>

This type of journey not only involved financial expenditure but also health and time consumption.

#### **5.4.6. Dangerous Voyage up the Brahmaputra**

Irregularly Bengali traders from Calcutta dispatch goods, which they had bartered with the Assamese and neighboring tribes. In the midst of travelling, no hotels or market places were to be found on the way, it was necessary for the travelers ascending the river, to furnish themselves in Calcutta with provision and all other accommodation which they might require for a long journey of at least four months. The current of the Brahmaputra was in many places dangerous and fearfully strong, and the bed of the river, like their Mississippi, was full of snags and sawyers which had been torn from the banks by the power full current. Infrequently they had to pass through dense and terrible jungles, where roamed the wild elephants, buffaloes and tigers of the country; such that the boats would be moored at night to sandbars or small islands of sand,

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<sup>56</sup>. P.H. Moore, 'Nowgong Field Report,' Tenth Biennial Session, Gauhati, January 8-17, 1910.

<sup>57</sup>. Letter from Stoddard, May 24, 1847.

formed by the changing current of the stream, which were the daily resorts of these wild beasts, and that crocodiles and other monsters swarmed in many parts of the river.<sup>58</sup>

Thus, journey through this type of river was risky for the life of the missionaries. Evidently, the Rev. and Mrs. Jacob Thomas and the Rev. and Mrs. Miles Bronson were dispatched to associate Brown and Cutter at Sadiya. These two families unfortunately began their long and tedious journey up the Brahmaputra river at the beginning of the rainy seasons when the current of the river would come in turbulent whirlpools carrying with it trees and debris from falling banks, endangering any kind of native craft coming up the river. The voyage was also accompanied with illness and untold hardships. Bronson, caught too serious a sickness to navigate, and was forced to moor in a low and unhealthful jungle, a little below the mouth of the Dibruh River. In the intervening time, Mr. Thomas was sent ahead in a small canoe to Sadiya to obtain help as well as to bring intelligence for his treatment.

Meanwhile, Thomas was only three hours from Sadiya and within sight of the town **two large trees fell on his boat and killed him.**<sup>59</sup> The sadness and discouragement came upon the hopeful missionaries through receiving news of the tragedy which was beyond comprehensible. Immediately, Mr. Cutter wrote, “I am now in a small boat, on my way to Sadiya, with our dear brother Thomas, lying before me a cold and lifeless body ...” His deepest sorrow and agony poured out and expressed in a poem:

“Death, like an overflowing a stream,  
Sweeps us away: our life’s dream,  
An empty tale, a morning flower,  
Cut down and withered in an hour.”<sup>60</sup>

In fact, it is realistic that many times missionaries had to take risk of their lives by boating in the river and some of them even lost their precious lives in the voyage for the **sake of Christ**, before an arrival to the promised station. Thus, the uncompromised vision of the missionaries had been shattered by unexpected perils like a night dream which scarcely caught the flame of reality and

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<sup>58</sup>. Eliza, Whitney Brown, *The Whole World Kin: A Pioneer Experience among Remote Tribes, and other Labors of Nathan Brown*, Op.cit., pp. 109-10.

<sup>59</sup>. *Annual Report, A'SA'M*, (1837), *BMM*, 1838, pp. 159-60.

<sup>60</sup>. *Baptist Missionary Magazine*, Vol. 18, p. 67.

created a vacuum in the hearts of the missionaries and probably weakened the mission works due to demise of their committed colleague and thereupon the missionary target hampered in boosts.

#### **5.4.7. Difficulties of Travelling, Boarding and Lodging**

Most of the time, missionaries were to wait for long days to obtain their necessary articles. Indeed, it is surprising to look at the missionary record which indicated the long journey of those days. They received a box of clothing from Calcutta, for which they wrote about sixteen months ago. Boats coming from Calcutta with goods, managed by natives, were six to nine months on the way. Letters received by them become very old news. So difficult was it to get even the necessary elements of life, in this remote corner of the country. Letters and papers from America were generally a year old before it reached to them.<sup>61</sup> There was also hardly anything to be bought here. What they had of dry goods, groceries, medicines, etc., must come from Calcutta or from America. They had to send for Calcutta, twelve-months before what they were actually required. The insurance, together with the expense of transportation, increased their cost too much, besides, the destructibility of the climate, and nearly every kind of vermin.<sup>62</sup>

Besides it was also often mentioned in the missionary statement on difficulties of travelling from one region to another region. No matter what the situation was, they toured for preaching and tract distribution, and had given away a good number of tracts on the road side, market and villages. One occasion recorded by Brown, after finished the visit in the evening, he found no<sup>63</sup> *namghor*<sup>64</sup> and one of the villagers received him by allowing him to take rest for the night under a shed adjoining his house. The shed was a place for loom of his wife. As far as the customs of the Assamese were concerned, a native could not furnish a missionary with boarding and lodging in his own house without losing caste. This mode of trip was unpleasant sometimes when a storm or wild buffalo comes.<sup>65</sup> While travelling they had to carry a bed (or blanket) and cooking apparatus with the assistance of coolies or native bearers. To suffix it cited Brown's description:

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<sup>61</sup>. Journal of Brown, September 17, 1838.

<sup>62</sup>. Journal of Barker, October 17, 1840.

<sup>63</sup>. Journal of Brown, April 1, 1843; *BMM*, October 1844, p. 292

<sup>64</sup>. *Namghor* or prayer house of the Vaisnavites in Assam hitherto served too the purpose of a rest camp to weary travelers irrespective of caste, creed or community, see H.K. Barpujari, *American Missionaries and North-East India (1836-1900 A.D.) A Documentary Study*, Op.cit., p.57.

<sup>65</sup>. Journal of Brown, April 1, 1843; *BMM*, October 1844, p. 292.

The difficulties of travelling in India, can scarcely be appreciated by those who live in a civilized country. All my dishes, cooking utensils, nearly all my provisions, bed, etc., I have to carry with me; also two or three loads of tracts and books; and the only tavern we find is an open shed, called a *namghor*, where we spread our beds on the ground, hang up our moscheto curtains, and consider ourselves very comfortably lodged for the night. This mode of travelling in the cold season we find very conducive to health.<sup>66</sup>

Without a doubt, from the above citation it is very clear about the culture and attitude of the local people towards Christianity. It seems the caste rigidity and accessibility of the gospel to the native people was not an easy way and had a great impediment.

#### **5.4.8. Unhealthy Locations and Various Diseases**

Unhealthy climate bred hazardous dose mosquitoes and thereupon converted the place into a place of malaria and epidemic diseases. Eventually the widespread epidemic attacked the missionaries and the native population which was depicted in the journal of Brown in 1840. When missionaries looked back to the past spent in this state, and considered the various difficulties and hindrances they had faced, and the little success that had attended their efforts, they were almost disheartened. During the past years their labors have been almost completely broken up. In the early part of the years, the disturbances at Sadiya prevented them from the mission work as mentioned as insecurity of the frontier tribes.

Meanwhile, Sadiya mission station was abandoned due to hostility and warfare of the Khamtis and Singphos and the missionaries reached Jaipur for launching a new mission station. Soon there followed another impeding obstacle known as cholera. The sickness and other necessary cares occupied much of their time, while the cholera drove nearly all the native population from the place; and since the close of the rains, both Mrs. and Mr. Brown had been visited by frequent attacks of ague and fever, which they were afraid that it would never leave them, unless they sought a change of air by journeying to other place. Brown's little boy had contracted fever by exposure to the weather at Sadiya. Afterwards, they were driven from their mission house because of complex circumstances like unhealthy site, climate, sickness and antagonism by

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<sup>66</sup>. Journal of Brown, December 26, 1844.

frontier tribes. The little boy entirely became a cripple. He had never been able to walk or stand alone since. After much painful hesitation, Mrs. Brown was accompanied by Mrs. B. and took with her the two children to Calcutta for their treatment. No doubt she might meet with many difficulties and trials before her return. Yet, Mrs. Brown trusted God and wrote, “But I would commit them all into the hands of an all-wise God, who ordains our sorrows as well as our joys.”<sup>67</sup>

During this time, on the 27<sup>th</sup> of Feb. 1840, Mr. Barker left Jaipur with Mr. Bronson, who was very sick suffering from fever, and went to Sibsagar for medical treatment, which they reached after a journey of five days. From the sickness, however, he recovered under the care of Dr. Furnell, an English physician. Unfortunately, Miss Bronson died on the 7<sup>th</sup> December.<sup>68</sup> Moreover, Brown’s last letter to Peck which was written from Jaipur, where he had informed about his poor health that he had resolved to come to Sibsagar for the medical advice of Dr. Furnell. Under his prescriptions he soon regained his health, and since then he had decided with the advice of the brethren to remain at Sibsagar. The missionaries had stayed for only a few months at Jaipur, meanwhile there was no such day that any one of their family was not sick. So they had been disappointed in their expectations regarding Jaipur, instead of increasing the population it has rather diminished than otherwise, owing to a great part of the unhealthiness in the region, which made the natives averse to settle there. The sparseness of the populations in the immediate surroundings made it very discouraging situation for missionary endeavor.<sup>69</sup> Thus owing to the situation of unhealthiness, the mission station evacuated from Jaipur and shifted to Sibsagar.

#### **5.4.9. Great Mortality-Untimely Grave of Missionaries and Converts**

There were also other circumstances which appeared in the mission fields like untimely grave with frequency death, particularly among adults and working-men at Sadiya. The missionaries received news every few days of someone, who had been their employ or with whom they had been acquainted, falling sudden prey to the destroyer. Perhaps, this great mortality was owed mainly to two causes assumed by missionary. Firstly, the immoderate quantity of opium used by

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<sup>67</sup>. *Journal of Brown*, January 1, 1840.

<sup>68</sup>. *Journal of Barker*, November 1840 to May 1841: see also *BMM*, March 1842, pp. 64 ff. (Excerpts).

<sup>69</sup>. *Journal of Brown*, April 14, 1841.

all the Assamese and secondly, the habit of sleeping on the ground, which might be highly pernicious, especially during the rainy season. The situation was a horror, because a large portion of the population died alarmingly in every year. The missionaries were clouded with sorrow and asked themselves what could be done for these ignorant people immediately.<sup>70</sup> Possibly, it might have been a difficult time for missionaries to contact and evangelize the native people for longer period due to sudden mortality rate in whom they targeted, as they withered before they could reach. Hence there was only a sad news blanket the entire region instead of illuminating happiness to the missions work.

#### **5.4.10. Affect of Missionaries by Jungle Fever**

Another panic visited in the mission stations, and it was known as jungle fever. Jungle fever became a vastly spread disease and took many lives of the missionaries and natives in the stations. Mr. Brown's daughter whom they had brought with them contracted jungle fever and died on September 29, 1838.<sup>71</sup> A still greater trial was ahead of them. Nathan Brown had been rapidly growing weaker. Jungle fever had eaten into his frame. The death of his children, the sickness of his body, and the poor health of his wife had aged him a great deal. His hair was white though he was only thirty-three years of age.<sup>72</sup> Moreover, Dr. Furnell was an English physician stationed at Sibsagar who had also been contracted with this dangerous jungle fever during a tour to the Singpho hills but he could recover his health.<sup>73</sup> It was painful to witness the death of so many Europeans, cut down one after another in the prime of life and vigor, and frequently without being aware of their danger till the grasp of death was upon them. It is stated that of fifty assistants in the service of the Company, fourteen or fifteen had died, as many more had been obliged to surrender their posts from sickness, about the same number had left from other causes, and only five of the fifty were then in the service and able to attend to their duties. Of course, this was not a fair criterion by which to judge of the unhealthiness of Assam. But, certainly it was true as far as the evidence concerned. The reason was that the tea assistants were, usually located in low situations, surrounded by dense jungles, where, during and at the close of the rains, a most deadly miasma was continuously arising from the decaying vegetation. But the

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<sup>70</sup>. Journal Brown, June 11, 1838.

<sup>71</sup>. Walter, Sinclair Stewart, *Early Baptist Missionaries and Pioneers, Baptist Missionaries and Pioneers* Volume II, Op.cit., p. 63.

<sup>72</sup>. Ibid. p. 65.

<sup>73</sup>. Journal of Brown, Sibsagar, December 25, 1841.

condition in the open and the cultivated land, although low, was comparatively healthy.<sup>74</sup> Whatsoever may be the case, the situation and environment was the same and directly or indirectly connected to the whole areas it might have affected the mission force. Therefore, many of the European officers were financially supporting the mission work in individual capacities and obviously the demise of officers might have drained financial strength as well as brought mental anguish to the missionary.

#### **5.4.11. Outbreak of Cholera Caused Many Deaths**

An epidemic known as cholera enveloped all the mission stations. Cholera broke out in the summer among the natives and had taken a tremendous toll at Jaipur.<sup>75</sup> In 1851, Danforth's letter, therefore, indicated that shortly after Bronson and Whiting and Mrs. Cutter departure, the cholera broke out in Assam and about one-tenth of the population had been swept off the land. It was estimated that 1000 people, within a few weeks, had died in Gauhati. The Gauhati Mission Field had suffered much from widespread epidemic diseases during this time. Dysentery and cholera had carried away many of the native Christians. Around the villages, it was difficult to give an accurate account of the toll number of death. The scenes were most fearful. The river had been filled with dead bodies, which now and then lodged upon the sands, inviting crows, vultures and jackals, and caused such effluvia that almost prevented the passage of boatmen. One event was added to give an idea of the work of death. Out of a company of 300 pilgrims only three survived to tell the tale. The missionaries had to spend time caring for the people and for an example reported to have had eighteen cases of that sickness on the mission premises but with timely care could only save four of them.<sup>76</sup>

Thereafter, the state had been weighed down heavily from this epidemic. Besides, this was a time of extraordinary sickness and high mortality. The cholera raged in every part of the state, to such a degree as literally to decimate the population of Sibsagar district. The mortality of Nowgong

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<sup>74</sup>. Journal of Brown, October 25, 1843: *BMM*, 1844, pp. 294-5.

<sup>75</sup>. Walter, Sinclair Stewart, *Early Baptist Missionaries and Pioneers, Baptist Missionaries and Pioneers* Volume II, Op. cit., p. 64.

<sup>76</sup>. Letter of Danforth, June 20, 1851.

district was over 9000 and of Guwahati much greater. In fact, in every side was found a land of death.<sup>77</sup>

This dreadful epidemic had taken lives of missionaries too. Mr. Scott died of cholera in Nowgong on the 18<sup>th</sup> May, 1868.<sup>78</sup> This affliction was soon followed by another, for Miss Marie Bronson daughter of Dr. Bronson, who had accompanied her father to help, died of cholera on the steamer near Goalpara, on her way back to Nowgong and was buried at Goalpara.<sup>79</sup> In addition, the North Lakhimpur Mission Field report in 1917 stated that the promising result had followed a sad moment due to the large number of death from cholera. One Evangelist employed in the North Lakhimpur Association had been recorded to have baptized 25 people as a result of his labors, and at the same time buried his wife, daughter, brother and mother who died from dreadful cholera.<sup>80</sup> The great reduction of members of the Churches had appeared and this led to a drastic declination of the missionary labors in the fields.

#### **5.4.12. Missionaries and Native People Affected by *Kalazar* (Black Fever)**

The *Kalazar* was another life-taking epidemic disease prevalent in the region. It was a kind of fever suffering among the natives that the Doctors did not even know how to treat. Indeed, it was known as “*Kalazar*” (the black disease or fever). The symptoms of the disease were found to be such as; the patients get fever off and on, from three months to a year or more. He or she gradually becomes weaker and weaker. Spleen and liver do not function properly. Patient looks rather bloodless and sometimes skin gets black. Towards the last Dropsy and Diarrhea infected them and sometimes they contracted dreadful sores. No medicine had been found to cure this black fever. Quinine did not have any effect on it. Initially, this disease started in Goalpara district and after causing many deaths, it had spread to Guwahati and Nowgong districts.<sup>81</sup> A serious epidemic of *Kalazar* during the last two decades of the nineteenth century had depleted the population significantly. *The Provincial Gazetteer on Eastern Bengal and Assam* (1950) has also described the major causes and exclusive mortality of the epidemic in the Goalpara,

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<sup>77</sup>. Annual Report, *BMM* July 1854, pp. 305-7.

<sup>78</sup>. P.H. Moore, History of the Nowgong Field,” The Assam Mission of the American Baptist Missionary Union. Papers and Discussions of the Jubilee Conference, Nowgong, December 18-29, 1886, Guwahati: Spectrum Publications, 1992, p. 35.

<sup>79</sup>. Ibid. p. 36.

<sup>80</sup>. John, Firth, Report from North Lakhimpur, 15<sup>th</sup> Session, Sibsagar, January 15-22, 1917.

<sup>81</sup>. Moore, Mrs. P.H. *Twenty years in Assam or Leaves from my Journal*, p. 114.

Kamrup, Mangaldoi, Darrang, Nowgong and North Sylhet.<sup>82</sup> The premature death of missionaries and local Christians was commonplace. The death and repatriation of missionaries due to the unhealthy climate of Bengal, which was referred to as a “**tomb of the Europeans**” was such a serious problem in the late nineteenth century.<sup>83</sup>

No doubt, this epidemic might have become a great blow and an alarming problem in the mission fields. The whole scenario of the surrounding might have lead to an environment of fatal doom, hampered normal activities of the mission accomplishments and perhaps interrupted and diminished the progress of the mission stations and churches.

#### **5.4.13. Ruins by Natural Calamity**

No doubt, Christianity had made considerable enhancement and the churches were planted in every mission station which influenced the neighboring villages too. When things just seemed most hopeful, however, threatening billows arose on the missionary horizon; and the little infant mission was plunged into trials that almost annihilated all former gains. A combination of circumstances like climate, flood and earthquake surrounded them and these factors severely depleted the missionary force and shook the whole missionary program from its very genesis.

##### **5.4.13.1. Immoderate Climate**

An abnormality of the immoderate climate gloomed the cheerful vision of the missionaries and caused overwhelmingly the mission work due to serious sickness of the missionaries. Meanwhile, Mr. Barker, after a short period of service, had been obliged to return to America because of sickness. While he was on his way home he died at sea in 1850. Mr. Dauble, who had come from the German Lutheran Mission and promised to help in the work at Nowgong and the work among the Mikirs, however, died at Nowgong from cholera.<sup>84</sup>

An unpleasing moment that befell the mission was the leave of the missionary i.e., subsequently resignation of its founder, Nathan Brown from the mission. For, twenty-two years he had served in the orient without vacation. His robust constitution began to crumble and it became evident

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<sup>82</sup>. A.J. Moffatt Mills, *Report on Assam*, 1854, reprint, Delhi, 1980, p. 46.

<sup>83</sup>. George, Kottuppallil, *History of the Catholic Missions in Central Bengal 1855-1886*, Shillong, 1988, p. 2.

<sup>84</sup>. *Ibid.* p. 83.

that the only relief was a journey home. It was not only hard work and exposure alone, nor wholly malarial climate that had sapped his iron strength. Mental anguish had done its part too. Repeated discouragement and his hope often deferred had not been without their physical effects; and now the time had come when he could do no more. It was unfortunate that his departure should come at a time when the mission needed him more than ever. In 1855, his leaving from Sibsagar station was a shock, not only to the undermanned missionary staff but also to the native Christians who looked upon him as a spiritual father.<sup>85</sup>

Shortly, Dr. and Mrs. Bronson with impaired health were also obliged to take leave from Nowgong field for America in 1848.<sup>86</sup> They returned to Nowgong on March 1851.<sup>87</sup> On September, 1855, Mrs. Dauble was compelled to leave for America due to ill-health after working about one and half years and the Stoddards followed her in December of the same year and thus leaving Dr. and Mrs. Bronsons alone again on the field. In September 1857, ill-health compelled the Bronsons also to take their second furlough to America, and the mission field left without a missionary for twenty months. The work was left in charge of Charles Sonaram Thomas, their native helper. The church declined greatly during this period. By deaths, exclusions and scattering of members it was reduced to five resident members-one less than when it was organized.<sup>88</sup> In May 1859 Rev. and Mrs. C.F. Tolman had taken charge of the station. Soon, Mr. Tolman imbibed of malaria, which broke down his health and drove him back to America in June 1861, having served in the field only two years. Mr. and Mrs. Scott entered heartily into the labor for the Mikir in 1863. But the malaria, the dreadful enemy of all Europeans in Assam, drove them back to America in just about two years, after their reaching to this land.<sup>89</sup>

Moreover, there was inconsistency among the missionary staff due to illness and poor management of the Home Board. In case of sickness and retirement if the missionary was on furlough or resignation, they often failed to reinforce immediately. In one of the instances, the

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<sup>85</sup>. Ibid. p. 87.

<sup>86</sup>. P.H. Moore, History of the Nowgong Field," The Assam Mission of the American Baptist Missionary Union, Papers and Discussions of the Jubilee Conference, Nowgong, December 18-29, 1886, Guwahati: Spectrum Publications, 1992, p. 31.

<sup>87</sup>. Ibid. p. 32.

<sup>88</sup>. Ibid. p. 33.

<sup>89</sup>. Ibid. p. 34.

Gauhati field, had no missionary for seven or eight years before the work was taken up again by Messrs, Stoddard and Comfort after Mr. Danforth departure.<sup>90</sup> Sometime it was assigned to a single missionary to care for two stations and thus became an over burden and the missionary was unable to carry the load and entire responsibilities effectively. During the 1908 report it was commented that cholera, small-pox and fever spread among the people to such an extent that work was brought almost to a standstill in the North Lakhimpur station.<sup>91</sup>

Besides, there was also heavy declining in the church membership because of unhealthy weather in the fields. The climate was not so favorable to the people as in the Sibsagar district, they had in the previous year more than 1,000 members, and only 18 deaths, which was a very low death rate for Assam, but in the Dibrugarh, they had among 150 members, 12 deaths, which would mean a death rate of 80 per thousand, whereas in Sibsagar, it was less than 18 per thousand. All these combined, caused the membership to shrink slowly and posed as a great hurdle for the successful growth of the missionary labor.<sup>92</sup>

#### **5.4.13.2. Earthquake**

The devastating calamity known as earthquake also visited the field. The natural catastrophe also partly ruined the missionary labor. Here some of the major damages that have occurred by earthquake are mentioned in several reports. During the earthquake in 1897, Gauhati Field had suffered most. Three bungalows and a brick chapel were utterly destroyed, and the shock to the work has been seriously felt. There were considerable damage and much interruption to the work occurred also at Goalpara, Nowgong, Tura and elsewhere. The death of two of the missionary member has been brought as a great loss to the mission work as well as to those of them who remained.<sup>93</sup> The Goalpara station in 1897, which was a newly constructed missionary bungalow was also damaged by great earthquake but it did not quite fall to ruin. The missionary out-houses were all destroyed and instead of going for preaching they kept themselves busy in repairing and

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<sup>90</sup>. C.E. Burdette, History of the Gauhati Field, The Assam Mission of the American Baptist Missionary Union. Papers and Discussions of the Jubilee Conference, Nowgong, December 18-29, 1886, p. 43.

<sup>91</sup>. John, Firth, Report from North Lakhimpur, Gauhati, January 8-10, 1910.

<sup>92</sup>. C.E. Petrick, Report from Sibsagar and Dibrugarh, 10<sup>th</sup> Session, Gauhati, January 8-17, 1910.

<sup>93</sup>. P.H. Moore, ed. Twenty Years in Assam or Leaves from My Journal, Gauhati: Western Book Depot, 1901, p. 200.

rebuilding work.<sup>94</sup> Besides, the Dibrugarh church had also been swallowed by the Brahmaputra River after the 1950s earthquake<sup>95</sup> and its site and monument lost utterly.

#### **5.4.13.3. Flood**

The unexpected tragedy called flood did not leave the missionary work too. It was reported in 1917, one teacher of the village school saw that the people built for him a good school house in which gathered 28 boys for daily lessons, when suddenly the whole village was overthrown by a flood and it desolated completely.<sup>96</sup> The maximum damage was caused by the natural calamity including health and it was almost difficult for missionaries to recover the affects and bring it back to normal operation.

#### **5.5. Economic Problem**

The economy is one of the most important sources for operating any kind of human agenda. Without strong financial endowment, any infant mission fields can sink in any moment and any time. It was partially true in the case of mission projects in Assam.

##### **5.5.1. Financial Crisis**

Another area that dwindled the mission was financial crisis. The missionaries too received sudden circulation in November 11, 1857, on reduction of mission expenditures.<sup>97</sup> It is evident that because of financial retrenchment missionaries had no Day School or native preachers. Therefore, the required budget could not be materialized which indicated further necessary budget for repairs that would perhaps need 200.00 rupees and miscellaneous Rs.200.00 more. Girls' Boarding Mission School remained on missionary hands, the legacy of their predecessors; which would have required 350.00 rupees and thus needs could not meet. Besides, what remained only was the printing press<sup>98</sup> for the mission service.

In fact, it was a crucial time, just at the moment to reach an advancement owing to a falling off funds, the Board were about to limit the number of missions stations, and that Assam, being

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<sup>94</sup>. A.E. Stephen, Report from Goalpara Field, 5<sup>th</sup> Triennial Conference, Dibrugarh, February 11-19, 1899.

<sup>95</sup>. Padre, Wyld, 1865, 1915, 1965 in Assam, Diaries Assembled, Shillong: Don Bosco Press, 1964, p. 16.

<sup>96</sup>. John, Firth, Report from North Lakhimpur, 15<sup>th</sup> Session, Sibsagar, January 15-22, 1917.

<sup>97</sup>. Danforth to Peck, Gowahati, February 9, 1858.

<sup>98</sup>. Whiting to Peck, Sibsagar, February 20, 1858

remote and infant, would perhaps be one of the first to be relinquished. The Home mail, instead of words of cheer conveyed discouragement. One Religious Paper had mentioned of the probable “suppression of schools, dismissal of native assistants, discontinuation of the press, translation and tract operations, the missionaries returning home, and the work being at an end.” So great was the crisis that Mr. Brown made a special personal plea to the churches at Home, of which the Board passed an order 10,000 copies of circulation. A pious spirit and unshakable determination of Brown substantiates from his concluding sentences which he wrote:

Should we be reduced to the extremity be recalled, or left without any regular support in a heathen land, trust our lord will not find us wanting in the day of trial. The call to RETURN is one which we could never obey, so long as life and a moderate share of health is granted to us. No, the precious converts that are gathered on, and to be gathered from amongst the people are dearer to me than life and with them by God’s Grace will I remain to last.<sup>99</sup>

Visibly, financial crisis made vulnerable the growth of the mission. But financial obstacles could not stop the missionary from serving God. The pioneer missionary known as Mr. Brown had proved to be courageous and an optimistic visionary and stood as a strong mission builder in the midst of financial mitigation. He trusted the mighty provision of God and labored to the last breath of his life along with other missionary colleagues. Further, unfortunate experience in connection to the closing of the orphanage at Nowgong had been emphasized considerably by other co-workers too for its financial crisis. The Deputation sent out by the Board in America to consult with the missionaries urged the closing, or rather a change of program for the orphanage. But for the missionary it was like throwing away the labors of many years and shutting a door of usefulness. The missionary pointed out that the closing of the institution would mean a humiliation which would be difficult to succumb. Unexpected abandonment or subversion would come to the natives like religious bankruptcy.

The missionaries, therefore, had debated that the schools be enabled to let the natives to read the printed word and religious tracts. They tried to impart correct moral and religious ideals; and to facilitate the right apprehension of religious terms used by the preachers. This was obviously

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<sup>99</sup>. Eliza, Whitney Brown, *The Whole World Kin: A Pioneer Experience among Remote Tribes, and other Labors of Nathan Brown*, Op.cit., pp. 269-271.

important as Hindu terminology frequently misrepresented great Christian Doctrines, and required special explanations. But the mode of changing education system and closed down was further exposed false usages wrought in idolatry. The basic reason was that the schools provided an opportunity for the first inculcation of the Gospel or in other words, for preaching to the pupils and associated with them the knowledge of enlightenment. Thus, the missionaries had strategies planned and maintained that they needed at least one High School for the whole mission. Firstly a Primary or Village School would be founded in every place where the missionary was able to organize a permanent preaching post. Secondly Scriptures and Religious Books would be the principal studies. Thirdly the schools would be in charge of Christian teachers.<sup>100</sup>

The attitude of the deputation from Home was not favored and tended to discourage the entire educational efforts and thereafter emphasized direct preaching. Besides, Dr. Solomon Peck, the Chief Member of the Deputation, perceived that Secular Education should be cared for by the Government and the Educational Policy of the Mission he said, with respect to Assam, the demand for common schools would be met and the language in these Government schools would be the vernacular. With no other option, that the missionaries had, after a long conference, they reluctantly acquiesced to the re-organization of the policy.<sup>101</sup> Thus, these modifications were suggested with the purpose of making the school more strictly missionary and more consonant with the design of the Missionary Union. The chief object was argued and asked not to take care of orphans or otherwise destitute children anymore; but to promote missionary laborers. In fact, financial ground undoubtedly interrupted the original policy of missionary work because when it was viewed from a comparative perspective, these schools had a heavy financial drainage and their continuation of the educational project at that time seemed impossible to function.

The outcome of this policy was that the infant institution withered within a few years. The fruits were not yet ripened but soon the radical change took place in the mission fields. **The Policy of the Home Board suggestion was considered more seriously than the policy of missionary work.** In this regard, the missionaries were the ones who knew the real need and

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<sup>100</sup>. Victor, Hugo Sword, *Baptists in Assam A Century of Missionary Service 1836-1936*, Op.cit., p. 84.

<sup>101</sup>. Ibid. p. 85.

**requirement of the people but their appeal was being denied.** Still, it is comparatively right in one side to appreciate the deputation's view. Ever since, they had feared that the school would produce lazy protégés and a community of Christians who would be entirely dependent on the mission. On the other hand, the missionaries continued to debate that the **surest and safest** way to win Assam for Christ was by winning the young in imparting knowledge through teaching in the schools. The Assam missionaries were a unit in their conviction that the late Orphanage was a wise and Scriptural Agency for propagating Christianity among the heathen people, as well as an indispensable means of training converts to be missionaries and leaders to their own countrymen. They felt that preaching among heathen was emphatically and pre-eminently teaching "**to make wise unto salvation.**" In this respects it is difficult to judge either right or wrong of the modified policy, but the equilibrium of the mission was shaken considerably.

The consequent result brought a mental reaction upon the missionaries which had been greater than they themselves or which the deputation realized at that time. The aim seemed to be fair but within reached was snatched away and the missionaries were discouraged with overburden of the multitude of duties and broken health. Mr. Bronson spoke of considerable embarrassment in relation with his resuming the charge of the Nowgong institution upon his return from America.<sup>102</sup>

### **5.5.2. Non-Availability of Tools and Provisions**

Another factor of difficulty faced by missionaries was non-availability of tools and provisions. Many of the mission fields were located in the **out skirts** of the town or remote areas. As soon as missionaries reached the station and started their mission endeavor, many of the people were anxious to send their children to school for reading. So, they began to build the school houses. But they had struggle in finding any workmen for hire to get the work done. They could not even purchase a stick of timber, or a bundle of rattans, and scarcely found a tool of any description. Seldom could they find a workmen who used an axe or knife, and consequently they were obliged to beat out the iron into a *dao*' or large knife and use that for chopping woods. There was no carpenter, nor could they buy a box, a board, a nail, or anything of that kind. Besides, they had the same difficulty in obtaining provisions too. They had to send for two or three days

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<sup>102</sup>. Ibid. pp. 86-87.

journey to buy a few fowls. Sometime, there was famine of rice and they had to keep it in stock, otherwise they would have been entirely destitute. The things with other large items had to be supplied from Calcutta.<sup>103</sup> Hence, it took a great deal of time to attend all these materials, such that they had but little leisure to devote in studying the language and other projects. Perhaps, it might have created inconvenience for steady and smooth functioning of the labors.

### 5.5.3. Financial Dependence of the Members

Helping is inevitable and the people must be helped to some extent. But depending on too much made a less innovative and lazy individual. Rightly Rev. A.K. Gurney said, “The Assamese are dependant and weak and I fear, will remain dependant and weak for years to come.”<sup>104</sup> Exactly, one day a native Christian passed a remark to Gurney that the mission did not help the Christians now as it used to do, because it had no money.<sup>105</sup> Hence, it indicates excessive help of native Christians by missions and perhaps it made in them the habit of being dependant. The fact was that the Assamese and Kolh Christians were poor. The Kolhs were exceedingly poor. They could contribute only a very small part of the pay for a pastor. Moreover, the churches were too poor to support their own pastors.<sup>106</sup> Perhaps, one of the reasons could be a conversion from low economic background. Most of the time, the missionaries could not excess and convince the well to do families or high class people by the Gospel.

### 5.5.4. Erroneous Concept of Christianity by Native People

Of course, it was seldom mentioned in the missionary report about the motives of the people who were coming to accept Christianity by means of expecting some material gain. In the North Lakhimpur Field it says that the missionary was discouraged to see a large number of people coming with **Christian names and heathen hearts**. The missionary illustrated them as “**drunken beggars** with a false notion of what Christianity was. A Mission to them was **golden Cow** which must be milked lest she die.”<sup>107</sup> Likewise, in the labor of missionaries at Pathalipam Field consequently, there were many signs of genuine interests in Christianity in the neighboring

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<sup>103</sup>. Journal of Brown, May 2, 1836.

<sup>104</sup>. A.K. Gurney, Self-support, The Assam Mission of the American Baptist Missionary Union. Papers and Discussions of the Jubilee Conference, Nowgong, December 18-29, 1886, Op. cit., pp. 120-121.

<sup>105</sup>. Ibid. p.124.

<sup>106</sup>. Ibid. p. 125.

<sup>107</sup>. Joseph, Paul, Report from North Lakhimpur, Gauhati, December 24, 1904- January 1, 1905.

villages and judging from the kind of enquiries made, it was expected that many would embrace Christianity, but when it came to the complete surrendering of their old religion, all faded away. In another occasion, the native confessed much more which had projected a real interest in Christianity at Pthalipam. Indeed, it is surprising to note that some of these people travelled by boat and in foot, over a hundred miles to ask a Tea planter, whether the missionary was preaching the Truth, and whether they were to expect money, cattle and other assistance if they became Christians. Hence, John, the local preacher, who had been discouraged because of deceit and cunning natures of the Miris, returned to his native town.<sup>108</sup> A crafty character of the Assamese could never fully win and made dim the growth of missions and thus it remained lukewarm churches till today.

## **5.6. Leadership Problem**

In addition to those problems, there were also some other problems that stood as barriers which caused great difficulties and troubles in the activities of the mission stations and churches in Assam. The following numerous factors seemed to be major hurdles as far as documents concerned such as:

### **5.6.1. Reduction of the Missionary Impetus**

After visiting Assam, the Foreign Secretary stated in respect to the Assam Mission Stations and quoted his remark from Baptist Missionary Magazine as:

The Committee was aware of the late reduction of the missionary force in Assam by death and other calamity. These heavy losses were needed to be promptly supplied. The mission, as now constituted, was not adequately manned; not even on the presumption, could it be entertained, that the missionaries would all continue at their stations, and all be strong to labor at all times.<sup>109</sup>

The field was too broad, and the interests and instrumentalities too numerous and varied and complex, for the force employed. In addition to the physical peculiarities of Assam, stretching up a valley some five hundred miles, with imperfect facilities for inter-communication had been a cause of great difficulties. But provision should be made for probable contingencies. The

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<sup>108</sup>. Joseph, Paul, Report from Pthalipam, 5<sup>th</sup> Triennial Conference, Dibrugarh, February 11-19, 1899.

<sup>109</sup>. Baptist Missionary Magazine, XXXV, March, 1855, pp. 65-70

breaking up or virtual abandonment of a mission station, or of a department of labor, should not be staked on the health of a single individual. This suggestion was painfully enforced by the present state of the mission. Moreover, during his visit to the mission field he found as a whole, it was not in working condition due to the impaired health of Mr. Bronson, Mr. Danforth and Mrs. Dauble who were all suffering from illness.<sup>110</sup>

The newly attained mission in this state with the reaping hour of hopes and plans of former years was too sorrowful for missionaries to narrate upon. Two of the three stations were reduced to a single man each. Important interests were staked upon the feeble health of one single man; interesting and promising tribes at hand, scarcely visited. Within four years, one half of the missionary number were removed, and more than half their strength too. The condition of the mission was described by Bronson as:

Mission bungalows stood empty, school house were closed up, pupils were scattered ... the Executive Committee tells us nothing of their policy towards us ... the mission, dependent wholly upon the policy of the Rooms, unable to settle their own policies and thus unsettled state is most unfaourable to successful effort.

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The Boys' Mission School at Sibsagar was closed early and the Jorhat School was intended to be dismissed at the close of the rains. Two of the Day Mission Schools that were run in connection with the Nowgong Mission Station, and one at Gowahati; the condition of these mission schools yielded no report. The three girls' boarding mission schools were in operation as per the latest accounts, but the missions were contemplating measures for their speedy reduction.<sup>112</sup> Possibly, the reduction of the missionary force certainly impeded the progress of the mission fields.

### **5.6.2. Inadequate Personnel from Home**

An inadequate personnel from home seemed to be a great obstacle in the mission work. This was another cause of discouragement to the small missionary force at work on the mission field. The vineyard had been too great for the few hands to which it had been assigned like a drop of water that falls into the great ocean. Indeed, it was almost the same case in the mission fields as needful

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<sup>110</sup>. Ibid. pp.

<sup>111</sup>. Letter from Bronson, Nowgong, November 5, 1856.

<sup>112</sup>. Forty-second Annual Report, *Baptist Missionary Magazine* 1856, July, pp. 279-80.

appeals were being made by missionaries year after year for reinforcements of missionary assistance. Since the field was greatly vast and the laborers were very few, the missionaries could not manage the peculiarities of their work because the demand and the enthusiasm which came from a large number of the people than that which had been dispatched to Assam. The demand of the hour was more laborers. The missionaries understood and suggested the opinion of those best acquainted with the field at Board. Moreover, they foresaw the urgent strategic goals that should be captured and organized. Thus, larger forces might move and venture into the interior, commanding the attention of the people and awakening them from their lethargy. In fact, the conservatism of the people was not only indifference; it was inanity too. The sleep of ages was upon them. They needed urgently to hear the trumpet blast of the advancing hosts of the Lord. If they could have employed enough missionary staff here to command the attention of the people and to arise them to a sense of their needs, their possibilities and opportunities, such a harvest would have followed as a surprise and gladden the hearts of the Christian world<sup>113</sup> in the past as well as today.

### **5.6.3. Lack of Competent Leader**

A leader is a forefront captain of the battle who has to lead, guide and direct the entire affairs. Similarly, it is true and applicable to all kinds of endeavor like army force, institution and missionary enforcement. The leader is a backbone and mark for the bright future. Unless the leader is efficient, it may lead to the collapse of the whole system. In this juncture, it is much appropriate to draw attention of the missionary labor in Assam who had served the land tirelessly. However, once they left the stations, it became a handicap and even almost stopped functioning in the fields. There were hardly very few native leaders with little knowledge of ministry who replaced the missionaries in the services.

The result was the down fall of mission and it has been observed and analyzed from the missionary reports. The work in Nowgong was about one and a half years in when in September 1855, Mrs. Dauble had been compelled to return for America on account of ill-health, and the Stoddards accompanied her in December of the same year, leaving Dr. and Mrs. Bronsons alone again on the field. In June 1855, Ghinai was licensed to preach – the third licentiate of this

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<sup>113</sup>. Ibid.*BMM*, 1891, p. 203.

church. In September 1857, ill-health pushed the Bronsons to take their second furlough to America, and the station was left without a missionary for twenty months. The work was left in charge of Charles Sonaram Thomas, the local helper. The result was that the church declined greatly during this period because of deaths, exclusions and scattering of members in the field.<sup>114</sup>

Besides, the scenario of the Nowgong church was also not in sound condition as far as the report was concerned. For instance, Rev. Tuni Goldsmith had served as pastor in the Nowgong church in 1890 and continued until his death on the 15<sup>th</sup> May, 1892. According to the missionary statement, he was a good man, conscientious and God-fearing, but not strong enough for being a leader of the people.<sup>115</sup> In 1910, P.H. Moore reported to have had the problem of consecrated trained and effective leadership in the church at Nowgong station.<sup>116</sup> Moreover, the frequent change of missionaries due to sickness and the fewness and inefficiency of the untrained native workers had been a crippling hindrance to the aggressive prosecution of the mission work.<sup>117</sup> Similarly, as far as evidence is concerned, by 1936, the number of churches in Sibsagar district dwindled to 40. There were still a good number of churches however, they were very weak and needed nurture and care. When Rev. and Mrs. R. Wickstrand departed for home in March, 1936, the field had remained without a residential missionary and Rev. R. Holm from Golaghat field had to look after it.<sup>118</sup> In 1946, Selander reported that the Sibsagar field was still without a residential missionary.<sup>119</sup>

Further, the missionary report for 1944 commented that the missionary regretted the Boro Baptists at Tukrajhar centre who lived far away from the mission centre at Goalpara and hence they had the least care and encouragement from them. They had no well-trained leaders among them and only a few literate women. As a result, some of the older men reverted to the custom of taking more than one wife and the drinking of rice beer became a disrupting force in the village churches.<sup>120</sup>

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<sup>114</sup>.Rev. P.H. Moore, 'Nowgong Field Report,' Mission Jubilee Conference, Nowgong, December 18-29, 1886.

<sup>115</sup>. P.H. Moore, 'Nowgong Field Report,' Third Triennial Conference, Tura, January 14-22, 1893.

<sup>116</sup>. P.H. Moore, 'Nowgong Field Report,' Tenth Biennial Session, Gauhati, January 8-17, 1910.

<sup>117</sup>. P.H. Moore, 'History of the Nowgong Field,' The Assam Mission of the American Baptist Missionary Union. Papers and Discussions of the Jubilee Conference, Nowgong, December 18-29, 1886, Op. cit., p. 38.

<sup>118</sup>. R.W. Holm, 'Sibsagar Field Report,' Missionary Conference, Gauhati, December 1-6, 1936.

<sup>119</sup>. J. Selander, 'Sibsagar Field Report,' Gauhati, December 6-10, 1946.

<sup>120</sup>. Miss M. Burham, Report from Goalpara-North Kamrup, Jorhat, November 8-12, 1945.

#### **5.6.4. Lack of Trained Leader**

Another dark side of the mission was not wholly due to ignorance alone but largely poor training, or rather lack of training among the native. They understood the missionary has been sent out here to do church work for them, to act as their pastor and it was strange because they thought that missionary should expect them to do it. They often thought that the services were of missionaries and it was their work to carry them on.<sup>121</sup> Furthermore, an astonishing statement made by the missionary was that there was not a man here that was fit, truly fit, to lead a church. And if there was a man fit in some way to work for a church, he wanted so high a pay that his services were unavailable. Others were those who would make good pastors but they have no desire for it and no interest in it. So, they found it even unaffordable to supply material for the pastor for the church services in the Sibsagar district. Thus, an Assamese literature would be supplied as far as possible to the Christians for their reading, for an example, religious literature.<sup>122</sup> As saying goes, a well educated and trained leader is the marked for bright future through whom could be rewarded the vision come true. But it was opposite in the case of Assam churches and mission fields and hence possibly some of the churches and mission fields **converted into a barren rock and dry bone.**

#### **5.6.5. Feeble Flock in Low Stage of Piety**

The history of the Gauhati Field stated that the low stage of piety among professing Christians was of course a serious hindrance to all human efforts to win converts, but the gospel was not bound, and the spirit of God was ready to bless faithful labor irrespective of favorable or unfavorable circumstances. But this work was possibly slow.<sup>123</sup> Many of the native converts seemed to have had little personal encounter and deeper experience with God except for few of them. There was no spiritual vibrancy among the believers with assumption and might be just casual, normal and some time even nominal. Perhaps, many of them had no spiritual thirst and hunger. That was the reason may be many of them wane as soon as missionaries departed from fields and churches and stood nearly stagnant.

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<sup>121</sup>. Ibid. p. 124.

<sup>122</sup>. Ibid. p. 127.

<sup>123</sup>. C.E. Burdette, History of the Gauhati Field, The Assam Mission of the American Baptist Missionary Union. Papers and Discussions of the Jubilee Conference, Nowgong, December 18-29, 1886, p. 53.

### 5.6.6. Backslide Members

One or two instances remarked on early converts who faded away very soon from new faith and returned to their old faith. Since, the converts were almost individual and as a family had hardly accepted Christ. Thus, most probably, loneliness, the time of hardship and strong influence of age old tradition from surrounding neighbors and family ties might have pulled them back.

### Conclusion

The above discussion unpacks the genuine tasks of the American Baptist Mission and Churches who had been offered noteworthy services to the people of Assam. The untiring and sacrificial labor of the missionaries is prominent and remarkable for the cost of the **Gospel to win Assam for Christ**. They ran the race to win the battle to the last breath of their lives. The vision and goal kept ever cherishing and sustained it alive to reach the destiny. No doubt, the missionaries had reached the goal launched many mission stations and planted churches throughout the region. The evidences are the present of mission fields and churches which are still existing in the province. Unfortunately, almost all the mission stations and churches did not prosper and flourish satisfactorily except few stations. Besides, some of them faded and abandoned much before taking its roots, blooming flowers and yielding fruits. More than a hundred years of missionary service impeded the progress and jeopardized the growth of the missions in the Assam valley. Therefore, the study of the Christian Mission and Churches is investigated and major causes unlocked as far as the evidence concerned and these causes probably become the chief obstacles for the slow growth of the missions and churches such as Hindus orthodoxy and Brahmanism, ungodly life of the European, war and sepoy mutiny, opium indulgent, financial crisis, lack of missionary impetus, lack of train and competent native leaders, dreadful epidemic, low state of piety among native converts, dependence and natural calamity. Obviously, these are the strong barriers which dwindled and hampered the smooth functioning of the missions and churches. But, there is still optimism for brighter hope to come again in the fullness of God's appointed time to fulfill the pioneers vision and it is quite convincing to quote Bronson's statement, "There, the reaper is required; in Assam, the feller of the forest and the sower; but even there, "in due time," the reaping hour will come, if we go on perseveringly in our work, without fainting." <sup>124</sup> The paths that have been blazed and the virgin soil that has been tilled will

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<sup>124</sup>. Letter from Bronson, Nowgong, November 5, 1856.

yet bring forth fruit worthy of the efforts put forth.<sup>125</sup> No doubt, pruning might turn to blossom and bringing the sheaves with endless joy in future.

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<sup>125</sup>. Victor, Hugo Sword, *Baptists in Assam A Century of Missionary Service 1836-1936*, Op.cit., p.125.

## CHAPTER 6

### AN EMPIRICAL STUDY OF THE PRESENT STATUS OF THE AMERICAN BAPTIST MISSION AND CHURCHES IN ASSAM

#### 6.1. INTRODUCTION

Assam is a cradle of Christianity and through its path Christianity sprang into different regions of North East India. The first Christian mission contacts with Assam were Roman Catholics in 1626. Then, it was Serampore, the headquarters of the William Carey's Mission through which Assam received Christian impetus too. The Serampore Mission took the first initiative by translating the Bible into Assamese in 1811. Gradually, they launched a mission station and school at Gauhati in 1829. In addition, the political administration in the province also had greater influence than any other regions in the country. Indeed, the British political history of Assam is obviously significant because of the way of the British Government that had embarked and eventually extended territories and assets to Christian mission particularly by the generous support of truly committed British Officers, by whose invitation the American Baptist Missionaries had arrived and began permanent Christian mission endeavors.

Nevertheless, the American Baptist Mission Stations in Assam were not founded for the aim of evangelizing the peoples of that area but had strategic plan to evangelize the Shan tribe of the Northern Burma and Southern China as highlighted before. Notwithstanding, the original plan of the mission went in reverse order and thereby the mission work had begun and number of permanent Mission Stations and Churches had been established throughout the Assam Valley. Moreover, the coming of Christian mission was a blue print in the history of Christianity that illuminated radiant light and set many mile stones in the society. The incredible contributions rendered by the missionaries were not merely ordinary legends, it is a monument. The Gospel had been preached and evangelized the people, the educational Institutes were established like Schools for Boy's and Girl's, Orphanage and Female Education, beginning of Industrial Training School, the literary works translated, furnishing of School materials, Redemption of Assamese Language from Bengali, the renaissance of modern Assamese, the first periodical called "*Arunudoï*" a literary mouth piece to the society that ever printed before, the first Anglo-Assamese Dictionary, and commencement of Medical enterprises to the entire Valley. The pious missionaries had dedicated their precious lives to serve and transform the lives of Assamese with

the word of God just for the sake of the Gospel. The awesome service bestowed by the missionaries is not a filmy task with an unrealistic world but in a real sense of labor it portrayed a visible outcome that needs to be credited with honor and thus remains praise worthy. The missionaries glamorized the Assamese society like mosaic and iconographic architecture by rendering valuable contribution which thereafter endowed modern Assamese society. The contributions to the society have become most precious pearl. They were the chief instruments and agents that invested huge sum of money and energy to transform the community. The missionaries had done the work not only for the gospel but were involved holistically for the entire development of the individuals and for the amelioration of the society. The courage and compassionate gesture displayed by the missionaries is beyond calculation and human comprehension.

Even after the two centuries of labor of the pioneer missionaries of Christian mission could not influence majority of the people of Assam and churches did not yield much fruit in the region. Thus, the growth of Christian population slowed down. , When we look at the present scenario of the Christian population, no doubt, the new mission fields are established and new churches were planted. The tremendous mission activities are carried out in the region and it is growing. In fact, Christianity is a third largest religion in Assam. It is also second growing religion in Assam after Islam. Yet, the population of Christians in Assam is 11,65,867, making up 3.74% state population according to census report of 2011.<sup>1</sup>In addition, the mission work is progressing much faster among the Adivasis and tribal groups than the general caste of the Assamese. But, one cannot argue that it is growing, when we compare with the overall population of Assam. Since the total population of Assam is 35.0184 million in 2018<sup>2</sup> and the Christian population is only 7% in 2017.<sup>3</sup> Through the empirical study the researcher authenticates the major causes for slow growth of the churches found in primary sources of the missionary documents along with common people's opinion towards Christian mission in order to verify the results for the slow growth of Christian mission and churches.

## **6.2. Sample Design**

To study the hypothesis and the objectives, the researcher has consulted primary sources as well as conducted empirical study and interviewed 300 people among the Christians include male and

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<sup>1</sup>. According to Census Report of 2011.

<sup>2</sup>. <http://indiapopulation2018.in/population-of-assam-2018.html>

<sup>3</sup>. <https://www.importantgk.com/india-population-religion-wise-2017>

female from six districts of the pioneer mission stations such as Sibsagar Mission Station, Nowgong Mission Station, Goalpara Mission Station, North Lakhimpur Mission Station, Golaghat Mission Station and Jorhat Mission Station in Assam with the help of the questionnaire.

In order to collect data for the study, a self constructed awareness tool was administered. The selection of sample is through Stratified Random Sampling. The researcher analyzed the different strata (Male and Female) on the basis of their gender, age, education, work and location. The data are tabulated, analyzed and interpreted in the light of objectives set for study with the help of Frequency Percentage test. It was found that the opinion, awareness, knowledge and information towards the study are significant at an average level of probability.

### **Part -1: Social Profile of Respondents**

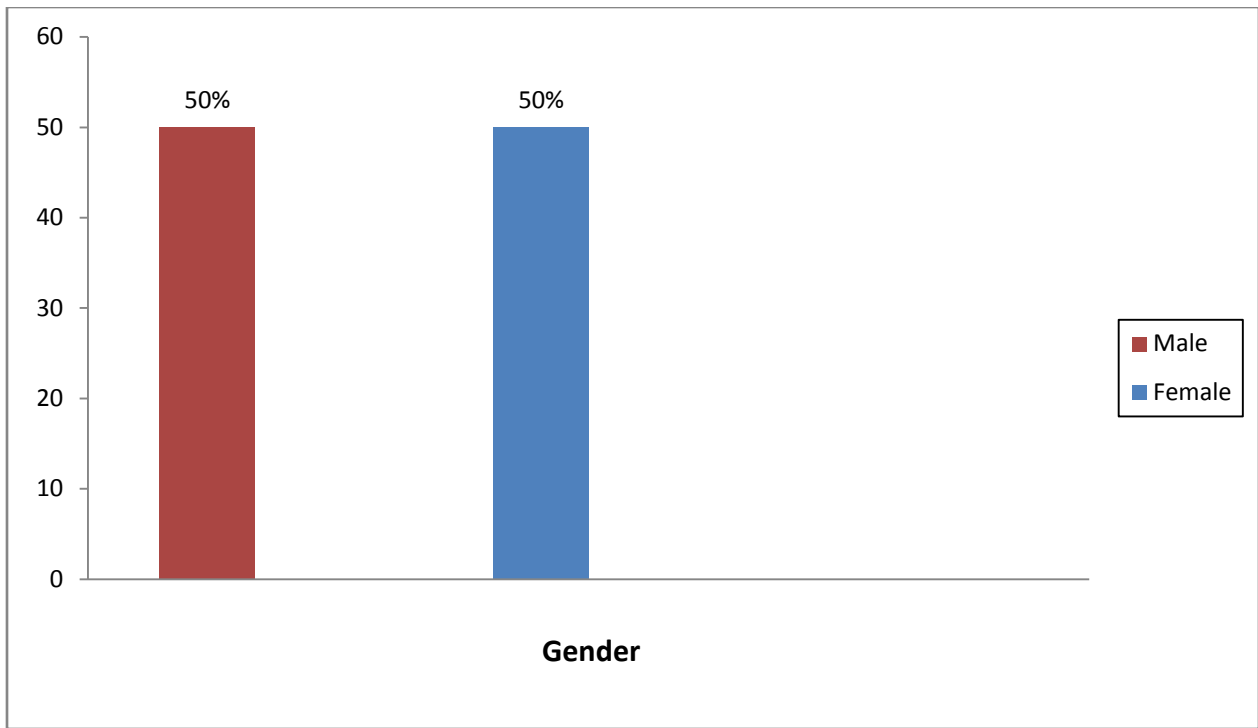
This parameter governs the gender, age, educational qualification, job and location order of the respondents.

#### **1.1. Gender Wise Distribution**

**Table 1.1: Gender of Respondents**

<b>S. No.</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>1.</b>	<b>Male</b>	150	50
<b>2.</b>	<b>Female</b>	150	50
	<b>Total</b>	300	100

As we see the evidence from above the equal percentage of respondents are males bearing 50% and female 50% of the respondents.



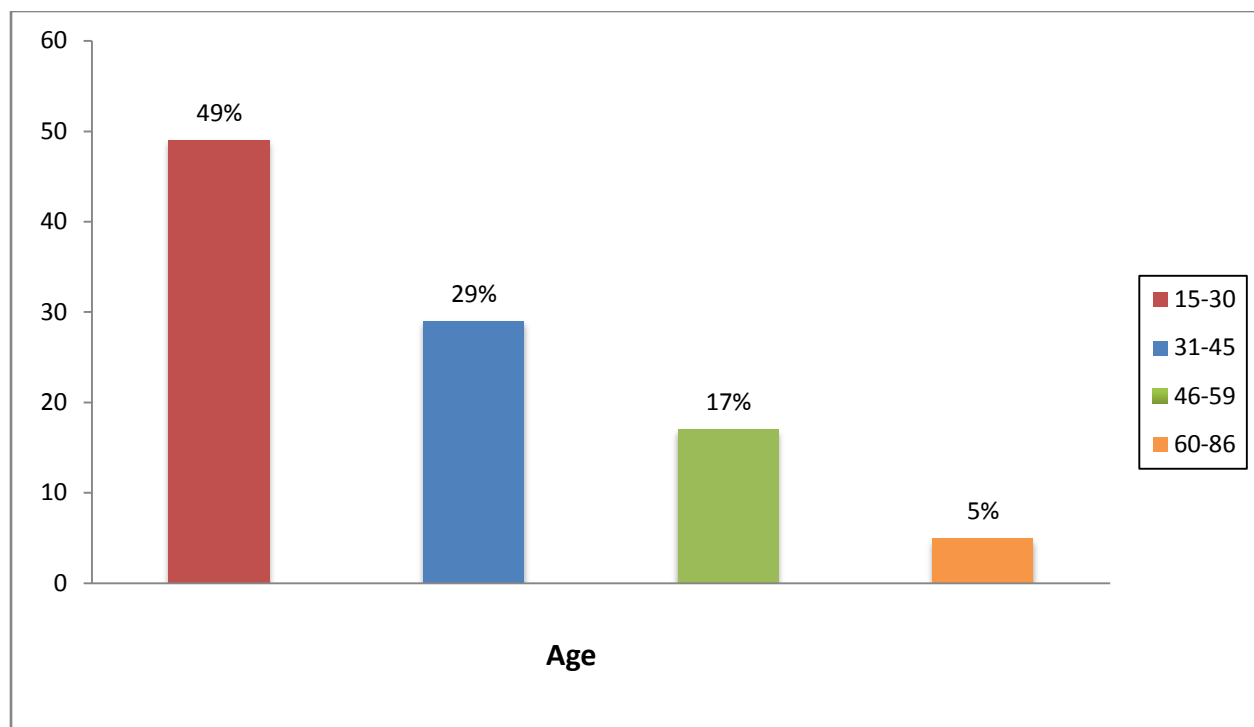
**Figure 1.1: Gender of Respondents**

## 1.2. Age Wise Distribution

**Table 1.2: Age of Respondents**

S. No.	Age	Frequency	Percentage
1.	15-30	147	49
2.	31-45	88	29
3.	46-59	50	17
4.	60-86	15	5
	<b>Total</b>	<b>300</b>	<b>100</b>

Different age group people were approached for sampling. Age is categorized into four sections. From above the maximum respondents is between 15-30 age group of 49% followed by 31-45 age group i.e. 29%, 46-59 age group i.e. 17% and the least age group is 60-86 i.e. 5%.



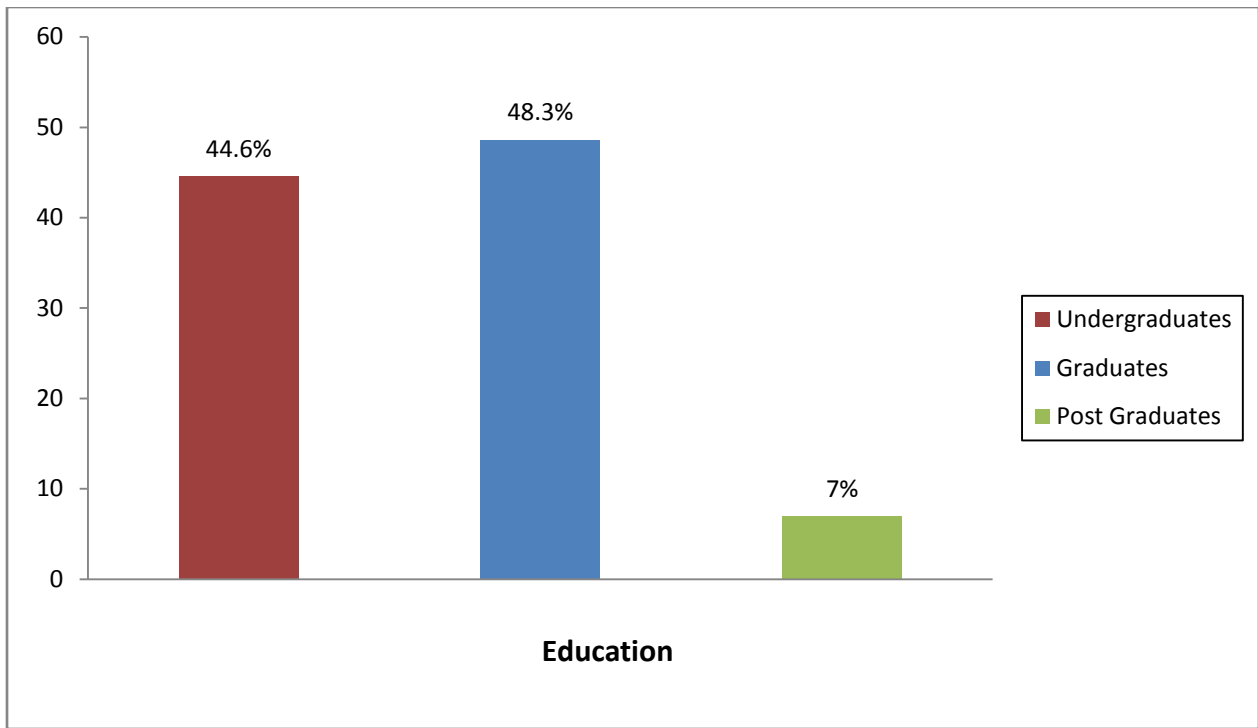
**Figure 1.1: Age of Respondents**

### 1.3. Education Wise Distribution

**Table 1.3: Education of Respondents**

S. No.	Education	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Undergraduates	134	44.6
2.	Graduates	145	48.3
3.	Post Graduates & Above	21	7
	<b>Total</b>	<b>300</b>	<b>100.00</b>

The education wise respondents are divided into three sections (a) Undergraduates - these are those who are either pursuing UG or below, 44.6% are under this category. (b) Graduates - these are degree holders and 48.3% are under this category. (c) Post Graduates and above – these are those who have finished their PG or Ph.D. and 7% are under this category.



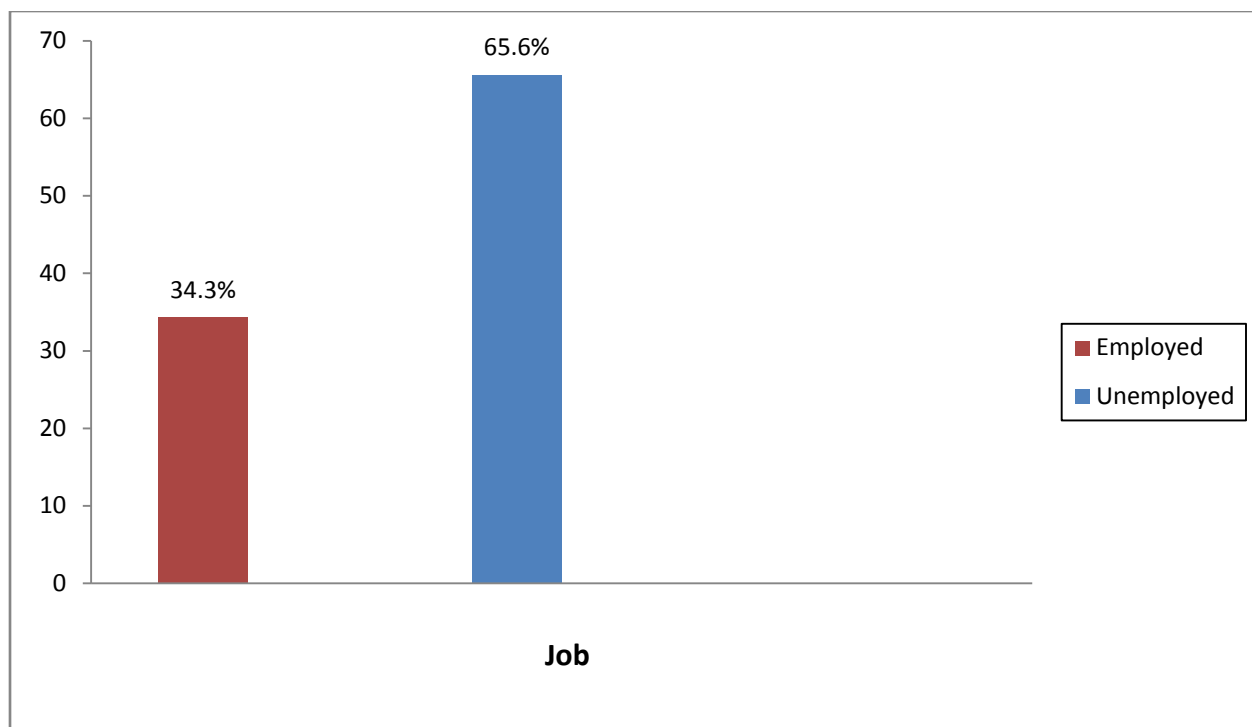
**Figure 1.2: Education of Respondents**

#### 1.4. Job in Category

**Table 1.4: Job of Respondents**

S. No.	Work	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Employed	103	34.3
2.	Unemployed	197	65.6
	<b>Total</b>	<b>300</b>	<b>100.00</b>

The job wise respondents are divided into two categories (a) Employed and (b) Unemployed. As far the evidence is concerned from above the percentage of respondent are employed bearing 34.3% and unemployed 65.6% of the respondents.



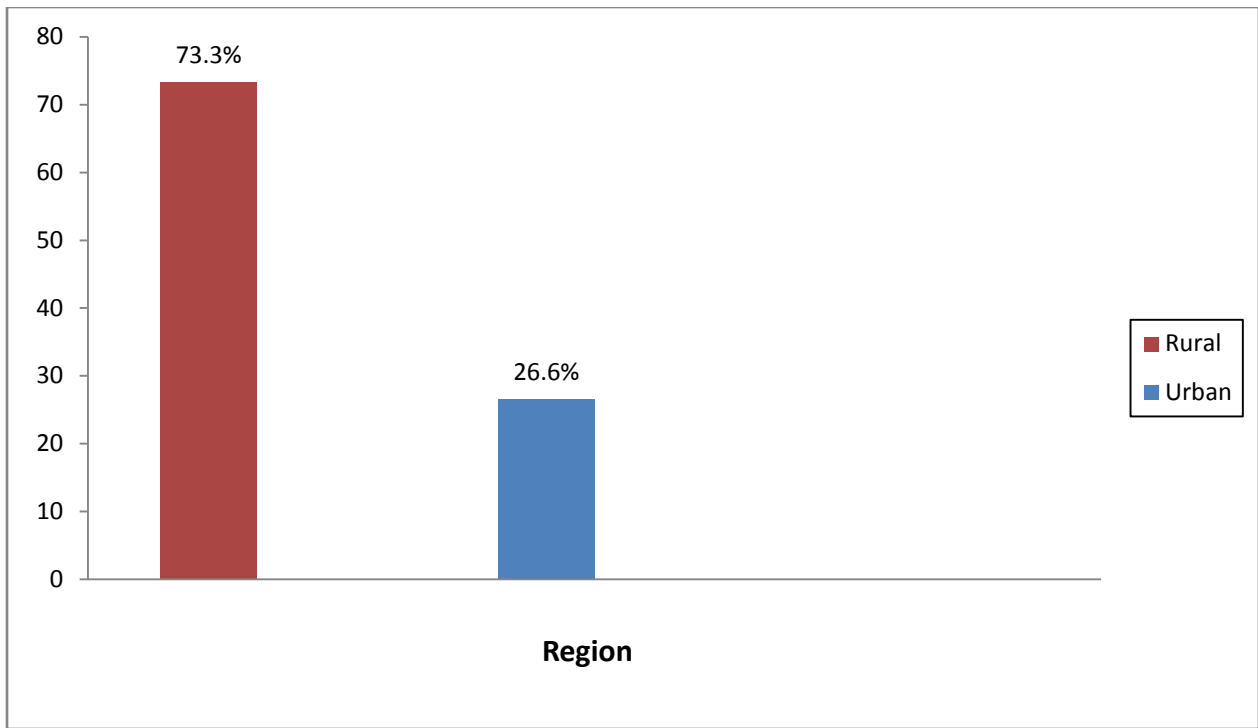
**Figure 1.4: Job of Respondents**

### 1.5. Region in Category

**Table 1.5: Region of Respondents**

S.No.	Region	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Rural	220	73.3
2.	Urban	80	26.6
	<b>Total</b>	<b>300</b>	<b>100.00</b>

On the basis of the region, the categories are divided into two sections each (a) Rural – these are those who are residing in rural region taking up 73.3% and (b) Urban – these are those who are dwelling in urban region at 26.6% respectively.



**Figure 1.5: Region of Respondents**

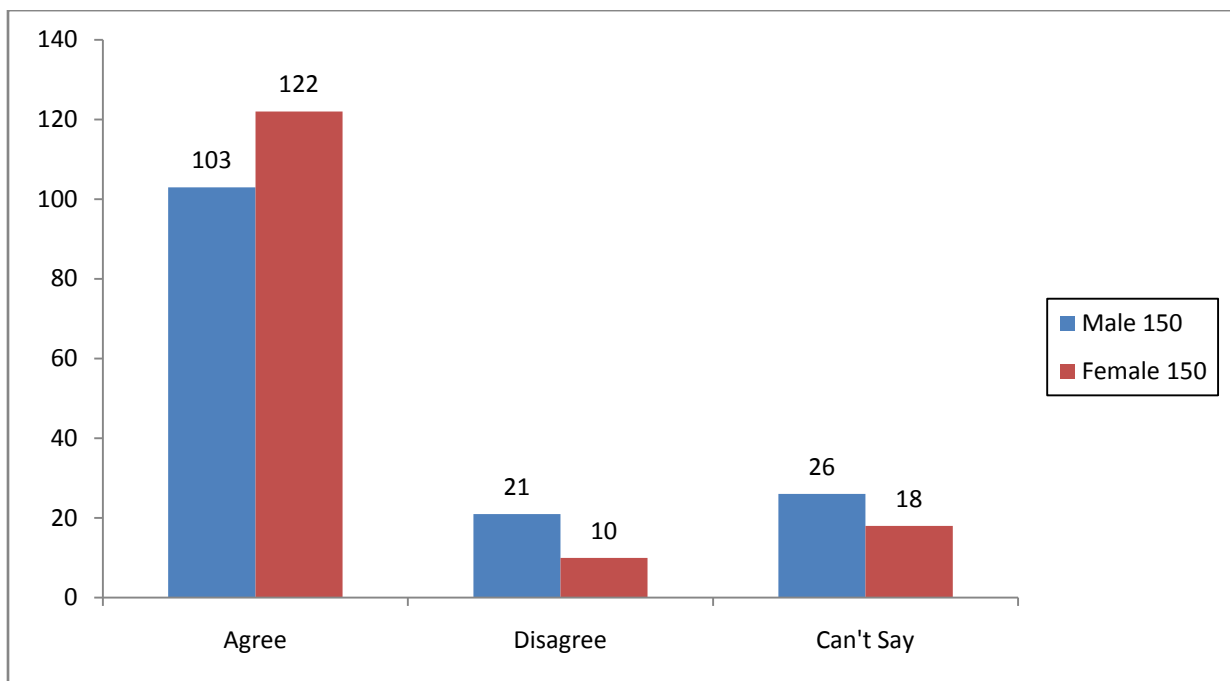
**PART -2: DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF THE AMERICAN  
BAPTIST MISSION**

**2.1. Religious Problem**

**2.1.1. Conventional Aryan Hinduism**

**Table # 2.1.1.**

S. No.	Gender	Respondent	Agree	Disagree	Can't Say
1.	Male	150	103	21	26
2.	Female	150	122	10	18



**Figure 2.1.1.**

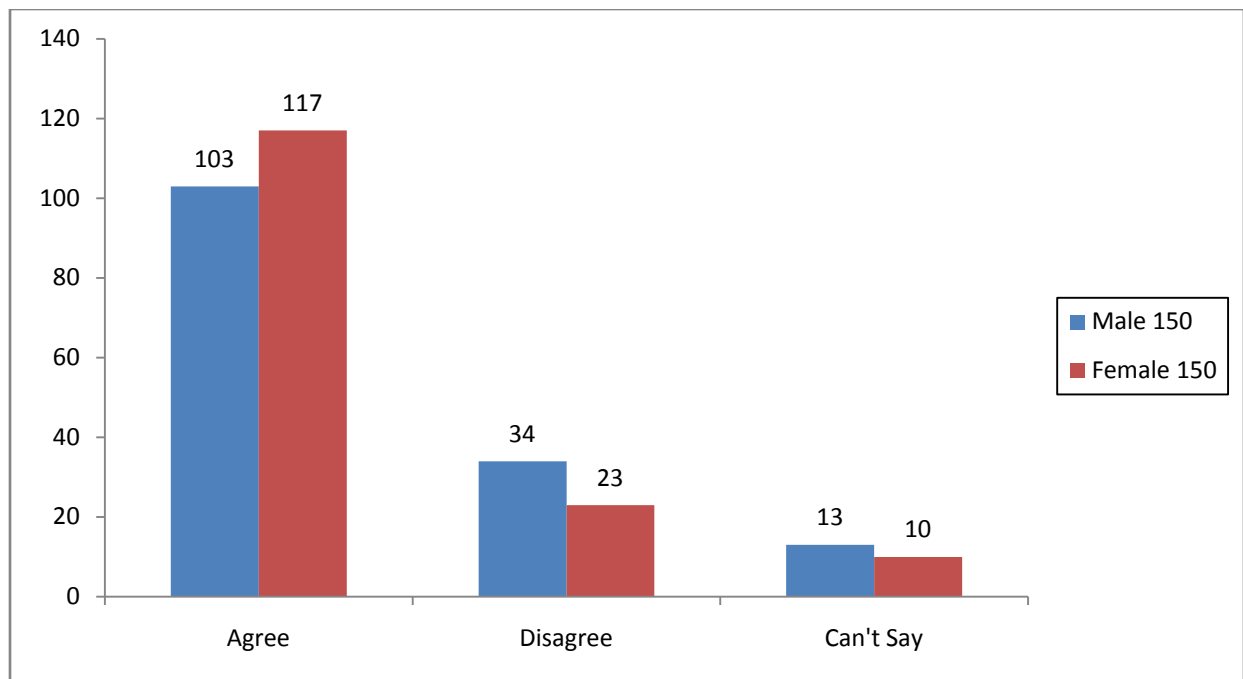
Convincingly, majority of the respondents on an average 75% are well versed with the information of assimilation of Aryan (Hinduism) in the Assamese society and only 25% are not aware. Then question arises here. When did the Aryans come to Assam? How did the Aryans (Hinduism) influence Assamese society? Assam is a home of different races and tribes. Some of the earliest tribes which arrived to ancient India are also found in Assam. According to the scholars, the earliest inhabitants are Khasis and Jaintias and followed probably by the Mongolian stock (tribal groups), the Ahoms and the last settlement was the Aryan stock. Between the pre-Aryan races and tribes and the Aryans, there were much cultural fusion and exchanges. The Hinduism of Assam, for example, is indebted to the pre-Aryan cults and faiths and the Hindu

worship of gods and goddesses were originally from Mongolian deities. The Hindus have adapted gods and temples as their own which were actually established by the Austric people in Ancient times. Eventually, the Aryan (Hinduism) won, took strong foothold and hence enveloped the entire region with Aryanism. Thus, it is observed that male group's knowledge is bearing of 68.6% and female group are 81.3% respectively. Therefore, it is very necessary for male class to gather more knowledge regarding Aryan Hinduism so that they may be able to comprehend deeper philosophy and religious tradition with dialogue to share and penetrate the gospel through preaching, meeting and writing. Indeed, it is an important task for missionaries and pastors to convey to their congregation of God's involvement in dialogue. For an example, Dialogue and Mission such as Jesus Christ and Samaritan woman, Dr. E. Stanley Jones' Round Table Conferences (an American Methodist Missionary in India) and Vatican II documents have all broken the cultural and traditional barriers and opened spiritual eyes. Because many of the mission fields and churches are still unable to conquer the influence of Hinduism and thereafter Christianity is far beyond reaching.

### **2.1.2. Superstitious Beliefs and Traditional Practices**

**Table # 2.1.2.**

<b>S. No.</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Respondent</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Can't Say</b>
<b>1.</b>	Male	150	103	34	13
<b>2.</b>	Female	150	117	23	10



**Figure 2.1.2.**

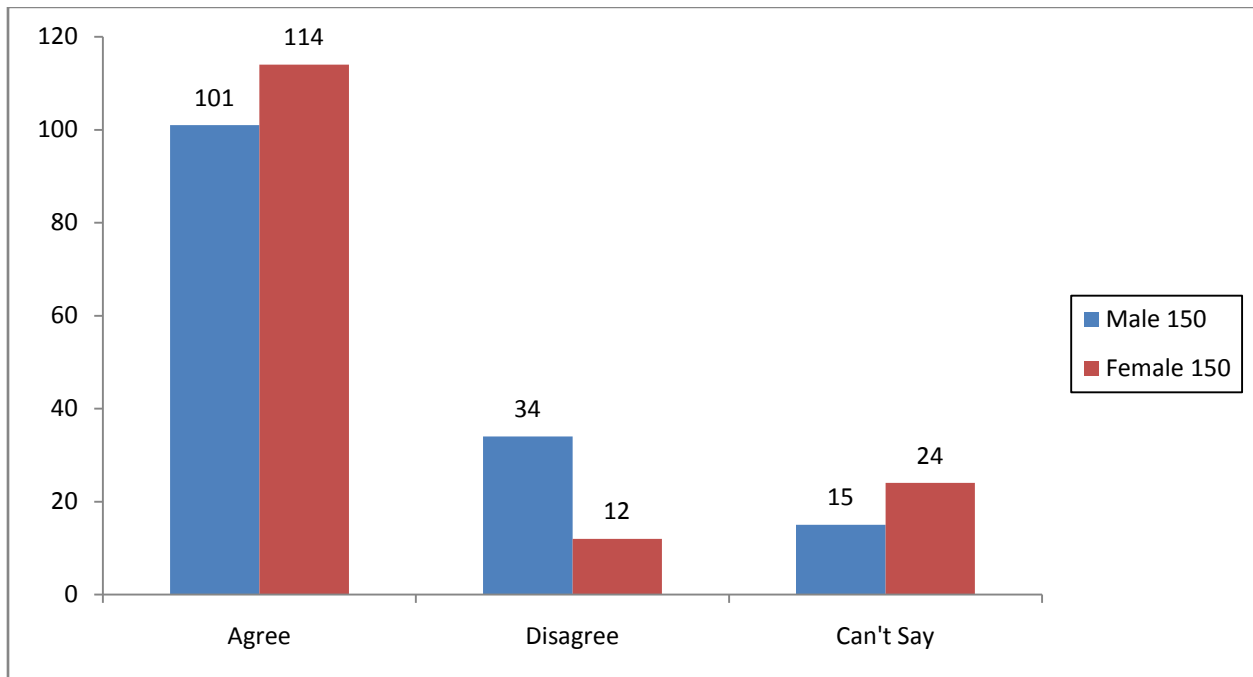
On an average 73.3% of respondents have the information of superstitious beliefs and traditional practices of rituals. It is noticed that the majority of the respondents are well versed with superstitious practices. However, there are only 26.6% having less information about the prevalence of superstitious practices. The data reveals that 68.6% male and 78% female groups respectively have knowledge about superstitious beliefs system. Therefore, this practice is an ongoing process and a prevalent issue in the society. So, the missionary and pastor should know these traditions and try to pursue them with an appropriate approach as far as the needs of the context. Indeed, the missionary and pastor have an important role to play in the society in regard to the increasing of superstitious beliefs. Thus, the source opines that the twin sisters, **ignorance and superstition** have held almost undisputed sway mutually rivaling each other in completing the degradation of the mass and hence became a great problem of the churches. Common belief of the people is to obtain healing and deliverance only through performing rites and rituals and good work can lead to salvation. In addition, the observance of religious rules and regulations had bound the people like fetters of brass. The people believe in malevolent and benevolent spirits, deities and observe propitiation to receive blessing, prosperity and health. Needless to say, the strong belief of superstitions and strict observance of rituals have blinded the eyes of the people and hence the Gospel could not penetrate into the hearts of the people and thereby eclipse the growth of the mission and churches. Yet, the church is the agent of light and the Bible is the only answer through which God can open the spiritual eyes and enable people to perceive and receive Jesus as their savior. Not by rituals or blood of animals but by Jesus Christ who became

the lamb for us died and was crucified on the Cross of Calvary for the sins of humanity (Hebrews 9: 12, 14; John 1:29).

### 2.1.3. Extreme Conservation

**Table # 2.1.3.**

S. No.	Respondent	Gender	Agree	Disagree	Can't Say
1.	150	Male	101	34	15
2.	150	Female	114	12	24



**Figure 2.1.3.**

The above statistic indicates that 71.6% average respondents agree on the extreme conservatism of the people and 28.3% are still not aware. Among the gender class, females have more knowledge on the narrow- minded conservatism of the people i.e., 76% and males claim to have less awareness i.e., 67.3%. Therefore, there is a majority of the people who have sufficient information respectively. According to the research investigation, the people were too conservative had a stony character and were exceedingly timid in innovation. In addition, many of them clung to the old primitive ways of beliefs and worship of spirits and deities. Sometime, they were listening to the gospel but at once fled from crowd as if forced them to become Christian like terrified children. Moreover, large numbers of the natives fell away from the Christian faith under the powerful spell of the age old traditions and turned back to the paths of

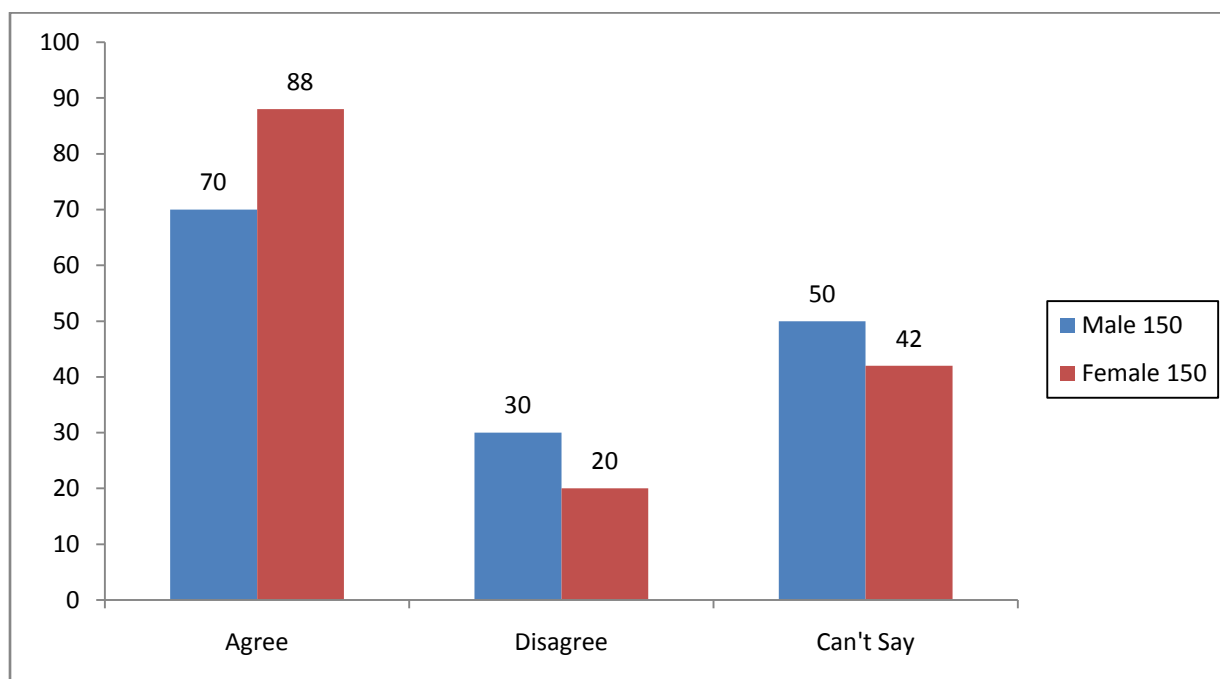
their forefather's religion. Henceforth, the missionary endeavor was and is becoming the stepping stone towards the promotion of the mission fields and churches. Notwithstanding, the mission and the churches need to educate the people to open up their eyes from traditional mindset and be wise enough to inculcate rational values through the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

## 2.2. Political Problem

### 2.2.1. Sepoy Mutiny and American Civil Wars

**Table # 2.2.1.**

S. No.	Gender	Respondent	Agree	Disagree	Can't Say
1.	Male	150	70	30	50
2.	Female	150	88	20	42



**Figure 2.2.1.**

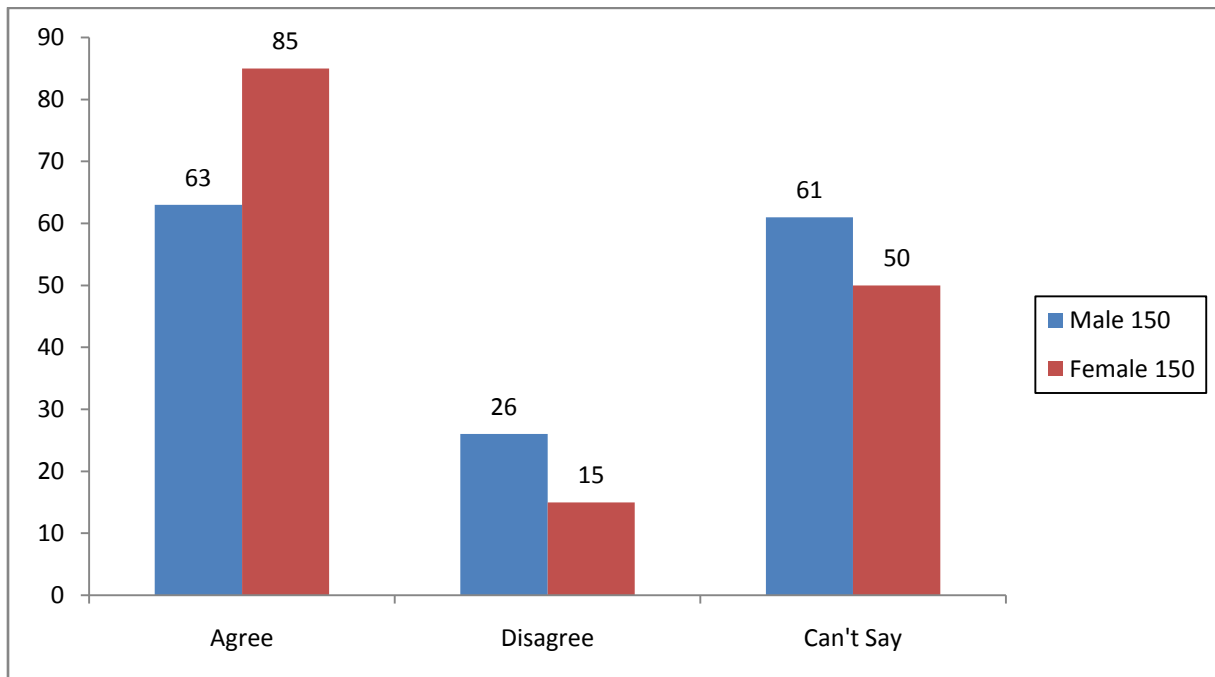
The dwindling of Christianity was accompanied with chaos and wars that tasseled the growth. The so called desolating wave of Sepoy Mutiny and American Civil War had become one of the main factors for the interruption of smooth function of the mission and churches. As far the statistic indicates on an average gender, 52.6% respondents are quite aware of the Sepoy Mutiny and American civil wars and only 47.3% do not have the information. Thus, according to the table males 46.6% and females 58.6% believe that Mutiny and American Civil War are caused due to normal activities of the mission accomplishments. As mentioned in the review of

literature for the above cause, particularly the Mutiny had more or less hindered the operations of the mission. For instance, out of three mission stations, two handed over the entire mission labors to one missionary staff while the third was vacant. During this time, the white men (British) and missionaries conspired to massacre and warned them to leave the state. So, they had to move out in search of safe places and sometimes they also worked as soldiers by guarding the mission premises. Further, the American Civil War too, affected the mission work. The fact is that the Assam Mission was sponsored by the North and South America. But in due course of time, the affairs between the North and the South were more and more complicated and broke into war. Finally, the North and the South were divided and the Assam Mission was supported now only by Northern Churches in America. Soon a financial crisis came into the fields and thereby reduced to keep one missionary family for the labor of whole mission stations instead of dividing to two or three parts. Certainly, this caused the infant fields to sink.

### 2.2.2. Antagonism of the Frontier Tribes

**Table # 2.2.2.**

S. No.	Gender	Respondent	Agree	Disagree	Can't Say
1.	Male	150	63	26	61
2.	Female	150	85	15	50



**Figure 2.2.2.**

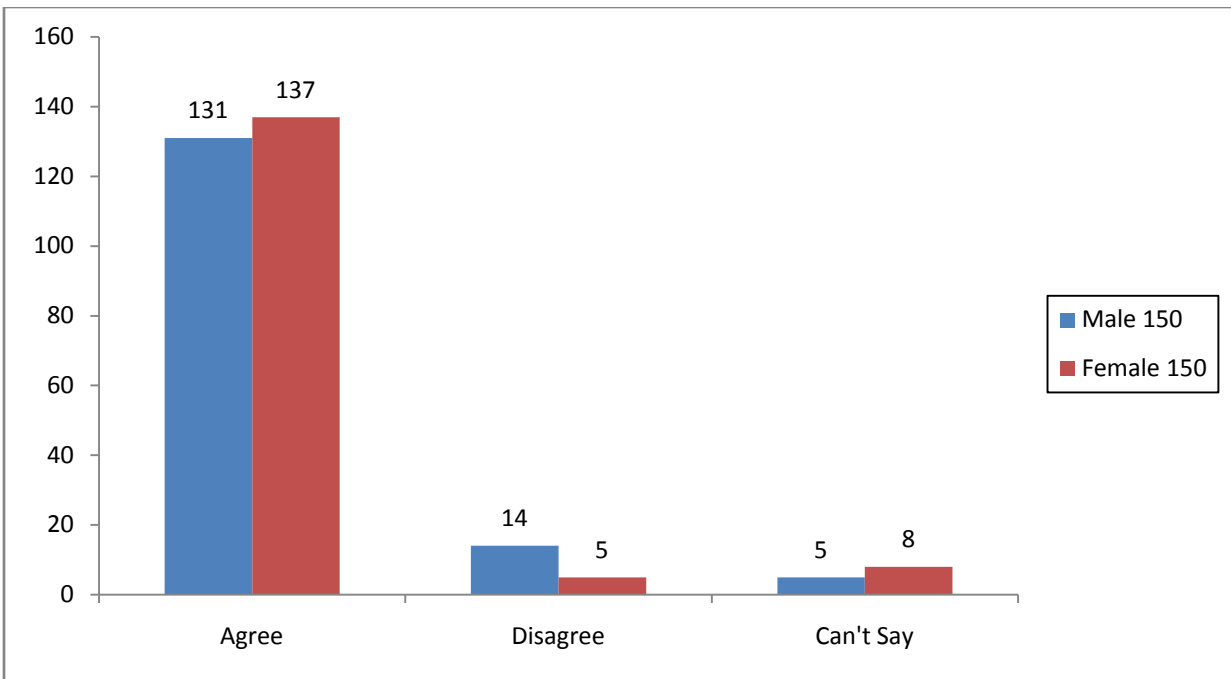
On an average from the statistic it shows that only 49.3% respondents agreed to the abandonment of the mission fields due to hostilities and war of the frontier tribes and 50.6% did not agree to the matter. Moreover, the female respondents through statistics 56.6% are aware that the abandonment of the pioneer mission stations especially Sadiya was due to hostility and warlike races of the frontier as compared to male respondents comprising of 42%. Hence, there is a great need of amity relationship to establish among native people in order to pursue peace. It is obviously important for the mission and the churches to understand the culture and context of the society which will help them to be aware of their congregation effectively. The people lived with ignorance and had never contact with the outside world. Certainly, they might have feared losing one's own political jurisdiction. Evidently, British had annexed Assam and established their quarters at Sadiya. Perhaps it made them violent and antagonist i.e., towards the British. This too directly affected Christian missionary work because missionaries were residing near the British cantonment with the help of Government. Eventually, these two became great foes with one another and in the midst of fighting with each other, this obviously degenerated the missionary deeds. Through this study it has been found out that proper and good dealing may help to provide sustainable relationship. It is also noticed in this study that love and good relationship is the best mode through which human beings may be able to win the hearts of the people. The friendliness is an appropriate facet to deal with the aggressive and unfriendly races. Although, it is difficult to eradicate the ongoing opposition and rude nature, however, better relationship will surely reduce the hatred. No doubt, Christian missionaries have proved to establish healthy relationship with responsibility for witnessing God's Love and Peace through the mission and churches. Since, God has called all Christians to be His peace makers on earth.

## **2.3. Social Problem**

### **2.3.1. Strict Observance of Caste System**

**Table # 2.3.1.**

<b>S. No.</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Respondent</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Can't Say</b>
<b>1.</b>	Male	150	131	14	5
<b>2.</b>	Female	150	137	5	8



**Figure 2.3.1.**

From the above statistic it has been observed that majority of respondents 89.3% are quite aware with the prevalence of caste system but there is only 10.6% having less awareness. In gender section, females, 91.3% are more aware than males, 87.3%. Therefore, it is important that every missionary, pastor/evangelist should be updated with the present situation of caste system which hinders the mission works. In this research, the researcher has made an attempt in the review of the literature to bring awareness to the mission workers with regard to the present caste system with special reference to Assamese society. The present mission for sustainable growth appears to be declining with the strict observance of caste and it will affect the future too if the people continue to hold on. As far as the study is concerned, the caste problem related to mission work was one of the main obstacles that hindered the progress. The caste, a stronghold of evil is so dear to the Assamese and hence it is strongly defying all missionary efforts. Generally the people believe that if they become Christians, ultimately they will lose their caste. So, this very doctrine fastens the door of the missionary labor otherwise the houses of the people would have opened and readied to listen to the message of salvation. In this way, it has darkened the missionary program. Thus, the current mission work is experiencing slow motion. Nevertheless, the missionaries and pastors should facilitate to educate the masses to discard the darkness of caste system through preaching and teaching of the word of God.

### 2.3.2. Opium Indulgence

Table # 2.3.2.

S. No.	Gender	Respondent	Agree	Disagree	Can't Say
1.	Male	150	119	20	11
2.	Female	150	123	14	13

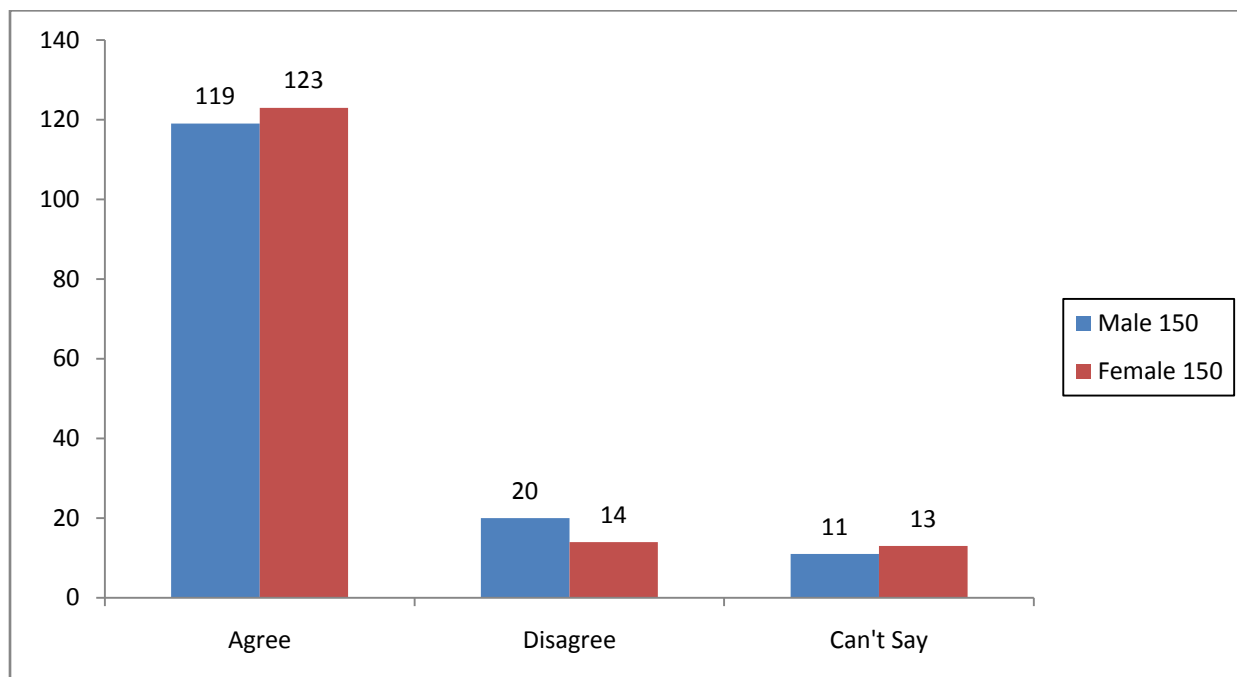


Figure 2.3.2.

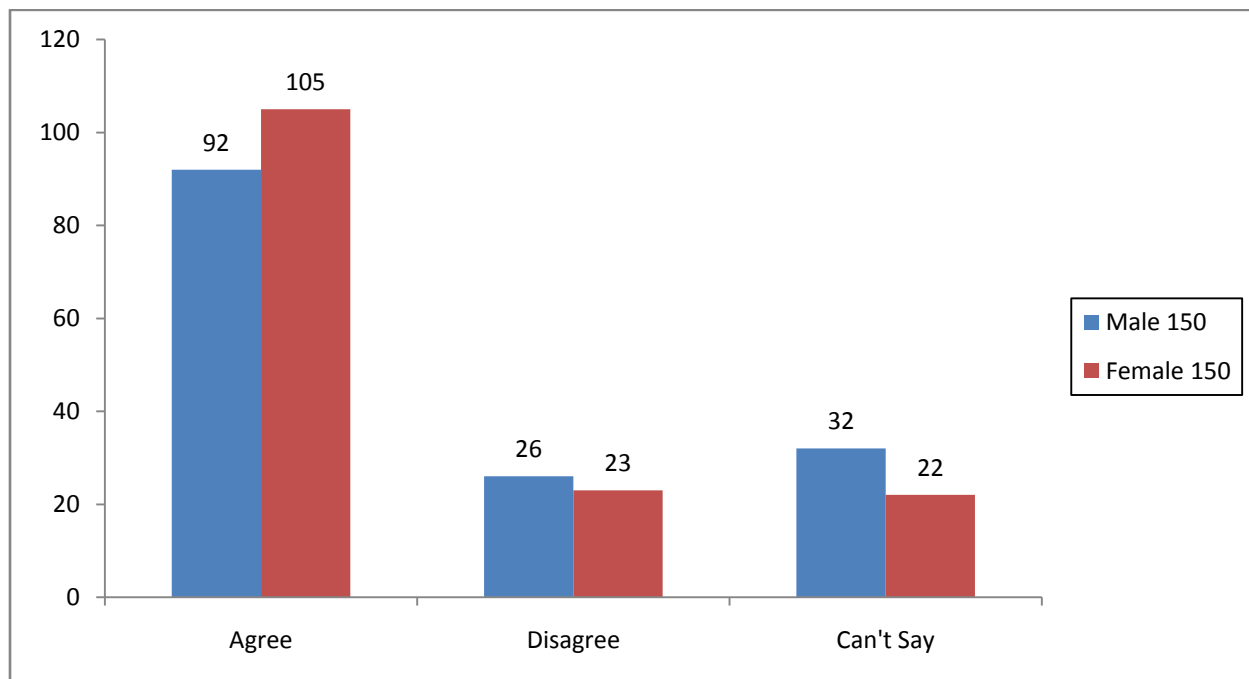
On an average 80.6% respondents are aware with regard to opium habit. Only 19.3% are not aware of the opium habit. Thus, in gender, females of which 82% are more aware as compared to male i.e. 79.3%. Currently, opium addiction is a serious issue among the Assamese society. Hence, there is a great need to eradicate and restore the Assamese from this ruinous habit. Moreover, it is disappointing factor when we look at the condition of Assamese society. As far as the document is concerned, the use of opium was unknown among Assamese society although the habit of local liquor (rice beer) had been found within community which is made by native people. The consumption of opium was introduced by the British East India Company. The Company policy was to make more revenues by licensing its sale. Gradually, its consumption and alarming demand of the substance had been increased. Furthermore, a large portion of the inhabitants were completely besotted by it. It carried off immense numbers to an untimely grave. The disease attack on opium-eaters was commonly dysentery, fearful scourge, cholera and almost all were sure to be fatal, no medicine being of any avail. Henceforth, the greatest evil of

this state has become opium. It became entirely hopeless, that a confirmed opium-eater would ever get off the use of the noxious drug. So, the strong drink and its use was the bane of the native Christian church that cursed this land. No wonder, it had heavily influenced native converts too and sometimes they fell with heavy addiction. The missionaries had tried to prevent both by teaching and example, but the demon of strong drink took its victims and thereupon saddening the missionary horizons. Certainly, it crippled the work of mission and churches. Therefore, the universal practice of opium intoxication is another most discouraging circumstance in the fields. In spite of the fact that the missionaries and pastors tried to prevent these destructive habits they failed to achieve it fully. The churches are suffering from this ill fate practice even today. Hence, the churches need to organize an ongoing program through awareness of drugs campaign, seminar, workshop and counseling in order to rescue the souls and bestow possible remedy to the society.

### 2.3.3. Migratory Nature of Tea Garden Laborers

**Table # 2.3.3.**

S. No.	Gender	Respondent	Agree	Disagree	Can't Say
1.	Male	150	92	26	32
2.	Female	150	105	23	22



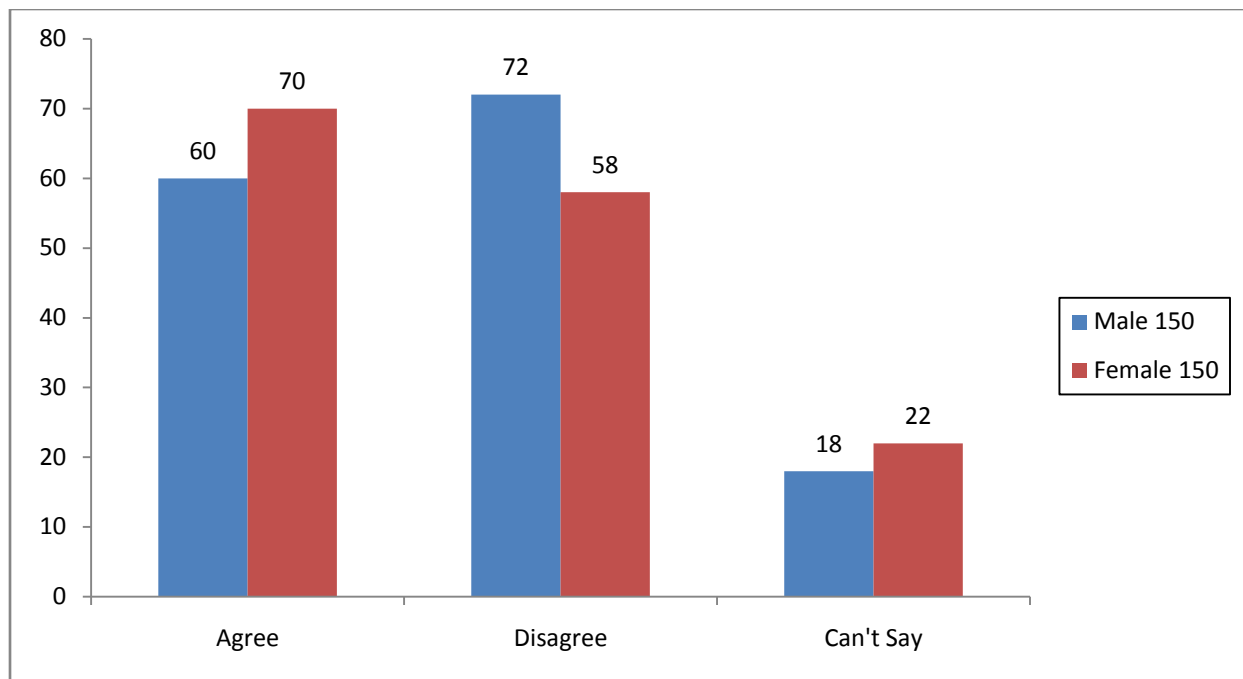
**Figure 2.3.3.**

The data shows that 65.6% of the respondent is quite aware of the migratory nature of the tea garden laborers in the mission. From the above chart it has been calculated that 34.3% respondents still are not aware of the migratory nature of the tea garden laborers. Among the gender class females laid more stress for the fluctuating memberships i.e., 70% and males laid less stress i.e., 61.3%. Hence, there is a great need of awareness of the migratory nature towards the advancement of the mission and churches. The review of the work is being portrayed that the work had been fruitful among this community. In addition, there was a good number of the tea garden laborer Christians but the membership of the churches had fluctuated due to the contract basis of labor in the tea garden. As soon as the contract was over, they had to move into new places in search of work and certainly its migratory character of the people made the work in the mission less promising. Therefore, the mobile nature of the community was depleted the membership of the churches and possibly degenerated the progress of the mission and churches. Indeed, this migratory nature is being stabled at present but the economical status has not improved. They are mostly dependent as the laborers in the tea garden, daily wage and paid servant for agricultural work. However, the minister and pastor should generate a new scope for their survival as well as self-support scheme so that they may be able to stand firm and improve the pathetic condition of the economy because many of them are still homeless. Uplifting the poor and vulnerable section of the society is a great mission through which one can elevate the living condition and economy and certainly churches will improve too.

#### **2.3.4. Unhealthy Location and Climate**

**Table # 2.3.4.**

<b>S. No.</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Respondent</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Can't Say</b>
<b>1.</b>	Male	150	60	72	18
<b>2.</b>	Female	150	70	58	22



**Figure 2.3.4.**

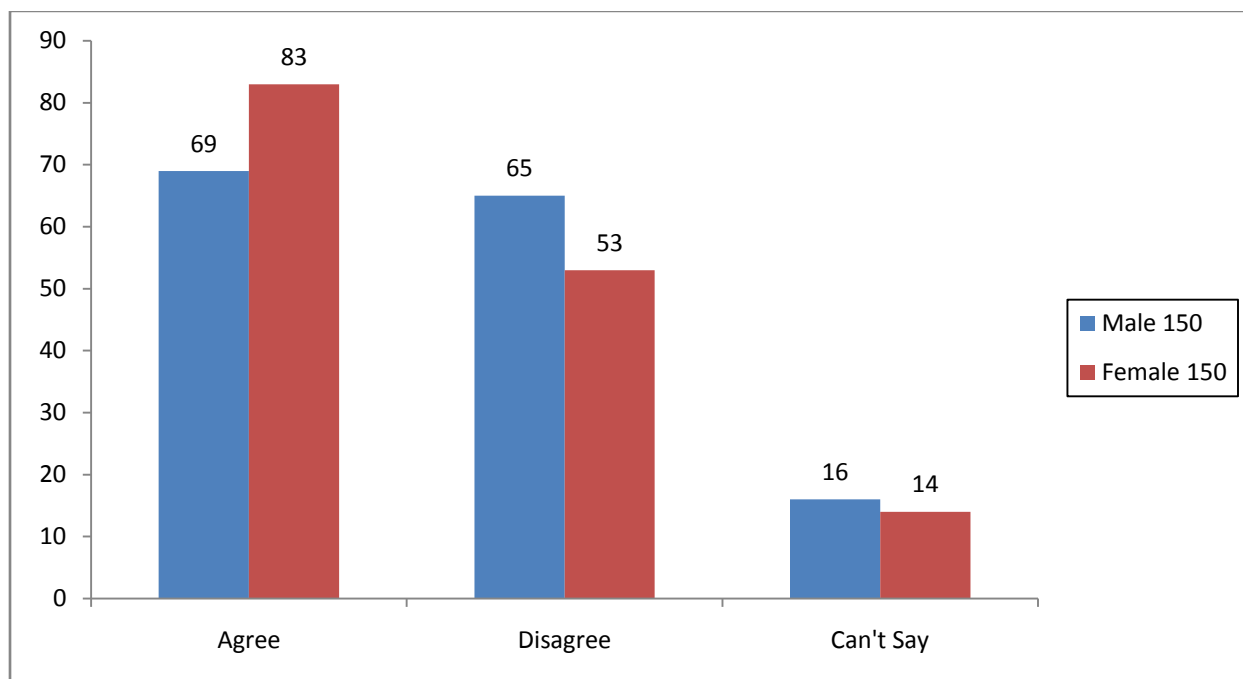
The above table depicts that on an average only 43.3% respondents have knowledge of the unhealthy location and climate and majority of the respondents 56.6% who do not agree it. So the statistic indicates that male respondents bearing 40% and female 46.6% agreed to the unhealthy location and climate which hindered the advancement of the mission and churches. So, there are larger numbers who do not seem to have any awareness of the condition. Of course, it may be true that the present situation of the region has quite improved. However, from the review of the literature it is explored that the large number of the population had been overshadowed with viral fever, malaria and this has taken many lives because of the hazard dose breeding of mosquitoes and immoderate climate in the rainy seasons. Sometimes, it was found sparse of density among the inhabitants due to death toll and even the missionaries were unable to stay and work for missions, for example at Jaipur. The double afflictions wore out the health of the missionaries too which compelled them to shift the mission station to Sibsagar. There were no proper medical services available during those days and the only remedy was to take very simple medical aid from Missionary Doctors. Besides, the medical term was almost unknown by the native people. Indeed, climate became one of the chief obstacles in the mission works as climate directly allied with health and moderate climate provides good health. To have conducive health definitely entails good climate. If climate does not suit then automatically brings unfavorable health. No doubt, unfavorable weather might have caused a barrier for the activities of the missions and thus the effect remains standstill. The present location and climate

has become much better due to the development of technology and introduction of the medical mission.

### 2.3.5. Natural Calamities and Epidemic Diseases

**Table # 2.3.5.**

S. No.	Gender	Respondent	Agree	Disagree	Can't Say
1.	Male	150	69	65	16
2.	Female	150	83	53	14



**Figure 2.3.5.**

Assam is a unique province with all sorts of peculiarities that is prevalent in the surrounding region. A distinctive natural calamity has often visited the state, especially, flood and earthquake. Flood visits annually and earthquakes come infrequently. Besides, there were also visible phenomenon's identified as epidemics such as black fever, jungle fever, cholera and dysentery, mainly during the rainy season that vastly spread diseases in the areas and often led to discourage the invaders as well as the missionaries in the past. The review of the literature comments that the calamity and epidemic highly depleted the missionary labors in the mission fields. Thereafter, to know the public opinion, the data is being gathered and evaluated regarding awareness of natural calamity and epidemics within the gender group. On an average of the respondents 50.6% are bearing information of the natural calamities and epidemic diseases and

49.3% who do not agree. Therefore, it has been observed that among the gender class, 46% of males have the knowledge as compared to the females i.e. 55.3%. Whatsoever, it is important to note how flood interrupts normal lives of the common people even today. Of course, epidemic disease has almost disappeared presently because of modern medicine which was introduced by the Christian missionaries. Nonetheless, the combined circumstances encumbered the missionary ventures for further development of mission.

## 2.4. Economic Problem

### 2.4.1. Financial Crisis

Table # 2.4.1.

S. No.	Gender	Respondent	Agree	Disagree	Can't Say
1.	Male	150	113	28	9
2.	Female	150	119	28	3

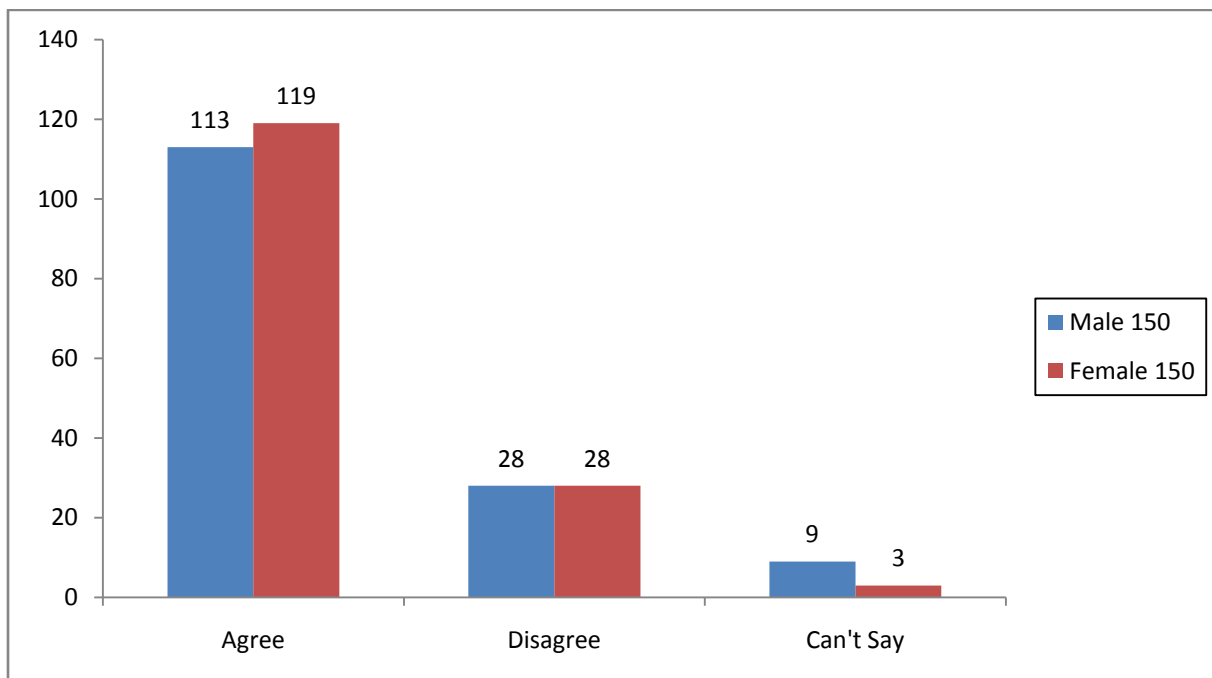


Figure 2.4.1.

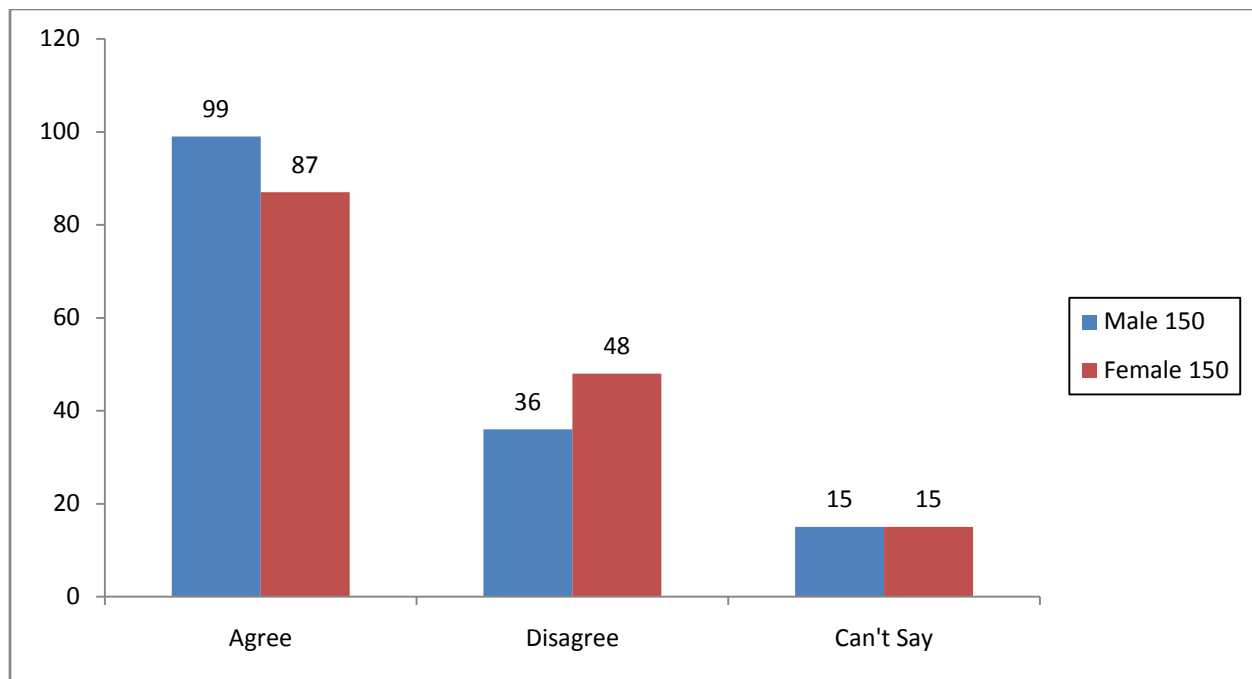
The finance is one of the most important resources for any kind of human programs. Without finance it is not possible to accomplish any type of project. On an average calculated value of the respondents from the table, 77.3% agreed of the financial crisis in the mission work and only 22.6% do not agree. Thus, from the above respondents of males 75.3% and females 79.3% admitted that the shortage of funds severely paralyzed the progress of the pioneer mission and

churches. The genesis of Christian mission was extensively involved with heavy financial expenditure and so the finances became a chief instrument for all kinds of mission operations. The mission work was laid in the holistic perspective such as charitable, philanthropic and humanitarian services along with evangelism. These were the prime areas the Christian mission focused the missionaries in every walk of their lives. The newly established stations extensively required strong financial support but often failed to attempt all the needs and demands of the local people due to shortage of funds. Many times, the missionaries could not supply the materials, literatures, school teachers, evangelists and launch new schools as per the evidence. Certainly, with any kind of agenda likely to be pursued, money is highly involved. Thus, finance becomes a backbone of the mission projects and without it even for the strong funding agency it will be difficult to perform the tasks which pull down the speedy progress of the endeavors. Therefore, the mission stations and the churches are still going through financial crisis. Indeed, the income generating resource is obviously needed to be explored in order to operate and govern the long lasting and successful mission enterprises.

#### **2.4.2. Dependent on Foreign Financial Supports**

**Table # 2.4.2.**

<b>S. No.</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Respondent</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Can't Say</b>
<b>1.</b>	Male	150	99	36	15
<b>2.</b>	Female	150	87	48	15



**Figure 2.4.2.**

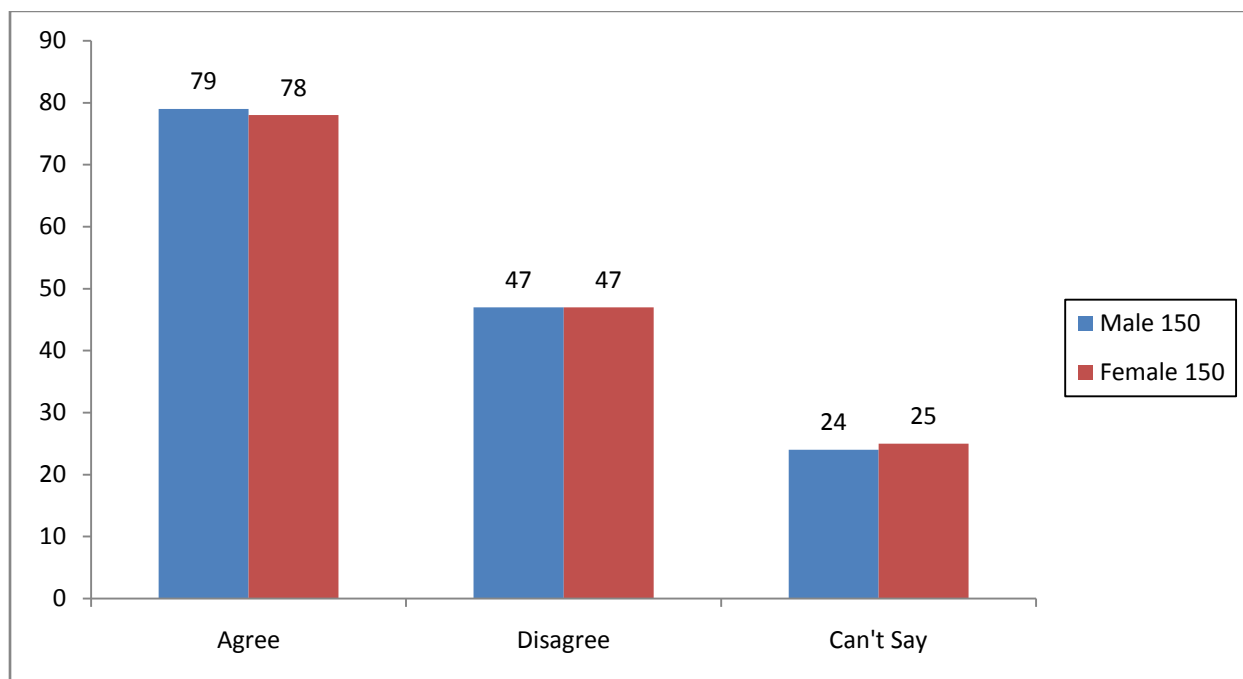
On an average 62% respondents have the knowledge of absolute dependence on foreign support. It is only 38% of the respondent who are not aware of foreign dependency. The data reveals that 66% males and 58% females have the knowledge of complete dependency on foreign support particularly in finance and missionary staff as mentioned earlier. Moreover, one of the major problems often encountered by the mission and the churches was full dependency on foreign help. And it was viewed by the missionaries and stated in their record which has been distinctively elaborated. There was heavy reduction of the missionary force by death, sickness, furlough, retirement and other calamity in respect to the mission stations in Assam. These bulky losses promptly required new missionary staff in the fields but the urgent requirement of the replacement could not materialize because of incapable and immature missionary personnel for mission work. Besides, another heavy-burden added in the mission was solely relying on foreign financial assistant and thus this became great hurdles in the development of mission and churches. The fact is that while the missionaries were in the fields, the conditions of the mission were in well functioned. However, the exodus of the missionaries was being pulled down from the bunching of the endeavors. Of course, it does not mean the entire closing of the activities but the dual crises like finance and local missionary staff had severely affected the operation of the fields. Due to the lack of native leaders as well as drainage of finance which could not carry the load effectively and subsequently it might have brought a handicap in the growth. Thus, there is a great need to produce greater numbers of fire brand missionary team and lastly, but not least

creating an avenue of fund generating resources which is also the top most assets for boosting of the mission and churches.

### 2.4.3. Shortage of Funds Affected in Educational Program

**Table # 2.4.3.**

S. No.	Gender	Respondent	Agree	Disagree	Can't Say
1.	Male	150	79	47	24
2.	Female	150	78	47	25



**Figure 2.4.3.**

The statistic reveals that there is much variation regarding the information of the demand of new school projects and funding crisis within the respondents. On an average it has been observed that approximately 52.3% respondents bear the awareness of school projects and crisis of funds and 47.6% are having less awareness. Among the gender class, 52.6% male respondents have information as compared to female respondents i.e., 52%. Thereafter, the study unlocks the core value of education and disruption of its program. The review of the literature indicates that the schools were diligent endeavors opened by prayer with dedication to imbue the minds of the scholars with the truths of Christianity. Hence, the objectives of the mission schools were to use it as an auxiliary to the work of evangelization. Moreover, the first and topmost obligation was to evangelize the people with Christianity and thus the educational institutions and other schemes

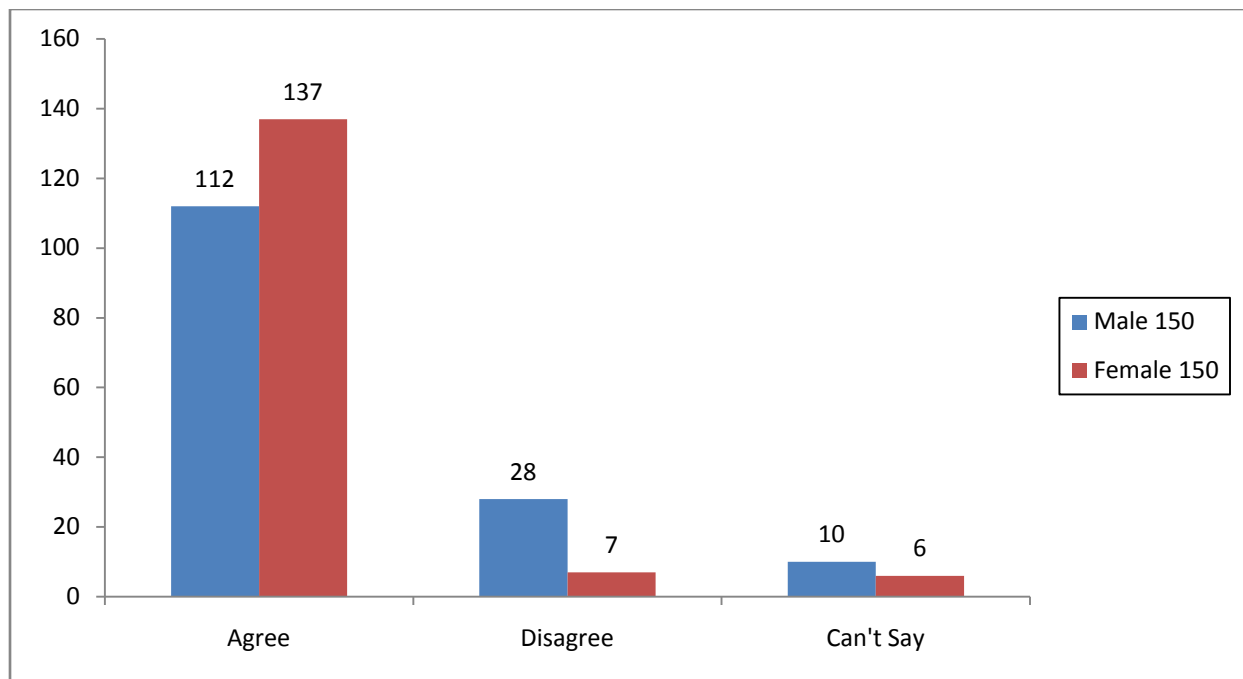
undertaken by the missionaries were intended to help in accelerating the process of conversions. In this way, the schools were being auxiliary enumerated such as to teach people to read printed word and religious tracts, help to impart correct moral and religious ideas, expose false science inwrought with idolatry and help overthrow it, give opportunity for direct inculcation of the gospel and raises up local authors. Therefore, the missionaries established schools to improve the temporal condition of the natives economically by teaching them useful arts and introducing the culture of foreign plants. Eventually, the proficiency of the scholars had been highly gratified. Shortly, other schools were expected to be established in some of the adjoining villages. Unfortunately, insufficient funds had obliged them to dismiss some of the flourishing schools. Subsequently, the closing of the schools became ultimately a closing door for the Gospel. It certainly hampered the blooming of the mission and the churches. Indeed, the education mission is one of the chief enterprises through which people could be enlightened with principles of divine truth and henceforth the missionaries and the pastors ought to take keen attention in education and explore resources for sustainable fund generation for the promotion of Christianity in Assam.

## **2.5. Leadership Problem**

### **2.5.1. Lack of Trained Indigenous Leaders**

**Table # 2.5.1.**

<b>S. No.</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Respondent</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Can't Say</b>
<b>1.</b>	Male	150	112	28	10
<b>2.</b>	Female	150	137	7	6



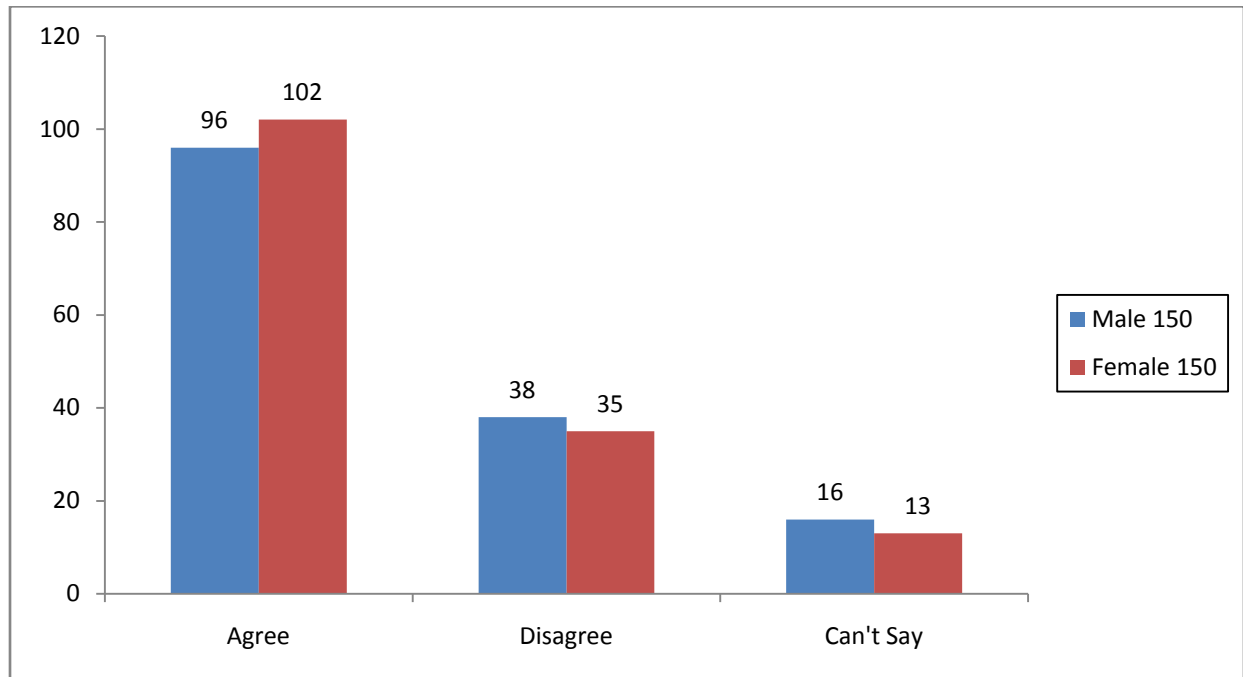
**Figure 2.5.1.**

On an average 83% are having information of the lack of indigenous church leaders but only 17% do not have information. It is clear from the above table that majority of the calculated respondents of males 74.6% and females 91.3% believe that there is a lack of indigenous pastors, evangelists and leaders in the mission stations and churches. Moreover, it is indispensable for mission workers to be aware about the present condition of the mission and churches regarding indigenous leadership crisis so that they may be able to train more capable local leaders for proper functioning of the institute. On the other hand, it was also viewed that the missionary labors had suffered from lack of capable leaders who could shoulder the responsibility of the missions and churches. While the missionaries were on furlough, sickness, retirement, demise and absence the decline of the membership of churches and mission work was often noticed. Moreover, the missionaries had once left the mission stations and the churches and the result became less promising particularly the whole program remained monotonous. Further, there was no steady growth and the entire work was handed over to the few native people who had little experience of the entrusted affairs and more or less without proper pastoral training. So the hour was demanding more laborers because harvest was plentiful but the laborers were few and it is true in the matter of Assam Mission (Mathew 9:37). Therefore, the mission fields and the churches are urgently required more trained leaders. Further, the present mission and church needs to produce committed pastors, evangelists and leaders who will be able to serve the Lord's ministry effectively for the expansion of His kingdom.

### 2.5.2. Small Missionary Force in a Vast Mission Fields

**Table # 2.5.2.**

S. No.	Gender	Respondent	Agree	Disagree	Can't Say
1.	Male	150	96	38	16
2.	Female	150	102	35	13



**Figure 2.5.2.**

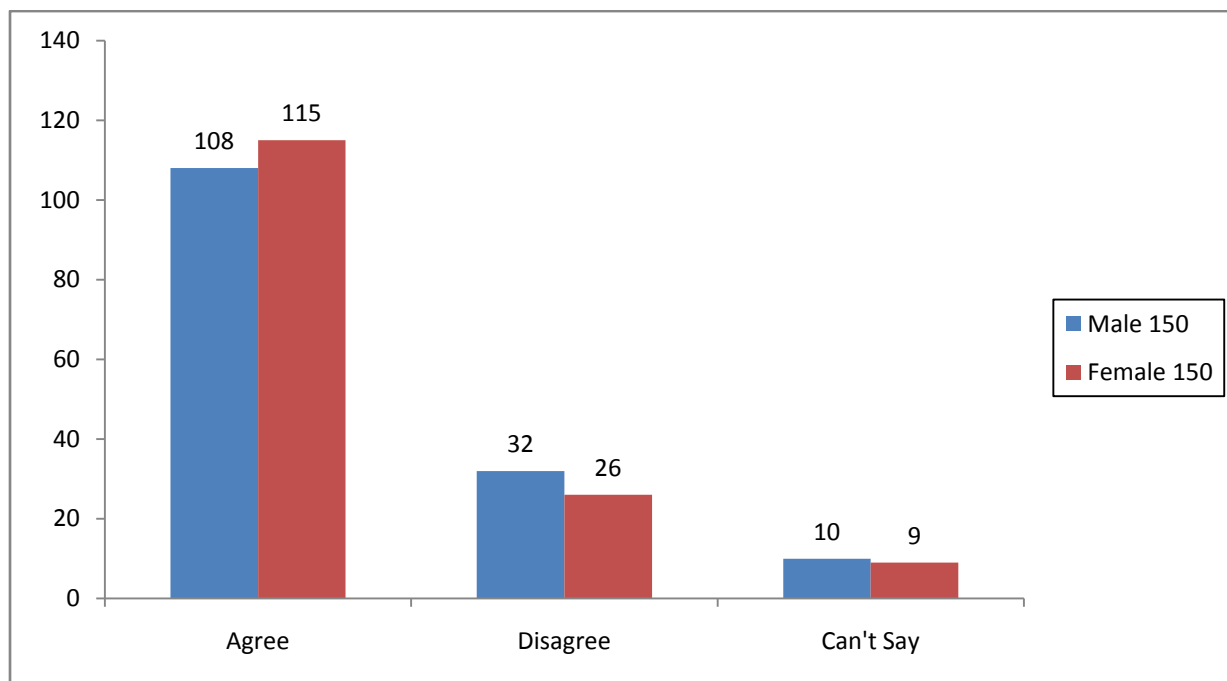
In this section, there is variation regarding the knowledge of missionary force and vast fields within the gender class. The above statistic indicates on an average 66 % respondents are bearing knowledge of inadequate missionary staff in the large mission fields that has suffered. Only 34% are not aware of the inadequate missionary staff in the fields. Thus, compared to awareness of gender with regard to the missionary reinforcement crisis an average 64% males and 68% females agree of it. The majority of the respondents are reasonably aware of the small force of the missionary in the mission stations. So, it is quite important for the missionary and pastor to take up immediate decisions to prepare sufficient number of missionaries and pastors to run the whole mission fields actively which would possibly lead to better and successful operation of the programs. As far as the research is concerned, the enquiry is found from the source that the mission constituted was not adequately manned; not even on the presumption, it could be entertained, that the missionaries would have all continued at their stations, and all be strong to the labor at all times. The field was too broad and the interests and instrumentalities too

numerous varied and complex for the task employed. Resultantly, the breaking up or virtual abandonment of a station or of a department of labor, should not be staked on the health of a single individual. This opinion was painfully enforced by the present state of the mission. As a whole, it was not in a working condition. Certainly, feeble staff in vast region had disappointed the missionary services and hence it distorted a satisfactory result. Yet, provisions should be made for possible contingencies. In this regard, it is necessary for mission and church to take active part in raising and preparing pious missionary and pastor as far as the need requires to gather harvest plentifully.

### 2.5.3. Inability of Missionaries Remaining for Long Periods in the Mission Stations

**Table # 2.5.3.**

S. No.	Gender	Respondent	Agree	Disagree	Can't Say
1.	Male	150	108	32	10
2.	Female	150	115	26	9



**Figure 2.5.3.**

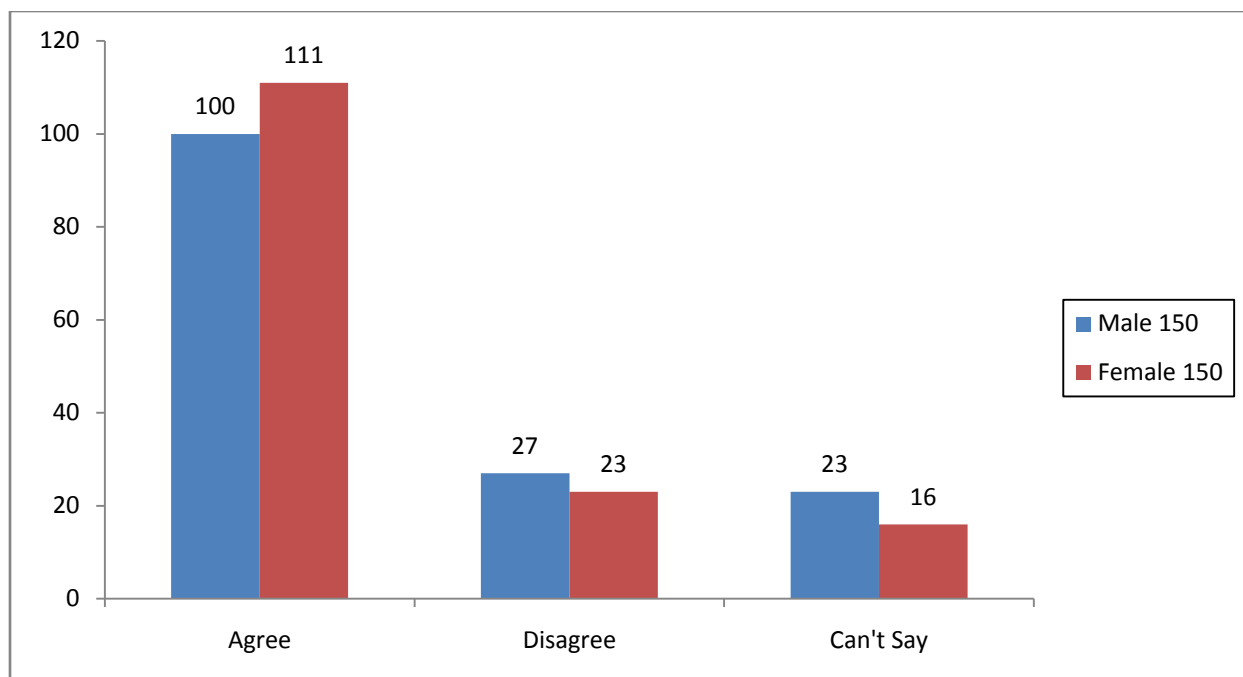
On an average 74.3% respondents are having the awareness of inability of missionaries remained for longer periods in the fields. 25.6% respondents are not fully aware of the matter. The data reveals the needs of the prompt concern for the stability of the missionaries in the fields. 72% males and 76.6% females agreed of the problem of instability of the missionaries in the stations.

In this respect, the evidence mentioned that frequent change of missionary personnel affected the work of the mission and churches. It was an entirely different culture, language and climate and to such state coming and adjusting themselves took lots of time and sometimes stayed for very short periods due to ill health, furlough and death too. Every new missionary who came to serve definitely began to fit themselves into a new culture, climate, learning language and devoted hours and sometimes unexpected situations suddenly pushed them to return home. Needless to say, tedious work was being done by the pioneer missionaries but the frequent replacement of new missionaries, ultimately assumed to reduce speedy work and prolong it because each new person arrived and had to start with new learning and ideas. Hereafter, regular change of missionary staff seemed not recommendable, since the working style and ideas would vary from person to person. Adapting someone's idea and implementing it practically, is not a glass of water to drink. Obviously, to cope with new situations is a great hurdle. Therefore, the present mission and churches are immediately required to plan for stability in appointment as well as replacement.

#### **2.5.4. Lack of Reinforcement Missionary Staff in the Mission**

**Table # 2.5.4.**

<b>S. No.</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Respondent</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Can't Say</b>
<b>1.</b>	Male	150	100	27	23
<b>2.</b>	Female	150	111	23	16



**Figure 2.5.4.**

On an average 70.3% respondents believe the lack of reinforcement of the missionary staff in the fields. 29.6% respondents are not fully aware with the lack of reinforcement. Thus, it is observed that male respondent awareness is 66.6% and female respondents are 74%. Therefore, it is probed that majority of the respondents are fairly knowledgeable towards the reinforcement crisis of missionaries in the missions and churches. Hence, the data unfolds immediate needs for resolution. The study has also found out often crises happen in the case of reinforcement particularly during the time of sickness and retirement. In regard to the mission stations, there have been heavy decreases of missionary personnel because of ill health, leave and retirement and the services were often charged to a single missionary who had to look after two or three stations. Thereafter, the work load became too much and sometimes it was difficult to manage the affairs effectively. Moreover, the mission fields failed to take instant appointment for the task and seldom the mission bungalow remained empty without a residential missionary. Obviously, this type of unorganized work had crippled the advancement of the Christian mission and churches. On the other hand, it is surprising to see in the North Lakhimpur Mission Field after visit by the researcher how the retired pastor holding the same post for several decades and even though he is now unfit physically due to ill health and advanced in age is yet unwilling to replace and vacate the post. Further, some of them considered mission premises as their individual property since they have been working for years and it is shocking to see the mission stations where people have captured mission land and built their residential houses in the Mission Compound. Currently, this is the real scenario and ill fate in some of the mission and the

churches. Thus, the missionary and the pastor should constitute rules and plan systematically and take serious step to train up more missionaries and pastors to reinforce the assignment for the rapid growth of the mission and the churches.

### 2.5.5. Lukewarm Believers Weakened the Churches

Table # 2.5.5.

S. No.	Gender	Respondent	Agree	Disagree	Can't Say
1.	Male	150	111	19	20
2.	Female	150	129	5	16

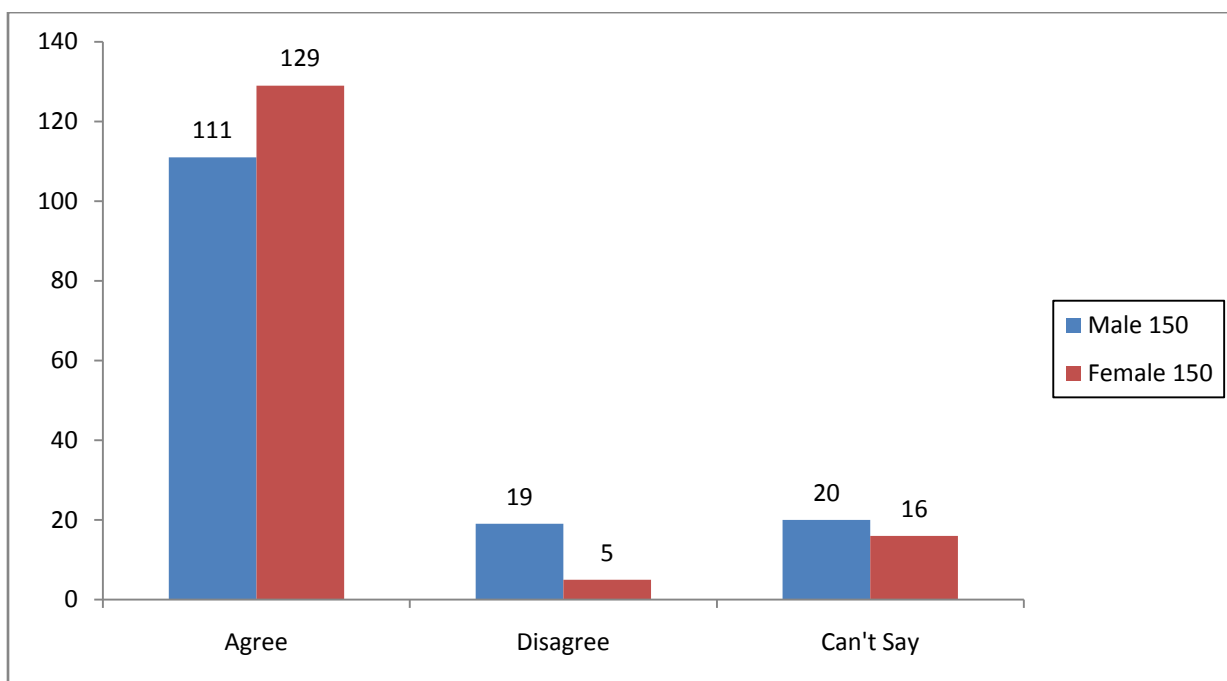


Figure 2.5.5.

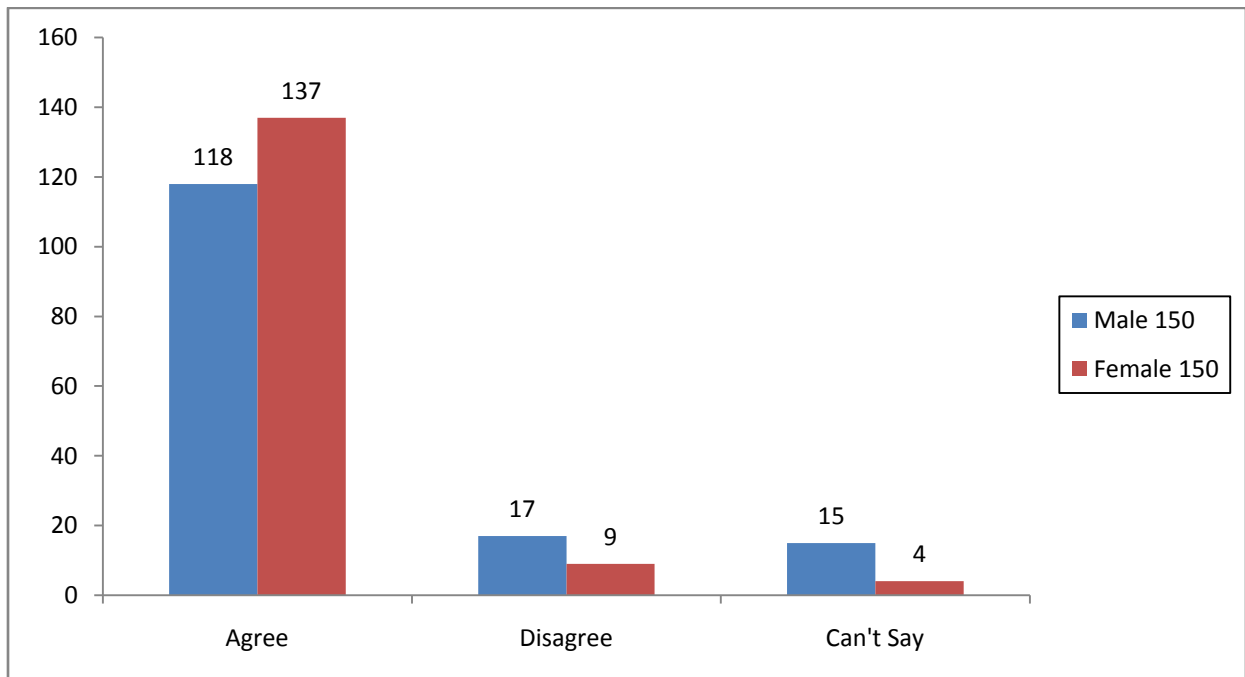
The data depicts on an average of 80% respondents agreed with lukewarm believers and churches. Only 20% of the respondents do not agree on the lukewarm believers and churches. Hence, in gender: females 86% are aware as compared to males i.e., 74%. So, there is a great need of shepherding the flock for the nourishment of spiritual growth. Through this study, it has been noticed that the proper pastoral care is lacking, to build sustainable community. It is also found in this enquiry that shepherding ministries are the best role model through which pastors may be able to take care of the believers in order to revive and re-germinate their faith. The history uncovers that low state of piety among professing Christians was of course a serious hindrance to all missionary efforts to win converts rapidly in Assam. The work was slow in pace.

Thereupon, the lukewarm status is neither cold nor hot but definitely jeopardized the missions and churches. Probably, there was no spiritual vibrancy among the believers and might be merely casual, normal and nominal in some extent. In lieu of that, the believers are more or less found to be lukewarm till today except few of them who are active members in the churches. Many of the mission stations are almost in very bad shape. Of course, some of the churches are in good position compared to mission fields but not in excellent or an average position. In this juncture, the missionaries and the pastors are called to administer the congregation with the word of God to enhance the spiritual growth and empowerment through the Holy Spirit. An anointing of the Spirit and revival of the believers are basic needs in the churches to flood the congregation with the power of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:8, 2:4). Indeed, it is the urgent demand and challenge for ministers to bring reformation in the God’s assembly as well as churches. God has appointed His servants to be the care takers of His sheep and revive them from slumbering.

### 2.5.6. Weak Pietism and Backslide Membership

**Table # 2.5.6.**

S. No.	Gender	Respondent	Agree	Disagree	Can't Say
1.	Male	150	118	17	15
2.	Female	150	137	9	4



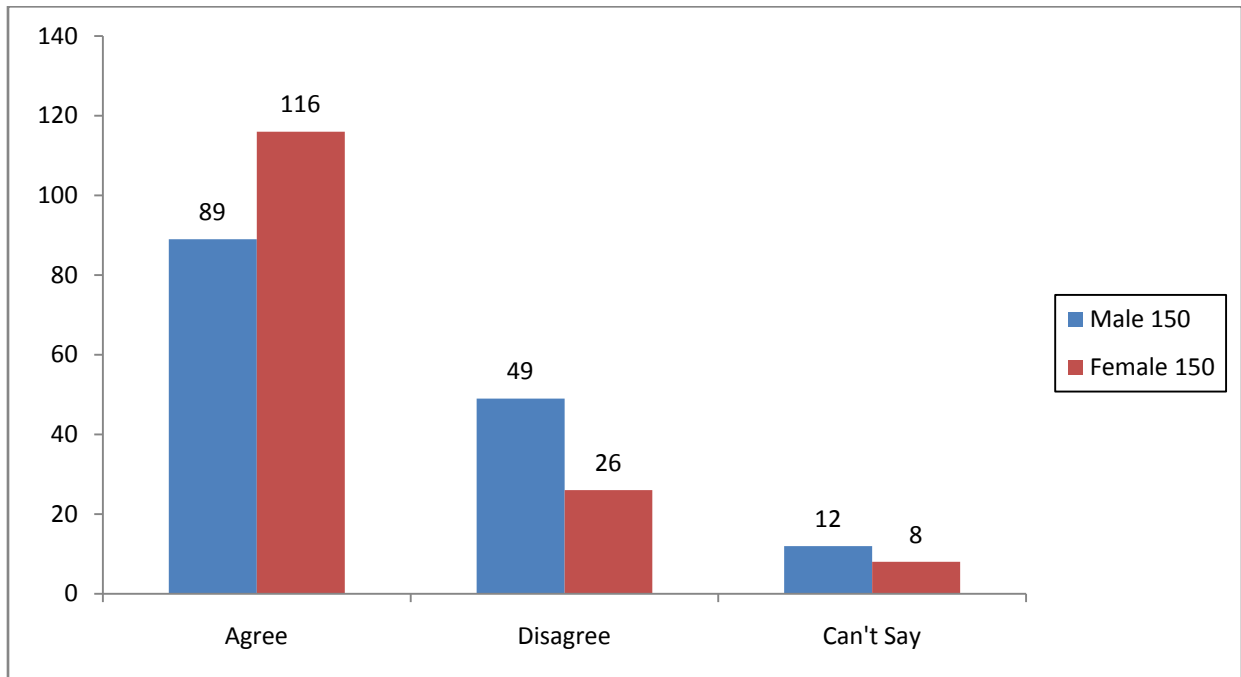
**Figure 2.5.6.**

In the Missionary statement, the weak religiosity and backslide memberships of the churches is rarely indicated. The shallow faith and backslide members are being found because of the influence of strong non-Christian religious traditions and practices from the family members, relatives and neighboring villages which could not hold and resist the snare. Gradually, some of them certainly went back to their old faith and perhaps it had weakened the strength of the churches and mission stations. Interestingly, in this section there is quite a persuading response regarding the awareness of weak religiosity and backslide members in the churches. On an average, it has been observed that majority of the gender 85% bear the knowledge of weak and backslide believers of the churches and only 15% have less awareness. Among the respondent, there is gender class, 78.6% male group have agreed as compared to female group i.e. 91.3%. Hence, it is important for the missionaries, pastors and evangelists to increase the labor hours and activities and invest joint efforts to rescue the perishing souls, tending the flock with proper care and conduct counseling. For instance, Jesus' role model of the shepherd should be opted who laid His life for the cost of the sheep. Indeed, the shepherding ministry is one of the top most priorities for the culmination and nurturing of the spiritual growth of the members in the churches. As in the history of Christian Mission, there are two great episodes that took place in the churches. "Pietism" originated in Germany and is associated with the names of Spener and Franke. In fact, it had gained a great missionary vision. Pietism was a spiritual movement within the nominal Lutheran State Church, but the power was felt far beyond Germany. Another event known as the Evangelical Revival in England was to the Church of England as having completely altered the course of history. Another movement was one associated with the names of Wesley and Whitefield. The awakening stirred missionary concern and stimulated the expansion of the faith. England was revived and Christianity was firmly planted among the colonists in America and they also developed missions to non-Christians. Hence, the present mission and churches do need these types of spiritual break-through which is very much relevant and significant to renew and revive the believers and elders from sleep as well as evangelize the un-evangelized areas.

### 2.5.7. Stagnation of Christianity at Present

**Table # 2.5.7.**

S. No.	Gender	Respondent	Agree	Disagree	Can't Say
1.	Male	150	89	49	12
2.	Female	150	116	26	8



**Figure 2.5.7.**

On an average the table portrays that among gender 68.3% respondents persuasively agreed the present stagnation of Christianity and only 31.6% have less information of the fact. Therefore, the evidence shows from above the male percentage of respondent bearing 59.3% are quite aware with the present stagnation of Christianity but still there is no cent percent agreement. In female 77.3% are more aware than male. Thus, it has been noticed that there is stagnation of Christianity at present in Assam. Therefore, it is essential that every evangelist and pastor should take up a serious step for the growth of Christian missions and churches. In this research, the researcher has made an attempt in review of literature to find root causes of Christianity with regard to the present stagnation with special reference to Christian missions in Assam. Although Christianity had first reached this region more than two centuries before its development was quite slow in comparison to other hilly stations in Northeast India. In this research, the factors related to these tortoise motions are well explained. The evangelists and pastors need awareness of this situation since they are guiders, overseers, shepherds and missionaries for God's people.

Thus, they must have fervor spirit for Christ and commitment to equip themselves with the present unproductive Christian mission and churches so that they may be able to lead the people effectively through preaching and evangelism in their respective churches and mission fields. In fact, the Christian mission work is moving but it is still on the way to gear up in fast track.

### **PART 3 - IMPORTANT FINDINGS**

The study of various opinions is summarized as follows:

#### **3.1. Religious Problem**

##### **3.1.1. Aryan Hinduism and Superstitious Beliefs and Practices**

The calculated on an average is 74.1% who agreed with regard to Aryan Hinduism and superstitious beliefs and practices which created a big wall for penetration of the Gospel and only 25.8% are not aware of it. The Aryan Hindus orthodoxy appeared to regard Christianity as good for Christians and so Hinduism is good for Hindus. Sometime, some of the Hindus are seem to admit Hinduism as equally true with Christianity and all religions are true. The Hindus are too considered Christianity as white men or foreign religion and not for the native people. In addition, the Hindu priesthood are exceedingly numerous and astringently against to all missionary efforts. The priests were evidently threatened to impose a fine upon common people who would go to listen missionary preaching or receive Christian books. Besides, the Brahmins were always taught the local people not to aspire to become educated, but content themselves with a toilsome life and look off themselves for all necessary knowledge in regards to science and religion. They also taught ordinary people about wrong concept of obtaining salvation by paying yearly tax to priests and worshipping idols. So, the poor and ignorant people were prohibited from their rights by the power of the Brahmins and considered them always as lower status and made mandatory to serve the Brahmins and the priests in all possible ways. That is how the Brahmins have manipulated the innocent people for centuries. Therefore, the customary world views, belief of sprits, charms and propitiations seemed to have flint against missionary labors and affected the races from embracing the Gospel.

##### **3.1.2 Extreme Conservatism of the People became a Hindrance for Mission Service**

The calculated on an average is 71.6% who agreed with regard to extreme conservatism of the people that hindered the mission work and only 28.3% did not agree to it. Possibly, the people are too much in conservative nature and thus they have been found extraordinarily timid in

innovation. Many of the races are still cling to have old primitive beliefs and continue to hold the same faith with traditional life style. Later, some of them assimilated to Hinduism. Yet, Hinduism seems never to have been able to conquest entire region. The people are also found to be stubborn in minds who have no rooms in the hearts to open the door for the Gospel and experiment Christ's love. Occasionally, they flee from the preaching of the missionary in a moment as if running for their lives. In this context, the missionary sermon could not do much impact on the lives of the people and they are almost same till today.

### **3.2. Political Problem**

#### **3.2.1. Sepoy Mutiny and American Civil Wars**

The calculated on an average is 52.6% who are aware of Sepoy Mutiny and American Civil wars for the negative effect of the Christian mission and only 47.3% have not agreed to it. Though the present generations are not agreed the negative effect on Christian mission by sepoy mutiny and civil war in America, however, it had a great interference in the work of the mission. In the early part of the mission work, there was a chaos and rumors of war by Indian munity and afterwards the rebellion was fanned into a flame. It became a moment of awful suspense of the missionaries from the mission fields and threats were made on the lives of the missionaries and the native Christians. The missionaries had to run away from stations to safe places and even some of them compelled to take leave due to strain of mutiny. Another rising phenomenon was civil war in America. As a result of civil war, the American Baptist Churches were divided into Northern and Southern Conventions. Now, the Assam Mission was reduced to support only by the Northern Churches and definitely failed to supply all requirements of the mission fields owing to funds problem. Immediately, the missionary personnel were decreased and the mission stations were combined into single. The entire burden of the mission fields, were left to deplete missionary staff and certainly the result might be bore dim. No doubt, the devastating wave of mutiny and civil war in America is caused in the smooth and effective operation of the mission.

#### **3.2.2. War and Hostility by Frontier Tribes towards Mission Fields**

The calculated figure on an average is 49.3% who agreed on war and hostility by the frontier tribes in the mission field and on an average are 50.6% who have not agreed. Obviously, the almost fifty percent of the respondents do not agree the violent act of the frontier tribes. It may be correct response from the present context. But, when we look into past history, there were wars and hostility particularly by the Singphos and Khamtis at Sadiya. The Sadiya was a pioneer

American Baptist Mission field blasted by surprised attacks and killings in the cantonments of the British. In this attack, they had killed Col. White, the commanding officer, native men, women and children and in retaliation some of the Khamtis were too killed. Nevertheless, the missionaries were escaped from fight. It seems, the place became horror and the trees were clouded with flocks of vultures, which have gathered from all quarters to feast upon the slain. The bodies were buried or thrown into the river and many remained undiscovered and many died in the jungles. The mangled bodies of the dead, the groans of the dying who had weltered in pools of blood, were sights and sounds which would even the less squeamish soldiers turn away. The missionaries were mentally disturbed for several months as well as they had to stay with constant peril. Further, many of the inhabitants were fled and the missionaries among whom they had keen interest to labor were fully scattered. A continual stink and sickness increased more and the place became unpleasant and finally abandoned Sadiya station.

### **3.3. Social Problem**

#### **3.3.1. Fear of Losing Cast in the Society**

The calculated on an average is 89.3% who have awareness regarding hindrance of caste observance towards development of the mission and churches and very few of them on an average 10.6% are not agreed. As far as evident is concerned, the caste system was heavily observed and it is ongoing process till now in the society. Hence, the society is bound by caste system and this binding factor makes an unbreakable cord. The people are instilled this very concept so deeply in their minds and hence, they are unable to uproot from their old age bondage slave of the practice of caste. Indeed, it is a kind of social evil which has been enveloped the society from centuries. It is a kind of darkness with false notion that the native people are failing to discern what is right and wrong. Even if they know, they still prefer to remain in that same state and many of them assume to feel at home with the prevalent of this practice. Because, the society is much more important than their individual freedom and decision making and often they utter of what would society say and if they would accept Christianity, then they have to cut off from society and become out caste or loose caste from mainline of the society. In this regard, there is a statement made by a missionary and recorded caste as legion of evils combined with stronghold of devil which strongly defies all their efforts and acts of kindness and love. For instance, there was a time where the poorest beggar would receive charity only if it is conformed to the very doctrine of caste. The dying man supposes to reject missionary medicine lest he or she lose his or her caste. So, this is proved that nothing was so dearer than the caste and it is true

and still existing among the Assamese community. No wonder, it is becoming strong force against the Gospel and almost inaccessible to spread the Christianity.

### **3.3.2. Regarding Negative Effect of Opium Addiction in the Church and Society**

On an average 80.6% responded to the negative impact of opium addiction to the mission and churches and only on an average 19.3% of them do not agree. The negative impact of opium is greatly ruined the society as well as the growth of the churches. Generally, the opium consumption and drinking wine were unknown to the Assamese society and only through the coming of the British government introduced these substances. On the other hand, the people were drinking rice bear and swing pan with betel nut as customary. But, as soon as the British annexed Assam and established their rule, was also commenced new culture which was not at all fitting to the Assamese society. The local inhabitants were badly influenced and blindly adopted the new culture called opium as way of life and find pleasure without realizing its severe affect to their bodies, minds, lives and economic pulling too. These noxious addictions were spread as fast as like a wild fire and wrapped the entire region with opium garden by cultivating locally and that is how converted the Assamese as opium eaters. The community was totally influenced both Christians and non-Christians. Many of them have indulged with these abuses and continued to seek for opium pleasure and thereby paid no attention to the missionary preaching. Some time the native converts too fell from heavy addictions. The local churches were banned for the use of these articles and consequently some of the members who were accustomed to use excommunicated from the churches. The missionaries were tried to rescue from paganism but the demon of strong drink snatches the victims among whom they have nurtured with the Gospel. Hence, the impact becomes ruinous like shipwreck to the advancement of the present churches too.

### **3.3.3. Fluctuating Membership of Migratory Nature of Tea Garden Laborer**

The calculated data on an average is 65.6% who agreed to the fluctuating membership of the migratory nature of tea garden laborers which hampered the growth of church and on an average 34.3% have not agreed of it. The respondents have opinion that the migratory character of the tea garden laborers are dragged the normal growth of the churches. As it was also mentioned in several places by the missionary records about their instability of dwelling for longer period in one place due to search of work. Since, these people were immigrant with aborigine race imported from Western Bengal, Chota Nagpur and Central India by the tea companies for labor

purposes in Assam. Later, they have remained in Assam as their permanent home. It seems that some of them have already been under Christian instruction. Thus, the mission work among these people became more responsive and prosperous. But, they were contractual laborers and they have to move from one place to another if the contract is over. The members of the churches could not remain as permanent in the churches and that's why the churches could not organize as strong and establish body because of instable membership. Reasonably, the strength of the church is dependent on the strong membership. Hence, the mobility nature appears weaken the progress of the churches.

### **3.3.4. Unhealthy Location, Epidemic Disease, Climate and Natural Calamity caused**

#### **Mission Work**

The calculated value on an average is only 47% who agreed in the ceasing of the mission work because of unhealthy location, epidemic disease, climate and natural calamity where on an average 53% of them do not agree. Looking at the present scenario, the common people may not believe on negative causes of those phenomenon to the mission work. Normally, the contemporary generation is never seen and experienced how the great epidemic disease and tropical climate raises hazardous mosquitoes and form malaria which has taken many lives within a few seconds. Today's generation is living with scientific age where all kinds of treatments are available with immediate effect with advance equipments. Rarely, people suffer from any kinds of diseases. So, it is for sure that they will not agree on what is stated above. Nevertheless, the unfavorable climate and wide spread diseases of great epidemic were killed many lives in the history. Evidently, there was massive dead of the native people including missionaries because of the widespread epidemic in the region. These diseases were carried away many of the local Christians too. Often, the missionaries were contracted with cholera and fever and made impair health where obliged them to stay back instead of going out for daily ministry. Moreover, the natural calamity particularly earthquake and flood were also carried additional damage in the mission buildings and the churches. In this way, the combined circumstances were encumbered normal activities of the missionaries and thereafter the result could not boost what actually suppose to accomplish.

### **3.4. Economic Problem**

#### **3.4.1. Financial Crisis in Mission Operation**

On an average 77.3% responded to the financial crisis in which pull down in the operation of all mission stations and churches successfully and on an average 22.6% did not agree. As far as the respondents are concerned, the majority of the local Christians are agreed on the serious financial crisis of the mission and the churches where some of the local churches are incapable to pay the wages of their own pastors and evangelists. The churches are standing as same which were established by the missionaries in centuries before without expansion. The same buildings are existing with minor maintenance. The mission fields are remaining without proper fencing and wall and thereupon some of the own church members have crossed the border and captured the land of the mission. The mission organizations are unable to function strongly owing to lack of funds. Rightly, the financial problem was also indicated during the missionary era for which they could not operate effectively all of their agendas in the mission fields. For an example, the appointment of local evangelists, printing of religious materials and sufficient missionary staff were ample reasons which the mission could not mitigate to achieve because of financial drainage. So, the financial problem was one of the major drawback for mission work in the past as well as in the present.

#### **3.4.2. Completely Dependent on Foreign Financial Support and Foreign Missionary**

##### **Personnel**

The calculated figure on an average is 62% who agreed on full dependency of foreign financial support and foreign missionary personnel that made them suffer from being a self-dependent organization and on an average 38% of the respondent do not agree. From the genesis of Christian mission, there was always help and support of finance made by the missionaries to the native Christians. The missionaries were come not only with the Gospel but also established mission stations and churches with their own finance particularly funds received from home board and some time from generous donors. Most often, they had to reduce their budget in order to save money which could be utilized for mission purposes. They have taken lots of pain and invested energy as well as resources just to propagate kingdom of Christ. Indeed, the missionaries have done everything for them and that is the reason why the local congregation became habit of always dependence and never learnt how to become independence. Similarly, the mission was also suffered from lack of native missionary personnel. The missionaries were the one who were carrying the full responsibilities of the mission and the churches. Meanwhile

there were very few local staff who had little experienced of ministry and shouldered the responsibilities. Once, the foreign missionaries were departed and stopped finance then the mission work became almost handicap.

### **3.4.3. Lack of Funds on Educational Project**

The calculated table on an average is 52.3% who are well aware in regard to lack of funds in the educational work that failed to fulfill the demand of the common people and on an average 47.6% do not have awareness. Seldom, it was mentioned in the mission statement that the demand of the school by the local people could not accomplish. Since, the educational project was involved with heavy financial expenditure and it was not possible for missionaries to launch school in every parts of the vicinity. Nevertheless, it was a period where the common people had more interest in the education rather than listening to the Gospel especially in the plains of Assam. Therefore, the education was important because through education the missionaries were tried to help how to read print materials and inculcate the principles of Christ's teaching. And the school could have become important agent for evangelism if it could have run successfully. Hereby, the financial shortage becomes indirectly barrier for the development of Christianity.

## **3.5. Leadership Problem**

### **3.5.1. Indigenous Leadership Crisis in the Mission and Churches**

The calculated statistic on an average is 83% who are well versed with indigenous leadership crisis in the mission and churches and only 17% are having less awareness of the leadership crisis. The leadership problem was one of the foremost issues in the mission fields and the churches in the past and it is continual problem in the local institutions even today. There is lack of capable leaders who could lead the organizations. Moreover, the churches are producing hardly countable individuals as far the needs of the churches. The fact is that the local Christians are interested to educate their children to become big government officers who would earn handsome salary with comfortable lives and rarely want to dedicate their children for the service of the Lord. Subsequently, there are very few who have taken ministerial training and working for the Lord. Besides, there are also seem to find lack of committed leaders who have little curiosity to do the ministry and some do not have zeal at all and some sidetrack their minds to accumulate wealth in the name of ministry. That is how the present institutions are severely afflicting from qualified, committed and spiritually vibrant leaders. It does not mean that there

are no good leaders. There are but need more fire brand leaders who will be anointed by the power of the Holy Spirit to deliver the congregation from darkness to light for plentiful harvest.

### **3.5.2. Instability of Missionaries, Small Missionary Force and Lack of Reinforcement**

#### **Missionary Personnel**

The calculated on an average is only 70.2% who agreed on the instability of missionaries, small missionary force and lack of reinforcement missionary personnel in the mission and churches and only on an average 29.7% who do not agree. Therefore, the diminution of the Christian mission and the churches are too found serious cause by instability, inadequate and reinforcement of the missionary staff. Because it was often seen how the missionaries were unstable for due to sickness, departure and transfer and usually made them to move away from fields and the work might be left incomplete and to resume the work by new persons obviously taken sufficient time. Further, the mission was also observed as over loaded because of the too small missionary force which employed for the vast areas. The field was greatly immeasurable to look after by almost few laborers and definitely the anticipation of the work would be brought unsatisfactory result. In addition, there was scarce in the reinforcement of the missionary personnel particularly in the time of death, vacation and retirement. Frequently, it was viewed the condition of mission in a sad state, since the work was appeared to be rested upon worn-out staff and sometime stations were stayed behind vacant without missionary recruits. Likewise, the present situation of the Assamese Churches and mission fields are not better position than the past. Some of the churches are ministering by retired pastor who is physically unfit, some of the mission fields have no capable missionary staff to govern the institutions and thus it is deliberately dragging the speedy growth of the Christianity.

### **3.5.3. Weak Religiosity, Lukewarm Believers and Backslide Members in the Churches**

The calculated statistic on an average is 82.5% who agreed in regard to lukewarm believers and backslide members that weakened the progress of the churches and only on an average 17.5% have not agreed. The native Christians are fairly have the same opinion of those complex facts that truly hamper in the swift progress of the churches. There were also occasional hints made by the missionaries for the distressing status of the native believers that nearly brought standstill their labors. Many of the professing individuals were suggested to have no deeper level of personal experience of the miraculous work of Jesus Christ and assumed to be found mere believers of Christ. Accordingly, it might make them monotonous Christians and spiritually dry

in the Lord. That is why, some of the believers were neither hot nor cold but lukewarm which made danger for the churches to blossom. Consequently, they could not root in the word of God and soaked by thorns and teasels and finally dried up with yielding no fruits. In this juncture, among the new generation Christians are also observed with the same condition who are unable to resist the temptation and persecution from their neighboring society and for this reason many of the believers immerse back to their old tradition and faith. Undeniably, the reverse order of the believers, are working as stumbling block for the advancement of the Churches.

#### **3.5.4. Awareness Regarding Stagnation of Christianity at Present in Assam**

The calculated value on an average is 68.3% who agreed in regard to the stagnation of Christianity at present in Assam and only on an average 31.6% who do not agree. So, the majority of the Assamese Christians are observing the extreme slow growth of Christianity and the current Christian population is 3.74% according to the census of 2011 which is a proof to the fact. Nevertheless, the Christian missions arrived to Assam before reached to seven sisters of the North East India. Yet, the Christianity spread rapidly and soon becomes predominant faith in some of the hilly regions. In the case of Assam, though the Christian missions originated centuries ago, however, its expansion taking too much sluggish and practically stagnant. Therefore, the Assamese Christians need to rise up from asleep and reenergize the strength of the mission and the churches by exploring new avenue and reclaim the vision of the pioneer missionaries to evangelize entire Assamese.

## CONCLUSION

Assam was a cradle of Christianity to the North East India. Although Christian Missions came to Assam even before they reached any other North Eastern states, Christian Missions and Churches in Assam has gone through slow growth in comparison to other states in north-east India. Therefore, it was significant to investigate the factors that led to this state of Christianity in Assam and analyze the causes for the slow progress particularly the American Baptist Mission and Churches in Assam. The problem investigated in this research is, whether the religio-political, socio-economic and leadership problems were the root causes of the slow growth of American Baptist Mission in Assam or not. The researcher studied the advent of Christian missions, the growth of American Baptist Mission and churches, the contributions of the American Baptist Mission, the causes for slow growth of the American Baptist Mission from missionary documents and empirical study from common people's views on Christian mission based on missiology from below.

In the first phase, it is seen how the different denominations of the Christian missions were established in Assam. Out of these, the Roman Catholics were the earliest Christian missionaries who had contact with Assam and established Catholic community in the region. In fact, these communities were not growing and some of them disappeared due to lack of spiritual care within a generation and some remained a remnant, though they exist even today. The Serampore mission reached Gauhati through William Carey and translated the first Assamese Bible. The mission was established with school and founded the first protestant church in the Assam valley. But, the church could not survive for more than a year because of unethical life of the members. Finally, the mission station was handed over to the American Baptist Mission. Then, the British government was annexed to Assam and thereafter the British commissioners persuaded missionaries to launch Christian mission. That is why the political landscape of the British government had great influence in the establishment of Christian mission in Assam than any other areas of the country. The British commissioners, especially David Scott and Francis Jenkins were both evangelical Christians who invited and offered generous donations to mission work in financially as well as providing security to the missionaries. In doing so they understood conversion to Christianity as saving souls from darkness to light of Lord Jesus Christ and on the other hand promoting educational work is transformation from ignorance and illiteracy of the local people. Moreover, it is observed that the keen interest of the Governor-General for inviting

Christian missionaries was to reconcile the Khamtis and the Singphos, who continued to disturb the tranquility of the frontier. Coincidentally, the American Baptist missionaries accepted the invitation as God's provident because they had already entered into every unoccupied field and extended their missionary operations as widely as possible. It seems that a mission station at Sadiya was fondly hoped and would enable the Baptists to convert the frontier tribes into Christianity and also open up an entrance into the Celestial Empire of China.

Thus, the American Baptist missionaries established number of mission stations and churches throughout Assam valley. The missionaries won a precious soul after several years of their services named Nidhi Levi Farwell, who was the first native convert of the American Baptist Mission, baptized by Bronson at Jaipur. He played extraordinary roles such as writer, preacher, poet and translator in which he showed uncommon ability and great fidelity with influential personality to society. Another prominent leader known as Calibor, a washer man who was baptized and he served the Sibsagar church for more than forty years. He was the father of Godhula, the first Assamese missionary to the Nagas. The mission also ushered with two eventful marks in the history of Christian mission, firstly ordaining for the first time two Assamese converts named Kandura R. Smith and Charles Sonaram Thomas and secondly, organizing the first "All Assam Baptist Convention" which was held at Nowgong.

The Goalpara mission field began with a school for Garos where two of the students of that school, Omed and Ramkhe were baptized at Gauhati and became chief instruments in evangelizing their own people. They were the torch bearer for testifying risen Lord to Garos and spread the Good news of Jesus Christ. The missionaries were also contemplated the mission to Miris (Mishings) in the Pathalipam for years and possibly found to be most cunning and deceitful in embracing the Gospel and as a result missionaries could not evangelize any single individual. Soon, the mission field was abandoned. The reasons for failure the mission were strong influence of Hinduism, heavy addiction of noxious substances and expectation of material gain through Christianity.

Rev. Henry Goldsmith, an Assamese approved worker assisted the Bible school that bears good testimony in the evangelistic and school work. The Baptist missionaries were not only propagated the Gospel and planted churches but also engaged in transformation of the society by striving for the abolition of slavery system. A pioneer missionary named Nathan Brown made

ceaseless efforts to put an end to the slave trade. The education system also made great impact on the common people and the outcome was the establishment of the number of mission schools that were freely available to all privileged and under-privileged children including male and female. The foundation of the Nowgong Orphanage Institute became important center in early years, particularly caring the destitute and orphan children and thus far led revival which sparked as wild fire among students and many of them accepted Christ and some joined in the government offices. The Orphan Institute had a great social significance because of its coeducational approach. The main purpose of the Institute was for evangelistic work and thus the Institute essentially provided scope for continuous Christian influence. As a result, some of the senior students were baptized. Meantime, the mission too contributed to theological education by establishing a Bible School at Jorhat, which later became Eastern Theological College, an important center that pioneered theological education for the whole of North East India.

The Baptist mission played a significant role in the literature, renaissance and resuscitation of the Assamese language. The American Baptist missionaries were the ones who recovered Assamese language from Bengali and gave an identity of its own for Assamese. In the area of literary work, the first Assamese newspaper cum periodical, "*Orunodoi*" was published from mission press at Sibsagar and it carried as a great literary mouthpiece to the masses that captured the mind of the readers both Christians and Hindus. Besides, Bronson made a remarkable contribution by furnishing Assamese English Dictionary from Nowgong mission field which became a valuable asset to the native people of Assam. The medical work was another area of intervention by the Baptist mission. The local population were dying numerously in almost every year from wide spread disease of great epidemic. The missionaries were extended medical treatment and hence, could save thousands of lives. The treatment of lepers by missionary doctors was another new chapter in the mission field. They were kept in isolation from society and treated inhumanly. But, the medical mission delivered them from long suffering and bestowed new hope to suffering humanity. Some of the medical hospitals are still honored by the government and the society as prominent Institutions for its service and reputation.

Despite of the sincere efforts of the American Baptist Mission for centuries in Assam, the missionary work testified slow growth of the mission and the churches. So, the present study has unpacked several reasons through examination of the mission documents which are identified as religious, political, social, economic and leadership problems that hampered the progress. The

religious problem, such as Hindu orthodoxy and cunning nature were hindrances to missionary work. They also regarded Hinduism as true as Christianity and bore an accommodation theory of all religions are true. Therefore, the Brahmins and priests disputed with the missionaries and manifested a surprising bitterness towards the Gospel, thereby shutting the door for Christianity. Bondage of superstitious belief system and intense emphasis on traditional way of living were also prevented them from embracing the Gospel. The political factor was another phenomenon emerged in the mission fields. Civil war led division of American Baptist Churches into Northern and Southern in America. Consequently, the financial support of Assam mission was being now offered only by Northern churches and this weakened the force of mission activities. The missionary strength was reduced and some mission stations were combined into one. Inadequate mission staff was not sufficient to shoulder the vast areas and obviously it hampered the work. The mission was also faced problem partly due to blind interference of the Baptist Missionary Union particularly on mission school as well as controversies between missionaries and Union in America. Certainly, it interrupted the commendable work of the mission. The sepoy mutiny added chaos and horrors in the province and threats were made on lives of the missionaries and native Christians. The missionaries were obliged to flee from mission stations to take refuge. Hence, the desolating wave of mutiny made vulnerable in the missionary operations as well as formed a great setback to the advancement of mission.

The social problem such as age old prevalence of caste was so deeply rooted and bound in the society and it became impenetrable bar to access the Gospel in the heart of the native people. Opium was another social evil and it became greatest curse in the state which saddened the mission work. Opium eater continued to grow and would ever leave off the use of the article. It carried off immense number of an untimely grave even among Christians. Moreover, opium indulgence was regarded as an excommunicable offense and thereafter exclusion of opium eater from the churches led to decline in the membership. The mission work among tea garden laborer known as Mundaris, were more prosperous and promising than Assamese, however, their migratory nature from one place to another in search for work in the tea garden affected in stability of the membership and thus, mission suffered from steady growth of the churches. The mode of communication was through steamer and small boat and this type of voyage was too difficult, dangerous and time taking journey. It made communication gap between missionaries and home board. The mission work was also jeopardized by wide spread epidemic diseases like jungle fever, outbreak of cholera, *kalazar* (black fever) where took great mortality rate including

European officers, missionaries and native people in the region. Adverse weather and natural calamities were added problem on health of missionaries and native people. Combined circumstances possibly created obstacles in the mission labor.

Owing to a falling off funds there was a decrease of mission expenditures, missionary personnel and suppression of schools. Particularly in the field of education, the schools could not be able to organize a permanent preaching post and thereby scriptures and religious books would be the principal studies. However, the schools were affected due to shortage of fund. The financial dependency of the members was another burden and disadvantage for mission work. The missionary labor was disheartened because of wrong intention of Christianity by native people. Christianity meant gaining of material benefit. People were interested in worldly gain rather than seeking of truth. Many of the enquirers showed genuine interest but, when it came complete surrendering of their old faith, they almost faded away. The crafty nature of the Assamese could not fully win and hence, led to the weakening of the mission work and the churches. Indeed, the economic crisis became another leading problem that obstructed the work of the mission.

The leadership crisis too pulled down the advancement of the mission and churches. The field was too broad and mechanisms were varied and complex. Particularly, the reduction of missionary impetus by impaired health, death and other calamities affected the mission work. Two of the three mission stations were reduced to a single missionary labor and scarcely visited the promising tribes who were eager to listen the missionary preaching. In fact, the demand of the hour was more laborers. On the other hand, the mission and churches were entrusted to few local leaders and helpers and some of them even did not possess any quality and perhaps it results ineffective leadership. It made decline the members of the churches and certainly became crippling hindrance to the vigorous prosecution of the mission work. Another two distressing rationales were lack of enthusiasm of the leaders who had no passion and zeal for Christ as well as lack in trained leaders who were able to lead the churches. Moreover, the mission fields bore low state of piety among professing Christians who were just nominal and lukewarm believers. And, it caused hindrance to missionary efforts to influence and win new converts. Some of the early converts soon backslide from Christianity due to strong influence of religio-cultural practices of surrounding neighbors and reverted into old faith and custom and thereafter weakened the growth of the churches.

Empirical research on the present status of the American Baptist Mission and Churches in Assam from the perspective of the people is conducted to discover the key obstacles that curtailed the growth of mission. The data collected is analyzed and interpreted to verify the core hindrances that disrupted the growth of the mission and the churches on the basis of primary missionary documents. The empirical study has confirmed some of the genuine reasons for the slow growth of mission and churches, as found in the missionary documents. The important findings are classified such as: Firstly, the religious problem, particularly negative attitude of Aryan Hinduism, the stronghold of superstitious beliefs and practices; secondly, the social problem based on observance of caste and fear of losing one's own identity is tightly packed from access to the Gospel in the society; thirdly, ruinous intoxication of opium and country liquor by large portion of the people in the society; fourthly, leadership and financial crisis in mission fields; fifthly, fluctuating membership among the tea garden laborers.

This study has found through the examination of primary missionary sources and verified by the empirical study that the slow growth of the American Baptist Mission and Churches in Assam are caused by various factors, such as Hindu orthodoxy and Brahmanical influence and their negative attitude towards Christian mission, ignorance and superstitious belief, extreme conservatism of the native people, strict observation of caste system, ruinous opium and other noxious addiction, migratory nature of tea garden laborers, financial crisis of mission field, indigenous leadership problem, lack of reinforcement and inadequate missionary personnel, nominal and lukewarm Christians and backsliding membership. Therefore, these factors endangered the mission endeavor and it is obviously preventing the rapid growth of the Christian mission and the churches in Assam even today. Hence, the mission and the churches in Assam need to educate and train the congregation to become self-dependent, self-governing and self-propagating in order to sustain a strong and active organization for the development of Christianity in future.

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**APPENDIX I**

**PART - 1**

**General Profile**

Name:.....

Age:.....Gender:.....

Qualification:.....

Address:.....

Employed

Unemployed

Rural

Urban

## **PART-2**

### **Questionnaire**

**(Please give your short comments)**

1. Why the Missions and Churches did not grow in your area?
2. What are the major hindrances faced by the Missions and Churches in the growth of Christianity?
3. What is the negative effect of Opium that disabled the Church and Society?
4. What is your opinion about the attitude of the high caste people towards Christianity?
5. The reduction of Missionaries and finances has also brought instability?
6. Do you think there is a leadership crisis in the development of the Missions and Churches that has led to various problems?
7. What do you think about the natural calamities and difficulties including health problems in Assam that endangered the Christian Missions?
8. What do you think about the migratory laborers of tea gardens and their fluctuating membership effect on the Church?
9. Is there an impact of Christian Mission on the society?
10. What are the changes brought in, by the Christian Mission with regard to Education?

### **PART-3**

**(Circle your answer for the following Questions with your honest opinion)**

1. There is stagnation in Christianity at present in Assam.  
(Agree/Disagree/Can't Say)
2. The Christian mission was affected by Sepoy mutiny and American civil wars.  
(Agree/Disagree/Can't Say)
3. The pioneer mission field like Sadiya, Jaipur had been abandoned due to hostility and war by frontier tribes called Singphos and Kamtis.  
(Agree/Disagree/Can't Say)
4. The pioneer missionary works had declined because of unhealthy location and climate.  
(Agree/Disagree/Can't Say)
5. Inability of missionaries in remaining for longer periods in mission fields and churches hampered the growth of Christianity.  
(Agree/Disagree/Can't Say)
6. Due to Financial crisis, missionaries could not operate all the mission stations and churches successfully.  
(Agree/Disagree/Can't Say)
7. Natural calamities like earthquake, flood and diseases of black fever, jungle fever and cholera epidemic played major damage in the mission work.  
(Agree/Disagree/Can't Say)
8. Weak religiosity and backside membership had been the stumbling blocks in the progress of the missions and churches.  
(Agree/Disagree/Can't Say)
9. The people of Assam deeply assimilated the Aryan Hinduism which created a big wall for penetration of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.  
(Agree/Disagree/Can't Say)

10. Lack of indigenous pastors, evangelists and leaders were barriers in the growth and development of the Christian mission.

(Agree/ Disagree/Can't Say)

11. The strict observation of caste system and fear of breaking caste and losing one's own identity from the main stream of the society were obstacles in the Mission's progress.

(Agree/Disagree/Can't Say)

12. Use of Opium by native people ruined the growth of the churches.

(Agree/Disagree/Can't Say)

13. Superstitious beliefs and traditional practices of performing religious rites and rituals to receive blessing and healing were extensively prevalent in the community and Gospel could not replace these traditional practices.

(Agree/Disagree/Can't Say)

14. The small missionary force at work in the field, caused discouragement, since the labor was vast and missionaries few.

(Agree/Disagree/Can't Say)

15. Completely dependent on foreign financial support and foreign missionary staff the advancement of the missions and churches as self-dependent organization, suffered.

(Agree/Disagree/Can't Say)

16. The mission work among the tea garden labor was much successful, but due to their migratory nature and fluctuation of the membership, the expansion of the mission did not take place.

(Agree/Disagree/Can't Say)

17. An extreme conservatism of the people became hindrance for mission service.

(Agree/Disagree/Can't Say)

18. Lukewarm believers and churches weakened the progress of the missionary enterprises.

(Agree/Disagree/Can't Say)

19.

19. Lack of reinforcement of missionary staff, immediately after their retirement or sickness, crippled the mission and church.

(Agree/Disagree/Can't Say)

20. New school projects were highly in demand in the valley of Assam, but due to shortage of funds were not viable and this hampered speedy growth of Christianity.

(Agree/Disagree/Can't Say)

## Appendix II

### Statistics of the Number of Churches in the Pioneer Mission Fields 1836 - 1950

S/No	Mission Station	Year	Churches
1.	Sadiya	1836	Nil
2.	Jaipur	1838	Nil
3.	Namsang	1840	Nil
4.	Sibsagar	1841-1950	48
5.	Nowgong	1841-1950	15
6.	Gauhati	1837-1945	9
7.	Mangaldai	1843-1945	61
8.	Goalpara	1837-1941	No indication of exact number
9.	North Lakhimpur	1890-1945	30
10.	Pathalipam	1839-1897	Nil
11.	Dibrugarh	1878-1916	4
12.	Golaghat	1898-1946	15
13.	Jorhat	1905-1946	No indication of exact number

### Appendix III

#### Statistics of the Christian Population by District Wise in Assam 2011

S. No.	District	Total population	Christian population	%
1.	KarbiAnglong	956313	157789	16.50%
2.	Sonitpur	1924110	138166	7.18%
3.	Udalguri	831668	110215	13.25%
4.	Kokrajhar	887142	101091	11.40%
5.	Goalpara	1008183	77862	7.72%
6.	Tinsukia	1327929	76877	5.79%
7.	DimaHasao	214102	63310	29.57%
8.	Dibrugarh	1326335	52968	3.99%
9.	Golaghat	1066888	50582	4.74%
10.	Chirang	482162	49747	10.32%
11.	Lakhimpur	1042137	46217	4.43%
12.	Cachar	1736617	37635	2.17%
13.	Kamrup	1517542	33297	2.19%
14.	Sivasagar	1151050	33147	2.88%
15.	Baksa	950075	27076	2.85%
16.	Nagaon	2823768	26844	0.95%
17.	Jorhat	1092256	21051	1.93%
18.	Kamrup Metropolitan	1253938	18810	1.50%
19.	Karimganj	1228686	11990	0.98%

20.	Dhemaji	686133	8711	1.27%
21.	Hailakandi	659296	8480	1.29%
22.	Bongaigaon	738804	5924	0.80%
23.	Dhubri	1949258	4107	0.21%
24.	Darrang	928500	1688	0.18%
25.	Barpeta	1693622	1020	0.06%
26.	Morigaon	957423	834	0.09%
27.	Nalbari	771639	429	0.06%
	<b>Assam (Total)</b>	<b>31205576</b>	<b>1165867</b>	<b>3.74%</b>