

An Exploration of Contributions of British Administrators and Christian Missionaries in Emerging Bodo Written Literature

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ABSTRACT: *From the exploration of history of Bodo literature it is found that the Bodos the largest indigenous group settling and speaking their own indigenous Bodo language in Assam of North East India did not have written literature in its own language till the 2nd decade of 20th century. But the history of Bodo literature depicts that prior to emergence of pure Bodo written literature the Christian Missionaries and British Administrators initiated to work on Bodo language and literature although in English language. In the paper attempt has been made to combing exploration of works of British Administrators and Christian Missionaries in Bodo language and literature and their contributions in emerging pure Bodo written literature motivating of then budding Bodo writers, as a consequence of which Bodo language and its pure written literature have gained current status. The paper collects the data mainly from secondary and more or less from primary sources.*

KEY WORDS: *British Administrators, Christian Missionaries, Bodo language, grammar and literature*

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I. INTRODUCTION

Bodos are one of the largest indigenous groups settling in Assam of North East India and speak their own indigenous Bodo language and is the origin of Sino-Tibetan language family. Even though Bodo language was spoken throughout the entire Brahmaputra valley of Assam, North-Bengal since beyond the long centuries but until the second decade of the 20th century Bodos did not have writing tradition and written literature in their own language and as a result this language began to decline due to the domineering Aryan languages, mainly Assamese and Bengali languages. At that juncture, the British Administrators and Christian Missionaries who came to India to colonize the country and for the purpose of spreading Christian religion were the first one to contribute towards the development of Bodo language and literature through writings. They collected information and knowledge regarding culture, religion, life styles, language, tales, history, rhymes etc. from Bodos and brought out those knowledge and information into books in English language which bestowed tremendous contributions towards the emergence of proper written Bodo literature.

II. METHODOLOGY

The data used for this paper is primarily based on historical documents. It is a historical descriptive study. To prepare this paper data are mainly collected from secondary source available in books, journals and E-books and reference books etc.

III. CONTRIBUTIONS OF BRITISH ADMINISTRATORS AND CHRISTIAN MISSIONARIES TOWARDS THE DEVELOPMENT OF BODO LITERATURE:

The roles and contributions of Christian Missionaries towards the development of Bodo written literature are very significant. Although Bodo has been a spoken language since ages but it did not have any written form of literature before the British Administrators and Christian Missionaries' works in the field of Bodo language and literature. The exploration of history of Bodo literature depicts that the British Administrators and Christian Missionaries initiated to work on Bodo language and literature by writing books on it, although it was in English language. Although they entered among the Bodos mainly to preach and propagate their religion, but they confined their activities not only in the field of religion but also contributed in the field of Bodo language and literature, which is clearly evident from the publications of books on religion, tales, rhymes, songs and grammars of Bodos using Bodo language. Orally they collected information and knowledge regarding culture, religion, life styles, language, tales, history, rhymes etc. from Bodos and transmitted those knowledge and information into books in English language. From the combing exploration of many written documents carried out by British Administrators and Christian Missionaries about Bodos it is

found that some of the them wrote books on Bodo language and literature and some of them worked in the field of culture, religion, life styles, language, tales, history, rhymes of Bodos and published them in English. Following are the some of the British Administrators and Christian Missionaries who worked and contributed in the field of Bodo language and literature before emerging pure Bodo written literature.

1. Brian Houghton Hodgson:

In the history of Bodo literature we cannot ignore the name of Brian Houghton Hodgson because he was known to be the first British person who worked in the field of Bodo vocabularies. He came to India in 1818 as a writer of British East India Company and learnt many Indian Languages. He was only British who opposed of introducing English language as medium of instructions in Indian schools. He worked in the field of publications. He collected as many as 1800 Bodo words including loan words mostly from its neighboring languages i.e. Bengali and Assamese which he published by giving English equivalent word meanings to Kocch, Bódó and Dhimál languages in the book entitled “*Essay the First on the Kocch, Bódó and Dhimál Tribes*”. It was one of the most remarkable and establishing works on the aborigines of India carried out by B. H. Hodgson. This book was printed and published by J. Thomas, Baptist Mission Press, Calcutta in 1847. It is mentionable that the term ‘Bodo’ was coined as generic term for the first time in this book. This book basically contains three parts:

Part I. - Vocabulary,

Part II. - Grammar

Part III. - Their origin location, numbers, creed, customs, character and condition with a general description of the climate they dwell in.

Following are the some examples of Bodo vocabularies used by B.H. Hodgson in aforesaid book:

PART I.—VOCABULARY.

NOUNS.

1ST.—THINGS AND BEINGS.

<i>English.</i>	<i>Kocch.</i>	<i>Bodo.</i>	<i>Dhimál.</i>
Time ditto,	Kál,	Khál,	Khál.
Motion, universal,	Chalan, gaman,	Thángbai,	Hánka.
Immotion or rest,	Thirta, Rahan,	Thábai,	Hiká.
Action, con- scious motion, }	Korom,	Habba,	Kámpáka.
Inaction ditto,	...	Habbagéyá,	Kámmánthuka.
Light, lux,	Jyoti,	Shráng,	Jolka.
Darkness,	Andbér,	Khomshi,	Kitikitika.
Figure or form,	Ráp,	Ráp,	Ráp.

2. James Drummond Anderson:

J.D. Anderson was member of Indian Civil service from 1873 till 1900. In 1887 he took charge as the Deputy Commissioner in the district of Sibsagar of Assam. Along with his administrative works he acquired considerable local knowledge and learnt various languages of eastern India thereby proving himself as a linguist. He had good command of Bengali, Assamese, Bodo-Kachari and many of the tribal languages of North-East India. Anderson, besides his administrative works contributed in literary creation also. He collected some Bodo folk tales, folk songs and nursery rhymes orally circulated among Bodos and transmitted them into English as well as brought out those specimens in text form both in English and in its original languages i.e. Bodo language in the book titled “*A Collection of Kachári Folk-Tales and Rhymes*” (1895). This book was published to offer as a reading book to those people who have acquired an elementary knowledge of Bodo Kachari and with a most significant aim that these specimens of the Bodo folklore of very simple and primitive people may be motivating to those who do not care to learn Bodos and that it may stimulate others to make a successful excursions into an unexplored field of Bodo-Kachari folklore. Following are the folk tales that are incorporated in the book.

Dùimâ Dùisâ ni khorâng (How the rivers were made), *Sâsè Olsiâ Gâthâ ni Khorâng* (The Story of the Lazy Boy), *Gâthâ mâmra ni Khorâng* (The seven champions), *Sâ-Se Phâlângi Gotho-ni Khorâng* (The Story of merchant lad), *Bîdâ binânauni Khorâng* (Brother and Sister), *Embu Bonglá ni Khorâng* (The story of the Toad), *Mùî ârù Daukha Dandân ni Khorâng* (The story of the Doe and Raven), *Brai Sâse ni Khorâng* (The old man and Tiger) *Mùkhrâ Arû Sessâ ni Khorâng* (The Tale of Monkey and the Hare), *Khusung ârù Mùkhrâ* (The Tortoise and Monkey), *Bâmun ârù Bînî Sâkor ni Khorâng* (The Brahmin and His Servant), *Abrâ ni Khorâng* (The Story of Simpletone), *Sâ-sni âbrâ ni Khorâng* (the story of seven simpletones), *Khânâ Khujâ ni Khorâng* (the story of blind man and the hunchback), *Sâse âbrâ brai ni Khorâng* (The Story of a silly old man), *Brai Bùrùini Khorâng* (the story of four thieves) *Kachari Theory of Thunder and Lighting*

3. Reverend Sidney Endle:

Born in the year of 1840 in the Sturdy Yeoman Clergy family and imparted his education at Totnes Grammar School and after that in St. Augustine's College at Canterbury in England was sent to India in February of 1864 by the Missionary society as a missionary for the purpose of propagating Gospel in Assam. He first stayed at Tezpur of Assam and worked under Mr. Hesselmyer at Kachari Mission at Tezpur itself. After Hesselmyer's demise Reverend Sidney Endle took charge of the Kachari Mission with head quarters at Tezpur. He learnt Bodo language to be familiar with Bodo community with an aim to preach Christianity among Bodos. This simple honest, gregarious person having good sense of humor contributed tremendously for the development of Bodos in every field of that area besides preaching and propagating Christian religion. His contribution in the field of Bodo language and literature is very remarkable. His book "**An Outline Grammar of the Kachári (Bârâ) Language**" (1884) is worth mentioning. Besides, grammatical discussion this book also has a few collections of Bodo folk tales written both in English and Bodo languages. Though this book was not considered as a part of pure Bodo written literature but was regarded as grammar and literature by the Bodos. From this point of view, it can be regarded that R.S. Endle was the first Missionary who created written literature by using the Bodo language. His works were confined not only in the area of language and culture of Bodos, but also he is known for translational work on the part of New Testament on Bodo language.

R.S. Endle's another remarkable work for Bodo is his monograph entitled "**The Kacharis**" published in 1911. The chapters that contained in this Monograph are social customs, agricultural practices, festivities, food habits, life cycle rituals, crafts and textiles of the Bodo-Kacharis. He incorporated a few Bodo folk tales in this monograph both in Bodo and English languages. Prior to this monograph Bodos did not have any written document to represent Bodo community in details to give a scope non Bodos to know about the Bodos. Following are the folk tales which are incorporated in the Monograph.

1. Dùimâ Dùisâ ni khorâng (How the rivers were made),
2. Sâsè Olsiâ Gâthâ ni Khorâng (*The Story of the Lazy Boy*)
3. Bâmun ârù Bînâ Sâgor nî Khorân (The Brahmin and His Servant)
4. Kachari Theory of Thunder and Lightning

4. George Abraham Grierson

G.A. Grierson's **Linguistic Survey of India (VOL.III, Part-II)** is also great work for Bodo language and literature. This book is also one of the documents where Bodo language got textual form. In this book Grierson discussed about Bodo Grammar like –verbal roots, compound verbs, adverbs, nouns, pronouns, tense etc giving a scope to learn Bodo language. Four specimens written by J.D. Anderson are also incorporated in the book. The first one is "**The Statement of an accused person**" which was translated from Assamese to Bodo language. Secondly, a fable was incorporated which bears the signs of translation from Bodo language to English language. Third one is folk tale and finally some folk songs translated from Bodo to English language.

Some example of grammatical discussions of G. A. Grierson are given bellow-

Verbal roots: ālu = pain, bai=break, bī=begin, dān=cut, de=hit, bīr=fly.

Compound verbs: thāng+fin= thāngfin= go back

 lāng+fai= lāngfai= come and take

Adverbs: In Bodo it is suffixed to an adjective, viz- gāhām=good; gāhām+ āi= gāhāmāi= in a good manner

5. Edward Albert Gait:

E.A. Gait was the Superintendent of Census Operation in Assam from Indian Civil Service. Under his supervision census of Assam was done in the year of 1891 which he compiled all the data in the book entitled "**Census of India**", 1891 (Assam). In the chapter VIII of Part II of this book, census report of Assam of that year, language data of different languages of then undivided Assam were collected for appropriate report of census. In this Book some grammatical sketches of Kachári or Bodo language have also been sketched by him. He wrote about gender, number, adjective, degree, noun, pronouns, and adverbs etc. of Bodo language.

Here are some examples of Bodo words as used by E.A. Gait with equivalent English meaning

English	Bodo (Káchári)	English	Bodo (Káchári)
Water	dūi	Paddy	mai
Salt	sankhri	Rice	mairang

Apart from above discussed pioneering works of British Administrators and Christian Missionaries there are some more establishing works in the field of Bodo language and literature carried out by them in subsequent years thereby making wider scope to know and study the Bodo language. For instances, Rev. A. Christiansen's compilation of a book entitled 'Grammar and Dictionary of the Kachari language' (1904),

Anderson's book on 'Dimasa Vocabulary' (1895), Bastold's 'Dimasa Grammar' (1906), Wolfenden's 'Outline of Tibeto Burman Linguistic Morphology' and also his note on 'Borofisa'. Some of them wrote religious books also.

IV. CONCLUSION:

From the discussion of paper, one question arises whether the pure written Bodo literature could have emerged and gained today's status or not without bestowing contributions of British Administrators and Christian Missionaries. In reply it can be rightly said that the writings of British Administrators and Christian Missionaries contributed tremendously in Bodo language and literature by unfolding the veiled treasure of the language, literatures as well as folklores of the Bodo community. Of course their pioneering works motivated and stimulated Bodo literate people to create proper creative written literature in its own Bodo language beginning from the second decade of 20th century and thus gradually pure written Bodo literature began to develop and have gained today's status. So, it can be credited to British Administrators and Christian Missionaries for their firsthand initiative in bringing out Bodo literature into light by writing on above mentioned aspects of Bodos although it was in English language motivating the Bodo literate people to bloom and prosper pure Bodo literature. As an outcome of that motivation the pure Bodo literature came in to being in the second decade of the twentieth century with the emergence of *Bodoni Fisa O Aiyen*, a book on traditions and customary laws of Bodo community published in 1915 by Habraghat Bodo Sammilani and *Bibar* the first Bodo magazine published in the year of 1920 in the form of Manuscript and in printed form in the year of 1924 as the mouthpiece of Bodo Chattra Sammilani which had encouraged of then educated new generations of the community towards the Bodo literary activities creating writing talents in Bodo language. After *Bibar* in 1923 *Khonthai Methai* was published with 26 lyrics and 8 poems and four more Bodo magazines viz. *Jenthokha* (1926), *Bithorai* (1932), *Alongbar* (1938) and *Nayak* (1940). These early phase of literary activities have contributed tremendously in bringing out the Bodo literature to its current position. Till 1952 the beginning year of modern period of Bodo literature the literary works were confined mostly of poems, prose and dramas with limited creations. In the modern period the Bodo literary activities in different field start to boost with fast pace. To-day the Bodos have huge treasure of literary creations in every aspect of literature in its own language to fit worldwide recognition and this has certainly developed this language socially, politically, educationally, literarily, culturally and linguistically making it fit to be introduced as a medium of instruction in primary school in 1963 in Bodo dominated areas, Modern Indian Language by Gauhati University in 1977, an Associate State Language of Assam in 1985, Post-Graduate Courses in Bodo language and literature in Gauhati University in 1996, Indian language under 8th scheduled of Indian Constitution in 2003. Although all these developments and recognitions are made possible as a consequence of Socio-Political awakening, educational and literary awareness and movement launched by the Bodo Leaders nevertheless we can never forget and ignore tremendous pioneering and stimulated motivational contributions of British Administrators and Christian Missionaries for all these development as they were the first one who had initiated work on Bodo language and literature, although in English language before the someone of the native speakers came forward to create proper written Bodo literature.

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