

# ROLE OF CHRISTIANITY IN THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS OF GARO HILLS, MEGHALAYA

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## Abstract

The study analyses the role of Christianity in the socio-economic and political developments of Garo hills, Meghalaya. The sample size of the study consist of 250 respondents. Before the entry of Christian missionaries the Garo community was engaged in hunting and fishing. Even their life also contaminated with head hunting and evil activities. The domains of developments such as In developing infrastructure, In creating awareness about their rights, In developing their skills and competencies, In maintaining social justice, In developing economic status, Increasing standard of living, In obtaining education and abroad study, In maintaining peace of society and individual, In developing spiritual awareness and descent life, Eradication of religious evils, In developing leaders, In exchange of culture- language –customs, In erasing the boundaries between the castes and in the increasing in the genuine and purity of life are the areas in which Christianity played pivotal role as the developmental mile stones of the Garo hills.

**Key words: Christianity, Grao Hills, Domains of development, role etc:.**

## Introduction

The State of Meghalaya has two parts consist of Khasi Hills and Garo Hills. The Western part is inhabited by Garo tribes. Majority of the people especially the Garos are Christians. The Eastern part of the state it is inhabited by two major tribes- Khasi and Jaintias. The Garo tradition says that the Garos originally came from Tibet and settled down in Coch Behar, Assam, Bangladesh, and Burma. Finally settled down in present Garo Hills of Meghalaya. They are famous for head hunting and war, especially with nearby landlords. The American Baptist Missionaries, David Scott, the British Civil Servant and two natives of Garo hills named Omed Momin and his nephew, Ramke Momin. David Scott opened the first primary School to the Garos in the village of Singimari in 1826. The school was opened with 40 Garo boys. Baptist Missionary from Dacca, Rev. Rupret Bion came to Goalpara and preached the Good News to the people and in the distribution of tracts. Ramke was obtained tract from his friend. The name of the tract was *Apatti Nashak*, meaning, *Loosing of Excuses*.

First Garo Baptist Church was organized with 39 members by Dr. Bronson on the 14<sup>th</sup> April 1867 at Rajasimla. The Second Missionaries came and contact with people of Garo Hills is the Roman Catholic Mission. Two Selesian Missionaries named Fr. Archemedes Pianazzi and Fr. Lois Roca came to Tura in 1933. Missionaries named Jobang D. Marak and Nagen Diengdoh, they could organize permanent Mission Centre in Garo Hills Tura. Later, The Seventh Day Adventist Mission also came to Garo Hills in 1954. It was a Bengali preacher by the name P.K. Ghayan and established their mission in Rajasimla village of Garo Hills.

### Statement of the Problem

The Garo tribes were the undeveloped and uncivilized group in the society because of the primitive life style. They rely on forest living, fishing and headhunting. They dislike to interact with the society and the standard of living is not an acceptable thing for them. The intervention of the Christian churches were helped them to develop and to get started in order to attain all the benefits of the educated, cultured and standardized society. Even though they are in the path of development and it need to analyse the developments contributions made by Christianity. The Christianity especially protestants and Catholic churches are playing pivotal role in the socio –economic and in the spiritual development of Garo hills.

### Scope

Still the Indian Garos hills struggling to attain the proper development of infrastructures including transport and communication systems. They are ready to change physically and mentally from the traditions because of the intervention of Christian institutions. The Garo community is able to develop due to the contributions of the missionaries from India and abroad. The study discusses the present and future endeavours of the Garo hills happened only because of Christianity as developmental mile stones,

### Objectives

- i) To understand the life of Garos
- ii) To analyse the influences of the Garos life development through Christianity.
- iii) To find out the level of changes made in different areas in the life of Garos

### Review of Literature

**Biju kumar, V. (2013)** Social exclusion is a multidimensional term that encompasses social, economic, political and cultural spheres. Exclusion is linked to the recognition of social identities, resource allocations and power relations. In most cases, both subjective consciousness and actual inequalities lead to ethnic assertions and extremist activities. Unlike other studies on ethnicity and extremism, the present article tries to understand ethnic assertions in northeast India in the context of rampant social exclusion taking place in the region.

**Dev, Soma., Resurreccion, Bernadette., and Doneys, Philippe. (2004)** Based on an ethnographic field investigation conducted on the matrilineal–matrilocal *Garo* community of Bangladesh, this article provides a historical account of local environmental struggles to draw attention to the interconnections between gender, environment and sustainable resource management. From a feminist political ecology perspective, the article argues that interacting with traditional culture, forest ecology and changing processes of centric resource governance, gender remains a salient variable in environmental issues. Local contexts of gender dynamics help configuring local people's mode of participation in environmental struggles as well as being the

consequence of those struggles. Findings suggest that *Garo* women and men have sustained gender specific roles and interests through their struggles to ensure control over forest lands and tree resources. Furthermore, they have developed a class-based relationship with forest ecology which must be acknowledged in forest policies.

**Raitapuro, Minna., and Bal, Ellen. (2016)** this article, we show how mobility (transnational connectivity, spatial, social and economic mobility) plays an important role in the everyday life and future aspirations of young members of the indigenous community of Garos in Bangladesh. In the contemporary globalizing context of Bangladesh, young Garos have constructed aspirations which can no longer be fulfilled in their native villages. With this case study of social and cultural meanings of mobility for indigenous youth, we also wish to contribute to a better understanding of past and present processes of social transformation amongst indigenous peoples in Bangladesh. While previous studies of indigenous minorities in South Asia are characterized by a focus on stillness and stasis rather than change and mobility, this article calls for a differing approach in ethnographic research on ethnic minorities, one which recognizes the mobile and (globally) connected context and challenges dominant notions of 'tribal' or 'indigenous' communities as frozen in time and space.

### **Profile area of the study**

The Western part of Meghalaya is Garo Hills, inhabited by Garo tribes. Majority of the the Garos are Christians.

### **Research Methodology**

This paper aims to analyse the role of Christianity in the socio-economic and political developments of Garo hills, Meghalaya. This section describes the study in a systematic and scientific way as follows:-

### **Research Design**

The design study was made in accordance with the data collection and analysis. The study consisted of descriptive and exploratory analysis.

### **Data Collection**

The data was collected from both the primary and the secondary sources. The questionnaire was developed by the research scholar to collect the research data.

### **Primary Data**

The opinion of residents of Garo Hills was collected through the questionnaire.

### **Secondary Data**

Secondary data was gathered from various Publishing sources including Magazines, Journals, News Papers and Online resources containing past studies on the Garo Hills, Meghalaya.

### **Sample Design**

For the study survey sample size was taken, by choosing stratified random sampling.

### **Sample Size**

The sample size consisted of 250 People living in Garo Hills, consist of 120 male respondents and 130 female respondents

### Statistical Tools Used

The collected data have been analysed by making use of the following tools:-

- Percentage analysis
- Analysis of variance(ANOVA)

**Table No.1**

#### Socio – Demographic Profile

Particulars	Number	Percentage
Male	120	48
Female	130	52
Married	202	80
Unmarried	48	20
Matriculation	50	20
Higher Secondary	65	26
Graduation and above	135	54
Unemployed	15	06
Employed	235	94
Natives of Garo Hills	200	80
Alien to Garo Hills	50	20

\*Source: Primary Data

The table no.1 shows that the majority of the respondents are female respondents are 130 (52per cent) and the male respondents are 120 (48 per cent).Majority of the respondents were 202 (80 per cent) are married and the unmarried people were 48(20 per cent). Majority of the respondents are educated minimum graduate level 135(54 per cent), the respondents completed matriculation are 50 (20 per cent) and the respondents completed higher secondary 56(26 per cent).Majority of the respondents are employed 235(94 per cent) and the unemployed respondents were 15 (6 per cent )only. Majority of the respondents are natives of Garo hills 200(80 per cent) and the respondents were alien to Garo hills were 50(20 per cent).

*H<sub>0</sub>: The Christianity doesn't have any role in the different domains of development of Garo Hills.*

Table No.2

**Influence of Christianity among different domains of Garo's Hills, Meghalaya.**

Sl. No	Particulars	Significance/ Insignificance
1	In developing infrastructure	Significant
2	In creating awareness about Human rights	Insignificant
3	In developing skills and competencies.	Insignificant
4	In maintaining social justice	Insignificant
5	In developing economic status	Insignificant
6	Increasing standard of living	Insignificant
7	In obtaining education and abroad study	Insignificant
8	In maintaining peace of society and individual	Insignificant
9	In developing spiritual awareness and descent life	Insignificant
10	Eradication of religious evils	Insignificant
11	In developing leaders	Insignificant
12	In exchange of culture- language –customs	Insignificant
13	In erasing the boundaries between the castes	Insignificant
14	In increasing the genuine and purity of life	Insignificant

\*Source: Primary data

\*Level of Significance @0.05%

Table no.2 depicts that the Christianity has had no role in the development infrastructure facility of the Garo hills because the null hypothesis is accepted and the alternate hypothesis is rejected. But in the case of the other domains of developments such as creating awareness about their rights, developing their skills and competencies, maintaining social justice, developing economic status, increasing standard of living, obtaining education and abroad study, maintaining peace of society and individual, developing spiritual awareness and

descent life, Eradication of religious evils, developing leaders, exchange of culture- language –customs, erasing the boundaries between the castes and in the increasing in the genuine and purity of life are the areas in which Christianity played pivotal role as the developmental mile stones of the Garo hills. The null hypothesis rejected and the alternate hypothesis is accepted.

### Findings

Majority of the respondents are female are 130 (52per cent).Majority of the respondents were 202 (80 per cent) are married. Majority of the respondents are educated minimum graduate level 135(54 per cent).Majority of the respondents are employed 235(94 per cent). Majority of the respondents are natives of Garo hills 200(80 per cent). The domains of developments such as creating awareness about their rights, developing their skills and competencies, maintaining social justice, developing economic status, increasing standard of living, obtaining education and abroad study, maintaining peace of society and individual, developing spiritual awareness and descent life, Eradication of religious evils, developing leaders, exchange of culture- language –customs, erasing the boundaries between the castes and in the increasing in the genuine and purity of life are the areas in which Christianity played pivotal role as the developmental mile stones of the Garo hills.

### Scope for further research

- More studies on the topic of spirituality, peace , social development etc: in the Garo hills because of Christianity
- The developed policies, development techniques and methods of development for other regions of the country based on the Garo Development model.

### Conclusion

Christianity without any denomination difference plays pivotal role in the total development of Garo Hills. Christianity laid foundation, build pillars and mould a civilized culture from the typical hunters and head hunters. The rights and needs of the people is established and uninterruptedly distributed with the same attitude of Christ to all without any discrimination. All the discriminations are reduced or come to an end in the form of implanted culture and manners .The Christian community still there to support more on the Garos development and well being of the general public.

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