

**CHAPTER-V:** Fashion is a popular style or practice, especially in clothing, footwear, accessories, makeup, body or furniture. Fashion is a distinctive and often habitual trend in the style in which a person dresses. It is the prevailing style in behavior and the newest creations of textile designers. Fashion involves change, novelty, and in the context of time, place, and wearer. H. Blumer in his book “*Fashion: From Class Differentiation to Collective Selection*” describes fashion influence as a process of “collective selection “whereby the formation of taste derives from a group of people responding collectively to the zeitgeist or “spirit of the times.”<sup>1</sup> The simultaneous introduction and display of many new styles, the selections made by the innovative consumer, and the notion of the expression of the spirit of the times provide impetus for fashion. Fashion is the relationship between the designed product and how it is distributed and consumed. For example the introduction of British Silver coins in the colonial period was new to the tribal people of North-East India. Using the silver coins as decorative jewellery became a fashion among the tribes. It added glamour and, instead of decorating themselves with only jungle beads and other available material. The Indian tribal women started ornamenting themselves with the silver coin necklace.<sup>2</sup>

The term “tradition” has been derived from the Latin word *traditio* which means handing over something. Thus the term “tradition” in English means handing over and handing down being or delivered and so on.<sup>3</sup> Labanya Mazumdar in her book entitled “*Textile Tradition of Assam*” also states that the word “tradition” is a way of handing down from generation to generation.<sup>4</sup> Tradition is an age old practice of a group of people in their lifestyle. “Modernity” and “tradition” can be used as polar opposites in a linear theory of social change<sup>5</sup> as one stands for ornamentation on the basis of latest trend and demand, and the another stands for a regular and customary ornamentation. Here Ornamentation means ornamentation of jewellery, dress, food habits and also customs and rituals. Fashion is present in both cases. Tradition and modernity are frequently mutually reinforcing, rather than

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<sup>1</sup> H.Blumer, *Fashion:From Class Differentiation to Collective Selection*.,1969,p-275

<sup>2</sup> Dr.Jyoti Dwivedi, *Indian Tribal Ornamenta; a Hidden Treasure*,Journal of Environmental Science, Toxocology and Food Technology,A.P.S,University Rewa,(M.P),2016,p-1

<sup>3</sup> A.Sarma, *Folk Culture of The Mising of Assam*,New Delhi,2004,p-170

<sup>4</sup> Labanya Mazumdar, *Textile Tradition of Assam*,Guwahati,2013,p-117

<sup>5</sup> J.R.Gusfield, *Tradition and Modernity: Misplaced Polarities in the Study of Social Change*,American Journal of Sociology,University of Chicago press,1967,p-351.

system of conflict. The modern comes to the traditional society as a particular culture with its own tradition; this transformation is the social change. Social change, which is a multidimensional and complex process, occurs in all societies irrespective of their structure, compactness, integrity and stages of development. Society is no static; it is running with the time and circumstances and keeps changing. Culture also changes along with it. Some time development occurs due to changes in a society and some time social changes of a society results in a developed society. For a change to be termed development, it must occur continuously in a desirable dimension and direction.<sup>6</sup> While change results in modification or alteration or replacement of the old by the new ones may be of many reasons.

Like other societies, the tribal society of Assam, located in India's North East, is also witnessing the spurt of social changes and development due to a variety of factors. Having diverse ethnic origins, representing racial stock from Proto-Austroloid to Mongoloid, with a distinctive socio-cultural system, own cultural ethos, an unique way of adaptation to different ecological niches and distinctive social structure of their own, these tribal groups seems to respond to processes of social change and development quite differently among them. In this context the role of women is vital as women are an active agent of change. In addition, with the increasing tempo of development in the sphere of education and economic scenario the dimension and spirit of acculturation have been gaining, thereby boosting the entire process of social change and development among the tribal women. However the pattern of social change is in no way uniform throughout Assam.<sup>7</sup> It is different among different tribal groups and also in special context. The effect of the changes also seems to assume different orders and patterns.

Tribal system are most popularly known as indigenous systems and their culture, traditions, social practices, occupational patterns and so forth, grow and get strengthened from their own experience.<sup>8</sup> The tribal culture has two aspects;

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<sup>6</sup> D. N. Jena and U.K. Mohapatra, *Social Change Themes and Perspective*, New Delhi, 1993, p-34-35

<sup>7</sup> M. Das, *Pattern of Social change and development among the tribal women in Assam*, India. The Clarion: Multidisciplinary International Journal, Vol-2, 2013, p-1

<sup>8</sup> S.P, Sharma and A.C. Mittal, *Tribal Women in India, Tradition and Modernity of Tribal Women*, New Delhi, 1992, p-275

the material culture which consist of their habits of clothing, eating, mode of farming and the non-material culture which consist of their values, status and roles, language, beliefs, symbols and goals. Hence, their culture is a complex phenomenon of all these aspects. Tribal people express their cultural identity and distinctiveness through their social organizations, language, rituals and festivals and also, through dress, ornaments, arts, and craft.<sup>9</sup> The changing environmental development makes internal adaptation necessary for culture. Changes have also been observed in the tribes of Northeast region of India. Tremendous changes both from within and outside is noticeable among the Dimasa, Karbi, Bodo and Mising tribe of the North East India in colonial and post-colonial period. The Role of the tribal women is an important chapter in changing pattern among the tribes. Rituals, customs, dress, food habits and the use of mother taungs all are directed or acted mainly by the women folk. Education is an instrument of social change and education plays a great role in determining the direction of social change. Literacy is considered as a fairly reliable index of socio-cultural and economic advancement. In traditional Assam, education was a prerogative of the higher castes like *Brahmins* and *Kayasthas*. This privilege was exclusively enjoyed by them because of their highest social and ritual status as *gosains*.<sup>10</sup> In the post colonial period in independent India, education among the tribal people was not wide-spread. It is during the post independent period that, education spread rapidly. Changes in tribal society is now took place, among many reasons, may be due to education or due to cultural communication with other community. Female literacy and educational attainment influence considerably towards social development of tribal women in Assam. Depending on historical background, locational advantages and disadvantaged, the degree of tribal and non-tribal interaction and infrastructural base, the level of socio-economic development of women among major tribal groups in Assam presents a highly varied picture. It is found that development is the highest among the Sonowal-Kachari women, followed by the Deories and the lowest among the Karbis followed by the Mising. Bodo and Dimasa tribal women development was little advanced then the Karbis, according to calculated data from

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<sup>9</sup> N.Panigrahi, *Tribal culture during colonial Rule*, Orissa overview January, 2006 Retrieved from [http://orissa.gov.in/e-magazine/orissareview/jan2006/engpdf/Tribal\\_Culture.pdf](http://orissa.gov.in/e-magazine/orissareview/jan2006/engpdf/Tribal_Culture.pdf).

<sup>10</sup> K.P, Bahadur, *Caste, Tribe & Culture of India: Assam*, New Delhi, 1978, p-51

Census of India, 2001 and it is increased in ten years with the same variation, according to Census of India, 2011.<sup>11</sup>

Changes in the societal system are also noticeable. One of the impacts of Hinduisation is noticed in the increasing de-tribalisation of the tribal's. For instance, an essentially egalitarian tribe which had its own priest likes *Jonthai*, and *Satula* to take care of birth, death, marriage ceremonies etc now is being replaced by the Hindu Brahmin. It was found during the field survey that among the Dimasa and Mishing residing in Cachar and Lakhimpur District respectively Brahmin plays an important role in marriage and death ceremony.

Again though a token of bride price (*Kalti*) system is still prevalent among the Dimasas, acceptance of bride price which had its hey-day in the past has been abandoned by all the tribal groups. However dowry is becoming a common feature. In many cases though is not demanded but taken and given in kind of gifts. Sadly enough divorce too which was rare in the past is gradually gaining ground among the Dimasas in urban settlement due to the impact of urbanization and westernization. But widow remarriage is still prevalent among them. The practice of applying vermilion on their forehead after marriage by the Dimasa, Karbi, Bodo and Mishing which was not practiced traditionally is another change in tradition among the tribes. Another non-tribal element entered in tribal society is the planting of *tulsi* tree in their courtyard. Three changes we can noticed, first, their religion nowadays is known as *Kewalia and hinduism* in place of the animist beliefs and practices; second is the emergence of *Bhakats and Brahmin* priest who have replaced traditional tribal Village priest to a considerable extent; third, is the introduction of *Namghars and temple* as their religious institution which has replaced the significance of bachelors dominator in the society where the traditional religious rituals and customs are discussed among the young ones. The emerging Brahminic conservatism was inevitably in consonance with the new feudal social formation in Assam valley.

Nature, ecology and the physical environment have always had a significant impact on the structure of society. Environment of a particular region, to a large extent, determines the kind of food people eat or clothes they wear, the way

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<sup>11</sup> See census report of 2001 and 2011

they earn their livelihood and pattern of their social interaction. Sudden and catastrophic events can change societies quite drastically. These changes are more or less irreversible. There are many instances of natural disasters leading to a total transformation and sometimes total destruction of society. But environmental or ecological factors may not necessarily be destructive to cause change; they can be constructive as well such as discovery of oil. Technology has brought about significant changes not only in other countries but also in Indian society. Industrialization is a major process of change in the field of industry, which leads tremendous changes in kitchen, dress, jewellery ornamentation, food habits and lots more. Technology affects the traditional society in a wide variety of ways. The traditional tribal kitchen breakfast replaced by slices of baked bread is become a common practice, like wise lunch and dinner traditional items are changed. This is because of available readymade food items. Besides, canned and packed food, pickle, sauce, juice, etc have also become important items of food.<sup>12</sup> This change has been accepted whole-heartedly by the younger generation as it saves time and energy of the women to a considerable extent. *Momo* is the most prized article of diet for the tribal youths. It has become a favorite food item for the non-tribals as well. The older generation, however prefers wild edible roots, leaves and other green vegetables prepared with alkali (locally known as *Khar*). They also used variety of spices collected locally from the forests. As we mentioned in our fore going chapter, the rice beer is a common drink among the tribe's of the region including Dimasa, Karbi, Bodo and Mishing with traditional significance is still prevalent but in the name of tradition the younger generation become habituated with the readymade liquor. On the other hand the tribal people have started consumption of readymade liquor. However the traditional rice beer is continued to be an important food item in their rituals with great significance. Again the Dimasas have the tradition of taking tea without milk as they think that milk is meant only for the offspring's of human or animal,<sup>13</sup> hence they do not milk the she buffalos for commercial purpose. However the field data<sup>14</sup> reveal that respondent of Dimasa people of Karbi Anglong and Nogoan district are now of the habit of consuming milk tea.

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<sup>12</sup> M.Taher, *An Introduction to Social Geography*, Guwahati, 2005, pp-71-82

<sup>13</sup> *Agriculture Ledger Vol-I, Imperial Council of Agricultural Research*, 1994, Guwahati, p-6

<sup>14</sup> Field survey in Karbi Anglong and North Cachar Hills District, during 2014-2015.

The role of religion in social change is a contentious issue in social science. Max Weber's classical work (1920/1962) on 'the role of Protestantism' is a good work that come to our mind in this issue. Robert Bellah's work (1957) on the role of Tokugawa religion in the development of capitalism in Japan and the more recent work of Randall Collins (1997) on the Buddhist monasteries in late medieval Japan's development in capitalism were the finest work on religion as a force to fight against established social order. Religion as a force of social change operated in largely homogeneous societies in term of their socio-cultural existence. Moreover religion seems to be largely an endogenous phenomenon evolving from within the material condition of such societies.<sup>15</sup> The neo-Vaishnavism in the multi-ethnic-consisting of caste Hindus, newly Hinduised semi-tribals and tribals of the Brahmaputra Valley of Assam assumed a strong local character and contributed immensely to the growth of a more broad-based, homogeneous social formation in the region, a broader de-tribalised composite society therein.

As by nature the tribal are animist,<sup>16</sup> but are now found to worship various Gods and Goddesses. This is primarily because of their assimilation with the neighboring Hindu culture. To cite an example, the primitive religious practices of the Missing, i.e, worship of *Dony-Polo* (the Sun and the Moon) have changed to a great extent.<sup>17</sup> Religion as a force of social change operated in largely homogeneous societies in term of their socio-cultural existence. In terms of Assam, the post-Barman royal dynasties of Kamrupa also were hinduised. Under their patronage, a large scale Aryan migration took place with the cast division. Following the royal dynasties, many autochthons also came under the fold of Hinduism, indeed under royal patronage. In this process of sanskritisation of the autochthons, the Brahmin liberally incorporated many religious deities, faiths, and customs of the latter into the folds of local Hinduism.<sup>18</sup> A broad in scale, complex in organization and more heterogeneous in content the tribe's existing in social

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<sup>15</sup> C.K, Sharma, *Religion and Social change: Neo-Vaishnavism vis-a vis the Tribal Groups in Assam Valley*, (ed). in.

D.Nath, *Religion and Society in N.E India*, Guwahati/Delhi,2011,p-112

<sup>16</sup> Virginius Xaxa, *Tribal Identity: A Discourse*,(ed).in .

V. Dhanaraju,*Debating Tribal Identity*, New Delhi,2015,p-36

<sup>17</sup> Information gathered by an interview with Sita Ram Bori, Principal, Dhemaji Junior College,Dhemaji.

<sup>18</sup> S.K.Chatterjee, *Kirata Jana Kriti*, Asiatic Society, Kolkta,1974,p-25

differences assumed hierarchical form, true to the emerging feudal spirit.<sup>19</sup> The constituent tribal groups of this emerging social formation thus experienced a transformation from an autonomous, egalitarian tribal social formation to an emerging hierarchical caste-driven feudal social order. It was at such a juncture that neo-vaishnavism made its appearance in Assam. Founded and propagated by Sankardeva (A.D 1449-A.D 1568) and his disciple Madhavdev (A.D 1489-A.D 1596). As against the Brahminic orthodoxy and conservatism, neo-vaishnavism advocated simplicity and liberalism in religious practice. On account of this, it could make itself acceptable to the various indigenous tribal communities of the region. It appears as a harbinger of a new social order in the valley. The role of Satras and Namghars is noticeable in this respect. A large section of the tribal population of the region like the Morans, the Sonowal-Kacharis, the Chutias, the Deoris, the Thangal-Kacharis, etc as well as an overwhelming number of people belonging to the marginal and despised castes came under its ambit as a considerable number of respondents are found to have been converted into *Bhagabatia* or *Mahapurushia* sect of Hinduism which means a further reformative attitude towards their present religion. Adaptation of Christianity in colonial period again makes the tribe to abandon their tribal custom, practices and institutions, but the tribes who are converted to Hinduism are still practicing their tribal rituals to a certain extent along with the Hindu rituals. For example, though *Vaishnavism* has taken deep root among the Sonowal-Kacharies, they still observe the traditional *Bathow puja*, along with sacrifice of animals. Among the Karbi's, the *Vokti-tom* is a new religion similar with the *Vaishnavism* and continued with their age old rituals. In the Dimas society Hinduism entered long before. The pages of history are witnessed about the Hinduization of the Dimasas. Not only that, a Hindu caste called Barman, was constituted as *Khastriya* and uses the sacred thread.<sup>20</sup> All the major Hindu God and Goddess are worshipped by the Dimas. Goddess *Lakshmi*, *Kali* and the *Siva* are worshipped as their main deity along with the traditional rituals. The influence of the Hinduization also reflects in the use of materials they used. Participation of all the tribes in the Assamese *Bihu* is the most striking feature of the present socio-cultural changes. When and how we cannot say exactly, but it has become an integral

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<sup>19</sup> C.Sharma, "Religion and Social Change: Neo-Vaishnavism vis-avis the Tribal Groups in the Brahmaputra Valley". (ed). In.

D. Nath, *Religion and Society in North East India*, Guwahati/Delhi.2011,p-4

<sup>20</sup>T.Fisher, "Memoir of Sylhet, Kachar and the Adjacent Districts" JASB,1840,p-13

part of the tribal society. *Busu* in Dimasa, *Baisagu* in Bodo is a harvesting festival and traditionally it is celebrated once in a year. But the Assamese *Bihu* received much more honor and attention, all the tribe's except karbi's, celebrated the *Bihu* as their own tribal festivals. This is a significant change observed in the post independent period. We can notice two impact of the adaptation of new religion; one is that not all but few Hindu rituals makes their place in tribal ritual and customs, another is the tribal language is suffered leading a new lingua-franca Assamese language. Use of Assamese language among the tribes, living in the urban areas is noticed and almost forgotten their own tribal dialects. The fact nevertheless remains that Neo-Vaishnavism have failed to bring any fundamental changes in the socio-cultural and religious practices of the Hill people in the North East. It remained confined mainly to the plains of Brahmaputra valley. In the plains also, the tribe and non tribe differences continued as usual. Even on the plain people also the influence appears to be very thin as obvious by the popularity of '*Kamakhya*' the sakta goddess. But the Assamese language got much headway during the vaishnavism hold in Assam. However the spread of Hinduism or vaishnavism in the Northeast region of India is not touched the other section of tribe; Naga, Kuki, Rengma, Garo and Mizos who are also the original inhabitant of the region. Their rituals and customs did not show any influence of Sanskritization and Hinduism, which spread over the land before the coming of the British, rather they are converted to Christianity by the British Christian missionaries. Conversion of the tribes to Christianity further increased the gulf between the hill and the plain people. When the British began to write on India in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, they made no distinction between tribe and caste; rather two terms were synonymously used.<sup>21</sup> This indicates tribal isolation from main stream and a gulf remain. The royal patronage of Hinduism during the Dimasa reign and in Ahom court was the indication of the Hindu influence in tribal society. Sanskritization of the land is also taken its way, but the introduction of *Vaishnavism* by *Sankaradeva*, had checked the social hierarchy. But with the advent of colonialism, the *satras* lost whatever autonomous ideological position they early had. The hilly tribes of Naga, Kuki, Rengma, Garo and Mizos were not connected with the plains and so remain isolated as traditionally they had no kind of internal government, and they

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<sup>21</sup> Virginius Xaxa, *Tribal Identity: A Discourse*, (ed).in.  
V. Dhanaraju, *Debating Tribal Identity*, New Delhi, 2015, p-37



acknowledge no supreme authority<sup>22</sup>. It is during the British imperialism that the hilly tract is counted under the one administrative umbrella. A new culture and missionaries efforts makes the tract under the new religion. The British administration ensured social continuity and at the same time facilitated the acceptance of British rule. It made no attempt to introduce any measures based on the alien concepts and gave freedom of religion leading to an elaborate administrative system. Introduction of schools by missionaries for the tribes in the hilly areas drew sympathy of the people, as to attain knowledge in a system was a new for the tribes. It was the Christian missionaries that for the first time show attention to them, as the other sections that remain free from Christianity was already under the '*Vaishnavism*' and few remain animistic with little adoption of Hinduism. It is not that the Christian missionaries did not appeared; they travelled to those remote areas on which the *satra* officials had hardly set their foot. They opened many schools in this areas, provides health services. These issues received little or no attention at all.

The adoption of new religions by the tribes forced them to change in socio-cultural activities too. For example one section of the Karbi's has adopted *Vaishnavism* and came to be known as '*Tholuwa Karbi*' or plains Karbi. Their changed in dress, language and festivals are differing from the Hilly Karbi's. '*Tholuwa Karbi*' women instead of '*Pini-Peckok*' wear *Mekhela-Chador* and they prefer to speak in Assamese language. Same case in respect of one section of Kachari's who adopted *Vaishnavism* came to known to us as '*Saronia-Kachari*'. The newly vaishnavised tribal section use to go *Namghore* and they adopted all the rituals and customs of vaishnavism. They totally forbade their traditional tribal rituals and customs. The tribe's however faced discriminatory behavior from the *sattradhikars*. One interesting fact underscoring the repressive character of the Assamese neo-vaishnavism was that the tribal neophytes converted to it by certain purifying rituals were, among the other things, not allowed to speak in their 'impure' mother tongues. If anyone was found defying it the local *satra* officials would impose a fine on him. Undoubtedly, this practice was a brazen display of the aggrandizing attitude of the contemporary Assamese middle class evoking

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<sup>22</sup> Hargovind Joshi, *Past & Present*, Nagaland, 2001, p-14

considerable anger among the tribal people.<sup>23</sup> In due courses the various tribal groups in the valley also experienced, in varying degree, a gradual emergence of their own educated elite. The expansion of colonial education system, the expansion of colonial administrative machinery to the tribal areas contributed to the rise of this class, though quite small in size. This class gradually became more self-conscious and began asserting their traditional social marginalization.

Generally, the changes taking place in socio-cultural and economic fronts are quite interrelated phenomena in a society. But the picture is somewhat different in the case of the tribal society of Assam. Here, changes taking place in economic fronts like occupation, income, expenditure, economic condition, etc among the scheduled tribes in general and women in particular have been quite slow as compared to changes in socio-cultural fronts. Traditionally the majority of the tribal's were involved in agricultural activities but there has been a significant change in occupational character as well. As a result of all round development, the value of land has increased many folds. The tribal's possessed huge acres of land which they sold off to the non-tribal now and have started settling in the peripheral locations. The changes in their settlement location are also due to changes in occupation. An agriculturist son after getting education wants to try their luck in city or urban areas, again due to overpopulation in the agricultural field few family member used to came out from the village and settled in urban areas as daily labor, hooker, shop keeper etc. The change in settlement changed daily tribal life too. Many rituals, customs and material culture became limited. For example traditional village tribal women used to weave traditional clothes in their loom but city or urban life marginalized the culture. Again changes in settlement also reflect the decreased in the relative importance of agriculture and occupation as primary, as well as the changing nature of occupation among them. The impact of urbanization has brought about a major economic transformation among the tribes of Assam. Traditional tribal population is towards the India's mainstream, is a good sign but at the same time the changes is welcoming the danger in the very nature of traditional tribal society. The Law has played a tremendous role in bringing about social

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<sup>23</sup> C.Sharma, "*Religion and Social Change:Neo-Vaishnavism vis-avis the Tribal Groups in the Brahmaputra Valley*", (ed).in. D. Nath, *Op.cit*, ,p-127

changes in Indian society. In the tribal society of Northeast India, including Karbi, Dimas, Mishng and Bodo society son inherits property, if there is none, the brother. The women have no right over land and property. But nowadays in tribal society property is given to daughter. This shows the trend of change in case of property inheritance.

Any talk on social changes cannot be complete in 21<sup>st</sup> century without reference to Globalization. The term “globalization” refers to the increasing interconnectedness of nations and peoples around the world through trade, investment, travel, popular culture, and other forms of interaction.<sup>24</sup> However a definition of globalization is not easy to arrive at. Extensive interaction between widespread peoples, as well as travel over vast distances across regions of the world, has existed for many centuries. The globalization of ideas is a universal phenomenon and in all ages, the ideas travelled from one illuminated areas to the less illuminated areas. This circulation of ideas occurred in the olden days when there were no mechanized means of transport as we find in the present days. For example, Hiun Tsang travelled to India through the desolate cold desert of Gobi to get the gleams of noble thoughts that flourished in this country at that time. The essence of the thoughts of Buddha was spread to the East and the South East Asia and that could be termed as the globalization of ideas.<sup>25</sup> It point out to the growing interdependence between different peoples, regions and countries of the globe as social and economic relationships come to spread and stretch worldwide. Culture more or less became similar and homogeneous, an increasing tendency towards ‘glocalization’ of culture. Glocalization refers to the mixing of the global with the local. Culture cannot be seen as a fixed or unchanging entity that cans either disintegrate or remain the same when encountered with social change. What is more likely in this age of globalization is the creation of not just new local tradition but global ones too. The new ideas, fashion, culture and the ways of ornamentation which is a local concept became global, when a local phenomenon had spread everywhere through human communication or by modern technology, as it effected in the tribal society too. Globalization has brought with it an increased mobility of goods and services, technology, capital and labour, across

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<sup>24</sup> Dr.Usha Agrawal, *Globalization Poverty And Culture*,New Delhi,2008,p-1

<sup>25</sup> Tanmay Bhattacharjee, *Globalisation and Indian Experience, Political Economy of North=East India*, Silchar,2004,p-45

ethnic, regional and national boundaries. The globalization is such a pervasive phenomenon that, no individual, community or nation can escape its onslaught. Rather like a swift flowing river, perhaps one can only survive by swimming with the current. An attempt to swim against the current is perceived as suicidal. Hence, in the words of Weisner a successful society must at time somehow have to change culture to persist intact.<sup>26</sup> Naturally the weave of globalization touched the ethnic culture of the tribes. In their socio-cultural practices few new customs added. Tribes as well as the non-tribe of the Northeastern region of India, besides their traditional rituals and customs, started to celebrated Birth-day, New-year Party, marriage anniversary etc. The new generation who came out from the very traditional tribal society is an important agent of the west. The new generation from the Northeastern region generally accepted the western culture more than the non-tribal. In a field survey of Diphu and Manja area, (of Karbi-Anglong District of Assam,) an urban and a rural area, we find that most of the English medium schools are enrolled by the tribal students, whereas the Assamese medium schools are enrolled by the non-tribe's student. Not only that in their hobbies like in dressing, singing song and fashion too the western culture is influenced. The globalization effect can be seen on dress, language, ornamentation and the mostly in life style. The trend of culture or fashion changed from traditional to modern. Clothing, as the primary adornment of the body, is a fundamental part of everyday experience and practice. During the past four decades, women's clothing style in rural India has changed rather dramatically, in particular those of females in their teenage years. Emma Tarlo (1996) takes note of this in the title of her book *Clothing Matters*: clothing and its implications for the female body are central to the creation of a gendered self. As a meaning of being women in her teens in rural areas has changed from "married" to "in school" the female body has been re-clothed to mark its married and unmarried status. Clothing is also conceptually allied with the idea of "fashion" as how it wears and when in varied occasion. It is found that women's clothing if we "read" it is as an expression of wealth and social status, and that one must examine caste cultures and other social factors in order to being to comprehend why people would buy or wear a certain

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<sup>26</sup> Weisner, *Culture Matters;How Values Shape Human Progress*, New York,2000,p-148

kind of dress. However the traditional way of fashion transformed in to a new global order.

Traditional dressing is confined to the women-folk. Traditional man's wear has been replaced by trouser and shirts in casual and coat, tie and shoes for special occasion, which are not originated within the tribes. Jewellery ornamentation among the men wear is lost. Life style of every tribe and household became more or less with the same furniture and utensils. Globalization garbed the very significance of traditional values which has led to crises of cultural identity.

Tribal life has also changes from within. In the rituals, marriage, birth ceremonies, dress and jewellery ornamentation, from the pre-colonial to post-independent period has changed in many ways. The traditional customs and rituals among the tribes of North-East India are in the spurt of changes due to variety of factors as discussed above. The changes in their tradition are noticed while performing their rituals like harvesting festivals, marriages, birth and in death ceremonies.

The tribal population of North-East region is basically engaged in agriculture which is their main occupation and celebrates harvesting festival. The Karbi enjoy many festivals relating harvest. *Ritnong-chingdi* (Planting seeds), *Sokkerroi* (observed when the paddy field is ripened to the fullest extent) and *Hacha-kekan* (post harvest rejoicing festival) are important. The former two festivals are observed in the cultivation field while later one was celebrated in a common ground. They cultivated their field with singing and dancing but in present these festivals shifted to stage from the cultivation fields. *Hacha-kekan*, the rejoicing festival become an occasion of rejoice and marry making. Mishing harvesting festival *Ali-aye ligang* is observed on the first Wednesday of the month of the *phagun* in the Assamese calendar. The farmer started to show the seeds of *ahu* paddy and some other varieties of crops of the season. The festival was started with worship of the souls of the deceased persons of the family. The heads of the families sows a handful of seeds of their respective fields reciting the prayer to the mother earth. It is found that the festival no doubt remains an identical to mishing society but become a great fest only ignoring the religious rituals of the festival.

Another festival related to harvest *Po-rag* (grand re-union festival) which was celebrated at every three, four or five year's interval at the end of a good harvest continued for three days is losing its ground and few remote areas celebrated for one day. Dimasa celebrated *Busu* as harvesting festival for three or five days called *Surem Busu* and if it is observed for seven days it is called *Hangseumanaoba*. While the latter is of an elaborate one and the former is regarded as the abbreviated form of the latter, *Busu* among the Dimasa now celebrated only for one or two days. The decorated *Busu* gate of the Dimasas *fangsla* (Dimasa traditional welcoming gate) which was erected at the main entrance is now rare to notice. The *Makhamgarkhoba* (offering food and drinks to the dead) ritual is done but in modified form. In place of banana leaf plate, paper plates are used and the bottle gourd shell for rice beer is replaced by the bottles. Traditionally *Busu* was celebrated in a courtyard of a desired person but now it is found to be celebrated in open field or sometime in a *nordrang* (bachelors' dormitory). Along with the traditional song and dances fashion shows, art competition and competitions for traditional food items are also celebrated.

Marriage in every tribal society was an occasion of joy celebrating many customs and traditions which was discussed in chapter three, is changing in customs and rituals. However the pattern of changes is varied among the tribes and also within the same tribe. In Dimasa society marriage by negotiation is still prevalent but it is found that it remains just a formality for the parents. The three visits (custom of offering salt, going with rice beer and final visit to finalize marriage date and about bride price) to girl's house by the parents of the boy is completed by a single visit with salt and rice beer. Carrying salt in *jambai* (small bamboo basket) and rice beer in *laothai* (small bottle gourd shell) is replaced by *pasi* (a bamboo basket without cover which is available in the market) and bottles. Again the custom of *minihawaba* (customs where boy has to stay in their father-in-laws house for one year) is not practiced. This custom was also practiced among the Karbi and Bodos and now it is not found among the tribe's. Marriage among the same clan was not allowed in Dimasa, Karbi and Mising society and is practiced till now, however inter-cast marriage in tribal societies is increasing. It is found that out of every ten families one or two in Dimasa society of Karbi Anglong District are of inter-cast marriage. However in case of Dima Hasau

district inter-cast marriage is very rare now also. The custom of *kopatang* (younger brother inheritance of the elder brother's widow) among the Karbi's become less and practice only interiors of the Karbi village.

Traditional custom of giving some of most essential things along with the bride to her in-laws house is replaced by modern furniture and utensils. It was tradition of the Dimasa society to give (*douphang*) loom to bride to carry to the in-laws house to prepare required clothes, was replaced by traditional woven dresses like the *juron* custom of the Assamese culture. The custom of giving new dresses and modern jewellery along with the bride is adopted more or less by all the tribes of the region. In case of Karbi, Bodo and Mising marriage system the traditional priest is still holding the position. In case of Dimasa marriage system importance of *Jonthai* in Dimasa Marriage is decreased. The Dimasa marriage system becomes varied due to cultural assimilation of the neighboring community which also replaced the *jonthai* by the Brahmin. For instance in the Dimasa marriage in Cachar region bride is ornamented with the *sakha* (a traditional Bengali bangle for married women) and face is decorated with floral designs. Rituals of bridal bath and singing song (*Ganga Bandana*) while carrying water from the ponds and *kunja* rituals is practiced by the Dimasa with the help of Bengali *Brhamin*. The Dimasa in the Karbi Anglong District though did not took Brahmin and the marriage is carried out by *jonthai*, some rituals like applying of turmeric and black dal paste at the bathing rituals for both bride and bride-groom is practiced as Hindu influence. However the Dimasa of Dima-Hasau District practiced their marriage in traditional way.

In the birth ceremonies too changes have taken place. The coming of the medical facilities greatly minimized the role of Dimasa mid-wife's. The *Hojajuli* and *Barwaju* the two Dimasa mid-wife is not any more in their service. The *Nana dihonba* (purification ritual) after one month is practiced only in Dima-Hasau district. Rest of the Dimasa the purification ceremony is carried out when the naval chord of the new born falls off by shaving hair of the baby. In the Mishing society the role of female priest, *Satula* is also less in practice.

The weaving culture of Northeast women is noticeable in this context. The region enjoys a place of pride for its rich heritage of artistic handloom product. There is an immensely rich assembly of tribal cultures. All the major tribes of Northeast India have practiced weaving culture and all the tribe's have their traditional attire, which is not only a visible symbol of the tribe's but also their identity. Weaving textile tradition has a profound relationship with religious and ritualistic beliefs of each community. As elaborated by renowned textile historian Jasleen Dhamija, "It is not explicit, it is implicit; for textiles are a form of non-verbal language, and reflect the socio-religious and cultural history of a tribe."<sup>27</sup> . From the earliest times textiles came to be associated with social and ritualistic tradition among the tribes playing a key role socio-economic life of the community. A unique feature of handloom weaving in Assam is the absence of any specific community or caste devoted only to weaving. Unlike the other parts of India, weaving is practiced universally by all section of the indigenous populations of Assam. Dimasa textile production at home is the exclusive prerogative of the womenfolk. The traditional skill in handloom weaving has been handed down from generation to generation. Essentially a feminine craft, it is customary for the Dimasa girls to learn the art of weaving from a tender age. It is nice to observe that till today all the tribe's including, Dimasa, Bodo, and Karbis preserved their tradition. The colours, patterns and designs signify artistic property and social significance. However throughout the world indigenous cultures are under threat from the forces of modernization and globalization. In the recent years, weaving as a household craft has shown a tendency to gradual disappearance among the educated and the urbanized sections and we cannot override the fact that changes has taken place in certain corners of the ethnicity as no living culture is static. As an element of culture, the craft of weaving has also been subjected to the universal laws of change. As Herkovits (1955:443-460) pointed out, change is a universal cultural phenomenon, and the process of change over a period of time constitute the dynamics of culture. The textile weaving craft of different tribes in Assam is also facing the same problem. Changes in weaving culture we may observe in following heads.

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<sup>27</sup> Dr.Vandana Bhandari, *Looming Large, Fibre 2 Fashion*, National Institute of Fashion Technology.



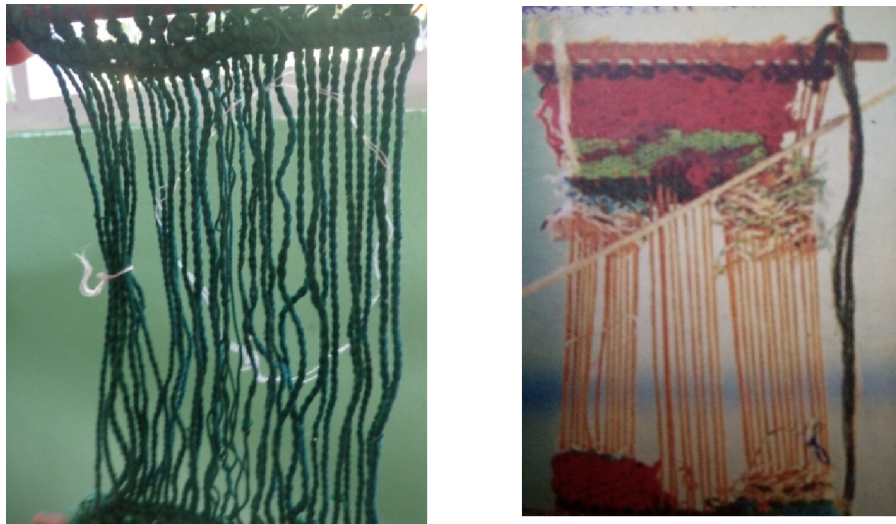


Figure 44 and 45: Photographs showing Dimasa traditional method of creating design

A common and an important material culture, the weaving culture of the tribe's of northeast India are facing a serious threat from the various forces. Socio-cultural changes, flexible social set-up, modern education and westernization can be the forces among many. The institution of youth or bachelors dormitories of tribes became a lost culture among the many tribes. It acted as a center of material culture of a tribe as well as social and ritual centers co-ordinating male activities in peace and war. Bachelor's dormitory used to be the centre of handicraft like bamboo and wooden works, a school for junior member of the dormitory about rituals of the tribes and girl's a meeting place to discuss various issues. Talk about the weaving textile is also part of the girl's gossip in the bachelors' dormitory. The motifs and its designs were the creation of the meeting. A competition of weaving was talked about as their main issue. The lost of such dormitory effected not only in weaving but also in other material culture. In a tribal society though dormitory played an important role in socio-cultural life was not under any compulsion, it is an autonomous body of the youth. So in due courses it failed to survive. However during our field survey in Karbi Anglong and North Cachar Hills we found bachelor's dormitory among the Dimasa and Karbis but in a changed activity. Their activity limited in marriage and dead ceremony only. Bamboo work and helping hand in agricultural field is no more remain a part of their activity. Weaving culture is an important culture among the Dimasas as well as the other tribes of northeast India but the modern education affected this culture a lot. Introduction of schools makes the generation more

enthusiasm than the weaving. Elderly women of the tribe used to continue the weaving culture. But too also working women cannot practice due to lack of time and interest. Tradition of weaving thus remained in the few hands of village women. However economic need forced some to practice the culture. In the modern period the causes of declining trend in tribal textile tradition in the region that the tribal people of younger generation are staying away from perusing this craft of weaving. Western fashion is the another factor that the demand of the traditional dresses minimized and younger one instead of wearing traditional dresses prefer to wear western dresses. Weaving culture may have declined among the tribes but their uses are continued, for which the traditional dresses become very costly and also resulted commercialization of the same.

Colour in tribal dress has a great significance. Use of myriad colours in handloom products is a unique feature of the textile tradition of Assam. Though the non-tribal plain people mostly use cotton and silk of natural hues, the tribal people, both the hills and the plains are always colourful. It is evident from the old records that Assam had great wealth of indigenous dyes, yielding all the colours the weavers required.<sup>28</sup> These are found in abundance in or near every village and dyeing was a common craft and art-form of rural Assam. History reveals that there has never been any class of people among the indigenous groups, who engaged themselves, solely to the practice of dyeing as a source of livelihood. Every tribe of the region practiced indigenous dyeing with great significance as it represents in status, beliefs, and love for their nature. All the Northeastern tribal people practice the dyeing culture. Tribe's 'dyeing' culture is an indigenous culture. Dimasas, Karbi, Bodo, Mishings including Ahoms practiced the dyeing culture. Every tribe has their preferred colour. The Bodos are a colourful tribe. Green, yellow, golden yellow are predominant colour in their costumes. According to Bodo weavers, green colour signifies their closeness to the nature and golden yellow, the colour of paddy field before harvesting. Mishings the second largest tribe of Northeast used many colours in their textile which has significant meaning related to nature such as black represent darkness, blue represents sky, green represents green pasture of nature. The horizontal red, white

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<sup>28</sup> H.S, Darrah, *Cotton in Assam*, Shillong, 1885, pp-51-60 & also see W.A.M, Duncan, *Monograph on Dyes and Dying in Assam*, Shillong, 1896, pp-1-5

and black stripes dress of Mishing married women is to keep evil eyes away. Significance of colour in Dimasa society is also seen in their beliefs. Red signifies fire and the use of the colour in deceased body is a taboo. They believed that in wearing a red coloured cloth the deceased will suffer from leprosy in its next birth. Black colour signifies dark so the using of this colour by bride and bride-groom is a taboo. Yellow, green, orange are the colours that represent rainbow. Karbi's mostly used 'black', 'white' and 'red', whereas white, red, and blue are the primary colour of the Dimasa. Orange, yellow, green and black colours are also prepared by mixing. Bodos and Mishing too have their traditional colours like 'orange' and 'black' respectively. The indigenous dyeing culture also suffers because of the invention of machine made coloured yarn. As the data collected from the field survey in Dhemaji, Lakhimpur, Karbi Anglong, North Cachar Hills and Nagoan District of Assam not a single tribe of the region practice the age old custom of dyeing colours.<sup>29</sup> The dyeing culture a very important and appreciable indigenous culture unlike the rest of the country along the weaving was the monopoly of the women<sup>30</sup> and remained intact during the Ahom period and in the beginning of the British period. Because, most of the Ahom dress are *white* in colour and British dress are from their home country, so influence of alien colour to the ethnic colours is not possible. It is said that due to the industrialization that invented many colours and the Indian as well as Northeast market is filled up with the variety of coloured yarns makes the tribal weaver relaxed from the lengthy process of dyeing practice in their colonial and post colonial period. The input of the new colours added fashion to the traditional dress; however the role of traditional colours remained same in their dresses. Later period the dyeing practice of the tribal people of Northeast India became out of their material culture. Cutting of jungle for shifting cultivation or for new construction makes many herbs rare and if someone find also it became useless as the ready-made colouring yarns is easily available. The Industrialization and globalization have much good effect in the society but parallel bad effect too, that the tribal dyeing culture cannot compete with the machine made coloured yarn resulting the culture an abandoned culture. The practice of 'dye' among the

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<sup>29</sup> Information and data collected by field survey in Dhemaji, Lakhimpur, Karbi Anglong, North Cachar Hills and Nagoan District of Assam, 2014-2015

<sup>30</sup> Labanya Maumdar, *Textile Tradition of Assam*, Guwahati, 2013, p-98 & and also see B.N, Bordoloi, *The Dimas Kacharis of Assam*, Guwahati, 1984, p-79

different tribes of North-east became a history. With the lost of the traditional methods of dyeing culture and coming up of coloured yarn in the market resulted variety of coloured traditional dress where significance of colour became less important. However an initiative is taken by Sushil Timung and Sika Teronpi, the husband-wife duo to go with traditional yarn and vegetable dyes in their farm called '*Serpindeng*'.<sup>31</sup> A modest effort to revive traditional dyeing culture is developing which will also contribute to cultural and ecological awareness.

Invention of new coloured yarn and their availability in the market and also due to adoption of Assamese dressing culture by the tribes; welcomed different coloured traditional dresses, besides the original one. The changes resulted variety of attires. Dimasa traditional dresses for women are of three pieces, '*Rajamphain*', '*Rigu*' and '*Rikhausa*' but now added with *Rigu-set* (*Mekhala-Chador*), *patho-mamai* (wrapper), purse, vanity bags, for men besides their traditional dress, Muffler, waistcoat or half jacket, and neck-tye are new fashion. *Rigu-set* is a new adaptation of the Dimasa women from the non-tribe culture. The attire is same as the Assamese people's *Mekhala-Chador* but the traditional in the way that the designs and motifs are Dimasa tradition. *Rigu-set* became the regular use of the Dimasa women which is woven by them. The two pieces of cloths for *Rigu-set* is of one colour, of varied colour having the traditional multi-coloured designs. It is again modified with a blouse piece with a designed boarder. '*Patho-ramai*' is a single piece of cloth to wrap in the waist to ankle. This kind of wrapper is very popular among the Naga, Kuki and Arunachali tribe's. It is woven in varied colour with different horizontal lines of colours like the '*Rajamphainbaren*' but some time without a border designs or '*Pari*'. Besides the dresses the related accessories like purse and vanity bags with traditional Dimasa '*Ramai*' designs is became popular among the Dimasas as well as appreciated and used by the non-tribal section of different parts of the country. Man's Muffler, half jacket and neck-tai is also became a part of Dimasa traditional wear with the traditional Dimasa designs. These new varieties of wear are very popular in Dimasa Busu, marriage function and ceremonies. The reception party of marriage, bride and bride-groom ornamented with the half-jacket and neck-tye and *Rigu-set* with the traditional purse. The changes are not among the Dimasas only the Karbi loom too changes

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<sup>31</sup> D. Teron, *Karbi Studies*, Guwahati, 2011, p-122

due to cultural assimilation with Dimasa and Assamese people of the region. The traditional black and red parallel scribed 'peckok' replaced by varied coloured 'peckok' in plain base with designs in two ends. 'Pini' instead of dark blue only, replaced by various colour matching with the colour of 'peckok' is new in their traditional stock. The neck-tye, jacket and muffler is became a demanding wear of function. As in Karbi traditional marriage and newly adopted parties like Birthday party, anniversary and lunch party the younger generation of boys used to wear neck-tai, jacket and male member wore muffler. The commercialization of these three items are been taken their root in the market. But not traditionally woven it is machine made, which is initiated by a group of Maruwari business people. It may be of two reason, firstly may be lack of good number of weavers and secondly popularity of the new fashion wear not only among the Karbi's but also others. The traditional dresses became an item of commerce. It is due to decrease in traditional weaving culture among the Karbi's. In the District of Karbi Anglong out of the total population majority is Karbi people.<sup>32</sup> By a field survey in rural and urban areas it is found that 50% rural women practiced weaving for their self requirement and only 10% urban house wife's produced traditional dress for special occasion. However few rural women used to weave traditional dress for economic support. The younger generation did not try to practice the weaving culture, instead preferred the modern attire and the machine made fashionable Karbi dresses. The pini and peckok also earn a good amount by the commercialization. Here we can see the high demand of the machine made Karbi traditional dress instead of hand woven. *Suwalkuchi* silk farms also started to produce peckok in silk. The traditional weavers suffer as they cannot compete with the machine made one. *Dimasa Riguset* is woven in few in number in silk farms on request but not commercialized. Other Dimasa dresses and designs are so complexes and multi coloured that the firm has given up production. Non-commercialization of the Dimasa traditional dresses indicates the regular practice of weaving culture among the Dimasas. However weaving practice is varied in area wise. In the field survey of North Cachar Hills and Karbi Anglong districts it is found that 75%-80% the Dimasa women in rural areas of the Karbi Anglong districts and 40% in North Cachar Hills district continued in weaving culture. In the urban area of Karbi Anglong district

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<sup>32</sup> See the Census report of 2011

10%-15% were engaged in weaving whereas urban women of North Cachar Hills district only 2% are engaged in weaving culture.<sup>33</sup> It is also informed that the Dimasa traditional dresses are being supplied from the Karbi Anglong district to the urban areas of North Cachar Hills district. Certain changes also articulated in case of the Bodos and the Mishing too. The Bodo women formerly and even now, tie a cloth round the chest just below the armpit that hangs to the toe. It is called *Dokhna*. Plain *Dokhna* is called *sala mathai* and if it is ornamented, it is called *Dokhna thawsi*. The latter type of *Dokhna* is essential during the marriage ceremony. Bodo women did not use any other body cover but a scarf called *alowan*. At present the women wear blouse as other Hindu women do and developed a small border decorated scarf called *Chadar* or *jumgra*. Traditional dresses is still in practiced among the Bodos, however along with the traditional one, *Dokhna* of readymade cloths with embroidered motifs or some time with a modern machine made ‘Paris’ with it. Adaptation of Hindu wear like sari and *Mekhala chador* among the Bodos is articulated. Light cotton towel is worn by the Bodo male with an ‘*Arnai*’, a long chador to take around the neck and shoulder. The ‘*Arnai*’ is ornamented with beautiful krish-cross designs, which is now used in traditional functions only. Due to western dress input in the society Bodo male traditional dress became very rare. The *Dokhona* and *alowan* is now available in varieties of colours both hand woven and embroidered one. The adapted *Mekhala-chadore* is however not woven traditionally like the Dimasas. Commercialization of Bodo dress is gaining popularity indicating decay in traditional weaving practices among the tribe.



Figure 46, 47 and 48: Photographs showing modern attire with traditional motif.

<sup>33</sup> Information gathered by a field survey during 2014-2015.

The traditional craft of weaving is one of a bright aspect of Mishing culture. All the required cloths are traditionally woven by the Mishing women. The traditional Mishing attire, under the global context too is flavored with new fashion. The traditional *ri:bi* (a sheet with narrow stripes, wrapped to cover the lower garment and the blouse), *gaseng* (used for the same purpose as that of a *ri:bi*, broad stripes of contrastive colours), *gero* (a sheet, usually off-white, wrapped round the waist to cover the lower part of the body, or round the chest to cover the body down to the knees or so), *seleng gasor* (a light cotton sheet, worn occasionally instead of a *ri:bi* or *gaseng*), *riya* (a long comparatively narrow, sheet, wrapped, a bit tightly round the chest), *segreg* (a loose piece of cloth, wrapped round the waist by married women to cover the eye down to the knees) and a *po:tub* (a scarf used to protect the head from the sun, dirt, etc)<sup>34</sup> are gradually getting lost. The traditional dresses of the tribe is now restricted to being wear in traditional functions, ceremonies and marriages. The regular attires of the tribe are replaced by *Mekhela-chador*. The traditional mode of weaving is marginalized by the alien culture, that is through the distribution of fashion as, has started as a movement, a flow or trickle from one element of society to another.<sup>35</sup> However the fashion adoption process results from individuals making a decision to purchase and wear a new fashion. Rogers (1983) suggests that this process involves five basic stages: awareness, interest, evaluation, trial, and adoption.<sup>36</sup> They became aware of the fashion, takes an interest in it, and evaluates it as having some relative advantage that could range from a new fabric technology or simply as being consistent with self concept or what one's friends are wearing. The individual tribe's process of positive evaluation of fashion, proceed to trial and adoption. The Northeast India is the meeting ground of many diverse culture and population of ethnic and distinctive tribes that co-exist peacefully, each unique in its traditions, culture, dress and exotic ways of life, is also differed in respect of evaluation and adoption of a new culture. The Naga, Kuki, Karbi and Bodo practiced their tradition wearing with modern flavors, whereas Dimasas and Mishing, wearing *Mekhela-chador* makes a new tradition to the communities and traditional dress became a

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<sup>34</sup> Dr, Shukhdeba Sharma, *The Tribes of Assam: Mishing*, New Delhi, 2012, p-512-513

<sup>35</sup> Marilyn Revell DeLong, *Theories of Fashion*.

<sup>36</sup> E. Rogers, *Diffusion of Innovations*, New York, 1995, p-23

fashion to special occasion like marriage, ceremonies and festivals. On the other hand the *Mekhala-chador* in traditional designs of Mishing and Dimasas is in 'High Demand' in the non-tribal society, which makes them extra-ordinary in the society. Looking the 'High Demand', of the traditional Mishing dress the commercialization of the Mishing *Mekhala-Chador* is started. The Dimasa traditional *Mekhala-Chador* remained under the traditional hands and few is available in the market.

The changes in traditional loom also affected in designs and motifs in traditional dresses which are also come to our notice during the field survey in the rural areas of Dimas, Karbi, Bodo, Mishing and Sonowal Kachari populated areas. Knowledge of incorporating traditionally used motifs and designs are fast disappearing; even weaving in back-strap loom is confined to only a few elderly women.<sup>37</sup> The motifs and designs are the sign of beauty and attraction. Sometime the motifs indicate the cultural and religious life of the tribe. The motif of snake is designed in the borders of the '*Biate*'<sup>38</sup> women's textiles is interpreted that the '*Biates*' were originally referred as the snake worshippers. The motif was an emblem of the '*Biates*' believing that the snake was a store of wealth.<sup>39</sup> Every tribe has their own motifs, which are basically inspired by natural phenomena like flower, leaves, trees, creepers and animals. The difference is because of their technology and pattern. Tribal motifs are symbolic in nature. It bears socio-psychological significance related to their culture. The symbolism makes possible a further revelation of axiological aspect of the society as of the culture's bearer.<sup>40</sup> The Karbi's traditional motifs represent their cultural background. The *Jambili Athon* is a cultural motif associated with the cultural background of the tribe. It represents the symbolical rod with 5 branches which signifies the 5 clans of the tribe. The animal motifs used in a Karbi traditional textile were cock motif known as *vo-alo*, signifying a domestic animal which awakens the people from their sleep at dawn. Goat motif known as *betoh* is another animal used as a sacrifice to a Karbi God named *Peng* signifying purity. Elephant motif called *engnar* symbolizes

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<sup>37</sup> Field survey in N.C.Hills and Karbi Anglong District.

<sup>38</sup> One of the tribe of Meghalaya.

<sup>39</sup> A.Kaolia & Baiahunlang Ladia, *Traditional textile and costumes of Karbi and Biate tribes of Meghalaya*, Indian Journal of Traditional Knowledge, Vol-2, April, 2012, p-312

<sup>40</sup> N.Nikolenko, *Ornament as a Symbol of Intercultural Communication*, Middle-East Journal of Scientific Research, IDOSI Publication, 2013, p-445



strength and butterfly motif known as *pipi* symboling freedom, joy and merriment.<sup>41</sup> The flower motif known as *mir* which is mainly used in women's attire often woven with a combination of a leaf. The philosophy of Karbi people is hidden in their traditional motifs. The knowledge of freedom and purity was well known to them. Changes in Karbi loom also effected due to modern technology and enter-cultural communication and mostly due to women engazment in government services. The commercialization of the Karbi traditional dresses and coming of new trend as fashion changed the traditional motifs in the loom. Instead of traditional motifs in Karbi *pecok*, floral designs became popular. The embroidered motifs of flower and leafs in different colours too now become a popular fashion. The inter-cultural communication also results inclusion of few new motifs in Karbi traditional loom. The geometric pattern of hand-fan motif which is a common motif of Dimasa is adopted by the Karbi and Assamese loom. The traditional black and red scribe in parallel pattern is replaced by multi-coloured scribed both parallel and horizontal one. Motifs which were used in '*Rekong*,' one of the men's wear of 15cm wide and 1.8cm long to cover the private parts<sup>42</sup> now lost as the tradition of wearing as '*Rekong*' is not practiced now. The '*bor-kapor*', a shawl and '*peselang*' are sound similar with Assamese '*bor-kapur*' and '*seleng*', may be due to cultural contract with the Ahoms the two cloths added in Karbi tradition. Using of golden rolexes thread in the motifs of '*pini*' is common fashion. Karbi man's wear which signifies social hierarchy especially those holding offices in the traditional Karbi chiefdom now lost its value. Big striped traditional jackets of red and white colours are wore by karbi chiefs to identify their social status and authority and smaller striped jacket of other colour combination are worn by common people. In the present time the jacket of red and white is not used instead varied coloured jackets are used by everyone.

Dimasas tribe's traditional motifs are inspired by the nature as well as domestic objects and designs are usually geometrical in shape. There is a great influence of surrounding nature in their designs. Tree, animal, rainbow, both jungle and vegetable flowers, are the important natural motifs and hand fan, beads are the object that they used in their textile. "Tree, elephant, lotus and peacock 'is

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<sup>41</sup> Interview taken

<sup>42</sup> D.Teron,*Op.cit*, p-112

a set of Dimasa motifs that used in every traditional textile as well as in ornamentation of architecture. The motifs are still practiced in traditional dresses. The traditional motifs of Dimasas also noticed in the architectural remains of Dimapur and Kachamari, which tells us about the Dimasa skilled craftsmanship. In the pages of Ahom history we find the importance of elephant in Dimasa kingdom. It represents power and strength of the tribe. The tree represents the strong establishment of the tribe. Lotus in water shows the stabled and peaceful environment of the Dimasa society. Peacock now is rare in the hilly region; the symbolic presentation of it makes us to understand the availability of the bird and a most beautiful bird. The object like beads and hand-fan motifs tells us about the use of beads and bamboo works. The interpretation is to understand the psychology of the tribe. As some of the motifs seen on traditional textiles of the *Biates* consist of a series of parallel lines only which was interpreted as row of bamboo called *rua*. The men folk of the *Biate* tribe were very fond of basket work and most of their basket was made of bamboos. Thus the parallel lines signify the bamboo craft of the tribe.<sup>43</sup> The most frequently used designs are; *Thai di bar*, (ou Tenga flower), *dilam palai* (Pomegranate leaf), *Tilam Palai* (Leaf of water lily) *Rudai lao*, (Castor Leaf), *Endi malai* (Eri worm), *Patha ramai* (Parrot) *Kesep* (Hand fan). Trees, elephant, peacock are common and every design carries these symbols. Dimasa traditional motifs are adopted in Assamese *Mekhela Chador* to give an ethnic look. But we did not come across any Assamese motifs adaptation by the Dimasa. We can say Dimasa contributed to the greater Assamese culture with the traditional geometrical Dimasa motifs rather adopted from them. It is also believed that the Assamese *riha* came to Assam through the Tibeto-Burman groups, the kacharis and the Ahoms.<sup>44</sup>

Bodo designs represent the motifs of *Pharao Megan agar* (pigeon's eye), *Daguthu gadu* (Dove's neck), *Maoji afa agar* (shape of cat's paw), *Arshi phul agar* (Mirror design), *Sikri agar* (Butterfly), *Jong agar* (Designs having points at both the ends), and *Chari bati* design (Diamond shape designs). The Mishing designs reveal their closeness to the nature. The chief characteristics of

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<sup>43</sup> A. Kaolia & Baiahunlang Ladia, *Traditional textile and costumes of Karbi and Biate tribes of Meghalaya*, Indian Journal of Traditional Knowledge, Vol-2, April, 2012, p-312

<sup>44</sup> Anumoni Gogoi, *Costumes of Ahom: The Tai*, Guwahati, 2000, p-96

Mishing design is the use of geometrical shapes in the form of triangular shapes and Dimonds along with bands of lines. Continuous diamond form and waves feature very prominently in the borders of Mishing textiles. The triangular designs represent hills, which are narrow at the top and broad at the bottom. The butties generally seen in the Indian traditional textiles are woven in Mishing textiles in the form of star or flowers, which appear all over the women's costumes. The designs generally consist of bird, deer, horse, butterfly and sprays of flowers, stars and trees in number of combinations. Floral butties on black background is often compared to the night sky. The tribes however used colourful stripes in contrast. The Mishing traditional dress is still preserved by the Mishing women in wearing as well as by weaving the same. The traditional motifs of the tribe are adopted by the Assamese culture in *Mekhela-Chador*.

Another co-tribe the Nagas also used colourful stripes. In the Naga textile colour signifies a lot. The simple and straight forward lines, stripes, squares and bands are the most traditional design motifs. Contrast and combination of colours are chosen expertly. If on skirts and shawls, the stripes and bands are usually horizontal, it is because of a fine eye to the way which these lines of direction drape on the body when worn. Naga textile however a symbol of hierarchy, different tribes of the Naga has different shawls of their own design and within the same tribe everybody is not allowed to wear any type of shawl one prefers.<sup>45</sup>Naga shawls range from a very simple white cloth to the elaborately designed warrior or rich man's shawls. The ordinary cloth consists of a plain white or a blue black cloth which can be worn by anybody without restriction. The decorative warrior shawl *Tsungkotepsu* is one of the most characteristic cloths of *Aos*. On a general dark base, the cloth has a median white band and on either side of it are horizontal bands of contrasting black, red, and white. There are five broad red bands close together at the top and bottom, six narrow red bands close together at the top and bottom, six narrow red bands close to the broad white median band. The median band is painted with a pattern in black which includes figures of *mithun* symbolizing wealth of the owner, elephant and tiger to symbolize velour of man, human head representing the success in head-hunting

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<sup>45</sup> *The Art and Crafts of Nagaland*, Naga Institute Of Culture Government of Nagaland, Kohima ,1968,p-19

and a few other things like spear, dao and cock. This is an exclusive male shawl and could be worn only by one who has taken heads in war or offered *mithun* sacrifice (a feast of merit performed in Naga society by a rich man). Like that the *Rongsu* shawl is one of the most decorative *Ao* cloths and the most difficult to earn the right of wearing it, for it can be worn only by a man whose grandfather and father have both done the *mithun* sacrifice feast and who has done it himself. Again Rehuke Khim or cowrie shawl is the most important cloth meant for the rich man of the Yimchunger Naga tribe. On a black background, circles of cowrie are stitched. Naga has variety of cloths for man and women and married and unmarried. The motifs differed from the rest of the tribe of the region. The colour symbolized the status and animal, spears, arrows and cowrie represent them as a warrior group. A. Kurane(2013) in her study on ‘Symbolism of Naga Handloom’ stated about the motifs and designs which were different according to the tribes also incorporates a variety of patterns or motifs to show cultural identity, social status, education, tribe and clan differences tribe.<sup>46</sup> Mizo, Kuki and Rengma tribe has a little similarity with the Naga, still has own tradition and representation.

The land of Head-hunting people are faced by an unprecedented evolutionary crisis in their history. It is changing rapidly like everyone else. It is no longer jungle or naked people. Love and kindness are being showered to any visitor instead of hunting head. We can understand the changes in the words of Mr. Hokishe Sema, the Finance Minister of Nagaland (1969-1974) when he said that those whose knowledge does not go beyond old anthropological books and the stories of head-hunting, expedition by British rulers, queer imaginary travelogue may find it very difficult to believe that Nagaland can be counted as one of the modern state of the union.<sup>47</sup> The changes is influential in the code of tribal life, social discipline, the integrity of the village community, interiority of the family, the culture and spiritual values, love of art and the aesthetic pleasure. The urbanization and improved communications, easy accessibility of markets and free contact with outside people have led to the import of many manufactured articles. Enamel mugs and plates have replaced the old bamboo and wooden cups

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<sup>46</sup> A. Kurane, *Symbolism in Naga Handloom*, *International Union of Anthropological and ethnological Science*, UK,2013. Retrieved from <http://www.iaaes2013.org/index.html>

<sup>47</sup> M.Alemchiba, *The Art and Crafts of Nagaland*,Kohima,1968,p-117

and platters which were often skillfully carved. The indigenous earthen pots have been substituted by aluminum pots. Hymns have taken place of the old songs and dances are being forgotten. The cessation of head-hunting and the gradual disappearance of the various kinds of Feast of Merit lead to the decay of *Morung* Institutions and maintenance of village gate and for this, wood carving has suffered. The need to weave a particular shawl for a particular class of warriors or rich men is no longer there. As a matter of fact, there are dozens of old shawl designs which are no longer made or woven. Preparation of indigenous dye is no longer urgent, because cheap colours are easily available in the markets. Besides this, tribes not only the Naga's but the Mizu, Kuki, and *Rengma* tribe of the region had new avenues opened up before them during the colonial period. These are the avenues of politics and political mobilization and modern education as we have mentioned, which have made them their entry into modern occupation possible. Alongside these processes was their encounter with new culture and religion in the form of the Christianity. Tribe's conversion to the Christianity gave an added new dimension to the tribal society and culture, which was in striking contrast to the dominant culture and religion of the larger Indian society. The avenues which the British rule made possible. In fact, political aspiration of tribes came to be intricately tied with educational attainment. If we notice the rest of India's tribe became a part of the larger Indian society through fusion of element (Kosambi) or by drawing themselves into the social organization of its production system, which invariably provided protection and security (Bose). In this process of their interaction with the larger Indian society, get absorbed in the larger Indian society in the cost of their tribal identity. But in case of Northeast especially for Naga, Kuki, Mizu and Rengma tribe it is the Christianity that transformed their socio-cultural activities leading limited demand for tradition. The different clans came under one religious platform. However the changing pattern of the Naga culture leads another move in resent period which can be termed as revitalization movement as has been described by the anthropological literature. The feeling of consciousness of cultural identity came in the forefront to establish themselves for attainment of political autonomy. Hence there has been articulated to go back to their cultural roots.

Every textile has a story with a rich past, developing alongside socio-political changes in society. The battle with demand and strains of increasing urbanization and globalization became a threat to ancestral knowledge and traditions and the regional identity. India, blessed with a multi-layered and culturally rich legacy of craft skills imbibed through the ebbs and flow of historical events is facing limitation in verity due to lose of traditional weavers. The intricate *dada* or *tangalia* weaving of Gujarat that emulates fine beadwork, or the beautifully ornate *bomkai sarees* of Orissa are now rarely woven for local consumption. The unique *balaposh* perfumed quilt, woven using local scent or attar from West Bengal is now a lost technique.<sup>48</sup> In the Northeast region traditional treasure is however minimized, but not lost. Adaptation and assimilation within the entire region's of northeast the tribal culture of traditional textile is surviving. The enter-mixing of culture in northeastern region and transformation to new fashion created a trend. *Mekhala-Chador* in tribal motifs became a common wear among the tribe as well as among the non-tribe. Mishing, Dimasa and Karbi motifs are represented in *Mekhala-chador* as traditional dress of Assam. It is a contribution to greater Assamese society as well as in the same time the absorption of tribal culture by the Hindu is completed. As we have found that the motifs and designs used in tribal loom are not merely a display but a representation of their social, cultural and religious life became meaningless representing a new fashion to the world. It is vary sad to say that the Northeast tribe till today hardly known to the rest of the country and so their culture and tradition were also remain aloof in present scenario. In this respect the regional fashion designers who have exposed the tribal motifs and designs to the world through their re-creativity and presentation is most important. Popular figures like singers, anchors and modeling personalities are the role model or as the banner for the ethnic culture presentation. Modeling and fashion shows are gaining much popularity now days. Varities of dresses with various coloures are prepared by the designers. The tribal motifs and designs are the latest in it. However the dresses which are representing northeast are focused as Assamese culture from Assam. In this case, different tribal cultural identity remained under a political boundary and not representing the tribe itself. In the world where handicraft traditions are linked

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<sup>48</sup>Dr.Vandana Bhandari, *Looming Large,Fibre2Fashion*, National Institute of Fashion Technology

to artistic expressions and hobby-crafts, reveal a deep symbolic nature that encompasses their culture, is a national heritage. Tribes have the caliber to weave new and more powerful handloom legacy.

Due to modern education, industrialization, changes of time, occupation and fashion changes have taken place in the traditional dresses. It is obvious to get attracted by the modern dressing style by the younger generation as they are trying to identify themselves with modern civilization and trends. But even then the traditional dresses have not totally lost their status and value, specially in the rural areas the use of the traditional dresses according to their social and customary needs, is very much alive with minimum changes.