CHAPTER-V
Quest For Identity
5.1. Cultural Hegemony:

Culture is a very wide term which is interpreted differently by different scholars. Dr. A. Chaube and Dr. S.P. Chaube quoted that we can include the things under culture which have been created by man for his physical, mental and spiritual development. Human race is divided into castes, community, nations and this to adjust itself in the environment of its community and nation. Different societies are affected differently by different beliefs, customs, traditions, ideas, physical and spiritual process. Such a different environment is called the culture of that society, group or nation. This is not the wider from of culture, but it is the narrow from which may be considered as a sub culture. Cultural Hegemony indicates ascendancy on the cultural domination of one power or state with a league, confederation as staled in The New Collins Concise English Dictionary. Cultural change in existing society reflected the world wide impact of processes of modernisation and subsequent colonisation by west European nations. Cultural Hegemony in a society in response to objective exploitation of an indigenous group by an alien group, or the one social clan by another. Identity crises or nationalist movements sometimes arise among dominant groups has led to somewhat more elaborate statement of the point of view. B.S. Sangal stated that, the levels of relative deprivation in culture field experienced by different
ethnic groups which experience the highest levels of relative deprivation may be expected to the most nationals (Sangal, B.S,1982, 106)

The elite class of a society demand the use of the regional language as the principal language of administration. New elites arise from culturally distinct, disadvantaged groups to complete for economic and political opportunities controlled the dominant group. The more widespread the competition and the more intransigent the dominant group. Brass Paul viewed that the identity most ion or ethnic exists when one ethnic group is dominant over another, but it not usually realized until some members from one ethnic group attempt to move into the economic riches occupied by the rival ethnic group. (Paul, Brass,1991,46-48)

Assamese society is comprises with different classes, groups and castes which emphasis their own identity and a hostile to one another. If some one trace back fifteen years back it would found that all ethnic groups considered themselves as Assamese, although they had their own identity. But now ethnic groups had asserted their right to promote their individual identity. Culture as a cultivation of spirit is seen as a privilege that is available to some and denied to most. The distinctions between
high culture and popular culture, between the great tradition and the little tradition, are then seen as so many modes of the hierarchical organization of the sphere of culture as a whole, which is by its very nature repressive. Classicism is therefore seen not just as accumulated wisdom of the ages but also an anachronism that weighs upon the souls of the oppressed. From the material practices by different strata in society—comes the conception of what Gramsci called “the national-popular,” in which the nation itself is identified with the popular classes as such, so that a 'national culture' can only arise out of the practices as well as aspirations of those classes. This conception of national culture as 'national-popular' has an orientation not toward the past, as in revivalist conception, but toward the future; culture itself is conceived then not as a finished common possession, beyond the various social hierarchies, but as a struggle for culture entitlements as part of a much broader democratic struggle for social and economic entitlements of various kinds. This conception of the 'national-popular' distinguishes itself from mere populism in two ways. One is that are numerous traditions of the oppressed which are intrinsically libertarian and egalitarian, that those traditions are among our central resources of hope for the future; but, unlike facile kinds of populism, it also regards the totality of the cultural life of the oppressed critically and even—with suspicion, because there is
much in the cultural life of the oppressed which reflects the internalized forms of the dominant ideology and even the distortions which are produced in the consciousness of the oppressed by the mechanism of oppression itself. On the other hand, the conception of the ‘national-popular’ refuses to concede the culture to the upper classes to those upper classes because it recognizes that dominant culture itself is not a product of leisure but of labour, so that it is indeed the working classes and other oppressed social strata which have in fact produced, through blood and sweat, the culture that the upper classes call their own. The work of creating the ‘national-popular’ thus involves a critical task twice over, in other words a critical appropriation of all that is best in the cultures of the oppressed as well as the oppressors, in the service of a general liberation. Aizaz Ahmed wrote that we have learned in the course of the revolutionary struggles of the past is that the fact of exploitation alone does not produce a revolutionary consciousness. For that, the domain of consciousness has to be addressed in the very forms in which it experiences the world, and those forms are social and ideological in nature. (Ahmed, A., 1993, 130).

Colonialism itself was not only an economic and political system but also a powerful cultural force. Struggles against cultural
imperialism were an integral part of the national movement. All forces within that movement tried to capture the ground of our cultural nationalism, the rightwing, upper class and upper caste tried to give this cultural nationalism a revivalist colouring, which was a very important element in the rise of communalism. The left and liberal forces, by contrast, tried to create a modern, secular, democratic culture in order to combat those revivalist and communal forces. That struggle continues to this day. The past two decades have witnessed great expansion in those revivalist and communal tendencies, which are now parading as “Hindu nationalism” and alternately, Indian cultural nationalism. The struggle over culture is now a central element in political struggle as a whole, much more so than ever before. The moral problem is the more serious because both dominant ethnic group and the core groups of these societies an minority ethnic groups an themselves divided. The dominant groups ay only recently have come to power. A strong impulses of the newly empowered in some states to drive out, or t deprive of even the barest minimum of life’s necessities or t withhold full citizenship from those who only yesterday were comrades in a struggle for equality within or independence from an imperial state. The urgent desire to strengthen their tenuous held on power and to establish the identity of the new state leads to acts of purification. They may as they themselves were

(178)
constrained in the recent past. J. Milton Yinger state that it is needless to say, in all societies minority ethnic cultures are equally in need of continuous revision having developed under circumstances vastly different from those their adherents now face. In particular, the impulse to separation and purity is an obstacle to cultural adaptation. Those seeking statehood by violence may find that the tradition that justified and energized their struggle is an inadequate blueprint for their new situation. Most will enclose ethnic minorities, whom they may regard as the devious occupations of Torjan horses, within their new boundaries. They will thereby lose the chance to examine cultural alternatives and perhaps to develop hybrids of greater strength and beauty. Some of those seeking equality and cultural freedom within a polity also stress separation. (Yenger, J, Milton, 1997, 221).

Cultural hegemony is the philosophic and sociological concept, originated by the Marxist philosopher Antonio Gramsci, that a culturally-diverse society can be ruled or dominated by one of its social classes. It is the dominance of one social group over another, e.g. the ruling class over all other classes. The theory claims that the ideas of the ruling class come to be seen as the norm; they are seen as universal
For Karl Marx, a capitalist society’s economic recessions and practical contradictions would provoke the working class to revolution in deposing capitalism and then to restructuring the existing institutions (economic, political, social) per rational, socialist models; thus, beginning the transition to a communist society. In Marxist terms, the society’s dialectically-changing economy determines its cultural and political superstructures, i.e. its social and economic classes. Despite Marx and Friedrich Engels having predicted this eschatological scenario in 1848, decades later, the workers the economic core of an industrialised society had yet to effect it. To understand this, Gramsci posits a *strategic distinction*, between a *War of Position* and a *War of Manoeuvre*. The war of position is intellectual, a culture war in which the anti-capitalist educators, agitators and organizers seek to have the dominant voice in the mass media, other mass organisations, and the schools (and actively conduct ideological subversion). Once achieved, this position will be used to increase class consciousness, teach revolutionary theory and analysis, and to inspire revolutionary organisation. On winning the
intellectual war of position, communist leaders would then have the necessary political power and popular support to begin the war of manoeuvre the armed insurrection against capitalism. The phrase "the long march through the institutions" is used in Marxist speech to refer to a war of position, alluding to the Long March of the Chinese Red Army in the 1930s. The phrase does not originate with Gramsci, though it is widely attributed to him. Rather, it was coined by German student movement leader Rudi Dutschke in 1967 as Der lange Marsch durch die Institutionen, as his reformulation of Gramsci's ideas, using language influenced by then-current interest in Maoism. Although cultural domination was first analysed in economic class terms, it is broadly applicable to social class. Gramsci suggested that prevailing cultural norms must not be perceived as either "natural" and "inevitable", but, that said cultural norms (institutions, practices, beliefs) must be investigated for their roots in societal domination and their implications for societal liberation.(ibid,102)

Cultural hegemony is neither monolithic nor unified, rather it is a complex of layered social structures (classes). Each has a "mission" (purpose) and an internal logic, allowing its members to behave in a particular way that is different from that of the members of the other social classes, while also coexisting with these other classes. Because of
their different social missions, the classes will be able to coalesce into a greater whole, a society, with a greater social mission. This greater, societal mission is different from the specific missions of the individual classes, because it assumes and includes them to itself, the whole. Likewise, does cultural hegemony work; although each person in a society meaningfully lives life in his or her social class, society’s discrete classes might appear to have little in common with the life of an individual person. However, perceived as a whole, each person’s life contributes to the greater society’s hegemony. Diversity, variation, and freedom will apparently exist, since most people “see” many different life circumstances; but they are incapable of perceiving the greater hegemonic pattern created when the lives they themselves witness coalesce into a “society”. Through the existence of minor, different circumstances, a greater, layered hegemony is maintained, not fully recognized by most of the people living in it.

In a layered cultural hegemony, personal "common sense" maintains a dual structural role. Individuals utilize this "common sense" to cope with daily life and explain to themselves the small segment of the social order they come to witness in the course of this life. However, because it is by nature limited in focus, common sense also inhibits the ability to perceive the greater, systemic nature of socio-economic
exploitation that cultural hegemony makes possible. People concentrate their attention upon their immediate concerns and problems in their personal lives, rather than upon the fundamental sources of their social and economic oppression. The concept of Cultural Hegemony has primarily been used by leftists, organized conservative social organizations (movements) also have used it in their politics. An example, in the US of the 1990s, were the efforts of evangelical Christian organizations to win election onto local school boards in order to have the power to dictate curricula aligned with their religious interpretation of what constitutes a proper public education. To wit, in 1992, at the Republican Convention, the rightist politician Patrick Buchanan addressed the conventioneers using the term Culture war in describing his perception of US politics, as being the socio-political struggle between conservatism and liberalism. Alain De Benoist and others from the European New Right movement have also been known to follow and appreciate Gramscian notions and ideas. As a theory, Cultural Hegemony has deeply influenced Eurocommunism, the social sciences, and activist politics. In the social sciences, its theoretic application in examining major discourses (e.g. those posited by Michel Foucault) is an important aspect of anthropology, political science, sociology, and cultural studies; moreover, in education the concepts of cultural hegemony led to the
5.2 Identity crises of small ethnic groups:

Ethnicity and its allied consciousness are a universal phenomenon. Every community possesses specific identity markers even if, in popular usage, ethnicity is considered unique of tribal societies. Which is why questions concerning this issue are now a constant in any discussion among different cross sections in Assam. The idea, as much as the word, has become part of a new political vocabulary of power whose defining elements in the more extreme forms of expression are exclusion and hatred of the “other”. In fact, the Assam agitation machinery was based on two points — that a majority of Muslims are infiltrating from the open Bangladesh border and saliently settling in Assam; and that because of this unabated infiltration — of both Hindu and Muslim refugees, “indigenous” Assamese were being linguistically reduced to a minority, losing their socio-cultural identity in their own land. (Waterman, A.S., 1984, 36).
This then is the political irony of post-partition India, something no government has ever perceived as a problem. Be it the Nehru-Liaquat pact (1950), Indira-Mujib Accord (1971) or the much publicised Assam Accord (1985), they all failed to stop this "silent invasion". In the absence of any definite government policy, this infiltration gradually assumed alarming proportions and aliens became so politically strong that no party in India found itself in a position to form a ministry without their support. Assam’s indigenous people have already become minority in districts like Dhubri, Goalpara, Barpeta, Hailakandi, Morigaon, Nagaon, Karimganj and Cachar, which represents a threat to the socio-cultural subjugation of the entire North-east. This is one of the major sources of bitterness and tension in the region, particularly in Assam. Despite the existence of the Foreigner’s Act, 1946, which gave New Delhi certain powers to operate in respect of the entry, presence and departure of foreigners inside Indian territory, Parliament in 1983 enacted the Illegal Migrant (Determination by Tribunal) Act. Unlike the existing Foreigner’s Act, that was applicable to all of the country, the IMDT Act was solely applicable to Assam and projected as an instrument to detect and expel illegal immigrants from Bangladesh. Both Acts were focused political moves by New Delhi to spoil the growing influence of the All Assam Students’ Union and protect genuine Indian citizens affected by
the state agitation, whether religious and linguistic, from undue harassment. Interestingly, the IMDT Act was passed by a Parliament that enjoyed no members from Assam because of a boycott of elections on the issue. Unfortunately, the question of demographic change in Assam which has created an identity crisis for Assam’s indigenous ethnic people has become an election issue and all political parties wish to make hay. For the Congress, the issue is merely related to a vote bank. In the BJP’s lexicon, however, Bangladeshi Hindus are all refugees and Muslims represent infiltrators. Such a biased attitude can yield no result. For the Asom Gana Parishad, the situation is beyond reach. It cannot support the BJP or the Assam United Democratic Front agendas. Ironically, without the support of these parties, the AGP cannot fight the Congress. Its compulsion is quite clear. Since 1985, the stage of state politics saw some unprecedented changes, one obvious issue being the concept of regionalism. And so the unholy effort of making illegal immigration a mere election issue has done real damage to the cause of preserving the rights of ethnic people. No political organisation considers this from a broader and realistic perspective and the attitude of separatist outfits remains dubious. Opposition forces are biased and the common people have grown indifferent of what is going on. India’s tension over immigration and citizenship exists in Assam and other North-east states.
because the region has been forced to accept the majority of post-colonial immigration from erstwhile East Bengal/East Pakistan and the now Bangladesh region in spite of vehement protests. However, these grievances have been drowned out in the pan-Indian din and, consequently, have triggered a series of dangerous insurgencies. Thus, Assam has been suffering from tensions and cleavages between immigrant populations and indigenous peoples. The post-colonial management of ethnicity in Assam has been problematic as the state continues to experience bloody ethnic strife, ruthless insurgencies and civilian deaths. Modern states at both the provincial or federal level are critical participants in inter-ethnic affairs as their governments reflect the distribution of power and prestige among ethnic communities and influence these relationships by the policies enacted and enforced. There now remains an urgent need to address the concerns of ethnic groups. Indigenous people should be privileged and protected as “owners of land”. This should be amply demonstrated in constitutional measures. Primacy should be given with regard to employment, scholarships and education. This requires greater autonomy to Assam. An interesting suggestion for this state, as also other North-east states, could involve the grant of greater rights and autonomy. The Aasu, the Asom Jatiyatabadi Yuva Chatra Parishad and other indigenous student/youth organisations
need to fight on a unified agenda. The demand for ST status to six ethnic groups fighting for as much should be addressed with urgency, or else despondency could initiate another phase of terror. Which should be avoided. For several decades, Assam has witnessed an overload of tears and blood. This stunningly beautiful state and its people are struggling to negate the curse of history. The most tragic reality for today’s generation is to see Assam at the receiving end of a political game that threatens to destroy ethnic identity. And politicians driven by narrow ends never being any the wiser. (Md., Berzonsky, 1990, 34).

The term ethnic identity, ethnic groups i.e. small or large derive in twentieth century only and not popular or used three decides ago. These concepts are used in the year 1973 for the first time in Webster’s third new International Dictionary, with the following meanings –

(1) The condition of belonging to a particular ethnic group.

(2) Ethnic pride. This does not mean that ethnic groups have not existed in the past, but rather that they have taken on a new significance in the post colonial period as the developing nations of the world attempt to define their own identity and the peoples within them claim certain right on the basis of their belonging to a separate group. (Yinger, J. Milton, 1997, 54)
Ethnic identity is a universal phenomenon found among all human society. All members of any human society are integrated together through ethnic solidarity. Each member of a society shares certain common traits, i.e., language, dress, ant, social. Organization etc which are essential to being a member of a particular society to gather a specific identity. B. Pakem had wrote that all the state of India (including Assam) composite nation state having a large number of castes, creed and sects have derived large number of ethnic issues, problems. (Pakem, B (ed), 1990, 71)

B.M Das subdivided all the ethnic groups of Assam into two broad categories., i.e. tribal and non tribal. All tribal people have their own culture, traditions, language and physical characteristics but become a indispensable part of Assam by maintaining their own socio-cultural identities. (Das, B.M.,1987,4)

In the second half of the last century Assam witnessed a series of immigration, e.g. tea garden labourers from Bihar, Orissa, Madhya Pradesh, East Pakistan, East Bengal, Banglarlesh etc. These immigrations, more specifically from East Pakistan and Bangladesh
have created a big problem to the people of Assam. Due to the increase of
influx from outside, the inhabitants of Assam going to become minority
in their own homeland and making efforts by adopting different measures
to safeguard the interest of people and to preserve their socio cultural
identity. All the major tribal groups of Assam, i.e., Bado, Mishing, Karbi,
Rabha, Dimasa etc have started movement for the protection of their
ethnic identities and in order to fulfill their ethnic aspirations, they have
demanded separate political units of different forms for their own. The
settlement of Missing is concentrated on the banks of the Subansiri River,
Majuli, Jonai and Dhemaji areas. They also do not occupy a distinct
geographical territory for their own. This community aims at achieving
socialism for economic development of them. Missing community
belongs to Mongoloid stock, consisting of several groups such as Padam,
Minyoung, Pasi, Tangam Simong, Asing, Pangi, Ke-ri, Siyom, Milang,
Ramo, Bokar, Pailibo, Tgin, Galong, Nishi, Miji, Apatani, Bangri, Hill
Miri etc. These groups of people inhabit the major part of Arunachal
Pradesh with concentration in the central areas. Promade ch.
Bhattarcharjee had wrote that the Missings of Assam are divided into two
major endogamous groups-Baregam (twelve gams) and Dahgams (ten
gams). These two groups again have subdivided into large number of
minor groups
The Missing belongs to Tibeto Burman language speaking family. Missings are generally Hindu by religion. Christian Missionaries diligent efforts not able to Missing people to convert themselves as Christianity. During the first regime of Asom Gana parisad under the leadership of Chief Minister Prafulla kumar Mahanta, the first Missing National convention was held in 1989 at Jiyadhal of Dhemaji District. The mien aim of the convention was to gear up the agitation for a Missing Autonomous state. The most notable feature of the conventions was that it was attended by all Missing organization, Missing women’s Association etc. Missing political leaders attended the convention in which a consensus was drawn to carry on the agitation for an Autonomous state (Bhattarchajee, Promad ch, 1999, 156).
The diversities of the Indian subcontinent and the search for identity by different ethnic groups in democratic political processes pose a challenge to the centralized structure of the Indian policy. In order to meet this challenge the Indian political system tried to solve the problem of ethnicity centering round the linguistic identity. Accordingly it was on the basis of the recommendations of the State Reorganization Commission submitted to the Union Government in 1996 that fourteen states were demarcated and curved out to meet the linguistic demands of the ferment region. This was an attempt to foster the cultural identity of ethnic groups living in new states within the growth framework of the process of democratic nation-building. Another attempt to preserve the cultural identity was evident in the north-east region, when Nagaland, Meghalaya, Manipur, Arunachal Pradesh, Tripura and Mizoram got statehood in phases. To promote the cultural identity of the Nepali ethnic group. The grivenses of some tribes and their demand for Bodoland in Assam is also under consideration of the Union government and Assam Government. The political process for meeting the ethnic problems appears to be encouraging. Nevertheless, the ethnicity problem is not over and it has taken new shapes and turbulent turns in Assam. The militancy of the movements which active involvement of the youth in these states at the periphery of India either in the shape of ethnic identity or in the form
of greater state autonomy has posed a crisis situation in the nation. It appears that the ethnicity problems veer round cultural-cum-regional assertion and its rightful place in the nation. (Dutta Vijay Ranjan, 1993, 78)

Thus, the ethnicity problem purchased in the present structure of the polity has not been able to solve it. It seems that there are four basic reason for the failure:

(i) Hierarchy-based colonial administration borrowed from the west and thereby creating patron-client relation in society;

(ii) Gape between allied and mass-a by-product of centralized decision making process;

(iii) equation of power in polity not balanced leading to deprivation on the part of some ethnic groups;

(iv) youth power not utilized properly for the cause of the nation and thereby youths are attracted to militant ethnic movements for their welfare and betterment.

The identity problem of some ethnic groups is also precipitated by economic and political threats posed by migrants. For eg., the people of Assamese origin apprehend that their relative number will
decreased in their own state. They feel that their identity is likely to be
overshadowed by the migrants very soon. They may deprived of
political power even in their own state. It is also note worthy that only
10 percent people of Assamese origin are engaged in the Central services
creates the problem of sub-nationalism combined with violence and
terrorist forces. Consciousness of tribal identity and the desire for a
greater share in power appears to be the motivating force in tribal politics.
They demand a separate Union Territory within the Indian Union
consisting of different tribes spread over. (Joshi, P.C., 1986, 125)

The process of national integration depends neither on a
strong centralized policy nor on the development model of the west it has
to search indegeous system of integration. For this the nation has to
derived vigour from the value concept of non violence unless individual
virue of non violenece transforms in to social virue, the dynamics of
steangthening cohesive nation appears to be disturbed. It is the
paradigram of non violence which keeps the nation together, and the
spearit of participatory democracy alive. At first glance the approach
appears to be utopian but the crises situation makes it imperative to wave
out certain operational parts of the paradigm.

(194)
There are four components of paradigm of non violence to promote national integration:

(i) Leadership role
(ii) Never Restructuring policy.
(iii) Dynamics of non violence and series of dialogue and decision making proces.
(iv) Relation between culture and politics

Man often fails to transcend the frontiers of caste, religion, dialect and region for the larger interest of a cohesive nation. In this context, the people of the whole country. His view on crucial questions was never branded as parochial. His method of mass contact by undertaking intensive tours of different parts of the country was full of potentiality to bridge the communication gap between elite and mass. Today, leaders depend more on mass contact for a personal relationship with the common man. No doubt, when the crisis is deep, a drive for mass contact is launched by some political parties. Since the programme is taken up at a very late stage, its impact on the people is not effective and widespread. In fact, political parties have reduced themselves to a mere electoral machine. No serious attempt ha been made by most of the parties to institutionalize different forms of elite mass
relationship. The crisis situation demands that one communicates with
the people like Gandhi for inculcating sentiments of fellow feeling and
brotherhood. The leadership will have to provide goals and ideals for
redirecting human energy and resources to a more constructive and
national end and purpose. It would also be worthwhile to weave a pattern
of "constructive non-violence" into basic activities of human lives. It is
essential to put into practice the nineteen-fold constructive work
programme as devised by Gandhi for socio-economic transformation.
Such a programme can provide the basis for non-violent social
relationships. New items can be added according to exigencies of the
present crisis. The successful application of a constructive work
programme2 like eradication of untouchability. Uplift of the Scheduled
Tribes, voluntary prohibition, communal harmony, etc., requires training
of dedicated and experiments of non-violence with continuity. (Gandhi,
M. K., 1949, 105-109)

It is a matter of debate whether the centralized parliamentary system of
Indian polity can tackle the divers problems of the vast nation. Politics
today is confined to Central and State levels of governance. Political
parties rely on the charisma of a few top leaders. This creates a wide gulf
between State and Society. As a result, the initiative of society for
building the nation is lost. Reviewing the working of the Indian polity, Jayaprakash Narayan stated: "The truth must be faced that the people have not been able to experience the sensation of Swaraj. It is only the very thin layer of the educated middle class, and even of them only those directly engaged in political activity, who are involved in the working of our democracy." (Narayan, Jayprakash, 1961, 2)

This implies that majority of the people don’t have any stake in political power. And certain ethnic-cum-regional groups still remain at the periphery and are far away from the center of political power. Although emphasis has been laid by some social scientists on “district” as the third tier of federal polity, the pyramidal structuring of power is still the core of Indian polity. There is hierarchy of power with higher and lower levels of structure. It must accept the fact that hierarchy and integration cannot go together and thus it seems very difficult to promote a cohesive autonomous unity at different levels which would be organically linked together by a principle of integration which he calls “an oceanic circle”. It is relevant to cite Gandhi’s views on the “oceanic circle”: “In this structure composed of innumerable villages there will be ever widening, never ascending circles. Life will not be a pyramid with the apex sustained by the bottom. But it will be an oceanic circle whose
center will be the individual always ready to perish for the village, the latter ready to perish for the circle of village, till at last, the whole becomes one life composed of individuals, never aggressive in their arrogance but ever humble sharing the majesty of the oceanic circle of which they are integral units. Therefore, the outermost circumference will not wield power to crush the inner circle but give strength to all within and derive its own from the center."

The framework of oceanic circle ensures a measure of autonomy, and self-reliance at different levels for involving the people. In a way, this is an attempt to establishment what G.D.H. Calls “little democracies” at different levels and thereby the present form of centralized parliamentary democracy is replaced by multiple centers of power and decision-making. Since the conceptual framework of the oceanic circle ensures dignity, equal status and autonomy to individuals, ethnic groups and regions, the problem of alienation will not arise and thereby different ethnic groups and units of the nation will work in unison for restructuring the polity and should be considered as one of the basic conditions for national integration. (Joshi, P.C., 1986, 234)
Missing people generally inhabited on the river bank. Regular floods and erosion made Missing people land less. This situation influenced their agro-based economy which laid a pitiable condition. On the other hand they fail to arrange irrigation to prevail draught conditions. These people get deprived of Government packages on developed agriculture. The school and colleges but almost all the educational institutions are withering away due to inadequate fund from the Government. There is no technical institute of any kind in the areas with Missing domination. There are only two ITI in Tezpur and Dhemaji where seat reservation for tribal students in technical and non-technical education is not adequate. Missing have a distinct language and culture of their own and as per provision of Article 350 of constitution of India it is possible for any state Government to introduce the use of minority language as a medium of instruction at the primary level. The Government of Assam did not take any initiative till the Missing people agitated for more than fifteen years to persuade the state Government to introduce the Missing language as the medium of instruction in primary level. However in 1986 the Assam Government took a favorable decision in this regards. The homeland of Karbi population are generally Karbi Anglong District. Karbis are also inhabited in Nagaon, North Cacher Hill, Khashi and Jayanties Hill. Karbis have a distinct geographical territory to

(199)
justify their claim for a separate political unit. Karbi student union agitated to acquire progressive democratic education system; for socio-economic, cultural and political identity, deprivation of sensitive rights, communalization and state repression. (ibid 119)

Similarly the North coacher Hills district is the homeland of the Dimasa and so they are also brought under an Autonomous district council.(ibid38)

Niru Hazarika very fairly discussed about different ethnic groups, their demands and activities etc. Rabhas are emerging as one of the predominant inhabitants of Assam. In an organized way they have also demanded ethnic Autonomy. All Rabha National council was coined in 1926 at Goalpara district. The main objectives of the council were protect age old identity, unity and integrity; preserve and safeguard language and culture; improve the standards of living; spread of education; develope socio economic condition etc. In 1973 Bebak Rabha, Kowrang Ranchum submitted a Memorandum to the Chief Minister of Assam Sarat Chandra Singha for recognition of Rabha Language. In the year 1992, a four-tier Autonomous council was formed as follows:

1. Rabha Hasong Autonomous State.

(200)
2. Rabha Hasong Autonomous District Council.


4. Rabha Hasong Autonomous village council.

This council for the first time express protest by boycott Independence Day celebrations as the first phase of agitation to realize the Rabha Hasong Autonomous State comprising the Rabha dominated areas in Kamrup and Goalparar districts. Rabhas scattered in Chaygaon, Paneri, Kalaigaon and Mongoldoi areas too. This group of people agitated to achieve a ethnic protection. (Hazarika Niru, 2005,164)

Among all the tribal groups, the ethnic movement takes a most vigorous forum in the cases of Bodos. The Bodo activists are divided into many groups on the basis of their different kinds of demand. Some groups demand a separate Bodo land state and some others who are hard core extremists adopting terrorism and violence of different forms are found to be restless till they achieve a sovereign Bodo land seceding from India. (ibid,166)

The Bodos constitute an important part of population of Assam, as the largest tribal group in the state. They have their own history, social culture and language. (Chatterji, S.K,1956,45)
Gurudev kalicharan Braham organised Bodo Maha Sanmilon and laid emphasis on Bodo society's social change. His effort was followed by Dwarendra Basumatary, Promad Brahma, Islam Mushahary, Rupnath Brahma, Satish Basumatary, Sitànath Brahma Choudhoury etc. So Bodo’s were struggling for development of the society and safeguard of their identity. This struggle is not a present day phenomenon but started along with the memorandum, submitted to Simon Commission visited Assam in 1922 by Asom Kachari Yubak Sanmilan. Bodo Sahitya Sabha was formed in 1952 and making effort to develop the Bodo language. Bodos are an important plain tribe of Assam and is playing very significant role in the politics of the state creating a turning point in the political History of Assam. All Bodo student union was founded 15 Feb 1967 at Kokrajhar Tribal Rest House with a view to united together all students of various Bodo groups of the world. The constitution of All Bodo student’s union (ABSU) was accepted to safeguard and develop socio-economic conditions, culture, civilization, etc. of the great Bodo nationality. On 27 Feb 1967 The plains Tribal council of Assam (PTCA) a political party was formed at initiative of ABSU. It is a Bodo Based regional political party. On the May 1967 the PTCA submitted a memorandum to the president of India, Dr Zakir Hussain at New Delhi for the creation of an Autonomous Region for the plain tribals of Assam.

(202)
In 1972, when Assembly Election was held, Charan Nazary, a candidate of PTCA was elected from the Kokrajhar Assembly seat. In 1973 ABSU demanded for a Union Territory in the place of Autonomous Region, viz, Udayachal covering all the plain tribals of Assam. It was followed by the Bodo language Movement as regards was of Roman script. On 18 Nov, 1988 at the initiative of ABSU a new organization was formed, viz Bodo Peoples Action Committee (BPAC) including all Bodo groups, e.g., Boro-Kachari, Mech-Kachari, Hojai-Kachari, Rabha, Garo, Deori, Barmans of Cachar, Koch-Rajbanshi and other sub groups of the Bodo nationality. In August 1988 ABSU and BPAC organised a talk at Delhi with central Government where Rajendra Kumari Bajpai was the representative from the side of Central Government. The fifth round of the talk was significant to which a 12 member team was led by Upendranath Brahma, because it decided to constitute a committee of Bodo issue (COBI) to identify the genuine grievances of the Bodos and the Committee was asked to submit its report by July 2, 1990.

Upendranath Brahma was passed away on 1 May, 1990 and he was succeeded by Khungur Bismutiary. The COBI submitted its report on July 2, 1990 at New Delhi in sixth round of talk. In the seventh round of talk Assam Government offered Panchayat Raj as a solution, but the
Bodo team rejected it. Again, on 23\textsuperscript{rd} Feb, 1991 the central Government announced the constitution of a 3 member expert committee under the chairmanship of Dr. Bhupinder Sing. But the ABSU and BPAC rejected the recommendation of the which offered formation of two Autonomous countries on the Banks of river Brahmaputra—Western council for the Bodos and Eastern council for the Missings. On 29 June the Assam Government advanced a proposal envisaging a two tire Autonomous council—village council at the bottom and body at the top in the villages having 59\% or more Bodo people thus also could not satisfy the ABSU and BPAC and was followed by a joint meeting of AASU (All Assam Student Union) and ABSU (All Bodo Student Union), at Gauhati University campus in which they agreed for a amicable solution to the demand for Bodoland. In the meeting AASU was led by Sarbananda Sanowal and ABSU by Rabi Ram Brahma. Ultimately, a memorandum of Settlement (MoS) as signed between State Government, central Government and ABSU, which was signed by ABSU president S.K. Bwismutiary, K.S. Rao Additional Chief Secretary Rajesh Pilot, Union Minister of Assam Legislative Assemmbly passed the Bodoland Autonomous council Bill; ON 8\textsuperscript{TH} April, 1993 and it become an act on receipt of the assent of the then President of India, Shankar Dayal Sharma. (Hazarika, Niru, 2005, 57-72).
On 20th Feb, 1993 the MoS was signed by the parties in discussion and it was known as the Bodo accord. The objective of the Accord was to provide maximum autonomy within the framework of the constitution of India to the Bodos for social, economic, educational, ethnic and cultural advancement council (BAC). Tiwa is a prominent plain Tribe of Assam. This community have stated that, however resides in the hills of Karbi Anglong, Kamrup, Marigaon, Darrang, Dhemaji and Jorhat district of Assam. The Tiwas living in plains have accepted the local cultural life but the hill Tiwas adhering to the old system. Plain Tiwas have adopted Hindism and Vaishnavism. But Hill Tiwas have common dialects, housing patterns, dress and food habits and social festivals. Tiwas joined in Indian National Congress in 1885 and fight against the British. Gradually they started converting themselves into the Koch community as they were deeply influenced by the, language and culture of Assamese people. The language in 1960 inculcated a sense of insecurity in the minds of Tiwa. Incasing Deuri leave his Government job suddenly and mobilizing the educated youths of the Tiwas and a Anglong District and in this conference the Lalung Darbang Hill sub division. They submitted memorandum on several occasion to the Prime-Minster of India identifying the boundaries of the Proposed Lalung Autonomous Hill District was formed in a special convention under the Tiwas Darbar with
Robotsing Deuri and Mukunda Biordoli as president and General secretary which decided to start agitational programme and demanded Autonomous District Tiwa students took part in Assam agitation but in 1985 when Assam accord was signed by AASU, Tiwa become dissatisfied. In 30th Oct, 1985 at Jagiroad a meet was organised between All Assam Lalung Sanmillan and the Lalung Darbar and formed Autonomous Lalung District Demand Committee (ALDDC). The ALDDC changed the demand from the Autonomous Hill District to an Autonomous Lalung District. The ALDDC, ATSU, ATWA and Tiwa Sanmilan submitted several memorandum to the state and central Governments, but no response was received by them. At last in the early part of 1993, the Government of Assam declared to grant Autonomy to the Missing, Rabha and Tiwa. On 10th Dec, 1993 the Government of Assam invited the ALDDC and ATSU for a discussion, but this discussion was not satisfactory. Then ALDOC again submit a memorandum where state about a model Autonomous council. The Assam Government signed an accord with ALDC. The Tiwa Accord provide for a Lalung Autonomous council consisting of satellite areas of the village council. There would be no separate compact areas or village boundary. The apex council would consist of 144 villages of Kamrup, Morigoan and Nagoan and 28 Blocks. The ALDOC demanded 174 more
villages along with villages. This accord was meaningless to Tiwas and they unhappy for it. All Assam Deuri Students Union established on 1959 at North Lakhimpur, keeping in view the aims and objectives to stand for various burning problems of Assam to provide solution of their political, social, economic, educational and cultural aspects. Their current demands are basically based on those issues which are not solved by Government of Assam due to political interest. Such demands are generally—demand for a separate Greater Deuri Autonomy in Assam, recognition of Deori language in education level etc. The student union of Moran community established on 1968 have demanded to include Morans under ST list to preserve their non distinctive art and culture. All Tai Ahom Students Union was established on 1987, keeping in view the aims and objectives of to develop and preserve own culture and language, Traditional Tai Customs, Monuments and arts, socio economic developments, provision for S.T. Students etc. (ibid, 78-270).

Besides the Tai Ahoms— the Chaodangs have raised the question of cultural identity. Chaodangs were originally one of the sections (Khel or Phoid) of Ahoms and entrusted the responsibility of punishing the offenders and acted as royal watchmen. They assimilated.
to the greater Assamese society. But now they became conscious about their economic and educational backwardness. (Pakem, B, 1990,179)

B, Pakem stated that, the tea industry had grown up in Assam in early part of nineteenth century. British brought tea garden laboures from Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Orrissa, Madhya Pradesh etc. At first they worked only as tea garden laboures. But since last quarter of 19th century, there was an observable change is their life style. They started to settle in rural areas of Assam and have accepted agriculture as main livelihood. They assimilated to the greater Assamese society. Assertion of identities among tea garden laboures however is proportional to the numerical strength of the particular group in the multi ethnic context. Now they are trying to impress Government to provide ST Status (Pakem, B. (ed),159-160)

5.3 Role of Christian Missionaries and Imperialism:

Nineteenth century is very significant in the history of Assam from several point of view. During this period a few incidents accrued in Assam which had far reaching impact in the modern period of the state. The Assam was invaded by Burmese soldiers for three consecutive times during the period 1817-1825 and simultaneous fall of
the Ahom regime paved the way for taking over by the erstwhile East India Company as per provisions of the treaty of Yandaboo signed between the king of Ava and the company. (Bhuyan, S.K., 650).

It is found in History of Assam of S.K. Bhuyan that- With the advent of the East India Company American Baptist Missionaries stepped into our land for propagation Christianity at the patronage of the former. Rev. Nathen Brown and Oliver T. Cultter were the first missionaries to come over here who arrived at Sadia was shifted to Jaypur and again to Sibsagar in Upper Assam. The Missionaries established the Assam Mission Press, the first ever printing machine at Sibsagar on 15th November, 1843. The press has contributed a lot towards the society as well as literature in Assam American Baptist Missionaries published different books in Assamese one after another in the Mission press. Some of the books were related to Christianity and some others were connected with the history and literature of the land. The text books published by the Mission press of American Baptist Missionaries played significant role in reintroducing Assamese in the school and officers of the province. The American Missionaries have a greater role in expansions of British Imperialism. The Missionaries Propagated Christianity among the local...
people which was considered a great threat to local religion and culture. (Neog, M (ed) Arunodoi, 68)

M. Neog wrote that in 1806, Lord William Bentinck expressed that *Our first wish must be to see the followers of Mohmet and Brahmo embrace Christianity*. Understood the relation between British imperialism and propagation of Christianity. The Christian Missionaries had started to coming to Assam in 1829. The British imperialism started in India mainly for trade and commerce. The advent of Christian introduced a new phase in Assamese language, literature and education and developed appreciably. The fundamental aim of these Missionaries was to propagate Christian religion through European mode of education and literature. Local language was not an end in itself but a means to the spread of Christianity. In order to execute this design, they studied the Assamese language and preached evangelicalism by translating the Bible into Assamese. In the charter Act of 1813 the British parliament made Indian education an important aspect and allow Missionaries to propagate Christianity in the States of India. (Ibid, 1991, 78)

In 1841, Nidhi Ram an Assamese youth converted to Christianity at first and joined as a worker of Mission. He was posted at
Sibsagar. Miles Bronson was born on 22 July, 1812 at Norway in state of New York, USA. The American Baptist Missionary union appointed him as a missionary to Assam. Bronson reached Sadia on July, 1837 through water ways. He worked in Assam stationing himself at Sadia, Jaipur, Sibasagar, Nagaon and Guwahati. He along with two other missionaries, Nathan Brown and Cyrus Borker, were instrumental in organising and founding the first Baptist church at Guwahati on 25th January 1845 and pioneered in establishing Assamese schools in different parts of the states. However, the most successful work of Bronson was founding the orphan institution where taken care and imported education. Bronson was a linguist per excellence very soon he become master of the Assamese language. He was deeply involved in teaching, translating and preparing books in Assamese. A good number of hymns are still used in many churches in Assam. Bronson and his co-workers understood that propagation of Christianity among Hindu people of Assam not an easy task, so they decided to spread Christianity among tribals of hill areas. They become successful to spread Christianity in the hill areas. (ibid, 87)

In 1836, the British rulers imposed Bengali as the court language as well as the medium of instruction in Assam. The justification of this imposition was that Assamese was though to be a colloquial
dialect and sub language or upabhasa of Bengali. William Robinson, Inspector of Government schools in the book *Grammar of the Assamese Language* published in 1837 noted that Assamese was identical with Bengali. However, in contrast to the Government, the school founded by American Baptist Missionaries used Assamese as the medium. Bronson, Nathan Brown and other Missionaries understood that Assamese was the lingua-franca to establish relationship with the people of hill areas. One Missionary Denford wrote that *If the Missionaries should adopt Bengali as the means of communicating religious truth, every one would doubt them.* (ibid, 78,158)

Nathan Brown published *Auronadai*, the first Assamese Magazine from the Mission press at Sibasagar beginning from January 1846. Bronson requested Robinson to send his argument in favoure of Bengali and asked other Missionaries, including Nathan Brown, A.H. Daford, William Ward and I.J. Stoddard to comment on Robinson’s paper. Bronson sent a letter and Robinson’s paper along with comments of these missionaries to the Lt. Governor F. James Haliday advocating the cause of Assamese. Bronson in his letter included, *Since the establishment of the American Mission in Assam....We have by every means in our power endeavoured to make ourselves acquainted with the*
people and by daily inter course acquir their language, so as to be able to communicate to them in the most direct manner....We have also established two printing presses and issued the whole New Testament, Portions of elementary books for schools and a monthly paper (Aurunodoi)...all in the vernacular.(Bhattacharya, Satish ch,2001,9 December,11)

Bronson published a 66 page spelling book and vocabulary in English, Assamese, Singpho and Naga in 1839. Other monumental work of Bronson was *Compilation of Asomiya aru Ingraji Abhidhan*- the first dictionary in Assamese containing 14,000 word entries published in 1867. This was a fruit of his 12 years of relentless labour. Even the primary mission of the Christianity and published Auronodoi. Auronodoi played a great role in the pathway of development of Assamese language and literature. (ibid,2001,16)

British Imperialism influenced the society and life of the ethnic people of Assam. It is a topic of discussion whether this imperialism able to destroy the dissimilarity of caste and creed among different groups or able to create integrity, classes society etc. In ancient time before the British Imperialism we found that abode of a variety of
ethnic groups speaking different language and dialects and leading
distinct colourful cultural lives, some living in the hills ever since the
draws of the civilization and others inhabiting the plains. But in spite of
physical diversity, separate cultural patterns, clan and group allegiances,
there exists an inner bond of unity among the people of the land which
binds them together. This racial harmony was largely due to intimate
contact among different ethnic groups throughout the centuries. But in
nineteenth century this sinario going to be changed. Gunariram Baruah
had wrote that educated Assamese youths started to consider themselves
as backward by living style. They started to accept materialistic way of
living. We found a derogatory mind set towards the region and tried to
place themselves in a higher social stratum. Such type of mindset was
also found in ancient period, but during that period it was tried to
assimilate small ethnic groups into higher stratum. In ancient period
Vaishnavite Sattras were established in tribal areas, hill areas. But British
imperialism create a negligence towards the small ethnic groups which
lead. Educated Middle class Assamese people started to think about their
Hindu traditions, rites. They became conscious about on the orthodoxy
Hindu religion and accepted western mode of living, influenced by Hindu
rites, rituals of Bengali people. This incident create a distance between
middle class educated Assamese and other ethnic groups. (Baruah, Guaviram, 1992, 52),

British imperialism also influenced the economy of the region. The uneducated ethnic groups of the region failed to walk along with new economy and social developments. British laid more emphasis on the education of the childrens of higher class Assamese section than the childrens of small ethnic groups. The childrens admitted in the schools were from the families of Darrah, Kakati, Brahmin, Kalita, Kayashtha etc only. Childrens of low class families were not allowed to enter in the schools. If even admitted, the teachers not treat them will and teach properly. Sometimes such children have to faced corporal punishment too. British Government appointed persons in different Govt. parts from the families of upper social order. (Dutta Dilip, 1987, 56).

The children of the families of the families of low social stratum a tribal families were failed to earn higher education. They become back ward and neglected in the pathway of development. Social discrimination increased between higher and lower classes. If we study the Jiban Carit (i.e.- biography) of educated Assamese youth we would find the reflection of the society in their thoughts and creation of literary work. The tribal ethnic groups were not familiar with the western culture,
made of living. So, they feel a distance with the new circumstances. (Baruah, Gunaviram, 1972, 167).

As the grip of the colonial power loosened, ethnic kinship, regional and religious ties both old and new, treated to demolish the fragile social order left in the wake of colonialism. It led to the fragmentation of the state. Inter group conflicts erupted within populated who ostensibly shared elaborate and long established ties. There is a tie amongst the ethnic groups in the Assamese language and a sense of belonging to the state. Ethnic groups stated to understood ethnic realities—the claims of ethnic and racial groups for their identity, for land, jobs, restitution, recognition, autonomous and so on.