

**THE DIFFERENT CONCEPTIONS OF GOD WITH
SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE BODO'S RELIGION
: A PHILOSOPHICAL AND SOCIOLOGICAL
INVESTIGATION.**

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PREFACE

The North East India is the place of different tribes and different ethnic groups. Assam is one of the important place of North east India where different tribes and non-tribes are settled together. The Bodos of Assam intermix with the Assamese and with the other communities specially in the Brahmaputra Valley and in the newly created BTAD or BTC. They have preserved their language, culture and tradition. Like other tribal groups or community Bodos have also traditional religion. A simple form of Hinduism has been seen in Bodo religion in the hands of Guru Kalicharan Brahma, a reformer of traditional Bathou religion. The followers of him are known as Brahma mainly seen in Western part of Assam. The process of Sanskritization or conversion to different Hindu sect is seen in the Bodo society to create a greater Hindu society. A mode of conversion to Christianity and Islam is seen among the Bodos which plays a pivotal role in building up and changing their socio-religious culture.

The study is concerned with the concept of God in Bodo religion. God is the guide, goal and ground of men. Different religions of the world demand God as the all-powerful, supreme, absolute etc. in different ways. In the first introductory chapter, an attempt has been taken to state a view of the problem, area of the study and about the History of the religion. Different concepts of God of Indian philosophy, Indian Mythology and in Western Philosophy are discussed in second chapter. In the third chapter the author wants to discuss philosophical understanding of God. The relation, the social system and the different social concept of God are discussed in the fourth chapter where an

elaborate discussion is made about the different concepts of God in different religion and different social, traditional system. Different religious ceremonies or festivals including religious rites and rituals are introduced in the fifth chapter. In the concluding chapter an attempt is made to assess the role of traditional religion; a comparative study among the different concepts of God and the significance of the use of different philosophical concepts has been also made.

I have tried to present the facts and chronology as authentic as possible. Many of the facts are established facts, which I have just reproduced and interpreted. In accommodating facts, I have always been careful and tried to present them in brief avoiding unnecessary prolongation.

The present work is an attempt to study the philosophical and social aspects of the different concepts of God and religious ceremonies of the Bodo religion. I collected primary information from the different Bodo people. I am grateful to all informants. Numerous secondary information or published books and journals have been consulted for this work. I have sincere thanks and honour to late Dr. Chandidas Bhattacharya, Professor, Deptt. of Philosophy, North Bengal University, my previous guide who died at the middle stage of the research work. I am greatly indebted to my guide Dr. (Mrs.) Bhaswati Bhattacharya Chakrabarti, Professor, Deptt. Of Philosophy, North Bengal University who helped and encouraged me to continue my research work after the sad demise of Dr. Chandidas Bhattacharya. I would not deny the inspiration of the faculty members, Deptt. Of Philosophy, North Bengal University who helped and inspired me in different ways. I offer my sincere thanks to the principal of my college for his kind co-operation, to my colleague Dr. T. C. Das, Dr. A. K. Das, S. C. Das, K. Das etc. and

well-wishers for inspiration. Finally I offer my sincere thanks to the employees of the University Central Library, workers of Seminar Library of the Deptt. Of Philosophy and the typist. Last but not the least I am indebted to my family members for the encouragement in doing my research work.

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CHAPTER – I

INTRODUCTION

The study of the concept of God involves the study of the culture of a religion. Any aspect or a part of a society is incomplete beyond the concept of religion. But the present study intends to deal with the concept of God in relating to socio-philosophical aspect with special reference to Bodo's religion. The investigation of my research work will also cover a comparative study among the different concept of God where two important philosophical concept like 'Language game' and 'Family resemblance concept' of Wittgenstein will also be used.

Though God is the matter of philosophy or metaphysics but it is inseparably related to religion. It is the active, living and religious belief. It is the belief of every civilized land and time. Religiously the concept of God is mainly associated with human desires and fears.

Though the concept of God is universal and popular, a few people have a metaphysical or philosophical concept. Religiously it is more popular or familiar. In between the universal, popular and familiar belief there is a metaphysical consideration also. The proofs for the existence of the belief or reality strengthen the philosophical understanding. There are two aspects of God, lived and philosophy of God. Lived god is found in Folk religion. Folk religion is animistic in nature.

God is believed as the creator of the heaven and earth (world). God is regarded as the self-caused. His existence is proved variously in philosophy and also in religion.

We have different conceptions and statements which are found not only in Indian tradition but also in Western philosophy and theology.

God has the sociological root in society. Man and society are inter-dependent. Men constitute society. Individuals nurture their ordinary belief and practices about god in their ordinary activities in society. The nurture of God is also found deeply in various religious societies of the world like Hinduism, Islam, Christianity etc..

God is said as the 'self-caused'. God is regarded as the first cause by theologians. God is the cause of its own existence. "To say that something is self caused (causa-sui) means only that it exists, not contingently or in dependence upon something else but by its own nature, which is only to say that it is a being which is such that it can neither come into being nor perish"¹.

For the philosophical understanding we much now better concerned with the arguments for the existence of God. "Some theologians maintain that the concept of God is the concept of a most perfect being"².

God stands for a being who is the ultimate reality. "The idea of God is associated with sublimity, ineffable majesty, holiness and transcendence. The Sacred.....the Supernatural, the Self-Existent, the Absolute etc. are all known simply as 'God' "³.

In Indian tradition or mythology the Vedic deities are presented or worshipped in anthropomorphic form. Mythology is the part of the living culture of every level of society. The Vedas are the earliest literary and philosophical documents. The Vedic culture is the main foundation of the Indian civilization. All the religions and philosophies

that we find in India have their root in the Vedas. The term 'Veda' is derived from the root 'Vid' which means to know. Thus etymologically 'Veda' means knowledge. By Vedas we can have the knowledge of ultimate reality. The Upaniṣads form the concluding portions of the Vedas. Hence, they are called the Vedānta and end of the Veda. Upaniṣads contain the essence of the teachings of the Vedas. The views of all important Indian philosophers including the Buddha are rooted in the Upaniṣads. "The Upaniṣads contain philosophic discussions about the nature of the self, creation, ultimate reality, liberation etc."⁴. A great many gods have been mentioned in the Vedic mantras. The word Upaniṣads is derived from the Sanskrit root Upa-ni-ṣad. 'Upa' means near, 'ni' means down and 'ṣad' means to sit. Hence, literally speaking the word Upaniṣad means 'sitting down near'.

Bodos is the largest and important indigeneous tribe of the North-East India. Their basic inhabiting four districts are Kokrajar, Sirang, Baksa and Udalguri which are recently included into BTAD or BTC. Now Bodos are regarded as the great inner power of the North-East India. "The whole of Assam (barring the eastern part inhabited by the Kuki Chins) and North and East of Bengal was the country of the great Bodo people"⁵. They belong to the Tibeto-Burma family of the Mongoloid race. The people who lived in Siberia and Mongolia around 2000 BC are known as Mongoloid. As their physical features, they have yellowish brown skin, square set face with broad nose, strong cheek bones, flat nose, almond shaped black or dark brown eyes and coarse head hair. They have also some other physical features. They certainly are not tall or handsome race. In appearance they have resemblances with the Nepali. In moral characters they are more favourable than others. They bears the Virtues of honesty, truthfulness, straightforwardness etc..

"Kachari is a generic term for a number of groups speaking a more or less common dialect or language and claiming a common mystical ancestry"⁶. China and Tibet are the original homeland of Boro-Kacharis. "According to Endle, the origin of the Kachari race is still very largely a matter of conjecture and inference in the absence of anything entitled to be regarded as authentic history"⁷.

In course of time the Mongoloid people divided into three groups and migrated towards different parts of the world. The first group migrated towards Europe where they liked to settle in Italy and Turkey. The second group migrated towards North America and Mexico and settled there. Some of the second group settled in Japan also. The third group migrated from Siberia and Mongolia and settled in the Hoang-ho valley of China and Tibet. After living a several centuries they migrated to the foothills of Bhutan. They were known in Tibet as "Bod". Their country was also known as Bod country. "According to Dr. Sunity Kumar Chatterjee and Kalaguru Bishnu Prasad Rabha, the word Bodo or Boro was derived from the word 'Bod' "⁸.

During their course of migration from the foothills of Bhutan they gradually moved towards west and settled one group in Coach Behar, Dinajpur, Jalpaiguri district of North Bengal, Goalpara and Dhubri district of Assam and Moran district of Nepal. They dwelt in the banks of the river Meche flowing through the Nepal. So, they are popularly known as Mech. This is the first flow through the valley of Tista, Dharla, Sankosh and founded the powerful kingdom of Kamrupa. The second flow was through the Subansiri, Dibang and Dihang valley into the eastern Assam and established a powerful Chutia kingdom. From their second flow some migrants were settled in Kamrupa, Nalbari and Barpeta district of Assam. They are known as Boros. Some of them

moved towards eastern part of Assam where they were identified as Deori, Moran, Chutia, Sonowal Kachari and Thengal Kachari. Some of the migrants were settled at North Cachar hills. There they are known as Kacharis and Dimasa. In Cachar plains they are also known as Barman. "According to S. K. Chatterjee, this group of Bodos assumed their name from the district of Kachar. The meaning of Kachar is lowlands or border lands, and is originated from Sanskrit Kaksavata-Kachada-Kachar"⁹. Some of them migrated to the Rangpur and Maimansing district of Bangladesh and many of them now converted into Islam. Outside the Brahmaputra valley they are now found in the contiguous areas of Tripura (as Tippera or Barman), Garo Hills (as Garo, Hajong), Nagaland and Arunachal Pradesh etc..

As stated by Anthropologists, Kīrātas belong to the great Indo-Mongoloid group. We have evidences about Kirātas in Yajurveda and Atharvaveda. According to S. K. Chatterjee, the Kirātas have yellow (golden) skin. They used fierce weapons, and were cruel. "The Mahābhārata and the Rāmāyana supported the evidences that the Boro-Kacharis belong to Indo-Mongoloid race known as Kirāta"¹⁰. So, the Boro-Kacharis belong to the Indo-Mongoloid race known as Kirāta. According to Dr. P.C. Bhattacharya, Boros are the descendants of Kirātas later known as Bodo-Kachari. The people who lived during the epic age of Rāmāyana and Mahābhārata in eastern regions of India were mainly Bodo people. At that time they were known as Kirāta. According to some Sanskrit books including the Vedas the Indo-Mongoloid people who were known as Kirāta are also known as Mlecca or Asura.

From the point of view of the term 'Boro', R. M. Nath says that Boros were the emigrates of 'Bod' country of Tibet. They were known

as the 'Bodo-Ficha', or 'Boddo-Cha' which means children of Bod country and later known as the Boddo or Boro. Britishers first used Bodo in stead of Boro. They pronounced 'D' in stead of 'R', e.g., Bidi-Biri, Kanada-Kanara etc.. Brian Hodson was the first British author who confirmed the generic term Bodo on the Boros. The etymological meaning of the term Bodo is 'men' by which the term Bara or Baraphisa (children of the Bara) could be justified. The tribe who domesticates pig (Bara in Assamese) is termed as 'Bara' and later on known as 'Bodo'.

The meaning of the term 'Kachari' is derived from 'Khoror' and 'Hari'. Khoror or Khare means head and Hari means a clan. From that sense Khoror-hari means a ruling clan. There is another proposition for the name of Kachari is that the term Kachari is derived from the name Cachar district. "According to Kalaguru Bishnu Prasad Rābha, the name 'Kachari (Kosari)' came from the Kuchi river of Kuchi Valley in Nepal"¹¹. The above statement probably mean that the Boros who lived in Kuchi Valley might have given their identity as Kuchiari and later on changed to Kosari and was pronounced as Kochari by non-Bodos. 'Kachari' was used as the racial name by the Britishers and Christian Missionaries in their books and literature. Later on the Bodo writers used Kachari as the racial name in their books. In the later period Boro or Boro-Kochari were used as the racial name of the Boros. As a result it is found that the race has three different racial names like Kochari, Boro-Kochari and Boro.

The Boro or Bodo language is used by the Bodos. The Boro language belongs to Assam-Burma group of the Tibeto-Burma branch of the Sino-Tibeto-Chinese speech family. "As Dr. P. C. Bhattacharya has observed that the Boro (Bodo) language belongs to the branch of British section under Baric division of the Sino-Tibetan family, as per

the classification given by Robert Shafer¹². Their livelihood pattern is mainly based on agricultural occupation and keeping domestic animals like pig, cock etc. The mode of living of the Boro-Kachari is in compact villages and putting barrier all around the homestead is a common sight to see.

The main residential area of Bodos is confined within the Brahmaputra Valley of Assam. It covers an area of 56,216 square Kilometer. The length of the valley from West to East is about 720 kilometer. In this valley the Bodo is the main tribal group. Now the total Bodo population in Assam is 1502147 where 811154 is male and 690993 is female. Total literacy percentage of Bodo population is 34.68% (According to the census of 2001).

Religion is the mirror of a society where culture and tradition of a race is reflected. Bodo race is culturally very rich. Bodo religion reflects all the cultural modes of the race including social institution and behaviour. From primitive age to the modern life the Bodo religion played an important role in the socio-cultural life. Social institutions of the Bodos are closely associated with religion. "Every sphere of life of men and women of Bodos are guided by the rites and rituals of the religion. Religion has also played a dominant role in changing their social pattern and status, economy, mode of living and way of thinking and it has led to achieving higher education and modernization of their society"¹³.

Bathou is the traditional religion of the Bodos which is also known as Bathou dharma or dharam. Bathou religion incorporates rites, rituals, social norms, ethics and philosophy of the Bodos. "The religion of the kachari race is distinctly of the type commonly known as "animistic", and its underlying principle is characteristically one of the

fear and dread"¹⁴. Bathou is the supreme or chief God of Bodos. The supreme God is also known as Sibrai (Śiva in Hindu). Mainao is the wife of Bathou. Though Bathou religion is independent and autonomous but it is a part and type of Hindu religion or Hinduism. It is the part of the evolution of the spirit of Hinduism. According to Dr. P. C. Bhattacharya and Mangalsing Hajowari, Sibrai created the universe with the help of Siburi and Mon-sin-sin is the first man. "But Mon-sin-sin was celibate for life, so Sibrai and his wife Siburi created man Darimuba and women Singrimuba for the propagation of mankind and the Sijou tree (Euphorbia Splenden) was created as an emblem of supreme god at the altar"¹⁵. Sijou tree is worshipped by the Bodos as the living symbol of Bathou or Siva. "It has five ridges and five depressions. Its thorns grow in pairs leaves resemble hoods of serpents and the branches grow vertically upward like the Trisul of Śiva"¹⁶.

Kherai Puja and Garja Puja are two main religious festival of the Bodos. Kherai Puja is performed in the month of Kartik or Aghon by the villagers collectively in an open field for the welfare of the villagers and also to worship Mainoburi for having bumper harvest. Garja puja is another religious ceremony of Bathou religion. There are difference of opinion regarding the meaning of the word 'Garja'. According to some the meaning of Garja is 'God'. According to some scholars the word means a way of making oneself free from danger. "In the words of Bhaben Narzi, a Boro scholar Garja means 'niskriti' in Assamese"¹⁷. It probably means the way of discharging anything. In the Garja Puja evil gods and goddesses are discharged and floated away in the river or stream. This puja is performed for the welfare of the villagers. It also performed to purify the villagers. It is performed within a family or by collectively.

In the history of Bodo religion many new religious activities impact and revive the traditional Bathou religion. In course of time many new religious group or sect is evolved among the Bodos. In the history of Bodo religion a wave of conversion was taken place. Many Bodo people were converted from their traditional religion to Vaisnavism (Ek Saran Nam Dharma) initiated by 16th century social reformer Sankardeva. They became Sarania Bodo and assumed the title of Koch-Rajbansi, Das, Deka, Mondal, Karji etc.. Many Bodos were converted into Christianity also. Christian Missionaries have a significant role among the tribes to change their religious, socio-economic and cultural lives. Christian Missionaries spread Christianity among the Bodos in the early part of 19th century. American Baptist Missionaries were the first to contact with the Bodo-Kacharies. In the villages of Panbari and Alamganj of present Dhubri district of Assam, some Bodo people were converted into Islam.

On the eve of the 20th century Bodo society faced critical stages and lost their original identity and culture by adopting conversion to other sect. In that critical period Kalicharan Brahma appeared as a messiah of the Bodo society. He born in 1862 at Kajigaon, Dhubri district of Assam. "His conversion to the Brahma cult paved the way to bring the larger sections of his followers to the wider fold of the Vedic Sanatan dharma and it was possible to carry out a social revolution among the Bodo-Kacharis residing in and around the district of Goalpara with epicenter at Kajigaon in Dhubri sub-division (Dhubri sub-division was then comprised of the present Kokrajarh district as well)"¹⁸.

Earlier he was known as Kalicharan Mech. He was unsatisfied with the traditional religious practices and rituals with the help of animal sacrifice and libation and felt as meaningless and discreditable by the

neighbouring Hindus. He felt traditional Bathou, Christianity, Islam and Ek Saran Nam Dharma would not protect their actual identity. He learnt about Brahma dharma under Swamiji Siv Narayan ParamHansa at Calcutta and preached Brahma dharma among the Bodos specially in Goalpara and Dhubri district of Assam and later on spread many parts of Assam. The religious movement led by Gurudev Kalicharan Brahma in the beginning of 20th century brought the process of Sanskritization. The entire movement of Kalicharan Brahma developed the education and self-awareness of the Bodos. "The traditional near-animistic belief that continued to guide the religious philosophy of the Boro-Kacharis began to change by the preachings of Guru Kalicharan Brahma who was inducted to the Brahma faith by Srimat Paramhangsa Sibnarayan Swami of Calcutta"¹⁹.

Brahma religion is a monotheistic religion based on the concept of the existence of one supreme Being called Brahma or God. The tenets of this religion was corrupted from the Vedic and Upanisadic Brahman. In this religion Hom-Yajña or Yajñahuti was used with the help of purohit. "Burning of Ahuti is sufficient for the realization of his self. Burning of Ahuti is occasionally followed by sprinkling of ghee, rice, frank incense etc. in the fire"²⁰.

In the hands of Guru Kalicharan Brahma a religious movement was grown up among the Bodos. Guru Rupamani contributed in the religious movement and founded Saivism sect or Mani Bathou Siva Dharma. Guru Rupamani Devi of Gossaigaon of Assam is still alive. She made a modification of the conception and practices of the traditional Bathou religion. The sect adopted the main features from Hinduism and Brahma dharma. "Saivism sect or Mani Bathou came into being as a conflation of the cumulative ideals of Bathou and Brahma cults along

with some elements of Hinduism"²¹. In Mani Bathou Śiva Dharma, like Brahma Dharma and Hinduism, puja with the help of prasad and flower, and yajna with the help of purohit are performed. Unlike Brahma Dharma, here different gods and goddesses are believed. According to this sect, Śiva is the Supreme god. He is known as 'Borai' Bathou.

Satsang religion of Guru Anukul Thakur has good ground in the religious movement among the Bodos. The liberal view of this religion united the various castes and communities to form a separate and refined religious society, giving them a high religious position. This religion is one. The main philosophy of Satsang is based on the concept of Param Purusa. Satsang is the monotheist religion believes the incarnation of Purusattama. Purusattama incarnates on the earth for the welfare of human being. Sri Sri Anukul Thakur is the Purusattama who incarnates on the earth. There are several thousands of Bodo devotees in Satsang in whole of Assam. The process of Sanskritization was accelerated by the Satsang Bodo where rites and rituals are the Aryan culture. The Satsang Bodos perform all religious rites and rituals of the Satsang religion and also they maintain very close relation with other communities in different socio-religious function.

In the religious movement a Bhakti Cult (Refined Bathou dharma) was established. Dr. Mangalsing Hazowari was one of the exponents of the cult. In the cult the traditional system of Bathou worship is made in new mode. They believe different gods and goddesses of traditional Bathou religion with a Sijou Plant. They almost use all rites and rituals. But, in stead of offering animal sacrifice and libation, they worship Bathou and other gods and goddesses with devotional songs, prasad and by offering flowers.

Another refined cult of Bathou dharma was established by Swami Nabin Brahmari. The cult is known as Bathou (Śiva) dharma. To preach this religion he established Arya Brahma Gyan Mat or Baba Sidhya Yogashram at Ultapani of Kokrajarh district near Bhutan Border. According to this sect, Śiva is the ultimate reality. The concept of Siva is drawn from the Hindu scriptures like Upaniṣads, Puranas or Vedas. "This sect believes that Śiva has created the Bathou religion solely for Boros and the spiritual life of the Boros can be culminated only through this religion"²². Like Bathou religion they have also constructed Bathou altar in courtyard with a circular fence of bamboo splits. In the religious movement a small number of Bodos were also converted into the Sai Baba Bhakti Cult of Hinduism which does not impact the Boro society.

In the religious movement a very small but important influence was seen in regard to Vaisnavite movement or Ek Saran Nam Dharma of Sri Sankardeva. The predominance of Brahma dharma returned thousands of devotees of Ek Saran Nam Dharma to the Bhakti cult.

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CHAPTER II

NATURAL THEOLOGY

'Natural Theology' is the favourite term in eighteen and nineteen centuries. It is an attempt to prove the existence of god provided by observation of the ordinary course of nature. The expression 'natural theology' seems to have been first used by Augustine with reference to the deepest philosophical insights of the classical philosophers. "Natural theology is the knowledge of God accessible to all rational human beings without recourse to any special or supposedly supernatural revelation"¹. It is the knowledge of god accessible to all rational human beings. Natural theology is a theology based on reason and ordinary religious experiences. This is distinguished from revealed theology which is based on scripture and religious experiences of various kinds and also from transcendental theology of Immanuel Kant which is based on a priori reasoning. The truth of the division of 'natural theology' is derived from nature by the use of Aristotolian logic. The deists relied exclusively on natural theology on the ground that the being and attributes of God could be ascertained from the constitution and course of world.

Theology:

'Theology' literally means 'discourse about God'. In theology we do not talk to God, but about God. The word 'Theology' is derived from the Hellenistic Greek but its use is found in the European Christian Thought of the middle ages. The term 'theologia' is used in the classical Greek literature with the meaning 'discourse on the Gods or cosmology'. Aristotle used the term Metaphysics to include discussion of the nature of the divine. The Latin writer Varro afterwards distinguished three

forms of the discourse: Mythical (concerning Greek Gods), Rational (philosophical analysis of the Gods) and civil (concerning the rites and duties of religious observation). In patristic Greek sources, Theologia could refer narrowly to the discussion of the nature and attributes of god and also could refer narrowly to the discussion of the attribution of divine nature to Jesus. "Others would simply claim that theology involves taking seriously claims internal to a religious tradition on their own terms, as topics for investigation and analysis – studying people's beliefs about God, rather than necessarily studying God, perhaps – even if that inquiry is not carried out by one who is committed to the relevant tradition, or involved in practice flowing from it"².

Theology is the philosophy of a religion. In between the religious and non-religious activities, the integrated life demands to make use of religious and secular experiences into a system. This is intellectual categorizing which is known as philosophizing. The clarification, elucidation and systematization of one's religious beliefs and practices are known as theology.

Theology is different from religion and religious philosophy. Theology is the interpretation of religious experiences: Religion is the system of lived experiences whether religious philosophy analyses and elucidates religious concepts in terms of general conceptual framework with detached objectivity. Religious statements are treated as the first order statement in which we communicate our thought. "Theological statements are second-order statement with religious statements as their subject-matter"³. Philosophical statements are treated as the third order statements with theological statements are their subject matter. In religion we talk to God. In theology we talk about God while in philosophy we talk about god with disinterestedness and detachment.

Divisions of Theology:

1. Firstly, Theology can be divided into (a) Natural and (b) Revealed

(a) Natural Theology is based on ordinary course of nature.

(b) Revealed theology is based on scriptures and religious experiences of various kinds.

2. Secondly, Theology can be divided into (a) Comparative, (b) Christian and (c) Philosophical Theology

(a) Comparative Theology is the theological study of two or more religious traditions without a particular theological commitment. It is a comparative enterprise of secular study of history of religions in which different theologies are compared by means of some comparative method developed in the discipline. "In general term, therefore, comparative theology always accords explicit theological attention to religious pluralism, despite radical differences in theological conclusions"⁴.

(b) Christian theology is designated as the knowledge of the Christian God.

(c) Philosophical Theology is the meta-theology which tries to elucidate the concepts of various theologies.

In many Christian seminaries, theology can be divided into four great departments– (a) Exegetical Theology, (b) Historical Theology, (c) Systematic Theology and (d) Practical Theology.

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(a) Exegetical theology includes Biblical studies, Biblical introduction, canonics and biblical theology.

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(b) Historical theology includes Patristic period, middle ages and modern period.

(c) Systematic theology includes the existence of God, the attributes of God, the trinity, creation and Eschatology and after life.

(d) Practical theology includes moral theology and pastoral theology.

Concept of God: An Overview

Belief in God is maintained from religious and from purely metaphysical perspective. Though the belief of God is popular and universal phenomenon, but only a few people have a conception of God as could be found in metaphysics. The religious beliefs of God seem to have its root in human desires, fears and helplessness. "Belief in the gods seems to have its roots in human desires and fears, particularly those associated with self-preservation"⁵. The fundamental notion is that there exists some superhuman power that is supremely good and wise who demands from man an attitude of worship.

In religious belief regarding God, the logic of worship implies that God must be the highest and infinite Being greater than whom nothing can be conceived by the worshipper. God is believed to have attributes due to which he is worshipped. From metaphysical point of view, God has the attributes of unity, spirituality, omnipotence, eternity, immutability and absoluteness. Religiously speaking, God is conceived to be a person, creator, eternal, omnipotent, infinitely wise, good and holy.

Today in west, the term 'God' typically refers to a monotheistic concept of a Supreme Being. Classical theism asserts that God possesses every possible qualities such as omniscience, omnipotence and perfect benevolence. In Advaita Vedānta of Indian philosophy, Saguna Brahman or Īśvara is the way to talk about Brahman. Īśvara, in turn, is described as having the qualities of omniscience, omnipotence and perfect benevolence from ordinary practical standpoint. "If we look at God from the ordinary practical standpoint (vyavahārikadrsti) from which the world is believed to be real, God may be regarded as the Cause, Creator, the Sustainer, the Destroyer of the world and, therefore, also as an Omnipotent and Omniscient Being"⁶.

In religion, there are different opinions regarding God from the standpoint of nature and attitudes. Deism, Pantheism, panentheism and theism assume the existence of one God as an adequate object of worship. On the other hand, Polytheism, Dualism, Henotheism assumes the existence of more than one God.

The ordinary and popular beliefs and practices are directed towards lived God. The lived idea of God can be found in the Folk-Religion: There is a difference between lived idea of God and philosophical idea of God. The philosophical idea or understanding of God is often alleged to be too abstract as Wittgenstein believes. He offers an anti-rationalistic concept of God.

The ordinary belief in the attributes and nature of God has difference with the belief of the agnostic who approaches God negatively. God for an agnostic is not what ordinarily is conceived and any attribution to Him is thought to be a falsification of the essence of God. According to an agnostic, any enquiry about 'God' is futile.

No rigid distinction can be drawn between the nature and the attributes of God as the nature is revealed in the attributes. Traditionally the attributes of God can be classified into Metaphysical and moral. The former arises from the comprehension of God as the Absolute or the infinite. The latter, the moral attributes, which have a bearing on the religions or the moral aspirations of a man, arises from God's being a person.

God is regarded as self-caused. It means that it exists but does not depend upon something else for its existence. It is a being which is such that it can neither come into being nor perish. A being that depends for its existence upon nothing but itself is called self-caused or eternal.

God can be said as the 'First cause.' First cause does not mean first in time. He is literally a Primary rather than a secondary cause. He is a Being upon which ultimately all other things and heaven and earth depend for their existence.

He is the Manipulator of this universe. He is called a Manipulator because of His sovereignty and control over the universe. God's active control in the world is for the benefit of the mankind. The Bible also indicates that God fully controls this Universe.

God and Gods

God and gods are two important philosophical, metaphysical and religious concepts. The concept of God or of gods is the active, living and religious belief and has been maintained purely from metaphysical grounds. "The concept of God or absolute is the most important, most universal and central concept of religion"⁷⁷. The concept of God is referred as the Supreme reality who is understood in different terms

like Omniscient, Omnipotent, Omnipresent etc.. In Advaita Vedanta of Indian philosophy the concept of God is referred as Brahman who is the supreme reality. God is accepted as the ultimate and unquestioned Truth who is the Creator and Controller of the world. "Most religious persons do, in any case, think of God as being at least the creator, as that being upon which everything ultimately depends, no matter what else they may say about Him in addition"⁸. Concept of God and gods are clearly distinguished in Hindu mythology and religion. The Hindu concept 'Ram', 'Hari', 'Krishna' etc. are used to believe as the supreme reality. In Hindu Mythology different gods and goddesses are regarded in different terms like deity, Īśvara, deva or devata etc. Gods and goddesses are believed not as a supreme reality but as an authority of certain field or area. "In Hindu Mythology and popular theology many gods appeared, though Vishṇu and Śiva (Rudra) became dominant"⁹. An avatāra is the reincarnation of gods or goddesses like Śiva, Vishṇu, Durgā. "Traditionally each avatara appears in order to perform a specific cosmic duty that is necessary to maintain or restore cosmic order"¹⁰.

Distinction between God and gods are clearly found in Hindu Trinity. Brahmā, Vishnu and Śiva are assumed as Hindu trinity. Brahmā is the creator, Vishṇu is the preserver and Śiva is the destroyer. Among them the status of Brahmā is regarded as the supreme reality or creator God while the status of Vishṇu and Śiva is a deity or dev or devata. Gods are the lesser manifestation of Supreme reality or God. In the Hindu devotional movement Lord Krishna and Rāma are assumed the position of supreme deity.

In vedic theology we have different gods and goddesses like Mitra, Varuna, Agni, Vāyu, Indra, Uṣas, Prithivī, Aditi etc., but among them a monotheistic tendency seems to be present.

Popular Greek religion shows various groups of gods like Demeter the corn goddess, Kore the goddess of vegetation, Dionysos the fertility god. Athena (Athene) was the Greek goddess of war.

Distinction between God and gods are found among the religions in our society. Hindu Trinity like Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva are the three aspects of godhead. Religiously Hinduism is monotheistic and philosophically non-dualistic. Different deities or gods are included into one God. Sikhism believes one God. He is one without a second. "Others insist that the concept of God in Judaeo-Christian thought is that of the Lord of Israel, or alternatively that the concept of God in Christian theology is that of an almighty, triune creator, redeemer, and sustainer of all—Father, son and Holy spirit"¹¹. In Islam Allah (God) is the supreme reality. Here God's message is revealed through Muhammad. Islam believed the God's supremacy through Quran which is the immediate and complete revelation of Gods message through Muhammad. "It is the heavenly book of revelation, the word of God par excellence"¹². Ahura Mazda is the supreme Lord of Zoroasterianism. Ahura Mazda and Ahirman are two polytheistic nature of Zoroasteriaism. "Judaism holds that God cannot be many because He is the supreme Power and Existence"¹³.

God in the Hebrew Scriptures

God of Israel is the main character of Hebrew scriptures. In Hebrew Bible God is depicted as creator, provider and lawgiver. The biblical author use the proper term of God as YHVH the meaning of

which is lord. "For YHVH is a great god, a great king over all the gods"¹⁴. The original pronunciation of YHVH is reconstructed as 'yahveh' or 'yahweh'(Jehovah as it is called in English) with the help of early Greek transcriptions. YHVH is usually translated as 'lord of hosts'. YHVH sometimes combined with elohim. Elohim is the most common generic word for god in the form Yaveh Elohim. Actually Elohim refers to the God of Israel is thus synonymous with Yahveh. Certain writers of Israel prefer Elohim to Yahveh as the proper name of god of Israel. When Elohim refers to the God of Israel it is always treated as plural. Plural is generally referred to gods worshipped and for this Israelities is condemned by biblical authors. Elohim aherim (other gods), elohim hadashim (new gods), eloheihanekhar (foreign gods) and elohei nekhar haarets (foreign gods of the land) are the references for plural gods. EI is the scriptural designation of divinity. EI functions corresponding to that of elohim. Like Elohim, EI is the substitute name for Yahveh, a proper name for the God of Israel. The original meaning of the term YHVH is unknown to modern scholars. One biblical writer demanded that the term has relation with the verb hayah (be, exist).

Hebrew scriptures are coloured by the belief of Yahveh who was the legitimate object of Israelite worship from earliest times. The German scholar Julius Wellhausen said that originally Israelite religion was polytheistic though Yahveh was a national god to whom every Israelite owed allegiance. "The Bible notes time and time again that Israelites worshipped other gods alongside Yahveh"¹⁵. Some other scholars like William F. Albright, Yahezkel Kaufmann etc. disagree with Wellhausen and said that Monotheism is the mosaic of Israel's official religion. According to them, the attention to other gods was sinful. As a result monolatry was seen in practical in Israelite religion. Monolatry was not completely unknown. In fourteenth century BCE, Akhenaten,

king of Egypt, inaugurated solar monolatry for family worship to worship god Aton, the sun disk. The various gods are the proper object of worship, in turn which are nothing other than the attributes or limbs of the God addressed.

Some biblical writers took the existence of other gods for granted, though all agreed that Yahvah was superior to the other gods. Writers like Amos, Isaiah and Jeremah spoke Yahvah as the only object of worship. Second Isaiah was the most consistent monotheist, insisting that Yahvah was the sole god in existence.

God in Postbiblical Judaism

Regarding God Postbiblical Judaism can be divided into four different periods like--The rabbinic or Talmudic, the philosophical or theological, the quabbalistic or mystical, and the modern. Though each period is independent but there is considerable overlapping idea of God. In rabbinic period all the rabbis are committed the statement that God is one who is the creator of heaven and earth. The most frequently used name for God in the Talmud are 'Ribbono Shel Olam' (Lord of the universe) when addressing God in the second person and ha-Quadosh barukh hu (the Holy one, blessed be He) used when speaking of God in the third person. There are some rabbinic names for God which were intended to suggest either his distance from man or his nearness. The name ha-Maqom (The place) defined as He is the place of the world indicates nearness. The name Shamayism (heaven) suggests his remoteness. The name Shekhinah, the feminine form means to dwell indicates Gods indwelling presence. Both idolatry and dualism were strongly condemned by the rabbis. The medieval Jewish theologians influenced by Greek philosophy had aim to refine the concept of God. They had a systematic way. For these theologians, the doctrine that

God is one means not only that there is no multiplicity of gods but that God is unique, utterly beyond all human comprehension, and totally different from his creatures, not only in degree but in kind. According to them God is omniscient and omnipotent. The mystical movement or tendency in Jewish thought is known as Qabalah. Qabbalists made a distinction between God in himself and God in manifestation. Mystics felt a need to have a relationship with God of living religion. God as he is in himself is Ein Sof (the limitless). Ein Sof has the powers of potencies (Sefirot) of the godhead in manifestation, conceived of as a dynamic organism. Qabbalists refuse to allow negative attributes of Ein Sof, but God is thought of in the positive aspect of manifestation. The living God of the Bible and of religion is godhead as manifested in the sefirot. The sefirot represent various aspects of life of godhead like wisdom, justice and mercy. Through them the whole world is controlled, the whole order is conceived as a chain of being from the highest to the lowest reaching back to Ein Sof. Sefirot represented two principle of male and female. Tiferet (beauty) and Malkhut (sovereignty) are male and female principle. The sacred marriage between these two means that there is complete harmony on high, and the divine grace can flow through all creation.

The mystical movement in eighteen century known as Habad tended a panentheistic understanding. God is the only true reality. There is a basic difference between panentheism (all is in God) and pantheism (all is God). God is the universe and universe is-in God. "In Habad thought, without God there could be no universe, but without the universe God would still be the unchanging same"¹⁶.

Modern Jewish thinkers have faced challenges to the traditional theism. From Renaissance onward the thinking is shifted from God

centric to mancentric. They are influenced by the modern trends, and compell to rethink the traditional views about God. Mordecai Kaplan (1881-1983), a modern Jewish thinker says God is not a supernatural, personal being but the power in the universe that makes for righteousness. In the pre-scientific age when spoke of God, people refer to the supreme being as the creator of the world.

Martin Buber (1878-1965) best known Jewish thinker stresses the personal aspect of deity. Franz Rosenzweig (1886-1929) had a existentialist approach. According to him, there are three elements in the Universe.....God, the world and man.

Different statements about the concept of God are thus found in the Western and Indian Philosophy and in _ different religions. In Western Philosophy, different conceptions and opinions regarding the nature of God are found in (a) Greek Philosophy, (b) Medieval Philosophy, (c) Modern Philosophy and (d) Contemporary Philosophy.

On the other hand, not only in the Western Philosophy but also in the Indian philosophy, specially the Vedic period, we have different conceptions or ideas of God.

Concept of God in Greek Philosophy:

In ancient Greece, gods are associated with various aspects of the Universe, are presented as super human immortal beings endowed with human passions, frequently behaving in undignified and amoral ways. Nevertheless, the worship of these gods in temples and other holy places, especially by means of sacrifice, constituted the state religion of Greece. Poetry of Homer depicted the anthropomorphic and moral representations of the gods.

The first Greek thinker, **Thales** (624-550 B.C.) has hylozoistic opinion. Hylozoism is a doctrine predicating life of all matter, specially propounded by Thales. According to him, water is the fundamental staff of the universe. Aristotle claims that Thales philosophy is conjectural as Thales is said to have said that all things are full of Gods. "Hence Windelband holds that the Philosophy of Thales and of other Milesians to be hylozoistic"¹⁷.

God is treated as infinite, boundless matter in the philosophy of **Anaximander** (611-547 B.C.). He was a cosmologist like Thales. For him the primary matter was boundless something – a formless infinite and eternal mass not yet parted into particular kinds of matter. This is the first philosophical concept of God. His God is no doubt a matter but is not mythological or anthropomorphic. Besides, the doctrine regarding the creation of the Universe by God has been completely ignored.

The God is regarded as a World-God in the works of **Xenophanes** (570–480 B.C.). He described God as 'One'. His famous utterance is 'All is one' and 'The One is God'. This World-God is immovable and perfectly homogeneous and is said to guide the Universe rationally.

In Xenophanes Philosophy, God is assumed as eternal without beginning and without end. God is said to abide in one place and does not move at all, sees all over, things all over and hears all over. He is said unlimited in the sense that there is nothing beside him, but limited in the sense that He is a perfect form not a formless infinite.

God's existence is found in the philosophy of **Democritus** (460-370 B.C.) as composed of atoms. Here Gods are mortal like men though longer live. Gods are more powerful than man and possess reason of a

high order. Gods are known through dreams. They do not interfere in the affairs of men and hence they need not be feared or propitiated. Like all other things, the Gods are subject to the impersonal law of the motion of the atoms. Sceptical position of God's existence is found in the philosophy of **Protagoras** (485-1120 B.C.). Here traditional worship of God is found as a measure of prudence.

Socrates (469 – 399 B.C.) believed the existence of one supreme God. He denied the idea of national Gods. In his philosophy, a new idea of God is found, known as 'daemon' which is regarded as his guardian God.

The concept of God is found as a perfect and transcendental entity in **Plato's** (428-347 B.C.) philosophy. God is demiurge. He is regarded as the best. He has maximum beauty and excellence. He is unlimited, free and self-existent. He is not a combination or mixture, but simple and pure. He is eternal and immutable. He is homogenous. He has purity, self-sufficiency, completeness and eternity which are not found in the physical world. He is naturally graceful. He has good will towards all. He is the highest limit of virtues. There can be no higher virtues than him.

God is said as the source of all good things and provides food and the means of enjoyment for men. God is a creator of the whole world. In the beginning, there was nothing but chaos. "He creates the world not because of some need but because of abundance"¹⁸. He created the world out of the four elements of water, air, fire and earth. God has created the time which is the moving image of eternity. The created time has come into being along with the creation of the world.

Thus, God can be said to be an architect not a creator God, for God created the world not out of himself but with the four elements. The world has been designed as a work of art by God. It is also said that God has created the soul with intelligence so that man may have fellowship with him.

God is ascribed as Unmoved Prime Mover which moves every thing without itself being moved in **Aristotle's** (384 – 322 B.C.) philosophy. God is self-dependent being, all perfect, eternal and exist of his own necessity. God is form of forms; its own thought of thought. God is the eternal unmoved mover. "A given motion in the universe is produced by some other motion; this motion by a third motion and so on, and since an infinite regress is impossible, it is necessary that there should be, as the first cause of the series of motions, an unmoved mover or God"¹⁹. God thinks of its own thought, so, God is said to be self-conscious. Therefore, God is mind. God is unchangeable, immovable, incorporeal at the same time the final cause of generation. God is wholly immaterial as he is without matter, body and potentiality. As without senses, He is said to be pure spirit. Again, He is stated to be spiritual because He is pure rationality. God is transcendent to the whole universe, for He is at the top of the hierarchical order in which this universe is found. He knows Himself directly and the world indirectly.

God is regarded as the final cause which moves the world by which He appears as the efficient cause. He is the first cause of motion as He moves the Heaven first then all other things through it. So, Heaven is regarded as near perfect God. God is the Apex of world process because He is the complete actuality and substance par

excellence. God is pure form and is looking in particularity. Therefore, God cannot be a person.

Plotinus (204 – 270 A.D.) regards the nature of God as the transcendent, eternal, unchanging and absolute. He is infinite and first cause of the world.

The world created by His immanent aspect. God is a spring from which the world flows like a stream. God is the sun from which the universe emanates in the form of light without losing the sun. The world depends on God but God does not depend upon the world. Though the world is the result of immanent–aspect, but the world is not the result of a voluntary action or idea on the part of God. The world is not an evolution from God. Thus the universe is an emanation and overflow of His infinite power.

Concept of God in Medieval Philosophy:

Augustine, Thomas, Martin Luther, Zwigli, Calvin, and Schleiermacher agree with naturalistic view of God. Naturalistic view holds that God is the creative ground of everything. He is the infinite and unconditional power of being.

God is believed and accepted as eternal, transcendent and absolutely good and is found an object of worship and adoration in **Aurelius Augustine's** (353 – 430 A.D.) philosophy. God is regarded as Absolute majesty, power and untrammelled free activity. God is all-powerful, all-good, all-wise is omnipotent and infinitely beneficent. It is also claimed that god establishes church which teaches the way to find rest and happiness in God.

God creates the world out of nothing but of his will. His creation is a continuous creation through which He sustains the whole Universe. We can not say that the world was created in time and space. He created time and space. He Himself is timeless and without space. The important thing is to maintain that God creates matter too. So, there is no lingering dualism in the theology of St. Augustine.

God is explained as an uncreated creator or uncreated creating principle in the philosophy of **John Scottus Eriugena** (c. 810 – 877). God is the beginning, middle and end of all things. God is a source which creates but not created. God does not come within the categories of nature. He can not be seen. He can not be known what He is, only that He is. "We know more about him through negative rather affirmative theology"²⁰. what God is not then what he is. The biblical Book of Genesis given an account of creatures and human beings how they were made. One can say that all things always were, are, and in God's wisdom. We should not understand God and the creature as two things removed from one another, but as one and the same thing.

God created the world out of nothing. God made all things out of himself according to the will or plan or eternal pattern of His mind. God is eternal and is the essence of all things. But the world remains within the God. Hence, creatures and God are one and the same. All things come from God and all things return to Him.

God is accepted as perfect being in **Anselm's** (1033 – 1109) philosophy also.

God is regarded as the ultimate unity of all things by **Marsilio Ficino** (1433–1499). The one (God) is the absolute and uncontradicted original essence prior to the plurality of all things.

St. Thomas Aquinas (c. 1225 – 74) explained God as wisdom, a prime mover, a first efficient cause, a necessary being and a designer or governor of the Universe. God is infinite, creator and transcendent to the world or man. All finite things are produced by God as their first cause. God is good and only good. God has created the world out of nothing. So, God is the creator not an architect. World is not necessary for God but God is necessary for the world. The world depends on God but does not depend on anything. There is nothing besides God.

God can be explained in two ways. In negative way, God is said to be immutable (without change), eternal (not in time), pure act (with potentiality) and simple (without composition). In positive way, God is said as having intelligence, living, having will, loving goodness etc.

Concept of god in modern philosophy:

God is found as infinitely perfect being, immutable, eternal, omniscient, omnipotent in **Descartes'** (1596-1650) Philosophy. God is the source of all goodness and truth. The idea of God is the innate idea. Time is irrelevant to His nature. He is *causa sui* (self-caused). His essential nature is incomprehensible. "God is *Ens entium*; as *Unum*, He can be said to endlessly rich in the varacity of His attributes; as *Verum*, He is omniscient and there is nothing that escapes his knowledge; as *Borum*, He is unchanging in the constancy of His benevolence"²¹. God is the creator of all things. God is the cause of all existence. This veracity of God is the Ultimate gurantee of all knowledge.

Benedict de Spinoza (1632-77) explains the concept of God as One, single, eternal, infinite, self-caused and necessary principle of all things. God is the perfect being, the sovereign and uniquely self-dependent reality. God is the ultimate or universal substance. God or

substance is all inclusive whole, outside of which nothing can be. All things are in God and everything that happens does so only by the law of the infinite nature of God. God is the ultimate, immanent and comprehensive source of the universe. He is infinitely absolute and omnipresent. Hence, God and Nature are identical. "There are places where Spinoza says that the nature is God and the God is nature"²².

God is said to be the cause or self-creative. In Western Theology God is taken to be a personal being, having will, intellect and feeling. God does not create anything out of some pre-existing matter. So, matter is the co-eternal with God, which would ultimately lead to dualism not to monism. As there is nothing over and above God, all is God and everything follows from God. So, God is said to be the indwelling and pervading principle of the universe. God or Nature as the self-creating Reality is known as *Natura Naturans* means free cause.

God does not create the world in a theistic fashion. God is a pervading principle and the indwelling cause of the world. From a theological standpoint, this interpretation can be called as pantheism.

Gottfried Wilhelm Leibnitz (1646 - 1716) believed God as the giant, grand harmonizer and the principle of unity. God is the supreme monad. God is the very crown in the series of monads. Monads are the eternal principle and as real as the single substances. God is the centre of monadology and monads can be destroyed on the part of God. "God creates them and God annihilates them. Otherwise they are uncreatable and indestructible"²³.

God is beyond nature and reason. Man can have no perfect nature of God because man is limited. But God is the infinite and

perfect. God is the creator of the universe. God has established the laws that governs the physical world.

God is described as a spiritual substance in the philosophy of **John Lock** (1632 - 1704). There is no innate idea of God. God is knowable and His nature is purely immaterial. God is believed as the natural powers like time, knowledge, power, pleasure and happiness. Notion of God is believed due to the infinite qualities or the attributes and God is imagined to embody the attributes.

George Berkeley (1685 - 1753) regards God as the infinite spirit. God's will is sufficient to produce any effect. God alone is the cause of all ideas. The whole nature is the living language of God. God is the real cause of the spirit and things. The reality of the physical world is essentially spiritual and manifests the goodness of God's will. In Nature, there is nothing like cause and effect. God arranges the succession of events according to this own fiat of will. Of course God maintains the laws of nature. This fixed character of events follows from the will of God, though it is arbitrary yet, it is not whimsical. So, God is the necessary ground and designer of the universe.

Concept of God in Contemporary Philosophy:

God is explained as the symbol of unity, harmony and power in **Paul Tillich's** philosophy. God is a dynamic and creative centre of reality. God is the highest being than any other being. God is the name for the power and meaning of reality. He is not identified with the totality of things.

Contemporary Philosophers like William James (1842-1910), Henri Bergson (1859 - 1941), Samuel Alexander (1859 - 1938), Alfred North Whitehead (1861 - 1947), Henry Nelson Wilman (1884 - 1975)

and Charles Hartshorne (b. 1897) however, attacked on theism. They conceived God as a limited being.

We also find anti-rationalistic view of God in **Ludwig Wittgenstein's** (1889 - 1951) Philosophy. Rationality has nothing to do with regard to religion or God. Rationality has a role in the language game of science not in religion. So, Religious belief or belief of God is irrational.

Concept of God in Indian Theology:

Different conceptions of God are found in Indian Theology, specially in the Vedic period. A great many gods have been mentioned in the Vedic mantras and invocations. Among these gods, Indra, Agni, Vāyu and Varuna are the chief. The mantras give a description of the nature and activities of these gods. From the description of these gods, it is evident that different objects of nature, viz. storm, cloud, lightning, rains, fire etc. have been deified. The conscious reality lying behind each natural object is a god. The mantras eulogize these gods in a expectation of getting some favours from them.

The word 'deva' is used to indicate many things. The word 'deva' is derived from the root verb 'div' which has different meanings. 'Div' means light or effulgence. Another meaning of 'div' is to manifest. He who manifests, who is bright, self-manifesting is god. God is deva; since He gives the whole world. The Sun, the Moon and the Sky are also gods because they give light to the created beings. The gods are effulgence and they help to manifest other things. Father, mother and spiritual guides and even a guest are also devas. But of all these meanings, we shall accept only that meaning of the word 'deva' which roughly

answers to the modern conception of God. The word 'deva' in this sense means bright or shining.

Hindu Trinity:

According to Hinduism, God has the three aspects within him – the creative aspect is personified as Brahmā, the preservative aspect is personified as Vishṇu and the destructive aspect is personified as Śiva (Mahesha). "These three were regarded as forms of the neuter absolute Brahman, or corresponding to the three gunas of the Absolute"²⁴. They are three deities within the one Lord. They, three are called as the Hindu Trinity or Trimūrti. In the theistic sense they are worshipped separately by distinct sects. Among the three, Śiva and Vishṇu are widely worshipped in India giving rise to Śiva cults and Vaisṇava cults.

Brahmā:

Brahmā is regarded as the authority of all creation. "As creator, Brahmā is sometimes said to have been the first of the gods, the framer of the universe and the guardian of the world"²⁵. He is not worshipped as the principal deity by the Hindus. At one time Brahmā worship was popular but later on He was overthrown by the Vishṇu and Śiva worshippers.

Brahmā was also said to be himself the creature of the supreme being. In the puranas He is said as the son of the supreme being; he is thought to have hatched out from the golden cosmic egg; which floated on the cosmic water; or to have been born from a lotus which sprang from Vishṇu's navel. He is depicted in as a kingly personage with the five heads, riding on a white swan. Brahmā is said as the god of wisdom, the four Vedas are said to have spring from his heads.

Vishṇu:

Vishnu is considered by the Hindus as the authority to preserve all creatures. He is the benevolent God. He is essentially conceived as loving, compassionate, kind and good. He is very popular among the masses. He is believed by his devotees that he comes to the earth as the incarnation of God when unrighteousness reigns supreme on the earth. Lord Vishṇu has the capacity to incarnate in other forms to rescue the human society. Hindus pray to Him first as He is the cause of all incarnations. He is incarnated nine times in different forms. In puranas and the Upaniṣhads, Vishṇu has appeared in the form of a dwarf to restore heaven and earth to the Gods. In the Rāmāyaṇa, Vishnu appeared as the prince hero Rāma, while in Mahābhārata, He came as the 'charioteer' of Arjuna. He appeared as a fish to rescue manu, who was being swept away in universal flood; then as a tortoise to assist the gods; as a boar to lift the sunken earth with its tooth just above the depths of the sea; as a man-lion (Narasimha) to rescue to life of a small child Pralhada from the demon father, the king Hiranya kassipu; as the Brāhmin-hero (Parāśurāma) to defeat the Kṣatriya caste and establish Brāhmanic supremacy; as Gautama to establish 'Buddhism'. As nine incarnations are over the tenth avatāra (Kāli) is yet to come to the world. This avatāra will be a messiah with a sword of flame, riding on a white horse, to save the righteous and destroy the wicked at end of this world period.

Vishṇu as the authority of preserver, is the object of devotion rather than of fear. So, He is worshipped in the different religious rites, pilgrimages and festivals.

Vishṇu's eight avatāra, Krishna has a dominant place in the Hindu society. He is very popular. Krishna is the most widely worshipped

avatāra of Vishṇu. Krishna is considered by many devotees to be the perfect manifestation of Vishṇu. In the fourth book of the Brahmavaivarta purāṇa Krishna is exalted as the God above all gods, the creator of the world. His favourite wife, Rādha is believed not as a separate being but as Krishna's sakti.

Śiva:

The third member of the Hindu triad is Śiva. His followers call him Mahadeva. He was called Rudra in the Vedas. Śiva is believed as superior to Brahmā. For this reason Śiva is known as or Īśvara, Supreme Lord. Śiva is regarded as the authority of the destruction. Śiva, the third deity of the trinity, is the most popularly worshipped deity amongst the Hindus. Though Śiva is the deity of destruction but He is most popularly known as a beneficent deity. He is regarded as the god of regeneration. He is believed to be pleased by a little prayer and devotion. He is the god of ascetics as well as the god of ordinary domestic life. He is also believed to have the creative power. So, His supreme creative power is celebrated in the worship of the lingam or phallus. The main object of the Śiva worship is the linga. He is invoked as the master of life and death.

Śiva is worshipped in the form of a linga, an ancient symbol, probably older than the Aryan culture having divine power and as a figure of fertility. Śiva worship is mostly found in Linga purāna.

God in the Upaniṣads:

Upaniṣads may be regarded as the end of the Vedas. Upaniṣads are the last literary products of the Vedic period. They contain the concluding portion of the Vedas, hence they are called the Vedānta or end of the Vedas. In respect of study also Upaniṣads come last or

treatises of the Vedas. All Philosophical thoughts including Vedānta are developed through Vedānta. Early Upaniṣads are regarded as the very root of Indian spriritual tradition and as the basis of Indian Philosophy. They contain the Philosophical system of Vedānta. The Vedic gods like Indra and Āditya, the Sun-god were the background gods of early Upaniṣads. They are rightly speak as the cream of the Vedas. "Samṁkarācārya, in his notable commentary on Taittirīya Upaniṣad says that the true knowledge of Brahma is called Upaniṣad"²⁶. The word Upaniṣad derived from three terms 'Upa', 'Ni' and 'Ṣad'. 'Upa' means 'near by', 'Ni' means 'devotedly' and 'Ṣad' means 'to sit down'. So, Upanisad means to sit down near the teacher devotedly to know the knowledge of highest reality which destroys all doubts and ignorance. " 'Upaniṣad' means 'what destroys ignorance and gets man near to God' or 'what gets man near to the teacher (upa-ni-sad)'"²⁷. "The usual explanation of 'Upaniṣad' however, is that it represents the instruction given to the pupil 'sitting under the teacher' "²⁸: Upaniṣads were the subsidiary works of the ritualistic Brāhmanas contained in the Āranyakas or Forest Books.

In the early Upaniṣads the Sun is the One God of Vedas. All Vedic gods are the forms of the Sun-god. Here Vedic God means the Deva or Sun and Goddess means the Devi or Dawn, the Sun-goddess. "The Sun is the image of totality in Veda, the integral reality of the absolute and creation, the God who is one in all and all is one"²⁹.

Upanisads contain the germ of orthodox schools of Indian Philosophy. They are part of the Vedas. There are four Vedas – Rg Veda, Śāma Veda, Yajur Veda and Atharva Veda. Each Veda has three divisions, viz, the Samhitas, the Brāhmanas and the Āranyakas. The Samhitas are the verses. The Brāhmans are commentaries in prose. The

Āranyakas are the forest treatises. The Upaniṣads are mostly parts of Āranyakas.

The number of God mentioned in the Vedas is indefinite. In Ṛg Veda Gods are reckoned as thirty three and classified into three groups of eleven each, Viz – (i) Gods of the sky or upper gods like Sūrya, Mitra and Varuṇa, (ii) Gods of the mid air or middle gods like Indra and Maruts, and (iii) Gods of the earth or lower gods like Agni and Soma. The classification indicates desire on the part of the Vedic series to discover the interrelations of the gods. The variable form of anthropomorphism has been exhibited by the Vedic deities.

The Vedas represent different philosophical assignments--polytheism, henotheism, monotheism and monism. Different gods and goddesses are personified as useful aspect of nature. They are the deities presiding over the diverse phenomena of nature. The different gods are personification of the different powers of nature. They are sometimes worshipped individually. This is the anthropomorphic polytheism of the Vedas. The gods are super natural and super human powers endowed with spiritual qualities. Sometimes they are worshipped in group. This is the organised polytheism. Monotheistic reflection is seen among the gods of the Vedas. Here one god is treated as supreme among the gods for the time being. Henotheism is seen in Vedic interpretation. Henotheism is a step from polytheism to monotheism. In henotheism one god is identified with many others and treated one as supreme. Monotheism leads to monism. Here one reality is conceived as supreme. He is the Parama Purusa. There was nothing other than it. "That One is not personal; it is neither male nor female; it is neuter. It is an impersonal principle"³⁰. That One was later identified

as Ātman or Brāhman in the Upaniṣads. The monism of Ṛg Veda is developed into idealistic monism in the Upaniṣads.

Upaniṣds are methods of philosophical approach through dialogues, questions and answers. All problems relating to self, God and world are put and discussed. "The first attempt at philosophical speculation is to be found in the Upaniṣads, where problems about self, God and the world are clearly put and discussed"³¹.

The Upaniṣads concern with the following problems, such as, what is the reality from which all things originate and into which all things dissolve after destruction? What is that by which everything can be known? What is that by which what is unknown becomes known? What is that by which one can attain immortality? What is Ātman? What is God? What is Brahman? Very natures of the questions imply the Upaniṣadic answer that there is an eternal all-pervasive reality from which all things arise, exist and return to it.

Upaniṣads are the foundations of Vedānta. The metaphysical teachings of Vedānta are the Upaniṣadic view of God or Brāhman. On the other hand Vedānta divided into various schools in regard to the nature of relation between Self (Jīva) and God (Brahman). Madhava holds that the two are totally different in nature. His view is known as dualism (dvaita). Śaṅkara holds that the two are absolutely identical. His view is known as monism (advaitism). Rāmānuja holds that the two are related as part and whole. His view is known as qualified monism (Viśiṣṭādvaita). The main teaching of the Upaniṣads may be termed as "monistic idealism" or "idealistic monism".

In Upaniṣads Brahman is the ultimate reality who is eternal, omnipresent, omniscient and pure spirit. The ultimate reality may be

viewed from two aspects – objective and subjective. From objective aspect it is Brahman. The word Brahman has been derived from the root Brha means to grow, to develop, to expand, to evolve. According to Upaniṣad, the essence of the world and ultimate reality is Brahman, which is infinite, eternal, omnipotent, omniscient and pure consciousness. Brahman is the essence and substratum of all things of the world. Upaniṣads speak of two aspects of Brahman – Para Brahman or Absolute and Apara Brahman or God. Para Brahman is higher Brahman. Para Brahman is indeterminate, unconditioned and devoid of attributes. He is transcendent and non-phenomenal. It is one and without any second. It is devoid of sound, touch, colour, taste and smell. "It is one, undivided, partless and devoid of duality and plurality"³². Though Para Brahman is indeterminate, unconditioned and attributeless, yet it has three essential characters. It is pure being, pure consciousness, and pure bliss. Apara Brahman or God or lower Brahman is determinate conditioned and endowed with attributes. Apara Brahman is immanent in the phenomenal world. He is the infinite, eternal, omnipresent, omniscient, omnipotent, creator, preserver, destroyer of the universe, and the moral governor. "Apara Brahman is the determinate Lord or Īśvara related to the empirical world and the individual souls"³³. He is the material cause and the efficient cause of the world. God is the ruler and governor of the world. The sun, the moon, the earth and the sky are kept in their places by His command.

Upaniṣads describe Brahman as having two aspects – one without attribute or Nirguṇa Brahman or unconditioned Brahman and on the other, Saguṇa Brahman or with attributes or conditioned Brahman. Nirguṇa Brahman is designated as 'It' (Tat). It has no limiting adjuncts. It is beyond space, time causality and world. It is infinite, attributeless, without any name and It is transcendent. The Kathopaniṣad says that

Brahman is without beginning, eternal, permanent and ancient. According to Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad, Nirguṇa Brahman is neither gross nor subtle, neither big nor small. In it there is no distinction of subject and object. It is Existence, Knowledge and Bliss. Brahman is Saccidānanda. These are the essences. Positive nature of Brahman is established by using negative senses of these words. 'Sat' indicates Brahman is not non-being, 'cit' indicates Brahman is not matter and 'ananda' indicates Brahman is not mere absence of pain. Brahman is not an empirical object. It is the absolute existence. Brahman is not a knower but knowledge. Brahman does not have bliss but itself is bliss. The Indian contemporary Philosopher Radhakrishnan admits that Brahman has been described in Upaniṣads as the only reality. Brahman is infinite and in that sense there can be nothing outside Brahman. As contrast to unconditioned Brahman, Saguṇa Brahman is limited with attributes, with name and form and immanent. Saguṇa Brahman is always pronounced as 'He'. He is the master of universe and concerned with causal relations. Saguṇa Brahman or God is eternal, omnipresent, omnipotent, omniscient of this world. Chāndogya Upaniṣad describes Saguṇa Brahman or God or Determinate Absolute as 'tajjalan' which means the Absolute from which everything springs and everything returns after dissolution. Nirguṇa Brahman and Saguṇa Brahman are not two separate reality but two aspects of one and same reality. Nirguṇa Brahman is the basis of Saguṇa Brahman or personal God. Personal God is immanent and transcendent to the world. Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad says that He is realized through the worship by yogins.

Upaniṣads explain individual soul as having two aspects – outer husk and reality. Reality aspect is the Real Self which is the pure consciousness. The Real Self is called Ātman. The individual soul is

different from the body, the sense organs, manas and buddhi. The body is treated as chariot guided by the self, mind as the bridge, buddhi is driver and sense organs as the horses. It is imperishable and immortal. It has no birth and death. The individual self is the Ātman who is one, non-dual, transcendental. It is identical with Brahman.

Reality is sometimes known as Brahman (God), sometimes Ātman (Self), Sometimes simply Sat (Being). According to Aitareya and Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad, at first there was the Ātman alone. According to Chāndogya Upaniṣad, there was only one Being (Sat) at the beginning. Mundaka Upaniṣad says that all is included in Brahman. The Upaniṣads conceive Brahman not only as the pure ground of all reality and consciousness, but also as the ultimate source of all joy. All the Upaniṣads unanimously hold the view that Ātman (Brahman or Self) is both the creator or material cause of the world. The multiplicity seen in different field is not really multiple but names and forms of the one substance. Upaniṣads hold that the creation is totally unreal, is the appearance of Brahman. Upaniṣads say that the supreme God appears to be many through Māyā. Māyā is the magical power of Brahman. Brahman conditioned by Maya is God (Īśvara). God is determinate Brahman.

In Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad Brahman is used to denote the substantial basis of the separate groups of homogeneous phenomena. Brahman has two forms – Sat and Tya. Sat is the material or bodily being; it is inert, transient, and mortal. Tya is the immaterial being; it is eternally in motion and immortal. According to the teachings of Yajñavalkya, Brahman is described as the common basis. Everything proceeds from Brahman and returns to Brahman.

Upaniṣads refer three gunas like Sattva (purity), rajas (passion) and tamas (dullness). The Maitrī Upaniṣad affirms that at the beginning the three gunas were differentiated within the Supreme Self (Brahman). The Supreme Self is indicated by the syllable 'Om' by recitation of which every Veda begins. 'Om' consists of three units: /a/u/, and/m/. Aum is the sound form of this being. Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad says that there is only one God, that is, Brahman. In the same Upaniṣad Prajāpati said regarding three kinds of offsprings – gods, man and demons. Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad said that physical breath or Prāṇa are identical with all the gods. Prāṇa is also identical with Brahma. Prāṇa is used to be same with the Spirit. In the Ṛg Veda it is said that all comes from the breath of God.

Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad says Air and Atmosphere as the Supreme Brahman. Brahman are of two types – formed and formless. Sun is the formed Brahman. Air and Atmosphere are the formless Brahman. Breath or Prāṇa is not just the vital force but equated with the formless Brahman. Brahman is the Self, revealed symbolically through the air or Vāyu and the atmosphere. Air is a poetic principle to reveal Brahmā. The Vedic god Indra is based on the common atmospheric symbolism. "The atmosphere is Brahmā as the all-comprehensive world, as the all comprehensive world spirit"³⁴.

According to Chāndogya Upaniṣad, the world has beginning and end due to the Brahman. The Brahman cannot be predicated. Chāndogya Upaniṣad regarded Sun as Brahman. The Divine word Aum and the Divine light, Sun, are one. Aum is the Exalted song of the Sun. This Sun is not just the material Sun but all the principles of light. In terms of our embodied being, embodied Sun is prāṇa. In terms of the cosmos, the Sun is the world soul. The Self is spoken as the Sun in

terms of its creative being. The Vedic Sun and sun gods represent the Self and the Self has a higher creative nature beyond evil and ignorance. Self is four fold as Being, Consciousness, Bliss and Supermind, and Saccidānanda and Vijnāna which are again represented by four great gods of Rg Veda – Indra, Agni, Soma and Surya. The creative Self of the Sun is also the same with the Self who is the Lord of the whole universe. The gods in the Veda are causal powers and principles of the Self. The Self is the Lord of all the gods and their wisers. He is the Lord of all Divine Wishes.

The Vasus are one of the major classes of Vedic gods. In late Vedic times they came to know for the basic outer powers of the cosmos. They were said to be Earth, Fire, Atmosphere, Wind, Heaven, the Sun, the Stars and the Moon. They are the basic powers of the material world and the waking state. They are the manifestations of the Solar Self which act for the benefit of living beings.

The Rudras are another major class of Vedic gods. In Upaniṣadic system they are said to be 11. Indra is the Divine hero who is their leader. They are the life forces that arouse people to action. They are the powers of the dream state, the Atmosphere and the mind. Through the powers of our sacrifices we build these Divine powers of action within us.

The Vedic gods Ādityas are the uplifting powers as they are the gods through whom we rise up. Out of 33 Vedic gods they are the 12 months of the year. They are the basic energies of time and creation, the state of deep sleep, Heaven and the breath. The movement of the Sun from the west to east represent the life force in the state of deep sleep, just opposite of waking state. Ādityas represent the forms of the night sun.

According to Chāndogya all this (Universe) is Brahmā. Man has the intelligent force or will. After death of the body the Will exist. This Spirit or Will is that mind-making, breath-bodies, light-formed, ether-spirited one. This Will is the Ego, Spirit or Brahman (Absolute Being). Highest being is the true (being). True being is happiness; true being is ego, ego is all; ego is the Absolute. "This (Universal being) is my ego, spirit, and is Brahmā, force (absolute being). After death I shall enter into him"³⁵.

According to Taittirīya Upaniṣad, Brahman is too great to be described by man. Brahman is truth which cannot be described. Brahman is the existence, knowledge and infinity as dwelling within the cavity. He is the creator of all. He is the supreme Spirit and source of all reality. "He is the supreme, the absolute Existencē, because there is nothing else that is outside of Him. He exists by Himself; subject to nothing. Space, Time, causality are created by Him, out of himself as conditions of manifestation; they donot contain Him, they are contained in Him"³⁶.

Praśna Upaniṣad regards Sun as the life (Prāṇa and Spirit). Moon is the substance (Wealth, matter). The Sun and Moon or Spirit and matter are Divine couple which is the basis of all creation. The Sun is the Universal God (Vaisvanara), the Universal form (Vaisvaruūpah); the flame of Awareness (Agni). Brahman is the Universal God conceived as the creator of the world. 'Om' is verbal symbol of knowledge of Supreme Brahman. If the 'Om' is meditated upon in its parts, the knowledge of Brahma is incomplete and if it is meditated as a whole the absolute nature of Brahman is understood.

According to Pranava Upaniṣad, 'Om' is the symbol of power of Brahman. Without 'Om' He is powerless. It is found that the gods

defeated asuras by uttering the 'Om' sound when asuras stormed the city of Indra. Pranava Upaniṣad explains 'Aum' in the following way. The first letter 'a' sound is the earth and the fire, the plants, the Ṛg Veda, two Gāyatrīs, the Earth, the spring, the language, the speech. The 'u' sound is the atmosphere, the wind, the Yajurveda, the west, the summer, the breath, the nose, the smell. The third moral 'm' sound is the heaven and the sun, Sāmaveda, the north, rainy season, the light, eye, the sight. The fourth moral the Anusvara, is the water and the moon, the Atharva Veda, the autumn, the sound, the heart, the knowledge and the known.

Kauṣītakī Upaniṣad says, Self is the truth of beings (Satyam). What is different from the gods and breaths (Prāṇas) is the truth (Sat) while the gods and breaths is the Being (Tyam). Sun was the solar Self from which the seed was gathered. Solar self impregnates all the world with life and the spirit. Moon is the reflected light of the Sun. Moon is the mind of creatures. Human being and its birth is identified with the moon. The self or the spirit in the Sun is Brahman, or personified as Brahmā. The self is not only the transcendent but also the essence of all creative powers. That transcendent creative Divine reality is the truth of Being, the ultimate truth itself, Satyam.

Mundaka Upaniṣad says that the knowledge of Brahman is detained by meditating the word 'OM'. The soul is identified with Brahman. This is all wise, omniscient and it is within the heart and the ruler of the senses. He is not comprehended by senses and devotion but through intellect and meditation. "Brahman is the spirit from whom individual soul sparks. He is all pervading, without cause, unchangeable, without attributes and not to be comprehended as any finite forms. He is the inner soul of all beings (the Virāt)"³⁷.

According to Kena Upaniṣad, Brahman is the one absolute spirit. He is the absolute end of all beings by the knowledge of whom a state of perfection and immortality is obtained. He is infinite and cannot be comprehended by common knowledge. Brahman is to be comprehended by one instrument, the intellect.

The Katha Upaniṣad regards Brahman in one, infinite, great and all-pervading. He has placed in the cavity of the heart of the living creatures. The knowledge of Brahman is not easy to obtain, it is possible by the union of Upaniṣads. The most perfect means to acquire the knowledge is the meditation on the word 'OM' which is the substance of all the Vedas, and which refers to the supreme Brahman to the absolute nature. Here the individual soul is some with the supreme Brahman or infinite soul. There is no real difference between them. Īśa Upaniṣad says that Brahman is the supreme ruler, the supreme soul, independent of all relations to the world. Brahman alone is absolute knowledge and bliss. He has the contradictory character. "He moves he doesnot move; He is far, and also near; he is within this all, he is out of this all"³⁸. He is all-pervading brilliant, without body, without muscles, pure, all wise and above all. Here Brahman is expressed as 'the Truth' which is specially considered to abide in the disc of the Sun. Pūsan is the another name of the deity of the Sun.

Māndukya Upaniṣad says, Brahman is the soul or spirit which comprehends all things. Brahman or soul has four modes of existence -- ---- the waking state, the state of dreaming, the state of profound sleep and the fourth is different from the former. In the waking state the soul has contact with the material through the senses. In the dream state, it is conscious through the mind. In profound sleep there is no desire, no thought and all impressions have become one. Here Brahman

is the creator and all things proceed from him. In fourth state Brahman returns to his absolute and infinite nature.

'OM' is the verbal representative of Brahman. It consists of A; u and m. A, u and m corresponds to the different moods of existence of Brahma – 'A' with his complete manifestation (the waking state), 'u' with his internal manifestation (the state of dreams) and 'm' with his existence when not manifested (profound sleep). By meditation on 'OM' in its last form man becomes identical with Brahman.

Aitareya Upaniṣad says, the soul is the knowledge. It is the foundation of the whole world. It is the Brahman. It is the creation. The gods and all the beings are produced from Him.

Sri Aurobindo says that Kena Upaniṣad is the Brahma Vidya or knowledge of Brahman. Here the relation of Brahman to the cosmos and the human consciousness are discussed. The Upaniṣad described Brahman as the Mind of minds, Sense of our senses etc.. Gods are the powers of Brahman. Indra is the power of the Mind.

Sri Aurobindo regarding Taittirīya Upaniṣad says that each god of the Vedas has a specific purpose to fulfill in the cosmic scheme. Mitra is the god who promotes harmony among man and gods. Varuna is the god of purity and vastness, he is the keeper of Law of Truth. Aryaman manifests the Consciousness Force of the Sun-God who symbolizes the Supreme Truth. Bṛhaspati presided over the potent world. Indra is the Lord of Divine Mind. 'OM' is the secret syllable of Brahman. 'OM' is the sound symbol of Brahman consciousness. "Brahman is Truth, Brahman is knowledge, Brahman is infinite"³⁹. Brahman is not merely the substratum of Truth but it is also the knowledge. Prāna or life-force is

experienced and realized as Brahman. Brahman is supreme Bliss. He is both the determinate and the indeterminate. He is the All and all is He.

The philosophical writings or Upaniṣads hold that there is a power of world spirit. Everything is a part of It or Him. The Absolute Being or Brahman is equated with the personal spirit (ego, self, ātmā). He is the God of power.

The Upaniṣadic view of God and world is not pantheistic but panentheistic. Pantheism holds that God is wholly immanent and transcendent to the world. All is God and God is all. The world and God are both not identical. God may be all but all is not God. We can say that all is in God which is included in the theory of panentheism. Radhakrishnan rightly says that Upaniṣads are not panentheistic in nature but where there is the view of abstract monism. Upaniṣads preach pantheism in the sense of God to be the fundamental reality. After all knowledge is key to know Brahman. Brahman is knowledge. Gods are the forms of ego; and their heaven is mortal. Upaniṣads do not deny the existence of gods. All the Upaniṣads arrived at the same conclusions that there is one world spirit (Man's Spirit or Self). World Spirit is all. Everything is a part of It or Him.

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CHAPTER: III

PHILOSOPHICAL UNDERSTANDING OF GOD

The concept of God or Absolute is the most important, most universal and central concept of religion but also has great philosophical significance. God is the highest reality, the highest value and the highest end. It is a metaphysical concept. The philosophical analysis of the religious concept of God has interpreted the existential mode of thinking. The western religious thinking, specially, is predominantly metaphysical. Religion or religious belief is chiefly concerned with the object as the matter of workshop.

The "philosophical understanding of God" has persisted in our language as the scientific study of God. It is an intellectual and logical interpretation of the idea of God. The "Philosophical Understanding of God" merges in philosophy so far as its philosophical thinking about god is concerned. In "Philosophical Understanding of God" all the philosophical aspects of God as the organ of religion is understood. Philosophical thought is always rational and very deeply intellectual. It is a rational analysis. All the metaphysical significance, proofs for God's existence, attributes, relations of God with the world etc. are the determining factors of philosophical understanding.

The relation between God and the world and the problem of existence have given birth the theories which have philosophical understanding. The theories like *deism*, *pantheism* and *panentheism* or *theism* are known as metaphysical theories which shows the relation between God and the world. On the other hand, the theories atheism,

agnosticism and naturalism have shown the problem of the existence of God.

Deism:

Deism was the predominant religious philosophy of British thinkers. It was introduced by Herbert Cherbury (1583-1648) and was greatly popularized by Sir Isaac Newton (1642-1727) and was accepted by Charles Darwin (1809-1882).

Deism is generally associated with British religious thought. The term "*deism*" was originally equivalent to *theism*. *Theism* based on the Greek word for God (theos), and *deism* on the Latin (deus).

Deism was used in numbers of ways rather than the principal one. These are, viz., (i) *Deism* is a belief in a supreme being lacking all attributes of personality, (ii) belief in a God but denial of any divine providential care of the world, (iii) belief in a God but denial of any future life and (iv) belief in a God, but rejecting of all other articles of religious faith.

Deism is the belief in the existence of a God without revelation. It is essentially hidden God. God is an object beyond worship and knowledge of man. "In its principal meaning, deism signifies the belief in a single God and in a religious practice founded solely on natural reason rather than on supernatural revelation"¹. *Deism* holds that God is perfect, infinite, eternal, omnipotent, omniscient, personal and the absolute reality.

Deists believed that God is the *causa sui*, the first cause of universe. The world is created by His will at a particular time but from

out of nothing. After creation, the world runs independently and God performs his duty as a sustainer and caretaker.

Deistic conception is that the world is an independent reality but world depends on him on certain occasions. *Deism* signifies that God exists apart from the world. God is completely transcendent or eternal from the world. He has no logical relations with the ongoings of the world. *Deism* had made concept of God as a definite, independent being as an object of worship. A religious man who cannot accept god as dependent upon the world rightly maintains God as a transcendent being.

In *deism* God is regarded as a creator of the world assuming that the world has been created by God like a perfect machine. As a machine being perfect requires no supervision. So the world also does not need any further supervision. God is retired from the world like the absentee landlord. "God has created man with freewill and has endowed him with his natural light of reason by virtue of which he can determine his moral duties"².

Relation between God and the world is indicated in this theory on the analogy of the watchmaker and the watch he makes. The relation of the watchmaker with the watch ends when it has been finally made. So is the God's relation with the world.

Deism can be interpreted as having scientific manner ---

- (a) Nature can be explained in terms of natural causes only and there is no room for supernatural agency or miracles.
- (b) Each natural event is determined by its own causes.

(c) There is hardly any inner law in the heart of nature which can be styled as moral.

From a critical analysis and justification it is found that the theory 'deism' is unsatisfactory and for the following reasons.

(a) It is asserted that *deism* has some scientific explanation but it is a truce which is not permanent.

(b) The theory that the world is created by God is an insoluble problem for *deism*. Why did a perfect God create the world? How did He create? Did He create out of Himself or of some pre-existing matter? Again, did He create the world in a timeless void or did He create the world along with the time? Further, if God is perfect then the world will have no value for Him. Again, if God is infinitely good and omnipotent then why is there evil at all.

All these problems raised here almost are insoluble for any rational form of religious philosophy. *Deism* though claims to be wholly rationalistic is failed to solve such problems. A God fully understood is no God at all. A fully understood God becomes a mere concept of human intellect.

(c) *Deism* involves *dualism* between god and the world. God and the world becomes two realities as the world is created by God. In this regards *deism* appears as a *dualism*, which has similarities with the *dualism* of Descartes.

(d) It is mentioned that the world is created by God but it finds difficult to determine the purpose of the creation.

(e) *Deism* holds that God has created the world out of nothing but from His will, it is logically inconsistent.

(f) If God is conceived as a mechanic or an architect, it makes God like human architect.

Hence *deism* provides no sufficient explanation of the relation between God and the world and of the revelation of God. Its tendency was purely rational interpretation. It is, that is to say, a critical rather than a spiritual movement.

This interpretation of the theory provides some points of characteristics which indicates the depth of philosophical understanding

(a) The world is supposed to be created by the will of God. He can be called a moral agent or moral being. So, His creation is adopted to have moral purpose.

(b) *Deism* has recognized God as the sustaining power of the universe.

(c) *Deism* emphasizes the duties of men to-wards God and who in turn comes to be regarded as the final judge.

This theory of *deism* was supported by the western philosophers i.e. John Toland, Mathew Tingle etc. during the 16th and 17th centuries. Though Karl Barth and Paul Tillich accept the transcendence of God, but have laid stress on revelation. So, *deism* has raised an important philosophical issue.

Pantheism:

Pantheism comes from the Greek term 'Pan' means 'all' 'theos' means 'God'. So, literally means 'all is god'. More commonly it means

that the world is God and the God is the world. This is opposed to *deism* and it is a reaction against it. It conceived God as absolutely immanent in the world. "In emphasising the immanence of God, pantheism fulfils the desire of religious spirit which wants God to be present everywhere in the world"³.

Pantheism is much older system. It is found in both east and west. It is closely associated with the mystic experiences.

Immense is the key concept in explaining *pantheism*. *Pantheism* holds that God is immanent in the universe in the sense that God pervades the whole universe as a indwelling spirit.

Immense God may be the vitalizing, moulding, sustaining and indwelling power of the world.

The immense of God also means that God is the primordial stuff of which everything is the modifications.

Pantheism regards God and the world are necessarily co-existing and immanently present in all. God without world is like a substance without quality and world without God is absolute nullity. God and world are identical. Everything, every event, every mental function are nothing without God. God is not only present in all. He is the sole reality. If God is the only reality, there is nothing other than God, the whole multiplicity is reduced to an unreal appearance.

Pantheism may be personal and super personal. According to the personal *pantheism*, the absolute reality is personal in nature. This type of *pantheism* is found among the sufists and also among the Christian mystics. According to *super personal pantheism*, the absolute reality is all inclusive, cannot be less than its appearance. The reality is

not personal as it is much richer and higher than personal. This type of *pantheism* is found in F.H. Bradley's philosophy.

Spinoza in the west was the typical exponent of *pantheism*. As it has been mentioned in the previous chapter, according to Spinoza, God is substance and substance is God. God and world are identical. It might be remarked that when Spinoza tried to explain the relation between God and the world through the pantheistic explanation by the end of the eighteenth century, he has in his mind a series of doubts about the creation of the world by the God. "Tolard coined the word pantheist and held that the universe is God"⁴.

The western thinker Josiah Royce is also a pantheist. His deity is all-inclusive and all-knowing.

Like Spinoza and Royce, Hegelian form of idealism is pantheistic in character. Hegel considers reality as the absolute mind or will. Nothing falls outside the absolute and everything is the absolute. God is infinite and omnipotent.

Ācārya Śaṅkara, the exponent of Advaita Vedānta is the typical exponent of *pantheism*. Śaṅkara holds that Brahman or the Absolute is the only reality, and the world is an illusion. It has no real existence. The Absolute or Brahman is one without any second. Brahman is indeterminate and indescribable. This theory is said to have relation with the Upaniṣadic saying 'aham Brahmāsmi' and 'sarvaṁ khalvidam Brahman'.

Rāmānuja in Vishiṣṭādvaita view holds God as co-extensive with the universe. The world like God is without beginning and is limited neither by time nor by space.

Śaṅkara, Spinoza, Upaniṣadic seers and Buddhistic thinkers are pantheists and are highly intellectual philosophers. The nature of Indian thought is highly pantheistic in character and does not accord personality to all pervasive reality. The *pantheism* of Śaṅkara, Spinoza and Wordsworth are impersonal.

The theory of *pantheism*, however, has some problems which are mentioned below.

- (a) In this theory God and the world are mentioned as identical and also God is regarded as real. The finite temporary world cannot be identical with God. If the world is real and identical with God, the impersonal world itself becomes the object of worship and devotion.
- (b) If we believe that all is God and God is all, then there would not be the problem of evil in the world. If He is here, He must have evils and defects. So how can He be regarded as perfect?
- (c) Here God is regarded as immanent in the world. If God is regarded as immanent and is within this world, how can God be real, eternal and infinite? For the world is non-eternal, all these concepts will be impossible for this theory.
- (d) *Pantheism* mentions that God is real and independent. Hence, finite self has no independence and freedom.
- (e) *Pantheism* creates religious difficulties in society. According to *pantheism*, God is not a personal Being and man is not having distinct personality of his own for religious activities.

So, from all these reasons and points it can be regarded that *pantheism* is not a satisfactory and sound theory.

In spite of all these problems *pantheism* has high historical importance. The pantheistic tendency emerges in very different systems of culture. *Pantheism* appeals to real instincts of the religious consciousness.

Pantheism is an elusive word whose spiritual significance is not well defined. Some pantheist have Christian mode of thought and expression, while some are not so.

Thus, *pantheism* is abstract monism which believes in the reality of one at the expense of the many things and objects of the world.

Panentheism or Theism :

The term '*theism*' can be used as equivalent to the term '*panentheism*' or *concrete monotheism*. *Panentheism* or *theism* is the reconciliatory theory of both *deism* and *pantheism*. This theory considers both as transcendent and immanent. 'Pan' means 'all', 'en' means 'in' and 'theos' means 'God'. So literally *pan-en-theism* means all is in God. "Panentheism avoids both extreme monism and extreme pluralism, and it does this, it claims, without obvious paradox"⁵. This view is outcome of a purely religious notice. A theist believes that the world cannot exist independently. God appears to be present everywhere. God is immanent in the world and is not subject to ordinary limitations which is in the phenomenal world. God transcends the world and He is not identical with them. He acts on the world but does not depend on the world. He is infinite as complete and self-sufficient. He is absolute and unconditional ground of all existences. He is attributed with omniscience, omnipotence and omnipresence. He is

everywhere. God is all powerful for He is the independent and self-sufficient ground of the being of the world.

According to this theory, God is ever-present in every movement of the world and ultimately is connected with the world. Therefore, God is immanent in the world. Again, the world follows from God. He, therefore, transcends the world. Hence, God though immanent in the world, yet is transcendent and immanent. One can remember here the famous Upaniṣadic saying about God 'atyiṣṭad daśāṅgulaṃ'. *Panentheism* holds that God is infinite and protector of the world. God is above time and space though He includes time and space in the immanent relation to the world.

Panentheism is based upon a concrete metaphysics of Hegelian idealism which is a view that establishes relation between the finite and the infinite, world and the God. *Panentheism* believes that God is the highest personality, supporter and defender of the world.

Theism which is known as *Panentheism* conceives God as a self-conscious being whose nature is expressed within the structure and process of the universe. In *theism* (or *Panentheism*). "God has been conceived neither as a mere plurality nor as a bare unity, but as unity in-plurality"⁶.

The theist is not willing to go the whole way with the deist or with the pantheist. With the deist, theist denies that God cannot be identified with the space-time order. With the pantheist, the theist denies that God can be wholly external to the space-time order. *Theism* agrees with the *deism* in the point that God is in some sense more than the world. On the other hand, *theism* agrees with the *pantheism* is that God is found within the world order.

Among the western philosophers who have advocated this *theism* are Descartes, Locke, Berkeley, James Ward, Hegel etc.. The Hegelian doctrine of *Panentheism* is generally known as *theism*. The *theism* advocated by Martineau differs from Hegel. Hegel holds that God is both immanent and transcendent to the finite souls. Martineau, on the other hand, holds that God transcended the finite selves. Finite selves have freedom of will, are free to work for their destiny.

Theism or *Panentheism* is also not free from defects. Some of them are as follows –

- (a) *Panentheism* holds that 'all things' are in God. If all things are in God then God cannot be more than all things. God will have the same status with the things.
- (b) It creates a religious difficulties by producing a sense of *dualism*. In *pantheism* 'all things are in God' indicates a *dualism* of 'all things' and 'God'.
- (c) God is both immanent and transcendent. The question arises, if God is immanent then how can God be transcendent? It is logically inconsistent.

Theism as a doctrine have a high religious attitudes. It occurs as the all-knowing, all-powerful and the creator of all. *Theism* as a concrete *monotheism*, believes one divine reality instead of negating the contents of the world, things of the world and will of men. Among the different theories regarding the conception of God, *Panentheism* or *theism* appears to be the best. The theistic connection is the outcome of a more purely religious motive. The theist speaks of communion and co-operation with God in religious worship and religious life.

Monotheism:

The term *monotheism* derived from the Greek 'mono' (single) and 'theos' (God). The term *monotheism* refers religious experiences and philosophical perceptions and emphasizes that God is One, Perfect, immediately Creator of the world from nothing. He is all powerful. He is worshipped by all creatures as a personal and worthy being. "*Monotheism* (one-God-ism) is the belief that there is but one Supreme Being who is personal and moral and who seeks a total and unqualified response from human creatures"⁷. The *monotheism* was considered by the theological apologists and nineteenth century cultural evolutionists as a higher form of belief.

Monotheism has a slide difference with *theism*. In *theism*, God is taken to be a supernatural person and the creator of value evolving world. He may not be absolute. In Indian thought, Īśvara is the Supreme God who has created this value evolving world but He is not the Absolute.

In the west, the *theism* assumes the form of *monotheism* where one God is worshipped and the worship of other Gods are treated as aberrant. The objective truth of this doctrine is that only one god is true and others are false. For *monotheism* god is a person and also an infinite being who necessarily exists. We are more concerned with *monotheism* than *theism*. In this respect, *monotheism* differs from *theism*. It also differs from the views that accept plurality of divine beings.

The term *monotheism* is generally theological rather than philosophical descriptions of religion. Philosophers used the term *theism* as having the same meaning with *monotheism*. *Monotheism* pre-

supposes the idea of Theos, a divine being with mind and will, fully personal, conceivable and approachable through prayer. *Monotheism* raises excessively one Theos to the absolute supremacy and power. The best example of *monotheism* about the idea of God is found in Judaism, Christianity and Islam. "Jews, Christians, and Muslims drew on the fundamental monotheistic vision of ancient Israel, each group filling out the picture of God with colourings and shapes drawn from its own particular culture"⁸. The term *monotheism* is used to indicate the conception of deity as found in the traditions such as *Zoroastrianism*, *Sikhism* and some form of *Hinduism* and *Buddhism*.

Monotheism can be divided into *monarchic monotheism*, *emanational mystical monotheism* and *historical ethical monotheism*.

Monarchic monotheism is the belief which believes in only one God who rules over many Gods. This one high God is the Supreme Authority and has unlimited power who forces other powers to total submission. Akhenaton's monotheistic movement in ancient Egypt was of this type.

Dualistic monotheism is a subtype of *monarchic monotheism*. Here one God opposes against evil forces. In this view there is one ruler God who is all-good and all-just. The distinctive feature of this type of *monotheism* is that it takes evil away from the being of one God. *Zoroastrianism* is a classic example of *dualistic monotheism*: although the one God, Angra Mainyu struggles throughout the history of the world to be overcome only at the end.

Emanational mystical monotheism offers two subtypes to worship God. In one subtype, one god is worshipped through many Gods and in another type, the one God is worshipped as the world soul. The first

subtype is seen in some theistic Hindu cult. Vishnu, for example, can be worshipped in many avatars and with many different names. The other subtype holds that there is one personal *theos* who is not sharply separated from the world but rather is the creative divine force in everything. *Qualified non-dualism* of Rāmānuja holds Vishnu to be absolute supreme God and His worshippers are united as soul and body are united.

Historical ethical monotheism is the view of one God who is the guide of the historical design of the world and describes God as personal.

Polytheism:

The term 'polytheism' is derived from the Greek 'polus' (many) and 'theos' (God) and has recognized the worship of many Gods. *Polytheism* is mainly used as a contrast with *monotheism* and *henotheism*.

In the history of religion, *polytheism* is found as the major and most widespread phenomena. The origin of *polytheism* are closely related with evolutionist view. The evolutionist calls it as post-primitive phenomenon due to the fact of appearance of advance cultures. *Polytheism* claims that there are many Gods because man experiences the world in its verity and manifoldness. "Hence there is also specialization among the gods, of the nature that is either local and tribal-ethnic (gods of specific localities, cities, countries, families) or functional (gods of specific arts, gods of illness, cure, fertility, rains, hunting, fishing etc)"¹⁹.

An important corollary of *polytheism* is that only the major deity can be very powerful. Only the monotheistic god, being monos can be the all-powerful.

In the primitive age *polytheism* is found. The primitive people believed the individual non-material (spiritual) being. They believed spirits of departed humans as a supernatural entities. Polytheistic belief is found in Vedic and Post-Vedic Period in India. The different Gods and Goddesses, Indo – Aryan asuras (demies) are the most among them.

Hence, it becomes possible to speak of a *pseudo – polytheism*, a religious system that preserves the traditional polytheistic terminology, the consideration of many gods are the mere manifestations of what is ultimately one divine principle. This tendency is especially noticeable in many modern types of *Neo-Hinduism*.

Henotheism:

From the Greek 'henos' (one) and 'theos' (god), the term *Henotheism* is derived. The view that one god is supreme while not denying the existence of other gods. *Henotheism* is the intermediary stage between *polytheism* and *monotheism*. *Henotheism* is found in Vedic Period, directed towards the variety of Hindu deities.

Existence of God:

The subject "existence of God" is a problem and debatable topic in philosophy. It has been the centre of debate and controversy since the time of Plato. The philosophers, scientists and theologians have been giving arguments for hundreds of years either to assert or to deny His existence. "The existent may be defined as that which is compatible with more things than is anything incompatible with itself"¹⁰. In

Taittirīya Upanisad, it is said. "If one knows Him as Brahman the Non-Being, He becomes merely the non-existent. If one knows that Brahman is then is He known as the real in existence"¹¹. For the Existence of God Sri Aurobindo said "God is love, God is wisdom, God is truth"¹². This is the issue and one of the problems of philosophy of religion, because issue of God has occupied a central position in the Philosophy of religion.

"The existence of God" is philosophically, theoretically and practically most extreme by important. By 'God' one understands a Supreme Mind regarded either as Omnipotent or at least more Powerful than anything and supremely Good and Wise.

Existence of God or belief in God is a question whether the object of belief is real or not? The philosophy of religion seeks to fulfil the answer by undertaking systematic enquiry into the nature and truth of belief.

"The existence of God" is held to be a necessary existence. Necessity is the property of a being or thing. A thing or being is called necessary which has the character of everlasting. God is said often as a necessary being while everything else is contingent. One of Leibnitz's proofs of the existence of God concludes that there exists "a necessary Being" in whom essence involves existence. J. N. Findlay says, if God is to be adequate object for religious attitudes, then He must be infinitely Superior to His worshippers. He cannot, therefore, be a being which just happens to exist.

Regarding "This existence of God" the American philosopher Josiah Royce said, "Gods existence cannot be assumed but must be

demonstrated," "God cannot be defined and preached until one knows that he exists"¹³.

The existence of God can also be searched through a critical method. The critical method is nothing other than skeptical method. The skeptical method also ensures the critical character of the spirit. To doubt is a duty for truth seeker. The philosophical truth also comes under the forms of doubt. The philosophical doubt is the essence of thought.

In the history of philosophy, therefore, we have some rational arguments for the theistic belief or faith regarding the existence of God. Such an argument confirms our belief or faith and removes doubt. Some important theistic philosophical proofs or arguments are offered for the existence of God, viz.,

1. Ontological
2. Cosmological
3. Teleological or Design,
4. Moral and some others which are being discussed one by one.

1. Ontological Argument:

The ontological argument was first forwarded by St. Anslem, a medieval philosopher. Later on it was restated by Descartes, accepted by Leibnitz, Hegel and John Caird, opposed powerfully by St. Thomas Aquinas and Kant. In contemporary religious philosophy, the argument was debated by A. J. Ayer, J. J. E. Smart, A. G. N. Flew, J. N. Findly and Norman Malcolm.

Ontological argument tries to prove the existence of God from the ideas or human experience. Anslem said that we have an idea of perfect being who is understood as God.

The root of the argument is found in Plato and later on, more or less, in an explicit form, it is found in the writings of St. Augustine. In Plato, ideas were considered to be more important and more valuable and fundamental than the existing things. Further the idea of God is nothing less than God, was the supreme principle of reality that drew all things unto itself. For Plato, 'existence' was not of much value. However, for him, 'essence' was of greater worth than 'existence' and in this sense he would maintain the spirit of the ontological argument.

The argument proceeds in this way- "God is a being than which no greater can be conceived"¹⁴. We have the idea of such a being. The existence is necessary for the concept of such a being. From the definition, it is conceived that He is the greatest being. Therefore, such a being exists.

It is clear from the word 'greater' as used by Anselm which means supreme perfect and the highest. Anselm used to mean the God not as a most perfect being but as so perfect that no more perfect can be conceived. Anselm pointed out in the ontological argument that the most perfect being exists in the reality as well as in the mind. He said that God is a necessary existence, so it is impossible to conceive His non-existence.

Another aspect of his argument is that God is the most perfect being. He must necessarily exist. His idea of non-existence is an imperfection. Therefore, perfection implies His existence. Anselm made his argument from the perfection of God to His existence. He holds that since an existent being is more perfect than a purely imaginary object, it follows that God must exist.

Anselm does not mean his argument as a demonstration. He took the proof with a view to strengthen his faith and justifying one's belief in God. For him, faith is a necessary pre-condition of understanding God. A being which exists both in the world and in mind is greater than a being which exists in mind only. Therefore, God not only exists in mind but also exists in the world.

Anselm, the Christian church's most original thinker and the greatest theologian, holds that a Being in thought and also in external world is greater than a being in thought alone. By greater he means more valuable or worthier.

Ontological argument is the nerve of all other arguments. Other arguments are to support and supplement the conclusion of the ontological argument. The main contention of the ontological argument is that existence is the very essence (ontos) of the idea of God. This argument is apriori; since from the mere analysis of God or the idea of perfect being, we deduce existence.

Descartes made some changes in the argument. He said that God must be the cause of the idea of a perfect Being. According to him, perfection means power, goodness, knowledge and also existence. But only idea beyond God cannot be the cause of such a being, which, according to Descartes, is the innate idea. Descartes refers that perfection and reality are identical. God exists because it is impossible to separate God and existence. Perfection is the essence of existence and naturally essence cannot be separated from being. So, we cannot conceive God without existence, it follows that existence is inseparable from Him, and hence He really exists.

Leibnitz in ontological argument says, the existence is perfection, a simple quality which is positive and absolute. God exists because He is among the number of perfection. Perfection does not express any limitation. Existence is not a property, which is possessed by finite beings. As God is the most perfect, therefore, He necessarily exists. Spinoza like Descartes infers the existence of God from His idea as the source and sum of all perfection.

Ontological argument thus raises the deepest philosophical issues. Its essential contention is that the reality of God is involved in the idea of God. Though the argument is criticized but it is clear that God is a-being who is to be and is worshipped. The concept of God is pre-supposed as a Union of a necessary being and perfection. The critiques of the ontological argument have not objected to the perfection or infinitude of God. Most of the criticism is directed towards the concept of 'God's existence' and his 'necessary Being'.

2. Cosmological Argument:

Cosmological or causal argument proceeds to show cause effect relation. In cosmological argument the idea of the world is assumed as effect and God is assumed as its first Cause. In the widest sense of the theistic proof, when the argument proceeds from the idea of the world to the idea of God, it is known as cosmological.

Cosmological argument was first formulated by Plato in *Laws* and *Phaedrus*. Later on it was also stated by Aristotle. Afterwards, St. Thomas Aquinas regarded that it is the central argument for proving God's existence. The classical statement of the cosmological argument is found in the *summa Theologiae* (1268-73) of Thomas Aquinas.

Thomas Aquinas rejected Anslem's proof but under the influence of Aristotle's metaphysics, elaborated famous ways by which the existence of God can be known. In the first way, he argues from the fact of motion of Universe to a Universal Mover; in the second, from the fact of causation he argues that there must be a substantial Being; the third from the degrees of value like goodness, beauty, truth etc. observed in the finite things to the Absolute value or perfect Being; and lastly, the orderly character of the natural events implies to the existence of an intelligent agent or Divine Designer.

Usually, cosmological argument can be explained in two ways, namely, causal argument and the argument from contingency. The causal argument is not most important than the argument from contingency. But the casual argument cannot be omitted as the philosophers pay attention on it.

Causal Form of arguments :

According to Aristotle, the first cause argument is known as cosmological. He holds that whatever happens has a cause and in turn that cause has another and so on, in that series there must be infinite and that infinite cause is known as First Cause or *Causa Sui*. The first Cause is the God which has no other cause than Himself and where is not any possibility of infinite regress.

According to Aristotle, the first cause of creation is the First Mover or Prime Mover. It holds that every thing has a cause. If this is accepted as per the law of causation, then the universe must have a cause. "The law of causality states that every effect must have a cause, and if one sets out to discover the primary cause of creation it would become necessary to stop somewhere and accept some first cause"¹⁵.

That cause is God. So, God exists. Therefore, God must be the first cause of the cosmos. As He is the first cause, He must be regarded as the efficient and the material cause.

Causal argument regards cause an mechanical antecedent of an event. Here the effects reflect its nature of design in the pre-existing matter, known as First cause. The First cause is supposed to be more perfect than the world designed by it.

Argument From Contingency:

Plato says that every created things must be created by some causes. The contingency of the facts is a necessary Being. That necessary Being is the ground of the contingency.

In contingent aspect of the world, things continuously come into being and pass away. A thing is called contingent in which there is not guarantee of its perpetual existence or a thing is called contingent which does not have any ground for its existence. But the point is that, if contingent event cannot exist by itself, there must be a necessary Being as the ground of the contingent events or happenings. The fact of the argument is that the contingent event must come out of something which is nothing other than a necessary Being. Further, Aquinas adds that this necessary Being does not depend on any other being but on itself. Hence this necessary Being is called God.

Aquinas notes that the ultimate thing cannot merely be contingent. He holds that there must exist something the existence of which is necessary. In Aquinas's assumption the contingent implies necessity. So, the relation between contingent and necessarily is purely logical. The concept 'necessary' and 'contingent' are self-contradictory. The ultimate explanation of the cosmological argument is about a

Being. The Being is always contingent. So, the total explanation in terms of a Necessary Being is both necessary and contingent.

3. Teleological or Design Argument:

In the history of philosophy, the design or teleological argument is found as a very ancient argument for the existence of god. Its roots perhaps has in the thought of Plato who argues that physical world is unintelligible apart from mind. In the English speaking world, the teleological argument was mostly told by Paley (1743-1805) in his *Natural Theology*. He was also preceded by Henry More (1614-87), the platonist. This argument attempts to prove the existence of god by empirical means. It reasons that God is an intelligent designer of evolution. It is observed that there is a purpose or end in this natural order. There is a purpose in governing the world. So, where there is purpose, there must be an agent. So, also since the world is governed has a design there must be a designer. "The Teleological proof bases itself on the presence of order in the world; this order it takes to be the token of design, and concludes that God must be the source of that design"¹⁶.

The terms 'teleological' has been derived from the Greek word 'telos' which means the 'end' or 'purpose'. On the basis of the meaning teleological argument holds that the order of the nature points to design of a certain infinite intelligence. So, the meaning indicates that the order of the nature points to a certain design. The order of the nature is contingent. There is nothing inside the nature to guarantee it. So, the order of the nature must be grounded self-existing infinite intelligence.

The universe is not a mere aggregate of events. It is an organized whole. There is the order, discipline and harmony in the

universe. This indicates that there must be a supreme, intelligent and wise designer. That designer is nothing other than God.

We have some other instances, which gives example of discipline and order in the universe. The millions of stars, the moon, the sun and the other planets behave orderly. The thousands of nerve cells function in a special order. The mechanism of the human body is wonderful. There are protective mechanism in human body to protect him from the attack of bacteria and other sudden injuries. The colour of animals varies in accordance with their environment so as to afford protection from enemies. This facts imply the existence of an intelligent and wise designer of the world. This designer is God.

The essence of the argument can be compared with the paley's analogy of watch. Suppose when I find a rock lying in the desert, this conveys me that it is produced in the natural process. But if we see a clock, this reminds that the clock has some parts and there must be a composer of these parts. Paley's argument is that world is a complex mechanism like a clock. There must be a designer of the world like the composer of the clock. He is nothing other than God.

4. Moral Argument:

The moral argument for the existence of God is based on man's moral nature and religious experience. Moral argument begins with Kant in his *The Critique Of Practical Reason* where he states that the existence of God is a postulate of the practical or moral reason.

Kant states that the existence of God is a postulate or pre-supposition of moral life. He regards that nothing can be conceived in the world without it or beyond goodwill. So, we should promote highest good or summum bonum for moral life as our duty.

The highest good is virtue, the complete good is in harmony with happiness. Our moral consciousness demands that virtue ought to be rewarded with happiness. But the virtuous are seldom happy. Kant, therefore, argues that there must be a supreme Being or God who will reward the virtuous with happiness.

Kant says that it is the demand of the moral life that the highest good be realised. The highest good has two elements, viz, Virtue and happiness. Virtue belongs to the intelligible world and happiness belongs to the phenomenal world. Kant says, the union of both the worlds is made possible by the postulation of God. Therefore, God guarantees the union of Virtue and happiness.

For Kant, religion is an aspect of morality and is not at all the foundation of morality. As a matter of fact, for Kant, morality is wholly autonomous. However, Kant recognizes that morality as purely rational still requires God for ever-signing the striving for the summum bonum.

Moral argument is the logical inference made possible from objective moral laws to divine Law Giver. "Kant himself in a later work, and many other thinkers, have argued from the existence of the moral law to a law-giver, God"¹⁷. It is the process from objective moral values and moral experiences of different individuals imply the existence of God. "When we speak of a moral God, we make God too much a man"¹⁸. God is the highest moral value or moral ideal. The ideal is the real. Our spiritual life requires a real moral ideal and God is the source of moral ideal. So, without the existence of God, the moral law and moral order cannot flourish in the world.

Argument from Religious Experience:

Experience is the only court by which the scientific faculty of God can be established. Experience has the case value of statements. Both empiricists and theologians made statements.

The theist unequivocally holds that nobody can have the direct experience by the five sense-organs. He holds the experience of God either through His disclosure to men through intuition, or by mystic trance or by special grace of God where the fact of divination is created for the worshipper.

It is generally claimed that normal human nature either has the capacity to become aware of God or the assumption of God or has special faculty of cognized God. In Indian tradition and also in western theology, belonging to the school of mysticism, the experience and the object of experience remain inseparable. The object becomes one with the subject "Tat tvam asi (That art thou) is the famous maxim of advaitism"¹⁹. From this concept it is argued that the religious experience is same with its object, namely, the existence of God. This sameness is possible only if God exists. As we cannot deny the different religious experiences, so also we cannot deny the existence of God. Experience of observed some miracles, grace of different deities, the divineness of worship or prayer convince us about the reality of God.

Paul Schmidt does not accept the objectivity of God. He denies that there is reasonable connection between religious experience and the factuality of God. He regards that religious experience is quite valuable. So, one should not deny the value, worth and the enjoyment of religious experience. Pragmatically one can prefer the seeing of God

to the delusion of experiencing a devil, but on this score one cannot prove the factuality of God.

Here the argument faces some mistakes. Here, if we make equivalent the statement 'God exists' with 'God experiences', the expression may be taken to be indubitable; and if we carefully check the statement, then the statement may be taken to have a very high empirical certainty.

The religious experience, miracles, prayers, worship and grace are purely psychological and man made. They do not guarantee the truth of the factual world. It may be some form of a *hypnotism* or magic which does not prove the existence of God.

It is, strictly speaking, however not an argument but a claim to intuitive awareness, at best in any form in which it deserves very much attention philosophically. "God seems to be intuited not only as good but as absolutely supreme"²⁰. The mere religious experience constitutes a valid ground for asserting the existence of God. The religious experiences have a religious emotion, which is necessary to have direct apprehension of the existence and nature of God. Though there is the difference between religious belief and religious emotion but there is between a mere feeling of happiness which has happened or is going to happen. As though religious belief is psychological has often intensified the sense of sin, it has inspired the dread of hell.

Proof for the Existence of God from Indian Standpoint:

Let us now see the Indian arguments which differ from the western conception of argument. In Vedānta it is found that all animate and inanimate things come into existence, live and play like the wave of a sea and ultimately return at the time of dissolution to whom which is

known as Brahman or the infinite substance or God. It is also stated that the Brahman conditioned by māyā is known as God who is the creator of the empirical world. This aspect is called Saguna Brahman or Īśvara in Śankara's Vedānta Darśana.

Naiyāyikas are more or less the theist. They believe in God and offer a number of arguments to establish the existence of god. These arguments are as follows.

(a) Causal Argument:

The world is the effect. The world is composed of matters like earth, water, air and light. The atoms of these matters are eternal, and space and time also. So, we require an efficient cause (nimitta kāraṇa) to compose the matter (upādāna). God is the sole agent who has knowledge to compose the atoms of matter to create the world. Hence, the existence of God is the efficient cause to produce the world as the effect.

(b) Moral Argument:

The Naiyāyikas hold that right action produces merit and wrong action produces demerit. The merit and demerit reside in the soul, which are called adrista, are unconscious. So, we must require a conscious agent to govern it. The individual soul cannot be that agency. God, who is the omniscient, must be the moral Governor who rewards the vicious with pain and suffering. Therefore, it implies that God exist.

(c) Argument from the authoritativeness of the Vedas:

The Naiyāyikas infer the existence of God from the authoritativeness of Veda. In Veda, we get both the empirical and transcendental things. By sense-experience we can have the knowledge

of empirical things. The knowledge of Vedas cannot be treated as true without the knowledge of transcendent authority. It, therefore, implies, there must be a transcendent authority like God.

We have clear testimony in the Vedas (Śruti) for the existence of God. In Mandukya Upaniṣad we find that God is the Lord of all, Omniscient, the inner Controller, the Cause of the world, its creator and destroyer. "The Bṛihadāraṇyaka says: God lives in the heart of all and guides them"²¹.

Theories against the Existence of God:

Some theories we find by which the existence of God has been challenged. They are discussed here.

Atheism (Not Godism):

Atheism is a theory concerned with the existence of God. Atheism means there is no God, or if there is, He cannot in any way affect the human existence. There are evidences of rational understanding and knowledge to support this conception. Scientific development and materialistic ideas are included within this evidence. In *atheism*, questions regarding God are answered from scientific knowledge.

Atheism claims that the religious beliefs in human history have nothing to do about the existence of God. *Atheism* believes that the existence of God is a false belief.

Atheism which I want to mean, does not mean complete absence of God. The role of God is assumed as an instructive force or power among the people. The authority of God assumed here but not as a supreme Being.

Atheism is also shown in the two types of school of Indian philosophy. Heterodox school does not believe in the authority of Vedas. Cārvākas and Jainas as heterodox school are explicitly atheistic. "The Jains depict the cosmos as uncreated and eternal. They therefore require no doctrine of God in order to explain its existence"²². Atheism is implied in Buddhism also.

Atheism as a theory of the non-existence of God is not found as a satisfactory theory. Some of them are indicated below –

- (a) Though the existence of God is completely denied, but cannot be totally ignored. For in order to explain the world we have to assume that there must be a creator, sustainer, controller of the universe.
- (b) Though there is scientific development but the scientific development cannot make vanish the shadow of God from the heart of the people. So, there must be something like God.
- (c) Man has different needs. A man may have some basic needs like luxury needs, imaginary needs etc. But the material needs is not the only need which can fulfill our all needs. So, man may want to have some other spiritual needs like God.

The different thinkers and philosophers have given their ideas regarding the non-existence of God. But their arguments are partial and for the sake of arguments only. They are ignoring the religious experience of the theist.

Agnosticism:

Agnosticism is derived from the Greek 'a' (not) 'gignoskein' (to know). A term coined by T. H. Huxley to express a position of suspended belief. Huxley used the term to apply to any proposition to indicate insufficient evidences for belief. It is principally applied to the belief with respect to God.

Agnosticism literally means "not-knowism". Agnosticism is a theory about the existence of God. It does not give us confirmation about the sufficient reason to affirm or deny the existence of God. The propounder of agnostic theory were Huxley, Spencer, David Hume and Voltair. Agnostics do not know any thing about the substances, causes, souls, reality etc..

The term *agnosticism* was first used by Huxley, but later on it was associated with the name of Herbert spencer. *Agnosticism* had Greek origin which means without knowledge. According to Spencer, absolute knowledge is not possible. All knowledge is relative. All knowledge cannot go beyond such facts like matter, motion, force, consciousness etc.. These are the symbols or modes of unknowable.

Huxley used the term in religious sense. He said, the existence of God may not be denied, but we cannot know His real nature.

Hume is an agnostic and sceptic philosopher. He doubted about the existence of God. "None of the arguments in fact offered for the existence of God appear to me to be sound: nor, on the other hand, do the arguments of Hume and Kant to show that there cannot be a proof even of a God conceived in the manner of Mill"²³. For him, the belief of God is not the result of speculation, curiosity or the pure love of truth, but the belief of God have its origin with happiness, the dread of future

misery, the appetite for food and other necessities. According to Hume, we are not only able to prove as a necessary consequence of His nature. But also we do not know His nature what nature actually is.

This theory, however, is not absolutely free from defects.

Hume, Herbert Spencer show only psychological feeling and emotion. But they do not try to put any rational analysis of God. They should apply reason or rational capacity to Him.

All agnostic philosophers try to consider God in terms of matter or object which are within space and time. But our observation of God is never postulated by the believers as something corporeal, i.e., having spatio-temporal existence.

Hume fails to give a satisfactory opinion to solve the problems of reality. He does not put a consistent level between empirical and metaphysical idea.

Naturalism:

Naturalism is a theory which is concerned with phenomena around us. The theory tries to explain all the phenomena around us on the basis of natural laws. It holds that nature is the ultimate reality. Naturalism seeks to explain nature by means of motion, energy and natural laws. *Naturalism* allows to use the concepts which are ensured from the study and experience of physical science.

Naturalism is a theory of universal science. It is not limited with the scientific laws of matter and energy rules. It is a theory which is flew from *materialism*. We have to experience nature and natural laws to study nature. The observation and experience of nature does not exclude God and soul from this theory. We are here more concerned

with the spiritual aspect of nature, because scientific system of nature may not be all exhaustive.

The philosophers like Henri Bergson, Nietzsche, William James, John Dewey and others have attempted to construct general theory about the nature of reality in a purely naturalistic terms.

"William James argues in his famous essay *The Will to Believe* that the existence or non-existence of God, of which there can be no conclusive evidence either way is a matter of such momentous importance that any one who desires has the right to stake his life upon the God hypothesis"²⁴.

Naturalism is wrongly involved with materialism. Both are different from each other. For materialism, matter is the only reality and for naturalism nature is the only reality.

Attributes of God:

It is the logical implication of the worship of God, i.e., God must be the highest being than whom nothing can be conceived. The teleological and moral proof for the existence of God would not establish His being an object of worship. God must have some attributes due to which He becomes object of worship. Let us now discuss this point in same detail.

Person:

The problem of person or personality of God is of cardinal importance for philosophy of Religion. Individuality is the basis of personality or person. A man is an individual where he becomes a person. Personality is the matter of degree. A civilized man is more personal than a semi-civilised.

The human conception of personality has linked with social and ethical elements which develops the doubt whether the conception can be applied to a Being or not. The issue of personality is not the human category which can be legitimately used to God.

God has many attributes. From the point of worship person or personality is most important. A person is a self-conscious unity of thinking, perceiving, willing, cognitive, conative and affective, and possesses of ideas, obligation and purposes.

"God is personality. God is the universal spirit and absolute self-consciousness evolving the worlds of finite spirits and physical objects from within Himself as the object of His consciousness"²⁵. God is the supreme person. The world is the externalization of God. The finite spirits are the reproduction of God. He is the person with self-consciousness having love and will. He is dynamic. He is the infinite moral perfection and realizes infinite perfection gradually in an evolving universe and evolving humanity.

God is worshipped, for spinoza, due to the intellectual love. This love is neither selfish, nor unselfish, but selfless. A God worshipped by the worshipper as because of a person. A worshipper not only prays to God as a person but hopes that He will response to him. As a matter of fact, it is the love of God which awakens a man's wonder.

Human persons have finite selves and experiences of past memories, present perceptions and future anticipations in our awareness. But we can conceive of an infinite person who realizes all the span of experiences into a self-conscious unity. It is the God as person who is the most comprehensive unity where past, present and future are integrated.

God as a person follows from the logic of worship. If He is a person, He must be an all-comprehensive and perfect person. His thinking, feeling and willing must be infinite. He must be unified all His ideals, obligations and purposes.

God as a person has created the entire universe not because of any need of His own, but because of His sheer generosity and goodness. God is all-powerful (omnipotent), all-knowing (Omniscient) and perfectly morally good.

The thought of God as a perfect person is the thought of a spiritual self which is fully self-determined and Himself is the ground and sufficient reason of his own states of consciousness.

The personal God is that God who reveals His good purpose in the teleological order. The personal character of God is best apprehended by our mind through His manifestation. God could not reveal Himself as person unless He were a person.

This conception of perfect person creates teleological problems. If God is a person, he must have senses like man. But God cannot be said to have sense like man. His thinking cannot be conceptual.

God is said to have free creativity. He is said as omnipotent. But now question arises, can God perform what is logically absurd? Can He make $2+2=5$? Does He create out something or out of nothing? There are some of the perplexing problems that arise with regard to God as a creator. Though there may arise such questions regarding God, but such type of questions are irrelevant to God. God as the perfect person, He is the basis of reason or logic. What is logically absurd is beyond the matter of God. God is not the place of logically absurd matter.

God as Immutable, Eternal, Infinite, Self-existence, Absolute and Unconditional:

God is considered as immutable, eternal, infinite and self-existent Being. God is called immutable in the sense that He is beyond the range of destruction. God is called infinite in the sense of being as the ground of the finite world and being. God is called eternal in the sense that God is above the time. God is called self-existent because He exists in Himself and for Himself. He does not depend on any other reality. God has the character of everlastingness not like the ephemeral existence of God.

God is immutable. Change is the mark of mutability. God is the perfect, does not have change or mutability. God is changeless with regard to his essence, but has change as his accidents are concerned.

Eternity or the timelessness has been construed to mean the complete negation of time process. This timeless character indicates to the transcendental self or God. Time always denotes a thing which is within the phenomena and time cannot be applied to what is real. Eternity is the pure negation of time and God is retained as timeless, so God is eternal. "God's eternity has to be understood as that which endures through the whole series of unending time"²⁶. Eternity is the essence or attributes of God. The eternal timeless God within which the time process rules and the God, the timeless reality is the truth of the universe. God is eternal because He is raised above the process of time: He is the ultimate condition of the existence of such a process.

The concept of eternity has been used in four senses. In the first, eternity is used as timeless. The God is timeless or independent of time. In the second sense, it is enduring through all times. God has the

eternity who is enduring through all times. The references of eternity are found in Judio-Christian tradition where God is conceived as that who is everlasting or who endures forever. In the third sense, time retained and transcended as total simultaneity. When a work is planned and executed, takes time and then becomes a thing of beauty, it is the joy forever and would never pass into nothingness. In the fourth sense, eternity is used as the way for the fulfillment of best value. A work of art like 'Monalisa' becomes a thing of value, it becomes independent of its being conceived in terms of time. No doubt any work of art has its beginning or end, but its meaning or value is kept as enduring. So, time is interpreted as the vehicle of meaning or value. The value is an eternal thing. God is looked upon as a creator of value.

Eternity has also the great religious significance when applied to the Divine being. Eternity has negative side as contrast with the mutability and decay, which are the doom of all earthly things.

In contrast to the experience of the world God is commonly known as the Infinite and Absolute. Infinite indicates the opposite of the finite. Finite is limited and boundless. The grounds and conditions of the finite are beyond itself. The theist considers God as the Absolute or identify God with Absolute. In current philosophy the word 'Absolute' is frequently used to signify Ultimate Reality, which is all-embracing, harmonious and complete.

The word 'absolute' has a special meaning which is applied to God. God is the absolute in the sense that He is the ultimate ground of all existences and is limited in so far as through the world created by Him. So, God is appropriately designated as the absolute ground of the world, He is the sole and sufficient reason of the existences. He may

also be called an absolute in the sense that He is a Being harmonious and self-complete, whose consciousness embraces the whole universe.

The Absolute is that which is free from limitations. The Absolute is not merely termed as an all-knower but also an all-determiner, not merely the world-experiences but also the world-possessor.

God is also attributed as unconditioned in the sense of not being conditioned by anything outside Himself. He is also being unconditioned in the sense of being as self-conditioned.

Omniscience or Fore-knowledge of God:

Omniscience is an attribute of God. God is an omniscient Being, for He has created all things. Omniscience or Fore-knowledge of God is the thinking or knowing of God. As God is eternal, His thinking or knowing is also eternal. God is said to know the hidden thoughts of every one of us. He is all-knower, before Him everyone is the open book. God is supposed to know everyone individually and completely. Fore-knowledge is the precise and accurate knowledge. "If God knows everything, then he knows that contradictories cannot be true together; he knows that $2+2 = 4$ and that the three angles of a Euclidean triangle add up to two right angles. These, after all, are truths which we know. So any omniscient being must know them to be true"²⁷.

The theologians like Calvin hold that everyone is pre-determined and pre-destined from the very beginning. So, the-pre-determiner like an intuitive seer can know in advance the future course of history and of human decisions. The theist St. Augustine admits that God foreknows even the free decision of every individual in advance. According to him, every individual is free and his free decision can be known. His argument means that free knowledge does not affect the nature of act.

The possibility of Divine omniscience must lie in the central relation of God to his universe and all elements of the universe.

The American philosopher, Royce considers omniscience as primary attribute. He argues that from omniscience, omnipotence and other attributes are derived.

Omniscience is the conception of attribute which is also adopted by the theologians in their discussion of the Devine Nature. We cannot deduce the attribute of omniscience in God from any facts of human experience. Omniscience involves the completeness and perfection of deity.

Omniscience or God's fore-knowledge is however, not commonly accepted by all. Some philosophers like Jonathan Edwards, Henri Bergson, Samuel Alexander and P.A. Bertocci deny God's fore-knowledge.

Omniscience, so to speak, cannot be deduced from the analogy made by human experiences as man's experience is always limited and partial.

Omnipotence:

The word 'omnipotence' is composed of two Latin word omnis (all) potens (powerful). God is supposed to bear the attribute omnipotence. Omnipotence means being able to do everything. God is supposed to be a power to do all things. "It remains, therefore, that God is called omnipotent because He can do all things that are possible absolutely; which is the second way of saying a thing is possible"²⁸. St. Augustine said that God is omnipotent in the sense that He can do whatever He wants. He is all-powerful. "The Absolute is not merely an

all-knower but also all-determiner; not merely the world experiencer, but also the world-possessor"²⁹. But it does not deny the other attributes of God like goodness, love, justice etc.

God's power or omnipotence can hardly be understood as a monotheistic concentration of power. Regarding omnipotence, the theist thinks that God has created free will and voluntarily delegated His powers to human beings. Omnipotence does not mean doing all things but means the power to do all that is worth doing. However, the most important aspect of God's power is one of creation and His relation of transcendence-immanence to it. So, we can turn to the point of God as Creator.

According to Judaeo-Christian theologian, this is the most important attribute of God. This concept is closely associated with creation. The concept of creation evolves out of creative love of God.

The notion of 'creation' is possible to distinguish from the notion of 'making'. God is believed as a creator of the universe not as a maker. Simply, a potter makes a pot out of pre-existing materials called clay. Here, He simply fashions out a pre-existing material into a desired thing. Here, the potter is not all-in-all. He imposes His refractory nature on the clay. So, God is the creator, ultimate reason and immanent spirit of the world.

If God is the omnipotent Being, He must be the object of worship and must be distinct from the worshipper, otherwise worship itself will become logically impossible. From these factors, it is clear that God has the attribute 'omnipotence'.

Regarding creation we have two types of interpretation. One is pantheistic and other is theistic. According to pantheist, all is God and

God is all and everything comes out of God. The eminent religious pantheists are Plotinus and Spinoza. Spinoza's pantheism is Geometrical. For him, the world follows from God in the same way in which all the angles of a triangle are together equal to two right angles follows from the very definition of a triangle. On the other hand, the theist holds that God is the absolute creator of all. Nothing can exist apart from Him. A theist says God creates the Universe out of nothing.

If God fashions the world out of pre-existing something, here He will be reduced to the status of architect which is the hamper of His eternity. This will not be a *monotheism*, but will be a *dualism*, besides God, matter also becomes co-existent, coeval with God.

Omnipresence:

God is believed to have the attribute omnipresence. A spiritual conception of God carries the belief of divine omnipresence. The spiritual worshipper feels the presence of God in everywhere. "God is everywhere in the sense that he makes his working everywhere felt"³⁰. A spiritual worshipper feels that no barrier can shut him out from the object of adoration and he feels God as always nearer to him.

The religious consciousness always rests on the satisfaction that God is omnipresent but none can feel to ask about the way in which He is present. The religious philosopher is not beyond from dealing with the problem. Regarding this problem, the theist excluded pantheistic answer: God is not everywhere because, He is everything. The idea of God is a conceptual form which implies the Divine Being. Consequently the Divine Being cannot be limited by space.

The sphere of the operation of God's activity is extended to the every point of space as He is the active Ground of existences. The

omnipresence is the way of expressing the non-difference between the Being and His activity. Omnipresence shows that the Being of God is not separate from His activity. God is everywhere as because that working makes a feeling of being present everywhere. For that God is the ever-present Ground of the world. We can express the idea of omnipresence with the help of an analogy. This analogy will suggest how we should regard this omnipresence. The soul or spiritual entity is operative throughout the body and stands in relation to all bodily elements. Yet, being a spiritual entity it cannot be located in any organ or part of the body although it pervades the whole body. In like manner, we may think of God as pervading everywhere.

God is believed to have the attributes transcendence and immanence. A transcendent God is one who exists outside the material world and His creatures. *Deism* is that religious system in which God's transcendence is most exclusively emphasized. According to *theism*, God is both transcendent and immanent in the world. According to Samuel Alexander, immanence means much more than God's entry into the world of His creation.

Of the moral attributes, 'goodness', 'justice' and 'love' are more important.

Goodness is a human attribute, which is also the perfect characteristics of God. There is a distinction between 'good' and 'evil'. The goodness will be meaningless if there is no evil. In fact, good has a meaning in contrast with the evil. In the matter of goodness there must be a gradual overcoming on evil and correspondingly arises a conscious realization of God.

The notion of God as justice is a moral attribute. The concept of justice is related to the concept of goodness is typical which is an ethical approach to God.

The attribute of God is 'love' and this is the typical view of the Christian and Vaishṇava faith. God's love follows from His goodness. Love is a matter of emotion, which is pre-supposed in every communion of God with man. 'God is good' is a feeling for man, a feeling which man has for God and love is another name for such a feeling. It is the motive force to the voluntary operations like will or creation. It is the view that love motivates God's creation. The love is that force which actuates the voluntary operations. So, from these facts, it is true that love is nothing other than the attribute of God.

Religious consciousness makes two demands, one is theoretical and the other is practical. Metaphysical attributes satisfy theoretical consciousness and moral attributes fulfill the practical consciousness. A pantheist or deist, for instance, concentrates on metaphysical attributes, while a crude theist emphasizes moral attributes.

If we treat the attributes as descriptive of a Being called God, then we are found to fall into contradictions and errors. The linguistic confusion which is raised with regard to the arguments concerning the existence of God seems to surround every point about the divine attributes as well. The linguistic confusion arises due to the different mode of analysis in regard to the attributes of God by different philosophers in their theories. Such type of linguistic confusion is a outward contradiction which does not effect to the real nature of God. Though God is described as having different attributes in different languages, but the real nature of God is always attributeless. If God is

described as having different attributes, which may create contradictions and errors. This may appear as the linguistic confusion.

The theologians try to explain the reality of God in terms of personality, eternity and a perfect Being. Ethically the God is regarded as having the goodness. The objections may be raised regarding the ethical character of God. If God is all-good, all-inclusive, the creator, then what is the need of creation of evil which stand as opposed to goodness or why is there any evil at all? The religious consciousness or discourse about God's attribute is not absolutely meaningless as having the purpose to create truth in one's self and in all other things through this.

– God is all-inclusive and naturally there can be nothing to count against any assertion concerning the divine attribute.

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CHAPTER - IV

SOCIOLOGICAL UNDERSTANDING OF GOD

Sociology :

The term 'Sociology' was invented by Auguste comte, a French philosopher in 1839. Sociology is the youngest discipline of the social sciences. The word 'Sociology' is derived from the Latin word 'Societus' meaning 'society' and the Greek word 'logos' meaning 'study or science'. The etymological meaning of sociology is thus the 'science of society'. "In other words, Sociology is the study of man's behaviour in groups or of the inter-action among human beings, of social relationships and the processes by which human group activity takes place"¹.

The social character is the distinctive feature of human life. Every human being interacts in the society in order to survive. According to Aristotle, man is a social animal; both nature and necessity impact man to live in society. Man carried on a study not of society but of different aspects of society which give rise to different social sciences like History, Economics, Political Science, Anthropology, Psychology etc. All these social sciences deal with social phenomena where conception is particularly made on human conduct. These social sciences do not give us a complete picture of society. These social sciences do not fully explain man's social behaviour. So, Sociology is a synthetic discipline which is essentially and fundamentally deals with that network of social relationships we call society. In society we should recognize that we are not attempting to study everything that happens in society but as forces that maintain and control social relations. The main interest of sociology is to study social relationship.

Society :

Usually the word 'society' is used to designate the members of specific groups of persons, social relationships of the persons. We can speak Horizon society. Sometimes the word is used to designate institutions like Arya samaj (society), Brahmo samaj etc. Society is a system of relationships. It is the system of norms of interaction among the persons by which the members of the society maintain themselves. Relations are organized in the society. So, society is a place where members are known by each other and possesses common interests.

It is a wheel of social relationship. Among these relations some are complex, some are simple, some are temporary and some one permanent. These relations include behaviour, customs, modes of operation, authority, assistance and other types of relations. "Society includes behaviour of human beings and the consequent problems of relationships and adjustments among them"². All these are understood in the society. A society is a group of individuals, a system or pattern of relationships among human beings. So, it may be defined as the total complex of human relationships. Social relationship always possesses a psychological element. Neither any society nor a social relationship can exist without this element. Society exists only where social being behaves.

Man and Society:

Man is an integral part of the society. Every man belongs to some society. It is the essential fact of man. Man cannot exist without any society. Man has the capacity to have a social life, which is the intrinsic need of man. "One would almost conclude from the foregoing statement that the individual is a product of society"³. Some essential

fact like emotional development, intellectual maturity etc. cannot be possible without society. Man cannot develop all these things in isolation.

Man is said to be a social being. Man's character of socialness is universally accepted. It is because that man lives in society in company with others where his conduct is evaluated as right or wrong. Moral judgment on the actions of man is done in the society. It is also fact that no man can achieve success or pleasure in his own efforts without society. It is not possible for man to achieve what we want without society. Man lives with his fellow beings. He lives in collaboration and co-operation with the human beings as because all human beings are lived with a character of socialness which is the essence of society. Hence, the relation between man and society is very intimate.

Social relationship is the essence of society which is only made possible between the presence of man and society. Due to this social relationship man establishes relations with other members of the society.

Regarding man and society, Spencer says, society is an organization; it is a social organization. He says that individuals are the limbs of the society. Just as the limbs separated from the body have no life, similarly individuals separated from society have no life.

Religion:

Religion is an institution with a recognized body of persons who gather regularly to worship ultimate reality. It is also the place where we accept the set of doctrines offering some means of relating the individual to what is taken to be the ultimate reality. Some defines religion with the moral life, some again considers it to be a typical

aesthetic enjoyment, while some other says that religion is nothing but the philosophic contemplation of reality. Mathew Arnold defines religion as the morality and he describes religious object as the power that makes for righteousness.

Kant defines religion as the moral duty as a divine commandment. It obviously supposes that religion has no other function than proving an ontological foundation of the consciousness of moral deligation. Religion is a unique experience of man's relation to an eternal and absolute reality not expressible in terms of the relations between finite things and beings.

Religion concerns belief and social institution and maintains the social relationship that exists in society. Individual, family and community life in general are regulated by religion, which influences people's behaviour, action, faith for enforcing social norms and ethics. Religion is a system of belief as well as an agent of value enforcement and action. "Religion involves thought and activity as well as beliefs and values"⁴.

Relation between religion and philosophy is very intimate. It is different from that type of relation which is found between philosophy and science. Philosophy tries to give a more unified and complete understanding of the world while religion attempts a more perfect unity. Though religion and philosophy are different with regard to their field but due to some important aspects they can be said to have an alike system. Both religion and philosophy has the same aim to understand the world. Though they are different in their field of interest but both deal with the same idea such as soul, god etc.

Tribal Religion:

Tribal religion was the most primitive form of human religion. Primitive people never believed one object, they believed different things and objects and also worshipped natural objects as gods. Tribal religion was also found in the form of Animism. Animism refers to the view of the Universe that include even plants and inanimate objects, it is one type of psychological being similar to that of human and non-human animals. This theory of the primitive people is called Animism. "According to Risley, Tribal religion is animism. The tribal people believe in the presence of supernatural powers at the back of high mountains, flooded rivers, big trees and epidemics"⁵. The primitive people tried to convince the powers by different propitiations and worships.

'Ancestral worship' is also another type of animism found among the tribes. It was the most important part of religion of ancient Greece and Rome. It was also found existed in China and some parts of Africa and Asia. "The term ancestor worship is sometimes used in a wide, loose sense to refer to any sort of rites referring to dead persons"⁶.

'Ancestor worship' is occupying an important place among the Bodos in the form of worshipping the spirits of dead person or ghost. Fear of dead person or ghost is the main inspiration to make 'ancestor worship'.

The Bathou religion as the tribal religion of the Bodos can be considered as a religion of the world because it established the characteristics of perfect unity among the Bodos.

Society and Religion:

The word 'religion' is used as more wider sense in sociology than religious texts. Sociologically religion is defined as institutionalized

systems of belief. Religion is a sociological phenomenon and religion plays an important part in the social order. The relation between religion and society are fundamental to the nature of religion. According to Galloway, religion is a faith of man in a power beyond himself. Religion is the field and systems of sociology. According to Herbert Spencer, sociology covers its field by the family, politics, religion, social control and industry and work. The goal of religion is not only liberation but it is mostly concerned with the social factor like social welfare, social relation, social cohesion and national integration. Religion is a need and support for the betterment of human beings. All religions are mainly concerned with social welfare and humanity service. "According to Hindu Social Philosophy each person wants to achieve purshārtha e.g.: dharma artha, kāma and mokṣa. Dharma is the root, artha is branch, kāma the flower and mokṣa the fruit of the tree of life. If the root is watered, the brances and flowers will be healthy and yield delicious fruits"⁷.

It is the first order language by which we communicate our feelings, thoughts and acts in relation to an object of devotion. Religion is the most influential forces of social control. It is also the most effective guide of human behaviour. Unless we understood religion we shall fail to understand society.

According to the intellectualist, religion has the intrinsic to the nature of society. Some religious ideals like belief, attitude, behaviour etc. are established in society. "Religion offers prescriptions for social order, individual behaviour, and collective action"⁸.

Both sociology and religion are value oriented. A society can be more rational and civilized with the help of religious and moral values. We can build up a noble, valuable and ideal society if we emphasise on

the religious aspect of the society. The value of religion is nothing other than the human value like truth, right conduct, love and non-violence.

All the religions or religious traditions give expression to the relationship what is understood to be the most compelling objectives of human life and day to day conduct. The religious traditions can be distinguished from each other in regard to their interpretations and yet, they also share some common convictions and attitudes towards society.

All the religions or the religious traditions are nothing other than the social groups or the part of society. Religious traditions differ from one another on the basis of their culture and style of living, but also have similarity in regard to the worship of some supernatural agency. All the religions or religious traditions seek a measure and ideal for the societal ordering of life. Invocation is the key of religious traditions by which the relation of brotherhood and the status of society are established. Society is a collective aspiration to which traditions provide some means by which individuals and communities can establish their lives on a basis that is distinct from the social and cultural status. It is clear that the religious ideals and the day to day ordering of common life are not fully suitable. They are rather characterized by conflict and tension. So, such problem requires a deliberate spiritual and practical agency as the mediator for effective solution. Some supernatural powers like God as the basis of the nature are admitted by the belief of God which varies from mind to mind of different traditions.

God in the Society:

The status of God is sociologically understood in the different societies or in the different religious traditions. God has the most

influential character in the society. The idea of God is inseparably related to society though God is an inseparable part of religion. The religious minded people of the society always believed some supernatural power or energy as the basis of natural world or as a source of justice and goodness. According to Kant, men cannot live in the society without the faith of God though the existence of God cannot be rationally proved. The different religious traditions like Buddhism, Jainism, Islam, Hinduism etc. are the branches of our social culture or some sociological groups where the existence of God is either affirmed or denied. In some religions like Buddhism and Jainism, we do not start with pre-supposition about the existence of God. So, in a different society God stands as a being who is believed as the ultimate source of values and powers, and also believed as the ultimate source of social integration.

Sociologically the status of God is understood by using different religious behaviours or systems like ritual, bhakti, puja, sacrifice, iconographic worship, prayer etc. found in the society. These religious systems are performed to propitiate gods and goddesses in different occasions.

Ritual:

Ritual is a religious practice. It is a complex pattern of behaviour for the individual as well as for various social groups in all sphere of life with reference to the sacred objects. Ritual is a performance of action or a system of worship to propitiate god which is performed by the priest (brahmana). Ritual appears in all religious rites and societies. Body is the centre of ritual and is also the vehicle of religious experience. Ritual is the symbolic action. Ritual underlines symbolic intention. In ritual special clothes, altar, manner of speech, distinctive

places and time are used. Here to nurture god, people voluntarily submit their bodily existence and assume very specific roles. The priest ensures the goodwill of the god to the people of the society.

Culturally ritual is defined as sets of behaviour. It is regarded as a form of social communication or code of information and analysed in terms of its "grammar". Ritual is treated as a cognitive category. Ritual is a socio-cultural function. According to social anthropologists, ritual is a stylized repetitious behaviour that explicitly religious. It is also called social as because it is performed in the different ceremonies of the society. According to Rudolf Otto and Mircea Eliade, ritual arises from the 'numinous' or 'sacred' or mysterious reality that is always manifested as of a wholly different order from ordinary or "natural" realities.

Ritual more fundamentally is intentional bodily engagement for the relationship to reality. "As a result, ritual draws into itself every aspect of human life, and almost every discipline of the social sciences and humanities has something to say about it"⁹. Ritual may appear in the verbal behaviour also. The verbal behaviour such as chant, song and prayer are of course included in the category of bodily actions.

Ritual is symbolic in nature. Ritual underlines and makes emphatic its symbolic intention.

Bhakti:

Bhakti is another way to nurture god. Bhakti is said as the best way to have union with God or Goddesses. Bhakti is the way that reflects the cultural and social changes in Hindu society. In the Bhāgavat Purāna, bhakti is conceived as a way of life, as selfless dedication to Krishna.

Puja:

Puja is also a form of ritual which is performed in the Hindu society to propitiate god. Puja or Yajña is also important in domestic ritual. Puja for the gods which is also called Deva puja is performed in four different settings: (a) at shrines of Hindu home, (b) at temples, (c) at festivals and (d) at shrine or temples of localized village divinities.

- (a) Most of the Hindus maintain home shrine puja to honour the divinity. Home shrine consists of pictures of god or a small images of gods on a table or low platform. Here images of Śivalinga, small cast-metal statues of various gods are housed. Here gods are worshipped by single family representative. In home shrine puja sixteen different upacāras are used to propitiate god. These are Āvahana, Āsana, Svāgata, Pādya, Arghya, Ācamanīya, Vastra, Anulepana or Gandha, Puṣpa, Dhūpa, Dīpa Ārati, Naivedya or Prasāda, Namaskāra or Pranāma and Visarjana or Udvāsana.
- (b) Temple puja is mainly performed by the temple officiants like Brahmana. Temple puja are of two types – Non-Śaiva and Śaiva. Non-Śaiva temple pujas are usually addressed to anthropomorphic images while in the Śaivic temple addressed is made to the non-anthropomorphic linga. Temple gods like Śiva, Vishnu etc. are royal. The temple is his or her palace and priests are palace servants. Temple pujas in some places, are performed by dances by the dancing girl (devadasis). In the vaiṣṇava temples devotional hymns are often sung during the pujas or honour to the images of Vishnu. All the upacāras mentioned above are required for temple puja also.

- (c) In this puja gods are worshipped by the people of a local community. In this type of puja, gods are mounted on a cart carried on the roads like a procession or is called as ratha yatra. Here gods are worshipped by the devotees through tossing flowers or sprinkling water to the images.
- (d) In the village puja different gods and goddesses are worshipped. Village divinities are different according to different sect. Blood sacrifice is common in the pujas of village divinities, Village pujas are not necessarily maintained on a regular basis. Coconuts, Bananas, betel leaves, turmeric and cooked rice are the most common non-bloody offerings. The pujas to the village gods are performed by the pujaris. "Village gods may possess their pujaris or other mediums during the course of pujas; festivals feature such possession experiences, as well as processions, sometimes fire walking, and sacrifices of sheep, goats, fowls, or buffalo"¹⁰.

Sacrifice:

Sacrifice is the most important rite of religion. It is the universal phenomenon in offering animal sacrifice though it has no longer plays any part in Buddhism, Islam, or Christianity. In the history of religion lies its fact that it is the means by which it seeks to establish the communication and to enjoy communion with their gods. This type of communion is essential function for the religion. The offering of animal sacrifice is a cardinal importance for the history of religion.

A sacrifice is called universal when the offering is done by the community to their god. When the offering to the ancestors is made by the family descendants, it is not universal but particular. Sacrifice is not

only made by animal but also made by offering food and any article to their gods. The offerings are normally made by food or animal or vegetable. "If, for this purpose offerings simply, or offerings of food simply, were all that was required, then any article of food would serve to propitiate any god"¹¹. Sacrifices may be regular and irregular. Regular sacrifices occur when it is performed as a religious rite under a religion. An irregular sacrifice occurs when the sacrifice is performed by the community when calamity occurs in the society.

"In connection with every religion, whether ancient or modern, we find on the one hand certain beliefs, and on the other certain institutions, ritual practices and rules of conduct"¹².

In Hindu pantheon, sacrifice is a means to worship God in some cases. Sacrifice is made in front of the different deities by sprinkling some drops of water and scattering of leaves or grains, Sacrificial act is also maintained by offering animal and also rarely even seen human sacrifices. Sacrifice is believed as the way to enter into the godhead of the gods and even to control gods.

Iconographic Worship:

Iconographic worship is the another means to propitiate god. Iconography are visual images which are called concrete image (mūrti) which can be seen and touched. Image worship has its own purpose in stimulating religious devotion among ordinary men and women. Visual images of Vishṇu, Śiva and different goddesses are worshipped in Hinduism. These images transcend human appearance. These image in translated terms are called pratimā. These images are man made and man like, and invoking is done in front of the images to reflect transcendent vision. The images have the special place in the temples.

An average intelligent man goes to temple and worships an idol as the image of God.

Prayer:

Prayer is a type of worship, prayer is done collectively to various deities and God at home as well as outside the home. In a home family gods and goddesses are prayed. The prayers are offered by the members of the family at the family altar. Collective prayer is seen to the village gods installed in the village temple. Sometimes prayer are also offered to the river deity, forest deity and to other deity of the locality. In the period of Vedas, the prayer was directed towards the chief manifestations of natural process such as sun, moon, wind, fire, rain etc.

Goddess worship:

Goddess worship has played a central role not only in the small-scale social organizations but also to the emergence of civilizations. Goddess worship is found as an important characteristic in Hindu pantheon. Lakshmī, Saraswatī, Durgā and Kālī are the chief Hindu goddesses. They are very popularly worshipped by the average Hindus. In the complex agricultural society female deities have been variously linked to the fertility of crops. The worship of female sacred images are found in the societies throughout the world, except if these societies are not dominated by Islam or certain branches of Protestantism.

The everyday worship of goddesses is primarily seen in Hinduism at the village level. Many of these goddesses are only regional or local in reputation though they may be associated in the minds of some villages. These village goddesses are preoccupied by some small communities with lives and well-being. "Local village goddesses were

besought (as they continue to be today) to increase human fertility, to cause or cure diseases, to bring about good fortune, to enhance the productivity of crops, or to destroy demons"¹³. They are especially associated with fertility, both for humans and crops, and with diseases. They often receive blood offerings and are usually worshipped by all members of a village, regardless of caste affiliation.

Goddess worship is found as an widespread important characteristic of the religious traditions. In some parts of the world female deities or goddesses are associated with virginity, purity and perfect piety. Hindu virginity is found in some places of Nepal and India in terms of which kumārī puja is performed. In the worship of the puja, the premenstrual girl is assumed as the embodiment of a goddess.

The worship of natural phenomena is assumed generally as has the link with goddesses worship. Basically female deities are associated with the earth while male deities are with the sun. There is considerable evidence from ancient times that goddesses were associated with various natural phenomena particularly the sea, the earth, and phases of the moon.

Another widespread important characteristic of goddesses worship is due to their power over the fertility of soil. The fertility of earth is closely and widely associated with the goddesses worship which is concerned with the human fertility in some societies. Barren women are believed as formal divinities in some societies of Europe, India, Africa and many other parts of the world to ask for aid in pregnancy. In European countries the images of corn mother deity have been placed in the fields by peasants for hundred of years. Here goddess becomes a source of life so that the human community may be sustained.

Healing is believed as an essential and important characteristics of goddess worship. The goddesses are assumed that they can give life and take it away. They are frequently assumed to have the power to cure diseases. The Indian goddess Śitalā not only cures small pox, She is considered to be its source and requires elaborate rituals to cool her anger, which causes the diseases. Thus, Hindu people fear and adore her. They are assumed and worshipped as the primary and original source of life like human mothers.

Female deities are mostly worshipped and strongly represented in the home rituals, in roadside shrines, and at local pilgrimage sites in many parts of the world. Here goddesses are worshipped by the pilgrims more on a sub regional basis for the purpose of curing diseases and asking for small favours, while pilgrimage to the shrines of male deities is almost always at the regional or national level.

Sacrifice is the most interesting rites associated with goddess worship. The practice of blood sacrifice though not universal but found as widespread in some form or other in most religious traditions. The sacrifice of blood, whether of human or animal origin, has been linked to goddess worship from ancient times. In contemporary India, large number of goats, buffalo, chickens, and other animals are offered to these deities to satisfy their thirst for blood. Kālī and Durgā in the Hindu pantheon are deities of this kind. Though, now the fact of blood sacrifice is outlawed in many parts of the world, but this custom continues to thrive often underground. Sometimes various types of sacrificial substitutions are made in place of blood offerings, like the sacrifice of cucumbers, pumpkins, or money.

Many patterns of goddess worship throughout the world have been found in antiquity and continue to thrive in many of the world's

religions even to-day. Goddesses played a prominent role in prehistoric cultures by which the great traditional civilizations are developed throughout the development of agriculture and in the emergence of urban life. They continue to be a fertile source of religious experience within our contemporary world.

The sociological status of God is understood differently in different religious traditions found in the society. In the different religious traditions gods and goddesses are worshipped by different socio-cultural system.

Hinduism is an ancient Arya dharma of Hindus. Hinduism perhaps is the oldest of all the living religions of the world. Hindu religion is the amalgamation of various beliefs and practices. Hindu religion or culture is a growth out of amalgam and synthesis of different beliefs and practices. "Hinduism is not only a religion, but a social system and a tradition too"¹⁴. So, Hindu religion may be said that is lived by the people of the Hindu society.

Different gods and goddesses having different forms, nature and characteristics are believed and worshipped by the Hindus. Hindu as a religion or system is found a firm believer in God either in one God or in many gods and goddesses. In the Vedas, the basic text of the Hindus, the prayer was directed towards the chief manifestations of natural processes such as Sun, Moon, wind, fire, rain and others. The worship was thrown through the medium of yajña and prayer with the mantras.

The earliest Hinduism was characterized by polytheism. There has been a gradual development of religious thought from anthropomorphic polytheism through henotheism to monotheism. There are different gods and goddesses having different forms, which are

characteristics and nature in Hindu religion. Among them the most notable gods are 'Brahmā' the deity of creation, 'Vishṇu' the deity of preservation and 'Śiva' the deity of destruction. Among these 'Śiva' and 'Vishṇu' have been widely worshipped in India giving rise to what are known as 'Śaiva cults' and 'Vaiṣṇava cults'. These cults are also further divided into some sub-cults due to the wide variety of distinction in places of worship, forms of idols, modes of worship, beliefs and religious values, places of pilgrimage, religious goals and practices etc. Out of these three gods in Hinduism, Brahmā seems to be the least-worshipped. Among them Vishṇu was worshipped first as because He creates the world first

The "mother worship" has been an important feather of Hinduism. People worship Śiva's and Vishṇu's consorts 'Śhakti' and 'Lakshmī' respectively. Among the goddesses, the most important are Durgā or Maheśvarī, Mahā-Lakshmī, Mahā-Kālī and Mahā-Śaraswati. In Hindu religion Lakshmī is worshipped as she has the association with fertility. Lakshmī is worshipped throughout the year in different festivals. Lakshmī is worshipped in Orissa as she has the association with crops and food in 'Kaumudī Purnimā'. In the autumn, during the Durgā Puja, the worship of Lakshmī is significant. Saraśwatī is also popularly worshipped goddess of the Hindus. She is most popular among the school children and is worshipped on a special day throughout the India as the patron goddess of learning. Durgā is the most impressive formidable and the popular goddess of the Hindu pantheon. The worship of Durgā is celebrated as the Durgā Puja, an important festival during the autumn in the month of Āsvina or Kartika. The offerings of blood to Durgā is the important characteristics of Durgā Puja. Kālī is the fierce goddess. Blood is the main content of the worship. Wherever she is worshipped, She receives blood offerings

Judaism is the religion of the Jews, the people of the Israel. Judaism is a monotheistic religion, based on the concept of one God. In Judaic society God's holiness is much emphasized. "The early Philosophical thinkers, such as Sa'adyah Gaon (882-942), adduced proofs for God's creation of the world, from which they deduced God's unity and Sovereign power"¹⁵. The prayer is recommended in Judaic society as the service to God. Devotion and love to God is also recommended to propitiate God like Hindu society. Neither the stars nor the moon, nor any other heavenly or earthly phenomenon can be worshipped or thought to have divine characteristics. In Judaism man is sometimes called the servant of God. Prayer and devotion to God are also prescribed for man in Judaism. It is said that the purpose of the creation of man is the service of God. And this service essentially consists in praying God with inner heart without any outside thought or preoccupation. In Judaism man must pray with true inwardness regularly at stated times and occasions. A man is obliged to pray three times a day in the morning, in the noon and in the evening. It reminds us the Hindu custom of trisandhya, i.e., prayers to be performed thrice in the morning, in the noon and in the evening. Jewish prayer to God is petitionary and devotional. It is both individual and collective.

Islam is a prophetic religion. It is the religion of Muslim. Islam is strictly a monotheistic religion. It believes only one God or Allah. Prophet Mohammad is believed as the messenger (Rasul) of God (Allah).

It is the basic duty of a Muslim to respect the words before every prayer "La ilaha ila llahu, Muhammad resulu llah" (There is no God but Allah, and Muhammad is his prophet). "According to Koran, there is one Allah, who is detached and uninterested, yet at the same time he

observes, enjoys, becomes angered at, takes pity on his disciples and destroys their enemies"¹⁶. The deep influence of Allah is seen in the heart of a muslim when the Imam or Mullah cries every morning and evening by uttering the words from the top of a Mosque, "Allahu Akbar, La ilaha llahu, Muhammad resulu llah" (God is great, there is no God but Allah, Muhammad is the prophet of God).

Daily prayer to Allah is the important pillar of Islam, is an act of faith. The purpose of prayer is to submit oneself to God. Every Muslim is expected to take as his basic duty praying to God unfailingly five times a day at the appointed hours at daybreak, at noon, at mid-afternoon, at sunset and at early night. These prayers follow a set of formula of devotional postures. In prayer a Muslim has to face towards Meccā. Each complete set of prayer is called a *rakah* and consists of eight separate acts of devotion. It starts with the proclamation "Allahu Akbar".

A Muslim can pray anywhere. But Mosque is the holy place for prayer. Mosque is arranged in such a way that while praying one will face to-wards Mecca. Mosque is devoid of any image or idol. Islam does not recognize priesthood but a leader is selected locally and is called Imam.

In Islamic society, there is the faith of the prophets of God and believed prophet Muhammad as the last messenger.

Zoroastrianism was the religion of the persian race. Zoroastrianism has a special worthy note of significance in the theological history. The ancient persian religion was similar in many respects to the vedic religion in India. Many of the Gods worshipped in Persia were similar to the Gods of Hinduism. In essence and reality both

Hinduism and Zoroastrianism are monotheistic though ostensibly both appear as polytheistic.

Zoroastrian theological concept is based on two supernatural kingdoms- the light, the God of good and other is the God of evil. The first is called Spenta Mainya and is so often identified with Ahura Mazda and the second is known as the Angra Mainya or Ahriman or God of darkness.

Ahura Mazda is the only God whom people adore and worship 'Ahura' means master or Lord, 'maz' is great and 'da' is knowledge; Ahura Mazda means Omniscient master and is assumed as the only god to be worshipped. Zoroaster was well aware of the Aryan tradition which saw only one reality behind all the various deities that people worshipped at the vedic age.

In Zoroasterian tradition 'Agni' is assumed as the child among the deities. Fire was a sacred symbol of son in Avesta, and was regarded as the son of Ahura Mazda. However, Zoroaster did not teach the worship of fire, but the worship of the one supreme Lord of the Universe under the name of Ahura Mazda. In Zoroastrianism, there are fire temples in which sacred flames burn eternally. Priests tend these fires and Zoroastrian people often visit these temples with sandalwood to offer. Though fire is not the direct object of worship or devotion but fire is regarded as very pure in the Zoroastrianism. "Fire was only the sacred object, the symbol of Divine, as it was in all ancient sacrifices"¹⁷.

Buddhism like Jainism is an offshoot of Hinduism. Buddhism is a purely humanistic religion. Buddhism presents a pure ethical and spiritual religion against extreme polytheism and ritualism of the vedic tradition. Buddhism is primarily a religion without God. Buddha, the

founder of Buddhism does not speak of any God and therefore no ritualistic acts find any place in it. No worship, no sacrifices, no ritual or prayers are found in Buddhism. Buddha did not say there was a God but he never says that there was no God. He always remained silent on the issue whether there was a God or not.

Although Buddhism does not believe in any God, later on Buddha himself was venerated like God by his devotees, in the form of Hinayāna school, there is no mention of God. According to Buddha, Who attains Nirvāna becomes a God. Each man, therefore, is a potential God. God in this sense is not a reality, rather Godhood is a status which is to be attained. So, early Buddhism is a purely ethical religion free from all sorts of ritualism.

The later Buddhist society, in the form of Mahāyāna school, is found to accept Buddha as God and believed in his various earlier incarnation. Later Buddhism gives vent to ritualism, monasticism etc. The modern Buddhist society was in favour of the establishment for the various Buddhist temples where images of Buddha are worshipped and adored more or less in fashion of the Hindu God. The Mahāyāna Buddhist also worship many Bodhisattvas other than the Buddha and abound in various sorts of ritualistic practices. For Mahāyāna Buddhists, Buddha became the idol of worship and came to be identified with the ultimate existence. For them, Buddha is God. This side of Buddhism seems very near to Hindu polytheism. It seems that instead of taking him as the creator, the Buddhists for the most part worship and adore him as an embodiment of holiness and compassion and as a great spiritual leader and saviour of mankind. By worshipping him, they expect his kind helping hand for removing their suffering.

Goddess worship is an important characteristic of Buddhist society. It is found in the Vajrayāna tradition of tantric Buddhism in Tibet and Mongolia is widely associated with goddess worship. In Buddhist society, some goddesses, however, retain a certain degree of autonomy and represent independent deities. This is the case of the goddess Tārā, a female Bodhisattva. In Chinese pure Land Buddhism, Kuan yin, goddess of mercy, is also considered to be a Bodhisattva. She is assumed as a principal teacher, a saviour who can give her devotees assurance of enlightenment. This goddess continues to be worshipped through out china and in Japanese Buddhism.

Buddhist puja had become a full-blown cult within a few centuries after Buddha's final nirvāṇa which is celebrated mainly to worship the departed master. This cult drew upon an ancient formula of veneration. In this type of worship, the practitioner offered flowers, incense, and perfumes and sometimes used music, burning lamps, decorative cloths, banners and umbrellas etc. During the earlier centuries of the cults development, puja was offered primarily to bodily relics (Śarīras) of Buddha.

Christian society is the most influential and has dominated large population of the world, specially the western part. Christianity has its origin in the teachings of Jesus, a Jew. He is regarded by the Christians as the "son of God". He is sometimes regarded as God and sometimes as man. "Jesus has been described as Man, son of God and a prophet only to manifest the divinity in him"¹⁸. Jesus Christ is most popularly worshipped by the Christians as the incarnation of the Heavenly Father and as the greater saviour of mankind.

Although in Christian society there is the monotheistic belief of one God, but is pointed into three-in-one. This idea of God as three

persons into one is known as the idea of Trinity. The other persons into one are: God the Father, God the son and the Holy Spirit. Jesus is regarded as the second person, the son incarnate. Though there are three persons but Godhead of the Father, of the son and of the Holy Ghost is all one.

Christians also believe heavenly angels which are of good and bad. Satan is the chief evil angel, the devil, who contributes to the spread of evil by instigating people to do sin. Satan is also deemed to be the master of hell.

In Christianity prayer and praise have an important place, which are recognized as the form of worship. In the churches of Roman Catholic order, an elaborate form of ritual was developed. Catholic Christians have to use two types of prayer-ordinary and mystic. It is an attempt to dwell in the presence of God. Mystic prayer is passive contemplation of the soul entering into direct communication with God. But in the protestant Churches, prayer and praise are exercised by preaching the Gospel.

Jainism like Buddhism is known as the offshoot of Hinduism. Both of them arose in the Indian soil as the reaction against the excessive vedic ritualism.

Lord Mahavira is treated as the God more or less, by the jainas like Buddha. There are Jaina temples at many places where the statue of Mahavira are kept inside and the Jaina play their devotion and respect in many ways. It is clear and certain that Mahavira is prayed only as a great, as a saviour of mankind, as a religious leader and guide and not as a omnipotent creator God.

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CHAPTER – V

GOD OF THE BODO'S RELIGION :

A SOCIOLOGICAL AND PHILOSOPHICAL VIEW.

The Bodo's : An Introduction

Bodos are widely accepted as the aboriginal or earliest inhabitants of Assam. Bodos, in the pre-historic age, were known as Kirātas. They were most powerful and built up strong kingdom throughout the whole North-East region of India. In contrast to the Aryans, they were more powerful but less intelligent. The ancient history shows them as powerful rulers not only in North-Eastern India but also in Moran district of Nepal and Rangpur district of Bangladesh also.

The Boro-Kacharis of Assam is generally fall under the great Bodo group of the Indo-Mongoloid family falling within the Assam Burmese linguistic section. In North Bengal and lower ranges of Himalayas coming within the territory of Nepal, they are known as Mech or Meches. In upper Assam they are identified as Sonowal or Thengal Kacharis, while in the western Assam they are popularly known as Boro or Boro-kachari. In Southern part of North Cachar and Cachar they are designated as Dimasas, Barmanas and Hojai. According to S. K. Chatterjee, this group of Bodos assumed their name from the district of Kachar. Now the Bodo population is largely concentrated at Kokrajhar district – under BTC of Assam.

Bodo-kacharis are characteristically Mongoloid in appearance. The Mongoloid physical feature is seen in the physical structure of the Boro-kacharis. Like Mongoloid they have strong cheek bones, slit eyes, a

slight growth of hair in the body and scant beard. They are shorter and more stocky than the Indians of the north-east.

The Bodos are originally falling under the Mongoloid family. The people who lived in Siberia and Mongolia around 2000 B.C. were known as Mongoloid. "The Bodo, a plains Tribal community now inhabiting the Brahmaputra valley of Assam, along with their closely allied other tribes now known by different names and inhabiting south-east Nepal, North Bengal, Garo Hills of Meghalaya, North Cachar Hills and the Cachar plains in south Assam, Tripura and also some adjacent areas of Bangladesh, are the decedents of those early settlers migrating in successive waves from south-east Tibet"¹. According to the history, the Mongoloid people were divided into three groups. One group of them went towards Europe who settled in Turkey and Italy. The second group migrated towards North-America, Mexico and Japan. The third group migrated to south west of China and generally settled in Hoangho Valley and Tibet. From China and Tibet some of them migrated to the foothills of Bhutan. During their course of migration from the foothills of Bhutan they changed their direction towards West and settled in present Cooch-Bihar and Dinajpur district of West-Bengal. A section of them went towards Garohills (Meghalaya), Mymonsingh, Syllet (Bangladesh) and Tripura.

According to the 1971 census, the Bodos are the 8th largest tribal group of India.

Bodo : The Term

Kachari is a generic name of the Bodos. The term Bodo means 'man'. "Kachari is a generic term for a number of groups speaking a more or less common dialect or language and claiming a common

mythical ancestry. E. Gait and others regarded the Kachari as the aborigines, or earliest known inhabitants of the Brahmaputra Valley i.e., the whole of modern Assam, North Bengal and parts of Bangladesh"².

The Bodos were described as the inhabitants of a country which was lying to the north of the Himalayas and west of China. This land was known as 'Bod'. The word 'Bod' is supposed to mean a homeland. The inhabitants of Bod country were known as the Bodo-Ficha or Bodocha or Bodosa ('Bodo' means 'land' and 'Ficha' or Cha means 'children', hence children of the Bod country). In course of time they came to be known as simply Bodo>Boro.

The Bodos of Cachar (Kachar) district (specially North Cachar) call themselves Kacharis. According to S. K. Chatterjee, they assumed their name from the district of Kachar. The meaning of Kachar is lowland or border lands. They are also simply known as Dimasa (Dima = big water, i.e, Brahmaputra, Sa or Cha = son or children, hence, Dimasa = son or children of big water, Brahmaputra).

According to S. K. Chatterjee and Kalaguru Vishnu Prasad Rabha, the word Bodo or Boro was derived from the word "Bod". The meaning of the word 'Kachari' is derived from the word "Khor" and "Hari". "Khor" or "Khare" means head. 'Hari' means clan. From that sense kachari means a ruling clan. "The Mongoloid people of Tibet who lived in the foothills of the Himalayas are called Kakhayat or Kassat in Sanskrit language. From this word Kakhyat or Kassat the word Kachari has come"³.

"The word "Kachari" was used as the racial name by Britishers, Christian Missionaries and the British officers who first created literature in Bodo language. Following them, probably Bodo writers too used the

name kachari in their books"⁴. In the later period, Boro-kachari and Boro were used as the racial name of the Bodos. So, the three names – Kachari, Boro-kachari and Boro are used as the racial name at the same time.

Brian Hodgson was the first author who used the generic name 'Bodo' on the Boros. It is seen that British writer often used the letter 'D' in place of an Indian word 'R' with strong sound. In kachari language the etymological meaning of the term 'Boro' is 'men'.

Religion of the Bodo's:

The prime religion of the Bodos is known as 'Bathou Dhorom' where Bodos believe different gods and goddesses. In Bathou Religion one supreme god in the person of Bathou is believed. Most of the Bodo people are concerned with Bathou religion. It is the traditional religion of the Bodos.

The religion of the Bodo race is commonly called as animistic. The foreign scholars such as S. Endle, Edward Stack, Major Playfair and others have described the religion of the Bodos as animistic with beliefs in ghosts and spirits. But such description is not accepted by the Assamese scholar like Dr. P.C. Bhattacharya. "Boros are not animistic. They are worshippers of Bathou, the Supreme God"⁵.

Besides their traditional religion some Bodo people were converted into Vaishnavism, imitated by 16th century social reformer Sankardeva. They were regarded as the Sarania Bodos. A few number of the Bodo people have been converted into Christianity too. "Christianity among the Boros of the Brahmaputra Valley is a recent phenomenon. It penetrated into the Brahmaputra Valley much later than in the other regions. It influenced mainly the Boros of Assam"⁶. In

between the last part of the 19th century and early part of the 20th century a new wave of conversion has been taken place among the Bodos to the 'Brahma Dharma' preached by Late Kalicharan Brahma. The original propounder of Brahma Dharma was Srimat Siv Narayan param Hangsa of Calcutta. Kalicharan Brahma (Mech) preached the teachings of Srimat Siv Narayan param Hangsa among the Boros. Another sect of Bodos is found which is known as the Śaivism sect or Mani Bathou Śiva Dharma was founded by Guru Rupamoni Devi of Gossaigaon (Basugaon) of Bongaigaon district. According to this religion, Śiva is the Chief god. Another conversion has grown up which has gained good ground among the Bodos, that is, the sat sang religion of Thakur Anukul. One development of Bathou religion was taken into place, that is, the Refined Bathou Dharma (Bhakti cult). It was the old Bathou cult made to worship in new mode. There is also another branch (cult) of Bathou which is known as Bathou (Śiva) Dharma of Swami Nabin Brahmari. A small number of Bodos have been converted to Sai Baba bhakti cult of Hinduism. But their number is quite insignificant and it does not have impact on the Bodo society. Besides these religions a negligible number of Bodos are seen in the Bhakti cult of chaitanya and other cult of Hinduism. Though both Bathouist and the followers of Kalicharan Brahma are different in their religious ideology but culturally both the sections do not differ from its other. "But the religious belief of the traditional Boro-Kacharis differ substantially with that of the 'Brahmans' who institute 'Hom-Yojna' before the sacred fire in all socio-religious obligations following the tenets preached by Guru Kalicharan Brahma. This section (i.e., the Brahmas) Practise vedic rites like other Hindus and do not resort to appeasement of gods and goddesses by sacrificing pig and fowls and also by offering rice-beer"⁷

Religion and Philosophy:

Religion and Philosophy are closely related. The religion cannot run without Philosophy. Philosophy is just like the flower and beauty of a tree and the fruit is the religion. Therefore if we discuss religion then we have to discuss Philosophy. The relation between religion and Philosophy is just like a man's bosom and backside. Every religion in this world has its own Philosophy. Like this the Bathou religion of Bodos has also its own Philosophy.

Place of God in Bathou religion:

The Bodos believe Bathou as the Supreme god or chief god in Bathou religion. Bathou is the highest god in the Bodo pantheon. Bathou Dhorom is the prime and traditional religion of the Bodos. Sijou plant (*Euphorbia Splenden*) is the living symbol of Bathou. Bathou is pre-eminently the object of family interest and family honour. "He is never presented in idol form, but is well in evidence through his living symbol, the *siju (hiju)* tree (*Euphorbia Splenden*), which is often to be seen in the Kachari homestead surrounded by a circular fence of split bamboo"⁸. In Bathou religion 'Bathou' is identified with 'Siva' of Hindu religion. "Their religious philosophy centers round the super power of 'Bathou Barai' or 'Khorai Barai Maharaja' which is analogous to 'Siva' of the Hindu Trinity"⁹. The chief God is known in different names in Bathou religion. He is known as Annangosai, Chirgiri, Abonglauri, Bathou Brai or Sibrai. According to the Bodos, Bathoubrai is the primitive creator of the Universe.

Mainao is the chief goddess and second important deity of the Bathou religion. She is the consort of Bathou. She is also known as Bathou Buroi, Bulli Buroi, Kharia Buroi or Sw Buroi. She is the "Guardian

of the rice fields" or the "Protectress of the paddy fields". "Only second to Bathou is his good consort, Mainao, though, unlike her husband, she has no special emblem visible to the human eye. Her special function is that of 'Guardian of the rice fields'; and among a purely agricultural community like that of the Kacharis, she is of course held in very high regard"¹⁰. There is a belief regarding Mainao that if she is offered egg in the harvesting period then the deity protects land. The deity protects land and the people and increase production of the rice. They worship her during the period of harvesting the 'Asu' and 'Sali' crops. So, they believe two forms of goddesses 'Asu Mainao' and Sali Mainao' as the forms of 'Lakshimī'. They also worship different forms of Mainao as there are different types of crops. Mainao is the consort of the chief 'Bathou Borai' or 'Sivrai'. She is also called 'Bathou Buri'. She is the chief of the domestic female deities known by various names, such as 'Song Buri' etc. She is the guardian and the protectress of the household, family wealth and paddy in the field; hence Her name is 'Mainao' ('Mai' means 'Paddy' and 'na' (nao) means 'to keep', 'to watch over'). She is equivalent to the Hindu goddesses Lakshmi. She is symbolized by a bamboo pole decorated with a red cloth and planted on a lump of earth raised in the easternmost part of a house of every traditional Boro.

Besides Bura Bathou and Mainao goddess in Bathou religion, there are many other minor gods and goddesses propitiated by the Bodos. They are Bura Alilong, Bura Kharji, Abla Khungur, Agrang Khoila, Rajputur, Rajkhandra, AliBura, Aidi-Baoli, Manasu, Jaman, Bagh Raja etc.

Over and above these, some other gods and goddesses which are used to propitiate in Bathou religion.

Mainao Gaddesses: - Asu Mainao, Kharma Mainao, Sali Mainao, Basumuti Mainao, Jhul Mainao, Damua Mainao, Josa gosom Mainao, Josa daothu Mainao etc. are the various crop goddesses associated with different varieties of paddy. Mainao has a place in the homestead also.

Garja Gods: - In Bodo 'Garja' means 'god' or 'deity'. The Garjas are propitiated at a place which is away from home. There are many garja gods or deities. The important garja gods are 'Lakhi garja', 'Sew garja', 'Tulsing-Mulsing garja', 'Duramari garja', 'Daoang garja', 'Sindu garja', 'Thong-thongali garja', 'Thia garja', 'Batho garja', 'Soka garja', 'Ihew garja', 'Phew garja', 'Maya garja', 'Shaya garja', 'Dhan kubir garja', 'Borai Raja garja', 'Dano garja' and 'Gola Kata garja'.

Decendants of the Borai Raja: - Borai Raja has many descendants who are also addressed during the time of garja puja. They are 'Borai Choudri', 'Nisan Dhara', 'Phanka Dhara', 'Mech-mechani', 'Koch-Kochani', 'Rabha-Rabhani', 'Hira-Hirani', 'Gongar-Gongarni', etc. (The people of Bhutan are called as Gongar-Gongarni).

Princess Goddess: - Along with the Prince-gods, princess-goddesses are also given seats during the Puja festivals. They are 'Alai khungri', 'Bilai khungri', 'Ish khungri', 'Bish Khungri', 'Maya Khungri', 'Shaya Khungri', 'Daisa Khungri' and 'Laitho Khungri'.

Kubir Gods: - Kubir Gods are regarded as malevolent gods. They are 'Ish Kubir', 'Bish Kubir', 'Akhala Kubir', 'Batana Kubir', 'Kal Kubir', 'Shāyā Kubir', 'Māyā Kubir', 'Hakona Kubir', 'Dhan Kubir', 'Langthia Kubir' and 'Patal Kubir'.

Harsa Garja (Non Bodo Garja): - 'Mahadeo', is the child non-Bodo Garja God. His followers are 'Sila Rai', 'Rupa Rai', 'Bera Bhanga', 'Santha Mara', 'Dhanka Mara' etc.

Bishahari is the Non-Bodo Garja (Goddess). "The Bodos give 'Visahari' a seat during the Garja Puja and the Kherai Puja. They regard 'Visahari' as a non-Bodo goddess and provide a seat in the line of the non-Bodo gods and goddesses"¹¹. The followers of Bishahari are 'Ai Kālī', 'Shāyā Kālī', 'Ai Barmani' etc. 'Garakia Gosai' is the Non-Bodo Garja. The followers of the 'Garakhia (in Assamese 'garakhia' means a 'Cowherd') 'Gosai' are 'Krishna Gosai', 'Madhab Gosai', 'Gadab Gosai', 'Laokhar Gosai' etc. The followers are the 'Chikna Raja', 'Nau Raja', 'Dighla Raja', 'Shai Raja', 'Bai Raja' etc. 'Ai Sati', 'Ai Parbati', 'Ai Durgā', 'Ai Kālī', 'Māyā Kālī', 'Gishong Kālī', 'Phakra Kālī', are the followers of the 'Ai Thakurani goddess.

The kachari deities naturally fall into two classes – (1) Household Gods and (2) Village Gods. The former are worshipped inside the house or in the homestead; the latter are worshipped outside the house, usually near the sacred grove of trees or bamboos or in the thansali, a sacred place.

1) Household Deities: -

'Bathou Brai' or 'Old Bathou', 'Mainao Goddesses', 'Song Raja', 'Song Rani' and 'Bura Bagh Raja' are the Household or Domestic Deities. "Besides Śhiva they also worship other God and Goddess at home such as Mainao Buri, Asu Mainao, Sali Maino, Song Raja, Kumari and Bhandari etc."¹²

Among the household gods, Bathou is pre-eminently the guardian of the family. He is never presented in idol form but in his living symbol, The Sijou tree (*Euphorbia splendens*, a kind of cactus) which is often to be seen in the kachari homestead surrounded by a circular fence of split bamboo. Bathou is worshipped inside the homestead with the help of

plaintains, tamul-nuts, pan-leaves, gazi and with the offerings in the form of heads of goats, pigs, fowls etc.

Mainao is the chief household goddess. She is the wife of Bathou. Unlike Her husband, She has no special emblem visible to the human eye. She is the gurdian of the rice-field. She is held in very high regard among the agricultural community like that of kacharis. She is apparently especially worshipped at the period of harvesting the asu and sali crops, so in this regard different Mainao goddesses are worshipped.

'Song Raja' and 'Song Rani' seem to be especial objects of devotion to women of the Bodo race. Here women especially pay their devotions and make offerings, particulars at the monthly period.

Bura Bagh Raja is apparently merely the name of the tiger. He is belived as the king of the forest and is worshipped to get rid of from the danger of the tiger at night.

2) Village Deities:

Village deities are worshipped outside the homestead. They are specially worshipped by the villagers in a field or in a secrod place or thansali or in the banks of the river. All the Garja gods, kubir gods, Descendants of the Borai Raja, princes Godesses are given seats within the village Deities. Specially village deities are worshipped in different pujas or occasions to get rid of some danger or demon. As for example, Morong puja is performed to propitiate the cholera demon. In these pujas offerings are made by goats, flowers, pigeons, fowls, betel nuts etc. In addition to these, flowers, eggs, pounded rice flour etc. are sometimes placed on rafts and set float on a river. By doing this they believe that diseases or demons have floated away. All the Mainao

goddesses, Garja gods, princes goddesses, descendants of the Borai Raja, kubir gods, Harsha garja, Malevolent gods etc. are included within the group of village deities.

Bodos believe the existence of different malevolent gods in the form of spirits, ghosts, witch-craft etc. It is also believed that these super natural elements cause diseases and sufferings to the human beings. The activities of the super natural power can be known with the help of the magical power of the Bodo ojhas.

Bira Modai (Bira god) is generally known as a popular malevolent god. Bira Modais are controlled and used in different ill purposes by the ojhas (Medicine man). Bira Modai can do harm to any person. The Bira Modai can disturb a person in such a way that he cannot live peacefully. Bira Modai throws stones to the houses in the broad daylight also. The stone which is thrown is visible but the thrower is not visible. Bira Modai is believed to take shelter at the bamboos. Sometimes the innocent walker is attacked by the Bira Modai when the person walks in a solitary place full of bamboos. The green bamboos remain fallen across the road and as soon as the man starts crossing it the bamboo stands up alongwith the man who falls down from the top of the bamboo.

According to the Bodo myth, 'Siw Borai' or 'Jew Borai' is the alternative name of Bathou. In Bodo 'Siw' or 'jew' means 'Life' or 'Soul', Borai means old and wise man. There is the phonetic similarity between 'Siw' or 'jew'. Bodos believe Śiva is equivalent to Bathou. In Bodo religion Śiva is known as Gila Dambra, khorā Borai, Sriborai, Bathou borai etc. So Śiva puja is popular among the Bodos.

It is found in the Bodo mythology that Bodos believed Aham Guru as their infinite God. He is believed as their infinite God. He is believed

as the most powerful. His first appearance in the form of man in the Universe is called Himself Sri Borai. He is also known as Jiw Borai or Siw Borai or Síbrai or Bathou. According to the Bodo traditional belief Sri Borai created his wife shri Buri and then the first men known as mon-sin-sin. As Mon-sin-sin remained a lifelong celibate, 'Síbrai' and His wife created 'Darimoba' the male and 'Siring Douba' the female in order to propagate the human population. Bathou created the 'Sijou plant' the first tree which stands as an emblem of the supreme God at the altar. Aham Guru is the creator of all and 'Sri Borai' is His incarnation. That is why in every religious festival of the Bodos He is pronounced at first in the words 'Ahom Swargadew Gosai'.

The place of 'Mon-Sin-Sin' in the Bodo society is found as a wisemen. According to the Bodos, He is the first giver of ethical principles, customs and traditions to human society.

Many deities are believed as manifested from the Bathou Raja for the purpose of the creation of the universe. Ailong is the god of earth and believed as the bodyguard of Bathou Raja. Karzi is believed as the Minister of Bathou. Khoilā is the god of air. Rajputar is the son of Bathou Raja. Rajkundra is the grandson. Bagh Raja is the Monarch of the woods. "The Bodos also worship the tiger-god (Bagh Raja) or the tiger king during the Bihu festival"¹³. Manas is the goddess of the river manas. Agrang is the general of Bathou Raja. At Aikhungri and Bilaikhungri are Bathou's daughters. Laokhar Gosai is the prolector of cowherds. Song Raja is the manifestation of bathou Raja and is sheltered inside the main house along with the Mainao and is symbolized by slightly raised lump of earth. He is worshipped by the women inside the main house during the period of the monthly impurity. Bulli Buri is the goddess of learning, the manifestation of

mainao and is equivalent to Hindu goddess Saraswati. Many village deities like 'Bura Mahadeo', 'Thal kubir', 'Bura Gosain' etc. in Bodo pantheon have been adopted from Hindu pantheon.

Hence the Bodo people believe the 'Siw Borai' or 'Jiw Borai' or 'Śiva' is the first incarnation of the God. He is also known as 'Mon-Sin-Sin Borai' who is the ripest of all in knowledge and wisdom.

SOCIOLOGICAL ASPECT OF GOD

The Bodos are sociologically one of the most important tribes of north-eastern India, particularly of Assam. In the Bodo society different types of gods and goddesses are worshipped in different social and religious occasions. In the Bodo society mainly we have two types of religious rites where different types of gods and goddesses are sociologically understood. These are Kherai puja and Garja puja which are also celebrated as festivals. These festivals are associated with Bathou worship. But among the two Kherai is the main religious festivals of the Bodos. Kherai is the prayer institution of 'Bathoubwrai' or 'Śibrai'.

Kherai puja: -

Kherai puja is believed to be the greatest religious festival of the Bodos. It is performed in the month of kartik and Aghon in an open field by the people of a village collectively. Kherai puja is the annual festival of the Bodos. All Bodo people do not perform all the four types of Kherai in a particular place at the same time. Different types of Kherai puja are performed in different Bodo areas.

Bodos perform Kherai puja on some specific occasions. For the welfare of the villagers as a whole they perform kherai puja collectively.

once or twice in a year. For the welfare of the private life, they perform kherai puja individually. Besides welfare of both private and public lives, the kherai puja is performed to the good harvest of crops.

Kherai puja is regarded as a national festival of the Bodos. It is a symbol of hope and desire, which has been prevalent among them since the time of their ancestors. The Bodo kings also were believed to have been depending on the 'kherai puja' for success at the battle. There is an instance that the powerful koch king Naranarayana also had to perform the kherai puja to satisfy 'Mahadeva' (Bathou Borai), with the Bodo dances before starting the battles against the Ahoms.

It is found that Bathou has relation with kherai. 'Bathoubwrai' is sometimes called 'khoriabwrai'. The word 'kherai' is born from 'khoriabwrai' means the primitive spiritual creator of the universe who first created the universe and living beings. Kherai dance is most important during the kherai puja to satisfy their God.

Bodos are agriculturist and hence their festival has relation with agriculture. So the purpose of kherai festival is to acquire blessings from 'Bathou Barai' (Śiva) and 'Mainao Buri' to have good harvest and for the welfare of the village. They perform this puja on some specific occasion. The kherai is of four types (i) The Darshan kherai, (ii) The Umrao kherai, (iii) The Phalo kherai and (iv) Nowaoni kherai (domestic kherai).

(i) Darshan kherai: - The Darshan kherai is performed during the first week of the month of 'kati' or 'kārtik' to worship Lakshimī, the goddess of wealth and welfare. So, it is also called as the "Lokhi kherai". It is also known as the 'Sali kherai' since it is concerned with the Sali or winter crop.

(ii) Umrao kherai: - Umrao kherai is performed during the month of 'Ashara' at the end of the 'Amoti Sua' (the unclear period) for the welfare of the villagers as well as of the crops. This kherai is also known as the 'Ashu kherai' ('Asu' is a kind of paddy of rainy season).

(iii) Phalo kherai: - The phalo kherai is performed during the month of Magha (As Assamese month), specially on the day of 'Maghi purnima' or the full moon of the month of 'Magha'. This kherai is also known as the 'Danshrang kherai', as it is performed during the full Moon of the month Magha (Danshrang is bright night of the full moon).

(iv) Nowani or Domestic or Family kherai: - Nowani or Domestic or Family kherai is performed to propitiate different gods and goddesses by the family when it deems necessary. The Bodo people believed that all the bad intentions of different gods and goddesses can be controlled by performing this kherai puja. It is mainly performed for the welfare of the people at all times. It is limited within the family only.

Origin of the term 'kherai'

Various writers and scholars are of different opinion regarding the origin of the word 'kherai'. "According to Dr. S.K. Chatterjee, there is similarity between the Ker Puja of the Tripuris and the Kherai Puja of the Bodos"¹⁴. The word 'kherai' has relation with Bathou, the chief God who is also known as 'kherai Borai' or 'khuria Borai' means 'latent old man'. The Bodos call him as 'kherai'. So, according to some, kherai puja is performed in his name. There is another explanation about the origin of the term 'kherai'. Sacrifice of animals and birds is essential for the 'kherai puja'. The sound 'khe' is produced when a goat or pig is sacrificed before the 'Bathou' by cutting the neck of the sacrificed animals with a particular 'dao' at a stroke. The worshippers believe that

the word 'kherai' originates from the sound 'khe' and is added with the word 'rai' which means puja or enchanting formula before the chief god 'Bathou'. So, it is believed that the 'kherai' is derived from a combination like 'khe-rai'. The Bodos believe and worship many gods and goddesses during the kherai puja'. Different gods and goddesses possess different position and received sacrifices according to their position. They are also worshipped during the puja by offering different materials.

God in the kherai puja: -

'Bathou Borai' or 'kherai Borai' is the god-in-chief of the Bodos. He is given the highest position among the gods. Bathou Borai and other gods and goddesses are propitiated by offering different materials and also with the sacrifices. "It is intended to propitiate 'Bathou' and 'Mainao' – the two primary deities of their adoration along with hosts of other gods and goddesses"¹⁵.

It is found that the chief god of the Bodos is identified with the Aryan god 'Śiva' or 'Mahadeva'. The Aryan worshippers used to worship 'Śiva', the god of the Bodos with animal sacrifice. The Boro kings also had to perform Kherai Puja to satisfy gods and goddesses to defeat enemies at the battle. "There is an instance that the powerful Koch King Naranarayana also had to perform the 'Kherai Puja' to satisfy 'Mahadeva' (Bathou Borai) with the Boro dancers before starting the battles against the Ahoms"¹⁶. Śiva worship is done with the help of Kherai puja.

To propitiate god sacrifice is must during the kherai puja. Specially they (Bodos) sacrifice birds and animals in the name of different gods and goddesses. Generally cocks, goats and pigs are

selected for sacrifices to the god-in-chief 'Bura Bathou' and other gods and goddesses. Along with the sacrifice the worshippers also offer 'jau' (rice bear) to the gods and goddesses. The worshippers believed that god-in-chief 'Bura Bathou' and other gods remain satisfied while they are offered 'jau' (rice bear) and sacrifice during the puja. Pigeons are also essential to be sacrificed during the 'kherai puja'.

To propitiate the chief god along with areca nuts and betel leaves, a pig is sacrificed in his name. The head of the sacrificed are placed together on the altar. Aileng is the body-guard of the 'Bathou Borai'. A cock is sacrificed to Him. 'Kherai' is the messenger of the god-in-chief, a cock is sacrificed to Him. 'Karji' is the follower of 'Bura Bathou', a pig is given to him. 'Raj khandra' is also a follower of 'Bura Bathou' a pig is given to Him. 'Song Raja' is the owner of the wild animals and a follower of the 'Bura Bathou'. The hunters propitiate Him before entering into the jungle for hunting. He is given a red cock. His consort is 'Song Rani'. Both are worshipped during the kherai puja. 'Alai khungri' is the princess goddess and She is a follower of the 'Bathou Bura' or 'kharlia Buri'. She is given a pig. 'Bhandari' is the owner of the store of the foodstuffs. She is given a red cock. 'Ranchandri' or 'Ranphagli' is known as the god of war. Before starting for the battle field she is believed to be propitiated with a sacrifice of the cocks. 'Bulli Buri' is regarded as the owner of the fish. She must be propitiated before starting for fishing. She is also regarded as the goddess of medicine and 'Mantra'. She is also given a pig as sacrifice. 'Laokhar Gossai' is the god of the cowherds. He is also known as 'Garakhia Gossai'. This god is identified as the 'Lord Krishna'. A pair of pigeons are freed in the name of this god. 'Nobab Badsha' (Muslim god) is also given a seat during the pujas. A cock is sacrificed in the name of this god. Sometimes the peer Saheb is also given a seat during the pujas.

Doudini: -

Doudini has important role to propitiate gods and goddesses in the 'Kherai puja'. 'Doudini' is the female key dancer during the 'Kherai puja'. All the three days and nights Kherai dances are performed by the Doudini to please the holy Bathou Borai and other gods and goddesses. All the items of the Kherai puja are performed by Doudini while she is helped by the 'Douri' and 'Ojha' with different musical instruments. " While the Shaman concerns himself with past, the daudini is concerned mainly with the future and is the chief functionary of the Kherai Puja dance of the Boro Kacharis"¹⁷. In the puja Doudini is found like a spiritual being. In this stage she tell the tales of the gods and goddesses in His voices. She moves the Bathou and sprinkles holy water from a pot and dances while the 'drums', 'flutes' and 'cymbles' are played on. The worshippers also may join in the circle of dancing with Doudini. In the dances she changes her mood and assimilates herself with gods and goddesses. She also imitates the nature of different gods and goddesses. The Doudini extends her valuable services to the priest during the time of worship even by offering sacrifices to the deities.

Ojha: -

The ojha has important role during the kherai puja. He instructs the worshippers and co-workers of the puja to help Doudhini in performing the puja smoothly. Ojha is that person who enchants 'mantras' or 'formulas' at the time of pujas. It is believed that the ojha is able to understand the motives of the gods at the time of the pujas. He enchants the mantras or formulas in such a way that the gods and goddesses become pleased easily. During the 'kherai puja' the prayer is offered by the 'ojha' to the gods and goddesses through Doudhini.

At the end of the kherai puja Doudhini performs a role of 'Mainao', the goddess of wealth. In the puja, the worshippers rescue the 'Mainao' from the earth through the 'Doudhini'. In that case, the Doudhini sits on the ground in front of the altar of the Bathou Borai without any movement. At that situation the ojha declares the reason of the position of the Doudhini to the worshippers. The ojha declares that the Doudhini is possessed by the Mainao. So, to satisfy the goddess, a pig is sacrificed to the goddess of wealth. The body, head and the blood of the pig are placed together before the altar of the Mainao while the flute, the drums and the cymbals are played on and produce a melodious tune. At that time the ojha enchants the formula to propitiate the Mainao.

At last at the request of the worshippers the Mainao becomes satisfied and agrees to stay at the houses of the worshippers. She expresses her willingness to go with them on condition. She says, "Let us go my dear children, you will keep me with great care, I will stay at year houses; you will worship me everyday, your wealth will increase day by day"¹⁸. After expressing her willingness to go the Doudhini stands up from her seat and starts at that position.

(B) Garja puja: -

Garja puja another important religious festival of the Bodos. There is difference of opinion among the Bodo scholars regarding the word 'garja'. Some like to give the meaning of the word 'Garja' as 'God'. 'God' are called in Bodo as 'Modai'. Again some scholars define the meaning of the word as a way of making ones free from danger. "In the words of Bhaben Narzi, a Boro scholar, 'Garja' means 'niskriti' in Assamese"¹⁹. Here also the meaning is not clear but probably bears the meaning of expulsion or discharging. During the 'Garja puja' some evil

gods are expelled or discharged from the area of a village. This system of Garja puja where evil gods are expelled is called 'bhasani' (floating away in the river or a stream). It is also noted that all the gods and goddesses are not expelled publicly. Generally harmful gods and goddesses who create diseases are expelled from a certain village or area by performing the Garja Puja.

The Bodos perform Garja Puja to purify by themselves and the village after any seasonal festival like 'Baisagu' etc. They believe that in the festival people become impure due to the free mixing with each other, walking one's house to another. So in order to purify themselves villagers collectively perform Garja Puja.

If some epidemic appears in a certain family or village then the villagers perform Garja Puja to protect themselves from the evil. In case of wrong activity, the villagers compell the wrong doer to arrange Garja Puja to satisfy gods and goddesses as well as to purify himself.

The Bodos believe that the flood also carries diseases to the villagers. So in order to keep the villagers free from danger they perform Garja Puja. It is found in some parts of Bodo areas that after heavy flood they perform Garja Puja.

Harsa Garja Gods (Non-Bodo Garja Gods): -

Along with the Boro Gods some non-Boro gods are also given seat during the Garja puja. 'Mahadeo' or 'Mahadeva' is the chief non-Boro Garja god. Though 'Bathou' is believed as equivalent or same to 'Siva' or 'Mohadeva' but He is also addressed seperately at the time of Garja puja as the non-Bodo Hindu god. The followers of Mahadeo are addressed at the time of the puja. They are 'Sila Rai', 'Rupa Rai', 'Bera Bhanga', 'Santha Mara', 'Dhamka Mara' etc.

'Bishahari' is another important non Boro Garja God. The 'Garakhia Gosai' or 'Laokhar Gosai' (Sri Krishna in Assamese) is also non-Boro Garja god. The followers of him are 'Madhab Gosai', 'Gadab Gosai', 'Baro Gopal', 'Baro Gopini', 'Langthia Gosai' etc. All of them are nurtured at the time of the Puja. The gods and goddesses are different from area to area but the major gods and goddesses remain the same.

Time of the Garja Puja: -

Generally Garja Puja is performed two times in a year. The first Garja Puja is performed during the Assamese month Jeth and Ahar after the seasonal festival Baisagu held at Bahag (Assamese month). This Garja is also known as 'Phojaonai' or 'Bhasani Garja'. 'Bhasani' means something floated away in the river. During this puja the materials and sacrificed are kept on a 'Bhel' made of plaintain trees and then let it floating. "By doing this the worshippers believe that the diseases may leave the village after the evil-gods are being expelled from the village"²⁰. The second Garja Puja is performed during the month of 'Kati' and 'Aghana' (Assamese month). This Garja Puja is known as or called as 'Lakhi' or 'Lakshmi Garja'. With the help of the Garja puja the Boros welcome the goddess of wealth, 'Mainao' to the village and worship her for better prosperity.

Place of God in different ceremonies and festivals:

Bodos believe and worship different gods and goddesses in different social ceremonies and festivals like Baisagu and Marriage ceremony etc. The sociological status of God is not found only in religious ceremonies but also found in different social functions.

Baisagu: The 'Baisagu' is the new years festival of the Boro-kacharis. "By far the most important occasion of marry-making in social

life of the Boro-Kacharis is the celebration of 'Baisagu' in the month of Baisakh (Mid April). It is also known as Bishu (or Bihu in Assamese).²¹ They also celebrate two other Bihus known as 'Domashi' (Bhogali Bihu in Assamese) and 'Katrigacha' (Kangali Bihu in Assamese) but none of them are important then the Baisagu from the point of view of merriment. In the festival the supreme deity 'Bathou' is worshipped by offering chicken and rice-beer. On that day the householder worship the Sijou plant as the symbol of Bathou.

Mrriage Ceremony: In the traditional system of marriage ceremony Bodos used to pray or worship gods and goddesses in different way. 'Hathasuni' khurnai' is the earliest and traditional form of marriage. This form of marriage is very simple. At this marriage ceremony the bride offers meal to the bridegroom at a function. After taking a little portion of the food the bridegroom rises from the seat and pray to god 'Bathou Borai' to grant them a peaceful conjugal life.

The place of god is deeply seen during the marriage 'Hathasuni khurnai' where the bride and bridegroom have to address seperatly the God-in-chief, 'Bathou Borai' and other gods and goddesses. It is clear that in traditional Boro society no marriage ceremony was possible without the concept and belief of gods and goddesses.

Putuli Haba (Doll Marriage): In some parts of Assam, the Bodos perform a putuli haba (doll marriage) on the seventh day of the Baisagu festival. This festival is performed at the place of worship of the village jointly. They make dolls of straw in the name of Diba Borai and Dibi Buroi or Raona and Raoni who are believed to be deities of wind and rain. They worship them with the hope of sufficient rain for cultivation. They believe that if the deities of rain and wind like Diba Borai and Dibi Buroi become satisfied then there would be sufficient rain in the earth.

God in Boro dances:

Boro dances are of five classes. In fact, the dances of the Boros are originated from kherai institution. The kherai is nothing but a prayer institution of 'Bathou'.

Five classes of Bodo dances are –

- (a) Kherai dance,
- (b) Habajanai dance,
- (c) Bagaroumba dance,
- (d) Bwisagu dance and
- (e) Raijw janai dance.

In between the five dances, the Kherai and Bagaroumba dances has some sort of links with the God which has deep influences in the Bodo culture. It has already mentioned that the kherai institution is the prayer institution of 'Bathou Borai' or 'Sibrai'. Kherai dances are therefore, no doubt, the prayer dances of 'Sibrai'.

There are sixteen types of kherai dances which indicates sixteen deities. These are called primary kherai dances.

'Bagaroumba dance' (Kherai dance) is the most beautiful and associated with merry making and gossips exclusively by the fairsex. Now we see the meaning of the word 'Bagaroumba'. The word 'Bagaroumba' consists of the following words – Ba+Ega+Roumba = Bagroumba. The details of the meaning –

'Ba' means to carry a responsibility, 'Ega' means 'to come out', 'Rou' means 'heaven', high place of God'. In Bodo 'Ba' means 'five' also.

So, the underlying meaning of Bagroumba is the dance created for the need of carrying the Bathou, the supreme God of Bathouists.

who is the origin of five spiritual elements from highland i.e. from heaven.

In 'kherai' more than 16 dance recitals are instituted through which ethnic and cultural identity of the tribe manifest fully. In 'kherai' at the end a ritualistic, a common prayer is offered. The usual time for holding the kherai festival is the month of kartic (in Assamese 'kati') when plantation is over but the seedlings are still in the process of growing. But it is now performed in different times found in different Boro areas.

PHILOSOPHICAL ASPECT OF GOD

The Bodos believe supreme god in the person of 'Bathou'. The 'Bathou' is called himself as 'Jiw Borai' or 'Siw Borai'. In Bodô 'Jiw' or 'Siw' means 'life' or 'soul'. Borai means 'old' and 'wise man'. So, the 'Bathou' or 'jiw' or 'siw' means 'the latent old and wise spiritual person'. 'Sijou' (Euphorbia Splander) is the living symbol of Bathou. Efforts to identify Bathou with Śiva of Hindu have been found in Bodo religion. Bathou is the highest god of the Bodo pantheon. The prime religion of the Bodos is the Bathou dhoram which incorporates the philosophy of the Bodos. The philosophy indicates the symbolic meaning beyond its literal meaning. According to the philosophical interpretation 'Ba' means 'five' and 'thou' means 'deep. Hence, 'Bathou' means 'five deep spiritual entity. It is a peculiar thing that the Bodo religion or philosophy is intimately concerned with the numerical 'five' or it can be said that the Bathou religion is based on the 'philosophy of Five' or the 'principle of Five'.

The philosophy of Five:

In Bathou religion the numerical 'five' has deep philosophical significance. Some components of Bathou religion has connection with 'Five'. In Bathou philosophy, we can see some examples of philosophical connection with 'Five'. The 'ou' fruit (*dillenia indica*) which is used in worshipping Bathou has five ridges; the siphung (the long bamboo flute) which is used as the musical instrument in prayer has five holes; the Bathou (the altar of the bathou) has five knots (of bamboo strips); the 'Boro Borai' (the Bodo elders) have five moral preachings; the Boros have five principles on which their social customs are based, viz, (1) Agarbad, (2) Phongalothbad, (3) Daokhibad, (4) Khoulabad and (5) Khaoalibad. The five spiritual principles are Ong, Hring, khling, Fwt and Che.

It can be said that in older times the Bodo had five main gods, viz., (1) Ailong (the god of earth), (2) Agrang (the god of water), (3) Khoila (the god of air), (4) Sanja Borai (the goddess of light) and (5) Rajkhungri (the goddess of sky). The original numbers were also found as five, viz., (1) Se (one), (2) Nwi (two), (3) Tham (three), (4) Brwi (four) and (5) Ba (five).

The five spiritual things are, according to them Kshiti, Apa, Teja, Marut and Boum. These are called the five spiritual base of 'Bathou'.

Fivefold preachings are found in different traditional slokas, verses, stories and tales related to the religious rites of Bathou, viz.,

(A) Five spiritual principles -

(a) Meditative prayer to God.

(b) Conversing Religious and spiritual matters,

- (c) Making charitable gifts to the poor,
- (d) Loving the fellow beings and
- (e) Doing things unitedly.

(B) Five senses of Love –

- (a) Love to Anan Gosai,
- (b) Love to fellow beings,
- (c) Love to the wife and children,
- (d) Love to other lower animals and objects of nature and
- (e) Love to one's mother land and the world.

(C) Hatred for the five sinners –

- (a) Hatred for the murder,
- (b) Hatred for the thief,
- (c) Hatred for the liar,
- (d) Hatred for that one indulging in illicit and unnatural intercoursés and
- (e) Hatred for the association with a man of guilty of offences.

(D) Five musical tone –

Sa, Re, Ga, Pa, and Dha

(E) Five musical instruments –

Kham (Madal), Chifung (Flute), Serenja, Jotha and Gagana.

(F) Five findings of life –

birth, pleasure, suffering, marriage, old age and death.

(G) Five holy realisation –

- (a) Realisation of the 'Sijou', the supreme soul,
- (b) Linking up the jiwma (human soul) with the 'Sijou', the supreme being,
- (c) Realisation of Mainao (Lakshmi),
- (d) Realization of the five great elements, viz., earth, water, air, fire and ether and their relation to five great gods – Ailong, Agrang, Khoila, Sanja – Borli and Raj khungri and
- (e) Realisation of the need of worldly affairs.

Meaning of Altar:

The altar of Bathou religion is a place or centre where the worship is done. It is also called the 'Bathou Bindo'. Every Bodo family of Bathou religion has a Bathou altar. It is divided into three parts – (a) The first part which is fenced by bamboo strips is the principal altar. In this part, the supreme God of the Bathouists is prayed, (b) a part of the altar which is extended spur like from the parent altar to the northern direction. In this part the 'Noni Mwdai' (The sub ordinate deities of 'Bathou') are prayed while (c) the 'Hagrani Mwdai' (the deities not belong to the Bathou family) are prayed in the similar extended part to the southern direction. "The 'Hagrani Mwdai' are though not belonged to the family of Bathou, yet Bodos believe them to be important for worshipping."²² However, in the first part of the altar, a white piece of cloth is hung up above the ground in the front side of the same. This indicates the formless (Nirakar) existence of the Almighty. In the middle of the principal altar, a Sijou tree (Euphorbia splendens) is planted, just before going to plant the same an egg of hen and a stone are buried under the 'Sijou' tree. Bodos believe that these are the origin of the

creation of the universe. The stone stands for truth and longevity while the egg stands for reproduction and primitive stage of the universe. After that a full blown small branch of Sijou tree is cut down from the parent plant as per religious customs and is made it fresh by spraying holy water either with 'Tulosi' (occimum sanctum) or yatrachi branch (justica Assamica Clarke). In upper region of the branch five curl is made by a white fresh thread (Ewa suta in Assamese). Bodos believe this to be worldly illusion and affection (attraction) since the creation.

The 'Sijou' tree is surrounded by a round fence of small bamboo strips woven by five other bits symbolising the religious and spiritual principles of Bathou. The fence is erected by eighteen pairs of bamboo strips which are planted in vertical direction. Three pairs of the strips in the front side are twisted in traditional style and it is called 'Daothu Bikha Helenai'. This Daotho Bikha stands for the threefold power of Bathou, viz., creation, nutrition and dissolution. At the altar a banana leaflet is laid down on which a pair of betel nut and betel leaf, a bunch of banana fruits, resin and incense and a lamp wick are placed. During the set up of 'Sibrai' and 'Sibrui' Bathouists worship their eternal God Bathou.

The lamp wick is placed under the sijou tree means the symbol of spritual knowledge. Flower is the symbol of softness and beautiness. Fruit symbolizes the result of the action. Dhup and Dhuna (resign) means religious component to worship God. Altar is the realization between Atman and Paramatman. It symbolizes a holy road from earth to the heaven. The ideal of philosophy here indicates a holy link between the God and heaven and the human beings of earth created by Him. The member of the family worship the 'Bathou Borai' regularly.

everybody in the evening lighting a lamp at the altar. The Bodos also believe the sijou tree as the supreme soul.

The Eighteen pairs of the altar and Significance:

The Bathou altar is made by 18 pairs of bamboo strips. The strips are planted in vertical direction. These means puruṣa and prakṛiti or ancient guru and wife. The vertical position means the love between the purusa and prakṛiti. Their vertical direction is also mean a relation between male and female. Male and female are not the same. They are not born and die at the same time. According to some Bathouists, 16 pairs of strips are used in the Bathou Bindo. It is specially found in some parts of Baska district of Assam. The topmost part of the bamboo strip is shaped as 'V' which is called in Bodo a 'Faranga Langai', 'Faranga' means 'bird' and 'Langai' means 'tail'. Here we mean 'V' as 'victory'. One can have victory, joy, happiness, boom etc.

Eighteen pairs of strips symbolizes the eighteen pairs of gods and goddesses or the representatives of the Bathou. The names of gods and goddesses (According of the Bodo scholar, Basuram Basumatary) are mentioned below –

1) Mon-Sing-Sing Bowrai	-	Mon-Sing-Sing Buroi
2) Siw Bowrai	-	Siw Buroi
3) Ahen Bowrai	-	Ahen Buroi
4) Khourai Bowrai	-	Khourai Buroi
5) Ehen Bowrai	-	Ehen Buroi
6) Zwmon Bowrai	-	Khoil Buroi
7) Aham Bowrai	-	Aham Buroi
8) Khoila Bowrai	-	Khoila Buroi
9) Deva Bowrai	-	Deva Buroi

10) Mainow Bowrai	-	Mainow Buroi
11) Song Bowrai	-	Song Buroi
12) Kharmai Bowrai	-	Garmai Buroi
13) Amao Bowrai	-	Amao Buroi
14) Hailung Bowrai	-	Hailung Buroi
15) Agrang Bowrai	-	Agrang Buroi
16) Rajkhandra Bowrai	-	Rajkhandra Buroi
17) Bourli Bowrai	-	Bourli Buroi
18) Alai khungur Bowrai	-	Alai khungur Buroi

The explanation of Bamboo five-fold sheet:

The Bathou altar is made with the help of bamboo five-fold sheet. They bear different philosophical significance. It is explained in this way—

- a) The lower one is believed as earth,
- b) The second upper means water,
- c) The third upper means air,
- d) The fourth upper means sun and
- e) The last upper means sky.

The last upper bamboo sheet contains three fold of bamboo sheets which are believed as the cycling order of a life including birth and death of the living beings.

In another way it is explained as —

- a) The lower one means embryo,
- b) The second upper means birth,
- c) The third upper means adulthood,

- d) The fourth upper means marriage and
- e) The last upper means death.

The Sijou:

'Sijou' is a plant of cactus type. The Botanical name of 'Sijou' is Euphorbia splendens. 'Sijou' is the living symbol of 'Bathou'. It is the holy and true symbol of truth in Bathou religion. So, Bodos worship the 'Sijou' tree as the symbol of duty. 'Sijou' is the first plant which stands as an emblem of the supreme God at the altar.

The meaning of the 'Sijou' is 'paramatman'. 'Si' means 'Ātman', 'jou' means 'elder', 'param'. The different parts of the 'Sijou' indicates in these ways –

- a) Root indicates formless God.
- b) Body of the tree indicates one God (EK Īśvara).
- c) Branches indicates things and beings.
- d) Leaf and flower indicates Mainao.
- e) Five ridges indicates sun, vacuum, air, earth and water or indicate truth, knowledge, power, beauty and goodness.
- f) Pair of sting indicates male and female and
- g) Three flowers indicate Swarga, Mairta and Patal.

Creation theory in Bathou Philosophy: -

Bodos believe that there was absolute vacuum before creation of the universe. When there was only the vacuum the Almighty Anan Gosai (The Eternal God) became tired of his formless existence and so He desired Himself by taking a form of flesh and blood. Soon the following spiritual words are surged in His consciousness

“Laoba Laoswm

Khaoba Khaoswm

Ada Gwswm

Dwiao barswm

The versa means – “Oh mind the great! take to you the five organs of perception and control the five organ of action to jump into the worldly ocean” In the reference ‘Lao’ means ‘organs of perception’ and ‘Ba’ means ‘five’, i.e. ‘Laoba’ means “Five organs of perception”. Similarly, ‘Khaoba’ means “Five organs of action”, ‘Khaoswm’ means ‘to tie with’. Hence ‘khaoba khaoswm’ means ‘to tie or control the five organs of action’. ‘Ada’ means ‘elder brother’ or ‘the great’ and ‘Gwswm’ means ‘mind’, hence the mind is elderly addressed to tie or control the five organs of action”²³. We can signify now the verse that what is called ‘purus’ in philosophy can never create alone with soul only without having mind, five organs of perception and five organs of action.

The concept of trinity is also found in Bathou Philosophy. These are, viz.,

- a) Mansinsin is the creator. As he is creator, he can be said as equal to Vishṇu in Hinduism.
- b) Mainao Buri – She is placed left to the Man sin sinbrai. She is Lakshṁī. She can be said as equal to Brahmā in Hinduism.
- c) ‘Sibrai’ who is placed right to the ‘Man-sin sin-brai’, a destroyer, equal to Hindu ‘Śiva’.

The religious philosophy of the Boro kachari tribe centre round the super power of ‘Bathou Borai’. or ‘Khorai Borai’ or ‘Śiva’ of the Hindu.

Trinity. He is also known as 'Śiw Borai' or Jew 'Borai'. In Bodo 'Śiw or 'Jew' means 'life' or 'soul' and 'Borai' means old and 'wise man'

It is observed that the god of the Bodos, 'Bura Bathou' is identified as the Aryan god 'Śiva' or 'Mahadeva' Later on, the Aryan worshippers also used to worship 'Śiva', the chief god of the Bodos with animal sacrifice.

God and other Sect of the Bodos

In Brahma Dharma Brahmā is believed as the supreme being, who is the ultimate reality, Param Brahmā. "Brahmā is by nature eternal and absolute blissful. He is eternally self-realised, self-perfect and self-enjoying. He also possesses the unique power of creating from within himself or manifesting himself as the phenomenal world of divinity without the least prejudice to the perfect unity of his self existence"²⁴. In this religion Brahmā is the only God.

In Brahma Dharma 'individual self' is identified with Brahman and a part of it. Here the performance of Hoom Yajña by reciting Gayatri Mantram is essential to lead oneself to Brahman. To realise the truth or Brahman is the ultimate goal of this religion.

To propitiate Brahman yajñāhuti is must by the devotees. 'Om' is pronounced by the purohit and the devotees at first when they set fire in the centre of yajña kunda. The purohit chants the mantras and he is followed by other devotees, present at yajñāhuti. Prasad is must for the devotees to nurture the Brahman which is prepared by fruits, milk, sweets, ghee, corns, scents, chandan, aguru, which are offered in the burning fire dedicating to Brahmā by chanting mantras.

Brahma religion is a monotheist and believes only in eternal Almighty. Brahmā who is omnipresent and owner of all creation, existence and destruction. In Hindu religion, there is the sacrifice of life which is performed by the Brahmins at the time of yajña. Such type of sacrifice is not prescribed by Srimat Siv Narayan param Hansa. He prescribed three types of yojna in the name of param Ātma Brahmā. They are, (i) Karma yojña, (ii) Jnan yojña and (iii) Upasana yojña. According to him, Dharma, Artha, Kāma and Mokṣa can be attained by following the path of yojña. In yajñāhuti there is no restriction about caste and sex. Rites and rituals of Brahma Dharma is very liberal.

Mani Bathou Śiva Dharma or Saivism sect is one of the important sects of the religions of the Bodos. Mani Bathou Śiva Dharma or Saivism sect was founded by Guru Rupamoñi Devi of Gossaigaon (Basugaon) of Bongaigaon district of Assam. The Saivism sect or Mani Bathou Śiva Dharma came into being as a refined cult of traditional Bathou religion. It is the cult of cumulative ideals of Bathou and Brahma cults along with some elements of Hinduism. This religion has made a major modification of the traditional Bathou religion. This cult does not offer any sacrifice of animals or libation to the deities. This is the basic feature of the cult.

According to this cult, Śiva is the chief god. He is believed as the chief of all things and beings. Everything comes out of him and ends in him. He is worshipped in the form of Bathou. He is known as the Borai Bathou (Old Bathou). "Śiva has neither beginning nor end, he is the older of olds known as Borai Bathou and he is the beginning of all clans and gurus. Śiva is the owner of heaven, earth and hell"²⁵. Śiva is depicted as having three aspects. He is the union of the three. He is the owner of three virtues – Satva, Rajo and Tama. So to propitiate him

three types of worship like satvic, Rajosic and Tamosic are necessary. According to this religion, spirit or ghost or daityas are worshipped as Maheswara, the associate of Śiva.

Rajosic puja is performed by the villagers or community at the open field (bank of river, forest area or reserved grass land is preferable) by arranging a temporary altar. It is the mass worship where all the people good or bad take part in the prayer. So this puja is considered as the less secret than the Satvic puja.

Tamosic puja is performed by the villages specially near the bank of the river where spirits, ghosts, giants or associates of Śiva are propitiated. This puja is considered as impure. At the end of the puja the worshipper have to take bath. They sprinkle holy water by themselves to become pure.

Here Satvic puja is believed as the true way to have Infinite, eternal and Absolute spirit Śiva for Salvation. Śiva is everywhere in this universe. 'Jotoi Jiva Totoi Śiva' is the theme of this religion.

The object of performance of puja and yojña are different. Puja is performed in the less important occasion by offering prasād and flower to deities where no Brahmin purohit is recommended. But in important occasion to propitiate gods and goddesses yajña is performed with the help of purohits and Rishis. The main object of this worship is to live as ideal life through the worship and to purify the universe by 'yajñāhuti' Another object is to have salvation or mukti and to become one with the supreme Almighty Śiva. To get rid of the influences of evil spirits, diseases, planets, distress etc. is the main object of this religion.

Under this sect every household has four types of altar to worship gods and goddesses. These are as follows -

(i) Borai Bathou Śiva Altar: - This is the main altar of the family. This is the altar of Borai Bathou. This altar is built on the north east corner of the courtyard. In this altar a Sijou tree is planted and a Trisul (Trident) is erected in the middle of the altar. A Jatrasee plant (a kind of shrub) in the eastward and a holy basil in the south ward are planted in the altar. Bhagawati, Indra, Swarswatī and Lakshmī are also seated with the chief god Śiva in the altar.

(ii) Bisahari Bathou Altar: This altar is constructed separately at north – east corner of the compound outside the courtyard. Here the altar provides for Ganesh and Biswakrma with the goddess.

(iii) Mainao Bindu or Lakshmī Altar: This altar is placed in the innermost room of the mainhouse (Nomano). Here two earthen big jar are placed, one for rice and other for paddy in the north and south of the altar respectively. In the altar three goddesses like Lakshmī Devī, Sawarswatī Devi and Gangā Devi are placed from north to south respectively.

(iv) Maindangshri Bathou or Gandeswari Altar: This is the altar of goddess Gandeswari placed in front of the door of granary. Besides Gandeswari Laokhar Gossai or Garakhia Gossai (cowherd god or Krishna) and Kartika are also placed in a same row from north to south.

To propitiate gods and goddesses, besides daily prayer they also use to pray on some special day like purnima (day of full moon), omabashya (new moon), Ekadashi (eleventh day after purnima) etc. In the prayer they offer prasada (mixture of edible things) and flowers and by burning incense in each of gods and goddesses. Specially red flowers are offered to the gods and white flowers are offered to the goddesses.

On some special occasion and serious matter they perform yajnahuti with the help of a Rishi or purohit which is attained by the members of the household devotee. The mode of performance of yojñāhuti is similar with Brahma dharma though they conceptually differ regarding the existence of god. In this sect after yojñāhuti to honour a small amount of money is given to purohit as Dakshina or token of honour.

Sat sang religion of Anukul Thakur has good ground among the Boros. Param purus is the basis and philosophy of sat sang religion. Sat Sang is the monotheist religion on nature and believes only one supreme authority Puruṣottam as God. They believe this Puruṣottam incarnates for the welfare of human being on this earth. Puruṣottam is the creator of whole universe. Incarnation comes to fulfill desires of the beings not to destroy. Anukul Thakur is the incarnation who is the puruṣottam. Sat Sang is a religion and man making institution for moral and spiritual upliftment and to find the way for unification with god.

Every devotee of Sat Sang obey rites and rituals everyday from morning till night. Every morning after taking bath they go for prayer and offer a certain amount of coins in the name of Iṣṭa Guru. In the evening also they sing hymn and offer same kind of Iṣṭa Guru Dan. The accumulated amount of money from daily prayer is sent to Sat Sang center at Deoghar every month for the welfare of religious activities.

So far the Sat Sang Boros are fully concerned with Sat Sang way of Salvation. When they meet each other they exchange their salutes or good wishes with the word Joy Guru. The Boros are closely concerned with the other communities of the same faith in performing socio-religious function either at home or in public place. Very often they arrange community prayer.

Refined Bathou Dharma (Bhakti cult) is one of the modified and refined cult of traditional Bathou religion. The main exponent of this cult was Dr. Mangalsing Hazowary. This cult of Bathou had been influenced and inspired by Bhakti cult of vaishnavism in the forms of kīrtana (singing), Archana (worshipping), vandana (bowing) etc. In this cult the worshipping mode of traditional Bathou religion is modified. In this cult all the gods and goddesses of Bathou religion are worshipped by placing them at the Bathou altar in the courtyard and planting a Sijou tree in the eastern end of the Bathou altar. Like Bathou religion all the rites and rituals are performed, but unlike Bathou religion they are debarred from any life sacrifice. In stead of this they use to pray by singing devotional songs dedicating to Bathou Brai (Śiva) and Mainao Brui (goddess of wealth) and offer prasād (mixture of edible things) to deities. This faith is most popular among those people who protest against the killing of animals to worship deities. According to them, the mercy and love of god can be attained by singing devotional songs to praise his goodness not by killing living beings. To nurture gods and goddesses they also use traditional musical instruments with the devotional songs. Though this cult does not oppose to the original concept of Bathou or Śiva but this cult makes some modifications in practice or rituals and social norms to suit the present condition.

Bathou (Śiva) Dharma is another refined branch of Bathou religion professed by Swami Nabin Brahmari. He established Arya Brahma Gyan mat or Baba Sidhya Yogashram at Uttapani of Kokrajhar district near Bhutan border. According to this cult 'Śiva' is the chief god. Śiva has created the Bathou religion for the Boros. The concept of Śiva, ultimate reality, of this religion is completely derived from the Hindu scriptures like Upaniṣad, Purāna or the Vedas etc. and this idea or concept of reality is adopted for the Bathou religion.

Like Bathou religion in Bathou (Śiva) Dharma the Bathou altar is constructed in the courtyard with a circular fence of bamboo splits to worship gods and goddesses. The altar of this cult indicates the earth is round. The circular fence contains ten vertical posts of bamboo splits which indicates ten directions of the world, Viz., East, West, North, South, North-East Corner, North-West Corner, South-East Corner, South-West Corner, Upward and Downward. The five horizontal bamboo splits which criss cross the vertical posts indicates the five basic elements of the world, viz., earth, ether, fire, air and water and also indicates the five human senses, viz., eye (seeing), nose (smell), ear (hearing), skin (feeling) and tongue (taste). According to them, every man can realise the truth by observing the faith and meaning of the Bathou.

In spite of these cults, there is a section of Boro people in the urban areas who are not within the fold of any cult but they worship Hindu deities in their own way and follow Hindu rites and rituals.

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CHAPTER – VI

CONCLUDING REMARKS:

POSSIBILITY OF A COMPREHENSIVE CONCEPT OF GOD VIS-Á-VIS LANGUAGE GAME ANALYSIS

The idea of God is inseparably related to religion. Though it is a matter of religion but it is also the important concept of philosophy. The matter of God is maintained purely from metaphysical and religious standpoint. It is most popular as a matter of religion though the metaphysical concept is beyond the reach of common people.

From the natural theology or from the general point of view, 'God' stands for a being who is the ultimate source of values and power, who is also immortal and creator of this world. Philosophers and theologians and all other religious people are concerned with the different statements about God or about the supremacy of the powerful 'God'. Philosophers and theologians have argued that the world has such a design that there must be a designer who fashioned it and whom we call God. "To Spinoza God is one alone, i.e., there is none like Him, or in the nature of things only one substance can be granted, and that is absolutely infinite¹". God is absolutely the first cause. Though all the arguments regarding God have subtle debates but some are found extremely lively in the history of philosophy and theology.

The idea of god is inseparably related with all religions of the world though the religions like Buddhism and Jainism etc. donot start with the pre-supposition of the existence of God. But some natural

power or agency is granted by all the religions of the world. The idea of God is so closely related with myth that without the series of myths no concept of God can be explained. The concept of God is so closely associated with the different minds that every individual born and die with that very idea. "It is but a small step to the belief, held by many that God Himself must somehow be responsible for the presence of this idea in our mind at birth²".

From Philosophical standpoint God is the Absolute Being and nothing can be distinct from him. The personified gods are really mere forms of one Supreme Puruṣa. The Upaniṣads develop this Puruṣa into Brahman or Ātman which is both immanent and transcendent Brahman and Ātman are ultimately one.

From the general view of God of some major religions, 'God' stands for a being who is the ultimate source of power and creator of the world. Ultimately the destiny of man and the world lies in his hands. Philosophically the idea of God is associated with sublimity, ineffable majesty, holiness and transcendence. The philosophers and theologians have finalized that God is the supremely powerful Being who is the intelligent designer of the world. He is the universe. In vedāntic conception, he is the supreme truth, the Brahmā.

Boros are sociologically and numerically one of the most important tribes of North-Eastern India, particularly of Assam. The Boros are mainly depend for their livelihood on agriculture. They dwell near river. "The river names of the whole Brahmaputra Valley are Boro names, and it is demonstrable that the Bodos were the aborigines of the Valley³". They belong to the indo-mongoloid group of family. They are also generally regarded as the Kirātas in purānas. Religions has an significant and important role on the traditional, social and cultural life

of a Boro. The worship of Bathou and creation of altar in traditional Bathou religion has sociological and philosophical significance. The natural living symbol of Bathou as the Sijou plant in the courtyard are noteworthy features of the philosophy of the Bathou religion. In addition to the domestic worship in Bathou religion we have also community worship made collectively by the villagers in the open field. Religion is a spiritual process. It is the basis of man's faith regarding the power beyond himself whereby he seeks to satisfy emotional needs and gain stability in life in the face of various forces which threaten him. The traditional Boro religion is a great advance in the concept of animism of the primitive culture. It is the stage of polytheism but traditional Boro religion is the movement from many to one. Boro religion has different gods and goddesses which are regarded as the manifestations of one supreme Deity, Bathou. Monotheism is attained in Bathou religion through the realisation of spiritual unity among the differences.

The information of Brahma religion by Gurudev Kalicharan Brahma in the beginning of the 20th century can be marked as a new era in the history of Boro society. Brahma religion of the Boros adopted Param Brahmā as the ultimate reality, the supreme being. Every individual self is identical with Param Brahmā. To realise Brahman the performance of Hom Yojña by reciting Gāyatrī Mantram is must. To realise Brahman and truth in 'self' is the ultimate goal of this religion. Pure monotheism is found in Brahma religion. "The Brahma religion is monotheist and believes in eternal Almighty Brahmā, who is omnipresent and source of all creation, existence and destruction⁴".

The Saivism sect or Mani Bathou Śiva Dharma is a modified or refined cult of traditional Bathou religion. Unlike the traditional Bathou

religion, Mani Bathou Śiva dharma does not offer sacrifice of animals to the deities. Here Śiva is believed as the supreme god. Boros worship him in the form of Bathou. Śiva is depicted as has the three forms ----- Brahma as creator, Vishṇu as saviour and Maheswar as destroyer. The union of three is the Śiva. Unlike Brahma religion and like traditional Bathou religion saivism is the sect of polytheistic form of religion as having the beliefs of various gods, ghosts, spirits etc. It is here found that the mode of performance of Yojña is almost similar to that of Brahma dharma, except the conceptual difference regarding the existence of god. The different religious sect accepted by the Boros prove a refined religious society giving them a high religious position. The saivism sect of Guru Rupamani Devi is a Sanskritized and refined form of the traditional religion whose complete structure is no other than a Hindu religion.

The Sat Sang religion of Boros (Sat Sang religion of Anukul Thakur) is the monotheism in nature and it believes in the incarnation of Purusottama. The Sat Sang of Thakur Anukul is a well institutionalised and organised religion which have a great effort towards the ascending social position of the Boros.

Bathou represent the five basic elements of creation. Bathou is also known as Sibrai (Śiva). He with his wife Siburi is called to create the universe and Man-sin-sin was the first creature (man). Thus the religious consciousness of the Boros was lifted into the region of speculative thinking.

Some awe of ghosts of the departed (dead man) is prevailed among the Boros. So, the ancestor worship exhibits a tribal loyalty and a fellowship between the members of the tribe is established. Rites and rituals performed in religious ceremony represents the hope and desire.

The main aim of rites and rituals are the public and private welfare as well as for the good harvest of crops. Blind superstition and religious beliefs are found in Boro religion in high order. The use of Deodhini (possessed women) and ojha (medicinal man) in the Kherai Puja represents the mystic elements in traditional religious beliefs of the Boros.

Bathouism was regarded by some scholars like S. Endle, Gait, Stack etc. as animistic. But Bathouism is not animistic. According to R.N. Mosahary, "The traditional Boro religion is not animistic but Bathouism presided over by supreme God-Bathou Borai or Bathou Raja⁵". Bathouism is not a world religion. It has the primitive religious character, may be termed as totemistic form of primitive religion. Bathou is a purely local term used by the Boro-Kacharis for Sijou Plant (*Euphorbia splendens*) and worshipped as supreme God accordingly. It may be said that the Boro religion is not animistic in nature, but shares the same status with the ancient Rg. vedic religion.

The religious essence is indicated in Boro religion as monotheism, the plurality of gods and goddesses are treated as the manifestation of one supreme God. But there are ample examples of beliefs in gods and goddesses which may be termed as polytheism among the primitives. Lack of scientific knowledge over the phenomena was the source of belief among the primitive men. Suitable offerings are seen in regard to different deities. Though Boro religion appears to be polytheistic but a native bent towards unification or monotheism is found. The polytheistic anthropomorphism is a step towards a spiritual monotheism. The ultimate principle of Boro religion is the theistical concept symbolized by a plant. The different deities found in Boro religion are the reflection of the growing needs of human beings but none of them can represent

the highest conception of God. Bathou is not a shadowy Absolute but a determinate Being.

The World and culture of Boro religion are in a heap of gods and goddesses. Diseases of man and catastrophies of the world inspired these people to believe ghosts and spirits. So gods and goddesses are propitiated. So, to do this some expert personalities like 'deori', 'ojha', 'deodhini' etc. are required. Sacrifice and prayer are also the main bone to propitiate gods and goddesses. Dread and fear are the underlying principles of Boro religion.

To propitiate gods and goddesses different offerings like rice, plantains, Pigs, goats, poultry etc. are offered which indicate the deep religious spirit. The genuine religious spirit of Boros is also proved by the sorcery and magic.

Boro social structure is patriarchal in character. There are some definite rules and regulations to construct their houses and their maintenance to the homstead. They perform various ceremonies and festivals in relation to birth, death, marriage, religion and agricultural activities. The status of the woman is equal with a man. The women share with different activities equally in the field or home. Social customs and traditions play a very important role in the cultural life of any ethnic group. It transcends our narrow individuality and small interests. The word 'Boro' is closely related with 'a man' allied with the -Tripuri language. Thus the religion of Boros is concerned with the religion of man which is universal in outlook not concerned with particular personality.

The matters of comparison may be said as a scientific study of the various features of different religions of the world. The name

properly, perhaps, is to be called 'comparative Religion'. "A.C. Bosanquet while making his aim of writing a book on Comparative Religion clearly asserts that it is a survey and comparison of the great religions of the world⁶". Comparison is possible among the two or more religions because every religion has its own distinctive character. There may be similarity and differences also. With regard to god also religions of the world both agree and differ in many important points.

Hinduism is a medley of rites, beliefs and rituals. Hinduism holds the view that men differ only in temperament and level of aspiration. Synthesis is the guiding principle of Hinduism than culmination which can be claimed as the mosaic of all types and stages of religious endeavour. As Radhakrishnan says that Hinduism is not based on any racial factor it is an inheritance of thought and aspiration to which every race in India has made its distinctive contribution. There is no real conflict among the Hindus, Bathouist and Mani Bathou Śiva Dharma sect of Bathou religion. All of them observe almost same religious system in different rites and rituals. The process of assimilation of the two faiths is evident from the fact that Hindu gods and goddesses are given seats at the time of Garja puja of Bathou religion. We see Śiva, the Hindu god is identified with Bathou, the chief god of Bathou and Mani Bathou Śiva Dharma. Some legends depict the origin of the Boros from Śiva, the third power in Hindu Trinity. Bodo religion is based on culture and tradition. The religion of the Bodos can also be said as within the Sanātana dharma of the Vedas.

The use of mantra in Hinduism is one of the important features which has resemblances with Boro religious rites like the Hindus. Boros believe in disembodied existence as well as transmigration of soul. This belief is the basis of rites of birth and death.

The major religious belief and tradition of Boros of the Brahmaputra Valley is nothing other than a part of Hinduism. A thorough analysis shows that the origin and development of the Bathou religion is also a part of the evolution of the spirit of Hinduism in the sub continent, India. It is found that many of the Hindu deities like Brahmā, Vishṇu, Maheswara, Bisahari, Lakhi etc. have been occupying prominent place among the Bathou pantheons.

Like the Ṛg. Vedic gods, the traditional Boros believe different gods and goddesses. They believe five traditional gods such as Ailong (gods of earth or pṛthivī in Ṛg. Veda), Agrang (god of water or Apsara, the anthropomorphic form of water in Ṛg. Veda), Khoila (god of air or Vāyu or Vātā in Ṛg. Veda), Sanjhborle (god of fire or light or Agni in Ṛg. Veda) and Rajkumbre (god of sky or Varuṇa in Ṛg. Veda).

Bathou is not presented in idol form but is well in evidence through his living symbol, the 'Sijou' (Euphorbia Splendens) which is seen in the homestead of Bodos. In this respect it has similarity with Hindu religion, because some of the Hindu people also worship the holy plant, the 'Tulsi' in front of the house, specially as seen in Kati Bihu. So, the Sijou Plant or Tulsi Plant is not only a forest deity or plant but also has deep philosophical significance. It is also seen that trees and plants are the direct objects of invocation in the Ṛg. Veda. It is true, however, that the greater veneration to some trees and plants at a special reason, for example, Tulsi, Asok Tree, Sijou plant etc. have the medicinal values. On the other hand, a pair of trees namely, Banyan tree (Ficus idica) as Bride and peepal (Ficus religiose) or pakar (Ficus venosa) as groom are closely planted together as sacred plants. This is known as married couple plants known as 'Bar-Kaina' (Bride-groom).

The sprouting leaves of these trees are very essential for many pujas in the Hindu religion.

Bodos speak of only one God, called Bathou. They are the worshippers of Bathou, the supreme God. They have also minor deities. They believe in ghosts and spirits also. Like the Hindus Bodos believe that different gods and goddesses are various manifestation of the supreme Deity. Thus the conception of the supreme God is predominant in Boro religion which, therefore, transcends the tribal stage and reveals a very great enlargement of outlook and significant content of religious consciousness.

The Bathouists can be compared with the Hindus with regard to the worship of nature. Parwa show or bhatheli is a festival where people enjoy themselves by dancing, wrestling and tom-toming around a tall bamboo pole. This type of common festival is specially seen in Barpeta, Nalbari, Baska and Darang district of Assam. This type of festival is observed probably to welcome the monsoon, which is necessary for growth of bamboo, because bamboo was the primary house building material for the Boros in early days.

From philosophical standpoint God is the Absolute Being and nothing can be distinct from him. The personified gods are really mere forms of one supreme puruṣa. The upaniṣads develop this puruṣa into Brahman and Ātman which is both immanent and transcendent. Hindu belief in God ranges from polytheism through abstract monism to a concrete monotheism. The Vedas are the sources of Hindu faith which are polytheistic in nature. But a monotheistic tendency seems to be present in Hinduism. The Philosophical significance of Bathou religion can be stated as monotheism through the polytheism. Among the different gods and goddesses Bathou is the chief god of the traditional

Bodo religion. The same type of monotheism is prevailing in Mani Bathou Śiva Dharma also, while on the other hand Brahma religion of the Bodos has, no doubt, monotheism. According to the Gītā, God is Puruṣottama which can be compared and identified with the concept of Puruṣottama of Sat Sang (Thakur Anukul) of Bodos. But Gītā's concept of God is pantheism. Christian's concept of God is monotheism through the aspect of polytheism as 'God the Father', 'God the son' and 'God the Holy spirit'. This God is of the nature of a pure spirit and has got will and consciousness. Islam is strictly a monotheistic religion. It believes in one and only God. According to Quran, there is no God except one called 'Allah'. Here prophet Hazarat Mohammad is the incarnation of 'Allah'. Here the concept of incarnation is equivalent with the incarnation (Thakur Anukul) of Sat Sang. The philosophical concept of Monotheism is found in Sikhism. Judaism is a religion of monotheistic concept. The original Zoroastrianism is monotheistic in character, but later on we see the sign of polytheism. Various gods like sun, fire etc. are seen which may remind us very well the Vedic polytheism. The dualism of Ahura Mazda and Ahirman seem to be the dominant character. The overall tone of Zoroasterianism is ever taken to be monotheistic in which Ahura Mazda is recognized as the only supreme all powerful, all-wise, all-good etc. From philosophical standpoint God's monotheistic character is considered by all the religions except jainism and Buddhism.

In-Zoroasterian religion, Ahura Mazda (God) is the supreme. In Zoroasterianism the world consists of good and evil, hence, it is very clear that the Zoroasterian world is ruled by two forces : one Good and the other Evil ; Zoroaster called Ahura Mazda is the Good Force, the Supreme God and Evil Force he named as Angra Mainyu. The concept Evil Force is of the same type with the concept of Malevolent gods of

Bathou religion. The Bathou's malevolent elements are believed as the cause of diseases and sufferings to the human beings.

The Hindu concept of Trinity has similarity or identified with the traditional concept of Trinity of Bathou religion and Mani Bathou Śiva Dharma. "The traditional concept of Trinity- Rongrchi, Maithahschi and Barigongtham has been identified with the Hindu Trinity- Brahmā, Vishnu and Maheswara⁷". In Mani Bathou Śiva Dharma, the chief god Śiva in the form of Bathou has three aspects in the name of Brahmā (creator), Vishṇu (Sustainer) and Mohesh (destroyer) which has the resemblances with the concept of Trinity. "There seems to be a striking similarity between Hinduism and Christianity in point of taking God as three into one or as one in three (trinity)⁸".

From our elucidation of the concept of God as present in different religious traditions we may form an impression that all the religions of the world are monotheistic in character except Buddhism and Jainism which do not believe in any God at all. The monotheistic character is seen too much in Islam, Sikhism and Judaism. All of them have monotheistic character and their monotheism is depicted in their very creed which are remembered and repeated by Jew and Muslim. The Jewish and Muslim creed are as follows: "Hear O Israel, the Lord, our God, the Lord is One," "There is no God but Allah, and Mohammad is His prophet⁹". There is a doubt regarding the monotheistic character in Zoroastrianism, it apparently seems to be ditheistic. There is also doubt in regard to the monotheism of Christianity as it believes the concept of Trinity. Monotheism is vivid in Bathou religion and other sects of Boros though they believe different gods and goddesses. 'Bathou' is chief god of the Bathou religion, 'Brahman' is the supreme reality of Brahma religion and 'Śiva' in the form of 'Bathou' is the chief god of Mani

Bathou Śiva Dharma of Boros. From all these religions we may claim that all the religions have monotheistic grounds. The Duality or Trinity in godhood is actually outward and secondary. Monotheism is the basic and essential to them. There is also doubt regarding the monotheism of Hinduism. In the earlier period we have seen polytheistic nature. But it is seen that under the apparent polytheism there is an undercurrent of monotheism. The average Hindu worshippers are aware that the different gods and goddesses worshipping are the manifestations or expressions or aspects of the same supreme, all powerful God. Hence, it seems to be a general point of unity of almost all the religions that they believe one supreme, all-powerful, all-knowing creator God either in very strictly or in somewhat a lenient form although this God may have his various manifestations or aspects. Here also it cannot be ignored that there are religions of the world which does not believe in god at all like Buddhism and Jainism.

Besides these all the religions of the world can be united together in attributing to God in regard to some of the metaphysical qualities like infinity, all-powerfulness, all-knowingness and all-pervasiveness as well as some of the ethical qualities like mercy, benevolence, justice etc. Furthermore, God is also regarded by all the religions as the creator, sustainer and destroyer of the world and he is taken as both transcendent from and immanent into this world.

In spite of the common features of the religions we have some differences among the religions. Regarding the nature of God the Indian tradition sometimes sharply differs from that conceived in the semitic tradition. In semitic religions God has been taken as immanent and all-present in the world, but in Indian tradition God is Antaryāmī (inner-dweller) and the inner soul of the world. Rāmānuja and Nanak, the

original propounder of Viśiṣṭādvaita and Sikh religion, has already taken God as such. Rāmānuja specifies God as having the attributes like truthfulness, bliss etc. is the specific character of Indian tradition. Mystery is emphasized in some semitic religion like Judaism and Islam but it is emphasized in its own manner in the religion of Indian tradition. In Indian tradition God's concept (nature) is so mysterious and so beyond human comprehension that it can only be conceived in negative terms like Apar, Agocher etc. Judaism and Christianity take God as personal but in Hinduism God is neither taken as personal nor impersonal, but he is called super-personal. The most important difference is seen amongst the religions in regard to the relation of God to the world. In the semitic religions God is believed as the efficient cause and not the material cause. But in Hinduism God is both efficient and material cause of the world. Sikhism also adds the view that world is the revelation of God. But Sikhism denies God as the efficient cause.

Animistic expression or impulse is seen in the early Indian deities. It is also seen very well in many Indian tribes including the Boros. "The list of animistic expression is almost endless¹⁰". Primitive men worshipped really everything in nature. Trees, plants, mountains, hills, rivers etc. had been the objects of worship. The heavenly bodies ----- the Sun, Moon and the earth itself had become objects of worship.

Sacrifice is the most important rite in religion. In the history of religion lies its fact that it is meant by which it seeks to establish the communication and to enjoy communion with their gods. This type of communion is essential function for the religion. Sacrifice is not only possible by offering food and any article to their gods. The offerings are normally made by food or animal or vegetable. "If, for this purpose, offerings simply, or offerings of food simply, were all that was required,

then any article of food would serve to propitiate any god¹¹". But such type of religious part is not seen in Buddhism, Mohmmadanism or in Christianity. But religious sacrifice is believed as the means to have the desired goal by some other worldly religions including the religions of the Boros. In Bathou religion the importance is given on animal sacrifice and offering drinks (rice beer) then the food offering. The concept of 'Soma' (wine) which is considered as the Vedic god is found in the Vedas. Here 'Soma' is also used as the offering. So, the sacrifice can be considered as a universal phenomenon for religion.

In Bathou religion we have one concept i.e. 'Garakhia Gossai'. Garakhia Gossai is the god of cowherds. He is also known as Laokhar Gossai. The concept of 'Garakhia Gossai' is equivalent with the concept of 'Lord Krishna' of Hinduism.

In Brahma Dharma Brahman is the sole reality. In Mani Bathou Śiva Dharma 'Śiva' is the chief god with believing the other gods and goddesses. The Brahma Dharma is monotheist. They devote everything to Param Brahma, the eternal God, but Mani Bathou Śiva Dharma being the believer of multi gods and goddesses, summon all deities to be present in Yajña (fire). But such type of Yajña culture is found in Indian mythology where different gods and goddesses are believed and worshipped.

Language game of Bodo's religion:

'Language game' which is the important philosophical concept can be applied with Bodo's religion and by using this concept the philosophical status and foundation of the Bodo religion can be enhanced. 'Language game' is the key term used by Wittgenstein in his later philosophy. It is the main part of his philosophy and forms the

foundation of his later philosophy. Earlier Wittgenstein talks of 'Language game' to dispel our language confusion, but this does not lead to a philosophy that tells us how to use language in our ordinary lives. But this later work as 'Language game' appeared as the philosophy.

'Language game' is the activity performed with rules. It concerns with the multiplicity of language practices through ordinary discourse. In language game people are said to use language to prompt to do particular action. As reaction a new move is prompted. Language is a game or communication between two actions. We can clear it with a primitive language game – A means builder, B means assistant. A builds and is concerned with brick, sand, stone, bim, slab etc. and B has to supply these as soon as A makes the call. "Notice that Wittgenstein says that people are trained to 'react in this way' to the words of other¹²". As Wittgenstein said correct responses are not inherited but acquired through teaching exercise. It is the game between action and reaction.

Language game can be divided into two types-Linguistic and Non-linguistic: Linguistic language game is pure because it is exercised through language discourses. Non-linguistic language is impure because it is performed with the help of some bodily movement. The symptom of Linguistic and Non-linguistic language game is found in Bodo religion. In Bathou religion worshippers make correct responses with the action of Doudhini, Douri and Ojha at the Kherai puja. Here Doudhini dances and moves round the altar and the worshippers also join in the circle of dancing with Doudhini. The "Ojha" is the person at the kherai puja who chants the mantras or formulas and which is correctly followed and responded by the worshippers. "At the time of chanting the formula the

“Ojha” is found in a half sitting position without using any tool or mate, while the Douris also follow his position¹³”. The game is seen in Brahma Dharma also. In Hom Yojña the worshippers send flowers into the Homkunda as soon as Purohit chant the mantras. This is nothing other than a game between worshippers and the Ojha, Douri, Doudhini, Purohit etc.

Language game can also be classified into religious and scientific. From the point of view of Wittgenstein rationality does not play a role in religious language game but rationality plays a role in scientific language game only. Religious language game has no rationality which is based on empirical data. From the point of view of Wittgenstein it can be said that Folk religion like Bathou religion of the Bodos plays religious language game which contain different religious practices like rituals, prayer, worship etc. But philosophy of religion is the scientific study of religion. Wittgenstein offers an anti-rationalistic concept of God. He said that religious belief is neither rational, nor irrational, but something separate and distinct from the concept of rationality. From point of view of Wittgenstein Boro religion plays religious language game only. But Wittgenstein’s concept of language game is not absolute as found in Boro religion. Boro religion though is a Hinduised type of religion, but is independent in their opinion, view and culture which has rationality because every religion is autonomous.

Family resemblance concept of Boro religion:

Further, family resemblance is a philosophical concept of Wittgenstein. It resemblances the type of similarity that can be found within the family. “The daughter in a family could have the “same” nose as her father, while the father and the son has the “same” ears but there is no characteristic common to all members of the family, still

there is a bond between them¹⁴". "Reminding us that, in a family, one member will have brown hair like one brother or sister, blue eyes like another, and be left handed like yet another, Wittgenstein points out that a series of relationships of height, health, hair colour, left handedness or what have you relates each member of the family to all the others without there being any one thing which all the members of the family share¹⁵".

All components that constitute the "partnering family" where family resemblance concept can be applied. The family resemblance concept can be described as a 'partnering concept' or like 'flower' where centre contains the common components.

All religions are grouped under a family where similarities and differences are there. The similarities between different components of religion are just like the resemblances between the family members. The concept of God of religion as Wittgenstein speaks, resembling one another in the manner of family members. " 'Family resemblance' is not something like black hair that each member of a family possesses. To speak of human beings or games or whatever as forming a family is to draw attention to the existence of similarities among them¹⁶". There are differences and similarities among the gods and goddesses of Boros religion in regard to their characteristics and nature. In spite of these they have been bound up as a family having some resemblances. In Bathou religion the concept of 'Bathou' is the common element just like the centre of the flower. "I can think of no better expression to characterise these similarities than 'family resemblances'¹⁷".

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• Muṇḍaka	44,48
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