RELIGION OF THE BOROS
AND
THEIR SOCIO-CULTURAL TRANSITION

CHAPTER IV
CHAPTER IV

THE RELIGIOUS MOVEMENT
(The Process of Conversion to different Sects of Hinduism)

Hinduism is the major religious belief and tradition of the Boros of the Brahmaputra valley. A thorough analysis shows that the origin and development of the Bathou religion is also a part of the evolution of the spirit of the Hinduism in the sub-continent, India. So, to study various developments of the religion of the Boros, it is also necessary to survey Hinduism.

It is very difficult to define Hinduism because of its manifold forms. Unlike the Muslim or the Christian religion, Hinduism is neither a particular sect of belief or social system, nor it is a founded religion. “But as eternal truth they have existed all times. Their validity does not depend on the historicity of any human being at all.” Hinduism can be defined as a deposit of different beliefs, practices, knowledge, and values of different human races of the sub-continent since the inception of Indian civilization.

“Hinduism always absorbs anything that is good and valuable, from whichever quarter it may come. At the same time it also shares its wisdom with whosoever seeks it. Its doors are open to all, different modes of worship are welcome; different styles of living among the people of the world are welcome too…..” Thus Hinduism is not a static social or religious code but it is a living and growing dynamic spirit.
"The present form, in which we find Hinduism today is the product of long continuous course of evolution of the spirit of Hinduism through hundreds of centuries."³

The Vedas are the basic religious texts of the Hindus, and these truths were revealed to the sages and seers. But as eternal truth they existed at all times and it is always willing to absorb newer elements of values. The Vedas were handed down orally from one generation of Brahmin to another for nearly three thousand years, with hardly any error. The Rig Veda is the oldest of Vedas having been composed between 1500 and 900 B.C.⁴

Many a time Brahmanism is perceived to be real Hinduism. But the fundamental distinction between them is that, Brahmanism is a religion synonymous with Vedism prevailing in ancient India, but Hinduism refers to the entire stream of religion of the sub-continent, which has gone through several stages in its evolution.

Hinduism, from within itself, evolved numerous branches and sub sections in different times and it has apparently originated from conflicting ideals and standard of values, religious faith and philosophical doctrines, social customs and rules of individuals conduct etc. Different doctrines of Hinduism like Polytheism, Henotheism, Ditheism, Monotheism Pantheism, Theism, Absolute-Monism came into being in different period.⁵

The religion is the potent source, which had resulted into positional change of the Boros in the Hindu society. To understand the social mobility and the process of Hinduization it is foremost essential to know the religious development among the Boros.
Religion from primitive to the modern age occupied a very important place in all the societies. The Boro religion could not remain in seclusion for a long time as it was akin to some cult of Hindu religion. The traditional Boro religion came into contact and influence of, other religion since long. And some of them adopted completely a new religion by abandoning their traditional religion, belief and culture.

CONTACT WITH HINDU RELIGION:

The traditional Bathou religion is a monotheism, which believes in multiple gods and goddesses. Though in the traditional religion the Boro Kocharies have numerous gods and goddesses, most of the less important deities have either disappeared, or the Hindu deities have taken their place. As a result of their contact with Hindu religion, only a small number seems to be their original pantheon, many have been borrowed from their Hindu neighbours.6 The three spines of the Sijou plant symbolize three principle deities, Brahma, Vishnu and Maheswar and they are worshipped with other deities like, Gaija, Hanbai, Bisahari, Mahadev, Ranachandi, Jarapagla and others.7

It is found that the Hindu deities like, Brahma, Vishnu, Maheswar, Bisahari, Mahadev, Ranachandi, I.akhi etc. have been occupying prominent place among the Bathou pantheons. Many deities with Aryan names must have been borrowed from Hindus or the original names were replaced by Hindu names as a result of blending of Aryan culture.
Emile categorized the pantheon of Boro Kocharies into household deities and village deities. Bathou is evidence through his living symbol the Sijou plant in the courtyard of a home surrounded by circular fence of split Bamboo. Among the numerous village deities many such as Mero Raja, Bura Mahadev, Bura Gosai, Jal Kuber, That Kuber, Kuber Brai, Kuber Brui- Kuber is the Hindu god of wealth of the lower religion. S.N. Sharma writes, “Saivism which was the dominant religion of the ruling dynasties and also of the Hinduised population up to the twelfth century A.D. bears certain affinities with Boro tribal deity, Sibray Bathou. Siva represented by a Linga in Hinduism is similarly represented by a cactus shoot in the Boro traditional religious belief. Hara and Parvati are sometimes worshipped in popular Hindu religion as Burdha Gohai (old god) and Budhi Gohai (old goddess). The Bodos also worship them similarly.”

It appears that many elements of Saivism sect of Hinduism came within the pale of Bathou religion or vice-versa, as a consequence of the foundation of classical Hindu thought and practice, since long back. The Saivism and the Bathouism are two diverse forms of the same cult of Hinduism who lead themselves to the same ultimate goal.

ADVENT OF BRAHMA DHARMA:

In the early years of the 20th century a new religious movement led by Kalicharan Mech, latter known as Gurudev Kalicharan Brahma, took place in the Boro society. The new and refined cult
known as *Brahma Dharma* was founded by Sivnarayan Param Hansa Swami, which was brought and preached among the Boros by Kalicharan Brahma in 1906 (Bangla 1312) and onwards.¹⁰

On the eve of the 20th century, Boro society sunk in the mist of evil, disorder, superstition, backwardness etc. perhaps it was the darkest period in the History of Boro society. That was degradation and degeneration in the socio-economic life of the Boros. Excessive and regular use of liquor and meat in the name of religion and festivity had demoralised the common people as a whole.

There was chaos and confusion in the traditional religion as it has lost the original spirit of spirituality but none came forward to rescue the Boro society by reforming the evil practices. In the mean time, the Christian missionaries had started converting some Boros into Christianity some Boros became Sarania by adopting *Ek Saran Nam Dharam* of Srimat Shankardev and abandoned their original culture and language. In the villages like Panbari and Alamganj of the present Dhubri district many Boros were converted to Islam and lost their original identity. Even Kalicharan himself saw the Boros of Bainyaguri, Malotijhora, Auabari, becoming Saraniya.¹¹

In such a critical period Kalicharan appeared as a messiah of the Boro society who realised that the Boros needed to be educated and the entire socio-economic and political condition need to be transformed and the traditional Bathou religion did not suit for the time. On the other hand, Islam or *Ek Sharan Nam Dharma*, would not protect their identity, language and culture. At last he saw a ray of
hope in *Brahma* religion, which would save the Boro society from that critical stage.

**GURUDEV KALICHRARAN BRAHMA:**

Gurudev Kalicharan Brahma (Kalicharan Mech) was born in the village of Kazigaon of Parbat Jowar area, under the present Dhubri district in 1862. His father Kaula Mech was a wealthy person. He received very little education. After learning two years under the private tutor Bir Narayan Sarkar, he came to Tipkai primary School and finished his education at Puthimary M.V. School. Then he began to study religious scriptures, Gita, Bible, Koran, Veda, Upanishad, etc. He was married at fifteen years of age. After the death of his father he carried on the Timber business of his father as *Ejadar*. Once when Kalicharan came to Charan Mandal Mech's camp for business purpose, he happened to see a book *Sar Nitya Kriya* about the Brahma religion, written by Mohini Mohan Chattapadhyay. After reading that book, Kalicharan was determined to meet Siv Narayan Param Hansa, the founder of Brahma religion, at Calcutta.

In 1905, Kalicharan along with his friends Karan Mandal Mech, Charan Mandal Mech and Jamadar Mech went to Calcutta and met Swami Siv Narayan Param Hansa at Bhabanipur Road. On the advice of Siv Narayan, Kalicharan devoted himself to the study of Amrit Sagar, Gita, Vedas, Upanishad, Ramayan, Mahabharat, etc. and from Swami he learnt about the teaching of Brahma Dharma and started preaching among the Boros.
In 1906, Kalicharan brought Phanindra Chatterjee, one of the preachers of Brahma religion from Calcutta and under his Purohit the first *Hum Yajna* was performed in the village Bainyaguri with the *Gayatri Mantram*.

*Om Ayahi Barde Devi Tyagare*

*Brahma badini, Gayatri Chandasan*

*Mato Brahma joni Namahastote.*

Thousands of Boro people participated in the *Yajnahuti*. It was for the first time that the Vedic religion began to embrace thousands of Boro people within its realm.

In the same year the second *Yajnahuti* was performed, on a large scale, at Kazigaon, the birth of Gurudev Kalicharan Brahma. Similar *Yajnas* were also performed at Gombhira Khata in 1907 and at Banshijora in 1908.

In 1908, Kalicharan Brahma for the first time performed a *Yajnahuti* as Purohit, on the occasion of *Mahalaya*, at Borkella hilltop of Rajdambra near Borshijhora village. It was attended by thousands of Boros, who accepted the new religion warmly.12

**SPREAD OF BRAHMA DHARMA:**

Being enlightened on Vedic scriptures Kalicharan Brahma preached Brahma religion in the entire Parbat Jowar area of present Dhubri district, and in villages like Adabari, Auabari, Banargaon, Khashibari of Kokrajhar district and also in the villages like Roumari,
Khagrabari, Bamungaon, Dangaigaon, etc. of present Bongaigaon district and gradually spread to many other areas.

By that time Christian missionaries had established schools or hospitals at Gaurang, Bengtal, Tukrajhar, Grahampur, Haraputa, Joima and converted many Boros into Christianity, along with other tribes like, Rabha, Santal, Garo, etc. but the spread of Brahma religion completely checked further conversion of Boros into Christianity. Even some newly converted Boro Christians came back to Brahma religion.

In his work of preaching, Kalicharan was not without obstruction, he was oppose by Rai Saheb Jagat Chandra Mauzadar of fourth division Sidli, who wanted to make Boros Saraniya with the Help of Ananta Narayan Goswami of Baithamari. But Kalicharan could convince him and Mauzadar admired his knowledge of Hindu scriptures. Thus many Boros came under the main fold Hinduism by accepting Hindu religion.

Besides Assam, he went to Jalpaiguri district of West Bengal, where he was helped by prominent personalities, Bag Mandal, Biman Sing Khatam and Haridas Gabur, etc. and preached Brahma religion among the Boros of West Bengal.

Gurudev Kalicharan Brahma was assisted by many prominent and enlightened Boros in his work of proselytizing, who were also his disciples like, Charan Mandal Brahma of Bainyaguri, Jamadar Brahma of Patakata, Bir Narayan Brahma of Daulabari, Kalicharan Brahma (Second) of Simbargaon, Bantri Kr Brahma of Bamunkura, Karan Mandal of Patakata, Malsing Brahma Choudhury of Patakata,
Monbaru Brahma of Bhalukmari, Dwijendra Bath Brahma of Basbari, Sabha Brahma of Bhalukmari, Shyam Charan Brahma of Daulabari, Rupnath Brahma (Ex Minister of Assam, 1938-1967), Padmashri Madaram Brahma (litterateur) etc. 13

From 1913 to 1914, Kalicharan visited Krishnai Dudnoi and Rangjuli of South Goalpara and gave sermon among the Boros. He was warmly assisted by Narapati Basumatary and Yudhisthir Hajoary of Kharalalpara village of Dudnoi and accepted by the people. In 1940, under the initiative of Yudhisthir Hajoary and Narapati Basumatary the Dinananda Shanti Ashram was established at Loreng hill near Daranggiri for the spread of Brahma dharma among the Boros.

In 1914-15, Gurudev went to Dibrugarh district along with his disciples, Kalicharan Brahma II, Yadav Chandra Khakhlary and Jadunath Khakhlary and preached among the Boros of the district. He also went to Nagaon district and converted large number of Boros to Brahma dharma.

The most remarkable development after embracing Brahma religion was the change of their Surname. Many Boros used to write Mech after their name, which was thought as Mlechcho (a non-Hindu) by the Aryans and they regarded Mech as Sudra caste and look down or despised them. When Kalicharan discussed the metter with Siv Narayan Param Hansa, he advised that Boros should write ‘Brahma’ after their name.

In 1911 Gurudev Kalicharan Brahma appealed to the Deputy Commissioner and the census commissioner of Goalpara district to
allow the change their surname and henceforth the followers of *Brahma Dharma* were entitled to write Brahma after their name. However they were given the right to take either Brahma or the original titles like, Basumatary, Narzary, Mushahary, Daimary, Goyary, etc. after their name.

**BORO MAHA SANMILAN:**

Along with the preaching of *Brahma dharma*, Gurudev went ahead with reformation mission to uplift the Backward Boro society. With a view to accomplish his missionary work he organized the first meeting of the *Boro Maha Sanmilan* in 1921 at Bhauraguri village of Gossaigaon under Goalpara district (then). Thousands of people attended the *Maha Sanmilan*. It was the first socio-religious upsurge in the Bodo society. Rupnath Brahma then a student was the Secretary of the sub-committee. Along with the prolonged religious deliberation the conference resolved to work for the development of the Boro society and for the uplift of Education. With the increasing and wider appreciation of the value of reform, the spiritual life of man rose correspondingly higher in society.

**The Second Boro Maha Sanmilan** was held in Rangia of Kamrup district in 1925. The Chairperson of this *Sanmillan* was Madhav Sharma of Tejpur. Other important personalities of this conference were Sobharam Brahma, Yadav Chandra Khakhlary, Ravi Kochari, Yogendra Kochari, Sabha Uzir, Gopal Uzir, Durga Mauzadar etc. The Boros of different parts of Assam and Bengal had
come to participate in the *Sanmilan*. As a matter of fact the huge Assembly experienced this height of spiritual ecstasy. The *Sanmilan* in the august present of Gurudev Kalicharan Brahma, endorsed the resolution adopted in the first *Sanmilan* and further adopted some reformatory resolutions. Some of the important resolutions with regard to social elevation are as follows.

1. Liquor is a source of miseries and evils in the society. The preparation and use of liquor be totally banned.

2. Pig breeding was to be restricted as it makes the whole compound of the house dirty and pollute the environment. Moreover, it was one of the reasons for being hated by the Hindus.

3. The only way to elevate the Boro Society was the spread of education among the mass people. So, education should be compulsory for all boys and girls.

4. The bride price was fixed to rupees fifty-one only, which was unlimited, even sometimes it was more than thousand in those days. In case of widow, only rupees twenty-five might be demanded. If some body demands more than that he would be punishable by the society.

5. A periodical, in this respect, should be published to cultivate the intellectual faculty of the Boro people. The women organization should be formed and encouraged.

6. The propitiation of deities and spirit should be given up.

In 1929 the *third Boro Maha Sanmilan* was held at Roumari near Bongaigaon. The *Sanmilan* was presided over by Yadav
Chandra Khakhhlary and the distinguished guests, Ambikagiri Roy Choudhury and Nilmoni Phukan, the famous Assamese litterateurs, also attended the conference. The conference discussed the various aspects to popularize the Brahma religion among the Boros and to make the people conscious of their duty towards the new religion. The most important and interesting issue in the conference was Gurudev’s suggestion to forsake the traditional musical instruments like, *Kham* (drum), *Siphung* (flute) *Jotha* (cymbals) and the traditional Boro dances. He took a view that these traditional musical instruments and dances were associated with traditional religion, *Kherai Puja* or with sacrifice of animals, birds and use of liquor or propitiation of deities or spirits. But his disciples like Phorlang Babaji (Nepal Chandra Basumatary), Rupnath Brahma and Satish Chandra Basumatary did not uphold the Gurudev’s view. Phorlang Babaji, one of his disciples and preacher of Brahma dharna, held the strong view that Boro culture and identity could not survive without traditional music and dance. Both religion and traditional culture should co-exist for the survival of great Boro race. Gurudev ultimately withdrew his proposal.  

Thus, simultaneously with the spread of Brahma dharma among the Boros, Gurudev Kalicharan Brahma also gained firm ground for social reforms, which had far reaching consequences in the development of Boro community as a whole. The era of Kalicharan Brahma marked a new epoch in Sanskritizing the Boros with new religion and culture. The period witnessed a significant development in the history of the Boro community, as for instance in the
subsequent years a considerable number of Boros achieved higher education in various streams, the Boro language and literature began to develop in the hand of new generations, and various intellectual and social organization came into existence with a new outlook and innovation. It has brought certain change in the position and status of the Boro Society. And gradually the Boros were able to secure a high position and good attention in the Hindu society.

THE CONCEPT OF BRAHMA DHARMA:

It is believed that there is a supreme being known as Param Brahma, who is ultimate reality. “Brahma is by nature eternally and absolute blissful. He is eternally self-realized, self-perfect and self-enjoying. He also posses the unique power of creating from within himself or manifesting himself as the phenomenal world of divinity without the least prejudice to the perfect unity of His self existence.”

Every individual self is really identical with Brahman and a part of it. The performance of Hom Yajna by reciting Gayatri Mantram is must to lead oneself to Brahma. To believe in Brahman and realized the truth in ‘self’ is the ultimate goal of this religion. In Paramartic Dorkhong, it is said, “A great soul Shivnarayan Param Hansa speaks about the glory of the supreme being in the sublime words of Vedas. He prescribed certain Vedic rites to be observed by us. As instructed the devotees of Param Hansa now faithfully observe the Yajna rites in the following manner.”
“At first set the fire in the centre of Yajna Kunda with vedic mantram ‘Om’ when fire is lit pay homage with hymn,”

“Om purna Brahma Jyoti Swarupaya Namo.” Then call innovation, Om Aiyahi Borde Devi Trayakshare Brahma badini Gayatri Chandasang Mato Brahmayoni Nomohostute.”

Prayer: “Om thet thou art, the self kindling light of love, knowledge and wisdom. In your truth exerts as Atman and Brahma for life and action. Yours is the supreme energy through time and space, unfold manifesting the universe like Sun, Heat, Sound and Speed. We call you god unseen from this world seen, for the cause of generation, operation and destruction in Trinity. You are absolute omnipotent and omniscient. Oh Almighty, should we pay our homage to you, we have nothing our own to offer in your cherished Yajna. All things that exist sweet and incense belong to your own self. Take your things and please to bless our Earth. You are Om, you are the Bliss.”

The Purohit, first chants the mantras, and he is followed by other devotees, present at Yajnahuti. Then they offer prasad made of sweets, fruits, milk, ghee, corns, scents, chandan, aguru, in the burning flame dedicating to Brahma, by chanting mantras.

The Brahma religion is monotheist and believes in eternal Almighty Brahma, who is omnipresent and source of all creation,
existence and destruction. In the Vedic age the Hindus used to offer sacrifice of animal at *Yajna*, which was performed by Brahmins. But Srimat Siv Narayan Param Hansa did not prescribe any sacrifice of life. He has spoken about three principal kinds of *Yajna* to be performed in the name of *Param Atma* Brahma. They are, (i) *Karma Yajna* (ii) *Jnan Yajna* and (iii) *Upasana Yajna*. He believes that *Dharma, Artha, Kama* and *Maksha* can be attained if one follows the path of *yajna*. There is no restriction to any cast or sex in performing *Yajnahuti*. The mantras are comprehensible, because except *Gayatri mantra* rests are translated into Boro language. The Brahma religion has very liberal view regarding its rites and rituals.

SIX TEACHINGS OF BRAHMA DHARMA:

1. The universe (*Atma and Param Atma*) should be kept clean.
2. One should be kind and careful to all creatures.
3. *Yajnahuti* should be performed with pure and scented article and with full devotion.
4. The *Param Brahma* should be called by reciting *Omkar mantra* or by dedicating his name.
5. Eyes and mind should be put on the light (free from sin) with respect.
6. Every body much be attached to ‘complete’ (Omnipresent almighty).
Everybody must adhere to this six teachings and no work is greater than these. True faith in Almighty necessarily leads to faith in the inner purity and goodness of all human and creatures in the earth.

Among the disciples of Kalicharan Brahma the most prominent were, Phorlang Babaji, Kalicharan Brahma (second) and Bijoy sing Brahmmary, etc.

PHORLANG BABAJI AND JYOTI ASHRAM:

Phorlang Babaji also known as Nepal Chandra Basumatary was born in 1878 at Roumari village, about three miles north of Bongaigaon. He was twelve years younger to Gurudev Kalicharan Brahma. He learnt about Brahma dharma from Gurudev but he was proselytized by Kalicharan Brahma (second). Phorlang Babaji founded the Jyoti Ashram at Roumari, which is one of the most important centers of Brahma dharma still in existence. Babaji spread Brahma dharma to that vast area through that Jyoti Ashram, thousands of Boros came to meet him.

He lost his parents when he was still young. He married Bugeshri, got one son and two daughters, but he lost all his children and wife one by one. Then he came under the influence of Gurudev’s Brahma dharma. Phorlang along with Kalicharan Brahma (second) went to Swami Nigamananda in Calcutta and after coming back home he established the Jyoti Ashram in his own thirty bighas plot of land. Sometimes he used to go to deep forest of Bhutan Hill and sat for meditation for several days.
At the initial stage the mantras of Yajna were chanted in Sanskrit and Bengali language for which many illiterate Boros took the Brahma religion as alien faith. Phorlang Babaji had realized the feeling of the common people and undertook the translation work of the Sanskrit mantras into Boro language. And it was under his firm initiative that for the first time he performed a Yajna reciting mantras in Boro language at his Ashram. Babaji says that god knows every language of his creation and he even hears the language of hearts. Henceforth the Yajna mantras, excepting Gayatri mantra, are recited in Boro language among the Boros of Brahma cult.24

Phorlang Babaji advised his followers not to renounce their original culture, music and art in the new religion. He himself was a gifted musician and dancer. But he stood against the social evils like, use of liquor, marrying a woman by force and he also discouraged rearing of pig or chicken or free movement of women at markets or melas (festivals).

At present the Jyoti Ashram of Roumari has become a nerve centre of Brahma religion, which takes care to instill into the mind of people the sense of responsibility of Brahma religion. Now a days the Ashram committee also run a Boarding School in the Ashram premises with a view to teach the religious taught and conduct along with the general education.

Jyoti Ashram still plays a great role in spreading and consolidating the Brahma religion among the Boros. After the death of both Gurudev Kalicharan and Phorlang Babaji, the Goalpara District Brahma Dharma Sanmilan was formed by the joint effort of
Shri Yogendra Basumatary from Gossaigaon (Basugaon) and Shri Rabi Ram Brahma, a resident of the Ashram. The first meeting of the Sanmilan was held at Roumari Jyoti Ashram itself in the year Bangla 1372. This meeting of the Sanmilan tried to establish a common religious code and rites for all the followers of Brahma religion. The Sanmilan deputed Shri Lalit Chandra Brahma, the preacher of Swarup Stiti Kendra of Jyoti Ashram and Dewansing Brahma of South Goalpara to attend the Mahalaya Yajna at Calcutta, where they met Siv Narayan’s disciple Shakti Kole. He presented them the Sixth Book of Brahma religion, which gives details regarding the Philosophical truth with spiritual knowledge, and the idea of an eternal, impersonal principle, the Brahma or Atman. Under the banner of the Jyoti Ashram Brahma dharma Parichalana Committee came into existence. The committee assigned the responsibility of editing the translation of Yajna Prakaran, into Boro language, to a priest, Shri Lalit Brahma, with a view to removing the various misunderstandings about the dharma and to enlighten people about satya (truth), chetan (sense), and shudhva (purity) of Brahma religion. Shri Rabi Ram Brahma is the present principal priest of Roumari Jyoti Ashram.25

Kalicharan II, who was a disciple and a right hand man of Gurudev Kalicharan Brahma, wrote and published a book, Boroni Jolonga about the religion and treatment of various diseases. Gurudev’s another disciple Bijoysing Brahmachari wrote a book Kriya Darpan based on Daskarma or Das sanskar (ten reforms) of Hindus. Like wise the rites and observances of Vedic Hinduism made its entry into the Boro society through Brahma religion.
The pace of cultural assimilation with the Hindus became faster as a result of the spread of Brahma religion and Boro people increasingly showed interest into the Hindu religious texts. And in the subsequent decades some new cults of Hinduism appeared in the Bodo society due to the admixture of Bathou and Brahma thoughts and several other established Hindu cults also made inroads into their society.

SAIVISM SECT OF GURU RUPAMANI DEVI:

The Saivism sect or Mani Bathou Siva Dharma was founded by Guru Rupamani Devi, of Gossaigaon (Basugaon) of Bongaigaon district, in Bangla 1380. Guru Rupamani is still alive. The Saivism sect or Mani Bathou came into being as a conflation of the cumulative ideals of Bathou and Brahma cults along with the some elements of Hinduism. This religion has brought a major modification of the conception and practice of the traditional Bathou religion. This religion has a considerable number of followers throughout Assam and mainly in Kokrajhar, Dhubri and Bongaigaon districts, among the Boros.

In fact this religion is a refined cult of traditional Bathou religion, which has adopted many basic elements of Hinduism and Brahma dharma. Unlike the traditional Bathou religion, Mani Bathou Siva Dharma do not offer sacrifice of animals or libation to the deities, as in the previous faith innumerable lives were killed in the
form of sacrifice to the deities. The chief features of worship in this religion are two folds.

(i) On less important occasion or in general state of affairs Puja is performed by offering Prasad and flowers to all deities, which requires no Brahmin Purohits.

(ii) On the important occasions or when serious matter arises, Yajna is performed with the help of Purohits or Rishis. Unlike Brahma dharma they believe in the various gods and goddesses of Hindus and of the traditional Bathou religion, which are summon to Yajna fire.

PHILOSOPHY OF MANI BATHOU SIVA DHARMA:

According to this sect of religion, Siva is the Supreme god and creator of all lives, creatures, objects, and universe. The universe is born out of him and will have its end in him. Boros worship him in the form of Bathou. Siva has neither beginning nor end, he is the oldest of olds known as Borai Bathou (old Bathou) and he is the beginning of all clans and gurus. Siva is the owner of heaven, earth and hell and he has three forms, Brahma as creator, Visnu as saviour and Maheswar as destroyer. The union of three Purna Param Brahma is known as Siva, the owner of three virtues, Satva, Rajo, Tama. He receives three types of worships, Satvic, Rajosic and Tamosic Pujas.26

The associates of Siva, in the form of Maheswar, are spirit, ghost, daityas etc. So besides deities, the spirits should also be worshipped to please Siva.
By *Satvic puja* one can achieve Siva, which is also known as *Chaitanya puja* or *Satya Guru puja*. This worship is performed at home in the open and permanent alter (*Bathou*) of gods and goddesses. Purity of mind body and objects is the essence of the *Satvic puja*. To perform such *puja* one must take bath, wear fresh and clean dress and must clean the space and objects. And they have to fast till the *puja* is over. No sacrifice of life is allowed except the offering of *prasad*, flowers and perfumes.

The *Rajosic Puja* denotes community worship in a temple or in open place by arranging a temporary altar. It is considered less sacred than *Satvic puja*, as all kinds of people, good or bad, take part in mass worship with some selfish motives.

The *Tamosic puja* is performed to propitiate spirit, ghosts, giants or associates of Siva. This type of *puja* is considered impure, and after the worship is over, all have to take bath and purify themselves by sprinkling holy water.

The *Satvik puja* to the Infinite eternal and Absolute-spirit, Siva, is the true way to attain salvation and to lead the self towards excellence. Siva is everywhere in this universe, *Jotoi Jiva Totoi Siva*, where there is life there is Siva.27

**OBJECTS:**

(i) The aim and object of this religion is to live an ideal life through reforms and worship and to purify the universe by performing *Yajnahuti*. 

108
(ii) To attain salvation or *Mukti*, and to be one with the supreme Almighty Siva.

(iii) To get rid of evil influences of planets, diseases, distress, calamity and to guide human life and society from darkness to light

(iv) To show respect and love to others and to help in right direction to disastrous and needy person.

FEATURES OF WORSHIP:

Every household devotee has four sacred altars of principle gods and goddesses. They are as follows.

(i) **Borai Bathou Siva Altar:** The main altar of *Borai Bathou* is built on the north east corner of the courtyard. The altar of the *Borai Bathou* is the chief altar, where a *Sijou* tree is planted and a *Trishul* (Trident) is erected to the west and in the middle of the altar. A *Jatrasee* plant (a kind of shrub), in the eastward and a holy-basil, in the southward, are also planted in the altar. Besides Siva, the main altar provides seats for Bhagabati, Indra, Swaraswati and Lakshi.

(ii) **Bisahari Bathou Altar:** The *Bisahari Bathou* is built outside the courtyard and towards the northeast corner of the compound. Along with the goddess Bisahari there are seats of Ganesha and Vishvakarma in that altar.
(iii) **Mainao Bindu or Lakshi Altar:** This altar is placed in the innermost room of the *Noma No* (main house stands in the northern side). Two earthen pitchers, one for rice and other for paddy, are placed in the north and the south of the altar respectively. Goddesses, Lakshi Devi, Swaraswati Devi and Ganga Devi are placed in a raw from north to south.

(iv) **Maidangshri Bathou or Gandeswari Altar:** The altar of goddess Gandeswari is placed in front of door of the staircase of granary. Along with Gandeswari, Laokhar Gosai (cowherd god or Krishna) and Kartika are placed in a raw from north to south. The granary is built in the east of the courtyard or east of the main *Bathou*, and the lone door of the granary is west facing or facing towards main Bathou.

(v) **Hoom kunda (Yajnahuti Pit):** Besides, this four *Bathou* there is a *Hoom kunda* or a place of *Yajnahuti* in rectangular size of three staircases, a little southward of main *Bathou* in the courtyard. And a little bit east of the *Hoom kunda*, there is another altar of ‘T’ size for three almighty gods namely, Brahma, Vishnu, Maheswar.

The follower of this religion worship every altar, dedicating to gods and goddesses in every morning and evening by offering flowers, kindling light on the earthen pit with mustard oil and thread and burning incense in each altar. Before worship one has to take bath
and wear clean cloth, then he or she sprinkles holy water to purify himself/herself and the places of worship.

Besides daily prayer, a devotee of this sect performs Puja or Yajna on some specific days like, Purnima (full moon), Omabashya (bluemoon), Ekadashi (eleventh day after Purnima or Omabashya), birth day of Guru, tithes of gods and goddesses and religious festivals. A Puja is performed by offering Prasad (mixture of edible things), flowers and by burning incense in each altar of gods and goddesses. Generally red flowers are offered to gods and white flowers to goddesses. A Purohit or a Rishi of the same sect conducts the Yajnahuti, which is attended by the members of the household-devotee. The mode of performance of Yajna is almost similar to that of Brahma dharma, except the conceptual difference regarding the existence of god.

After the accomplishment of Yajnahuti a small amount of money is given to Purohit as Dakshina. The amount of Dakshina differs according to the nature of Yjna; it may be Rupees-five, seven, nine, fifteen, twenty-five or fifty. Incase of poor person, a nominal amount of Rupee one or two or a flower is also accepted as Dakshina. The same amount of money along with small quantity of rice is also kept as Ista Guru Dakshina, on the eastward of Yajnahuti. Latter on this Dakshina is sent to the Siva Temple of Guru Rupa Mani Devi.
RANKS OF THE PRIESTS AND AUSPICIOUS DAYS:

There is a system of gradation of the priest in the Mani Bathou dharma. The Guru Rupamani is on the top and above the system of gradation. And she is the authority of all rites and systems prevailing in the Mani Bathou dharma. Below Bima Guru (mother priest), there are priests of different ranks in descending order, which are, Maharishis, Rishis and purohits. Again, there are eighteen ranks Rishis with the Maharishis on the top. A priest is qualified for higher ranks only if Bima Guru (mother priest) is satisfied that he or she, observes all rites and rituals of the dharma strictly, maintains the purity of life, devotes himself for the cause of this religion etc. Maharishi is the highest rank among priest and there are general devotees at the bottom.

The following Sacred days are solemnized by performing Yajna under the auspices of Mani Bathou Siva dharma, with blessings and guidance of Guru Devi, and with the help and co-operation of priests and devotees.

(I) The first day of the Baishak is solemnized by performing Yajna on account of Oulingi (rebirth) of Sri Sri Rupa Mani Devi at the centre Ashram.

(II) The seventh day of Baishak or Sat tithi is solemnized by performing Yojna, in the name of mother Baishagi or Ashagi, the goddess of nature, in every Anchalic Ashrams.
(III) From the thirteenth day up to the Purnima (full moon) of Ras Puja festival, the Naree Yajna is performed for three consecutive days.

(IV) A consecutive three days Yajna is also performed on account of Siva Ratri beginning from the thirteenth day to Omabashya (blue moon).

(V) From the thirteenth Magh to Magh Purnima a yajna is performed at the central Ashram for three consecutive days as annual ritual ceremony along with colourful annual religious conference on the day of full moon.29

DRESS AND CONDUCT OF THE RISHIS AND THE PRIESTS:

The priests of Mani Bathou dharma have to wear conventional dress on religious functions or occasions. The Maha Rishis, Rishis or Purohits have to wear dhoti and loose garments of red, pink and saffron colours respectively in the time of worship or religious ceremonies. The women priests also have to use the cloths of same colour.

The Rishis, Purohits and priests are restricted from eating fish, meat, egg, as they are strictly vegetarian. They do not take defiled cooking or ceremonially unclean food. They even do not take the vegetarian food cooked in the utensils of non-vegetarian.

They have to observe fasting on austere days Ekadashi, Purnima or Omabaishya of every month. They are even prohibited to
eat fruits, drink water or to swallow spittle on *Ekadashis*. They are also not allowed to drink liquor, smoke or use intoxicating things. The priests of this sect are restricted from tilling soil, which is a very new development in the Boro society and it must be a sure sign for the arrival of *Brahminism* in the society.

**CONDUCT OF DEVOTEES:**

(i) The devotees of this cult have to clean all the dirt of their house and take bath before worship or observing rituals and ceremonies.

(ii) Sunday and Thursday are observed as sacred days and the devotees refrain from eating meat, fish and egg on these days.

(iii) Eating meat, fish, egg are restricted on *Ekadashi, Purnima, Omabaishya* and religious *tithes*.

(iv) They perform worship every morning and evening after taking bath and before eating anything.

(v) After discharging stool and urine one must take bath and wear fresh cloth to worship.

(vi) The devotees are prohibited to criticize or discuss against the Guru at any time or place.

(vii) In the time of crisis or need they should help each other remembering almighty.

(viii) No *Yajna* or atonement should be performed on the *Oulingi* (rebirth) day of Guru or on other ritual days.
(ix) After sunset one must not pluck flowers, fruits, vegetables, or cut trees, creepers or kill living beings.

(x) One must not plough his soil on full moon and blue moon days.

(xi) The use of liquor is strictly prohibited.

(xii) This religion does not prescribe to change the religion in his sweet will.  

ORGANISATION:

There is a central committee known as Sri Sri Rupa Mani Debi Bathou (Siva) Ashram Meru Afat to run and guide the whole religious affairs as well as to formulate social rules and laws for devotees. The general committee consists of two hundred members and the executive committee has twenty-five members. The committee members can be expanded when need arises. The committee has one Chairperson, one Secretary and a Treasurer all of them are selected from among the members in conformity with Guru Devi. The committee acts in accordance with the sermon, advice and suggestion of the Guru.

Besides that there are Dalaisa Afats (local committees) in different parts of Boro Populated areas, to look into the religious affairs of the locality and also to help the central committee for carrying out its policies. But every the Rishis action of the committee needs prior consent and blessing of Guru Devi.
There is another committee of the Rishis and Purohits, known as *Mani Bathou (Siva) Dharma Rishi Purohit Committee*, which would be formed in presence of Guru Devi herself. All Rishis and Purohits have to attend the *Yajna* to be performed at central Ashram on *Purnima* (full moon) of every month. And they have to perform *Yajna* in their own place on every *Ekadashi*. All expenditure of such performances is met from their annual contributions. The Rishis and Purohits of the committee must come forward to cooperate with Guru Devi, whenever she performs any religious rite or function. The *Rishi Purohit committee* also keeps watch on the conduct and activities of purohits and Rishis if they go against the religious precepts.

The Propaganda committee or the Magazine committee, known as *Sri Sri Rupa Mani Devi Bathou San Laisi Afat*, is formed from the members of the central committee. The propaganda committee is responsible for publishing periodical magazine to highlight the concept of this religion and to give sermon to common people through different writings likes essays, poems, stories, message of Guru Devi, and translation of Hindu scriptures etc. The committee has an Editorial Board to scrutinize articles to be published in the Magazine. The whole expenditure of the publication are born by the central committee.

It is observed that though the *Mani Bathou Siva Dharma* made a comprehensive addition to Hindu Belief and practices in the traditional system, yet the original value and culture of the Boros remain unchanged. The semi-secular aspects like social observances,
customs, etc. remain same except the religious aspects. The rituals of birth and death, fair and festival, law of punishment for offences, etc., are allowed to continue as they are. This proves that the Mani Bathou Siva dharma never attempted to uproot people from the Boro culture. On the other hand, it has allowed them to foster their own culture, within the framework of this belief and practices.

The fundamental change in this religion is that, it has discarded the sacrifices of bird and animals and use of liquor in the name of god, which they consider as an act of sin and against the divine law. On the other hand, it has become more ritualistic than Brahma religion and claims to be a pure Hindu religion believing in multi gods and goddesses. Till today this sect is confined among the Boro community.

SATSANG OF SHRI SHRI ANUKUL THAKUR:

The Sat Sang religion of Thakur Anukul has gained good ground among the Boros of Assam as well as the other parts of India. The most important aspects of this religion is that it has the most liberal view in drawing the people of various castes, creeds, faiths and communities towards the main Hindu fold to form a separate and refined religious society, giving them a high religious position.

The Sat Sang manifest on its philosophy that the basis on which man lives is religion and he is Param Purus. The religion is one, it cannot be many or it does not have other form. The paths or views may be many. Different people may have different views. Hindu, Muslim,
Christian or Buddhist are not different religion, rather they are different paths or views of one religion. The same is felt differently and realized in different way by different people.  

The Sat Sang is monotheist on nature and it believes in the incarnation of Purusattam. Purusattam who incarnates for the welfare of human being on this earth is the creator of the whole universe. Purusattam is the fulfiller the best. Incarnation comes to fulfill, not to destroy. Sri Sri Anukul Thakur is the Purusattam who incarnates on the earth for religious inculcation.

OBJECTIVE:

This cult objectify to achieve its end in ‘being and becoming’, i.e. the existence and manifestation of truth and to be in union with god. The conception of the purpose of the Sat Sang is to have a man making institution for moral and spiritual uplift and to find and to find the way for unification with god. The more virtues in man will bring unity, harmony, friendliness, and readiness to serve the human society. Hence man has great responsibility for peace and harmony in the society.  

But, it is not possible to achieve this virtues in human life without the guidance of Purusattam. So every one should be attached to Purusattam’s ideal.

Knowledge comes from devotion. One should try to see the truth in his every deed. To see the truth means to know the reason and that is knowledge. But to achieve the right Knowledge every truth-
seeker needs ideal guide or Acharya. Devoid of which will lead to unsuccessfull.³⁴

The Sat Sang is above the communal views and there is no question of castes and community in seeking god. The good individual lead to a good family; good families lead to a good society; and good societies to an ideal state and so on. An individual is determined by three factors; other individuals, society and ideal. But in order to remain above the undue influence of the society one need an ideal. And to achieve this ideal one should be attached to the Acharya.

RITUALS:

The four rituals of Sat Sang are, (i) Yojan (ii) Yajon (iii) Ista briti (iv) Swastayani Sadasar. By Yojan one should be attached to the ideal of the Acharya; by Yajon one should bring others to the ideal of Acharya; by Ista briti one is involved and attached to the ideal of the Acharya and he has to feed Thakur; and by Swastayani Sadasar one should take svatic food, i.e. one should restrain himself from eating non-vegetarian food, onion garlic etc. Without svatic ahar, spiritual life is impossible. It purifies human mind and body.

There is a gradation in the functionaries of the Sat Sang religion. Sri Sri Anukul Thakur who is believed to be the incarnation of Purusattam is on the top of the entire system of this cult. After his death he was succeeded by his ideal son Boroda, who became the Chief Acharya and Ashok da followed Boroda. And other functionaries in
descending order are- *Ritvik, Prati-Ritvik, Saha Prati-ritvik, Adharju, Yojak*, and general devotees.\(^{35}\)

**IMPACT ON BORO SOCIETY:**

There are more than hundred designated workers of different ranks and several thousand devotees of Sat Sang among the Boros of Assam. By embracing *Sat Sang* cult of Hinduism thousands of Boros have directly accepted the Aryan Culture and their rites, rituals, custom and manner, which has accelerated the process of *sanskritization* among the Boros. The cultural fusion and fission among the Boros and other communities have been evolving due to the process of conversion to the different faiths. The study reveals that the Boro followers of this cult virtually detached themselves from the mainstream though they live together in the same society. Many devotees and priests of this faith consider themselves more refined and, religious and cultured than other Boros. One of the apparent changes brought about in the Boro Society is that, the number of vegetarians has been increasing not only among the *Sat Sang* cult but it has influenced other too. The *Sat Sang Ritvik, Prati-Ritvik* and many devotees regard themselves high caste Hindu *Brahmins* in their conduct and manner and try to avoid social interaction with the lower grade people of other faiths.

Some basic features of the followers of the *Sat Sang* religion are found as follows.

Every devotee of *Sat Sang* regulates his life observing rites and rituals every day from morning till night. In the morning as soon as they
get up from the bed, they go to bath and then sit for morning’s prayer and offer a small amount of coins or rupees in the name of Ista Guru. Only after the morning’s prayer is over they start the business of the day. In evening too they hold the same kind of prayer singing hymn and offering Ista Guru Dan. The accumulated amount of money from daily prayer is sent to Sat Sang centre at Deoghar every month for the welfare of religious activities.

So far as the Sat Sang Boros are concerned they are more accustomed to the Sat Sang way of salutation and expression of good wishes rather than their traditional manner. When they meet each other, they exchange their salutes good wishes with the word Joy Guru. They have almost given up the traditional way of salutation. The Sat Sang Boros maintain very close relation with the other communities of the same faith in performing socio-religious function either at home or in public. Very often they arrange community prayer and religious discourses like Sat Sang Adhibesan or Matri Sanmilan etc. at home or in centers. The followers of this cult go to visit the pilgrimage centre at Deoghar in Bihar very frequently or at least once in a year.

The Boros of this find themselves moving upwards in the Hindu social ladder with their position and status, and deserved equal respect like other high caste Hindus in the domain of Hinduism. But in spite of that they do not enjoy any special position and status in the Boro society. The Boro society concedes equal ranks and social standing to all religion of the Boros.

The Sat Sang is a well-organized religious institution. So, along with spreading of this faith many Sat Sang Vihars (monasteries) have
come into existence both in urban and rural areas of the Boro dominated region. The *Sat Sang Vihar* of Amlaiguri (Patgaon) in Kokrajhar district and the monastery of Kokrajhar town are worth mentioning among the others in the Boro areas of this region. These monasteries have been playing a very important role in spreading this religion among different communities and motivating the believers to render service for religious activities.

**REFINED BATHOU DHARMA (BHAKTI CULT):**

One of the important developments of the Bathouism is the appearance of a refined Bathou cult with Bhakti movement. It was the old Bathou cult, made to worship in new mode. This cult worships the gods and goddesses of old Bathou religion, by placing them at the Bathou alter in the courtyard and planting a *Sijou* plant in the eastern end of the Bathou altar. They observe almost all the rites and rituals of the traditional *Dharma* in elegant manner. But unlike the traditional mode of worship they have denounced the sacrifice of living creatures in the name of worship, and instead of this they pray to Bathou by singing devotional songs dedicating to Bathou Brai (Siva) and MainaoBrui (goddess of wealth) and offer *Prasad* (mixture of edible things) to deities. Tues days are taken as sacred days by the followers of this cult and abstain from eating non-vegetarian food on those days.

Mostly the people, who protest against the killing of animals to worship deities, have accepted this refined cult of Bathou. This cult believes that mercy and love of god, wisdom and goodness can be
attained not by killing living beings but by dedicating to Bathou (Siva) and singing devotional songs to praise his act of creation, operation and destruction. Singing devotional songs, accompanied by traditional musical instruments are in order to express the beauty and joy to god.

In fact this cult of Bathou might have been influenced and inspired by Bhakti cult of vaisnavism and with their forms of discipline like Kirtana (singing), Archana (worshipping), Vandana (bowing), Sakhya (spirit of friend), etc. Though this cult has not retreated from the original concept of Bathou or Siva they have brought some modification in practice of rituals and social norms to suit the present condition. Dr. Mangalsing Hazowary, a scholar of Boro culture and literature is one of the leading exponents of this faith. This cult has a considerable number of followers among the Boros of entire Assam and part of Bengal.

BATHOU (SIVA) DHARMA OF SWAMI NABIN BRAHMARI:

There is another branch of Bathou (Siva) dharma professed by Swami Nabin Brahmari who established Arya Brahma Gyan Mat or Baba Sidhya Yogashram at Ultapani of Kokrajhar district near Bhutan Border. The concept of Siva, the ultimate reality of this religion is completely drawn from the Hindu scripture like, Upanishad, Puran, or Vedas and adopted in the Bathou belief. This sect believes that Siva has created the Bathou religion solely for Boros and the spiritual life of the Boros can be culminated only through this religion. Like other Bathou cult this cult also build Bathou altar in the courtyard with a circular
fence of bamboo splits. The circular fencing indicates the earth is round. The circular fence has ten vertical posts of bamboo splits, which indicates ten directions of the universe (East, West, North, South, North-East corner, North-West corner, South-East corner, South-West corner, Upward and Downward), and the five horizontal bamboo splits, which criss-cross the vertical posts indicate the five elements of the universe like, earth, sky, water, fire and air or five senses of human like, eye for seeing, nose for smell, ear for hearing, skin for feeling and tongue for taste. These are the ways to realize the truth of Bathou religion. Only true knowledge of Param Guru Siva may lead to the fulfillment of religion.

There is a central committee known as Bathou Siva Dhorom Meru Afat to maintain the affairs of the Sidhya Yogashram of Ultapani.

OTHER HINDU CULTS:

A small number of Boros have been converted to Sai Baba bhakti cult of Hinduism. But their number is quite insignificant and it does not have impact on the Boro society. The Vaisnavite movement of Sri Sri Sankardeva could not gain ground due to the pre-dominance of Brahma religion among the Boros of Kokrajhar district. Though thousands of Boros in other parts of Assam became Sarania by accepting Ek Saran Nam Dharam of Sankardeva, in Kokrajhar district, people who came under this fold of Vaisnavism, returned to Brahma cult.
Besides these religions a negligible number of Boros are seen in the Bhakti cult of Chaitanya and other cult of Hinduism. There is a section of people in the urban areas, who are not within the fold of any cult but they worship Hindu deities in their own way and follow Hindu rites and rituals.

TANTRISM OR SAKTISM:

Though Tantrism and Saktism were prevalent among the Boros till recent past, now their number has been reduced to insignificance. Nowadays some elements of Saktism and Tantrism can be found in traditional Bathou religion, especially in Kherai puja. The Satrali, one of the shamanastic dances, is performed in dedication to the goddess of war Ranachandini on the occasion of Kherai puja. Elements of Tantrism like, summoning a soul of demised person, spirit of deities in the person of Daudini (a female shaman) are also prevalent in Kherai puja. There is a sub-sect of Bathou, Known as Jangkrao who performs magic like, walking on the flaming coal or stepping on the sharp edge of sword and dancing over it.

There is a kind of Tantric rites among the uneducated mass of the Boros in interior Villages. The medicine man, known as Ojha, propitiates spirits, deities and spells mantras to keep off the evil spirit and cure the patients. The common people are afraid of Ojhas, believing that, they can perform witchcraft to fulfill their evil motive.
IMPACT OF RELIGIOUS MOVEMENT AND THE PROCESS OF SANSKRITIZATION:

The process of conversion to different sect of Hinduism has accentuated a new process of Sanskritization in the Boro society. "Sanskritization is the process by which a 'low' Hindu caste or tribal or other group, changes its customs, rituals, ideology and the way of life in the direction to high and frequently twice born caste. Generally such changes are followed by claim to higher position in the caste hierarchy than that traditionally conceded to the claimant caste by the local community." the above definition has been given by M.N. Srinivas. The term sanskritization was first used by Srinivas to describe the cultural mobility in the traditional social structure of India. In the broader sense, Sanskritization includes both the sacred and secular elements of the culture. Sanskritization, therefore, means adoption of new values, which belong to the member of upper castes.

The process of sanskritization is not only confined in a particular region, rather it is almost an all India phenomenon. Sanskritization occurs in many forms. First By the Historical process where lower caste collectively rise upto the position of upper caste as a result of rise in economic and power status and political alliances. Sanskritization in the second form is an attempt of the caste or sub-caste to move upward by giving up some of their low rank custom and seek to get recognition of higher caste status in the system. Thus sanskritization denotes cultural and structural changes in the traditional society.
The sanskritization process is conspicuously dominant in the Boro society as a result of religious ferment. The tribal Boro society, which was outside the realm of Hindu society came into contact with Hinduism long back and gradually came within the fold of that society. The Boro society, which was despised by the upper caste Hindu society, underwent a great change as a result of sanskritization of the Boro culture. The process of sanskritization among the Boros started as a result of the influence of the Hindu culture or direct conversion to Hindu religion. The influence of Hindu culture on the Boro society was so strong that it has also brought change in the secular traditional institution even without converting a large section to Hindu religion directly. As a first step of Sanskritization the Boros give up beef eating and some of their tribal habits. In the second stage they partially abandoned the traditional non-Hindu deities in the traditional religion and gradually included many Hindu deities in the traditional pantheon. Thirdly, Boros gave up many traditional social customs and accepted new customs, which were acceptable to Hindu society. Fourthly, they were directly converted to the Hindu religion and adopted sanskritic culture.

The introduction of Brahma religion by Gurudev Kalicharan Brahma, in the beginning of the 20th century, marked a new era in the history of Boro society: it instituted reformative movement for the development of society and education and it led to the development of Boro language, literature and political ideas among the Boros. The Brahma religion, which has its root in Vedic philosophy did tremendous work in sanskritizing the rituals and culture of the ethnic Boros. The
Brahma religion, besides proselytizing, transformed the Boro society from a tribal character to a fair Hindu society. As a consequence of the mass conversion of the Boros to this sect the most notable change is the beginning of upward social mobility with refined culture and behaviour. It can, rightly, be said that Gurudev Kalicharan was the pioneer of initiating benevolent revolution in social educational and political field of the Boros. Most of the early Boro figures of the 20th century were directly or indirectly inspired and benefited by the religious movement. The first enlightened generation of the Boros like, Rupnath Brahma (politician), Padmashri Madaram Brahma (social worker), Yadav Chandra KhaKlary (social worker) and many others are the product of this movement.

The Saivism sect of Guru Rupa Mani Devi is a sanskritized and refined form of the traditional religion whose complete structure is no other than a Hindu religion. All gods and goddesses like, Siva, Bhagabati, Indra, Lakshi, Swaraswati, Brahma, Vishnu, Maheswar, Bishahari, Ganesha, Kartik, Viswakarma, Gandeswari, Ganga, Durga, Kali, Khamakhya, etc., who are the Hindu gods and goddesses, are the principle deities of Mani Bathou Dharma. The Maha-Rishis, Rishis and Purohits of this cult maintain strict dietary habit like, fasting, eating vegetarian food, abstain from drinking wine etc. and they live pious life. They have earned a position of puritan class in the society.

The Sat Sang of Thakur Anukul is a well institutionalized and organized religion, whose primary concern is to sanskritize the people of different caste and communities and it has contributed, to a great extend, towards the ascending social position of the Boros. The Sat
Sang desires to have a cosmopolitan society of Hindu beliefs under the ideal of Thakur Anukul Chandra, indiscrimination of all castes, creeds, and religion. Boros of different cults have been coming under the fold of this religion and the process of conversion is still going on among the Boros.

The *sanskritization* movement has also touched the secular aspect of the Boro society and brought some refinement in their customs, manner, habit, food and drink, in economic institution and psychology of the people for upward progress of social ranks.

One of the striking changes, which has taken place in the society, is the institution of marriage. The *Brahma* marriage, performed with *Vedic* rites by arranging *Yajnahuti* and chanting *Gayatri mantram*, has been a dominant system of marriage among the Boros at the present age. It is considered as, the most respectable and appropriate system of marriage in the Boro society, by all religious sects excepting Christianity, and the traditional system of marriage *Hatasuni* tends to be disappearing except in a few places.

The growth and development of higher education, literature and the birth of Boro *Chatra Sanmilan* in 1919 were the direct consequences of this process and that has tremendously changed the picture of the society as a whole.

The development of higher education and self-awareness among the Boros led them to search for their identity and political rights. It gave birth to the Boro Sahitya Sabha, the 16 November 1952, at Basugaon town, which was a turning point in the history of the Boro society. After that the Boros Began to launch movement one after
another, for implementation of Boro language as the medium of instruction in the schools of Boro areas in 1960’s; for self-rule unit ‘Udayachal Autonomous Region’ by P.T.C.A. in 1970’s, and the Bodoland movement by All Bodo Students Union in 1980’s. It ultimately led to the creation of Bodoland Autonomous Council within the state of Assam comprising contiguous geographical areas between river Sankosh to river Pasnoi in February 1994. But it also failed to fulfill the aspiration of the Boro people.

Now it has been an established fact that the Boro society observes the Hindu rituals and performs the calendrical festivals like, Pujas, Diwali, Holi, etc. and often they go for visiting pilgrimage centers like Kamakhya, Mahamaya, Kasi, Goya, Puri, etc. as a part of their religious zeal.

The quest for upward movement is still an on going process among the Boros in many fields, such as socio-religious, economic, political and intellectual ones.
REFERENCES: (CHAPTER IV)

11. Ibid : p.17

131


34. Bandapadhyay Subash Chandra: *Bartaman Yugasamasya Satyanusaran O Sri Sri Anukul Thakur*; Published in *Alochona*: Sat Sang, Deoghar: Bangla 1395, pp.683-86.
37. Ibid: p.50.
38. Srinivas M.N.: *Social Change in Modern India*; New Delhi, 1972, p.6