

**HISTORY OF CATHOLIC MISSIONS IN
NORTHEAST INDIA: A CASE STUDY OF THE
BETHANY SISTERS**

THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE MIZORAM UNIVERSITY

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT

FOR THE AWARD OF THE DEGREE OF

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

IN HISTORY AND ETHNOGRAPHY

By

JESSY JANET SEQUEIRA

MZU/Ph.D/396/ 04.11.2011

DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY AND ETHNOGRAPHY

SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

MIZORAM UNIVERSITY, AIZAWL

MIZORAM-796004

2014

**HISTORY OF CATHOLIC MISSIONS IN
NORTHEAST INDIA: A CASE STUDY OF THE
BETHANY SISTERS**

THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE MIZORAM UNIVERSITY

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT

FOR THE AWARD OF THE DEGREE OF

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

IN HISTORY AND ETHNOGRAPHY

By

JESSY JANET SEQUEIRA

MZU/Ph.D/396/ 04.11.2011

DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY AND ETHNOGRAPHY

SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

MIZORAM UNIVERSITY, AIZAWL

MIZORAM-796004

2014



MIZORAM UNIVERSITY

Department of History & Ethnography

(Tanhril, Aizawl, Mizoram)

Dr. K. Robin

Associate Professor

Email: robinkhuhly@gmail.com

0389-2331564(O) 9436149263 (M)

MZU/HISTÐ/PhD/1

Dated Aizawl, the 15th December, 2014.

Certificate

This is to certify that Ms. Jessy Janet Sequeira, Registration No. MZU/Ph.D/396 of 04.11.2011 has completed her Ph.D thesis entitled ***“History of the Catholic Missions in Northeast India: A case study of the Bethany Sisters”*** in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Department of History & Ethnography, Mizoram University, Aizawl under my supervision.

Ms. Jessy Janet Saqueira has complied with all the requirements as laid down in the Ph. D. Regulations of the University. This thesis and its finding is the original work of the scholar and that no part of this work has been previously submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma elsewhere.

(Dr. K. Robin)

Supervisor

Dated Aizawl, the 15th December, 2014.

DECLARATION

I, Ms. Jessy Janet Sequeira, hereby declare that the subject matter of this thesis entitled “**History of Catholic Missions in Northeast India: A Case Study of the Bethany Sisters**” submitted to the Mizoram University, Aizawl for the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in History and Ethnography, is the original work carried out by me. I further declare that I have not submitted this work earlier to any University or institute for the award of any degree or diploma.

[JESSY JANET SEQUEIRA]

Research scholar

Regn. No. MZU/Ph.D/396/ 04.11.2011

Dated Aizawl, the 15th December, 2014.

CONTENTS

Certificate

Declaration

Contents

| | |
|---|---------------|
| Preface | <i>i-ii</i> |
| Acknowledgement | <i>iii-iv</i> |
| List of Tables | <i>v</i> |
| List of Figures | <i>vi</i> |
| Chapter I Introduction | 1-12 |
| 1.1. Methodology and Procedure | 1 |
| 1.2. Previous research | 6 |
| 1.3. Research objectives | 7 |
| 1.4. The Scope of the study | 7 |
| 1.5. Significance of the study | 8 |
| 1.6. Purpose of the study | 9 |
| 1.7. Structure of Dissertation | 10 |
| Chapter II Approaches to the study of Religion | 13-61 |
| 2.1. Definition of Religion | 16 |
| 2.2. Various Approaches | 21 |
| 2.2.1 Antropological | 21 |
| 2.2.2 Psychological | 28 |
| 2.2.3 Philosophical | 36 |
| 2.2.4 Theological | 39 |
| 2.2.5 Rational Choice Theory | 41 |
| 2.2.6 Sociological | 42 |

| | |
|---|----------------|
| Chapter III Christianity and Catholicism | 62-100 |
| 3.1. The Early History of Christianity | 62 |
| 3.2. Christianity in India | 79 |
| 3.3. Christianity in North East India | 81 |
| 3.4. Catholicism | 85 |
| 3.4.1. Organization in the Catholic Church | 89 |
| 3.5. Catholic Missions in India | 98 |
| Chapter IV Catholic Missions in North East India | 101-143 |
| 4.1. Pioneer Missionaries | 102 |
| 4.2. Diversity of Sisters Institutes | 115 |
| 4.3. Work of the Sisters | 120 |
| 4.3.1. Educational | 131 |
| 4.3.2. Social | 137 |
| 4.3.3. Health and Family Welfare | 138 |
| 4.3.4. Evangelization | 140 |
| 4.3.5. Pastoral Care | 140 |
| Chapter V Origin, Growth and Activities of the Bethany Sisters | 144-202 |
| 5.1. The Origin | 144 |
| 5.1.1. Raymond Francis Camillus Mascarenhas – The Founder | 146 |
| 5.1.2. Contribution of RFC Mascarenhas | 147 |
| 5.1.3. Relationship with the Civil Society | 148 |
| 5.2. The Special Charism of the Bethany Sisters | 148 |
| 5.3. The Growth of the Institute | 149 |
| 5.4. Activities of the Bethany Sisters | 151 |
| 5.4.1. Educational | 151 |

| | |
|---|----------------|
| 5.4.2. Social Welfare | 155 |
| 5.4.3. Pastoral Care | 157 |
| 5.5. The Financial Management of the Congregation | 158 |
| 5.6. Bethany Sisters in North East India | 159 |
| 5.6.1. Bethany Sisters in Mizoram | 164 |
| 5.6.2. Bethany Sisters in Assam | 173 |
| 5.6.3. Mission in Nagaland | 178 |
| 5.6.4. Bethany Sisters in Tripura | 185 |
| 5.6.5. Mission in Manipur | 192 |
| 5.6.6. Bethany Sisters in Meghalaya | 194 |
| 5.6.7. In Arunachal Pradesh | 196 |
| 5.6.8. Mission in West Bengal | 197 |
| 5.6.9. Northeast Presence in Mangalore, Karnataka | 201 |
| Chapter VI Assessment of the Bethany sisters | 203-260 |
| 6.1. Data Analysis of the questionnaires and Interviews | 203 |
| 6.1.1. Educational Contribution | 204 |
| 6.1.2. School Administration | 219 |
| 6.1.3. Hostel Work | 223 |
| 6.1.4. Social Work | 226 |
| 6.1.5. Medical Work | 235 |
| 6.1.6. General Opinion About the Bethany Sisters | 239 |
| Chapter VII: Summary and Conclusion | 261-269 |
| Bibliography | 270-285 |
| Appendix | i-xiv |

PREFACE

It is a fact that very few research works have been conducted in the context of Catholic Missions especially in Northeast India. It appears that the past studies and the existing books do not assess the work of the various religious congregations or the activities of the different missions in the Northeast and particularly of the Bethany sisters. The two main reasons, which gave impetus to this study are- firstly, no proper historical write ups on the activities and contributions of the Bethany sisters. The need was felt for historical study to assess the changes brought in by the Catholic Missions and the Bethany Sisters in particular, as they were completing fifty years of their arrival in the region. Secondly, in the studies made so far on the Catholic Missions in Northeast India, Bethany sisters' role has been generalized without any specific study on any of their activities except that of Missionary Sisters of Mary Help of Christians. Hence this may be the first attempt to give a special account related to the activities of the Sisters of the Little Flower of Bethany in the Northeast, familiarly known as Bethany Sisters.

From the present study also it is found that there is no intensive research on the work done by the Catholic missionaries particularly by the Bethany sisters among the people of Northeast. Hence the study of the activities of the Bethany sisters from 1962 to 2012 is a recordable work of immense importance. So, this research is to point out how much the Catholic missions have contributed to the social, political, cultural and religious life of the people of the Northeast. This study follows a historical, sociological and an analytical method of historiography for wider understanding of the subject.

The advent of Catholicism to Northeast India ushered in significant transformation and development. The church historian, Frederick S. Downs, has given a sociological perspective to this change among the entire tribal population of the region. According to him, the role of Christianity in the social change of Northeast Indian tribes essentially was in terms of 'acculturation'. He presents a general study on the work of Christian missionaries for social change among the Northeastern tribes. But the present study deals with the activities of the Catholic Missions in the Northeast in a more elaborate way along with the important role played by the Bethany sisters in the lives of the people in the field of education, social and medical work.

Several scholars have ignored the role played by the Catholic Church and in particular the religious sisters in changing the lives of the people of Northeastern region. However, the journals, reports, seminar papers and letters left by the missionaries are rich sources of information attesting to this fact. Further, the study focuses on the socio-economic changes reviewed historically and examines how effectively the work of Bethany sisters has contributed to the development of the people. Hence this work on '*The History of Catholic Missions in Northeast India: A Case Study of the Bethany sisters*' is a historical investigation of the assessment of the Bethany sisters on the social, cultural, political and religious life of the people of Northeast.

The problem addressed in this thesis shows that there is no intensive research reflecting the changes and transformations that took place among the people of Northeast due to the advent of Christianity. Hence, this research indicated, to some extent, that Catholic missions have brought changes on the social, political, cultural and religious life of the people of Northeast especially through the Bethany sisters.

From this research, it may be concluded that though the catholic missions, particularly the Bethany sisters have catered to the people of the Northeast, yet there remains much to be done for the progress and development of the society. There is greater need for personal contact, family visits, counseling in marriage and other needs that could be attended to in order to make the mission more effective as well as fruit bearing.

- ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS -

I give thanks to the Lord God Almighty for his grace and guidance that sustained me through these years of study, helped me and led me through the completion of this thesis.

The transformative journey presented through this thesis would not have seen its destination without the support and generosity that I have received from some of the special persons of my life. First of all, I owe an immense debt of thanks to numerous individuals who have helped and provided me with timely suggestions, support and encouragement during this endeavor. Though it is not possible to mention the name of each individual, I must gratefully mention those who have been instrumental in the successful completion of my research.

In carrying out this work, I am immensely indebted to my Supervisor Dr.K.Robin, Associate Professor, Department of History & Ethnography and Deputy Director of Academic Staff College, Mizoram University for his invaluable encouragement and academic guidance. He has not only played the key role in shaping my ideas and thinking-process as a research guide but also through his unique gestures, has been able to provide me with critical comments and constructive help which was instrumental in the smooth progress of the entire research work.

I am deeply indebted to Prof. J. L. Dawar, the former Head of Department of History & Ethnography, Mizoram University who encouraged me to study at Mizoram University. I am also grateful to Prof. Orestes Rosanga, the present Head of Department of History & Ethnography, Mizoram University for his support during my research. My heartfelt thanks are also due to Mr. Joseph Lalzarliana, Lecturer at MZU who took great interest to help me undertake this study and provided me with necessary direction from time to time.

I owe a sincere debt of gratitude to Sr. Jyoti, my former Superior General and Sr. Wilberta, the present one and their teams, for giving me an opportunity to pursue higher studies. I wish to put in record my sincere thanks to Sr. Noeline, my former Provincial Superior and Sr. Joy, the present one for their inspiring help and good wishes. Very special thanks to Sr. Lillis, the Asst. Superior General, Sr. Miriam and all the staff at the Generalate and Bethany Archives who helped me in the collection of data during my study. I am greatly indebted to all my sisters in the congregation for their

support, encouragement, appreciation and inspiration. My deepest gratitude, however, goes to all the Bethany sisters of the Northeast Province who painstakingly bore patiently with me through all the stages of my research. Their unceasing prayer has been my spiritual and intellectual strength and has made the completion of my Ph D possible.

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to all my friends and well wishers for their prayer and encouragement. I duly acknowledge the valuable assistance provided by one and all towards the successful completion of this thesis.

I would like to remember my family members and relatives who had always felt great pride in all my academic achievements. I am grateful to my cousin brother, Mr. Herold Mathias for his valuable time in preparing the pie charts, bar diagrams, providing valuable comments, and different perspectives which had been valuable to my research. I place on record my sincere thanks to the staff of Sacred Heart Theological College library, Oriens Theological College library, Aizawl Theological College library, AICS Library, St. Joseph's Seminary Library, Mangalore for giving me access to their archival material and library resources.

Last, but not the least, I would like to thank all my critics for their 'valuable' criticism which has always provided me enormous strength and enthusiasm to put in more sincere and concerted efforts towards my every academic endeavor.

(Jessy Janet Sequeira)

| Sl. No. | List of Tables | Page No. |
|----------------|--|-----------------|
| 1 | Catholic Educational Institutions | 145 |
| 2 | Catholic Health Care Institutions in India | 152 |
| 3 | Views on Educational Contribution: People's Responses | 220-221 |
| 4 | Responses of Priests and Sisters | 222-224 |
| 5 | Student's Responses | 226 |
| 6 | Student's Responses | 227 |
| 7 | Student's Responses | 228 |
| 8 | Student's Responses | 229 |
| 9 | Student's Responses | 230-231 |
| 10 | School Administration: People's Responses | 236 |
| 11 | Responses of Priests and Sisters | 237-238 |
| 12 | Boarding's: People's Responses | 241-242 |
| 13 | Responses of Priests and Sisters | 242-243 |
| 14 | Social Work: People's Responses | 244-245 |
| 15 | Responses of Priests and Sisters | 246-247 |
| 16 | Health Ministry: People's Responses | 254-255 |
| 17 | Responses of Priests and Sisters | 255-256 |
| 18 | The Bethany Sisters I Know: People's Responses | 259-262 |
| 19 | Responses of Priests and Sisters | 263-266 |
| 20 | Major Roman Catholic Countries of the World | i |
| 21 | Statistical Data on Dioceses, Personnel and Institutions of Sisters and Priests | ii |
| 22 | The Catholic Church's Institutions in India | iii |
| 23 | Statistical Data as per Conference of Religious India on the Missionaries | iv |
| 24 | Women Religious Institutes working in the Northeast | v-xi |

| Sl. No. | LIST OF FIGURES | Page No. |
|----------------|---|-----------------|
| 1 | Views of Educational Contribution: People's Responses | 222 |
| 2 | Responses of Priests and Sisters | 224 |
| 3 | School Administration: People's Responses | 237 |
| 4 | Responses of Priests and Sisters | 239 |
| 5 | Boarding's: People's Responses | 242 |
| 6 | Responses of Priests and Sisters | 243 |
| 7 | Social Work: People's Responses | 246 |
| 8 | Responses of Priests and Sisters | 248 |
| 9 | Health Ministry: People's Responses | 255 |
| 10 | Responses of Priests and Sisters | 256 |
| 11 | The Bethany Sisters I Know: People's Responses | 263 |
| 12 | Responses of Priests and Sisters | 266 |

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

1.1. Methodology and Procedure

The present work on *The History of Catholic Missions in Northeast India: A Case Study of the Bethany Sisters* with anthropological-historical perspective appears to demand an integrated inter- disciplinary approach that requires relatively more methods and techniques as the study involves a larger but varied population and regions. The researcher employed a synthesis of historical and field research methodology to do the study among the people. So far no extensive or any academic work has been done on the Catholic Missions or the Bethany sisters in Northeast India.

For the present work, the researcher has tried to look at the role of Catholic Missions in a historical perspective. Historical method helped to understand the series of events at variant intensities and developments, starting right from the genesis of Catholic Missions till the recent activities of the Bethany Sisters. However, the usage of historical would not be as one would find it in this thesis strictly historical or for the sake of history itself; but it is rather a complimentary means at bringing about the use of descriptive integration. Methods such as participation in group discussions, interviews and questionnaires apart from other methods and techniques are used which were found very useful.

‘Participant observation’ is one of the most useful techniques in this field work. The scholar has participated and observed the daily life and activities of the people under research for some time. It was a very helpful method in understanding the minds of the people, the picture of the given situation, etc., under study because of its intimacy with the situation itself. It is not easy to understand the social organization and structure, movements, various activities, etc. One cannot simply generalize the behavior of various societies. In this connection, the experience encountered was important. Participant observation method is quite essential for a work like this which basically attempts to understand the views of the people, so also the trend of the activities of the Bethany sisters. Both primary and secondary sources are made use of for greater objectivity of the findings.

The exhaustive use of the secondary sources can in no means underestimate the role of primary sources because the research work is based primarily on participation, and not quite a participatory research. The techniques used in this research are many. Nevertheless, the use of questionnaire and the interview schedule was successful and helpful to be orderly

when interviews were conducted or discussions were held with informants. In fact the interview schedule was used as interview guide in a semi structured manner. But the use of unstructured interview with the help of interview guide was by and large the order of this research. Conducting group discussions was also helpful. These techniques provided a good insight into the minds of the people, the way they look at the sisters and their reactions toward the activities of the sisters.

Primary sources mainly from interviews, observation, listening to group discussions, etc., and secondary sources from published works, journals, periodicals, newspapers among others are meticulously examined and analyzed to give a 'holistic' piece of work. Even coming to the point of rapport establishment with informants there was not much problem except for very few cases where some informants dispose reservations to certain questions which are sensitive to them. Or at times, just because the research scholar was an insider, some informants tend to have some uneasiness while answering to some of the questions.

Statistical techniques have been used in this study and the data collected are interpreted. Other techniques like case study, cluster sampling and quota sampling were utilized. A type of purposive sampling also helped although the work is not statistical one per se; but some of the statistical principles by way of resorting to the above sampling techniques were advantageous for this research. The necessity for cluster sampling technique was felt because of some reasons such as the big sizes in terms of population and geographical area. Northeast comprises of eight states and the research universe was confined to the people of Tripura, Assam and Mizoram in the Northeast. Mainly three states were selected as research areas. The researcher visited 8 centres in about 15 days from the 1st of August to the 15th of August 2013. The centres visited by the researcher included Sihphir, Kolasib, Mamit, Kanhmun and Aizawl in Mizoram; Silchar, in Assam; Dharmanagar, Kattalcherra, Agartala and Khayerpur in Tripura. Due to heavy rains, bad roads, insecurity for travel, lack of resources and time constraint the researcher could not visit all the centers in the Northeast though that was the initial intention. All the people from the Northeast such as the staff, parents of present students, past pupils as well as the priests and sisters were represented.

In Dharmanagar, the researcher interviewed 10 informants all from Northeast. Some of them are permanent or semi- permanent residents of Dharmanagar while over half of the interviewees are just 'floating population' who come to Dharmanagar from the hill districts mainly for jobs, business and so on. This implies even to those informants of Agartala town

under Tripura and Silchar town in Assam where 20 interviews were conducted. Twenty students each from classes 10 and 12 were given out the questionnaires in both the places. 10 teachers each associated with the Bethany sisters for a longer period of time were interviewed as well 10 parents each of the students studying presently in the institutions run by the sisters were given out the questionnaires. 5 religious personnel, priests, Brothers or sisters, were also either interviewed or given out the questionnaires as per the availability of their time. Due to lack of time, the interview schedule was given to the sisters and staff which was filled up and submitted by the informants. At Kattalcherra village, an informant was chosen to accompany the researcher to 10 houses of past students, teachers as well as catechists and parents of students studying in the school. The researcher realized the love, appreciation and attachment that the simple folk of the village had for the missionaries. The nurse sisters, social workers and the health workers at the dispensary were interviewed and the priests as well as the sisters were requested to fill up the questionnaires.

At Khayerpur and Agartala, the researcher distributed the interview schedules to the priests and Bethany sisters that served as a good source material for this research. At Kanhmun, two of the priests answered the questionnaire as they were well associated with the Bethany sisters. In Mamit and Sihphir, the health workers were very responsive. There were about 20 alcoholics each as well as the health workers along with the nurse sisters and Mizoram State Aids Control project co-coordinator. A group discussion was held based on the experiences of the health workers and the clients. The latter were not so responsive perhaps because they could not face the others in the group but the health workers were enthusiastic enough to write down their experiences after sharing them orally. Here also the researcher made use of an informant due to language barrier to visit some of the office bearers of Young Mizo Association, Mizo Hmeichche Pawl, the secretary of the Village Education Council, pastors as well as other leaders of churches and villages. The interviews were conducted and a lot of data were gathered from the interviews of the sisters, staff and the parents.

At Aizawl, the researcher distributed 10 questionnaires to the parents of students of Mary Mount School who were the past pupils of the school and another 10 questionnaires were given out to the teachers who were associated with the institution as well as the Bethany sisters for a longer period of time. At Sihphir, the questionnaires were distributed to sisters working in the de-addiction centre as well as to the teachers who were a part of the school

there. The researcher also reviewed the quarterly and annual reports of the two de-addiction centres at Mamit and Sihphir as well as the health centers including that of Kattalcherra. This largely contributed to assess the activities and effect of those activities on the beneficiaries. Interviews with several pioneer sisters as well as other sisters and church leaders supplied invaluable source material with up-to-date information on the present activities of Bethany sisters.

The written primary sources consisted of personal diaries, minutes and other materials collected from the Generalate at Mangalore and Provincialate at Guwahati were studied extensively. Secondary source information includes those theses and dissertations written by scholars from various cultural backgrounds with various cultural experiences. Having gathered and organized both primary and secondary sources of information, they have been analyzed, interpreted and described to understand the role of Catholic Missions and particularly the Bethany sisters in the development of the people of Northeast.

An indispensable source which was available for investigation was the rich documentation in the form of letters and reports of the missionaries from Northeast sent to the Superiors General of the Bethany sisters in Mangalore, Karnataka. A part of the extant material, particularly the letters of the Superiors and Sisters are made use in this study. These letters offer the best material for a comprehensive study of the activities that the Bethany sisters carried out and to gauge as far as possible the responses of the people.

The study is mostly based on historical analysis of the subject, using the archives, files, reports, record books, content analysis, interviews, questionnaires and group discussions with the people of the region. In each chapter, chronological history and analysis is maintained largely with narrative historiography. In chapters 3 and 4 an extensive analysis of the history is maintained topically. Primary sources like missionary reports, letters and writings of early missionaries were used extensively. In addition, writings of church and institutional authorities who lived in this land during 1962-2012, files and records from headquarters of the Bethany Sisters, sociologists and anthropologists' writings on Christianity and Catholicism were extensively used.

There are not many books and research materials available on Catholic Church, Catholic Missions or on Bethany sisters in the Northeast. However, records in the form of booklets of the local churches, annual reports and letters, souvenirs, magazines published by

the congregation to mark the jubilee celebrations and unpublished materials are consulted. Hence, the research depended heavily on oral history based on information gathered through questionnaires and personal interviews held with the missionaries, students, parents and the staff as well as the leaders of the church.

This study is ethno- historical in nature. It is based on both oral as well as archival sources.

The archival sources include:

- Archives of the Bethany congregation, Diaries and Log books of the head office, Mangalore.
- Letters of the Superiors General to the Bishops of various dioceses.
- The proceedings and other documents of the past provincial chapters of the Northeast Province.
- Souvenirs of the Silver, Golden, Diamond and Platinum Jubilees of the Bethany Congregation and the institutions of the Northeast Province of the Bethany Sisters.
- Unless the Seed Die: a brief sketch of the life of RFC Mascarenhas by Sr. M. Violette D' Souza, B.S.
- Yearbooks and other published Annuals of the different institutions run by the sisters of Northeast Province.
- Archives maintained by the Bethany Provincialate, Guwahati and of all the different houses and institutions of the province as well as the archives of the various organizations of the Bethany Sisters in the North East.

The oral sources include:

The interviews of the pioneers as well as the senior sisters of Bethany who have worked in the North East, the students, the health workers and also the beneficiaries of the services of the sisters.

The following libraries were used for the research work: Academy of Integrated Christian Studies, Aizawl Theological College, Mizoram University Central Library in Mizoram; Sacred Heart Theological College Library and Oriens Theological College Library

at Shillong; St. Joseph's Seminary Library and the Bethany Generalate Library at Mangalore, Karnataka, and Provincialate library at Guwahati

Lastly, objectivity is a catch-word in any scientific inquiry, especially in social sciences. In this case, the research scholar was aware of biases that could creep into research consciously or unconsciously, especially because of being an insider. Therefore great care is taken for maximum objectivity while handling research techniques. It is the mind that matters to objectivity, notwithstanding the importance of the right selection of method. Therefore, the mind is controlled intelligently and diligently, while resorting to methods and techniques that could best serve the research purpose.

1.2 Previous research

This thesis is the first of its kind to contribute valuable materials for academic pursuit. There are some anthropological, political and sociological writings on Northeast people, some of which are briefly reviewed here.

There are works written about the Northeast tribes. Their general contribution is helpful, but their approach has been from a secular perspective and the social change of the people of Northeast from Christian perspective was not brought out clearly and comprehensively. Special mention of some helpful works in this regard would be the books of S.M.Dubey and K.S.Singh (Naga Polity: 1975), Socio economic and political transformation and the future (1986). In these books scholars seem to have contributed their views on the socio-cultural change of the Nagas in general and the Aos in particular. They are however, general sources of information concerning the tribes in Northeastern India.

Church historian like Frederick S. Downs has dealt comprehensively with Christianity (1983) Vol. V part. 5 and contributed valuable information which has helped to proceed with this study. Besides books and periodicals, modern scholars have written several theses and dissertations, which do not relate directly to this research but contribute as supplementary sources. This study on the *History of Catholic Missions in Northeast India: a case study of the Bethany sisters* is first of its kind at doctoral level. The researcher however wishes to highlight that it is not Christianity or Catholic Missions alone, but factors like the political, economic, education and modern development have also played important role in social change of the Northeastern people.

1.3. Research objectives:

1. To analyze and study the theories and concepts on religion.
2. To examine the origin and growth of Catholic Missions in Northeast India.
3. To have a critical analysis of origin, growth and development of the Bethany sisters and how it developed into seasoned mission enterprise.
4. To study the policies and strategies adopted by the Bethany sisters and to examine the various developmental activities undertaken by the congregation and how the people reacted and interacted with the mission.
5. To investigate the extent to which the Bethany sisters operated, liaise with elements of the state as well as the civil society and the underlying challenges faced by the mission.
6. To bring to light the intricate situational exigencies and others confronting the contemporary Catholic Missions and the Bethany sisters in particular and to bring out the position of mission enterprise in the post-modern world.

1.4. The scope of the study:

The study covers the missionary work done by the Catholic Missions among the people of Northeast and the activities carried out by the Bethany sisters from 1962-2012. This study also looks into how the people encountered the mission activities, how they reacted and responded to the sisters and to their work. With regard to the assessment of the work, the region is taken as a whole rather than a particular state or an institution as it is not possible to isolate a single institution in bringing about socio- cultural, political and religious changes among the people.

The activities of the Bethany sisters in this study are limited to the eight centres managed by the Bethany sisters in three of the eight states of Northeast. The research is limited to focus on Catholic Missions and the activities of the Bethany sisters. Since this is a historical study mention has been made in chapter 4 on the historical development of the Bethany congregation and its spread in this part of the Northeast. This is an account of history covering more than 50 years and every field of the activity of the Sisters requires a special research in itself. The researcher however leaves it open for further research. Although many changes seemed to have taken place since then but the researcher has limited the period of study to 50 years between 1962-2012. In 1962, Bethany sisters entered into the

lives of the people of the region and the year 2012 marks the Golden Jubilee of the Northeast Province of the Bethany Sisters which at present has 30 communities.

The history of Catholic Missions entails the study of various themes, subjects and factors involved in the historical process. But, only a few are looked into for a comprehensive understanding of the objectives of this research. As a result the role and contributions of Bethany sisters in other provinces are not studied in detail as this thesis attempts to write the assessment of Bethany sisters among Northeastern people and not a study on the history of Bethany congregation as a whole. Though the Bethany sisters were the first and only sisters' congregation in Mizoram and Tripura, space is also given to other congregations that came after. Thus the writer tries to maintain a balance as the study focuses on the Bethany congregation as a whole.

History is no longer the prerogative and the privilege of the colonial administration and their missionaries, but now they belong to 'communities' as they perceive and understand their social realities. Therefore it's a genuine attempt to dig out authentic information and present an objective narrative. This necessitated touring the centre's to collect oral traditions. For this purpose a field research methodology was developed and a personal interview method was adopted to gain necessary information.

Three different types of interviews were conducted. First, the pioneer Bethany Sisters, who worked between 1962-2012 and contributed to the mission etc. Secondly, some of the non-Catholics, who hold constructive opinion concerning Catholicism were interviewed. Lastly, the Catholic leaders within the region were also interviewed to learn their opinion, response and reaction towards the sisters. They were questioned on their perception toward the activities of the sisters.

1.5. Significance of the study:

This study is significant because it would create a common platform for all the Catholic Missions to understand the work done by them and how they contributed to the growth of the Catholic Church and the Northeastern region in particular. Studying the different activities accomplished by the various Catholic Missions will also give a boost to other missions to take up such studies and evaluating the effectiveness in the mission will enable to plan out better strategies, interact more and in an effective way with the society and contribute a greater share to the well being of the people whom they cater to. This research

also needs to be perpetuated not confined within particular regions, but spread across the boundaries of cultures and provinces around the country. Thus, the research is significant not only for academic reason but is also an inspiration for the young generation, whoever may be future leaders of Catholic Church in the Northeast, to give a glimpse of their historical past and provide for them a platform to participate in the humanitarian activities of Jesus, the Founder.

Personally, this study has motivated me to dig deep into the past and present history of Bethany sisters and learn from it. I have some experience in this mission field as a missionary since 1998. Those experiences helped me to do the research work of this mission. The province and the institute would definitely be educated by this study because it deals with the methods and approaches developed and employed by the sisters. I also believe that this study will be a source of help and guidance to the Northeast Province of the Bethany sisters. It will make a contribution towards the understanding of the Church's role in her mission as far as the missionary methods are concerned.

1.6. Purpose of the study:

The purpose of this study is to trace the advent and growth of the Catholic Church, the Catholic Missions and particularly that of the Bethany sisters in the Northeast, to record their oral history so that the young Bethany sisters' in the future will know their challenging history and be challenged to fulfil the commission of Jesus. It also means to challenge the young people to carry on the humanitarian work, especially in taking the good work beyond this region. The main objective of this thesis is to draw lessons from the past history, to reflect on them in the light of the present situation and to equip the Sisters for the future. Hence, the aim in bringing out these objectives is twofold: firstly, to record the historical past of the Bethany sisters in Northeast region; secondly, to serve in educating and catering to the well being of the people of Northeast.

There's a need for research on Catholic Missions and their activities particularly at the regional level in order to enrich and plan the ministry and work for better effectiveness. The need to make available to the whole Catholic Church especially those concerned with the training of future missionaries, the results of research already done as well as information so that the training of personnel can be focused on areas that are required. The need to renew the missionary commitment and offer fresh enthusiasm and new incentive to those who are

already in the mission field is essential so that their spirits are boosted up for better work. To give a fresh impulse to missionary activity by fostering the commitment of the members of the province is another need of the study.

1.7. Structure of Dissertation

The thesis is a historical study assessing the role of Bethany sisters in the lives of the people of Northeast from 1962-2012. The title therefore is *'History of Catholic Missions in Northeast India: A Case Study of the Bethany sisters.'* A total of seven chapters, including the introductory and concluding chapters comprise the thesis.

Chapter-I: Introduction

The first chapter deals elaborately with the methodology and sources utilized for the research work. The previous research done in the field is analysed. The research objectives and the scope of the study is a part of this chapter followed by the purpose and significance of the study. Last part of the chapter is devoted to the structure of the dissertation.

Chapter-II: Approaches to the study of religion

This chapter analyzes the concepts and approaches to the study of religion and is drawn for understanding and formulating frameworks for the entire study of this work. It deals with the theories of religion and discusses the philosophical, theological, psychological, intellectual, sociological and Marxian approaches to the study of religion. It also provides an overview of the importance of studying these theories which form the basis of this entire research work. The researcher has made particular focus on the sociological approaches as sociology of religion has as its subject the study of religion in its social context- the beliefs, practices and organizational forms of religion using the tools and methods of sociology. Besides through this approach religion helps to understand social experiences and institutional practices by serving as a powerful source for explaining a wide range of social attitudes and behaviors.

Chapter-III: Christianity and Catholicism

The third chapter includes a history of Christianity, Christianity in India and Northeast India, Catholicism, its organization, the origin of Catholic missions and their works

in general. In the historical background, the researcher highlights the origin and spread of Catholicism as well as the Catholic Missions throughout the Northeast.

Chapter-IV: Catholic Missions in Northeast India

The fourth chapter deals with the various congregations working in the region, role of the Sisters within the Catholic Church and their activities such as education, social welfare, health, evangelization and pastoral works in general. Though a number of Priests and Brothers also do mission work in the region the researcher has focused on the work of the Sisters as they are the ones who are mainly involved in the above mentioned activities. The chapter deals with the interaction of the people with the missionaries. The research reveals that most of the people have come to know the Catholic Church through missionary activities.

Chapter-V: Origin, growth and activities of the Bethany Sisters

This chapter makes an in-depth study of the origin, growth and activities of the Congregation of the Sisters of the Little Flower of Bethany in general and their presence in the Northeast region in particular in areas such as education, medical care, pastoral and social works. Besides the methods, approaches and strategies employed by Bethany sisters in the Northeast and the extent to which the Sisters operated and liaised with elements of the state as well as civil society is discussed and analyzed in this chapter. With the help of the archival sources, agreement files and content analysis, the researcher has tried to bring out the original purpose for which the Bethany institute was founded and the variety of activities that the members of this institute are engaged in. A part of this chapter is also dedicated to the work of the Bethany sisters in the Northeast Province, the number of their institutions, their varied activities and how they have affected the lives of the people.

Chapter-VI: Assessment of the activities of the Bethany Sisters

The sixth chapter makes an assessment of education, social work and health care activities of the Sisters. It begins with the people's responses to the missionary activities of the Bethany Sisters, as well as the assessment of the Bethany sisters as a whole in relation with the people whom they catered to. It deals with how the Bethany Sisters interacted with the people, staff, students and other organizations. The chapter examines through quantitative data the effect of the Sisters' work on the socio economic, cultural, religious and political life

of Northeastern people. The quality of Sisters work is assessed through questionnaires and interviews of the parents, past students, present students studying in Sisters' institutions, the Priests and Sisters of other institutions and the data collected is analyzed through pie charts.

Chapter-VII: Summary and Conclusion

The final chapter has a detailed summary of the findings of the research. It provides a gist of the entire research work which highlights the major findings of the study and conclusion of the entire thesis.

CHAPTER II: APPROACHES TO THE STUDY OF RELIGION

As far as it is possible to know, given an incomplete knowledge of human history, some form of religious experience or activity has been common to all human beings.¹ The fact that religion seems to have continually played an important role in every known society reveals that religion serves some sort of purpose.² All societies have possessed beliefs that vary from culture to culture and from time to time. Human beings live in communities that have their cultures and religions which play a crucial role in forming, molding and shaping world views of persons in that community. The world views of human groups tell the way in which they perceive God, the world and the humans.³ Religion is a complex phenomenon, focused by people on explaining the evolution of particular religious beliefs and behaviors.⁴ However, religion does not refer merely to a range of human constructions and behavior connected to beliefs in transcendental beings, powers and states. They do not just happen but are created by inspired individuals, spread by faithful devotees and structured so as to reach specific goals and serve the felt needs of adherents.⁵ Scholars from a multiplicity of humanistic, socio-scientific and socio-biological disciplines have shown an interest in this discipline and their work has contributed to achieving an overall understanding of religion.

Religion is seen differently and in different perspectives. Anthropology, psychology, philosophy, theology and sociology have attempted to look at the origin of religion; each of them developed its own theories, and within each discipline a multiplicity of theories which generally attempt to answer at least two interrelated questions: what is the origin of religion and what is its function.⁶ Some theories complement each other and can be combined, whereas others are more or less mutually exclusive.⁷ In dealing with the approaches to religion, therefore, the focus of interest is mainly on the way religious behavior differs between and within societies.

¹Chris Livesey, "Religion, Functionalist Perspectives." Accessed 14 May 2011. Available from www.sociology.org.uk, p.1.

²*Ibid.*

³A. Alangaram, *Religions for Societal Transformation: Interreligious Dialogue from Subaltern Perspectives*, Asian Trading Corporation, Bangalore, 2005, p. xiii.

⁴L.B. Steadman and C.T. Palmer, *Beyond Belief, A Review of the Supernatural and Natural Selection: Religion and Evolutionary Success*, Boulder, CO: Paradigm, 2008, p.225.

⁵J. Gordon Melton and Martin Baumann (ed.), *Religions of the World: A Comprehensive Encyclopedia of Beliefs and Practices*, Oxford, England, 2002, p.x.

⁶http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Theories_of_religion#cite_note-Robert_A_page_49-0 accessed 20 September 2012.

⁷Inger Furseth & Pal Repstad, *An Introduction to the Sociology of Religion : Classical and Contemporary Perspectives*, Ashgate Publishing Limited, London, 2006, p.3.

Religion is everywhere an expression in one form or another of a sense of dependence on the power outside oneself, a power which can be spoken of as a spiritual or moral power.⁸ The Confucian philosophers took the view that religious rites have important social functions which are independent of any beliefs that may be held as to the efficacy of the rites. The rites gave regulated expression to certain human feelings and sentiments and so kept these sentiments which, by their control of or influence on the conduct of individuals, made possible the existence and continuance of an orderly social life.⁹ Any religion or religious cult normally involves certain ideas or beliefs on one hand and on the other certain observances. These observances can be positive and negative, i.e. actions and abstentions or rites. Much of religious behavior has an instrumental goal; that is, the individual has some particular goal in mind when the religious ritual is performed. Those who carry out the rites and perform the spells desire to produce results, such as stopping a storm, bringing down rain or ensuring fertility for their crops.¹⁰

The motives and goals in all these cases are to bring about specific results, to make natural forces and natural processes respond to human needs.¹¹ Sometimes religious action has particular effects that the individual may not be aware of. These are different from the conscious goals and purposes of the participants themselves.¹² When a person is faced with uncertainty in possibly dangerous situations, alertness to the real dangers and confidence in one's ability to cope with the situation are the most desirable mixture of readiness and may be brought about by performing some magical or religious rituals.¹³ Fustel de Coulanges opines that the social, juridical and political institutions of the ancient societies cannot be understood unless the religion is taken into account. But it is equally true that religion cannot be understood except by an examination of its relation to the institutions.¹⁴ The social function of the rites is obvious: by giving solemn and collective expression to them, the rites reaffirm, renew and strengthen those sentiments on which the social solidarity depends.¹⁵

⁸ A.R. Radcliffe-Brown, *Structure and Function in Primitive Society*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London & Henrey, 1982, Rep. 1976, p. 157.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 160.

¹⁰ Abraham Rosman, Paula G. Rubel, and Maxine Weisgrau, *The Tapestry of Culture: An Introduction to Cultural Anthropology*, Ninth Edition, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., United Kingdom, 2009, p. 256.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 257.

¹⁴ A.R. Radcliffe-Brown, *op. cit.*, p. 163.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 164.

Every religion contains a belief system, intellectual ideas, a credo or a set of doctrines.¹⁶ To rational-minded thinkers beliefs are usually held to be the most important element of a religion. It is argued that action emerges from thought and so thought is prior. Belief is the means by which a religion is communicated to others and through it religion is comprehensible to an observer.¹⁷ Religion no longer designates some sacred, mysterious, transcendental, or metaphysical reality that sets it wholly apart from the mundane world. An inquiry to the study of everyday ordinary reality is that it seems necessary to explain for the existence, persistence and decline of religious beliefs and practices.¹⁸ The concern, therefore, is for an understanding of the purpose of religion. That is why do people believe in god, spirits, supernatural beings and to provide an answer to the question, as to what religion does for the individuals and society.¹⁹ Religion is also a critical construct for understanding contemporary social life. It illuminates the everyday experiences and practices of many individuals. It is a significant component of diverse institutional processes including politics, gender relations and socio-economic inequality and it plays an important part in culture and social change.²⁰

Theists often assert that popular belief in a creator is instrumental towards providing the moral, ethical and other foundations necessary for a healthy, cohesive society.²¹ It dominates, directs and provides hope for the aspirations of its adherents.²² In the Christian West, religion was increasingly understood as a private affair of the individual and many assumed it would cease to exist. Yet, Western analysts have reassessed their opinion of religion as personal and private, although many still regard it with suspicion.²³ Directly or indirectly, all over the world, people are influenced by religion, but due to its multiplicity, diversity and evolving process it is difficult to define.²⁴ The overriding question that

¹⁶N.J.Allen, W.S.F.Pickering & Watts Miller(eds.), *On Durkheim's Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, Routledge, Taylor & Francis e-Library, London , 2002, p.5.

¹⁷*Ibid.*,p. 6.

¹⁸*Ibid.*,p. xii-xiii.

¹⁹ Chris Livesey: *op. cit.*, p. 1.

²⁰ Michele Dillon, "The Sociology of Religion in Late Modernity" in Michele Dillon (ed.), *Handbook of the Sociology of Religion*, Cambridge University Press, United Kingdom, 2003, p.ii.

²¹ Gregory S. Paul, Cross-National Correlations of Quantifiable Societal Health with Popular Religiosity and Secularism in the Prosperous Democracies, *Journal of Religion & Society*, (Vol. 7) A First Look, Baltimore, Maryland, 2005, p.1.

²² T.Swami Raju, *The Study of Religion: Methods & Perspectives*, BTESSC / SATHRI, Bangalore, 2004, p. viii.

²³ Santanu K. Patro (ed.), *A Guide to Religious Thought and Practices*, ISPCK, Delhi, 2011, p.3.

²⁴Christopher Augustus Bixel Tirkey, *Religion / Primal Religions*, ISPCK, Delhi, 2005, p.1.

occupied the minds of scholars of religion in the nineteenth century was: ‘How did religion begin?’ and ‘How did religion evolve?’²⁵ Why religion is found in all societies and how and why it varies from society to society?²⁶ When, how exactly and in which form religion came into society is not known. Though its origin is hidden in the unfathomable past, social scientists in general have made lot of efforts to explain the origin, account for its universality and thus have given birth to a number of theories. Though there is a great deal of disagreement among the thinkers as to the purpose of religion, they do agree that it arose in response to certain felt needs of human beings.²⁷ However, before analyzing the approaches to religion a general idea of the term ‘religion’ seems more essential for understanding.

2.1. Definition of Religion

Religion may refer to scripture, rituals, myths, beliefs, practices, moral codes, communities and social institutions– that is, the outward and objectified elements of a tradition. The adjective ‘religious’ implies some degree of grounding on the part of an individual or community within such a symbolic universe.²⁸ The term religion originated from the Latin noun *religio*, that was nominalized from one of the three verbs: *relegere* which means to treat with care,²⁹ or (to turn constantly/observe conscientiously); *religare* (to bind oneself back); and *reeligare* (to choose again).³⁰ Because of these three different meanings, an etymological analysis alone may not resolve the ambiguity of defining religion, since each verb points to a different understanding of what religion is. It means ‘respect for what is sacred, reverence for the gods’, ‘obligation, the bond between man and the gods.’³¹ Strictly speaking no word in either Greek or Latin corresponds exactly to English word ‘religion’ or ‘religious’³² as it is used for several meanings: belief in unity of God, worship, obedience, all the acts of worship, piety etc. All these meanings are interrelated and are connected with the belief in creator. Gavin Flood, an English scholar of religion, while acknowledging that religion is impossible to define in any definitive sense argues that it is legitimate for scholars to construct definitions of religion to suit their different purposes. He describes religion as

²⁵ Carol R. Ember, et.al., ‘*Anthropology*’: Dorling Kindersley, New Delhi, 2002, p.439.

²⁶ Chris Livesey, *op. cit.*, p.1.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ Michele Dillon, “*The Sociology of Religion in Late Modernity*”, *op. cit.*, p.138.

²⁹ Christopher Augustus Bixel Tirkey, *op. cit.*, p. 17.

³⁰ Gregory D. Alles, ‘Religion: Further considerations’, in Lindsay Jones (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Religion*, Vol.11 (2), 2005, p.7702.

³¹ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Theories_of_religion#cite_note-50 accessed 20 September 2012.

³² J.A. Macculloch, *Religion: Its origin and forms*, The Temple Primers, 1904, p, 13.

‘value-laden narratives and behaviors that bind people to their objectivities, to each other and to non-empirical claims and beings.’³³

In all ages people seem to have hoped that by the proper performance of religious actions or observances they would obtain some specific benefit, health and long life, children to carry on their line, material well-being, success in hunting, rain, the growth of crops and the multiplication of cattle, victory in war, admission of their souls after death to a paradise, or inversely, release by the extinction of personality from the round of reincarnation.³⁴ Most religions have organized behaviors including clerical hierarchies, a definition of what constitutes adherence or membership, congregations of laity, regular meetings or services for the purposes of veneration of a deity or for prayer, holy places and scriptures. Its practice may also include sermons, commemoration of the activities of god, sacrifices, festivals, feasts, trance, initiations, funerary and matrimonial services, meditation, music, art, dance or other aspects of human culture.³⁵

There has been a plethora of books and articles that have attempted to define ‘religion’ which is a ‘Western’ category. Thus like economy, culture, realism and reason, it has a historical trajectory and in different contexts diverse meanings. Melford Spiro defines religion as: ‘an institution consisting of culturally patterned interaction with culturally postulated superhuman beings.’³⁶ By institution, he refers to socially shared patterns of behavior and belief.³⁷ All institutions including beliefs, patterns of action and values refer to ‘superhuman beings.’³⁸ He suggests three kinds of needs that religion fulfills: the cognitive need, that is, the need to understand, the need for explanations and meanings; the substantive need to bring about specific goals, such as rain, good crops and health, by carrying out religious acts; the psychological need to reduce fear and anxiety in situations in which these are provoked.³⁹ Hence, it can be said that religion represents what is perceived as ultimate and central to life.⁴⁰

³³ Fiona Bowie, “Anthropology of Religion” in Robert A. Segal (ed.), *The Blackwell Companion to the Study of Religion*, Blackwell Publishing, 2006, p.6.

³⁴ A.R. Radcliffe-Brown, *op. cit.*, p.153.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ Melford Spiro in M.Benton (ed), *Anthropological Approaches to the Study of Religion*, London, 1966, p.96.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 98.

³⁸ M. E. Spiro, *Culture and Human Nature*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1987, p.197.

³⁹ *Op. cit.*, p.232.

⁴⁰ Micheal Amaladoss, *Walking Together: The Practice of Interreligious Dialogue*, Anand: Gujarat Sahitya Prakash, 1992, pp.125-126.

The religions which give people a promise of immortality give them thereby an assurance which permits them to bear courageously the burdens of their present life and face the most difficult obligations.⁴¹ What makes and keeps a person a social animal is not some herd instinct, but the sense of dependence in the innumerable forms that it takes.⁴² Societies differ in their systems of morals as in other aspects of the social system and what needs to be examined in any given society is the relation of religions of that society to their particular system of morality.⁴³ Law, morality and religion are the three ways of controlling human conduct which in different types of society supplement one another and are combined, in different ways. For the law there are legal sanctions, for morality there are the sanctions of public opinion and conscience, for religion there are religious sanctions. A single wrongful deed may fall under two or three sanctions.⁴⁴ The field covered by morality and religion are different; but either in primitive or in civilized societies there may be a region in which they overlap.⁴⁵

Religion may also help to understand social experiences, institutional practices besides serving as a powerful source for explaining a wide range of social attitudes and behaviors.⁴⁶ It represents an important tie between the individual and the larger social group, both as a basis of association and as an expression of meaning for the individual and the larger social group.⁴⁷ In dealing with the social aspect of religion, there may arise confusion of categories and terminological difficulties. For example, popular references to 'religious community' reflect ambiguities in the current use of the term '*community*.' From Webster one learns that '*community*', derived from the Latin *communitas*, has many meanings, including a body of people having a common organization or interests, or living in the same place under the same laws and regulations; society at large, a commonwealth, a state; joint relationship or ownership; and a common character or commonness.⁴⁸

⁴¹ A.R.Radcliffe Brown, *op. cit.*, p. 174.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p.176.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p.170.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 172.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 173.

⁴⁶ Michele Dillon (ed.), *op.cit.*, p.8.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p.25.

⁴⁸ Joseph M. Kitagawa, 'Religious Communities' in Lindsay Jones (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Religion*, Vol.11 (2), 2005, p.7716.

Professor A.C.Watson opines religion as ‘a social attitude toward the non human environment’ and A.M. Whitehead opines it as ‘the art and the theory of the eternal life of a person, so far as it depends on oneself and on what is permanent in the nature of things.’⁴⁹ Thus, religion is individual and social, individual in that each person has a religious experience of one’s own, and social because it is a function of a person in society. The basic concern of religion is the attempt of a group to reach communion as a body with the deity in which the group believes.⁵⁰ Religion can be explained as a set of beliefs concerning the cause, nature, and purpose of the universe, especially when considered as the creation of a superhuman agency, usually involving devotional and ritual observances, and often containing a moral code governing the conduct of human affairs. It helps to conserve social values.⁵¹

Scholars have sought to escape formalistic, doctrinal definitions and to include the experiential, emotive, and intuitive, as well as ethical factors. These factors seem to be truer to the religious person’s sense of what religion is like from the inside.⁵² Wilfred Cantwell Smith advocates that religion does not refer to a divine object so much as it describes a human condition, one that is repeated phenomenally in all great religious traditions. It elaborates on experiences of the sacred, building them into systems of belief, emotion, action and social relations oriented towards higher realities that supposedly transcend the level of empirical experience and thereby confer ultimate meaning on life.⁵³

The development of religion has taken different forms in different cultures. While some religions place an emphasis on belief others emphasize practice.⁵⁴ Some religions focus on the subjective experience of the religious individual, while others consider the activities of the religious community to be most important. Some claim to be universal, believing their laws and cosmology to be binding for everyone, while others are intended to be practiced only by a closely defined or localized group.⁵⁵ Religion has also been associated with public

⁴⁹ Christopher Augustus Bixel Tirkey, *op.cit.*, p.15.

⁵⁰ John L. McKenzie, *The Roman Catholic Church*, Image Books, U.S.A. 1969, p.19.

⁵¹ *Op. cit.*

⁵² Winston L. King, ‘Religion’ in Mircea Eliade, (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Religion*, Vol.12, Macmillan Publishing Company, New York, 1987, p.7693.

⁵³ James Beckford, ‘Religion’, in Bryan S. Turner (ed.), *The Cambridge Dictionary of Sociology*, Cambridge University Press, UK, 2006, p. 505.

⁵⁴ James Haughton Woods, *Practice and Science of Religion: A Study of Method in Comparative Religion*, Longmans, Green and Co., New York, 1906, pp.103-104.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

institutions such as education, hospitals, the family, government, and political hierarchies.⁵⁶ A religion may include a vivid and inner feeling of personal values. Beliefs as the expressions of values and ideas as portrayals of beliefs need not be substituted for the values themselves. But in every religion there may be the personal thrill of expectation, wonder, surprise and enthusiasm which is called religious emotion. Secondly, it consists of collective values and finds expression in social forms of life.⁵⁷ Then there are values which are a system of supersensible realities at the metaphysical level which is very often mysticism. This level of religion moves in a kind of being which is not confined to groups of people or to things that human beings can touch or feel.⁵⁸

Religion consists of three elements: the natural recognition of a power beyond ones control; the feeling of dependence upon this Power; and relations with this Power.⁵⁹ Uniting these elements into a single proposition, religion may be defined as the natural belief in a Power beyond one's control, and upon whom one feels oneself dependent; that belief and feeling of dependence which prompt to join an organization, perform specific acts, regulate the conduct, with a view to establishing favorable relations between oneself and the Power in question.⁶⁰ Though some scholars attempt to define religion, but many of their definitions have been rejected due to reductionism or oversimplifications.⁶¹ The immense variety of ways in which religions can be defined and put into operation in social forms is not arbitrary but is subject to the influence of social forces.

Leaving aside the claims about the super-empirical realities to which religions are supposedly oriented, there is extensive evidence that social factors help to shape religious belief, experience, practice and organization. This does not mean that religions are merely the dupes of their circumstances but the individual and collective expressions of religion develop in a complex interrelationship with societies and cultures.⁶² Although religion is often claimed to be universal in human societies, agreement about its defining characteristics is far from universal. Some definitions insist that religion must involve belief in supernatural beings; others are content to define religion in terms of the type of functions that it allegedly

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ Varghese Manimala, *Toward Mutual Fecundation and Fulfillment of Religions*, Media House & ISPCCK, New Delhi, 2009, p.274.

⁵⁹ Morris Jastrow Jr., *The Study of Religion*, Scholars Press, USA, 1981, pp.171-172.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ Winston L. King, *op. cit.*, p.283.

⁶² James Beckford, *op. cit.*, p.507.

fulfils for individuals or societies.⁶³ Therefore, in view of the enormous complexity of sociological phenomena, no definition seems to be totally satisfactory.⁶⁴ Thus it is clear that no sharp definition can possibly cover all of the varied phenomena which are generally grouped as religion. But there are certain characteristic forms of human activity and beliefs which are commonly recognized as religious: worship, separation of the sacred from the profane, belief in the soul, belief in gods, acceptance of supernatural revelation and quest for salvation.⁶⁵

2.2. Approaches to the Study of Religion:

Philosophers, psychologists, theologians and sociologists interested in a particular aspect of life have all defined religion in their own way and for their own purposes.⁶⁶ The different approaches are valid in different ways and within their own limitations.⁶⁷

2.2.1 Anthropological

The anthropology of religion involves the study of religious institutions in relation to other social institutions, the comparison of religious beliefs and practices across cultures. It emphasizes that religious traditions are not just conceptual belief systems but rather a way of life in which beliefs are embedded in and formed by the practices of faith- the rituals, symbols and religious artefacts.⁶⁸ It attempts to analyze the system of meanings that exist in religious symbols, their relationship to society, besides it also involves the observation of social life, its structures and patterns and an observation of religion helps to determine the nature of the society in question.⁶⁹ Anthropologists have considered various criteria for defining religion such as a belief in the supernatural or the reliance on ritual, but few claim that these criteria are universally valid.⁷⁰ Although many scholars have rejected religion out of hand as being unscientific, virtually all of them assume that there must be good reasons for the endurance and importance of religion and by implication, assume that religious beliefs and practices are in some sense reasonable. In order to determine the reasons for the

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p.505.

⁶⁴ Madhavi D. Renavikar, *Women and Religion*, Rawat Publications, Jaipur, 2003, p. 27.

⁶⁵ John R. Everett, 'Religion' in *Encyclopedia Americana*, s.v., Vol.23, p.342.

⁶⁶ Varghese Manimala, *op. cit.*, p.227.

⁶⁷ R. Pierce Beaver et.al., (eds.), *A Lion Handbook: The World's Religions*, Lion Publishing, England, 1982, p.10.

⁶⁸ Santanu K. Patro(ed.), *op.cit.*, p.12.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

importance of religion, however, they generally move beyond the literal claims of any religion to look at its latent social functions.⁷¹

Max Muller, a German scholar and an exponent of Naturalism makes religion, ‘a mental faculty or disposition that enables a person to apprehend the infinite under different names and under varying guises.’ This was later modified as ‘religion consists in the perception of the infinite under such manifestations as are able to influence the moral character of people.’⁷² Further he defined religion as ‘a longing or desire to know the unknown and the unknowable’ i.e., the ‘infinite.’⁷³ The central thesis of his theory is that religion arises out of myths and cults which were based upon an original personification of natural phenomena. He traces the dawn of religion to the awakening of the idea of worship in people as they stood in the presence of the infinite, or any object which seemed to suggest it, such as a mountain, a river or the dawn.⁷⁴ He derives the belief in supernatural beings from the sensations aroused in people by overwhelming and at times tragic manifestations of nature. These, for being natural, were calculated to make the mind aware of the ‘over-whelming pressure of the infinite.’ He holds that people first called the striking phenomena of nature by terms which denoted their activities- a ‘thunder bolt’ was called that tears up the soil and that spreads fire, the wind, something that sighs and whistles.’ This description of the phenomena of nature in terms of human or quasi- human activities led to an interpretation of them in anthropomorphic terms, and divine personalities were invented to account for the activities of natural phenomena.⁷⁵

Edward Burnett Tylor views religion as essentially a belief in spiritual beings⁷⁶ and it exists to help people explain events which would otherwise be incomprehensible if it were not for invisible spirits behind everything.⁷⁷ Belief in supernatural being grew out of attempts to explain life and death.⁷⁸ The dead, the distant, all seem real in dreams and trances. He thought that the lifelike appearances of these imagined persons and animals suggest a dual existence for all things: a physical, visible body and a psychic, invisible soul. In sleep, the soul can leave the body and appear to other people and at death the soul permanently leaves the body. Because the dead appear in dreams, people come to believe that the souls of the

⁷¹[http://www.knowledgerush.com/kr/encyclopedia/Magic_\(religion\)/](http://www.knowledgerush.com/kr/encyclopedia/Magic_(religion)/) accessed 19 April 2011.

⁷² Christopher Augustus Bixel Turkey, *op. cit.*, p.14.

⁷³ Raghuvir Sinha, *Essays in Social Anthropology*, Concept Publishing Company, New Delhi, 1990, p. 175.

⁷⁴ Varghese Manimala, *op. cit.*, p. 234.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

⁷⁶ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Edward_Burnett_Tylor accessed 20 September 2012.

⁷⁷ Gregory D. Alles, *op. cit.*, p.7702.

⁷⁸ *Op.cit.*

dead are still around. Thus, in his opinion, the belief in souls was the earliest form of religion called *animism*⁷⁹ which is a theory in social anthropology meaning ‘belief in spiritual beings.’⁸⁰

The sense of spiritualism in its wider acceptance, the general belief in spiritual being, as Tylor writes, is here given to *Animism*. The term is derived from *anima*, a Latin word, which means ‘soul.’⁸¹ Hence Tylor in his book *Primitive Culture* defines it as ‘a philosophy of soul and holds it to be the earliest form of religious being.’⁸² Animist accounts emphasized the assertion by primitive societies of spirit-like qualities to animals whilst naturist theories stressed the attribution of spiritual qualities to natural phenomena.⁸³ From his theory one can assume that religion is a universal feature of human culture, not because all societies foster a belief in spirits, but because all recognize in some form or other, awe-inspiring, extraordinary manifestations of reality.⁸⁴ Another generative factor was the production of fantasies, and the ‘appearances’ at hand in dream and vision.⁸⁵ Tylor takes religion as being both belief and practice and thus deals with intellectual and not social or emotional aspect of religion.⁸⁶

Herbert Spencer did not completely accept Tylor’s theory of animism. According to him the gods were derived from early savage experiences of ghosts who were thought to be the heroic ancestors of a particular tribe or group. The hero- god was thus the earliest deity to be worshipped.⁸⁷ Hence the primitive men had to keep the ancestral ghosts in good humor if they were to act in their favor. He further said that the deceased tribal leaders of great power came to be eventually worshipped as gods and thus the belief in gods originated in this way.⁸⁸ According to him, man’s first reaction to the experience of ghosts is one of fear, and therefore

⁷⁹The belief in the ‘ensoulment’ of nature, and in the emergence of religion from belief in souls and spirits of the dead.

⁸⁰James Beckford, *op cit.*, pp.506-507.

⁸¹Edward Burnett Tylor, *Primitive Culture*, (Vol. I), New York, 1874, p.30.

⁸²Raghuvir Sinha, *op. cit.* , p.176.

⁸³ For a useful survey of various theories of religion including animistic and naturalistic ones, see E.E.Evans-Pritchard, *Theories of Primitive Religion*, Oxford, New York, 1965.

⁸⁴*Op. cit.*,p.183.

⁸⁵Christoph Auffarth, Hubert Mohr, ‘Introduction: the academic study of Religion- Historical and Contemporary Issues’, *The Brill Dictionary of Religion*, p. xv.

⁸⁶*Op.cit.*, p.185.

⁸⁷Varghese Manimala, *op cit.*, p.234.

⁸⁸C.N.Shankar Rao, *Sociology- Principles of Sociology with an Introduction to Social Thought*, 5th Edn., S.Chand & Company Ltd.,New Delhi, 2006, p.418.

fear is the fundamental cause of all religious life.⁸⁹ James George Frazer followed Tylor's theories to a great extent in his book *The Golden Bough*.⁹⁰ He distinguished between magic and religion. Magic is used to influence the natural world in the primitive people's struggle for survival. In contrast religion is faith that the natural world is ruled by one or more deities. The method used was seeking similar beliefs and practices in all societies, especially the more primitive ones, more or less regardless of time and place.⁹¹

Bronislaw Malinowski argued that religion originated from coping with death. He developed some of Durkheim's basic ideas in relation to the specific functions of religion in small-scale societies.⁹² In his study of the Trobriand Islanders of New Guinea, he agreed with Durkheim that religion functioned to reinforce social norms and values and promote social solidarity.⁹³ However, in looking at the specific function of religion for the Trobriand Islanders, he argued that it served the social purpose of 'easing emotional stress, tension and anxiety.'⁹⁴ As Thompson notes: 'in a society full of dangers, uncertainty and a continual threat of injury, disease and death, there was always an element of the unfathomable, the unknowable.'⁹⁵ Religion and magic served to offer an explanation of the events for which other frameworks could not account.'⁹⁶ Thus, in addition to Durkheim's work, Malinowski adds the idea that one of the major functions served by religion is that of 'explaining the inexplicable.'⁹⁷

In this respect, although the Trobriand Islanders were reasonably advanced technologically, there were times when their scientific knowledge, belief system could not account for such things as crop failure and was unable to explain events. When this happened the Islanders turned to a belief system that could provide some sort of explanation.⁹⁸ In such situations, recourse was frequently made to a frame of reference that could provide

⁸⁹*Op. cit.*

⁹⁰http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Golden_Bough accessed 20 September 2012.

⁹¹Paulos M.Gregorios, *Religion and Dialogue*, The Rev. Ashish Amos of the Indian Society, ISPCK, 2000, p.16.

⁹² Chris Livesey, *op. cit.*, p.8.

⁹³*Ibid.*

⁹⁴Bronislaw Malinowski D.Sc., *Crime and Custom in Savage Society*, Littlefield, Adams & Co, Paterson, New Jersey, 1959, p.i.

⁹⁵Raymond. J. J., Thomson Seeger, Anglican, 'Perspectives on Science and Christian Faith, *The Journal of the American Scientific Affiliation*, 1986, pp.131-132.

⁹⁶*Ibid.*

⁹⁷ Chris Livesey, *op. cit.*, p.8.

⁹⁸*Ibid.*

explanations - namely, religion and magic.⁹⁹ Malinowski noted that ‘people in all societies are faced with anxiety and uncertainty. They may have skills and knowledge to take care of many of their needs, but knowledge is not sufficient to prevent illness, accidents, natural disasters and the most frightening prospect of death itself. Consequently, there is an intense desire for immortality.’ He saw religion as born from the universal need to find comfort in inevitable times of stress. Through religious belief, people affirm their convictions that death is neither real nor final, that people are endowed with a personality that persists even after death. In religious ceremony, humans can commemorate and communicate with those who have died, and in these ways achieve some measure of comfort. Malinowski saw that religion is not only born from the universal need to find comfort in inevitable times of stress but it helps a person to live life meaningfully all the time.¹⁰⁰

Social anthropologists such as Edward Evans-Pritchard did extensive ethnographic studies among the Azande and Nuer peoples who were considered ‘primitive’ by society and early scholars.¹⁰¹ His book *Witchcraft, Oracles and Magic among the Azande* is about the people of Central Africa, an attempt to make intelligible a number of beliefs, by showing how they form a comprehensible system of thought, and how it is related to social activities, social structure and the life of the individual.¹⁰² Throughout his work he presents Zande oracles, magic and witchcraft as a logical, coherent set of beliefs and practices.¹⁰³ He was happy to enter into discussions of rationality with his Zande informants and never patronized them by assuming that they were incapable of making sound judgments or defending their beliefs and practices.

An example was his encounter with witchcraft.¹⁰⁴ According to the Azande, moving lights emanate from the body of the sleeping witch as the activated witchcraft substance stalks its prey.¹⁰⁵ He writes: ‘I have only once seen witchcraft on its path.... I never discovered its real origin, which was possibly a handful of grass lit by someone on his way to defecate, but the coincidence of the direction along which the light moved and the subsequent

⁹⁹*Ibid.*

¹⁰⁰*Ibid.*

¹⁰¹http://en.wikipedia.org/E._E._Evans-Pritchard#qsrc=3044 accessed 20 September 2012.

¹⁰²Fiona Bowie, *op.cit.*, p.13.

¹⁰³*Ibid.*

¹⁰⁴*Ibid.*

¹⁰⁵*Ibid.*

death accorded well with Zande ideas.¹⁰⁶In reflecting afterwards on this event, Pritchard sought to reassert his own Western, scientific outlook. The alternative would have been to accept an Azande view of the world based on the belief that human beings can be witches and can project a visible witchcraft substance which has the power to kill other human beings.¹⁰⁷ While not wishing to go this far, he did not simply dismiss the world view of his Zande informants as primitive or inferior. He allowed himself to be drawn into its logic and to reason from within Zande categories of thought.¹⁰⁸

Pritchard shows how any action in society is explained in terms of respective cosmology and belief system in a particular religious tradition. Studying the culture and religion, he saw the people as different, but not primitive and argued that the religion of the Azande cannot be understood without the social context and its social function. Witchcraft and oracles played a great role in solving disputes among the Azande.¹⁰⁹ He also studied the neighboring Nuer people who had an abstract monotheistic faith, somewhat similar to Christianity and Judaism, though it included lesser spirits. They had also totemism. He rightly pointed out the importance of the primitive people of the Nuer of eastern Sudan, a naked-cattle rearing people. ‘The Nuer are undoubtedly a primitive people by the usual standards of reckoning, but their religious thought is remarkably sensitive, refined, and intelligent. It is also highly complex.’¹¹⁰

Clifford Geertz, has put forward one of the social-scientific approaches to religion in an essay titled *Religion as a Cultural System* and spelled out a definition of religion. His main focus is the meaning of religious symbols.¹¹¹According to him, religion is ‘a system of symbols which acts to establish powerful, pervasive and long-lasting moods and motivations in people by formulating concepts at a general order of existence and clothing these conceptions with such a feeling of factuality that the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic.’¹¹² This definition suggests that every group and every individual may have a religion, even if no one in that group believes in god because every group has some overall outline that all its members share in common, to make sense out of life and guide behavior.

¹⁰⁶E.E.Evans-Pritchard, *Witchcraft, Oracles and Magic among the Azande*, [1937], Eva Gilles, (ed.), Abridged Edn., Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1976,p.11.

¹⁰⁷ Fiona Bowie, *op. cit.*

¹⁰⁸*Ibid.*, p.14.

¹⁰⁹[http:// en.wikipedia.org /Witchcraft#qsrc=3044](http://en.wikipedia.org/Witchcraft#qsrc=3044) accessed 20 September 2012.

¹¹⁰E.E. Evans Pritchard, *Nuer Religion*, Clarendon Press, Oxford Publications, 1956, p.311.

¹¹¹T. Swami Raju, *op. cit.*, pp.24-25.

¹¹²Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, Basic Books, New York, 1973, p.90.

He understood religious traditions as ‘symbol systems’¹¹³ and saw religion as one of the cultural systems of a society. Geertz views on religion in its cultural dimension contributes valuable insights into cultural realities for the interpretation of religion as a ‘symbol-system’ as he gives crucial importance to what religious people say they believe, and thus to the meanings and metaphysical systems derived from these perceptions, that they affirm. With symbols Geertz meant a carrier that embodies conception because he saw religion and culture as systems of communication.

Sacred symbols are seen by him as possessing a unique double quality as they provide a representation of the way things are- a cosmology; on the other hand, they provide a programme for human action- ethics or aesthetics. He identifies, ‘symbols’ as social elements which are available to empirical study. Geertz followed Weber when he wrote that ‘man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun and the analysis of it to be therefore not an experimental science in search of law but an interpretive one in search of meaning.’¹¹⁴ He advocated that mere explanations to describe religions and cultures are not sufficient. Interpretations are needed too and that he called thick descriptions to interpret symbols by observing them in use. He suggests that religion serves as a template in establishing meaning. It not only interprets reality but also shapes it. The template of religion ‘fits’ experiences of everyday life and ‘makes sense’ of them; in turn, this meaning shapes the experiences themselves and orients the individual’s actions.¹¹⁵

Talal Asad sees Geertz’s emphasis on the symbolic as too abstract, as too far removed from the social, historical, and political context. He challenges the assumption that religion can even be studied as a cross-cultural category and concludes that ‘there cannot be a universal definition of religion, not only because its constituent elements and relationships are historically specific, but because that definition is itself the historical product of discursive processes.’¹¹⁶ He also takes up similar themes in addressing issues of truth and ideology and suggests that Geertz’s arguments ignore the political or power aspects of the creation of truth. It is not only symbols which create a sense of truth but the full range of

¹¹³*Ibid.*, pp. 91-125.

¹¹⁴http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Theories_of_religion#cite_note-56 accessed 20 September 2012.

¹¹⁵Meredith B. McGuire, *Religion, The Social Context*, Fifth Edn., Wadsworth Thomson Learning, USA, 2002, p.27.

¹¹⁶Talal Asad, *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam*, Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993, p.29.

historically contextualized political and religious sanctions which enforce acceptance and conformity with the socially accepted truths.¹¹⁷

Claude Levi-Strauss analyzed the complex and interrelated systems of society, understanding religious structures as the basis of social phenomena, such as kinship, marriage, language and maintained that seemingly dissimilar belief systems had the same underlying structures.¹¹⁸ His structuralist approach has been criticized as reducing religious phenomena to mere systems of culture.¹¹⁹ It cannot fully explain religious myths, symbols, folklore and beliefs, although seeing religious traditions as part of the structure of cultures can demonstrate the ways in which religion is used to communicate knowledge and control behavior.¹²⁰ For him, a person's categories of thought have to do with 'the hope of transcending the opposition between' nature and culture.¹²¹

No matter how anthropologists may define religion, they characteristically see it as much more than a set of abstract ideas and beliefs. It is also a system of ordered social interaction, not only between a person and supernatural beings but also between people and their fellow human beings.¹²² The identity of the performers and participants in religious acts, the relationships among them, the nature of their acts, the values expressed in myths and rites and the occasions upon which myths are told and rites are performed are all regarded as information vital to the understanding of religion. From observation of these matters, inferences are drawn regarding the role of religion.¹²³

2.2.2 Psychological

The psychology of religion is the approach to the study of religion concerned with what psychological principles are operative in religious communities and practitioners. It is the application of the theories and methods of psychology to understanding religion.¹²⁴ It emphasizes the varieties of religious experience, the importance of that experience for the individual, the range of religious manifestations and places the utmost priority on the

¹¹⁷Helen K. Bond, et.al., (eds.), *A Companion to Religious Studies and Theology*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 2003, p.91.

¹¹⁸ Santanu K. Patro, *op.cit.*, p.13.

¹¹⁹*Ibid.*

¹²⁰*Ibid.*

¹²¹ Claude Levi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind*, London, 1965, p.91.

¹²²J.C.F, W.H. Normaan, *The Philosophy of Religion*, Oklahoma, 1967, p.422.

¹²³*Ibid.*, p.423.

¹²⁴Roderick Main, "Psychology of Religion", in Robert A. Segal, (ed.), *The Blackwell Companion to the Study of Religion*, Blackwell Publishing, 2006, p.147.

person's religious quests. Psychologists of religion go beyond reason and recognize that there is a force, consciousness, which tries to apprehend the infinite in a limited way.¹²⁵ They consider that religion deals primarily with those human experiences that go beyond one's understanding. This discipline is also concerned with those religious happenings which take place and forces which exist within the human soul. These inner experiences are of the very essence of religion; outward forms and observances are of themselves lifeless and not real at all.¹²⁶ This science attempts to accurately describe the details, origins, and uses of religious beliefs and behaviors. While religion and spirituality play a role in many people's lives, it is uncertain how they lead to outcomes that are at times positive and at other times negative.¹²⁷ The phrase 'psychology of religion' suggests a one-way relationship, with psychology as the method of study and religion as the object of study.¹²⁸ A few issues of concern to the psychologists of religion are the psychological nature of religious conversion, the making of religious decisions, religion and happiness and the psychological factors in evaluating religious claims.

U.S. psychologist, William James is regarded by most psychologists of religion as the founder of the field. His 1902 *Gifford lectures* and book *The Varieties of Religious Experience* considered to be the classic work in the field, examined religion from a psycho-philosophical perspective. In it he defined religious experience as gradual, unified consciousness, through which the person grasps spiritual realities.¹²⁹ He considered personal religious experience to be the heart of religion and defined it as 'the feelings, acts and experiences of individuals in their solitude, so far as they apprehend themselves to stand in relation to whatever they may consider the divine.'¹³⁰ This experience which is psychological and subjective becomes the basis for religion as a phenomenon and as a social institution.¹³¹ He would state that 'the religious life consists of the belief that there is an unseen order and that one's supreme good lies in harmoniously adjusting oneself thereto.'¹³² His essay *The Will to Believe* defends the rationality of faith.

¹²⁵ W. Schmidt, *The Origin and Growth of Religion: Facts and Theories*, (trans.) H.J. Rose, Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1931, pp.3-4.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, p.149.

¹²⁹ Santanu K. Patro, *op. cit.*, p.13.

¹³⁰ James Beckford, *op. cit.*, pp.31-32.

¹³¹ Helen K. Bond, et.al., (eds.), *A Companion to Religious Studies and Theology*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 2003, p.32.

¹³² Christopher Augustus Bixel Tirkey, *op. cit.*, p.13.

William James discusses religion as arising from a broad range of human experiences that are analogous to experiences in other realms. Religious emotions are the same as other emotions; what makes them religious is that their object is religious.¹³³ He distinguished between institutional and personal religion where the former refers to the religious group or organization, and plays an important part in a society's culture. In personal religion the individual has mystical experience, can be experienced regardless of the culture. In studying personal religious experience, he made a distinction between healthy-minded and sick-souled religiousness. Individuals predisposed to healthy-mindedness tend to ignore the evil in the world and focus on the positive and the good.¹³⁴ In contrast, individuals predisposed to having a sick-souled religion are unable to ignore evil and suffering, and need a unifying experience, religious or otherwise, to reconcile good and evil. His hypothesis of pragmatism stems from the efficacy of religion. If an individual believes in and performs religious activities, and those actions happen to work, then that practice appears the proper choice for the individual. However, if the processes of religion have little efficacy, then there is no rationality for continuing the practice.¹³⁵

Sigmund Freud was another influential figure in the field of psychology and religion who focused on neurosis as a psychological origin of religious beliefs and used his psychoanalytic theory to explain religious beliefs, practices, and rituals in order to justify the role of religion in the development of human culture. According to him, religion is a form of mass neurosis. It exists only as a response to deep emotional conflicts and weaknesses. Since it is nothing more but a by-product of psychological distress, it should be possible to eliminate the illusion of religion by alleviating that distress. He felt religion was an escape and a fallacy, which ought not to be propagated. Freud attempted to explain why religion persists in spite of the lack of evidence for its tenets and asserted that religion is a largely unconscious neurotic response to repression. By repression he meant, civilized society demands that all desires cannot be fulfilled immediately, but that they have to be repressed.

¹³³*Op. cit.*, p.33.

¹³⁴ James Beckford, *op. cit.*, p.32.

¹³⁵*Ibid.*

Rational arguments to a person holding a religious conviction will not change the neurotic response of a person.¹³⁶

Religion arose out of frustration and guilt and he believed that these early practices gradually became transformed into the worship of deities or gods modeled after the father. Thus religion is a defense, a response to the experience of utter helplessness, a fantasy that makes life tolerable despite the hardships and it even negates death as the final end of human life.¹³⁷ Religion operates as an escape mechanism for infantile jealousies and is born of a wish for protection from the terrors of life and nature. All forms of worship and all dogmatic beliefs are wish projections.¹³⁸

Freud in *The Future of an Illusion* states that ideas about God serve as a compensatory function. So people who are oppressed with a sense of helplessness may deal with that by invoking the idea of a good and powerful God. However, it is equally possible that people's ideas about God are consistent with their personal problems rather than a compensation for them. Thus, someone who felt helpless might be tempted to overemphasize the arbitrariness of God's judgement and someone who felt excessively guilty might overemphasize the severity of God's commands. Images of God often arise from and are distorted by, key personal relationships.¹³⁹ Human beings are active collaborators in their religious faith, not just passive recipients. Rituals, worship, healing, in both traditional and charismatic church contexts, engage on all levels: physical, emotional, volitional, intellectual, spiritual and social.¹⁴⁰

Freud adds that humans feel a need for and invent a source of security and forgiveness in God. He views the idea of God as being a version of the father image, and religious belief as at bottom infantile and neurotic. He attacked religion more generally and asserted that religion is rooted in the wish for immortality and the return to the guidance of a powerful father in an imagined primary family. It is a consolation for suffering. Religious beliefs are based on desires that cannot be challenged and they lie in the infantile past of the individual when he sought protection from his parents. Later on, the fear of death will bring back the old anxieties and the longing to be protected by the father. This irrational origin of religion gives

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*

¹³⁸ Varghese Manimala, *op.cit.*, p.235.

¹³⁹ Fraser Watts, et.al., *Christian Ministry*, Routledge, London, 2002, p. 17.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p.20.

it the odour of sanctity. Authoritarian religion, Freud believed, is dysfunctional and alienates man from himself. At various points in his writings, he suggested that religion was a means of giving structure to social groups, and an attempt to control the outside world. Freud noted in *Civilization and Its Discontents*, that the suffering caused by external nature, physical frailties, and the actions of fellow human beings helped gestate soteriological responses. Religion was nothing but psychology projected into the external world. There is wide spread agreement with Freud when he suggested that events in infancy can have long-lasting and powerful effects on beliefs and practices in adult life. Helpless and dependent on parents for many years, children inevitably and unconsciously view their parents as all knowing and all powerful. When as adults they feel out of control or in need, they may unconsciously go back to their infantile feelings and then look to gods or magic to do what they cannot do for themselves, just as they looked to their parents to take care of their needs. This feeling of security that a child experiences from his / her parents, can lead one to have a strong religious, transcendental experience of the divine later in life. Thus in the opinion of Freud, religion emerges as a psychological necessity, but the religious attitude is infantile, imprisoned, and immature.¹⁴¹

Freud acknowledges that religion has played an important role in the development of civilization through helping persons come to terms with both the outer forces of nature and the internal forces of instinctual life. Above all, religion has helped persons to repress anti-social aggressive desires. But these benefits have been obtained at the cost of guilt and neurosis and of living in a state of illusion, where religious phenomena have been valued because they have been wished for, not because they have been demonstrated to be real. In fact, religion has the effect of keeping persons in a state of child-like dependence, in which they are unable to face reality.¹⁴² Religion seems to have performed services for human civilization. It has contributed towards the taming of the asocial instincts.

Religion, Freud claims, has ruled civilization for many thousands of years and had time to show what it can achieve. If it had succeeded in altering conditions and made the majority of people happy and reconciled them to life no one would dream of changing the situation. But, Freud asks, what do we see happening? . . . Most importantly, however, Freud thinks that the acceptance of religion as the universal neurosis, safeguard believers who have

¹⁴¹ Inger Furseth & Pal Repstad, *op. cit.*, p.41.

¹⁴² Roderick Main, "Psychology of Religion", in Robert A. Segal (ed.), *op. cit.*, p.155.

a high risk of certain neurotic illnesses. That is, their acceptance of the universal neurosis spares them the task of constructing a personal one.¹⁴³ Freud must have been impressed by the universal nature of religious phenomena, being on the interface between the biological and social realms. No doubt he suspected that religion, like literature, articulated in a disguised way some of the psychological truths he discovered in his own work.

The Swiss psychoanalyst Carl Gustaf Jung adopted a more sympathetic posture to religion and more concerned with a positive appreciation of religious symbolism. He considered the question of the existence of God to be unanswerable by the psychologists and adopted a kind of agnosticism. Where for Freud symbols are distinguished references to purely instinctual processes, for Jung they are the best possible expressions of unknowable processes that are as much nonmaterial, or spiritual, as bodily.¹⁴⁴ Jung saw religion as a projection outwards and upwards of inner neurotic conflicts and regarded it as a force for good. He suggested that religion is ‘one of the earliest and most universal expressions of the human mind’ and it helps people resolve their inner conflicts and attain maturity. The human psyche, in fact, is ‘natively religious.’ Humankind needs ‘that which the living religions of every age have given.’¹⁴⁵

Erik Erikson is best known for his theory of psychological development which has its roots in the psychoanalytic importance of identity in personality. He applied his theories to the biographies of two major religious thinkers, *Martin Luther*¹⁴⁶ and *Mohandas Gandhi*¹⁴⁷ and considered religion to be an important influence in successful personality development because they are the primary way that cultures promote the virtues associated with each stage of life and religious rituals facilitate this development. He postulated an eight-stage life cycle, each stage of which represents a crisis in human relationships that generates virtues and vices, affects later stages and is evinced in religious behavior. He believed that religious attitudes largely have their origin in the mother-child relationship, but did not thereby consider religious attitudes immature. On the contrary, he considered that the religious life

¹⁴³<http://www.faiht.net.org/up/Science/Psychology/Freud.htm> accessed 12 June 2012.

¹⁴⁴*Op.cit.*, p. 156.

¹⁴⁵ Helen K. Bond, *op.cit.*, p.41.

¹⁴⁶Erik H. Erikson, *Young Man Luther: A Study in Psychoanalysis and History*, New York: Norton, 1958.

¹⁴⁷Erik H. Erikson, *Gandhi's Truth*, New York: Norton, 1969.

can be psychologically healthy and even necessary for growth into full psychological and social maturity.¹⁴⁸

Studies on the influence of religion on physical health suggest that religion usually but not always play a positive role. A positive influence has been found in research involving subjects of all ages, both genders, and a variety of religions (i.e., Protestants, Catholics, Jews, Buddhists, and Muslims). The positive effects of religious and spiritual experience on health are based on the assumption that the experience itself is positive and healthy. Religion and spirituality can also be pathological: authoritarian or blindly obedient, superficially literal, strictly extrinsic or self-beneficial, or conflict ridden and fragmented. Indeed, such unhealthy religion or spirituality can have serious implications on physical health, having been associated with child abuse and neglect, intergroup conflict and violence, and false perceptions of control, with resulting medical neglect.¹⁴⁹

Research investigating mental health indicates a similar protective effect of religion. In a review of 139 research studies using quantified measures of religious commitment,¹⁵⁰ found that only 39% reported any associations at all, but of these, 72% were positive. Measures of the religious variable in these studies included prayer, social support like fellowship, companionship and relationship with God, participation in religious ceremonies and meaning such as values, beliefs and ethics. Lifestyle can also act as a mechanism through which religion and spirituality have their positive effects. For example, religious commitment can lead a person to adopt better health-related behaviors, such as abstinence from smoking, alcohol and drug use and risky sexual behaviors. Indeed, religious groups that follow a strict behavioral lifestyle tend to have a better health status than the population as a whole.¹⁵¹

Some researchers have postulated that religious and spiritual factors might positively affect various physiological mechanisms involved in health.¹⁵² Positive emotions such as forgiveness, hope, contentment, love might benefit the individual through their impact on

¹⁴⁸ Donald Capps (ed.), *Freud and Freudians on Religion: A Reader*, New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2001, pp. 121-203.

¹⁴⁹ R.F. Paloutzian & L.A. Kirkpatrick (eds.), Religious influences on personal and social well-being, [Special issue], *Journal of Social Issues*, 1995, 51(2).

¹⁵⁰ D.B. Larson, et al., Associations between Dimensions of Religious Commitment and Mental Health, *American Journal of Psychiatry*, 1978, pp. 149, 557- 559.

¹⁵¹ P.C. Hill, E.M. Butter, The Role of Religion in Promoting Physical Health, *Journal of Psychology and Christianity*, 1995, pp.14, 141-155.

¹⁵² D.B. Larson, J.P. Swyers, & M.E. McCullough (eds.), *Scientific Research on Spirituality and Health, A Consensus Report*, Rockville, MD, National Institute for Healthcare Research, Levin J.S., & Chatters, L.M., 1998.

neural pathways that connect to the endocrine and immune systems. Negative emotional states as anger and fear can lead to arousal of the sympathetic nervous system (SNS) and the hypothalamic-pituitary adrenal axis (HPA) systems involved in mobilizing the body's energy during stressful situations. Such excitability can produce a stress response in the body. The stress response, in turn, can lead over time to inhibition of the immune system, increased risk of infection, increased blood pressure, impaired healing response, increased risk of stroke and heart attack. Meditation, forgiveness, and certain religious and spiritual thoughts might reduce the arousal in the SNS and HPA¹⁵³; increasing immune competence and restoring physiological stability.

Religion is an important contributor to physical and mental health but it also supports the models linking social support, such as the support religious communities provide, with positive health outcomes. For many religious people, religion, ethics and morals are inseparable. The Greek poet-philosopher Pindar defined ethics as 'What we should do by virtue of who we are.'¹⁵⁴ Religion can also be thought of as a value system. According to Milton Rokeach 'A value system is a learned organization of principles and rules to help one choose between alternatives, resolve conflicts, and make decisions.' But there are other value systems as well. Religious values may be viewed as principles or narratives. As principles, religious values are taken as universals. Principles can be defined as 'general action guides specifying that some type of action is prohibited, required or permitted in certain circumstances.'¹⁵⁵ For the believer, religious values provide a coherent foundation for all of life and should be applied in all situations, and little or no distinction is made between believers and non-believers. The sacredness of life is an example of such a principle. Because life comes from God, no human being has the right to end life. Therefore, based on religious values as principles, one might argue that neither abortions nor withholding or withdrawing life-sustaining interventions is morally acceptable.¹⁵⁶

Many religious practices like meditation, centering prayer, contemplative activities elicit what is called in the literature the 'relaxation response' which has been shown to contribute to a reduction in sympathetic nervous system activity, reduced muscle tension, reduced activity of anterior pituitary/adrenocortical axis, lower blood pressure and heart rate,

¹⁵³CE.Thoresen (ed.), Spirituality and health [Special issue],*Journal of Health Psychology*, 1999, 4(3).

¹⁵⁴Laurel Arthur Burton & Marcia Sue Dewolf Bosek, 'When Religion May Be an Ethical Issue' in *Journal of Religion and Health*, Vol. 39, No. 2, 2000, pp. 97-106. Springer Available from URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/27511432> .Accessed 12 June 2012.

¹⁵⁵*Ibid.*

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

and changes in brain waves. All of these relaxation mediated effects contribute significantly to better health.¹⁵⁷ Religion has been shown to contribute to reduced involvement in unhealthy behaviors: alcohol abuse, smoking, drug abuse, unsafe sex, suicide attempts, violence prone behavior, and an unhealthy diet. In many cases this reduced involvement begins in childhood and adolescence and so may affect health throughout the life cycle. Religious attendance increases survival by improving and maintaining good health behaviors, mental health and social relationships.¹⁵⁸ Research has shown that people involved in a religious practice enjoy increased social support that has been increasingly recognized as playing a significant role in mental and physical health.¹⁵⁹

Research consistently finds that frequent religious involvement is also associated with more extensive social support networks and this is consistently found to be connected with a variety of positive physical and psychological health outcomes.¹⁶⁰ Religion contributes to a sense of coherence and an experience of life as meaningful as well as to a hopeful outlook on life, all of which are associated with better physical and mental health.¹⁶¹ The same is true of the positive effects of hope and optimism that have been found to be associated with better health and intrinsic religiosity. The latter has been associated with higher self-esteem, less anxiety and depression. These psychological conditions have been associated with decreased immune system competency and increased susceptibility to illness. Religiosity has also been found to be a powerful coping mechanism and so may well serve as a buffer against the deleterious effects of stress on the body.¹⁶² In addition, there is the interaction effect between mental and physical well-being. People who feel better physically tend to feel better mentally and less anxiety and depression have been shown to contribute to better physical health, probably through the effect emotional state has on the immune system. To the extent that

¹⁵⁷H. Benson, *Timeless Healing: the Power and Biology of Belief*, New York, Scribner, 1996, p.23.

¹⁵⁸T. Chamberlain, and C.Hall, *Realized Religion*, Annals of Behavioral Medicine, Templeton Foundation Press, Philadelphia, 2000, 23, 68-74.

¹⁵⁹J. Cacioppo, et al., Loneliness and Health: Potential Mechanisms, Psychosomatic Medicine, *Journal of Religion and Health*, (Vol. 3), No.4, 2004, 2002, 64, 407-417.

¹⁶⁰W.Strawbridge, et.al., *Annals of Behavioral Medicine, Journal of Religion and Health*, (Vol. 3), No.4, 2001, pp. 23, 68-74.

¹⁶¹A. Antonovsky, *Unraveling the Mystery of Health*, San Francisco, Jossey-Bass, 1987.

¹⁶²K. I. Pargament, *op. cit.*

religion contributes to one, it indirectly contributes to the other. To the extent it contributes independently to both, there may be a potentiating interaction effect.¹⁶³

2.2.3. Philosophical

Philosophy of religion is another branch of knowledge concerned with questions regarding religion, including the nature and existence of God, the examination of religious experiences, analysis of religious language and texts, the relationship of religion and science.¹⁶⁴ Philosophers of religion examine and critique the epistemological, logical, aesthetic and ethical foundations inherent in the claims of a religion. Questions studied in the philosophy of religion include what gives reason to believe that a miracle has occurred, the relationship between faith and reason, between morality and religion, the status of religious language and petitionary prayer.¹⁶⁵ It is a system for understanding meaning of life, the universe, and one's place in it. Religion claims to be more than a certain kind of experience, claims ultimate truth- to be in close harmony with ultimate reality. Thought may be secondary to feeling or will, as religious teachers often affirm but it does not mean that religion implies an interpretation of reality.¹⁶⁶ More specifically, it implies an interpretation of the meaning of reality in terms of its value to and for human beings, implies a consideration of the meaning of the universe for well being and reckoning with the possibility that something at the core of reality does respond to and satisfy human demands for life and fulfillment of destiny.

The task of the philosophy of religion, which is to examine, criticize, and assess the validity of at least the human elements in religious experience is thus twofold: it has the function of interpreting, evaluating and integrating the data of religious experience as these are manifest in human behavior.¹⁶⁷ The passionate detachment of the philosophical attitude differentiates it from the religious attitude. The religionist is passionately committed to a tradition and the claim for the divine element which informs and is symbolized by that tradition and its faith. In the light of this distinction, however, it becomes clear that the respective attitudes of the philosopher and the religionist need not be mutually exclusive, nor

¹⁶³Jones, James W., 'Religion, Health, and the Psychology of Religion: How the Research on Religion and Health Helps Us Understand Religion' *Journal of Religion and Health*, (Vol. 3), No.4, 2004, pp.317-328, Available from Springer URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/27512816>. Accessed 12 June 2012.

¹⁶⁴ J.C.F., W.H.Normaan, *op.cit.*, p.11.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

need their respective tasks conflict. Insofar as religion aims at the unification of life- perhaps of all beings- it is important initially to make a distinction between primary experience and reflective experience. The primary religious experience is in the mode of an encounter. The person is grasped-perhaps even overwhelmed- and shaken by an experience suffused with fear, wonder, awe and reverence.¹⁶⁸ Religious writings, the world over have recorded types and elements of this experience and have indicated that encounters of this type can take place under various conditions. Sacred rocks, trees, groves, animals, artifacts etc. are worshipped because such experiences have occurred in conjunction with or through them; thereby these objects are set apart from what is profane or unholy and are felt to be sacred by the individual or group. Certain acts or rituals are often the carriers of this experience.¹⁶⁹

Ivan Strenski says that in the phrase ‘philosophy of religion,’ both the term ‘philosophy’ and ‘religion’ need to be analyzed. By ‘philosophy,’ Strenski refers to analytic philosophy. The central questions in textbooks, classes and journals of analytic philosophy of religion concern whether one can prove that God does or does not exist, whether the belief in God’s existence can or cannot be reconciled with the reality of evil in the world, the relationship between faith in God and reason and the problem of miracles as violations of the laws of nature.¹⁷⁰ Moreover, it is not unusual for textbooks on analytic philosophy of religion to work on issues drawn specifically from Christian theology: the nature of God (omniscience, omnipotence, etc.), prayer, revelation and the existence of the soul.

Analytic philosophers of religion often describe what they do as the study of ‘generic theism,’ by which they mean that they investigate issues that are common to theists generally, whether they are Jews, Christians, Muslims or Hindus.¹⁷¹ Strenski’s suggestion that ‘the sacred’ would be a more inclusive way to understand the object of religious affections may be a step in this direction.¹⁷² His primary critique of philosophy of religion is that it assumes what he calls a cognitivist definition, that is, it defines religion in terms of religious words, beliefs, creeds, confessions and other forms of religious discourse. Analytic philosophers of religion presume that what matters about religion is the propositions that religious people assume or assert. He recommends that philosophers of religion instead take as their proper

¹⁶⁸*Ibid.*

¹⁶⁹*Ibid.*, p.11.

¹⁷⁰Kevin Schilbrack, “New Directions for Philosophy of Religion: Four Proposals”, *Studies in Religion/Sciences Religieuses*, 2012. Accessed 9 May 2012. Available from <http://sir.sagepub.com>.

¹⁷¹*Ibid.*

¹⁷²*Ibid*

object 'lived religion', including affiliation, practices, emotional life, bodies and culture.¹⁷³ Caputo defines religion as 'the love of God.'¹⁷⁴ The definition focuses on love and thereby brings into philosophy of religion all the phenomenological aspects of religious affections. By defining religion in terms of God, this approach is no more inclusive of the varieties of religions around the world; it is still concealed as generic theism.

According to Emmanuel Kant religion is 'the recognition of all our duties as divine commands.'¹⁷⁵ It is a collection of cultural systems, belief systems and worldviews that establish symbols and relate humanity to spirituality and sometimes to moral values. Many religions have narratives, symbols, traditions and sacred histories that are intended to give meaning to life or to explain the origin of life and the universe. They tend to derive morality, ethics, religious laws or a preferred lifestyle from their ideas about the cosmos and human nature. George Galloway in his book *Philosophy of Religion* opines that 'religion may be taken as universal which touches the inner soul of a person and which goes beyond all distinctions of class or group such that the ways of deliverance pointed out by it are applicable to all and not only to a few of a particular class or group.'¹⁷⁶

Every religion in its own way tries to satisfy the inner soul of its followers and its principles and practices are never meant for any particular group of people only.¹⁷⁷ 'No one can understand mankind without understanding the faiths of humanity. Sometimes naïve, penetratingly noble, crude, subtle, cruel, suffused by an overpowering gentleness and love, sometimes world-affirming, negating the world, inward-looking, universalistic and missionary minded, sometimes shallow and often profound religion has permeated human life since early and obscure times.'¹⁷⁸ Although social sciences are concerned with religion as a social construct, relating to issues that arise from human beings' interrelations with each other and the socially constructed environment in which they live, analysis of religion could take seriously the internal perceptions and understandings of reality. The theory must also balance the societal aspects of religion with the role it plays for individuals.¹⁷⁹

2.2.4. Theological

¹⁷³*Ibid.*

¹⁷⁴*Ibid.*

¹⁷⁵Christopher Augustus Bixel Tirkey, *op.cit.*,p.13.

¹⁷⁶George Galloway, *Philosophy of Religion*, T &T Clark, Edinburgh, 1956, p.138.

¹⁷⁷Kedar Nath Tiwari, *Comparative Religion*, Motilal Banarsidass Publishers Pvt. Ltd., Delhi, 1997, p.220.

¹⁷⁸*Ibid.*

¹⁷⁹Helen K.Bond, *op.cit.*, p.92.

Another way to study religion is to take a theological approach which refers to the branch of Christian theology that attempts to theologially and biblically evaluate the phenomena of religion. Theologians often consider the existence of God as self-evident and explain religious claims by rationalization. A theologian elaborates rationally on the nature of God.¹⁸⁰ In the later twentieth century, scholars discussed theologies of religion in terms of a three-fold typology: exclusivist, inclusivist, and pluralist. Exclusivism is the view that only one religion is true and all others are false. Such exclusivism can take either an extremist or a moderate viewpoint. In fact, neither the pluralist nor the inclusivist could avoid being exclusivist at some point. Mundane and the transcendent aspects of religious life cannot be described by the concept 'religion' but with two separated concepts namely 'cumulative tradition' and 'faith'. If faith is a total orientation of human person to the transcendent, belief transfers that lofty relation into the mundane level of operation of the mind.¹⁸¹

Inclusivism is the view that one religion contains the highest truth but the elements of that truth may be found in other traditions; these elements prepare adherents of those traditions to accept fuller revelation when they encounter it and sincere devotion to those truths may prove saving for those in other religions.¹⁸² This position was popularized by the Roman Catholic theologian, Karl Rahner who raised an important issue about the salvation of those who have never had the opportunity to listen to the gospel of Jesus. To Rahner people can be saved apart from allegiance to the Christian church as it is God in christ who reaches out to the individual in his own personal religious history to save him. Also the religion is included in God's plan of salvation which God has ordained for the communication of his grace.¹⁸³

John Hick in his book *God and the Universe of Faiths* 1973, opines that in the evolutionary scheme of things in which at isolated ages and places the early religions are succeeded by higher religions, it is the same message of God that comes distinctly to a particular group but in a different form from the others. According to him 'Religious pluralism is emphatically not a form of relativism. Challenging the older view that Christianity must be seen at the center of religions he says, God must be seen at the center of

¹⁸⁰K.P.Aleaz, *Theology of Religions, Bermingham Papers and other Essays*, Moumita Publishers & Distributors, Calcutta, 1998, p.13.

¹⁸¹*Ibid.*

¹⁸²*Ibid.*

¹⁸³*Ibid.*

religions¹⁸⁴ and the pluralistic contention is that although religions have different outward forms, all have the same source. While theological approaches are significant in and of themselves as statements of particular forms of believing, they cannot serve as definitions of religion(s) usable beyond those particular traditions.¹⁸⁵

The German Protestant theologian Rudolf Otto treated the importance of religious experience, more specifically experiences that are both fascinating and terrifying. He saw religion as emerging from these experiences. Otto focused on moments that he called numinous which means ‘wholly other’ and saw religion as emerging from these experiences. He asserted that these experiences arise from a special, non-rational faculty of the human mind, largely unrelated to other faculties, so religion cannot be reduced to culture or society.¹⁸⁶ Understanding religions as filters that determine experience rather than as pictures that express experience, he draws conclusions that no pluralist may ignore: there cannot be an inner experience of God common to all human beings and all religions. There can be no experiential core because the experiences that religions evoke and mould are as varied as the interpretative schemes they embody. Adherents of different religions do not diversely thematize the same experience; rather they have different experiences.¹⁸⁷

2.2.5. Rational Choice Theory

The rational choice theory has been applied to religions, among others by the sociologists Rodney Stark and William Sims Bainbridge.¹⁸⁸ During the 1980s, for instance, there was a temporary flurry of interest in rational choice theory, an idea borrowed from economics that aimed to explain behavior in terms of the choices made by rational individuals trying to maximize their personal gratification.¹⁸⁹ According to rational choice theory, social actors will always seek to obtain their goals with the least amount of risk and cost involved. They will assess the situation in a rational way, attempt to obtain the best

¹⁸⁴ John Hick, “Religious Pluralism and Islam.” Accessed 25 August 2011. Available from <http://www.johnhick.org.uk/article11.html>.

¹⁸⁵ Seth O. Kunin, Jonathan Miles-Watson (eds.), *Theories of Religion: A Reader*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 2006, p.9.

¹⁸⁶ http://en.wikipedia.org/Theories_of_religion#cite_note-Kunin-14 accessed 20 September, 2012.

¹⁸⁷ Paul F. Knitter, *One Earth, Many Religions: Multi-faith Dialogue and Global Responsibility*, Orbis Books, USA, 1995, pp.42-43.

¹⁸⁸ http://en.wikipedia.org/Rational_choice_theory#qsrc=3044 accessed 20 September 2012.

¹⁸⁹ Lawrence Young, (ed.), *Rational Choice Theory and Religion: Summary and Assessment*, New York, Routledge, 1997.

possible overview of alternative actions and choose what maximizes their rewards and minimizes their costs. The individuals turn to religion because they see that it gives them some sort of benefits or rewards. They will join the religious groups and movements that will give them the most rewards.¹⁹⁰ They asserted that religion is able to function as compensators for unobtained rewards and saw religions as systems of ‘compensators’ which are a body of language and practices that compensate for some frustrated goal. They can be divided into specific compensators (compensators for the failure to achieve specific goals), and general compensators (compensators for failure to achieve any goal). They define religion as a ‘system of compensator that relies on the supernatural’ and assert that only a supernatural compensator can explain death or the meaning of life.¹⁹¹

2.2.6. Sociological

Sociology of religion has as its subject the study of religion in its social context¹⁹² the beliefs, practices and organizational forms of religion using the tools and methods of sociology. It is concerned with the dialectical relationship between religion and society and the role of religion in society. Here the Sociologists have an interest in religion’s effect on society and society’s influence on religious life,¹⁹³ in the content of religious ideas, as long as they contribute to an understanding of the interdependence between religious life and its social context.¹⁹⁴ They focus on understanding religious beliefs and explaining how they relate to worldviews, practices, and identities, the diverse forms of expression religion takes, how religious practices and meanings change over time, their implications for, and interrelations with, other domains of individual and social action.¹⁹⁵ Religion is similar to other social phenomena in that it can be studied across different levels units of analysis and drawing on the plurality of theoretical concepts and research designs that characterize the discipline.¹⁹⁶ Two major strategies used by sociologists of religion are substantive and functional definitions. The former include characteristics of the substance of religion which is

¹⁹⁰ Inger Furseth & Pal Repstad, *op. cit.*, p.117.

¹⁹¹ http://en.wikipedia.org/Theories_of_religion#cite_note-Kunin.2C_page_85-61 accessed 20 September 2012.

¹⁹² *Op. cit.*, p.5.

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p.11

¹⁹⁵ Michele Dillon, *op. cit.*, p.7.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

usually based on the human belief in extraordinary phenomena that which one cannot experience with senses or grasp with intellect.¹⁹⁷

Functional definitions describe the utility or the effect that religion is supposed to have for individuals and society,¹⁹⁸ describe what religion does¹⁹⁹ and focus on the social / psychological functions that religion has for a group or a person. Religion is considered to perform the manifest function, that is, the actual things that are clearly involved when people practice religion which involves things like worshipping God, finding answers to social problems and the like.²⁰⁰ The latent function that is, a purpose hidden from view which involves things like giving people a feeling that they have something in common with each other, may be a shared belief in a common God and integrating people into a sense of belonging to the same society.²⁰¹ Religions are human and social phenomena regardless of whether the ultimate reality to which they are supposedly oriented has a basis in truth.²⁰² The social forms of religion include organization and ideology where the structures of social relations, power and other resources that control the practice of religion²⁰³ not only give practical expression to religious ideas but also aim to defend and promote them. Organizational forms of religion extend well beyond church, denomination, sect, cult and include temples, monastic orders, shrines, brotherhoods, mosques, Sikh gurudwaras, churches, congregations, chaplaincies and missions.²⁰⁴ Berger and Luckmann have argued very persuasively that the concentration on institutional forms of religion, that is to say religious phenomena which are bound up closely with visible churches, denominations and sects has been inhibitive of a genuine sociological theory of religion.²⁰⁵

The classical, seminal sociological theorists of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century's such as Karl Marx focused on the economic background and Émile Durkheim focused on the social function of religion.²⁰⁶ In their sociological writing, Marx, Weber, and

¹⁹⁷ Inger Furseth & Pal Repstad, *op.cit.*, p.16.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁹ Meredith B. McGuire, *op.cit.*, p.8.

²⁰⁰ Inger Furseth & Pal Repstad, *op.cit.*, pp.13-14.

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*

²⁰² James Beckford, *op.cit.*, p.506.

²⁰³ *Ibid.*, p.507.

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁵ Peter L. Berger, Thomas Luckmann, 'Sociology of Religion and Sociology of Knowledge', in *Sociology and Social Research*, (Vol.47), 1963. Thomas Luckmann, 'Religion in Modern Society', *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, (Vol. II), April, 1963, pp. 147-162.

²⁰⁶ Gregory D. Alles, *op.cit.*, p.7702.

Durkheim were reacting to the economic and social upheavals of those centuries, prompted by the devastating consequences that rapid industrialization had inflicted on the European populations of which they were part.²⁰⁷ The study of religion could hardly be avoided within this framework, for religion was seen as an integral part of the society that appeared to be mutating beyond recognition.²⁰⁸ According to Durkheim, religion is ‘an integral system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things... that unite in a single moral community called the church all those who adhere to it.’²⁰⁹ It has two elements: a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, things which are set apart and forbidden; and beliefs, practices which unite into one single moral community called a church, all those who adhere to them.²¹⁰

Durkheim made a clear distinction between the sacred and the profane which can be paralleled with the distinction between God and humans. The sacred, however, possesses a functional quality that is by its very nature it has the capacity to bind²¹¹ and unite societies. He suggests that religion arises in relation to the beginnings of society- God is seen as the projected embodiment of society, and thus religion functions as a means of creating and strengthening the social solidarity.²¹² According to him religion is collective, as he emphasizes on a community as the basis of religion.²¹³ Religious beliefs are symbolic expressions of social realities as without them serving as a foundation, religion may have no meaning. He viewed religion within the context of the entire society, acknowledged its place in influencing the thinking and behavior of the members leading for social solidarity, cohesion and integration, and at the same time argued that religion itself was a manifestation of a person’s dependency on, and subservience to, the collective social life which ‘surrounded’ that person.²¹⁴ Attempting to explain social institutions as collective means to fill individual biological needs, he focused on the ways in which social institutions fill social needs, especially social stability. Society was viewed as an organic analogy of the body,

²⁰⁷ Grace Davie, “The Evolution of the Sociology of Religion”, in Michele Dillon (ed.), *Handbook of the Sociology of Religion*, Cambridge University Press, United Kingdom, 2003, p.62.

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁹ Anne Warfield Rawls, ‘*Epistemology and practice: Durkheim's the Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, p.115.

²¹⁰ Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life: A Study in Religious Sociology*, (trans.) Joseph World Swain, George Allen & Unwin, Free Press, New York, 1915, p.47.

²¹¹ Grace Davie, *op. cit.*, p.65.

²¹² Seth O.Kunin, Jonathan Miles-Watson (eds.), *op.cit.*, pp.18-19.

²¹³ Madhavi D. Renavikar, *op.cit.*, p.27.

²¹⁴ Roland Robertson, *op.cit.*, p.7.

wherein all the parts work together to maintain the equilibrium of the whole, and so religion was understood to be the glue that held society together.

In his most memorable work, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* published in 1912 Durkheim claimed that totemism was the most primitive form of religion²¹⁵ which can be defined as the identification of human beings with plants or animals and the designation of kinship groups in such terms.²¹⁶ He attempted to prove through this study that among the Australian aboriginals each of the many clans had a different object, plant or animal that they held sacred and that symbolized the clan.²¹⁷ The function of religion is group cohesion often performed by collectively attended rituals and these group meetings provided a special kind of energy, which he called *effervescence*, that made group members lose their individuality and feel united with the gods and thus with the group.²¹⁸ He also suggested that religion arises out of the experience of living in social groups; religious belief and practice affirm a person's place in society, enhance feelings of community and give people confidence.²¹⁹ Being deeply interested in the problem of what held complex modern societies together he saw that religion encompasses regular rituals and ceremonies on the part of a group of believers, who then develop and strengthen a sense of group solidarity. Rituals are necessary to bind together the members of a religious group, as they allow individuals to escape from the mundane aspects of daily life into higher realms of experience.

According to him, people see religion as contributing to the health and continuation of society in general and bind society's members by prompting them to affirm their common values and beliefs on a regular basis.²²⁰ There is the need for periodic, collective expressions of social commitment and solidarity which was achieved through meeting in a common cause.²²¹ There is also the need for individuals to understand their place in society in terms of collective relationships and responsibilities.²²² People had to be made to understand the importance of their social relationships for the continuation of social life. He saw religion as an affirmation of common values, beliefs, ideals and a way of providing people with ideas

²¹⁵*Ibid.*, p.16.

²¹⁶Claude Levi-Strauss, *Totemism*, Rodney Needham, (trans.) *Introduction to Claude Levi-Strauss*, 1962, pp.10-11.

²¹⁷N.J.Allen, W.S.F.Pickering & Watts Miller (eds.), *op cit.*, p.4.

²¹⁸*Ibid.*,p.6.

²¹⁹Roland Robertson, *op.cit.*, p.19.

²²⁰Chris Livesey, *op.cit.*, p.4.

²²¹*Ibid.*

²²²*Ibid.*

they could hold in common.²²³ His theory that religious ritual is an expression of the unity of society and that its function is to ‘re-create’ the social order by reaffirming and strengthening the sentiments on which the social order itself depends is very significant.²²⁴ Durkheim claimed that religion has an actual presence in the world of events and actions²²⁵ and therefore it is immortal and though its particular manifestations come and go, its action is fundamental.²²⁶ Thus, he resolved the individual-to-society relationship by presenting individuals as transcending themselves in communion with the greater reality-society itself.²²⁷

Georg Simmel in *Essays on Religion*, regarded religion as one of the abiding forms of social relations encapsulating interpersonal trust and faith.²²⁸ Religious traditions endeavor to promote harmony, equality and justice.²²⁹ He views religion as a fundamental aspect of human relations and therefore, it will always exist as a way of being.²³⁰ Thus Simmel and Durkheim believe that religion emerges in social relations, and the individual transfers his/her relation to a deity.²³¹ Boyer claims that religious symbolism and representations are constrained cognitively by the universal properties of the mind-brain: ‘Religious concepts are probably influenced by the way the brain’s inference systems produce explanations without one’s being aware of it.’²³² From these different considerations of why religion exists and what explanations have been offered for the universality of religious phenomena, it may be suggested that human beings are part of a social and a natural world. They are dependent on the actions of other humans and on the forces of nature. Some of these actions and forces can be controlled through their own behavior. However, they are helpless in the face of other actions and forces. Humans attempt to understand and at least influence or control through a belief in the supernatural what is otherwise uncontrollable and unexplainable. By doing this, they alleviate their anxieties about their helplessness in the situations.²³³ The organization of

²²³ *Ibid.*

²²⁴ A.R.Radcliffe-Brown, *op. cit.*, p.165.

²²⁵ William Ramp, “Durkheim and After”, in Bryan S. Turner (ed.), *The New Blackwell Companion to the Sociology of Religion*, A John Wiley & Sons Ltd. Publication, 2010, p.54.

²²⁶ *Ibid.*, p.56.

²²⁷ Meredith, *op.cit.*, p.198.

²²⁸ James Beckford, *op.cit.*, p.506.

²²⁹ Santanu K. Patro (ed.), *op.cit.*,p.5.

²³⁰ Inger Furseth& Pal Repstad, *op.cit.*, p. 40.

²³¹ Abraham Rosman, Paula G. Rubel, and Maxine Weisgrau, *op. cit.*, p.232.

²³² Pascal Boyer, *Religion Explained: The Evolutionary Origins of Religious Thought*, Basic Books, New York, 2001, p.18.

²³³ *Ibid.*,p.20.

the supernatural world that is constructed by human beings reflects the society in which they live. The sentiments and emotions generated by the supernatural are an important force in the enhancement of social solidarity.²³⁴

Max Weber's main contribution to the sociology of religion was actually to demonstrate the conditions under which religion could be, to use Parsons' phrase, a source of 'creative innovation' in socio-cultural systems.²³⁵ Weber acknowledged that religion had a strong social component. His most famous study, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* in which he attempted to show that emergent Protestantism, to a considerable extent promoted that set of values and beliefs which Weber claimed came to characterize nineteenth century capitalistic orientations-frugality and ascetic devotion to work for the greater glory of God.²³⁶ The fundamental purpose of his research was to discover religion's impact on social change and he made a number of very important conceptual contributions to the sociology of religion. Probably the most frequently utilized of these has been his sociological differentiation between churchly forms of religious organizations and sectarian forms.

Another such conceptual distinction was between ethical prophecy, which Weber characterized as being productive of 'breakthroughs' from traditional social patterns and which was typical of the group of (mainly monotheistic) religions of the Occidental world and exemplary prophecy, which typified the qualities of religious leadership in Oriental religions and emphasized the necessity to live up to traditional-mystical social standards of conduct rather than promulgating new standards.²³⁷ In his sociology, Weber uses the German term *Verstehen*²³⁸ to describe his method of interpretation of the intention and context of human action. A religious group or individual is influenced by all kinds of things, he says, but if they claim to be acting in the name of religion, one should attempt to understand their

²³⁴ Abraham Rosman, Paula G. Rubel, and Maxine Weisgrau, *op cit*, pp.232-233.

²³⁵ Talcott Parsons, "Religious Perspectives in College Teaching: Sociology and Social Psychology" in Hoxie N.Fairchild (ed.), *Religious Perspectives in College Teaching*, New York, 1952, pp. 286-337.

²³⁶ Roland Robertson, *op.cit.*, p.12.

²³⁷ *Ibid.*, p.14.

²³⁸ In American sociological literature, the term is used as a 'technical term' which stands for 'motivational understanding', 'psychological interpretation', 'dynamic assessment', 'intentionality', and 'similar designations of purposeful human behaviour.' In contrast to this restricted use, the term in the writings of German social philosophers covers a much broader range of manifestations of the Human Realm. Besides motivational understanding, it also includes the interpretation of the meaning of cultural objects like norms or institutions; the interpretation of past historical events; of cultures other than one's own; and the gamut of subjects covered by hermeneutics.

perspective on religious grounds first. He also gives religion the credit for shaping a person's image of the world, and this can affect their view of interests, and ultimately how they decide to take action. Religion, in his opinion, is no longer a social activity but, an individual one. The individual does not feel the need to belong to rather 'he feels the need to live according to the moral values that he has imposed upon himself.' For him religion is 'the means by which human beings adjust to their natural, social, economic, political, and intellectual environments, the means by which these are transcended or changed.'²³⁹ H. H. Pressler quoting Weber says that 'he insisted that the goals of religion lay a powerful hold on people and motivate them to organize their society in harmony with them. These goals are enunciated in a system of morals and are a way of salvation. Society is rearranged by a person to conform to principles regarded as 'right' and 'legitimate.'²⁴⁰

Karl Marx described religion as a dependent variable as its form and nature are dependent on social and above all economic relations, which form the bedrock of social analysis. He saw religion originating from alienation and aiding the persistence of alienation. These are responses to the general sentiment of lack of control over a person's destiny and the persistence of religion is both an indicator of far reaching alienation and an 'opiate' which perpetuates imbalances and inequalities in the social structure.²⁴¹ Religion persuades people that social and economic relationships are natural and, therefore, acceptable. It follows that the real causes of social distress cannot be tackled until the religious element in society is stripped away to reveal the injustices of the capitalist system; everything else is a distraction.²⁴² Central to Marx's theories was the oppressive economic situation in which he dwelt. Workers were devalued to the level of a commodity – a thing....²⁴³ Here, in his eyes, religion enters. Capitalism utilizes human beings' tendency towards religion as a tool or ideological state apparatus to justify alienation. 'As far as societies divided into classes are concerned, Marx's main answer is that much ideology is inevitable in a class society, because the economically dominant class requires the existence of false beliefs for its continued

²³⁹*Op. cit.*, p.141.

²⁴⁰ Christopher Augustus Bixel Tirkey, *op.cit.*, p. 23.

²⁴¹For Marx's views on religion, see especially 'On the Jewish Question' and 'Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right', in T.B.Bottomore (ed.), *Karl Marx: Early Writings*, London, 1963, pp. 1-40 and 43-59.

²⁴²Grace Davie, *op.cit.*, pp.62-63.

²⁴³*Ibid.*,p. 125.

dominance and has resources for perpetuating beliefs that are in its interests.²⁴⁴ The dominant class must construct systems of belief about ultimate concerns (God, the universe, humanity, morality etc.), and communicate them persuasively to the masses to keep them subdued.

Impressed by these reifications, the working class develops a false consciousness, convinced that the present socioeconomic order is sanctioned by the natural or eternal orders.²⁴⁵ ‘The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas: i.e. the class, which is the ruling material, forces of society, at the same time its ruling intellectual force. The class which has the means of material production at its disposal has control at the same time over the means of mental production, thereby, generally speaking, the ideas of those who lack the means of mental production are subject to it.’²⁴⁶ He limited religion's dependence to economic institutions. Marx agrees with Durkheim and Weber, that religion is a reflection of humanity and not of a god. He makes the claim that the god sought in religions was one's own self. Not only is religion a representation of humanity, but further, it is a representation of one's own self-consciousness. The crux of his arguments was that humans are best guided by reason but religion was a significant hindrance to reason, inherently masking the truth and misguiding followers. He viewed social alienation as the heart of social inequality.

Marx never suggested that religion ought to be prohibited.²⁴⁷ From a Marxist perspective, religion is once again considered to be a conservative social force since, for Marxists, it represents a means of ideologically justifying the social world. From this perspective, religion is a means of social control and that can be used to justify the economic and political status quo.²⁴⁸ One of the major differences between the Structuralist perspectives of Functionalism and Marxism is that while the former tends to see the functions of religion in terms of the benefits it brings to society as a whole, Marxists tend to see

²⁴⁴Richard W. Miller, ‘Social and Political Theory: Class, State, Revolution’, in Terrell Carver (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Marx*, Cambridge University Press, 1991, p.74.

²⁴⁵David K. Naugle, *Worldview: The History of a Concept*, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, Michigan /Cambridge, U.K., 2002, p.236.

²⁴⁶R. Pascal, (ed.), *Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, The German Ideology, Parts I and II*, International Publishers, New York 1947, p.39.

²⁴⁷Swatos Kivisto Christiano, et.al., *Sociology of Religion: Contemporary Developments*, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, New York, INC. 2008, p. 126.

²⁴⁸Abraham Rosman, Paula G. Rubel, and Maxine Weisgrau, *op. cit.*, pp.232-233.

religious ideas benefiting a ruling class.²⁴⁹ From an Interactionist perspective Berger sees religion as an ideological framework that seeks to explain ‘the world as it is.’ In this respect, religion is again, almost by definition, a conservative social force since its purpose is to enable people to make sense of the world around them.²⁵⁰

Talcott Parsons’ views on the nature of religious belief and practice start from the idea that all societies require a central value system, if they are to exist and develop as a society, a society-wide system of common values and norms to which everyone in society can be encouraged to subscribe.²⁵¹ He argued that religion contributes to social integration.²⁵² However, societies need to develop social mechanisms, since without this mechanism integration and solidarity could not develop across society as a whole.²⁵³ All institutions in society like family, work, education, religion have a particular set of functions which is to provide the individual with a set of meanings that help him / her to make sense of society.²⁵⁴

Parson assumes that religion helps members of society to deal with uncontrollable events and explains phenomena that otherwise would seem meaningless, such as suffering and the problem of evil. In this way religion calms tensions that otherwise would disturb the social order, and helps to maintain social stability.²⁵⁵ Religions involve a belief in a power that is higher than the individual and this higher authority can be used to represent and develop common moral codes. Common values can be reinforced and given meaning to people through the organization of collective practices and ceremonies. By making people meet to practice their common beliefs, social integration and solidarity is created.²⁵⁶ But people must develop common values / beliefs in order to create a sense of shared meaning and purpose. It does not matter what these values actually are since all that is functionally important is that common values and social mechanisms exist for propagating these values.²⁵⁷

In pre-modern societies, therefore, religion represents an obvious solution to the problems of integration and solidarity that is getting people to live and work together.²⁵⁸ In

²⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁵¹ Chris Livesey, *op.cit.*, p.11.

²⁵² Inger Furseth, *op.cit.*, p.4.

²⁵³ *Op.cit.*

²⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵⁵ Inger Furseth & Pal Repstad, *op. cit.*, p. 46.

²⁵⁶ *Op.cit.*, p.12.

²⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

modern societies, however, religious belief systems can be progressively undermined by the development of scientific belief systems.²⁵⁹ The concept of a higher power, for example, may be questioned by science, leading to a decline in the power of religious beliefs to create consensus.²⁶⁰ When and if this happens, societies are faced with a problem since the structural framework for integration and solidarity may start to crumble.²⁶¹ The solution is the development of new social mechanisms such as cultural institutions like education and the mass media which serve a similar function - the promotion of common moral values and their practice through various forms of communal gatherings and events.²⁶² Religious ideas about morality and behavior, for example, become entrenched in the collective consciousness and effectively form the basis for legal norms.²⁶³ In addition, in times of personal and social crisis explicit forms of religious belief frequently arise since in such situations scientific belief systems cannot cope with or provide explanations for such events.²⁶⁴ Thus the constructs of religion and spirituality cannot be defined strictly in terms of a specific set of beliefs or behaviors. Perhaps the easiest distinction is to think of spirituality as a person's sense of meaning and purpose in life or one's relation to the cosmos.

Religion, on the other hand, can be understood as organized spirituality that includes doctrines, prescribed rituals and governing structures.²⁶⁵ Both spirituality and religion may be positively correlated with health outcomes. Lack of social participation or religious strength and comfort can be risk factors for death after cardiac surgery in the elderly.²⁶⁶ The multidimensional nature of both was underscored by a working group of experts commissioned by the Fetzer Institute and the National Institute on Aging (NIA). This group identified 10 dimensions of religion and spirituality (religious spiritual history, preference affiliation, social participation, private practices, coping styles, beliefs and values, commitment, experiences, sense of support and motivation for regulating and reconciling relationships) that have been addressed by research in recent years and that hold promise for

²⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁶¹ *Ibid.*

²⁶² *Ibid.*

²⁶³ *Ibid.*, p.13.

²⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁶⁵ Laurel Arthur Burton & Marcia Sue Dewolf Bosek, *op. cit.*, pp. 97-106.

²⁶⁶ H. Benson, H. Koenig, *The Healing Power of Faith*, New York, Simon and Schuster, 1999. TE Oxman et al., *Psychosomatic Medicine* 57:5-15. 1995.

future research, especially in relation to health care (Fetzer Institute/ NIA, 1999).²⁶⁷ Many characteristics common to religion may also be found in spirituality, and vice versa.²⁶⁸ For example, spirituality (like religion) may involve a personal transformation, an encounter with transcendence or a search for ultimate truth or reality that is sacred to the individual. What is religious may also include stipulated behavior patterns and encouragement of adherence to certain religious practices or forms of expression, characteristics that some forms of contemporary spirituality may resist. Still, there is much overlap between these phenomena.

There are variations on the general theme of religion but none of the scholars anticipate the total disappearance of religion or deny the possibility that religion could occasionally be revived.²⁶⁹ Many have recognized the limitations of focusing too strongly on either side of the individual or societal function of religion. The examination of the creative interaction between the individual and the society is increasingly prominent in recent theories of religion.²⁷⁰ Religion is no longer present as ‘bookish knowledge’ in isolation from other ‘knowledge.’ It is present in the context of its cultural carriers and vehicles such as language, food and clothing. It abides and changes in its foreign environment, alters that environment while forming a visible distinction between its own members and other persons.²⁷¹ The last fifty years have witnessed a remarkable revival of religious truth-claims. Religions entered public spheres and became strong identity markers both for individuals and communities. People raised political claims in the name of religious traditions and interpreted history with reference to an ongoing global apocalyptic scenario, a struggle between ‘good and bad.’ At the turn of the twenty-first century, however, a completely different situation had risen: religion has regained its importance but it is no longer the same religion as that of the beginning of the twentieth century.

²⁶⁷ Kevin S. Seybold & Peter C. Hill, ‘The Role of Religion and Spirituality in Mental and Physical Health’ in *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, Vol. 10, No. 1, Sage Publications, Inc. on behalf of Association for Psychological Science, February 2001, pp. 21-24 Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20182684> .Accessed 12 June 2012.

²⁶⁸ P.C. Hill, et.al, Conceptualizing religion and spirituality: Points of commonality, points of departure, *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour*, 2000, 30, 51-77.

²⁶⁹ James Beckford, *op.cit.*, p.510.

²⁷⁰ Seth O. Kunin, Jonathan Miles-Watson, *op.cit.*, p.19.

²⁷¹ Kocku Von Stuckrad (ed.), ‘Religion’ in Introduction: The Academic Study of Religion- Historical and Contemporary Issues, *The Brill Dictionary of Religion*, (Revised edn.), Metzler Lexikonin (ed.), (trans.) Christoph Auffarth, Jutta Bernard & Hubert Mohr., Vol. III M-R, Martinus Nijhoff publishers, Boston, 2006, p.xi.

Religion is no longer the religion of the commandments and directives and being a member of a church no longer brings with it social advantages or prestige in public sector.²⁷² It has repeatedly acted as a motive and vehicle for change. The role played by religion can only be comprehended by viewing in terms of time, place and its function within a historical context.²⁷³ Religion, like society and culture was in a continual motion, only the speed changed, at times increasing and at times decreasing due to the variations in the situation of a particular time and place, that is, the historical context.²⁷⁴ Yet religion in itself remains a powerful medium for the mobilization of human resources.²⁷⁵ In its respective cultural context, religion changes, so that there are no longer simple easily definable 'religions.'²⁷⁶

All religions have the idea of the divine as the starting point, is transcendental and beyond any human descriptions. But religious search does not end in God alone- it moves to human community. Though God is defined in scripture and the teachings of great seers, God is better understood in the context of believers. Each religion creates its own distinct faith community precisely because the religions have spread in particular ways, depending on the socio-cultural and geographical context. In addressing the issues of life and death, religion also gives meaning, hope and purpose to living and to the created order.²⁷⁷ Religion provides some sort of peculiar, inexplicable religious experience in which an individual comes into contact with the supernatural through prayer, worship and meditation. This experience enables the human desires, ideals and values facilitating the development of personality, sociability and creativeness.²⁷⁸ It also provides for the individual the most desired peace of mind and promotes goodness and helps the development of character. It acts as the healer of the ills of life and also promotes social solidarity, unity, identity, a common faith, value-judgments, sentiments and common worship which are significant factors in unifying people.²⁷⁹

²⁷² *Ibid.*, p.xii.

²⁷³ Kenneth W. Jones, *The New Cambridge History of India: Socio Religious Reform Movements in British India*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1994, p.220.

²⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p.221.

²⁷⁶ Kocku Von Stuckrad (ed.), *op. cit.*, p.xiii.

²⁷⁷ Santanu K.Patro (ed.), *op.cit.*, p.10.

²⁷⁸ C.N.Shankar Rao, *op.cit.*, p.423.

²⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

Many empirical studies indicate that people, who are religiously devout, tend to report greater subjective well-being and life satisfaction, greater marital satisfaction and family cohesion, more ability to cope with stress and crises, less worry and fewer symptoms of depression.²⁸⁰ People involved in religious pursuits, on average, live slightly longer lives and experience slightly lower levels of depressive symptoms than do their less religious counterparts.²⁸¹ Religion gives to a person what he can obtain from no other source, a confidence in the outcome of life's struggles through a personal connection with superior powers in the world.²⁸² Every religion does many things for the individual and also usually for the society. For example it assists in providing the individual added power and satisfaction. It helps to bear pain in the troubles of life, uncomplainingly, offers a solution to the problem of evil, improves the quality of present life, offers hope for a better life in the future and outlines an ideal society.²⁸³ Thus religion appears to be an essential ingredient of society. The functions of religion help to know what social and psychological problems are solved by the religious beliefs and practices and also how these functions help to know the extent, how a religious system helps to express, codify and reaffirm the central values of a society in such a way as to maintain the social fabric of that society.²⁸⁴

Religion is one important contributing factor in societal integration. Religious symbols can represent the unity of the social group and religious rituals can enact the unity, allowing the individual to participate symbolically in the larger unity they represent. According to integration theories, societal cohesion and stability are ensured by the functioning of institutions (e.g., religion, education and the family) that represent the larger social reality to the individual and enable the individual to accept personally that definition of reality.²⁸⁵ It appears that religiosity is socially beneficial, that high rates of belief in a creator, as well as worship, prayer and other aspects of religious practice, correlate with lowering rates of fatal violence, suicide, abortion and also improved physical health.²⁸⁶

Religion, as a cultural institution serves to originate new ideas and categories of thought and to reaffirm existing values. It also helps in social unity, solidarity and works as

²⁸⁰Michael McCullough, Timothy Smith, "Religion and Health: Depressive Symptoms and Mortality as Case Studies", in Michele Dillon, (ed.), *op.cit.*, pp.191-192.

²⁸¹*Ibid.*, p.198.

²⁸²Gianfranco Poggi, in Lindsay Jones (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Religion*, Vol.11 (2), 2005, p.156.

²⁸³Christopher Augustus Bixel Tirkey, *op.cit.*, p. 22.

²⁸⁴*Ibid.*, p. 24.

²⁸⁵Meredith B. McGuire, *op.cit.*, p.196.

²⁸⁶<http://moses.creighton.edu/JRS/2005/2005-11.html#figures> accessed 14 May 2012.

an integrating force. It holds power over people and societies. Because societies cannot be physically sensed - seen, touched, tasted, heard or smelt, people have to be encouraged to feel that they belong to a society; they need to be integrated into society.²⁸⁷ At one end of the scale are those who consider belief in a deity is helpful while the most ardent advocates consider persons and people inherently unruly and ungovernable unless they are strictly obedient to the creator.²⁸⁸ Thus it can be seen that religion has got to do with the society, is implicitly associated with social functions and has intricate social implications too. Religion does give birth to and enrich social values which are visible in tribal religion and ancient religion. Whether modern religion like Christianity and particularly the works of the Catholic Church and Bethany sisters as a part of the Catholic Church has contributed to the enrichment of the social values is a question under study.

Religion seems to be one of the most powerful, deeply felt and influential forces in human society. It has shaped people's relationships with each other, influencing family, community, economic and political life. Religious beliefs and values motivate human action and religious groups organize their collective religious expressions. Religion is a significant aspect of social life and the social dimension is an important part of religion.²⁸⁹ Religion exists in a social context, is shaped by it and in turn, often influences it.²⁹⁰ Religious beliefs are not mere abstractions that are irrelevant to everyday life but people use their beliefs to make choices, interpret events and plan actions.²⁹¹ Religious beliefs also inform the individual what action is good and desirable or bad and to be avoided. Thus, an entire range of values, norms, and attitudes are derived from religious beliefs.²⁹²

Religion has much in common with the culture of a society. The non-scriptural, non-philosophical manifestations of religion are present in every culture. Within the value system of any given culture there are inbuilt religious elements. For example, the social structures- the hierarchy, values and ethics of a society are determined by religious faith and practice. Core cultural behavior will carry strong religious currents within it. The subtle interaction between religion and culture may mislead into thinking that culture has replaced religion, but in a real sense religion persists through culture. The institutions and structures may take

²⁸⁷ Chris Livesey, *op.cit.*, pp.2-3.

²⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁸⁹ Meredith B. McGuire, *op.cit.*, p.1.

²⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. xiii.

²⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p.16.

²⁹² *Ibid.*, p.17.

different shapes, but religion continues to influence and define culture in many societies across the globe.²⁹³

Ambedkar believed that religion could be either liberative or oppressive, depending on various factors. It could function as a tool of oppression if it propagates infallibility and requires total surrender to its totalitarian perspective. It is liberative if it is open for the notion of revolution or change. The social ideal of that particular religion which is the divine scheme of governance of that religion, decides whether it is good or not good.²⁹⁴ The universally accepted theory is that religion is multi-functional; hence the study of religion may give attention to a particular function or aspect of religion excluding others.²⁹⁵ Therefore, it may not be appropriate to regard any one of the approaches as the only or the fundamental theory of religion and thus seeking for its universal application. The more tangible solution seems in the realization of the fact that various factors at different times and place may have been responsible for the birth and growth of a philosophy like that of religion.²⁹⁶

According to Ambedkar, religion is essential to humankind for he understands religion not as a means to spiritual salvation of individual souls but as a social practice for establishing the righteous relations between humans. He believed that religion is necessary as a system of values and as a science of social reconstruction. For him religion is necessary for the development of an individual and it is a system of such socio-cultural values which would bring all the individuals on equal plane and would create a powerful political community. He looked at religion as the basis for social interaction and all the way he looked for a religion without exploitation, a religion that does not justify exploitation.²⁹⁷

Religion is closely interrelated with other aspects of specific cultures and that all religions will be shaped by and address issues of significance to individuals within those cultures or communities. This issue appears to be true of the 'indigenous' religions, as they are usually associated with a specific community, but it is also demonstrably true of the 'world' religions, which, although containing elements that are shared by all or most adherents, are also and most importantly shaped by the particular contexts in which the religions find themselves.²⁹⁸ Scholars of religion declare religion is for all and any attempt to

²⁹³Santanu K. Patro (ed.), *op.cit.*, p.4.

²⁹⁴ P. Mohan Larbeer, *Ambedkar on Religion: A Liberative Perspective*, ISPCK, Delhi, 2003, p.169.

²⁹⁵ T. Swami Raju, *op.cit.*, p.27.

²⁹⁶Raghuvir Sinha, *op.cit.*, p.193.

²⁹⁷P. Mohan Larbeer,*op.cit.*, pp.160-161.

²⁹⁸Helen K. Bond, *op.cit.*, p.117.

study religion is in fact the attempt to study humanity itself. In that vein, L.W.Grensted says, 'no conception of religion satisfies the religious person unless it is significant for the whole of life in all its details.'²⁹⁹ According to Professor J.G.Arapura, finding out the integral relation between humanity and religion is the main goal of the science of religion. For him, without humanity there is no religion and apart from the essence of humanity there is no essence of religion. Dr. S. Radhakrishnan has indirectly indicated that 'when properly studied, comparative religion increases our confidence in the universality of God and our respect for the human race.'³⁰⁰ Thus the point becomes clear that, if any attempt is made to conceptualize a new method for the study of religions it needs to focus on life.³⁰¹

Religion is regarded as intimately interwoven with social life, even those who consider religion as part and parcel of the individual, private quest for 'spirituality' do not deny the fact that religion is a social phenomenon. Religion continues to play significant role in social life. In shaping beliefs, values and attitudes knowingly or unknowingly religion definitely influences the process of socialization. With new knowledge and experiences society changes which in turn brings new approaches to religious thinking. The question of the nature of religion can be answered in two ways: one is to inquire into the meaning of religion, into the question of whether or not it is true and into its value for human life. The second is to inquire about the facts associated with religious beliefs and actions. This alternative concentrates on examining what religious people actually believe or do; it focuses more on what can be observed to take place than on the reality behind that observation. This description, however, immediately gives rise to a basic paradox: religion itself is a subjective experience of such profound depth that it cannot be studied as a science. Any attempt to grasp religion scientifically is bound to fail because science is based on objective knowledge, whereas religion is rooted in subjective experience. The present study is focused on the cultural, psychological and social phenomena of human life and the effect religion has on these aspects.

Religion has continued to play a vital role in the lives of individuals worldwide which shows that religion has a great survival value. Its universality is not based upon the forms of beliefs and practices but upon the social functions it generally fulfils. These functions are of

²⁹⁹L.W.Grensted, *The Psychology of Religion*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1952, p.15.

³⁰⁰S.Radhakrishnan, *East and West in Religion*, George Allen & Unwin Ltd., London, 1933, p.32.

³⁰¹K.P.Aleaz, *Harmony of Religions: The Relevance of Swami Vivekananda*, Punthi Pustak, Calcutta, 1993, p.52.

great individual and social significance. All the theories of religion agree that whatever the beliefs or rituals, religion satisfies some social and psychological needs common to all people and it is considered to be an extremely important social variable in the work of all the theorists.³⁰² Their approach treats the interaction and dynamic processes between religions and the rest of societies. Religion continues to be a significant dimension intertwining individual lives, collective identities, institutional practices and public culture and although in some circumstances it has a negative impact (e.g., violence), in other situations it holds an emancipatory charge (e.g., faith-based organizations).³⁰³

Cultural institutions, such as religion, education, and the media, form a functionalist perspective, develop as a way of giving people a sense of belonging to a particular society, create and maintain a sense of order and continuity in society. Their main function is to provide the individual with a set of values that help him / her to make sense of society. By creating a system of common values, people see themselves as having things in common and this helps to develop a sense of belonging to a society. Religion is a very important source of cohesion and integration in society, since it can provide people with such things as:-Common values, experiences and interpretations.³⁰⁴ Despite, and perhaps because of, disenchantment with the increasingly rationalized society, religion continues to provide meaning and to intertwine daily social, economic and political activity.³⁰⁵ The power of religion lies, in part, in the resources it provides toward the creation and shaping of meaningfully connected individual and communal lives.³⁰⁶ For many individuals and groups, the continuing relevance of religion derives from the fact that religious institutions, doctrines and practices are, at least partially open to reasoned criticism and to change. Although the founding narratives of religious traditions may be seen as divinely inspired, their subsequent institutionalization is a social process because religious institutions are social institutions whose practices evolve over time and adapt to changing cultural and historical circumstances.³⁰⁷ Religion not only helps to understand social experiences and institutional practices; it also serves as a powerful source for explaining a wide range of social attitudes and behaviors.³⁰⁸

³⁰²Michele Dillon, “*The Sociology of Religion in Late Modernity*”, *op.cit.*, p.14.

³⁰³*Ibid.*

³⁰⁴*Ibid.*

³⁰⁵*Ibid.*, p.3

³⁰⁶*Ibid.*, p.6.

³⁰⁷*Ibid.*

³⁰⁸*Ibid.*, p.8.

Benjamin Franklin stated that ‘religion is a powerful regulator of people’s actions, giving peace and tranquility within the minds and rendering benevolent, useful and beneficial to others.’³⁰⁹ When the theory of biological evolution removed the need for a supernatural creator, concerns immediately arose over the societal implications of widespread abandonment of faith. In 1880 the religious moralist Dostoyevsky penned the famous warning that ‘if God does not exist, then everything is tolerable.’³¹⁰ Though this brings out the need and importance of religion in one’s life, the essence of religion is to be sought in an inner religious experience, variously characterized as communion between God and a person, the deep inner life or the sense of the ‘sacred’.³¹¹ It is essential to religion and is normal to human life if one considers the religious experience as the result of the ‘breaking-points’ of human life, where everyday thought and action are transcended in human experience.³¹²

Religion is meant for personal transformation, social transformation and it has to supply a sense of sacredness to human life.³¹³ Here it may be appropriate to see how religion in general terms, continues to influence society in a positive way. By society in this context is meant the networks and institutions, health and education systems.³¹⁴ Every human action is either good or evil and there is no neutral action. Vivekananda perceived good actions to be revealing one’s divine nature: ‘every action that helps a person to manifest the divine nature more and more is good, every action that retards is evil. The only way of getting the divine nature manifested is by helping others to do the same’ thus, helping them to live a dignified human life.³¹⁵ It is incontrovertible that religions serve as a meaningful purpose for the human beings although quite often religions have failed to live up to the task that is theirs by failing to read the signs of the times.³¹⁶

The study of religion has taken its place among contemporary sciences, and the importance of the study cannot be denied by anyone who appreciates the part that religion has played in the history of human kind and still plays at the present time.³¹⁷ Since human beings are by nature communitarian, religion may get itself expressed also on the institutional level.

³⁰⁹Walter Isaacson, *Benjamin Franklin: An American Life*, Simon & Schuster, New York, 2003, p.58.

³¹⁰Gregory S. Paul, *op.cit.*

³¹¹Madhavi D. Renavikar, *op.cit.*, p.16.

³¹²*Ibid.*,p.17.

³¹³Varghese Manimala, *op.cit.*, p.261.

³¹⁴*Ibid.*

³¹⁵A. Alangaram, *op.cit.*, p.24.

³¹⁶ Varghese Manimala, *op.cit.*, p.17.

³¹⁷ Morris Jastrow Jr., *op.cit.*,p.vii.

Institutional religion is a term used to indicate the process by which religious feeling attaches itself to various forms of social organization. Gradually structures emerge and most important and immediately apparent activities of this kind are churches, rituals and dogmas.³¹⁸ Churches are sociological institutions which give public expression to religious feeling and afford a vehicle for the transmission of faith. Some churches are highly organized, having staffs of priests forming a hierarchy and teachers, while other churches have been and still remain loosely knit groups of worshippers who meet periodically to express a common understanding of the divine.³¹⁹ Religious communities work with a sense of spiritual experience to help those who are in need, and address global issues that affect the earth.³²⁰

Religion and human development cannot be seen as two isolated fields of life but within the totality of human existence. There is a general inclination to limit religion only to the occupation of the spiritual care and subjectivity of the individual, while development is understood as economic activity in terms of production, marketing, commerce, etc. This division may be useful for analytical purposes but does not do justice to the understanding of the totality of life according to which religion and development are interwoven in human life. Very little research has been made on the history of Catholic Missions in Northeast India. Hence the need is to establish the historical record and elucidate the effect of the diverse catholic missionary efforts within Christianity.

The anthropological and sociological approaches seem apt in this study as these approaches deal with the beliefs, practices and organizational forms in its social context. The focus of study being what Christianity and more so Catholicism as a religion has done in the lives of people and how it has impacted the society could be effectively studied taking these two approaches as its background. Christian missionaries in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries brought a form of health care and education to Africa and Asia that encouraged the creation of new egalitarian societies. Society, however secular it might be, can recognize that religion plays important societal roles.³²¹ The church is viewed as a major player in addressing the problems of human society, such as poverty, hunger, environmental issues, social justice and so on. Modern religions in general have denounced many of the evils that

³¹⁸*Op.cit.*, p.268.

³¹⁹*Ibid.*,p.269.

³²⁰Santanu K. Patro (ed.), *op.cit.*,p.172.

³²¹*Op.cit.*

have been counterproductive for the communities thus providing a sense of social dimension to the community and thereby making it socially relevant to the faith community.³²²

The focus of research here is why religion developed, what needs it serves, the reasons for the survival, persistence and also an understanding of the social purpose of religion i.e. why people believe in supernatural beings, why they continue their religious beliefs, practices, the way religious behavior differs between and within societies, individuals and most importantly, the consequences for social interaction of religious activity and organization. Therefore what religion has done for the individuals and society will be the focus of interest in this research. Since the topic of investigation is the Catholic Missions in Northeast India, it is appropriate to investigate on what the Catholic Church with its missionary activities was able to do to the society in the Northeast as a whole and particularly how Bethany sisters as part of the Catholic Missions have contributed to the socio-educational and cultural development of the region from 1962-2012. It may be interesting to note how Catholicism and particularly the humanitarian activities of the Bethany sisters have helped to fulfill the purposes of religion.

³²² *Ibid.*

CHAPTER-III : CHRISTIANITY AND CATHOLICISM

This chapter deals with the history of Christianity, the birth of Catholicism, the organization and spread of the Catholic Church within India and particularly in Northeast India and then the advent of the Catholic Missions.

3.1. The Early History of Christianity

The history of Christianity goes back to the first century of the Christian era.³²³ Christianity was born in one of the remotest outposts of the Roman Empire³²⁴ in Palestine, region of Judea.³²⁵ This global religion first emerged as a sect and continuation of Judaism³²⁶ as it embraced many Judaic views and practices. It began as a small nucleus of apostles (one of the twelve immediate followers of Jesus) who shared faith in the resurrection of Jesus, their crucified leader who was the starting point of Christian faith. The idea of resurrection had already appeared in Judaism during the second century B.C., but Christians found their faith upon clarity and certitude through faith in Jesus' resurrection.³²⁷

As a monotheistic religion, Christianity is centered upon the life and teachings of Jesus who was born around the turn of the first century A.D. probably between 6 B.C. and 6

³²³ C. Becker SDS, *Early History of the Catholic Missions in Northeast India, 1598-1890* (trans. & ed.) F. Leicht SDS, S.Karotemprel SDB, Vendrame Institute Publications, Shillong, 1989, p. xi.

³²⁴ J. Derek Holmes & Bernard W. Bickers, *A Short History of the Catholic Church*, Inforum Ltd, Portsmouth, 1983, p.11.

³²⁵ *Ibid.*

³²⁶ Lawrence S. Cunningham, *An Introduction to Catholicism*, Cambridge University Press, New York, 2009, p.90.

³²⁷ Thomas Bokenkotter, *A Concise History of the Catholic Church*, Image Books, USA, 1977, p. 26.

A.D. and was crucified by the Romans between A.D.28 and 30. His early years were spent at Nazareth in Galilee. At some point in his early life of manhood he felt a call to preach the coming of God's Kingdom and began to gather huge crowds from the villages and towns in the region northwest of the Lake of Galilee.³²⁸ The sources of historical facts about Jesus as founder of Christian religion are the Gospels (in the Bible) of Mathew, Mark, Luke and John that tell little about the genesis of his ministry.³²⁹ They were written from forty to seventy years after his death. Their authors drew on an oral tradition that disseminated stories about the deeds and words of Jesus in the form of sermons, catechetical (teachings on faith) and liturgical material.³³⁰ The gospels were not meant to be a historical or biographical account of Jesus but they were written to convert non Jews to faith in Jesus as the Messiah of God.³³¹ Their authors were not primarily concerned with historical accuracy as they included material drawn from the Christian communities' experience of the risen Jesus.³³²

Christianity was established a decade or so of Jesus' execution and it is a historical religion.³³³ Palmisano defines Christianity from the sociological point of view as 'the religion that was formed in Palestine by those who followed the teachings of Jesus of Nazareth, a Jewish spirit-healer and exorcist who became public figure after he turned thirty.'³³⁴ Believed by his followers to have risen from the dead, Jesus became the focus of a cult that spread throughout the Mediterranean region. His mission was to liberate Israel and for several centuries after his death Christians of Jewish origin were significantly present both inside and outside the land of his birth.³³⁵

Christians believe that Jesus came on earth to preach the doctrine that had been confided to him by his father and also to found a society which was to include all those who would accept his teaching which is why he selected the apostles. To them he handed over the exclusive right of preaching and preserving what he himself had taught, so that the future adherents would accept the instructions and the advice of those who had been appointed by

³²⁸ *Ibid.*, p.15.

³²⁹ *Ibid.*, p.16.

³³⁰ *Ibid.*

³³¹ *Ibid.*, p.17.

³³² *Ibid.*

³³³ *Ibid.*, p.90.

³³⁴ Joseph M.Palmisano, (ed.), *World of Sociology*, (Vol.1), Gale, New York, 2001, pp.90-91.

³³⁵ Margaret M. Mitchell & Frances M. Young (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Christianity, Vol. 1, Origins to Constantine*, Cambridge Histories online, Cambridge University Press, 2006,p.87.

Jesus.³³⁶ Having selected a body of apostles he instructed them specially and revealed the secrets not communicated to the multitude.³³⁷ Jesus not only preached the Good News of the kingdom but also gathered his followers into a fellowship.³³⁸ Through the preaching of the apostles and the miracles wrought by them, they secured quickly a large number of followers in Jerusalem.³³⁹

The early Christians met on the first day of the week most likely as a way of distinguishing themselves as different from the Jews who celebrated Sabbath on the seventh day – the day, according to the creation account in Genesis, the first book of the Bible, when God rested.³⁴⁰ Adherents to the new Messiah (savior as Jesus was considered) would gather in homes for prayers, exhortations and celebration of the ritual meal.³⁴¹ This is indicated in the Bible, I Corinthians 16:19.³⁴² Besides the teaching through sermons, there was, in every church, the systematic instruction given to the newly converted members in preparation for their reception into the church by the sacramental rite of Baptism (initiation rite into the church).³⁴³

The small community of believers at Jerusalem was led by the twelve men who were supposedly chosen by Jesus himself. Their leader and spokesman was Peter.³⁴⁴ The increase in numbers due to the vigorous and effective preaching of the apostle Peter, led to the necessity of appointing others to free the twelve from domestic duties to continue their ministry of evangelizing. The first recorded helpers were the seven deacons (persons chosen by the apostles to help with the day-to-day matters of local faith communities).³⁴⁵ This community spread to countless cities of the Roman Empire within less than a century.³⁴⁶ It is exactly difficult to determine when Christians first appeared in Rome. The Christian religion spread from its Jerusalem center rapidly and as their work progressed and religious body grew larger the official leaders of the Jews determined to crush

³³⁶Rev. James Mac Caffey, *History of the Catholic Church*, The Macmillan Co. USA, 1912,p.5.

³³⁷*Ibid.*

³³⁸ Thomas Bokenkotter, *op. cit.*, p.19.

³³⁹*Op. cit.*, p.5.

³⁴⁰ Philip Hughes, *A Popular History of the Catholic Church*, The Macmillan Company, USA, 1949, p.1.

³⁴¹Margaret M. Mitchell & Frances M. Young (eds.),*op.cit.*, p.149.

³⁴² They met in private homes: ‘Aquila and Prisca, together with the Church in their house, greet you.’

³⁴³ Philip Hughes, *op.cit.*,p.17.

³⁴⁴Thomas Bokenkotter,*op.cit.*,p. 26.

³⁴⁵ J. Derek Holmes & Bernard W. Bickers, *op.cit.*, p.12.

³⁴⁶*Op.cit.*, p. 27.

the movement, and so, a great persecution began.³⁴⁷ From the Acts of the Apostles in the Bible it is clear that through the preaching of Peter and of the other apostles flourishing Christian communities were established.³⁴⁸

The earliest examples of Christian missionary activities are those recorded in the letters of Paul, written in the course of his missionary activity in Asia Minor (modern Turkey) and Greece. The contributions of Paul significantly helped the growth and development of Christianity in the non-Jewish world in its early phase. Of all those responsible for taking the gospel to the non-Jews, none can be compared in stature or significance with Paul.³⁴⁹ His initial distrust and persecution of the Church was matched only by his future acceptance and missionary endeavors.³⁵⁰ In three great missionary journeys between 46-58 AD, Paul was responsible for founding Christian communities in modern day Syria, Turkey, Yugoslavia, the Greek mainland and Islands and Cyprus.³⁵¹ With the non-Jews, he concentrated on the basic Christian message of Jesus' resurrection, aiming to create a group capable of existing on its own, thus freeing him to establish new communities.³⁵² His most difficult and yet most important task was to give these individual communities a sense of belonging to one Church.³⁵³ Paul was especially successful in spreading the Christian religion in Asia Minor, Greece, and Macedonia. Mathew, Bartholomew and Thomas worked beyond the confines of the empire among the Persians, Ethiopians, Parthians and Indians. In Rome, the Church made great progress which is clear from the works of Tacitus who declared that in the days of Nero an immense number of Christians were put to death for the faith.³⁵⁴

Christianity gradually became a very important religious, social, cultural and even political force in the Western world. It radiated from Jerusalem, though that was not the center of Christianity in any strict organizational sense.³⁵⁵ Christians used strategies and developed social forms similar to those of the Pauline circle.³⁵⁶ Some of the earliest evidence

³⁴⁷ Rev. James Mac Caffey, *op.cit.*, p.8.

³⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p.12

³⁴⁹ J. Derek Holmes & Bernard W. Bickers, *op.cit.*, p.13.

³⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

³⁵¹ *Ibid.*

³⁵² *Ibid.*

³⁵³ *Ibid.*

³⁵⁴ *Op.cit.*, p.12.

³⁵⁵ Lawrence S. Cunningham, *op.cit.*, p. 4.

³⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p.151.

for Christian beginnings comes from the art found decorating the walls of catacombs and the tombs dating from the period of late antiquity.³⁵⁷ Conditions in the Roman Empire facilitated the spread of new ideas. The empire's well-defined network of roads and waterways allowed for easier travel from one region to another, while the *Pax Romana*³⁵⁸ (Latin for 'Roman peace') was the long period of relative peace and minimal expansion by military force experienced by the Roman Empire in the first and second centuries A.D. The Roman road building, together with the earlier spread of the Greek language in cities of the eastern half of the empire under Alexander and his successors, had made possible an unprecedented ease of travel and communication. The Christian Apostles exploited this facility and their need for support for their travel and for continuing contact with and supervision of churches already founded led them to develop extraordinary network of 'fellow workers', delegates and messengers.³⁵⁹ The government had encouraged inhabitants especially those in urban areas to learn Greek and the common language allowed ideas to be more easily expressed and understood.

The Roman Empire forms the broader political, social and religious context for the emergence of early Christianity.³⁶⁰ The movement that began with Jesus eventually became the Christian Church in its manifold varieties, developed with astonishing rapidity and exhibited diverse forms from its earliest years.³⁶¹ A new form of religious community was introduced into the ancient Mediterranean world by the followers of Jesus. Adolf Von Harnack in his classic study of *The mission and expansion of Christianity* asserts that by the year 300CE it was 'this church itself... through its mere existence' that had replaced the activity of 'missionaries' in apostolic times and that it was able to do so by indigenizing its radical and revolutionary claims into forms that seemed 'familiar, wished for and natural.'³⁶²

The term Christianity coined in the first century A.D. about five years after Pentecost³⁶³ (Ancient Greek: Pentēkostē [hēmera], 'the Fiftieth [day]' Pentecost - 'Pfingsten' in German, is the Greek for the fiftieth day seven weeks (50 days) after Easter Sunday.) It

³⁵⁷*Ibid.*, p.97.

³⁵⁸*Britannica Online Encyclopaedia*. Available from <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/447447/Pax-Romana>. Accessed 19 July 2012.

³⁵⁹Margaret M. Mitchell & Frances M. Young (eds.) *op.cit.*, p.152.

³⁶⁰*Ibid.*, p.69.

³⁶¹*Ibid.*, p.145.

³⁶²*Ibid.*

³⁶³*The Catholic Encyclopedia*, Robert Appleton Company, New York. Available from <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/15614b.htm>. Accessed on 18 July 2012.

is a prominent feast in the calendar of Ancient Israel celebrating the giving of the law on Sinai and also later in the Christian liturgical year commemorating the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the remaining eleven apostles of Christ. It is sometimes described as the Birthday of the Church. After the death of Jesus of Nazareth the adherents multiplied, but there was as yet no word ‘Christianity.’³⁶⁴ According to Acts of the Apostles in the Bible, it was in Antioch that the followers of Jesus were first called *christianoī*,³⁶⁵ most likely by outsiders who recognized them as a sect distinguishable from the main Jewish community.³⁶⁶ Christians are defined as ones ‘called out’ from the world to be followers of Jesus.³⁶⁷ A Christian is sometimes said to be one who has made a decision, one who belongs to a Church (a body of Christians) and far too often, someone who confesses the right creeds (Catholic beliefs).³⁶⁸ This term is an abstraction precisely because it is a comprehensive term that covers a huge spectrum of doctrinal, ethical and cultural differences among the various Christian churches.³⁶⁹

Christianity spread slowly and steadily, once ‘the days of Pentecost were accomplished.’ The first of many decisive foundations was the establishment of the Church at Antioch, the third city of the Roman Empire, destined to be the first main centre of Christian life and for centuries to come, the main source of all missionary activity in the East.³⁷⁰ It was from Antioch that Paul evangelized Asia Minor, Macedonia and Greece and Christianity gained recognition in the following century. After hundred years or so, Persia first received the new religion while at the same time Armenia was won over by Gregory the ‘wonder-worker.’³⁷¹ There were Christians in Egypt by the time the second century was half-way through.³⁷² In the middle of the third century the Christians penetrated into the countries that

³⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, *Christianismos* is first found in Ignatius (Rom 3:3). The adjective *Christianos* – (‘Christian’) appears only in late New Testament documents, such as Acts 11:26, 26:28, and I Pet 4:16.

³⁶⁵ Acts 11:26, 13:1.

³⁶⁶ *Op.cit.*, p. 150.

³⁶⁷ www.bible411.com accessed on 12 July 2012.

³⁶⁸ For concise treatment on Christianity, see *Encyclopedia of Sociology*. See the article by James Smallwood, ‘Christianity’ in Frank Magill et al., *International Encyclopedia of Sociology*, Fitzroy Dearborn Publishers, 1996, vol.1, pp.157-161, Indian edition by Chand & Company Ltd., New Delhi, 2000. For a treatment of Christianity from a historical point of view, see John Mac Manners, (ed.), *The Oxford Illustrated History of Christianity*, OUP, Oxford, 1990, pp.1-61.

³⁶⁹ Lawrence S.Cunningham, *op.cit.*, p.254.

³⁷⁰ Philip Hughes, *op.cit.*, p. 18.

³⁷¹ *Ibid.*

³⁷² *Ibid.*

are today Rumania and Southern Russia.³⁷³ Syria and Asia Minor were largely dominated by Christian faith.³⁷⁴ In the course of the next two centuries the hundreds of churches of central and southern Italy were founded. This steady and progressive extension of the church was accomplished despite the divisions and controversies about its doctrines (official Christian teaching) and despite a constant hostile pressure from outside; namely from the civil authority and the Roman Empire. During these first three centuries, the church was always liable to severe persecution and during the greater part of that time it actually suffered persecution.³⁷⁵ Christianity had so developed in the long half-century that its adherents were now to be found in every walk of life.³⁷⁶

When Christianity began to spread in the Roman Empire it began to attract the suspicion and the hostility of the Roman authorities.³⁷⁷ At first the Roman government ignored Christians but in A.D.64, Emperor Nero accused them for a great fire in Rome. The apostles Peter and Paul, the leaders of the church in Rome were martyred in this bloody persecution.³⁷⁸ The historian Tacitus, writing some years after the persecutions, described Nero as shifting blame on the Christians, whom he described as ‘haters of the human race’ inflicting on them atrocious tortures and finally death.³⁷⁹ Large scale organized persecutions took place under Decius (249-251), Valerian (253-60) and especially Diocletian (303-05) but then Constantine (306-37) made Christianity his favorite religion.³⁸⁰ What made the Christians dangerously subversive in Roman eyes was their unwillingness to exhibit that veneration towards the gods which alone, according to the Roman way of seeing things, insured the civil order.³⁸¹ Romans called Christianity a *superstitio* (a name for religion that was irrational, culture-hating and destructive) and not a *religio*.³⁸²

In the late second century a philosopher named Celsus wrote a long, well-informed pamphlet against Christianity in which his principal criticism was that the movement appealed only to ‘the uneducated, slaves, women, little children and to workers in despised

³⁷³ *Ibid.*

³⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p.19.

³⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p.20.

³⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p.23.

³⁷⁷ *Op.cit.*, p.51.

³⁷⁸ Alan Schreck, *The Compact History of the Catholic Church*, St.Paul’s Press, Mumbai, 1987, p.16.

³⁷⁹ *Op.cit.*, p.52.

³⁸⁰ Margaret M. Mitchell & Frances M. Young (eds.) *op.cit.*, p.72.

³⁸¹ *Ibid.*

³⁸² *Ibid.*

trades.³⁸³ The Roman government began to suspect the Christians as enemies of the state, atheists who refused to worship the Roman gods or pay homage to the Roman emperor. Thus a fierce persecution followed but Christianity continued to grow. The inflexible opposition of Christians to Roman Empire, morals and religion aroused the savage fury of the state and many church members perished when they refused to conform.

The Roman Emperor Constantine in the year 312 A.D. attached the monogram of Christ to the banners of his troops and granted it complete religious liberty.³⁸⁴ Around the year 313 A.D., Constantine espoused the Christian faith. An edict of religious toleration was promulgated, the so-called 'Edict of Milan', whose purpose was 'to grant to the Christians and all others full authority to follow whatever worship they had desired.'³⁸⁵ The edict also pointed to a future, where Christianity would not be one among many religions, but would be the sole religion of the empire.³⁸⁶ Thus it became possible to build churches without fear of suppression³⁸⁷ and Rome became the centre of the Church as well.

In 330 A.D. Constantine moved the capital to Byzantium, rebuilt the city and called it Constantinople. The church grew there and spread into the neighboring countries of Eastern Europe. The presence of the emperor in that city gave it the added prestige as well as political, social and cultural importance. Later the Sea of Constantinople (a geographical area under the leadership of a local bishop) became a patriarchate (names of the highest Church related dignitaries after the Pope and of the territory they rule) as was the patriarchate of Rome, the former in Eastern Europe and the latter to the west of it. Thus arose a distinction, basically geographical, between the Eastern Church and the Western Church.³⁸⁸ What seems irrefutable, however, was the rapid spread of Christianity during his reign and the fact that imperial legislation approved of such growth. Under Constantine the church emerged from being persecuted and passed through a period of toleration to a position of supremacy. The Christians were able to enter a century of theological debate and doctrinal formulation that became the business of the first four General Councils.³⁸⁹ At the Council of Nicaea (A.D 325),³⁹⁰ convened by Constantine, the

³⁸³ *Ibid.*, p.156.

³⁸⁴ Thomas Bokenkotter, *op.cit.*, p.11.

³⁸⁵ J.Derek Holmes, *op.cit.*, p. 32.

³⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁸⁷ Lawrence S. Cunningham, *op.cit.*, p.77.

³⁸⁸ W.L.A. Don Peter, *50 Questions about Catholicism*, St. Paul Press, Mumbai, 1998, p.59.

³⁸⁹ J.Derek Holmes, *op.cit.* pp. 32-33.

basic doctrines of the Christian Church were established.³⁹¹ In the early fourth century, it is estimated that about 10 percent of the 50 million people in the Roman Empire were Christian.

Christianity extended west to the Iberian Peninsula (present-day Spain and Portugal), north into Roman Britain, south along the Mediterranean coast of North (Roman) Africa and east to the area nominally under Roman jurisdiction east of the Euphrates River.³⁹² After permitting to reach beyond Hebrew and Jewish lands, Christianity began spreading throughout the Near East, ultimately becoming the state religion of Armenia in 301, Ethiopia in 325, Georgia in 337 and then the State church of the Roman Empire in 380. In 381, Emperor Theodosius decreed that Christianity would be the official religion of the Roman Empire. The opportunity, of course, appeared as the Christians were no longer under the threat of persecution. They were able to practice their faith openly and more importantly, to preach it with impunity. That opportunity was enhanced by the patronage of the imperial office which built churches, endowed works of the church and ever more closely aligned the policies of the Empire with that of the ever growing church.³⁹³ Becoming common to all of Europe in the Middle Ages, it expanded throughout the world during the Age of Exploration. Like other world religions as Hinduism, Buddhism and Islam, it had its birth in Asia.

Meanwhile the church continued to grow and spread from Palestine to Asia Minor, Greece, Italy, Egypt and Africa, Gaul and Spain, Germany and Britain.³⁹⁴ The first Christians had a conviction that they were inspired by God to spread their faith universally. After the destruction of the Western Roman Empire, the church in the West was a major factor in the preservation of classical civilization, establishing monasteries (A community of persons, especially monks, bound by vows to a religious life and often living in partial or complete seclusion), and sending missionaries to convert the people of northern Europe, as far as Ireland in the north. Under the leadership of the Popes (supreme head of the Catholic Church)

³⁹⁰F. L.Cross & E.A.Livingstone (eds.), *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, Oxford University Press, New York, 2005. Representatives came from across the Empire, subsidized by the Emperor. Previous to this Council, the Bishops would hold local Councils, such as the Council of Jerusalem, but there had been no universal or ecumenical Council.

³⁹¹ T.B.Subba, Joseph Puthenpurakal, Shaji Joseph Puykunnel, (eds.), *Christianity and Change in Northeast India*, Concept Publishing Company, New Delhi, 2009, p.50.

³⁹²*Ibid.*

³⁹³*Ibid.*,p.196.

³⁹⁴*Ibid.*,p.3.

like Gregory the Great (d.604), it laid the foundations for a whole new Christian civilization in the West.³⁹⁵

For nearly thousand years then, the Church presided over the total life of Christendom and animated its laws, institutions, customs, literature, art and architecture. The Papal monarchs controlled vast ecclesiastical machinery that regulated in minute details, the moral and social behavior of medieval kings and princes as well as peasants and townspeople.³⁹⁶ Martyrdom (giving up one's life for the sake of Christian faith) remained constant in the history of Christianity, perhaps no more than in the twentieth century when more Christians died for their faith than in all of the Roman persecutions combined.³⁹⁷ Christian bishops, the leaders of the church after the death of the apostles, continued to be models of faith for God's people. By the end of the first century, there were an estimated half million Christians in the Roman Empire.³⁹⁸

The historical sources for the initial birth and early life of the church are meager and detailed evidence almost non-existent.³⁹⁹ The first beginning of the Church⁴⁰⁰ is found in the pages of the New Testament (a collection of 26 books and letters). It also presents a range of unique teachings, the writings of Paul which early Christians sent to newly established churches. The New Testament covers several aspects of Jesus' life, including his ministry, teachings, miracles, his death by crucifixion and his resurrection. Despite difficulties, the church continued to develop in terms of self-understanding and organization, clarifying her teaching and consolidating her structures.⁴⁰¹ Justin the martyr claimed that Christianity was not only viable but was 'the only certain and adequate philosophy.'⁴⁰²

By the end of the second century, despite the internal problems and external pressures, the church had not only survived but had advanced both numerically and geographically. The missionary spirit, so marked in the apostolic period, had been maintained and new areas especially in the West, including North Africa and Gaul, had

³⁹⁵ Thomas Bokenkotter, *op.cit.*, p.11.

³⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁹⁷ Lawrence S. Cunningham, *op.cit.*, p.53.

³⁹⁸ Alan Schreck, *op.cit.*, p.17.

³⁹⁹ J.Derek Holmes, *op.cit.*, p.12.

⁴⁰⁰ Lawrence S. Cunningham, *op.cit.*, p.75.

⁴⁰¹ J.Derek Holmes, *op.cit.*, p. 13.

⁴⁰² *Ibid.*, p. 21.

been added to those where Christianity had originally taken root. As yet there was neither a centralized nor a co-ordinated plan of campaign, but by preaching, writing and bearing witness in life and in death, the early church gained converts whose quality was to prove decisive in the century which still separated the church from the peace of Constantine.⁴⁰³ It was at Antioch, that they took the revolutionary step that would have momentous consequences for the spread of the church and the history of the world. Here they first preached the Gospel to the non-Jews and dared to baptize them and they made this city the center of missionary work among them.⁴⁰⁴

The early Christian Church was very loosely organized which resulted in diverse interpretations of Christian beliefs.⁴⁰⁵ In the second century, the leadership structure of the church took a definite form that has remained unchanged to the present. Ignatius of Antioch reports as early as A.D. 110 that each local church was led by a single bishop (spiritual leader and head of a diocese). The bishop was assisted in his ministry by ‘presbyters’ (later called priests) who led the community in celebrating the Eucharist (one of the seven sacraments of the catholic community synonym for the communal ritual known as the Mass) and administered other Sacraments. As the local churches grew too large for the bishop to minister personally to everyone, the bishop was assisted by ‘deacons’, who had the important role of serving the local church in practical ways, such as distributing money and goods to the poor and needy.⁴⁰⁶

In part to ensure a greater consistency in their teachings, by the end of the 2nd century Christian communities had evolved a more structured hierarchy, with a central bishop having authority over the clergy (priests) in his city, leading to the development of the Metropolitan Bishop (an archbishop or bishop having authority in certain matters over the dioceses in his province). The organization of the Church began to mimic that of the Empire, bishops in politically important cities exerted greater authority over bishops in nearby cities. Bishops often congregated in regional synods (an assembly of church delegates, convoked pursuant to the law of the church, for the discussion and decision of ecclesiastical affairs, to resolve

⁴⁰³ *Ibid.*, p. 25.

⁴⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 28.

⁴⁰⁵ *Op.cit.*, p.51.

⁴⁰⁶ Alan Schreck, *op.cit.*, pp.17-18.

doctrinal and policy issues).⁴⁰⁷ By the 3rd century, the bishop of Rome began to act as a court of appeals for problems that other bishops could not resolve.

Christianity from the moment it moved outside the Jewish milieu, in which it was first preached, was thus immediately brought up against the influence of world-wide religious activities.⁴⁰⁸ The conversion of the tribes of Europe continued in the eighth century under the leadership of the English Benedictine monk (one who lives a stable life in community) Winfred, better known as Boniface, the apostle of Germany.⁴⁰⁹ The beginning of the ninth century appeared promising for the Western Catholic Church. Denmark and Norway were converted to Christianity in the eleventh century, followed shortly afterward by Sweden in 1164. Russia had received missionaries from both the East and West, until the Russian prince decided to accept baptism in the Byzantine church, which later became the Roman Orthodox Church with its own patriarch (a title for the bishops of one of the four major Christian centers: Rome, Jerusalem, Antioch and Alexandria in Moscow).⁴¹⁰

Renewal was sweeping the church, but the growing political influence and affluence of the church, including the monasteries, led to the emergence of some groups who proclaimed to be living a truer and more radical gospel.⁴¹¹ The new life in the monasteries and cathedral (the principal church of a bishop's diocese) schools brought newness to the church in many ways.⁴¹² The twelfth century also marked the beginning of Scholastic theology, the theology of the schools and reason was employed to understand the mysteries of faith and theology.⁴¹³ The thirteenth century was the height of Christendom. This period was also the apex of the thought and culture of the Middle Ages and around 1170 new centres/universities of higher learning emerged in the period. The universities began as a union of guild of scholars, which first attracted members of the clergy and were supported financially by the church. The first two universities were

⁴⁰⁷*Ibid.*

⁴⁰⁸ Philip Hughes, *op.cit.*, p.4.

⁴⁰⁹ *Op.cit.*, p.34.

⁴¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p.43

⁴¹¹ *Ibid.*, p.46.

⁴¹² *Ibid.*, p.46-47.

⁴¹³ *Ibid.*, p.47.

founded at Paris (specializing in theology) and Bologna (law), but soon Oxford (1200), Cambridge (1209), Salamanca (1220), Naples (1224) and others followed.⁴¹⁴

This century was truly the height of the church's life and the height of western culture in the Middle Ages.⁴¹⁵ It was a time of fruition for Christianity, for the medieval church and Papacy (the office or term of office of a Pope). It was a time of decline as the era was marked by the fearsome Black Death, the bubonic plague that swept through Europe beginning in 1348 and wiped out one third of Europe's population.⁴¹⁶ There were sparks of spiritual awakening in the late middle Ages but the spiritual reform and renewal was not firmly rooted in the mainstream of the Church. Thus the period from AD.600 to 1300 was marked by the conversion of new people and tribes to Christianity. It was a time of political turmoil and warfare which often involved the struggle to determine the proper relationship of the Church to the state. In the West this led to the emergence of 'Christendom', the alliance of church and state. Christendom bore much fruit but also resulted in continual tension between the Popes and Emperors and between other leaders of church and state. Serious heresies (a name given to all deviations from the doctrinal or moral teachings of the Catholic Church) and distortions of true Christian teaching appeared.⁴¹⁷

There were also many advances in Christianity as some of the renowned Christian scholars emerged and the culture of Christianity reached new heights in art, architecture, literature and theology. New religious orders (an association of members who make the vows of Poverty, Chastity and Obedience and live in communities) flourished, bringing new life to the church and old monastic orders were renewed.⁴¹⁸ It was a time of the establishment of Europe as a Christian continent and of the preservation of the Christian faith in the East in the face of the spread of Islam.⁴¹⁹ The authority of the Pope and the church became supreme in the Middle Ages. The church as an institution acquired huge property and so also did the monasteries. Besides, many practices which were not a part of the original teachings of Jesus Christ, crept into the religious institutions. Under these circumstances reform appeared inevitable particularly in the context of Renaissance,

⁴¹⁴*Ibid.*,p.53.

⁴¹⁵*Ibid.*, p..54.

⁴¹⁶*Ibid.*,p..55.

⁴¹⁷*Op.cit.*, p.33.

⁴¹⁸*Ibid.*

⁴¹⁹*Ibid.*,p.34.

geographical discoveries, scientific thinking as well as scientific discoveries. They all contributed to the attitude of questioning many practices in the Church organizations. Hence in the sixteenth century there emerged the Reformation and Counter Reformation⁴²⁰ and the Reformation reached its climax under Martin Luther of Germany when he went against the church.

Luther had learned that Scripture teaches righteousness different from that taught by the church of his day. In sum, the primary cause for composing his theses was the rediscovery of important biblical doctrines (official Christian teaching). Closely related to this theological motivation for writing the theses was Luther's reaction to practices that had arisen from false teaching. For it was also in response to the sale of indulgences (a paper issued by the Pope in Rome, on which was stated that the bearer is granted partial or complete remission of the punishment that is due to acts of sin) that Luther was provoked to write. Indulgences released the sinner from earthly punishment imposed by the church. During the eleventh century these indulgences were granted to people returning from crusades (a series of religious wars between Roman Catholic Europe and Muslim polities or other enemies with the goal of recapturing Jerusalem and the Holy Land from Muslim rule) to the holy land as a token of completed good work.

The Church was split and those who differed with the Roman Catholic Church came to be known as the Protestants.⁴²¹ The Church was made more democratic and liberal in the reformed areas.⁴²² To check the influence of the Protestant movement the Roman Catholic Church established a series of reforms and they are collectively known as the Counter Reformation. The Council of Trent (the council of the Roman Catholic Church that met between 1545 and 1563 at Trent in S.Tyrol, reaffirmed traditional Catholic beliefs and formulated the ideals of the Counter-Reformation) issued various decrees to reform the Roman Catholic Church. In this way Catholicism was strengthened and rejuvenated.

As modern times dawned with the Renaissance of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, the unity of papal Christendom was severely undermined by social, economic, religious and cultural forces that could no longer be contained within the framework of the papal theocracy. When Luther dealt the most devastating blow by his denial of papal absolute

⁴²⁰ August Frazee, *A Concise History of the Church*, Publishers, New York, 1969, pp.254-263.

⁴²¹ Karl H. Bihlmeyer, *Church History*, Vol. III, Westminster, 1958, pp.4-11.

⁴²² Philip Hughes, *Op.cit.*, p.186.

authority much of the elaborate structure simply collapsed. The church of Rome, however, was able to save itself by a thoroughgoing reform at Trent (1545- 63), and with greatly diminished membership and influence but with rejuvenated spiritual energy most evident in the newly founded Jesuit Order (Society of Jesus), it set about its new task of recovering its lost territories and preserving the faith of its members, who were now exposed to the spirit of radical doubt engendered by the rising forces of rationalism and liberalism.⁴²³ Shaken by crisis after crisis, especially the French revolution which began in 1789 the church managed to keep its ranks unbroken and its faith unchanged. After the Revolution it experienced a powerful spiritual revival that manifested itself in the conversion of numerous members of Europe's intellectual elite, in the foundation of many new religious orders (communities of Christian women and men who seek to live as active witnesses to the good news of Jesus and who have pledged to observe the vows of poverty, chastity and obedience), in a dynamic missionary movement that extended its presence to every corner of the globe and in the development of a social ethic that offered a consistent set of answers to the moral problems raised by the Industrial Revolution.⁴²⁴

In the post Reformation period the Latin countries made an attempt to spread Christianity in far off places like India.⁴²⁵ Roman Catholicism struck deep roots in India with the arrival of Portuguese Christians but there were also Christians living in some parts of India prior to 1498 A.D. According to tradition, the foundation of the Church in India was laid by Thomas and Bartholomew, the Apostles of Jesus Christ. The arrival of Christianity in India is ascribed to the enterprise of the Christian merchants and missionaries of the Syrian Church (is one of the churches of Saint Thomas Christian community, which traces its origins to the evangelical activity of Thomas the apostle in the 1st century).⁴²⁶ The nineteenth century was an age of challenges and of reawakening of the catholic faith.⁴²⁷ In 1850, Christians comprised about one- half of the world's population.

The church entered the twentieth century with a constantly increasing membership- nearly one fifth of the world's population, under the highly centralized control of Rome. With the advent of Pope John XXIII (d.1963), a turning point was reached in the church's relations

⁴²³ Thomas Bokenkotter, *op.cit.*, p. 12.

⁴²⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴²⁵ Pius Fidelis Pinto, *History of Christians in Coastal Karnataka (1500- 1763 a.d.)*, Samanvaya, Mangalore, Karnataka, 1999, p.10.

⁴²⁶ H.C.Perumalil CMI & E.R.Hambye S.J., (eds.), *Christianity in India*, Alleppe, 1972, pp. 15-16.

⁴²⁷ Alan Schreck, *op.cit.*, p.98.

with the modern world. With incredible boldness, he resolutely turned his back on four centuries of sterile polemics and called for dialogue with all people of good will. The Second Vatican Council (a landmark meeting of catholic bishops from around the world convened by Pope John XXIII in 1962 and was concluded in 1965 by Pope Paul VI. It produced 16 major church documents that outline important church teachings in contemporary terms) embraced his optimistic vision of a renewed church seeking greater unity with all people. It subjected the church to a penetrating self-scrutiny and carried through sweeping changes that radically transformed the church in many aspects of its life and doctrine.⁴²⁸ The suddenness and extent of the changes profoundly shocked and plunged the whole church into a period of such intense inner turmoil.⁴²⁹ Pope Paul VI was thought to have skillfully balanced tradition with innovation in guiding the Church steadily through one of its most critical transition periods.⁴³⁰

In the twentieth century, the Catholic Church underwent an unprecedented growth outside of Europe itself.⁴³¹ Churches, schools, hospitals, colleges, and other institutions were built to aid in this growth.⁴³² There was a steady increase in population and a strong interest in social problems especially the rights of workers. The pastoral constitution on the church in the modern world (*Gaudium et spes*) charged the Church itself to take its place in the needs and aspirations of all humanity.⁴³³ By 1950, the catholic population had shrunk to one-third due to the rise of communism and other atheistic forms of government in the twentieth century.⁴³⁴ As the religion of Byzantine Empire in the first millennium and of Western Europe during the time of colonization, Christianity has been propagated throughout the world and around 32 per cent of the world's population today is, at least nominally, Christian.⁴³⁵ It has grown into an influential force throughout the world. Being the largest of the world's religions, it is also more evenly spread around the globe and is found, in one form or another, throughout the world.⁴³⁶ It has always had a strong missionary impetus and since the sixteenth century has spread throughout much of what is now

⁴²⁸ *Ibid.*, p.13.

⁴²⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴³⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴³¹ *Op.cit.*, p.210.

⁴³² *Ibid.*

⁴³³ *Ibid.*, p. 212.

⁴³⁴ *Ibid.*, p.102.

⁴³⁵ Isaac Padinjarekutt, *Christianity through the Centuries*, St.Paul's Publications, Mumbai, 2005, p.142.

⁴³⁶ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Catholic_Church#cite_note-22 Accessed 15 March, 2012.

described as the ‘developing’ world – Asia, Latin America, Africa and Oceania. It has been closely implicated in the rise and the spread of capitalism and in the ‘colonial encounter’ itself. In recent decades, accompanying the expansion of global capitalism, there has been a tremendous upsurge of Pentecostalism or ‘charismatic’ Christianity (renewal movement within Christianity that places special emphasis on a direct personal experience of God through the baptism with the Holy Spirit as described in the second chapter of the Book of Acts in the Bible).

With the resurgence of charismatic and Pentecostalist forms of Christianity, there has been, in recent decades, a huge expansion of Christianity in many parts of Africa, Asia and Latin America.⁴³⁷ Today it includes among its members every known race, every nationality and every social class. It is an organized society, with its beliefs set out in a scientifically ordered theology and its moral life similarly related to its beliefs, while an elaborate code of law safeguards the detail of its organization and the procedure of its corporate life.⁴³⁸ Primary challenges for Christianity in this century include the retention of its intellectual leadership and the development of a rapport with the world’s other religious communities without losing its evangelical mandate (a mandate given by Jesus to proclaim the Good News that he came to preach). It has in every generation produced a cadre of philosophers and theologians who have been able to speak not just as church leaders but as spokespersons amid the world’s intellectuals.

The church, from the first moment as it is revealed in the New Testament, is organized in a multitude of ‘churches’, one church in each city. Although Christianity is claimed as a transcendental truth of universal significance, it has been communicated in diverse historical and socio-cultural contexts and has thus given rise to a bewildering number of different denominations (groups with a particular theology and form of organization, sects and movements). The three largest Christian denominations are Catholicism, Eastern Orthodoxy and Protestantism. The Roman Catholic and the Eastern Orthodox Churches have more than 200 million adherents and established Christian churches as the Anglican, Methodist, Apostolic, Lutheran and Baptist churches there also exist throughout the world many thousands of different independent Christian churches.

⁴³⁷ Lawrence S. Cunningham, *op.cit.*, p.174.

⁴³⁸ Philip Hughes, *op. cit.*, p.1.

It can be further subdivided into thousands of distinct denominations and sects, each differing to some degree in belief and practice.

Christianity is concerned with rules and regulations concerning moral behavior. Though it preaches a moral code, what is not often emphasized is that the moral or ethical life, according to Christian teaching, flows out of faith, which is to say that Christian morality derives its strength from the prior conversion of a person to the way of Jesus.⁴³⁹ From its very beginning Christianity looked after the widows, orphans, travelers, sick, infirm and other needy persons, thus providing within its community a social network for those who might have otherwise ended up destitute.⁴⁴⁰ The doctrines of Christianity offered a high moral code, a belief in one God and a view about assuaging guilt as well as a sense of common bonds within their fellowship. In a period of religious yearning, these factors had attractive power.⁴⁴¹ This work therefore, is an attempt to find out how the divinely founded society that is Catholicism has fared in the past years, how far has its field of action and mission been expanded and helped and to what extent the Catholic Church has been able to carry forward the good work begun by its founder.

3.2. Christianity in India

Although the exact origins of Christianity in India remain unclear, it is generally agreed that Christianity in India is almost as old as Christianity itself, taking hold there even before it spread in many predominantly Christian nations of Europe. The history of Christianity in India figure in the opening chapters of the *Acts of Thomas* which was almost certainly written in Syriac, perhaps in the third century after Christ.⁴⁴² There are two traditions regarding Thomas. According to the Western tradition Thomas, following the well established trade routes, reached India sometime in the middle of the first century of the Christian era. He preached the gospel and converted many, including the members of royal families, suffered martyrdom in India and was buried there. Later his mortal remains were transferred to the West.⁴⁴³ According to the Indian tradition, Thomas came to India by sea.

⁴³⁹ *Op. cit.*, p.219.

⁴⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p.174.

⁴⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴² Stephen Neill F.B.A., *A History of Christianity in India :The Beginnings to AD 1707*, Press Syndicate of the University of Cambridge, United Kingdom, 1984, p.48.

⁴⁴³ A.M.Mundadhan, *Sixteenth Century Traditions of St. Thomas Christians*, Bangalore, 1970, pp.60-67.

He first landed at Cranganore in about 52 A.D.⁴⁴⁴ and converted high caste families and others in South India, particularly in Kerala. He also worked in the Coramandal coast and went to China where he preached the Gospel and returned to India. On his return he organized the Christians of Malabar under some priests among the leading families he had converted. He erected a few public places of worship, then moved to the Coramandal coast and suffered martyrdom. Christians believe that Thomas, one of the twelve apostles of Jesus, personally preached the Gospel and died in South India and that his tomb in Madras is his genuine resting place.⁴⁴⁵

According to A.M. Mundadan, Thomas the apostle preached the Gospel in South India and the origin of the Indian Christians is ascribed to his preaching.⁴⁴⁶ His apostolic work was continued by missionaries from West Asia and Europe over the centuries. The ancient church whose members are found in South India was for many centuries linked with the Syrian church of the East sometimes called Thomas Christians and sometimes Syrian Christians. The presence of Christians was found in western region by the end of sixth century. For centuries the Thomas Christians expanded due to their own zeal, though inspired also by the apostolic spirit of their East Syrian brethren. Some monks from India went to the Far East. During the tenth and the eleventh centuries, Thomas Christians tried to spread their faith in the Maldives' Islands.⁴⁴⁷

New continents were being opened up in the East and the West, and Christian missionaries were being sent forth to bear an invitation to 'strange races and peoples to take the place of millions who had strayed from the fold.' The restless energy and activity so characteristic of the fifteenth century manifested itself strikingly in the numerous naval expeditions planned and carried out in the face of enormous difficulties, which led to such important geographical discoveries. The importance of these discoveries in both East and West from the spiritual and temporal point of view was understood clearly enough by Spain and Portugal. The rulers of these countries, while anxious for the spread of Christianity in Asia and America, were not unmindful of the important service that might be rendered by religion to their work of colonization.

⁴⁴⁴ C.Becker SDS, *op.cit.*, p.xii.

⁴⁴⁵ Francis X. Clark S.J, *An Introduction to the Catholic Church of Asia*, Cardinal Bea Publications, Manila, 1987,p. 15.

⁴⁴⁶ A.M.Mundadhan, *op.cit.*, pp.60-67.

⁴⁴⁷ H. Hosten, *The Mackensie Manuscripts*, Madras, 1926, pp. 2-4.

The Portuguese pushed forward their discoveries along the west coast of Africa till at last Bartholomew Diaz succeeded in reaching the Cape of Good Hope in 1487, thereby opening the way for Vasco da Gama's voyage to the Malabar Coast in 1498. Though the middle ages of Christianity in India marked with the arrival of Franciscan John Monte Corvino in the year 1291, history was created by Vasco Da Gama. The individuality and uniqueness of Christianity lasted until Christianity in India came in contact with Portuguese missionaries who arrived in Kerala after the discovery of the sea route from Europe to India by Vasco Da Gama in A.D 1498.

The Christian presence is very vivid in the southern states of the country from the beginning of the first century. Christians in Kerala constitute one third population of the state. Though Christians were found in Kerala and Tamil Nadu in the early centuries, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh had Christian presence later in the beginning of thirteenth century commencing with the coming of Dominican missionaries. Kerala has 19.31 per cent Christian population, 5.69 per cent in Tamil Nadu, 1.91 per cent in Karnataka and 1.82 per cent in Andhra Pradesh. These four states account for 28.73 per cent of the total Christian population in the country. Madhya Pradesh, West Bengal and Gujarat have less than one percent of the total population. Christians form just 0.43 per cent in Gujarat, 0.09 per cent in Haryana and 0.08 per cent in Himachal Pradesh. In Goa, Christians constitute 29.85 per cent of the total population.⁴⁴⁸ Elsewhere, Christians are much more scattered.

Christianity developed in India and in the course of time attained an indigenous character. In the pre-colonial period Christians were more predominant in the areas of agriculture, commerce and welfare of the people. The contribution of Christianity in early ages, before the arrival of Portuguese is the acculturation and spiritualization which provides social and socio-ecclesial life. Independence marked by the fast growth of the country economically, socially and culturally, improvement in transportation and communication facilitated the missionaries to reach the unreachable areas of mission and development across the subcontinent. Today, Christianity is rooted from South Kanyakumari to North Jammu and Kashmir. Christianity has emerged as the major religion in three North-eastern states, namely, Nagaland, Mizoram, and Meghalaya. Among other states/UTs, Manipur (34.0%), Goa (26.7%), Andaman & Nicobar Islands (21.7%), Kerala (19.0%), and Arunachal Pradesh (18.7%) have considerable percentage of Christian population to the total population of the State/UTs. The total Christian population of Northeast India, which is roughly 4.3 million,

⁴⁴⁸ States: Literacy & Population by Religion, 1991 from *indiaonlinepages.com* accessed on 3 May 2014.

accounts for 22.7 per cent of Indian Christians. With roughly 1.2 million- Meghalaya has the highest number of Christian population and Tripura with 47,000 has the least population in the North East region of India. The three largest Christian groups are the Baptists, the Roman Catholics and the Presbyterians.

3.3. Christianity in Northeast India

Christianity in North East India goes back to 1560s of Mughal and Afghan (economic/political) struggle period, when Arakan (Burma) King brought Portuguese Forces around Bondashill (present Badarpur) area and its neighbouring areas. The spiritual needs were looked after by Priests from South India and later by Holy Cross (Bengal Mission 1860-76) and still later by Benedictines, Capuchins, Salvatorians, Jesuits and the Salesians till it went back to Canadian Province of Holy Cross in 1928 under Chittagong Diocese. The presence of Catholics since 1860s with resident priest in Badarpur, made it possible to establish the parish in 1880 with the first church dedicated to St. Joseph. Catholic missionary work proper in the North East dates since the creation of the Prefecture Apostolic of Assam, Bhutan and Manipur in 1889.⁴⁴⁹ It was made the responsibility of a young German order, the Society of the Divine Saviour, popularly referred to as the Salvatorians.⁴⁵⁰ After the Prefecture Apostolic of Assam (1889) entrusted to the Salvatorians, Baptismal record indicated the far and wide activities and tour of the missionaries, baptizing people in places like Cherrapunjee, Guwahati, Shillong, Tejpur, Silchar, Manipur, Damalia, Duputtee, Krishnagar, Silcouri, Larshinga, Sonacherra etc.⁴⁵¹ Since then, this region has seen a number of Christian missions with different historical, socio-economic and cultural backgrounds.⁴⁵²

The presence of Christianity in the region is also found with the arrival of two Portuguese missionaries on 26th September, 1626. The first systematic catholic effort to evangelize Assam was undertaken by a handful of Priests, Brothers and Sisters belonging to a young religious society that was just establishing itself and struggling to marshal adequate

⁴⁴⁹Frederick S. Downs, *History of Christianity in India*, Vol.V, Part 5, The Church Association of India, Bangalore, 1992, p. 92.

⁴⁵⁰For a history of the Salvatorian work in Assam see Becker, *Catholic Missions*. Mgr. Becker published the book of which this is the second part in 1923 under the name *Im Stromtal des Brahmaputra*, and a re-edited and revised edition came out in 1927. The first part was published in 1989, Becker, *Early History*.

⁴⁵¹*Souvenir*, Diamond Jubilee of the Prefecture Apostolic of Haflong, 2013, p.18.

⁴⁵²Dr. Sebastian Karotemprel “The Impact of Christianity on the Tribes of North East India” in J. Puthenpurakal SDB (ed.), *Impact of Christianity on North East India*, Vendrame Institute Publications, Shillong, 1996, p.3.

personnel and means for such a gigantic task.⁴⁵³ Roman Catholic Missions began working in India in the fifteenth century, but there was only occasional contact with the North East prior to the nineteenth century.⁴⁵⁴ The Foreign Missionaries of Paris (MEP) and the Foreign Missionaries of Milan (PIME) also worked in the area during the nineteenth century.⁴⁵⁵

Although Roman Catholic missionaries had made a few visits at an earlier date, the Protestant missionaries first established mission work in the region in the mid-nineteenth century. They pioneered healthcare services, medical work for local people, nursing schools and Bible translation centers. They were the first to give the Roman script to most tribal languages, which until the advent of Christianity were only spoken languages without script, grammar and literature. They passed on Church leadership to local Christians. They were the first to introduce Christianity to the people of the Brahmaputra valley and the tribal people of the hills. Their missionary work can be traced back to the establishment of translation centers and schools by Serampore Mission in Guwahati (1829) and in Cherrapunji (1832). The Presbyterian and Baptist missionaries succeeded in attracting a large following among the Khasi and the Garo tribes of Meghalaya and works of education and medical mission directed to the tribals played a major role in drawing them to Christianity. The Roman Catholic Church followed with the advent of Otto Hopfenmueller in Shillong on 27 February, 1890.

Protestant Christianity spread rapidly in Mizoram with the arrival of the first missionaries in 1894. A major missionary thrust began in 1897 with the work of D.E. Jones. By 1930, most of the Mizos had become Christians. This has been called the ‘Mizo Miracle’ by mission historians. Lutheran missionaries, however, registered modest success among the Adivasis and the Bodos of the Assam plains. Despite the major role played by missionaries in preventing attempts to replace Assamese with the Bengali language, their contribution to Assamese literature and publication of journals and books in Assamese and their educational and healthcare services were praise worthy. Manipur, once a princely state, witnessed the spread of Christianity since the arrival of William Pettigrew, a Baptist missionary, in 1894.

The Baptist missionaries worked among the Tangkhul Nagas with great success. Most Naga tribes of Manipur are Christian today, other than that there are also Chin-Kuki-Mizo

⁴⁵³ C. Becker SDS, *History of the Catholic Missions in Northeast India, (1890- 1915)*, (trans. &ed.), G. Stadler SDB & S. Karotemprel SDB, Firma KLM Private Limited, Calcutta, 1980, p. vi.

⁴⁵⁴ Dr. O.L. Snaitang, *Christianity and Social Change in Northeast India*, Vendrame Institute, Shillong, 1993, p. 78.

⁴⁵⁵ Fr. Jacob Aluckal, *The Catholic Church in Northeast India*, Archbishop’s House, Shillong, July 2006, p.i.

ethnic tribes in Manipur. The Naga tribes and Kuki-Chin tribes constitute 34 percent of the state's population and they are predominantly Christians. The ratio of the Christian population among the Meiteis, however, is still very less. So far as the Nagas of Nagaland are concerned, the work of the protestant missionaries began among the Nagas in 1870, though large numbers began to embrace Christianity only during the twentieth century and most members of the Ao tribe became Christians. They in turn became enthusiastic missionaries, joined the American Baptists and evangelized the other Naga tribes, especially the Semas, Chakhesangs, Angamis, Zeliangrongs, and Konyaks. In 2001, Nagaland was 87.5% Christian. Baptists followed by the Roman Catholics have the largest number of followers in Nagaland.⁴⁵⁶

Arunachal Pradesh, earlier known as North-East Frontier Agency (NEFA), was closed to missionary work by successive governments in New Delhi until the 1980s. Christianity came to this bordering state during the Raj with missionaries establishing schools and churches at Sadia and other areas. But students coming to Shillong and other towns for school and college education embraced Christianity and they in turn became missionaries to their own people. Thus Christianity began to spread among the Adis, the Mishings, the Wanchoos and other tribes. Within a short span of time, from 1975 to 2005, nearly 20% of the tribals embraced Christianity. Christianity was brought to Tripura in 1920 by the Baptist missionary society of New Zealand. The society established its first church in 1938.

In the context of different political systems, plurality of religious beliefs and practices, unintelligible dialects and languages, alphabet-less communities and variations in social structure, the presence of the new faith has been of tremendous importance to the fragmented and isolated people for introducing various effective institutional means so that the people could successfully work in the ongoing transformed situation and create a common sense of cultural identity. Many Christian missionaries seem to have contributed to the building up of the tribal's and their rich cultural traditions. Pundit Nehru confirmed this: 'The missionaries did very good work in North-East India and I am full of praise for them.' The former President of India Dr. Rajendra Prasad said, 'Christian missionaries from various countries of the world have worked among the tribal's and at great sacrifice have spread education and generally helped in effecting improvement in their living conditions. By

⁴⁵⁶ F.Hrangkhuma & Thomas Joy (eds.), *Christ Among the Tribals*, SAIACS Press, Bangalore, 2007, pp.122-123.

helping the tribal's to develop, the church has helped the nation to develop.⁴⁵⁷ The Christians established many schools in different parts of this region. At present there are schools in these states giving education to all sections of the society.

3.4. Catholicism

Catholicism is understood as a distinct body within the larger Christian world.⁴⁵⁸ The Catholic Church has always claimed Jesus of Nazareth as its founder.⁴⁵⁹ 'Early Catholicism' is sometimes used to refer to the Pauline Christian communities in the third generation as they are known in the Pastoral Epistles, the letters of Ignatius and Polycarp and the Acts of the Apostles.⁴⁶⁰ Much of what is termed 'catholic' about the third Pauline generation was already to some degree present or anticipated in the first. Paul's own perspective was from the start 'catholic' in the sense of 'universal.'⁴⁶¹ One element that is peculiar to the Catholic Church is its insistence that the bishop of Rome, the Pope is central to the self-identification of the church in his role as the center of catholic unity.⁴⁶² What makes the church catholic is the unity among all Catholic bishops and their common unity with the bishop of Rome, the Pope.⁴⁶³

The word 'catholic' comes from two Greek words, *kath holou*, which means something like 'of the whole.'⁴⁶⁴ The word does occur, very early in Christian history.⁴⁶⁵ It is usually translated as 'church in the New Testament and the term as used most commonly by Saint Paul comes from the Greek word *ekklesia* (from which the word 'ecclesiastical') is derived meaning an 'assembly, 'community', or 'congregation.'⁴⁶⁶ The earliest stages of Christianity therefore can be thought of as a loosely organized network of small communities in various parts of the Mediterranean world keeping linked to each other by travelling apostles, evangelists and other missionaries as well as by circulating letters like those of

⁴⁵⁷ S. Devasagayam Ponraj, *Tribal Challenges and Church's Responses*, Mission Educational Books, Madhupur, 1996, pp. 17-18.

⁴⁵⁸ Lawrence, *op.cit.*, p.12.

⁴⁵⁹ Thomas Bokenkotter, *op.cit.*, p.15.

⁴⁶⁰ Margaret M. Mitchell & Frances M. Young (eds.), *op.cit.*, p.123.

⁴⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p.123.

⁴⁶² Lawrence S. Cunningham, *op.cit.*, p.49.

⁴⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p.3.

⁴⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

Paul's letter to the Churches of Galatia, Corinth or Philippi.⁴⁶⁷ It is within the context of this wide-ranging network of small Christian communities that the word 'catholic' first appears. Today the term is more often applied to the church founded by Christ, which is of its nature intended for all races and all times. It is applied to the teaching and the faith of the church of Christ and in this sense it means what is believed by the whole church. Finally the word is used for individual Christians in so far as they belong to the Catholic Church.⁴⁶⁸

According to Irenaeus the word 'catholic' means those who hold to the authentic faith of the apostles who were entrusted with the teaching of Jesus.⁴⁶⁹ Vincent of Lerins, the fifth century monk and a theologian understands catholicity to mean the universally held truths handed down by apostolic authority as it is perceived in the whole of Christianity.⁴⁷⁰ It is common for many people to understand the word Catholicism to mean a particular denomination. Thus, for example, Catholics say the rosary, revere the Pope, go for Mass on Sunday, have a clergy that does not marry and those characteristics, among many other, distinguish Catholics from other denominations.⁴⁷¹ Catholicism can be considered as one Christian denomination identifiable as having its own distinct culture, character and sometimes dependent on ancestry and geographical location.⁴⁷² It can be understood as a recognizable social grouping.⁴⁷³ Within Catholicism there is more than one tradition (for example, there are Roman and Byzantine Catholics- all part of the Catholic Church).⁴⁷⁴ Since the East-West Schism of 1054, the churches that remained in communion with the See of Rome (the diocese of Rome and its bishop, the Pope, the primal patriarch) have been known as 'Catholic.'⁴⁷⁵

So 'catholic' is believed to be used as a formal name for this universal body of Christians spread throughout the known world, which also claimed to possess the fullness of

⁴⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶⁸ *New Catholic Encyclopaedia*, Second edn. (Vol.3), The Catholic University of America, 2009, p. 275.

⁴⁶⁹ *Op. cit.*, p. 5.

⁴⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p.6.

⁴⁷¹ Lawrence S.Cunningham *op.cit.*, p.1

⁴⁷² *Ibid.*

⁴⁷³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p.2

⁴⁷⁵ *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, Oxford University Press, 2005. Available from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/See_of_Rome. Accessed 19 July 2012. In Christianity, an Apostolic See is any Episcopal See whose foundation is attributed to one or more of the Apostles of Jesus, is, in the original sense, the official seat of a Bishop.

the Christian truth.⁴⁷⁶ At the early stage of Christian history, Catholicity was thought to mean two things: The unity of all the local churches in union with each other and the common faith as it was professed in its worship, creeds (a summary statement of catholic beliefs) and other articulations of the ancient tradition.⁴⁷⁷ Catholic Church understands itself to be ‘catholic’ as it wishes the Gospel to be preached universally to the whole world. In that sense, it seems to be a missionary enterprise⁴⁷⁸ and not confined to any one place in the world, not limited to any one race or social class, but stands above all classes, races, nations and thus is intended for all peoples⁴⁷⁹ and that has led to bewildering complexity of institutions, schools, literary texts, music, art, various media, forms of ministry, etc.⁴⁸⁰ Thus the Catholic Church is both inclusive and expansive or missionary as it attempts to invite all people to be members of the Church.⁴⁸¹ It appears that this quality is essential for the due performance of that work for which the church has been established.⁴⁸² It is also an extensive united body of Christians in the world and claiming to embrace all authentic Christian belief.⁴⁸³ According to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (No.830), three things constitute the essential marks of the Catholic Church: the complete and full confession of faith as it was preserved from the tradition of the first apostles; the full sacramental life of worship and liturgy (expression of relationship to the divine through symbol, prayer, ritual actions and self-sacrifice); and the ordained ministry of bishops in apostolic succession who are in union with each other and the bishop of Rome.⁴⁸⁴

The function of the church administrative system gradually expanded in the course of its existence. Originally its functions limited due to historical constraints. But, in the course of time, the church came to incorporate two basic ideas into its function. The first important function was the spiritual function for which the church was originally founded. This function of the church involves educating the followers in the doctrine of faith. After 1500 A.D. the church in this area found almost a revolutionary outlet. This was due to three important trends that appeared in the history of the modern

⁴⁷⁶ Alan Schreck, *op.cit.*, p.10

⁴⁷⁷ Lawrence S. Cunningham, *op.cit.*, pp.7-8.

⁴⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p.10.

⁴⁷⁹ Rev.Newton Thompson S.T.D. (ed.) *A Course of Sermons by most Rev.Tihamer Toth B. Herder*, Book Company, 1947, p.72.

⁴⁸⁰ *Op.cit.*

⁴⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸² Rev. J.B.Bagshaw, *The Credentials of the Catholic Church*, London, 1879, p.241.

⁴⁸³ Alan Schreck, *op.cit.*,p.10.

⁴⁸⁴ Lawrence S. Cunningham, *op.cit.*, p.8.

world. Firstly, Renaissance created a new spirit of enquiry and caused a new awakening. Secondly, it was the scientific progress, particularly the invention of printing press which facilitated the spirit of knowledge. Lastly, the geographical discoveries widened the horizons. All these affected the function of the church at macro region.⁴⁸⁵ The second important function of the church was the service to humanity which became necessary for fulfilling the teachings of Jesus Christ. This became a motivating factor especially after the schisms (the withdrawal of submission to the Pope or from communion with the members of the Church subject to him) in the church organization. In short, the church function came to be symbolized with Evangelization (the entire faith-inspired process of witnessing to and sharing the good news of Jesus with others) in its totality and in its integrated approach to the development as a whole.⁴⁸⁶

According to the Catholic Directory of India 2013, the population of India was 1,210,193,422 out of which about 17,535,429 were Catholics⁴⁸⁷ comprising the Latin, Syro-Malabar and Syro-Malankara Catholic traditions that represent less than 2 per cent of the total population but it is the largest Christian church within India. There are also 7 Indian Cardinals (members of that select group of bishops who make up the church's College of Cardinals) out of the total of 20 from Asia which is a good representation of the Indian church. There are 166 ecclesiastical units in India, 8 Auxiliary bishops; 166 bishops; 10715 Parishes and sub stations, 15,420 diocesan priests, and 7031 Religious Priests at the service of the Diocese (a territorial division of the catholic church headed by a bishop). 1221 religious priests, 250 Brothers and 4112 sisters, 101 persons belonging to secular institutes and 80 of them from the pious Associations totaling to about 5764 serve through the various Religious Institutes.⁴⁸⁸

Catholic Church runs 14148 educational institutions both formal and non-formal, 6603 social welfare centres and 2692 health service centres in the country. Besides these the Catholic Church owns 360 retreat and renewal centres as well as 668 media centres.⁴⁸⁹ All the bishops in India, both Western and Eastern, form the Catholic Bishops' Conference of India (CBCI) which was founded in 1944. The Holy See's representative to the government of

⁴⁸⁵Pius Fidelis Pinto, *op.cit.*, p.213.

⁴⁸⁶*Ibid.*

⁴⁸⁷*The Catholic Directory of India 2013: The Catholic Bishop's Conference of India*, Claretian Publications, Bangalore, India, p.83.

⁴⁸⁸*Ibid.*

⁴⁸⁹*Ibid.*

India and to the Church in India is the Apostolic Nuncio to India.⁴⁹⁰ Within the jurisdiction of these dioceses thousands of educational and non educational institutions are functioning as an expression of its social commitment. Various developmental activities are taking place under the registered social service societies of each diocese. Rural development activities and conscientization activities are initiated in recent times.

Since the Independence the number of services rendered by Catholics has multiplied in various forms like schools, rehabilitation centers, leprosy homes, orphanages, hospitals, dispensaries, colleges, vocational training centers, printing and visual media, social uplift programmes, social development initiatives etc. Catholicism has been a minority presence in India, although the catholic presence is an ancient one.⁴⁹¹ The Catholic Church has strong roots, with constant experiments in casting its presence in acculturated ways.⁴⁹²

3.4.1 Organization in the Catholic Church

The church, from the first moment as revealed in the New Testament record, is organized in a multitude of ‘churches’, one church in each city. In each church there are two groups, the clergy who preside over its affairs, offer the Mass, administer the sacraments, explain the teaching and the laity (baptized members of the church who have neither received the sacrament of order nor become members of religious orders). This arrangement is everywhere secured, with a uniform regularity that derives from something that is not just chance. All is according to some single primitive pattern.⁴⁹³

The structure of the Roman Catholic Church begins with the Papacy (the office of the Pope). Pope was the symbol of Romanism and was called a ‘Primate.’ In Roman Catholic belief, the Pope was considered the successor of Peter, the apostle of Jesus,⁴⁹⁴ as the head of the Apostolic College. This belief rests on two foundations: The Primacy of Peter is described in the New Testament⁴⁹⁵ and the Papacy is the largest managerial operation in the world outside of political government, whether the number of people

⁴⁹⁰http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Apostolic_Nuncio_to_India&action=edit&redlink=1 accessed 24 September 2011.

⁴⁹¹ Lawrence S. Cunningham, *op.cit.*, p.258.

⁴⁹² *Ibid.*, pp.257-258.

⁴⁹³ Philip Hughes, *op.cit.*, p.14.

⁴⁹⁴ John L. Mckenzie, *The Roman Catholic Church*, Image Books, New York, 1971, p.25.

⁴⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p.27, Matthew 16: 13-18, the name Peter means rock” Peter was the leader of the Apostles. John 2: 15-19 Peter is given the commission to act as leader of believers in Jesus Christ.

involved is considered or the geographical extension. The power of the Pope was supreme and he had full power of jurisdiction (the power to make laws) over the universal church both in matters of faith, morals and discipline. Disobedience to the pope was punished by Ex-communication (the process of imposing a penalty on a baptized person that results in the dismissal of that person from union with the catholic community). Thus, there was no area of the Roman Catholic Church and no person who was not subject to a direct command of the Pope. The Pope was assisted in his day to day administration by an organization called Curia (the official network of Vatican agencies, departments, officials and diplomats) and different congregations.⁴⁹⁶ It had no authority except that which Pope gave. In this sense, the Curia acted as his personal assistants. This body addressed to the administrative problems of the entire Roman Catholic Church and as well as particular regions and dioceses.⁴⁹⁷

The Pope personally appoints the heads of Curia offices called congregations. The Congregation of the Consistory was established in its present form by Pope Sixtus V in 1588. It supervised dioceses and established new provinces, dioceses and appointed bishops. It also supervised the administration of the Bishops and received regular reports from them. The Episcopal appointment was the vital part of the centralization in the Roman Catholic Church.⁴⁹⁸ The congregation of Religious established by Pope Sixtus V supervised religious communities. The Pope approved any community which wished to serve in the Church at large as per the directives and rules laid down by the Church.⁴⁹⁹ The Congregation of the Propagation of the Faith was established by Pope Gregory XV in 1622 for the missionary territory. A mission territory by definition is a territory by which a hierarchy is not established. A territory may remain missionary even after a hierarchy is established.⁵⁰⁰

The College of Cardinals (members of that select group of bishops who act as primary advisers and assistants to the Pope) was the most powerful group within the Church.⁵⁰¹ The Curia, the Congregations and the Court had a Cardinal as its presiding officer. The College had two classes. One class consisted of Cardinals who were

⁴⁹⁶*Ibid.*, pp. 40-41.

⁴⁹⁷*Ibid.*

⁴⁹⁸*Ibid.*, pp. 43-44.

⁴⁹⁹*Ibid.*, pp. 44-45.

⁵⁰⁰*Ibid.*, p. 45.

⁵⁰¹*Ibid.*, p. 56.

residential Bishops and they remained in the Sees (dioceses) which they governed. Cardinals who were not residential Bishops were expected to live in Rome and to take posts in the papal administration.⁵⁰² The Cardinals who were members of important Congregations were likely to be the members of other Congregations as well. The most important function of the College of Cardinals was the election of the Pope, always from its own class. They were appointed personally by the Pope with the advice of the Congregation of the Consistory.⁵⁰³

The College of Cardinals was an electoral body and a senate of the Roman Catholic Church. It is the most powerful organ within the Roman Catholic Church.⁵⁰⁴ In short, the Cardinals were consulted in all the affairs of the Church.⁵⁰⁵ A Roman Catholic Church territory always had a Bishop. The normal territory is called a 'diocese' and the bishop is in charge of the diocese. The term Episcopacy is derived from the Greek term '*episkopos*' which means 'overseer' from which the English word bishop is derived.⁵⁰⁶ The jurisdiction of the Roman Catholic Church was organized territorially in such a way that there was no place on earth which was not subject to some Episcopal authority. The name was borrowed from the reorganization of the Roman Empire under Diocletian, who divided the empire into regions to which the name of diocese was given. Therefore, each Bishop had a place and a residential Bishop was given designation of 'the ordinary of the place.'

The word 'ordinary' here means that he had jurisdiction by virtue of his office, one important difference between the mission territory and the diocese was that the pope could limit the powers of the Vicar Apostolic (diocesan bishop), head of the mission territory who otherwise was in all other respects the effective Bishop of his territory.⁵⁰⁷ The territorial division of jurisdiction had certain regional groupings; a group of contiguous dioceses are formed into a province. Within a province one Episcopal See, usually the oldest or the largest was called the Metropolitan See and all the others were called Suffragan sees. The ordinary of the Metropolitan See was by definition an Archbishop. He had neither jurisdiction over the suffragans nor any jurisdiction within the suffragan dioceses. The appointment of the bishops was done by the Pope through

⁵⁰² *Ibid.*

⁵⁰³ Pius Fidelis Pinto, *op.cit.*, p. 199.

⁵⁰⁴ *Op.cit.*, pp. 57-58.

⁵⁰⁵ *Op.cit.*

⁵⁰⁶ Karl Rahner, Herbert Vorgrimler, (eds.), *Concise Theological Dictionary*, London, 1968, p.56.

⁵⁰⁷ Pius Fidelis Pinto, *op.cit.*, p 200.

the Congregation of the Consistory.⁵⁰⁸ The diocesan office usually known as the ‘Chancery’ bore a resemblance to the Roman Curia and dealt with the same type of business.⁵⁰⁹

The parish was the basis of the Roman Catholic administrative structure and in the immediate context was the part of the diocese under the control of the bishop. The parish was the place where the adherents of the Roman Catholic Church encountered the priesthood, the teaching office and the sacramental system.⁵¹⁰ It was also the place where the catholics most frequently met the other members of the Roman Catholic community. The parish was administered by a parish priest (the priest in charge of a parish). As a rule, the parish defined territorially. All Roman Catholics within certain boundaries were attached to the parish church of the territory. The Roman Catholic Church insists, as much as it could, that the boundaries be respected. Respect for the boundaries made it convenient to keep records and prevented pastoral rivalries and feuds and assured each pastor the revenue he could expect from the parish, the parish had no ideal size although the Roman Catholic Church prefers parishes to be smaller. The ideal size was considered as that which enables the priest to know personally each member of the parish. The parish was normally the centre of a certain social organization. These organizations were deliberately intended to keep the people together and offer pastoral care for the different groups within the parish like children, adolescents, young unmarried people, married people, husbands and wives. Therefore, the parish was an organization to which everyone belonged and in which everyone had a place.⁵¹¹

Religious orders constituted a significant addition to the existing structure of the church administration. They arose as a result of the individual efforts of some unique, devoted and faithful Roman Catholic personalities. They were dedicated to the service of humanity at large and thereby they decided to demonstrate the principles of faith in action. The religious orders were encouraged by the Popes because they were the effective instruments of church administration. In short, they were important instruments in bringing about the reform of the church. There arose also new congregations dedicated to the education of youth, the healing of the sick and to help in all the various needs of the church.

⁵⁰⁸ John L. Mckenzie, *op.cit.*, p.69.

⁵⁰⁹ *Op.cit.*

⁵¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 313.

⁵¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 315.

The Catholic Church is made up of 23 autonomous particular churches, each of which accepts the paramountcy of the Bishop of Rome on matters of doctrine. These churches are communities of Catholic Christians whose forms of worship reflect different historical and cultural influences rather than differences in doctrine. In general, each *sui iuris* church is headed by a patriarch or high ranking bishop and has a degree of self-governance over the particulars of its internal organization, liturgical rites, liturgical calendar, and other aspects of its spirituality. Eastern Catholic Churches with a membership of 17.3 million as of 2010 follow the traditions and spirituality of Eastern Christianity and are composed of Eastern Christians who have always remained in full communion with the Catholic Church.

The Catholic Hierarchy of India was established through the promulgation of the Bull "*Humanae Salutis*" by Pope Leo XIII on October 1, 1886. As a result of this Papal Decree, six units were created as Archdioceses (Agra, Bombay, Calcutta, Madras, Pondicherry and Verapoly), 10 units were created as Dioceses (Allahabad, Cochin, Coimbatore, Hyderabad, Krishnanagar, Mysore, Pune, Quilon, Tiruchirapally and Visakhapatnam), and Patna continued to function as a Vicariate (a territory yet to be developed into a diocese).

Every Christian believes that in Jesus Christ God has revealed himself to humanity especially through the humanitarian deeds that Jesus carried on during his life of thirty three years on earth. This conviction has been the basis of all missionary endeavors in the history of the church.⁵¹² In canon law (a body of rules or norms drawn up for the correct administration and government of all Catholic Church matters) the term 'mission' signifies all districts which are subject to the Congregation of *Propaganda Fide*.⁵¹³ Mission is no more just one of the activities of the church carried out by the so called missionaries only⁵¹⁴ but it is applied to all church related missionary work connected with the sending. In the subjective and active sense, it is applied to the activities which serve to establish and spread the Christian faith and also to revive and preserve it; in the objective sense as mission works, it is applied to the sum of all the institutions and arrangements which have for their aim the extension of the faith. In its widest sense it means Christianizing and with it are associated, a series of secondary activities and results which support and complete

⁵¹² W.L.A. Don Peter, *op.cit.*, p.134.

⁵¹³ *Ibid.* A congregation established by Pope Gregory XV for missionary work in 1622, which was to become the headquarters and dynamic center for Catholic missionary efforts both in mission lands and in those places where Protestantism had taken firm root.

⁵¹⁴ Rev. Newton Thompson, S.T.D. (ed.), *op.cit.*, p. 5.

the main work.⁵¹⁵ Among these subordinate tasks include the establishment of schools and charitable activities. Following the example of the English division of missions into evangelistic, educational, medical, industrial and pastoral, it may be categorized as religious, moral, economic, charitable, literacy and school missions.⁵¹⁶

The term mission, in the sense of foreign missions began in 1622. In that year, in the decree establishing the congregation of the propagation of the Faith, it appears four times and it assumed the definition that long remained: ‘a body of persons sent into foreign lands for the conversion of the heathens.’⁵¹⁷ The *Oxford English Dictionary* gives 1769 as the year when the term mission first appeared in English thus: ‘a permanent establishment of missionaries in a country, a particular field of missionary activity.’⁵¹⁸ This became then a common interpretation of the word even up to recent times. People spoke about ‘the missions’ by which all understood certain countries, as in Asia and Africa, where missionaries were preaching the gospel and establishing the church.⁵¹⁹ About 1945, the nations that obtained their political independence rightly resented being called missions, as if still considered spiritual colonies. They were in fact young local churches.⁵²⁰ At present mission in general has come to be a dignified, even a high sounding term for task, duty and obligation.⁵²¹ Though mission, from the very derivation of the word, means to be sent to do some task, it can also mean a self-appointed or self-assumed task.⁵²² Dictionaries normally restrict its meaning to ‘diplomatic, military and religious missions.’⁵²³

The catholic reformation marks the beginning of a great period of missionary expansion of the Catholic Church to all nations. There had been a few missionary outreaches in the middle ages, such as Franciscan John of Montecorvino’s planting the Catholic Church in Beijing, China, in 1307. Whenever explorers were sent out from catholic countries, so were catholic missionaries. Despite the cruelty of some of the

⁵¹⁵*Ibid.*

⁵¹⁶*Ibid.*

⁵¹⁷*Oxford English Dictionary*, under mission. Historically, it seems the Jesuits used the term first, but it could mean sending them anywhere, even near and for a short time. The Carmelites first used it for ‘foreign missions.’ In 1622 *Propaganda Fide* found the word prepared for its needs and by use gave it official status.

⁵¹⁸*Oxford English Dictionary*, under mission.

⁵¹⁹ Francis X. Clark, *An Introduction to the Catholic Church of Asia*, Cardinal Bea Publications, Manila, 1987, p.122.

⁵²⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵²¹ *Ibid.*, p.124.

⁵²² *Ibid.*

⁵²³ *Ibid.*

Spanish conquerors of the Western Hemisphere, the missionaries often fought for the rights of the native peoples of Central and South America. They taught and cared for the native peoples of the New World, as well as converted them.⁵²⁴

The Society of Jesus (Jesuits), or the Jesuit Order, which had been the vanguard of the Catholic Reformation and a leader of the Catholic missionary effort throughout the world,⁵²⁵ was suppressed in 1773 by Pope Clement XIV. It was Pope Pius VII who reestablished this order in 1814, which attracted young men by the thousands. Other new religious orders began such as the Marianists, Marists, Christian Brothers, Sisters of Charity, Sisters of Loretto, Paulists, Salesians, Society of the Divine Word and White Fathers. These orders were engaged in a wide variety of pastoral and social, education and missionary work. New and revitalized religious orders were, once again, a key to the renewal of the whole Catholic Church. The society of Foreign Missions was reestablished in 1815 and with the help of the Jesuits, the missionary activity of the Catholic Church was revitalized. The Jesuits doubled their membership during the papacy of Pius IX and the seminaries (training houses for priesthood) and monasteries of all orders were filled with new recruits.⁵²⁶

It is still heartening to note the present Pope Francis represents the Third World. This suggests a greater acceptability and spread of the Catholic Church in this part of the world. The Catholic Church in Asia is established in almost every country. Despite the small numbers, the Asian local churches are normally active in many varied fields. In education there are universities, colleges, high schools, grade schools and kindergartens. In caring for the sick they have clinics, hospitals, leprosaria, nursing schools, medical schools. For the poor and oppressed there are social institutes, credit unions, cooperatives, labor and management schools, grass root activities for organizing and conscientizing. In the mass media there are periodicals, newspapers, audio-visual centers, radio, television and film projects. Parishes of communities by area, serve the catholic people in cities and country districts. Finally, there are retreat houses, ashrams, guidance centers, centers for contemplation and other such spiritual bases, to offer inspiration for human suffering and searching.

⁵²⁴*Ibid.*, p.75.

⁵²⁵*Ibid.*, p.89.

⁵²⁶*Ibid.*, pp. 97-98.

There are a number of Asian priests, religious and lay persons in apostolic work in other countries and cultures, both in Asia itself and Africa, Latin America and the Pacific.⁵²⁷ More than 3,000 priests and sisters are overseas now. Most of these dedicate themselves to a cross-cultural world, learning the language, symbols and customs of their new home.⁵²⁸ The Church in the modern world is thought to have with all its works brought about changes in diverse fields. It has a long history of interventions in dehumanizing situations of the society and it responds to the signs of the times through its missionaries. Missionary activities of necessity, demand a shift in worldviews, which means that the missionary activity demands some sense of everything from cultural anthropology to linguistics.⁵²⁹

Missionary efforts are not the sole domain of the ordained priests or the vowed catholic sisters.⁵³⁰ Many traditional religious orders and some independent organizations educate and support missionaries for both domestic and foreign missionary work.⁵³¹ Every institution exists in function of certain definite objectives. In this case these are religious objectives, as defined in Catholicism. The function of institutions is to ensure the permanence of the pursuit of these objectives and to inculcate behavior adapted to this purpose. This definition, of course, applies to every institution, whether economic, political or cultural. Every religion seems to imply the institutionalization of objectives, although the modalities involved may vary widely. Some religions are characterized essentially by their beliefs or their established rituals and these do not depend on any rigid organization of specialized roles. Others, on the contrary, like the catholic religion, possess a very strongly institutionalized structure.

A person or a small group of persons in the Catholic Church discover a certain way of living Jesus' way of life. That 'certain way' may constitute over time a series of models in the persons who have lived the way, a body of instructional literature in the form of rules, treatises and other texts, as well as a tradition about how the life is to be lived. Finally, this way of living is attractive enough to constitute a gift which the church accepts as part of its heritage and receives the gift as a grace or charism for others to accept if they find it equally attractive.⁵³²

⁵²⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵²⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵²⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵³⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵³¹ *Ibid.*

⁵³² Lawrence S. Cunningham, *op.cit.*, p.151.

Thus, every school of spirituality tends to privilege certain texts from sacred scripture as central to their way of understanding the Christian life, from which they draw inspiration.⁵³³ Such a school, of course, does not ignore the entire scriptures, rather, they find a certain attraction for some texts. Those texts become particularly ‘performative’ in the sense that they draw from those texts a manner of living and acting.⁵³⁴ The missionary schools of spirituality take their clue from the mandate of Jesus found in the Bible in the Gospel of Matthew 28, to evangelize all peoples, while the deeply contemplative orders like the Carmelites, draw much from the mystical reading of the Song of Songs in the Old Testament of the Bible just as the Franciscan School is attracted to the evangelical poverty described in the Gospel of Matthew chapters 5-7.⁵³⁵ Each school of spirituality has a preferred way of praying and a ‘theory’ about how best to attain a more perfect life of prayer.⁵³⁶ These schools of spirituality almost always derive from the inspiration of individuals or small groups who conceived of them in tandem with what can be called the founding of ‘religious orders’, which have been the vehicles for representing these schools over the course of time.

It is common to speak of the monastic school as well as the Franciscan, Salesian, Ignatian etc. It was the religious community itself that guarded and passed on the teachings of its school, but the distinctive spirituality associated with the school was available to all.⁵³⁷ If the teaching of a potential school does not adapt itself to the circumstances of history, it becomes stagnant and passes from the picture.⁵³⁸ The beauty of diverse schools of spirituality within the larger catholic tradition is that these schools provide a way of being catholic amenable to the personality of the individual. If a person desires to spend whole life in prayer there are practices to encourage that, if another is more an activist there are schools that encourage such desires.⁵³⁹ The various schools function in a somewhat analogous fashion. The presumption is that the person would do all the things expected of any practicing catholic but would enrich one’s faith by an intensification of the spiritual life by participating in the

⁵³³*Ibid.*

⁵³⁴*Ibid.*, p.15.

⁵³⁵*Ibid.*

⁵³⁶*Ibid.*

⁵³⁷*Ibid.*, p.153.

⁵³⁸*Ibid.*

⁵³⁹*Ibid.*

accumulated wisdom of a given school of spirituality.⁵⁴⁰ Historically, these various schools of spirituality have been identified with religious Orders.⁵⁴¹

Religious communities of men and women were founded to serve specific needs and possible challenges hitherto unmet in the church.⁵⁴² The Jesuits became the principal agents of the Catholic Reformation throughout Europe, adept at missionary work and famous for the schools they planted throughout Europe and later in various mission lands both in Asia and in the Americas. There was also the emergence of active orders of religious women who, freed from the restrictions of the cloister (secluded), were able to involve themselves in the active works of education, care of the sick and other forms of charity.⁵⁴³ Mary Ward (1585-1645) founded a religious institute modeled on the Jesuits.⁵⁴⁴ The Daughters of Charity were a community of like-minded women who banded together informally only eventually becoming a religious order with vows of poverty, chastity and obedience, but, in a singular act, were free from the enclosure. Those congregations not only provided elementary forms of charity, but in time, a path for technical training, academic administration and higher learning.⁵⁴⁵ In the nineteenth century, new religious orders and societies of priests and sisters were formed by the Church specially to work in the missions.

3.5. Catholic Missions in India

During the British rule over India, their religious neutrality was not conducive to missionary work. The Catholic missionaries took to establishing schools, hospitals and charitable institutions such as nursing homes, orphanages and dispensaries. One notable result of independence was a spectacular increase in the number of institutions devoted to education and health.⁵⁴⁶ In accordance with the nation-building spirit, the church threw itself into the development of educational, health and social institutions and later of community building projects.⁵⁴⁷ There are numerous sisters, Brothers and priests who are working for the poor and the marginalized in India. They believe that even today Jesus invites his disciples to get involved in the social arena, in the struggle of the marginalized, the plight of underpaid

⁵⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴² *Ibid.*, 205.

⁵⁴³ *Ibid.*, 206.

⁵⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 207.

⁵⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p.10.

⁵⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

workers, the discrimination against women, pollution of natural resources, ethical problems in politics, medicine, economy, religion and other contemporary problems.⁵⁴⁸

According to the statistics provided by the catholic sisters' congregations in 1977, there were at that time in India 42,846 professed sisters and 3,611 novices (trainees to religious life). They belonged to 130 congregations, 55 of Indian and 75 of foreign origin. Besides the 7 purely contemplative congregations, there were 123 apostolic congregations engaged in many different activities. Five of them have founded no institutions, their members being concerned with work in animation or catechesis, generally associated with pastoral work.⁵⁴⁹ There is an increased record of sisters during the year 2002-2007. In Asia, India recorded an increase of 9,398. According to an analysis, sisters have increased in 99 nations since 2000. Altogether there are 7, 50,000 sisters serving around the world, approximate ratio is one sister for every 9000 persons. The number of sister's congregations increased steadily over the century with a noticeable expansion.

In India the foundation of local congregations in many areas preceded the arrival of European Sisters and that 28 of the 55 Indian congregations were founded before the First World War. The dates of foundation of these congregations and their regional origin followed very closely the expansion of missionary activity. From the beginning of the missionary renewal the participation of Indian religious agents was ensured by the presence of Indian sisters, who formed a bridge between the Christians and the foreign missionaries. The development of sisters' congregations in India was not linked with the missions but was the result of the need to develop institutions in the educational and charitable domains. The first international congregations which came to India were integrated into the mission field for the development of institutions founded in response to basic needs: primary schools, dispensaries, orphanages etc. The second phase of implantation between 1930 and 1960 contributed to the building up of the ecclesiastical (church related) institution. The earlier primary schools were extended into High Schools, the small village and suburban dispensaries gave place to up-to-date hospitals. New centres of all kinds were created. The newly arrived congregations established themselves in the most solidly established Christian

⁵⁴⁸National Monthly Magazine for Christian Leadership, *Smart Companion*: India, July 2012/ Vol.3 / No.6, p.3

⁵⁴⁹*Op. cit.*, p.149.

areas, while the new missionary territories were taken over by congregations long established in India.⁵⁵⁰

India has 1, 00,430 missionaries, among them 85,344 are sisters. There are 6,726 novices aspiring to join the sisters in their work and nearly 18,802 are trainees in different levels of training. All these are involved in the diverse mission of Jesus. While technology has taken the world to globalization to make it better, richer and healthier, it has also created dehumanization and further marginalized the already marginalized people. Today, India is afflicted with gender discrimination, female foeticide, infanticide, domestic violence-physical and emotional, harassment, murders for dowry, acid attacks and honor killings. The sisters assume that this could be addressed through a mission exercised through compassionate love as shown by Jesus Christ.⁵⁵¹

⁵⁵⁰*Ibid.*, p.142.

⁵⁵¹*Report of the Conference of Religious Women India (CRWI) Superiors' General Meet, Bethany Convent Mangalore, 2 January 2008.*

CHAPTER IV: CATHOLIC MISSIONS IN NORTH EAST INDIA

Northeast India is an expansive region consisting of eight states and covering over 163,000 square miles. With 31.4 million people, it accounts for nearly four percent of India's population. Known for its beauty, this area also has poor road, transport, communication, education and health care facilities. Scholars assert that today's Northeast India is characterized by new aspirations, ethnic and political tensions, insurgency movements, flight from villages to urban centres, erosion of traditional values, weakening of family bonds, educated unemployed, disappearance of age-old institutions, increasing dichotomy between life and belief and lack of genuine leadership in society. At the same time there is a fresh awareness of her natural as well as possible resources, historical and cultural advantages and human potential of both men and women.

The region with its galaxy of tribes and colorful cultures has witnessed changes during the last hundred and twenty years. During this period, the Catholic Church seems to have grown and the missionaries have worked for the growth and development of the region. Many, marveling at what has been realized in a life span in Northeast India, have said and keep repeating that what has been achieved by the missionaries and their helpers in this corner is little short of a miracle. In the age of democracy the missionaries thought it useful to give importance to the training of leaders especially through the work of education, so that they could exert a salutary influence on societies.⁵⁵² The first missionary society assigned

⁵⁵²C.Becker SDS, *History of the Catholic Missions in Northeast India (1890-1915)*, *Op cit.*, p.39.

specifically to the region, the Foreign Missionaries of Milan, came to the region briefly in 1872, but because of a jurisdiction dispute no tangible work was done.⁵⁵³

There were many activities on the part of the missionaries during the colonial period. Their missionary work created Christian communities which seem to reflect today on the nature and goal of missionary work in North East India.⁵⁵⁴ Christian message seem to have had impact on some of the intellectual and open-minded seekers of other religions. The missionary works in its institutionalized form seem to have had a positive impact on the social life of the people. The gospel values lived by the Christian communities are admired and at times accepted by people of other religions as worthy of imitation.⁵⁵⁵

4.1 Pioneer Missionaries

The contribution of Catholicism to the development of the people in Northeast India is unparalleled, says Jose Anchupankil, Delegate Superior of the Claretians in Northeast India. Today there are 15 Catholic dioceses with nearly 1.5 million Catholics in Northeast India alone. Congregations like the Apostolic Carmel, Sisters of St. Joseph of Cluny, Carmelites, Clarists, Sacred Heart Sisters, Bethany sisters from Mangalore, Adoration Sisters from Kerala, Ursulines from Ranchi and others were invited to this region by different Bishops. Their work in mission centres was and is an important factor in the growth of the church⁵⁵⁶ as more numerous and better qualified teachers and catechists came out from the catholic schools to help priests with direct evangelization and running of the village primary schools.

In 1890 the Assam Mission, as the mission of Northeast India was then known, was entrusted to the German Society of Catholic Education, (or Society of the Divine Saviour popularly known as Salvatorians) who began Catholic missionary work proper in the region. Pope Leo XIII decreed the establishment of the Prefecture Apostolic (a certain portion of the catholic people, which for special reasons is not yet constituted a diocese, and which is entrusted to the pastoral care of a Vicar apostolic or a Prefect apostolic, who governs it in the name of the Pope) of Assam on 13 December 1889 and destined the newly founded German Congregation of Salvatorians (a religious order) to pioneer the new mission field. The

⁵⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 170.

⁵⁵⁴ Dr. Francis Fernandez, S.D.B. & Dr. Jose Varickasseril, S.D.B., (eds.) *Mission: A Service of Love, Essays in Honour of George Kottuppallil, S.D.B.*, Vendrame Institute Publications, Shillong, 1998, p.101.

⁵⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵⁶ C. Becker, SDS, *Father Otto Hopfenmueller, Salvatorian Spirituality & Charism Series*, No.12, Society of the Divine Saviour, Bangalore, 2008, p.53.

Prefecture Apostolic of Assam was carved out of the two dioceses of Dacca and Krishnagar but no missionary had been sent to this area nor had any missionary activity been undertaken in Dacca. By a decree of December 15 1889, the *Propaganda Fide* created the Prefect Apostolic of Assam in North East India and the Bhutan territory, consigning it to the Salvatorians care.

After the establishment of the Prefecture Apostolic of Assam as desired by ecclesiastical authorities, the first missionaries settled down among the Khasi people though at that time there was not a single catholic among them. The first salvatorian missionaries under the leadership of Otto Hopfenmueller arrived in Shillong in February 1890 when there were only Gauhati and Bondashill mission stations in the Assam territory and only in Gauhati there was a permanent resident missionary. When the first group of four missionaries under the leadership of Otto Hopfenmueller reached Shillong in February 1890, there were about 6500 Christians in the entire region of Northeast India, but only about 350 were Catholics. From its very inception, the missionaries devoted most of their time to the missionary work by learning Khasi and Bengali languages.⁵⁵⁷ But excessive physical and mental work together with the tropical climate claimed the lives of two missionaries including that of Otto within six months of their arrival. However in spite of a very severe shortage of staff in the first period since 1890 until 1897, they succeeded in establishing a number of mission stations: Shillong in 1890, Raliang in 1892, Shella in 1893, Cherrapunji in 1897 and in taking over Gauhati and Bondashill which were already in existence. The number of minor stations rose to 30, six churches and one chapel were built.⁵⁵⁸

Several of the missionaries who came after 1906 were better prepared with educational qualification from England. They started a Catechists Training Centre at St. Antony's school, Shillong, to enable the church to launch into direct evangelization. Vast resources in personnel and money were spent for creating a good network of educational institutions. On the medical and developmental fronts the missionaries made remarkable efforts to serve the people. Consequently, by 1915 the number of Catholics of the Prefecture registered a growth reaching up to 5176 and catechumens totaled about 1700. The outbreak of the First World War shattered the Salvatorian dreams of greater expansion and

⁵⁵⁷Dr. Julian Bednarz SDS, "Salvatorian contribution to the church in Northeast India" in *Centenary of the Catholic Church in North-East India 1890-1990: A Souvenir*.

⁵⁵⁸*Op.cit.*

missionaries were interned in July 1915 by the British and expelled from India eight months later.

From the very beginning the missionaries were trying to preach the Gospel, both in speech and in writing and therefore catechism (religious instruction), hymn-books, prayer-books and Bibles were printed in large numbers and distributed free of cost. A major part of the year was spent by the missionaries wandering along the mountain villages and tea plantations in valleys seeking the Catholics.⁵⁵⁹ In 1892, the Salvatorian Sisters joined the missionary work, whose co-operation made it possible to create many schools, orphanages, dispensaries and homes for the aged. In early 1897, the number of Catholics had increased to 1300. The earthquake during the same year was a great blow to the missions, destroying all the churches and mission stations. In spite of these difficulties, two more mission stations were opened in Smit in 1898 and in Jowai in 1902. However the number of Catholics was increasing very slowly. In 1909 there were only 1800, an increase of 500 persons in seven years. During this period the missionaries had been preaching the Gospel and were striving for the education of catechists and the expansion of the system of primary schools.⁵⁶⁰

In 1906, Christopher Becker was made the first Prefect Apostolic of Assam. On his arrival in Shillong, he studied the condition of the mission, made plans for its expansion, succeeded in getting more missionaries and saw to their proper preparation in preaching the Gospel to the natives as well as succeeded in getting new missionaries for Assam. Six years after his arrival there were already fifteen fathers and three brothers in the mission. The Loreto and St. Edmund's schools were started under his patronage. By 1912 the number of missionaries increased to 18 priests and brothers. This enabled the opening of two major stations in Dibrugarh in 1908 and in Nougah in 1911, while the number of minor stations rose from 32 in 1906 to 68 in 1914. In 1907 the Catechetical Training centre was founded for the better education and learning to read and write.⁵⁶¹

The Salvatorian missionaries had the privilege of being the first to bring the Catholic faith to these simple and peaceful people who live in the long mountain range which separates the Assam valley from the Surma valley with the Garo hills to the west and the

⁵⁵⁹*Ibid.*

⁵⁶⁰*Ibid.*

⁵⁶¹*Ibid.*

Naga Hills to the east.⁵⁶² The missionary work among the Khasis gradually began to show positive results. After an intensive course of instruction, the first Khasis were received into the Catholic Church on 8th December, 1891. The small group increased and multiplied steadily. The missionary activity among the Khasis was not limited to Shillong only but from this centre it spread out into far off areas. Sub- stations were established, several schools were opened and the missionaries visited them frequently. Mission work was started also in areas far from Shillong and new horizons were opening up for the faith. The Gospel was carried from Shillong into the Northern region of the Khasi hills. The first contacts with the people were made in 1907.⁵⁶³ One of the first undertakings of the missionary was to start a good school in Shella. Seventy boys and forty girls were admitted into the school in the first year. They were given catechism class daily. In course of time schools were opened in the neighbouring villages.

Technical education and methods of modern agriculture were imparted to pupils in schools through the help of Salvatorian Brothers and the Sisters who taught the girls home science and nursing. The printed word was considered to be of great weight by Becker in preaching the Gospel. The Salvatorians who pioneered and laid the foundation for the growth of the church in Northeast India had to leave Assam in 1915 and return to Europe on account of World War I.⁵⁶⁴ The Jesuit missionaries ministered to the church of Northeast India from 1915 to 1922. Paul Lefebvre succeeded in getting the Sisters of the Congregation of Our Lady of the Missions to continue the good work started by the Salvatorian Sisters. Archbishop Stephen Ferrando founded the congregation of the Missionary Sisters of Mary Help of Christians for service in the missions.

The people of Northeast India appear to have been responsive to the gospel message. Hence, right from the beginning, much of the missionary effort was concentrated in these areas and around these groups. Thus Christians feel that over the years, it has been possible to build up communities strong in faith, active in charity, always looking forward to give witness to the presence of God. The missionaries assert that the young and vibrant Catholic Church has been a source of strength and encouragement for them. The presence of many missionaries from other countries and other parts of India, along with a dynamic and

⁵⁶²*Ibid.*

⁵⁶³*Ibid.*

⁵⁶⁴*Ibid.*

committed laity were contributing to the growth and vitality of the church in this region.⁵⁶⁵ It is believed that the Church growth also owes to the work of laity as it was they who showed the way and made the communities sprout in different villages. Their zeal helped the communities to grow in faith.

Among the laity the lay associations, as well as their lay leaders and especially the catechists (lay persons who serve as assistants to the priests), have played a role to keep the faith alive and active. A good number of laity qualified with higher education in different walks of life were becoming the voice of the rest. Frequent visits to villages, contact with people and staying on with them for some time to instruct them were the secrets of church growth in the past. But with the growth of institutions and with diminishing missionary spirit of a pioneering nature, village visits seem to have suffered in recent years. The question of learning the local language, trying to understand the feelings of the people, learning to do what is best for them in terms of the gospel, promotion of local vocations, supply of needed literature, appreciation of tribal love for music, adapting oneself to tribal ways of expression including construction of buildings were part of inculturation by the missionaries.

From the year 1890 till 1915, the sixty-one pioneers including 31 priests, 10 Brothers and 20 Sisters labored to make the Church grow in Northeast India.⁵⁶⁶ Otto Hopfenmueller emphasized, that it was the young society's task to prepare missionaries for the people from their first studies onward. Accordingly, their lifestyle was set up in simplicity, modesty and the apostolic spirit was constantly held up to inspire the members.⁵⁶⁷ He wrote: 'I have felt the urge to contribute to foreign mission work among Christian people as well as to the nations who are still in 'darkness'. I chose the newly founded catholic teaching society in Rome because they were in need of manpower and I saw that their good spirit would be fruitful in God's kingdom. My expectations were not disappointed and the constitution (rule of life) of the congregation has strengthened the initiative.'⁵⁶⁸ Otto was an apostolic man, the missionary, covered in sweat, kindled and consumed by the fire of love, and flaring out with zeal for the mission and its activities.⁵⁶⁹

⁵⁶⁵National Monthly for Christian Leadership, *Smart Companion*, *op.cit.*, p. 6.

⁵⁶⁶Thomas Manjaly, Graviour Augustine, Tomy Palely, (eds.), *Challenges of Faith Formation in North-East India*, Oriens Publications, Shillong, 2009, p. 183.

⁵⁶⁷C. Becker, SDS, *Father Otto Hopfenmueller, op.cit.*, p. 159.

⁵⁶⁸*Ibid.*

⁵⁶⁹*Ibid.*, p. 166.

At the request of Becker, Mueleman, Archbishop of Calcutta sent his secretary, Paul Lefebvre to Shillong. He later became the Vice-Administrator of the Prefecture of Assam and together with five other Jesuits ministered to the catholic communities spread over the Khasi Hills and the plains of Assam. Though some works had to be abandoned due to shortage of personnel, they continued to cater to the catholic community till 1922 when eleven Salesians of Don Bosco (religious order) under the leadership of Louis Mathias arrived in Shillong to take over the Assam Prefecture from them. On 14 January 1906 the first group of Salesian missionaries had arrived on the subcontinent whose mission field was Tanjavur in South India and sixteen years later another group of Salesians from Europe reached Northeast India to take over the Assam Mission.⁵⁷⁰ Today the Salesians are the second biggest group of male catholic missionaries in this subcontinent.⁵⁷¹ From 1945 on, Indian Salesian missionaries joined the ranks of foreign missionaries. The growth of the Assam mission particularly in the Khasi- Jaintia hills since 1922 was the work of the Salesian Fathers, Brothers and Sisters.

When the Salvatorian Sisters had to leave India in 1915, their work was taken over by five sisters of *Notre Dame des Missions* who continue their work in Shillong. The Salesians who hailed from various European countries kept up the rhythm of mission growth and expansion. Their strategy of bringing from Europe, in large numbers, novices and clerics and forming them in Shillong seems to have paid rich dividends. The Second World War however, arrested the speedy growth of the church in Assam. Many of the missionaries from Italy and Germany were interned. After independence, the Government of India discouraged new missionary personnel coming to the region. The Salesians started recruiting in a big way Indians into their ranks from Assam and other parts of the country. From the late 1950s groups of priests belonging to a diocese were also inducted into the diocese and St.Paul's Minor Seminary (an institution of studies where seminarians undergo training for the priesthood) was established to encourage local vocations. At the same time, the Salesian Aspirantate (an institution for those who aspire to be Salesian priests) of Savio Juniorate was opened at Mawlai for the same purpose.

World War II brought with it the added burden of the internment of the missionaries. Thus, on 10th February 1942, Mr. H.G.Dennehy, the chief Secretary to the Government of Assam informed Bishop Ferrando of Shillong that the Government had decided to intern the

⁵⁷⁰*Quarterly Magazine*, 'Mission Today', January-March 2005, Vol.VII No.1, p.4.

⁵⁷¹*Ibid.*

citizens of Axis powers. The Assam mission suffered a great blow at this, since the majority of missionaries were from Italy. Thus the missionaries were interned first at Mawlai in Shillong, then they were shifted to Deoli near Bombay and finally to the Dehradun Central Internment Camp.⁵⁷² The war brought lot of suffering to people everywhere and Northeast India, being a border area, was subject to even greater hardships. Poverty and disease accompanied by fear of aggression reigned supreme and economic deprivations coupled with shortage of food, essential commodities claimed many lives, especially from the vulnerable segments of society, viz, women and children.⁵⁷³

The years of the Second World War (1939-45) impeded the progress of the mission as the region was affected due to the Japanese forces making inroads into Manipur and Nagaland. Towards the close of the War, Ferrando wrote: 'In these years of war we have seen 56 missionaries, priests, clerics and coadjutors, leaving the mission. Only thirty priests, twenty clerics and coadjutors were allowed to stay back to continue the work. With personnel reduced, restrictions inevitable in a war zone and other grave difficulties those who remained in the field, with sacrifice and generosity were able to maintain the works.'⁵⁷⁴

After the war, with the return of the missionaries, every possible effort was made to re-launch the mission activities. But in 1950 a devastating earthquake hit the region causing huge damage and in presenting the state of Assam mission (1950-51) Ferrando wrote to Renato Ziggiotti, 'The past year was an exceptional year of illness for our missionaries. The great load of work, the unfavorable climatic conditions, the insufficiency of food during the long and exhausting missionary journeys, the passage of years etc. affect even the more robust of them. The missionaries are too few for a mission so vast. The numerous languages spoken make the transfer of personnel difficult because one cannot learn a new language in one or two years. A missionary in Assam, other than the mother tongue must speak at least three more languages.'⁵⁷⁵

In 1954, the first Indian diocesan priests from Kerala came forward to do missionary work in Northeast India. Local diocesan priests (priests belonging to the diocese and distinct from the religious orders) and several religious congregations (institute or order) of women and men from other parts of India have been engaged in missionary work in the region. In the

⁵⁷² Jane Mary Thadathil, *A Great Missionary Legacy: A Brief History of the Origin, Growth and Charism of the Missionary Sisters of Mary Help of Christians founded by Archbishop Stephen Ferrando*, Centre for Indigenous Peoples and Missionary Sisters Publications, Shillong and Guwahati, 1997, p.24.

⁵⁷³ O.L.Snaitang, *op.cit.*, p.127.

⁵⁷⁴ S.Ferrando, *Letter to the Rector Major*, dated 18th March 1932, Salesian Central Archives, Rome.

⁵⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

post-war decades, over 20 European missionaries from Italy, Spain, Belgium and France entered Assam and an equal number of young people were recruited from Assam, Bengal, Burma and Chota Nagpur. The Naga and Mizo insurgency which began in mid 1950s and 1960's demanding sovereign states affected the mission work and challenged the local Christian leadership, to take over from foreign missionaries. The period witnessed growth of mission activities outside their home territories.⁵⁷⁶ The earlier welfare assistance to groups and individuals was mere donation and distribution of materials, but the new approach was more on charity and relief. The contribution by diocesan priests to Northeast India from 1954 when the first group of diocesan priests arrived in the Northeast from South India to the present day is a chain of services for the spread of the Good News. The growth of the church in the region seems to bear witness to their zeal, dedication and hard work.⁵⁷⁷

Until the independence of India in 1947, the British government did not permit Catholic missionaries to work in Mizoram, Nagaland and Manipur but later, the Catholic missionaries established mission centres in those states as well as in Tripura especially in the field of education and healthcare services. With just over 125 years since the beginning of the catholic mission in Northeast India, there are about 3000 diocesan priests and religious priests, sisters and brothers working in this region. Among these an increasing number of Sisters and Fathers are from the region itself.⁵⁷⁸ People feel that there has been a qualitative change in the approach in recent times which is oriented to a more people-oriented sustainable development. Numerically, demographically and in terms of institutional presence and influence, variety of services rendered and their effectiveness is as important as the other leading Christian churches of Northeast India.⁵⁷⁹

The creation of several small states and their interest in the education and health of their people, opening of new lines of communication and increased number of apostolic workers all seemed to favor rapid expansion.⁵⁸⁰ Assam was among the most unwanted apostolic fields. Mrs. Ladislaus Zalecki, Apostolic Delegate of India, wrote on 10th April,

⁵⁷⁶ Amrit Kumar Goldsmith, *Article: The Christians in the Northeast India: A Historical Perspective, 1819-2004*, accessed 20 June 2013.

⁵⁷⁷ Thomas Manjaly, Peter Haokip, James Thoppil, *Towards Building up the Local Church: Priestly Ministry for 21st Century*, Oriens Publications, Shillong, 2004, p.153-154.

⁵⁷⁸ Gratian Carlo S.J., Paul Raj S.J. *Formation of Priests and Religious in North East India: An Exploratory Study*, Jesuit Institute of Religious Formation, Guwahati, 2005, p. Foreword.

⁵⁷⁹ C. Becker SDS, *Father Otto Hopfenmueller, op.cit.*, p.53.

⁵⁸⁰ Sebastian Karotemprel S.D.B., *Albizuri Among the Lyngams: A Brief History of the Catholic Mission among the Lyngams of Northeast India*, Vendrame Missiological Institute, Shillong, 1985, p.vii.

1892: ‘The Assam Mission is the most difficult one in India, not only regarding the mission work itself, but also the conditions of life for the missionaries which require from them no small spirit of sacrifice and self- denial.’⁵⁸¹ The difficulties arose from the geography of the country- trackless jungles, rugged hills, steep precipices, months of incessant, torrential rain, blistering and enervating heat, wild animals, poisonous snakes and swarming insects which brought fatal diseases, destroyed buildings, earthquakes, tropical storms which in a few moments demolished the work of years.⁵⁸² A mountainous terrain, harsh weather conditions, paucity of roads, dense forests, long journeys on foot, perhaps made severe demands on the physical resources, the moral strength and the spiritual resilience of the missionaries.⁵⁸³

The courage and zeal, love for the people of the land of r adoption, the natural goodness and openness of the people to whom the missionaries had come were some of the strengths of the missionaries. They braved distances, isolation, lack of funds and personnel, illness, discouragement and death while the people of the region welcomed the missionaries with open minds and hearts.⁵⁸⁴ The number of sisters’ congregations increased steadily over the century, responding to some of problems of poverty, illiteracy, alcoholism and drugs.

Frederick S. Downs, the eminent historian of Christianity in Northeast India, opines, ‘Without question, the most important post war development has been the rapid expansion of the Roman catholic church.’ He points out that the secret of success lay in the availability of personnel, means and opening up of the whole region to Catholic apostolate.’⁵⁸⁵ Missionaries invested in a vast network of educational institutions from elementary schools to colleges. A similar network of healthcare services contributed to the expansion of the mission. There were hundreds of Priests, Sisters and Brothers since the 1960s from South India for the expansion of the missionary work. Congregations of Sisters have also contributed substantially to the spread of Christianity. The Catholic community at the turn of the twenty-first century was close to 1.5 million.

Since Northeast is a vast region, with a number of tribes, languages and cultures, the tribes of the region seem to be open to the gospel message. There is social consciousness, eagerness to share the faith and a keen interest in the Word of God. Many of the youngsters

⁵⁸¹ C. Becker SDS, *History of the Catholic Missions in Northeast India, op.cit.*, p.x.

⁵⁸² *Ibid.*

⁵⁸³ Sebastian Karotemprel S.D.B., *Albizuri Among the Lyngams, op.cit.*, Preface, p.vii.

⁵⁸⁴ T.B.Subba, Joseph Puthenpurakal, Shaji Joseph Puykunnel, (eds.), *op.cit.*, p.8.

⁵⁸⁵ F.S.Downs, *Christianity in Northeast India: Historical Perspectives*, ISPCK, New Delhi, 1983, p.151.

accept the faith and consider it their duty to share it with those who have not heard about it yet. The close similarities between some of the aspects of Christianity, the tribal cults and cultures might have made it easier for the gospel values to penetrate into their lives. Another factor that put the Church at an advantageous position was the virile and dynamic nature of the people and their inclination to work as a community. The tribals are active by nature and their life is full of festivals, dances, songs and they find that Christianity encourages them in all these. They are also taken up by Christian love, care, sense of equality and they spend hours in prayer service, singing hymns and sharing prayer. The educational institutions, medical services and developmental works carried out by the catholic church attract them to Christianity.

The church has been considered a vibrant missionary church and in the region is known as one of the most responsive areas of evangelization in India. There has been consistent numerical growth, establishment of various churches and institutions in all the states of the region. During the past 125 years steady streams of sisters have found their way into Northeast India. Their religious living has contributed to the growth of the Catholic Church in the region. Christianity and education went hand in hand and is responsible for the upliftment of the society. The modern educational institutions, health care facilities and the introduction of developmental as well as humanitarian works owe their origin to the early missionaries who were the pioneers of development in the region. As a result of its interaction with Christianity the society has undergone changes in its psychology, world-view, languages, cultures, social habits and economic activity. The momentum of change has been extraordinary, assisted by the psychology of tribal society, its democratic ways, aspirations for a new life, simple socio-cultural, theological and philosophical thought patterns favoring quick social transition.

Christianity has brought a change in the socio-cultural environment, in the behavior, thoughts and the way of life of the tribal communities because of their acceptance of a new religious perspective. The Catholic missionaries worked for the development of the poorer sections and Christianity was regarded as offering them dignity, recognition and hope for salvation both on this earth and in eternity. Hokishe Sema in his book *Emergence of Nagaland* writes, 'the Christian message of freedom from fear, superstitions and above all from wild spirits did appeal strongly to the Naga minds.' Every Naga believes today that the

Christian religion for him is a religion from uncertainty to certainty, from darkness to light, from death to eternal life, from damnation to salvation.’

In Shillong, almost every educational institute is run by the Christian missionaries. In Arunachal Pradesh Christianity has got the status of a private and personal affair. The state assembly passed the Indigenous Faith Protection Bill in 1979. The Arunachalis were also attracted by the perceptive benefits of embracing Christianity and they came to the missionary schools established on the Assam side of Assam- Arunachal border. The missionary organizations served as places where new generations could master the skills needed in order to cope with the demands of post independent India. The Christian perspective of reality is suffused with hope and it looks at the human condition positively. This sense of personal dignity appears to be reflected in the transformation that can be noticed in the villages which have embraced the Christian faith. It is believed that the families are transformed, the children are better looked after and they are given better education.

Catholic missionaries in general are thought to cater to the poor and the needy specially the marginalized sections of the society whose quality of life changed through the intervention of the missionaries.⁵⁸⁶ In times of draught, famine, floods and epidemics the missionaries came to the rescue of the people. People thought Catholicism brought them liberation from various shackles. This religion helped to facilitate the transition of tribal societies into modernity. It contributed to the formation of social, political, cultural and professional leadership of the region and to peace-building processes in states such as Nagaland, Mizoram, and Assam.⁵⁸⁷ It would seem that Christians have emerged as vibrant and distinctive communities in this region and these states have already sent out hundreds of missionaries to other parts of India and abroad. Christianity seems to have made a unique impact on the region. Missionaries worked to preserve tribal cultures and identities by building the structural foundations of their spoken languages such as a script, dictionaries, grammar and translation of the Bible, newspapers and reviews.⁵⁸⁸

Through modern education and healthcare the tribal worldview was enriched and enlarged. Primal faith has to a great extent been replaced by Christian faith, with some attempts made to assimilate its positive values and cultures by way of inculturation. On the

⁵⁸⁶O.M.Rao, *Focus on North East Indian Christianity*, Indian Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, Delhi, 1994, p.7.

⁵⁸⁷*Ibid.*

⁵⁸⁸*Ibid.*

positive side the holiness, heroic spirit of self-sacrifice of missionaries, seem to have had an enormous impact upon the progress of missionary work in the region.⁵⁸⁹ The courage and determination of the missionaries in the face of constant failures and immense difficulties needs admiration. The single minded devotion of some individuals who understood the importance of the tribe in the total evangelization work in the region has been of great help. The missionaries have contributed to the socio-cultural development as they seem to have brought in a faith which enabled them to come out of their isolated existence. The quality of their life improved greatly through education, health care and exposure to the outside world.

On the other hand, the churches are often thought to have destroyed the traditional cultural elements of different tribes. Talom Rukho, as quoted in a study by Atul Chandra Talukdar of Arunachal University, said that ‘the younger generation had forgotten traditional music, songs and dances following the rapid changes effected by Christianity.’⁵⁹⁰ Various ethnic clashes in the region have been linked to the church. The churches are often alleged to have been practicing forcible conversion in the backward region as people who are entrusted to the missionaries are of financially poorer groups.⁵⁹¹ George Plathottam, director of Don Bosco Publications, Guwahati, while denying such allegation, said: ‘a widespread conception is there that the churches and the missionaries are engaged fully in forceful conversion. But in reality it is a misconception fuelled by a section of people with destructive attitudes. The missionary schools are open to all irrespective of caste and creed. Most of the students in these schools for instance, are non-Christians.’⁵⁹²

Some insurgency movements too have been linked to the church and the declaration of the factions of NSCN in their insignia. ‘Nagaland for Christ’ has made this charge prominent.⁵⁹³ But the Christian leaders are of the view that by providing quality education, missionaries are making the people aware of their rights, social values and identity. Better education enables the people to question the established system. The missionaries have liberated their thoughts and made them question the inequality and injustice in the society.⁵⁹⁴

⁵⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹¹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹² *Ibid.*

⁵⁹³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

It is believed that Christianity acted as a stimulus, an inner urge, providing them with a new dynamism from within setting them on a path to transformation and change. It led to self awareness and made the people conscious of their own collective identity which provided vision that went beyond one's village, clan or tribe and gave a world view based on the Christian message of love, equality, pardon, peace and justice.⁵⁹⁵ The high level of literacy, the low level of infant mortality, improved status of women, the increased desire for ongoing education, health care, efforts to expose oneself to change etc. are signs of integral growth experienced by the people when they came in contact with Christianity. Perhaps nowhere else in India has the encounter between society and Christianity so profoundly affected and transformed as in the tribal society of North east.⁵⁹⁶

The church in this region is believed to serve the role of educating persons who are to be the leaders of their people.⁵⁹⁷ Lines of communications bring medical facilities nearer home. Education introduced more hygienic living conditions. The people being dynamic took to such changes much faster than those in other parts of the country. As a result even on the demographic front, Northeast India seems to take the lead.⁵⁹⁸ Bible centred Christian life and tradition has been built up in the villages and this makes Christian life more appealing to the people. The active participation of the laity in planting and nurturing the church has created a greater sense of belonging.⁵⁹⁹ Christianity seems to have given a sense of human dignity to the people and Catholicism seems to have provided a better opportunity of freeing themselves. As Sachchidananda puts it, 'the Catholic mission with its beneficent educational and various other institutions and elaborately organized mission work among the tribals of Chotanagpur became most popular...'⁶⁰⁰

It may be evident that the secret of missionary success in this region was personal contact. Those missionaries who were capable of greater warmth or great intensity of human relationships worked the bigger miracles. This does not refer to some superficial etiquette or external cordiality, but to a deeper level of human ties based on dedication, service and sacrifice, virtues that plunge the missionary into all kinds of activities and undertakings on

⁵⁹⁵Thomas Menamparampil, *An Introduction to North-East India: Culture and History*, unpublished, Guwahati, 2006, pp. 40-41.

⁵⁹⁶*Ibid.*

⁵⁹⁷*Ibid.*

⁵⁹⁸*Ibid.*

⁵⁹⁹*Ibid.*

⁶⁰⁰Sachchidananda, *The Changing Munda*, New Delhi, 1979, p.119.

behalf of the people with whom she has cast her lot and has come to identify herself in her aspirations, ambitions and desires.⁶⁰¹ The many developments that have taken place are a means to foster such warm, personal contacts. Most tribals were happy to see that the Catholic Church in general cared to preserve their culture. The catholic missionaries were more sympathetic to tribal customs, traditions, music, dance, architecture and to tribal cultural values like respect and veneration of the dead and their ancestors.

It is claimed that the Catholic Church in Northeast has done much for the poor and the deprived sections of the society. The missionaries do realize that their efforts have been too sporadic and at times too superficial.⁶⁰² Some priests, religious and lay people are protesting against disproportionate attention to schools instead and they are dedicating themselves to working with and in the midst of the poor.⁶⁰³ Through primary schools, dispensaries, house and village visiting the sisters have opened the way for the church in many areas and have given rise to numerous Christian communities. Besides evangelical and humanitarian social works, the missionaries failed to take keen interest in studying the land and the people, their history and culture, language and literature, religions, customs and traditions. The numerous educational institutions that the Catholic Church runs are teeming with thousands of youngsters looking for missionaries. Despite many limitations the Catholic Church in Northeast India has witnessed considerable growth during the last hundred and twenty years.

An understanding of the impact of Catholic missions in the region can be gained by reviewing the development of Church institutions, which may indicate the humanitarian work done in the area on the one hand and the extent of mobility achieved by the Christian communities, on the other. Whether Catholics are the majority or minority group in these states, the fact is that the church is in the forefront in the field of quality education, holistic health care and people oriented developmental projects. The life and activities of various congregations of the Priests, Brothers and Sisters in the region are very prominent. The work of the missionaries met with success especially in the states of Mizoram, Nagaland, Meghalaya, and Manipur. Historians assign several reasons for the ready acceptance of Christianity by the people, such as the natural affinity of primal religious beliefs and practices with some aspects of Christianity, the image and perception of Christian churches as agents of social, cultural and economic upward mobility and the fact that by and large missionaries

⁶⁰¹ Thomas Menamparapil, *Church in North East India*, unpublished, Shillong, 1974, p.70.

⁶⁰² Francis X. Clark S.J, *op.cit.*, p.8.

⁶⁰³ *Ibid.*, pp. 8-9.

identified themselves with the tribal people. The different aspects and facets of service and the mission of thousands of Catholic organizations across the country manifests that no two dioceses or religious organizations, neither the diverse ways in which they are trying to meet the challenges of the time are the same.

4.2. Diversity of Sisters Institutes within the Catholic Church

In the Catholic Church, all men and women who are members of different congregations are collectively known as religious men and religious women respectively. It is common to distinguish between three categories of religious personnel, namely the diocesan clergy, religious men and religious women. Religious men can be either priests or Brothers. The exact number of persons belonging to these three categories in the North East is not known, partly because the number is never static. According to the Catholic Directory of North East India, in 1997, there were 339 diocesan priests and 457 religious priests, 83 religious Brothers and over 2000 Sisters.⁶⁰⁴ There are more religious women than deacons, diocesan priests and religious men combined. Taken together, sisters represent nearly two-thirds of the total. There are more than three sisters for every diocesan priest and more than four sisters for every religious priest or a Brother. Nearly half of all sisters are in Europe⁶⁰⁵ and about a third is in the Americas. Asia claims a fifth of sisters, well over half of whom are in India.

The congregations of Sisters have originated as a response to the call of God to radiate His compassionate love in joyful service to the sick, needy, poor such as lepers, deaf and dumb, blind, mentally handicapped etc. The founders of these institutes seem to have realized during their pastoral ministry, the need for evangelizing the people especially the poor, the women and children in the villages visualizing the fulfillment of this mission through dedicated sisters, knowing the language and culture of the people and promoting local vocations. Given the large number of sisters compared to other church personnel, the number of Catholics per a sister is much lower than that for Brothers, religious priests or diocesan priests.⁶⁰⁶ On an average there are 1,359 Catholics per sisters, worldwide. In Oceania, there are 739 Catholics per a sister. There are as many as 2,473 Catholics per sisters in Africa, a larger number than elsewhere, but still much smaller than the corresponding

⁶⁰⁴ Gratian Carlo S.J. & Paul Raj S.J., *op.cit.*, p.3.

⁶⁰⁵ Yolanda Randel, *op.cit.*, p.43.

⁶⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

figure of 7,447 Catholics per religious priests and Brothers. Although the Americas have a large proportion of sisters worldwide, its large catholic population yields a relatively high proportion of 2,584 Catholics per sisters.⁶⁰⁷

In the history of the growth of the church and the region, the contribution of the religious sisters has been significant and vital.⁶⁰⁸ Usually, religious sisters go to mission lands often due to an explicit request from the priests or the bishops. This was also the case in Northeast India.⁶⁰⁹ Education, socio-medical ministry, pastoral care, hostel and youth ministry, geriatrics and service of charity as per the needs of the society and signs of the times are the ministries of sisters in the Northeast.⁶¹⁰

Missionaries of Christ Jesus congregation founded by Camino Sanzorio in 1944 accepted the invitation of Bishop Ferrando and opened centres at Kohima and Tura in 1948 and at Raliang in 1950. During the war, Bishop Ferrando had founded a congregation of sisters known as the Missionary Sisters of Mary Help of Christians. They grew fast and have been recruiting into their institute girls from Northeast India belonging to the different tribes. Numerous other congregations like the Apostolic Carmel, Bethany Sisters, Sisters of St. Joseph of Cluny, Carmelites, Clarists, Sacred Heart Sisters, Adoration Sisters from Kerala, Ursulines from Ranchi and other congregations of women were invited to Northeast India by different bishops.⁶¹¹ Institutes were also started by those who were members of other orders like Mary Kutty who was a Salesian missionary for 25 years working in the missions of the Northeast, founded The Fervent Daughters of the Sacred Heart of Jesus congregation.

The Catholic Church has a history of the increase of new religious orders founded and approved by the Church at different times for different needs. Sisters have access to the strata of population which remain outside the reach of priests and Brothers; they seem to have shown a deep understanding of family problems and proved their unique ability to awaken the sense of personal dignity, to raise standards of human existence, to make peace, share their faith and love with people, especially the poor. In particular, the role of religious sisters

⁶⁰⁷*Ibid.*

⁶⁰⁸S.Karotemprel SDB (ed.), *The Catholic Church in Northeast India 1890-1990*, Vendrame Institute Publications, Shillong, 1993,p.296.

⁶⁰⁹*Ibid.*

⁶¹⁰www.bethanymangalore.org accessed on 11 June 2013.

⁶¹¹ Dr.George Kottupallil 'A Historical Survey of the Catholic Church in North-East India from 1627 to 1983' *Centenary of the Catholic Church in North-East India 1890-1990, Souvenir.*

is growing in many regions.⁶¹²The evangelization would be unthinkable in the region without the direct involvement of Salvatorian sisters, Loreto sisters, Sisters of Our Lady of Missions, Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, Missionaries of Christ Jesus and other more recently arrived congregations of sisters. The church depended on the sisters for education, health care, developmental work and direct evangelization. Most of these congregations have a large number of local vocations, a sign of the growth of the church.

The sisters are responsible for the greater part of ecclesiastical activity such as teaching, health, relief for the poor and the mass media. This involvement in action and the forms which this action may take, depend as a rule of the congregation to which the sister belongs. Some congregations are of ancient, others of very recent origin; some were founded in the West and so are bound up, in spite of their international character, with particular cultural forms. Others are Indian, but differ in their rite: Latin, Syro- Malabar or Syro-Malankara. Finally, each of them has developed their own special type of spirituality, associated with the charism, the life and character of their founder.

There are indigenous institutes founded within India but extending their services even outside the nation. They are Franciscan Sisters of Our Lady of Graces, Daughters of St. Thomas, Handmaids of Mary, Sisters of Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, Prabhudasi Sisters of Ajmer, Sisters of Franciscan Clarist Congregation, Sisters of Our Lady of Fatima, Sisters of the Little Flower of Bethany, Sisters of the Sacred Heart, The Congregation of Holy Family, The Fervent Daughters of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, The Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, The Sisters of the Destitute and the Ursuline Franciscan Sisters.

The international congregations that have sent their sisters to the region for mission are Servants of Holy Spirit, Daughters of Divine Providence, Medical Mission Sisters, Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate, Sisters of the Cross of Chavanod, The Congregation of Sisters of St. Elizabeth, The Sisters of Charity of Sts. Bartholomea Capitanio and Vincenza Gerosa, the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians who work in 89 countries etc.. There are also local congregations founded in the region such as Missionary Sisters of Mary Help of Christians which is the first Indigenous one of Northeast India and the Visitation Sisters of

⁶¹²John Desrochers CSC, *The Social Teaching of the Church in India*, NBCLC/CSA, Bangalore, India, 2006, p.123.

Don Bosco founded in Shillong and working in the region with its members hailing from the region itself.

Prabhudasi Sisters of Ajmer is the first indigenous congregation of women founded in Ajmer, in 1906. Congregation of the Daughters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul perhaps is the largest international congregation spread in 91 countries, having 20,000 members in 77 Provinces. There are Indian sisters serving in Europe, Africa, America and the other continents as well. There are congregations like that of Daughters of Presentation of Mary in the Temple, Sisters of Mary Immaculate who devote themselves to village apostolate by means of spiritual, moral, social and material assistance to women and children of all classes.⁶¹³ These institutes originated solely for the upliftment of women and children, education and instruction of young girls, to form them into good Christians and good mothers of families.

There are institutes which are diocesan while others are Pontifical (recognized by the Pope) and there are institutes that cater only to health services without involving in education like that of the Medical Mission sisters. Some congregations have recruited into their ranks girls from Northeast India belonging to different tribes who educate the poor children, care for the sick, visit the villages and do other village apostolates. Congregations like Missionary Sisters of Mary Help of Christians have members belonging to 41 ethnic groups of India. Most of the congregations like that of Prabhudasi sisters of Ajmer, Bethany sisters, Ursuline sisters etc. collaborate with the Fathers and Brothers in the fields of direct evangelization, education, care to children in the hostel especially of the girls and work for the empowerment of women and in the field of health care through dispensary and health camps in the villages.

There are also institutes collaborating with the government in health care such as the Sisters of Charity of Sts. Bartholomea Capitanio and Vincenza Gerosa. In Northeast, the sisters first came to work in Dibrugarh Government Hospital in 1933 in response to the invitation of the Assam Government.⁶¹⁴ Just as there are institutes concentrating purely on health care, there are also orders like the Loreto Sisters who were invited to open a school of higher learning precisely with the purpose of making Shillong, an educational centre of Assam,⁶¹⁵ and were restricted to education as well as the care of the girls in the boarding.

⁶¹³*Op.cit.*, p.303.

⁶¹⁴*Ibid.*

⁶¹⁵*Ibid.*

They already had seven large schools in India and had a high reputation for conducting good schools for the education of girls.⁶¹⁶

There are institutes bearing similar names as Sisters of Providence. The congregation of the sisters of the Imitation of Christ known as Bethany Sisters and the sisters of the Little Flower of Bethany also known as Bethany sisters. But the primary objective of the former is the spiritual renewal of the Malankara church, living liturgical life, a life of prayer and contemplation where as the latter one was founded for the education of the girls in a special way. The former plays a major role in the building up of the Malankara Catholic Church and in its missionary expansions. Both the institutes are indigenous but the former was founded in Kerala whereas the latter was founded in Mangalore, Karnataka. The members of the former order visit the houses of the parishioners who stay in faraway places as frequently as possible. Their charism is to live a life in accordance with the provisions of the congregation, in a manner consonant with the traditions of the Malankara church, respectful heritage of India, the needs and aspirations of the time and the apostolate consists of uniting the separated Christian brethren, proclamation of faith among non-Christians, welfare of women, education, caring for the sick, protection of the orphans and the Destitute, Apostolate of the Press and social welfare activities. The activities of the latter are discussed elaborately in the next chapter. There are also the Bethany Fathers.

Institutes like Sisters of St. Joseph of Cluny started during the time of the French Revolution, when churches were closed and priests were hunted down and the services were requested in the French colonies. They are spread out in all the five continents. The Foundress worked for the formation of the African Clergy, emancipation of slaves, for mental patients and those afflicted with leprosy. The foundation of the Sisters of St. Ann of Providence was connected with the humanitarian and spiritual works of the Marchioness Giulia Falletti Colbert and the Marquis Carlo Tancredi of Barolo, a married couple. The members are engaged in instruction and education of children and young girls in schools, orphanages, boarding homes and colleges. They run orphanages, homes for the aged, disabled and destitute. They cater to the education and Christian formation of children and young girls belonging to the needy and less wealthy families without, however, neglecting the children and young girls belonging to other social strata. Though most of the congregations were started to cater to the poorest and the most neglected of the society, there were also orders

⁶¹⁶*Ibid.*, pp. 272-273.

that did not neglect the care for the rich may be reaching out to them in different ways according to their need.

4.3 Work of the Sisters

There are about 80 congregations of sisters working in the Northeast region among whom the Salvatorian Sisters were the first catholic sisters to make their entry into Northeast in the year 1891⁶¹⁷ at Shillong. They were the first group of Sisters to begin evangelization and educational service in the region. They were followed by the Loreto Sisters who arrived in 1908, then came the Catechist Missionary Sisters (Salesian Missionaries of Mary Immaculate) in 1913. The Sisters of Our Lady of the Missions began their rest house in Haflong 1914 for sick sisters from the hot plains of East Bengal followed by the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians who came in 1923. Among the international institutes, the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians were the first Sisters to enter Manipur in 1958⁶¹⁸ and among the indigenous orders the congregations of the sisters of the Little Flower of Bethany were the first to set their foot in Mizoram in 1962 and Tripura in 1969.

There are large Institutes such as Congregation of Jesus existing worldwide with about 3000 members in 44 countries across the five continents. The Sisters of St. Joseph of Chambery number about 1500 with provinces in France, Italy, Norway, Denmark, USA, Brazil, some regions in Ireland, Wales, Czech Republic, Pakistan, Mozambique and Tanzania. There are also Congregations founded in India such as the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Martha whose aim is to share with the working class, the poor and the needy Jesus' merciful love, compassion and mercy through loving service. The special end of the Institute of Ursulines of Mary Immaculate is the education of girls in the spirit of the Catholic faith and instructing them in all branches of knowledge and work suitable to their condition. Visitation Sisters of Don Bosco is a Congregation of such Sisters, who work with the poor, sick and ignorant of the tribal areas.⁶¹⁹ Their specialty is that it is a Congregation that is missionary and educative institute of consecrated life, founded for the poor and abandoned in the villages and neglected urban areas. The Sisters dedicate themselves particularly to

⁶¹⁷Thomas Edamattathu and Ida Rodrigues, "Contribution of the Religious Sisters to the Church in Northeast India", in S.Karotemprel(ed.), *The Catholic Church in Northeast India 1890-1990, A Multi-dimensional Study*, Vendrame Institute Publications, Shillong, 1993, p.296.

⁶¹⁸Mary George, *The F.M.A. Contribution to the Missions in Northeast India*, A paper presented at All India Symposium on Salesian Missions in India, Shillong, 1983, p.53.

⁶¹⁹*The Catholic Directory of India 2013: The Catholic Bishop's Conference of India*, Claretian Publications, Bangalore, India, p.2413.

Evangelization, Catechesis and the upliftment of the materially and spiritually needy people especially the young, with preference being given to the poorest.⁶²⁰

The Congregation of the Sisters of the Catholic Apostolate is a part of the Union of the Catholic Apostolate which consists of Priests, Sisters and the lay people whose members strive for the liberation of human beings from the bondage of evil, poverty and misery through the exercise of charity. An apostolate with the collaboration of the lay people is the special characteristic feature of this Union. The members promote the spiritual growth of their neighbours by reawakening the Christian life in every baptised person, animating all to love and by forming apostles for the work of the Church. They are completely available for work of charity and zeal through education and instruction, missionary and parish apostolate, hospital and social work as well as formation according to the needs of the church, time and place.

The arrival of the Sisters of the Holy Cross to India was due to the intervention of the Maharaja of Tripura whose son was studying in the Holy Cross Brothers' school namely St. Gregory's High School in Dhaka, Bengal. In that same year, Joseph Voorde was engaged in teaching French to the Tripura King. The Congregation of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Annecy was founded as early as in 1650 in answer to the needs of the 17th century. But the founder had put no limit to the apostolates, which the Sisters could engage in, except that they were to go in preference to the poorest and the most neglected. Their special mission is that they run leprosarium, homes for the aged and crèches. Sisters of the Cross of Chavanod have the education of the young as their mission for which they run professional and technical schools and are involved in House Management and women's upliftment. Sisters of the Holy Spirit run short stay Homes and rehabilitation of women in distress, homes for the street children, vocational training centres, care centres for HIV/AIDS patients, orienting their work towards the grass root level and peoples movements based on the social realities of the Indian situation.

The Daughters of St. Paul, Missionary Sisters, Sisters of Notre Dame are committed to Media Communication, Evangelisation through Mass Media and they aim to make effective use of the Media of Social communications such as the Press, Radio, Cinema, Television, Internet and Audio-Visual products to proclaim the Gospel and the Doctrine of the Church to all people, defend the Truth and foster Christian influence and values in human society. They

⁶²⁰*Ibid.*

transform the message of the Gospel into colour, sound and image to make it relevant to today's media oriented world. Through their Book and Media centres, participation in and organising national and local book fairs, exhibition of their products in schools and churches, organising different animation programmes along the lines of their mission of spreading God's word form an important facet of their mission. Sisters' mission is to spread the Word of God through literature, films, radio, television, cassettes, slides, etc. Sisters are engaged in visiting families and schools and provide good Christian literature for individuals and families, audio-visual programmes on Biblical and catechetical themes in schools and villages.⁶²¹ The institutes are devoted to the education of women in moral, intellectual, social, spiritual and psychological aspects undertaking various activities such as teaching, social work, village catechesis, care of leprosy patients, schools for the blind, Health Programs in villages, youth animation, Jail Ministry, women empowerment programs and vocational training for women.

There are orders founded by the royalty such as Laura Leroux, the duchess of Bauffremont in France founded the institute of the Franciscan Missionary Sisters of Sacred Heart with the vision of educating poor girls and giving spiritual support to the missions. Congregations were also founded to look after the unfortunate children during the Franco-Prussian war, which claimed many victims, leaving behind innumerable orphans and this led to the foundation of Franciscan Sisters of St. Mary of the Angels. The Sisters of Charity of Sts. Bartholomea Capitanio and Vincenza Gerosa was one of the numerous foundations typical of the century which especially in France, Belgium and Italy contributed towards the spreading of the new religious life pattern, better suited both in structure and in aims, to the actual conditions and needs of the European society, which had just emerged from the French Revolution and Napoleonic wars.⁶²² The suffering caused by World War II led to the founding of the Congregation of Sisters of St. Elizabeth and the Missionary Sisters of Mary Help of Christians. Franciscan Sisters of the Sacred Heart came into existence to care for women suffering from syphilis.

The institute like Missionaries of Charity founded by Mother Teresa is solely dedicated to the service of the destitute. Like the Medical Mission sisters, this order also does not involve in educational activities but in socio developmental works. In Northeast India

⁶²¹ Sabastian Karotemprel, S.D.B., (ed.), *op.cit.*, pp.308-309.

⁶²² David R. Syiemlieh, (ed.), *Diocese of Agartala: Ten Years and Onward*, Don Bosco Press, Shillong, 2005, p.162.

they have 21 Social Welfare Centres such as Nirmal Hriday, Shishu Bhavan, Homes for Children, Adults, dying destitute, unwed mothers, the aged, slum schools, leprosy rehabilitation centres, Tailoring classes, village apostolate and family visits. Shanti Nilayam Benedictine Abbey, Order of St. Benedict, the first of its kind in India and the only one of its kind in Northeast India whose characteristic feature of spirituality is prayer and liturgical worship, the singing of God's praises by the daily celebration of Mass and Divine Office (recitation of psalms). Time outside Divine Office and prayers is spent in manual work by which the Monastery earns its living and they exercise hospitality by offering opportunities for retreats (prayer experiences) for small groups in the retreat house. Sister Disciples of the Divine Master are working in 31 countries collaborating in the evangelizing mission of the Church through prayer, assistance in ecclesiastical offices, retreat houses, Holistic centres, establishing houses for sick, old and needy priests, Liturgical animation and catechesis through the arts, sculpture, architecture, music and literature.⁶²³

The Daughters of Mary Help of Christians commonly known as Salesian sisters of Don Bosco⁶²⁴ share mission in the church through Christian education in the style of the Preventive System- a system of loving kindness⁶²⁵ providing integral formation and education for girls. The congregation came into existence particularly with a view to catering to the all-round development of growing girls. From the earliest years of its existence the congregation began to reach out to faraway lands, to the youth in need without neglecting others.⁶²⁶ They are involved in pastoral care through personal contacts, family and village apostolate and healing ministry, collaborating with the other religious congregations and especially with the laity in working together.⁶²⁷ The members work with committed young people, parents, lay collaborators, past pupils, members of the Salesian family and other social and educative agencies for the good of people. They aim at working for peace, justice and create family atmosphere.⁶²⁸ Every Salesian sister is called to be particularly attentive to the needs of the young women.

The Institute plans and executes a pastoral project that aims at promoting the integral education of young people, active in the direct and indirect evangelization, Oratories and

⁶²³ Thomas Edamattathu and Ida Rodrigues, *op.cit.*, p. 304.

⁶²⁴ *Op.cit.*, p. 164.

⁶²⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶²⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶²⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶²⁸ *Ibid.*, p.170.

Youth centres, vocational training to young girls of rural settings, different programmes and work to improve the condition and position of women, various works of social upliftment and networking with other agencies.⁶²⁹ They prepare the people for the reception of the sacraments, beginning with the sacrament of Baptism (Initiation into Catholic Church) for those who desire to become Catholics.⁶³⁰ They are engaged in knitting and sewing schools rendering service in the municipal hospital and surrounding villages. They have extended their field of activity to vocational guidance, marriage preparation course, Grihini schools and association of the laity.⁶³¹

There are institutes such as Daughters of the Heart of Mary whose immediate objective was the preservation of religious life, the very existence of which was threatened by the suppression of the religious orders in France at that time and to offer the benefits of religious life under a new form, adapted to the changing needs of the church. The members of the Society wear no outward distinguishing habit in order to permit greater penetration into every milieu. The sisters of all the congregations profess three vows of chastity, poverty and obedience but the Hospitaller Sisters of Mercy profess a fourth vow of 'hospitality', by which they dedicate themselves to serve the sick and the needy, directly or indirectly. They are running a hospital with a department for naturopathy since 1985 and a home for the aged. Special feature of the Missionaries of Christ Jesus is that they are known for evangelization in places where the church is not present and in young churches where there is need of missionary help. They make themselves available in situations of urgent need with a preference for the poor and the marginalized and with a readiness to withdraw and hand over works when they are sufficiently established in order to open new ways.

Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate, Prabhudasi sisters of Ajmer, Sisters of Notre Dame and Missionary sisters of Mary Help of Christians have direct evangelization as their main charism, which they carry out through regular house visits in the villages, caring for the destitute and Differently Abled, Hostels for working women and girls, and Homes for the aged. Missionary Sisters, Servants of the Holy Spirit is a Congregation founded for the cause of propagation of the Faith whose members are in schools, hospitals, dispensaries, catechetical and social work especially with battered women, orphans and street children, mentally retarded and physically handicapped, aged and AIDS patients. The specific reason

⁶²⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶³⁰ *Op.cit.*, pp. 298-299.

⁶³¹ *Op.cit.*, p.299.

that brought the Prabhudasi sisters of Ajmer into existence is that when the French Capuchin Priests came to Rajputana Mission around 1890 and started to work among the poor and illiterate village people of the area, they found that owing to the purdah system and other social restrictions prevailing among the women, it was impossible for men missionaries to approach the women. Therefore, they felt it was the need of the time to have an indigenous congregation of women who knew the local language, customs, culture and lifestyle of the people, who could easily meet the village women to educate and give them the Gospel message.

Institutes were also founded for the sole mission of serving the families like that of the Congregation of Holy Family whose members work for an integral family life through family visits, counselling centres, etc. and they have institutions like Family Apostolate Training and Research Institute, Family Renewal Centre for Couples and Integral Family Development Forum. The congregation runs Press, Homes for the Aged and Dying. The Congregation of Sisters of St. Elizabeth serve the families, care for the mother and child, serve the sick and aged. The sisters try to build people through enrichment of families, empowerment of women and integral development of children with a special focus on the underprivileged. Their apostolate involves Girls home, prison ministry, family counselling, village development programme, pastoral work, care and counselling for the people living with HIV/AIDS and programme for the physically handicapped.

Sisters of Holy Cross (Menzingen) was mainly founded to fill up the gap between the Gospel values and the changing world of the time as the Founder perceived in the then existing social conditions spiritual and moral decline, which he thought of dealing with in a Christian spirit. Education of girls, who would become future mothers, was the means he adopted and the congregation was introduced in India in 1906 to care for the sick in the Government hospitals at the request of the then ruling Maharaja of Travancore. Beside all the activities the members are specially engaged in prison ministries though they run hospitals, dispensaries, community health centres, training schools for Nurses and Para-Medicals, TB sanatoriums, leprosy survey and Treatment Centres, hospices for terminally ill cancer patients and work in hospitals of the Government and church related organisations.

The Congregation of Sisters of Nazareth was started mainly for the family apostolate and the members devote themselves to the service of the integral development of families with special emphasis on spiritual development through family visits, Home Science Institutes, Family counselling centres, De-addiction activities, Publications for Mothers

(Amma magazine), Refuge Homes to cater to the various needs of women and children, Psycho-medical centres and vocational training centres. Sisters of Notre Dame are engaged in communication media as well as retreat work. Sisters of Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament have direct contact with the people through agricultural and rural development. The institute of the Sisters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul was started as early as 1734 for the alcoholics and drug addicts. Sisters of Charles Borromeo extend their work to Africa, Argentina, Italy, Poland and Mexico through day-care centres, crèches, homes for the aged, leprosaria, community development and hospice for AIDS victims.

Institutes were also founded to render service in the government institutions such as the Society of Christ Jesus rendering service in the Kohima hospital and the government leprosarium at Tura. There were congregations that were started with the intention of sending missionaries to other countries like the Sisters of St. Ann of Luzern, India whose founder realised that it is only a group of women with religious commitment, who would give themselves wholeheartedly to do maternity welfare. At first, they focused on health care through mobile camps, working in Government run hospitals. Their mission consists of professional training course, vocational training, HIV/AIDS care centres for affected and infected persons, hostels for women, training and care of the handicapped and mentally challenged, women empowerment, prison ministry and care of the Rag Pickers children.

Thus, it is evident that the Sisters in general are engaged in a variety of activities, education-both formal and non-formal, health care services and community health, pastoral and social work with marginalised groups responding to the needs of people. They live and work with a preference to the poor gaining a deeper understanding of their culture, tradition and language with a desire to learn from them. There are those sisters who are engaged in the care and education of children of all age groups. They run schools, foundling homes, Homes for the aged, welfare centres for the orphaned/ destitute children, hostels for working girls, dispensaries and health centres in the rural/ tribal regions, social uplift programmes etc.

Christian formation through value education and catechesis happens to be another aspect of their mission in Northeast India. The sisters strive to collaborate with the missionary priests in evangelization and Christian formation of women and children, specially the poor, the backward, the abandoned and the neediest. The sisters are involved in the mission of the church collaborating with the parishes in all their endeavors. They are entrusted with the apostolic activities of teaching in the school and care of young girls

through boarding houses.⁶³² Among the many apostolates, the family visit on regular basis is one of the most effective means of reaching out to people which the sisters in general do for they seem to have realized the significance of this mission. They maintain a good rapport with the neighborhood and through their various activities they serve the humanity with a missionary outlook. The Sisters are engaged in multiple works such as family visits, instruction of adults and children for Baptism, preparation for Communion and Confirmation, hygiene and child care for the womenfolk, health care and marriage preparation courses.⁶³³

The sisters take active part in the programmes like Youth Awareness and Youth Build and Youth Leadership Programmes. The hostels provide values and sound education to the students which seem to have been proved by the good results over the years of the girls who have written their Board Exams. This becomes a source of encouragement to the student's to continue to seek admission to the hostel. The hostels maintain good farms in order to educate the children in the art of working and preparing themselves for the future to do any type of work dutifully and also to benefit out of their own land and property.

The missionaries of the different congregations in Northeast India set in motion and influenced a whole train of events with their charismatic personalities. During the first decades of the last century, a few persons have exerted powerful influence in planting and developing the church in Northeast India. They were endowed with the charism of leadership, courage for self-giving, strong faith and a sense of mission, great capacity for service and a long-range vision for making Christ known and of planting his church. Through schools, dispensaries, house and village visiting the sisters have opened the way for the church in many areas and have given rise to numerous Catholic communities. The sisters work for the poor, the imprisoned, the ill and the marginalized. They focus on the homeless, the destitute, prisoners and the undocumented. Marian Rona testifies, 'Because of the sisters' hard, able and financially uncompensated work, women today are also vastly more educated, competent and professional than women of any previous generations.'⁶³⁴ Most of the work that excites

⁶³² *Ibid.*, p. 67.

⁶³³ Pushpa George, *The Missionary Sisters of Mary Help of Christians and their Contribution to the Missions, A paper* presented at All India Symposium on Salesian Missions in India, Shillong, 1983, p.127.

⁶³⁴ Fr. William Grimm in "Change is a must for all", *Smart Companion India: National Monthly for Christian Leadership*, June 2012 / Vol.3 / No.5, p.11.

admiration for the church throughout the world is done by the sisters.⁶³⁵ They are multi-focus women whose power comes from their presence among the powerless.⁶³⁶

As per the data available in the *Catholic Directory of India, 2013* out of the 80 congregations working in Northeast India, thirty three of them manage their own educational institutions, health and social welfare centres. Some of them work in institutions managed by the diocese or the other religious orders of Priests and Brothers. Though many of the sisters run English medium schools, there are also those who manage vernacular medium schools like that of the Catechist Missionary sisters who began an Assamese medium school in 1914 at Guwahati. They also run special schools for the deaf and dumb, blind and mentally handicapped.

Health care through its curative, preventive, promotive dimensions, through institutions as well as counseling, pastoral care, social development and ecological awareness continue to be expressions of living their vocation in the mission. Justice, peace and integrity of creation are integral part of their healing mission. Through collaboration and partnership, they continue to network with like-minded groups, participate in people's movements, capacity building for empowerment of communities and seek to respond to the ecological crisis in a healing way. They strive to develop life-giving ways of their healing mission in response to the signs of the time.

There are also sisters who monitor some of the activities of the orphanages and hostels, conduct singing classes, tutor those who need help with school subjects, organize games, share a weekly prayer hour and pray with the inmates of the hostels and orphanages. The orphans are provided with a set of foster parents to live with. Sisters work at the empowerment of women through Self-Help Groups and try to address the people's concerns, attend to questions of peace and justice. They help them to improve their situation and become the evangelizers of their own culture and society. They live and work with the indigenous people of the region, learning to speak and pray with them in their local language, studying their history and familiarizing themselves with their customs.

The specialty of the Sisters of Our Lady of the Missions is that they opened St. Agnes, an English elementary school in 1916 for the children of the railway employees and Anglo-

⁶³⁵*Ibid.*, p.12.

⁶³⁶ Angie O'Gorman columnist, USA, in *Smart Companion India, Ibid.*, p.13.

Indians.⁶³⁷ St Mary's Convent at Laitumkhrah (1915) is the longest established and it has a Teachers' College – University Level, Orphanage, Higher Secondary School [English medium], Primary School [Khasi medium], Montessori Nursery School opening its doors to orphan girls and destitute children of the area. The hostel caters for the poor tribal girls, giving them the opportunity to continue their basic education. Women for Integrated Sustainable Empowerment (WISE) as an NGO established in July 2000 in Shillong is a new social service centre that has been established by the sisters to promote the role of women and their education for self-sufficiency working at developing self-help groups amongst the unemployed. It targets destitute women, girl dropouts, domestic workers and women in crisis. They come to the Centre for vocational training in fast food preparation, food processing. Girls from the orphanage get training in handicrafts, basket- dry flowers making and tailoring. Those who have completed the training from the Centre are encouraged to make use of the skills they have acquired and to take up income generating activities such as a small shop, fast food sales or livestock projects. They are encouraged to join Self-Help Groups through which they learn to mobilize their own small savings and have access to micro credit.

Apart from the congregation of the sisters of the Little Flower of Bethany, Ursuline Franciscan Sisters was the second Congregation that was founded in Mangalore. The charism of the institute is to launch deeper into the life of the people and proclaim the message of the fullness of life of God's Kingdom.⁶³⁸ Just like many other international and indigenous congregations the Ursuline Sisters of Tildonk also serve the local church in whatever way they can mainly through the mission of education, health care, social and pastoral activities.⁶³⁹ The Sisters of the Destitute is a unique order in the catholic church in the sense that their founder gave training to Sisters to make house visits in the locality and take care and shelter the abandoned and destitute with compassion as pioneers in Kerala. They choose the suited fields of service according to the needs of the times to bring the good news of the compassionate love to the poor.

One of the secrets for the development of the mission centres of the Roman Catholics in Northeast India is the degree of autonomy and freedom for personal initiatives that each centre enjoyed. It was up to each missionary to get funds for the projects and build up the

⁶³⁷O. Paviotti, *The Work of His Hands: The Story of the Archdiocese of Shillong-Guwahati 1934-1984*, Archbishop's House, Shillong, 1987, p.17.

⁶³⁸*Souvenir*, Diamond Jubilee of the Prefecture, *op.cit.*, p. 64.

⁶³⁹ Thomas Edamattathu and Ida Rodrigues, *op.cit.*, pp.296-305.

centres. Hence, family members of missionaries, their home parishes and dioceses supported their undertakings. The local Catholics too made their contribution in cash/ kind or by voluntary labour towards the construction of their village chapels and schools. By and large, the Hindus and Muslims of the plains tolerated the missionaries and even positively welcomed them into their midst for the sake of the educational, medical and developmental benefits that they brought with them. The non-Christian tribals, particularly of the hills, welcomed missionaries in whom they tended to depend for the education of their children, for medical and developmental projects. To this end often they offered land for schools and churches and even helped in the building of mission centres. The catholic missionaries were sympathetic to tribal customs and traditions, music, dance, architecture, cultural values like respect and veneration of the dead and their ancestors.

The pioneering missionaries had their human limitations, individual and collective. But they also brought with them their rich individual talents, their rational gifts and fortitude, specific religious spirit, charism, methods, acquired characteristics and traditional riches as well as strengths. Some were truly outstanding and exceptional in knowledge, scholarship, holiness and abilities. Some may have lacked some human qualities, others theological or spiritual depth or intellectual accomplishments. But their great love, dedication and untiring zeal for the human promotion and advancement of the people of the region as well as their accomplishments cannot be denied. An important contribution of the religious sisters to the church here is the fostering of vocations to priestly and religious life. Earlier there was an overwhelming dependence on vocations from abroad and other parts of India. Today the trend has changed towards greater emphasis on the training of local vocations in the particular region itself. The establishment of the local religious congregations has favoured inculturation and adaptation to some extent. It has also helped them to grow in their evangelizing work almost imperceptibly and capture the missionary enthusiasm of their seniors in the field. Here an attempt is made to identify the specific work done by the Sisters of various Congregations to the growth and development of the region.

4.3. 1.Educational

The most important contribution made by the church for the growth of society may be in the field of education. The church with a vast number of elementary schools, Middle Schools, High schools, hostels, colleges and adult education centres is contributing to the

moulding of the society. In the minds of many especially outside the Church today, the Catholic Church seems to be synonymous with quality education. This identification may not be wrong as it reveals one facet of Christian missionary work which has marked every catholic mission station.⁶⁴⁰ The people of the region feel that before the advent of the missionaries in Northeast India, there was hardly any type of educational infrastructure that was accessible to commoners. Tribal areas were neglected and hence there was poverty, ignorance, illiteracy and under development. Therefore the assertion is that the missionary contribution to education is no mean achievement.

After Indian independence and ever since the religious priests, Brothers and Sisters arrived in the region, followed by the diocesan priests, there has been significant growth in terms of quality of life for the people because of the education imparted by them.⁶⁴¹ The church has invested so much in personnel and money in the field of education. The All India Education Policy of the Catholic Church focuses on providing quality and relevant education, to give serious attention to deepen the authentic spiritual formation of all the students and nurture their faith culture. It appears that the need was to focus on the fuller development that meets the challenge of modern culture and society, and its demand for higher levels of competence. This may make it necessary to bring about significant changes in the planning and organization of the institutions, so that education promotes genuine personal development and excellence.⁶⁴²

The Catholic Directory of India, 2005-06 gives the following number of catholic educational institutions:

TABLE NO. 1

| | |
|--------------------------|-------|
| Colleges | 359 |
| Higher Secondary Schools | 1,465 |
| High Schools | 3,372 |
| Upper Primary schools | 3,198 |
| Lower Primary schools | 5,872 |
| Nursery Schools | 4,428 |

⁶⁴⁰ Dr.Dominic Jala & Ms Patricia Mukhim in 'Contribution of the Catholic Church Towards Education in North- East India', in *Centenary of the Catholic Church in North-East India 1890-1990:A Souvenir*

⁶⁴¹ Lazar Jeyaseelan, *op.cit.*, p.155.

⁶⁴² *All India Catholic Education Policy 2007*, Catholic Bishop's Conference of India, New Delhi,p. 4.

| | |
|---------------------------|-----|
| Training schools | 513 |
| Technical schools | 900 |
| Professional Institutions | 263 |

Source: *The Catholic Directory of India 2005-06*, p. 110.

A total of 20,370 institutions with over 10 million students are catered to in these institutions. According to T. Menampampil, 54 per cent of these students are girls, and 28 per cent only are Christian (23 per cent Catholic).⁶⁴³

The commitment of the Catholic Church to the apostolate of the schools in the region is a commitment in personnel now numbered by the thousands, a commitment in material resources almost impossible to estimate. The Bishops in the various dioceses sought the cooperation of Sisters of the various Congregations or set up their own Congregations to meet the needs, in great part education of the poorest and most backward masses. From the beginning, a catholic school was almost always attached to each mission station. Among the various congregations of sisters an ever growing concern to promote education in the whole region seems to be visible. For quite a number of years the sisters concentrated their efforts on education, as it was difficult to impart a mature knowledge of the faith without education. It is to be noted that a major contribution in the field of education of the young has been given by the Sisters in various rural centres. They have made it possible for children in very remote areas to reach at least primary and high school level of education. Various religious congregations of sisters have made a significant contribution to the education of women in Northeast India, by running scores of elementary, secondary and high schools, colleges in rural and urban areas of the region. A number of political, educational and governmental leaders of the region are the products of their schools and colleges.

The sisters found it difficult at first to get the children to school, especially the children of families that had not yet become Christians. But with the spread of Christianity, the demand for schools too grew. But the establishment of catholic schools was difficult as the government grants were not easy to get. In 1907 when the Catholics reorganized their school system to fall in line with the government syllabus, recognition was given so that by 1910 the catholic mission could count 12 primary schools recognised by the government. Endeavors for proper buildings, right qualifications of the teaching staff and the erection of

⁶⁴³ *Report of the General Meeting of the CBCI, 2006*, pp. 49-50.

boarding schools enabled the church personnel to gain the colonial governments' allocation and granting of national rights to 9 schools.

Christopher Becker, records that 'as it was difficult to impart grown up people a mature knowledge of the faith, the missionaries directed their attention from the very beginning to youth in order to instruct them in schools and educate them to a true Christian spirit.'⁶⁴⁴ By September 1st 1914, the Salvatorian Missionaries had established two English medium High Schools with boarding houses in Shillong. They also had a higher elementary school with boarding house in Haflong and a Middle English medium School for local boys in Shillong. They also conducted a Girls' School for Khasi children in Shillong and two home science schools in Shillong and Raliang. In the same year, the sisters opened a school for domestic science with a government grant towards the building. Special rooms and furniture were provided to train girls in cooking, washing and ironing. The sisters had already introduced other practical subjects in the schools of Raliang, such as stitching, knitting and embroidery. They succeeded in setting up a weaving school in that locality as well. The first primary school for girls established according to government regulations was opened in June 1913, by the mission centre of Shillong.

Besides caring for the sick and the needy, providing a home for the aged and orphanages in every mission station, the Salvatorians laid the foundations for the education of women in Northeast India.⁶⁴⁵ Only in Shillong did the Sisters conduct a girl's school for the Khasi children. The girls entrusted to them were taught various household skills and for training boys, they built an agricultural school, a handicrafts school with various trades, including making of silk thread and gardening.⁶⁴⁶

There had been a great demand for the opening of a school in Shillong for European and Anglo-Indian girls and the Loreto Sisters in Calcutta, in 1908, came to Shillong opening their school there in May of the following year- the first of its kind in the then province of Assam. The Sisters, under the direction of Machtilda Costelloe set out to begin an English medium High School and a boarding for girls which was inaugurated on 8th May 1909. The sisters had 23 day scholars and three boarders. The institution soon won warm praises from

⁶⁴⁴ C. Becker SDS, *History of the Catholic Missions in North East India, op.cit.*, p.259.

⁶⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, pp.340-341.

⁶⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

various civil authorities.⁶⁴⁷ There was great appreciation among Catholics and Protestants for the school. *Times of Assam* reported that at that time the boarding school of the Loreto sisters was one of the best places of summer resort, it was a place well suited to provide calm and peace to the spirit, so desirable and necessary in the education of the youth.⁶⁴⁸ The girls were prepared for the senior Cambridge examination, for which the convent (a building in which sisters live) became a centre. The founding of the Loreto Convent under the auspices of the catholic mission was an event which contributed to the name and fame of the catholic mission.

In 1914, the catechist missionary sisters took a bold step to start an Assamese medium school and a small boarding house in Guwahati.⁶⁴⁹ This was a much felt need for an educational institution for girls since society of that time did not easily favor education of girls.⁶⁵⁰ On 15th November 1915, the Sisters of the Lady Queen of the Missions came and they immediately began work in Shillong and shortly afterwards in Haflong, but seven years were to elapse before they were able to start once more the work in Raliang. Initially they ran a small primary school which later became a recognized High School. They developed the school which they inherited with its 90 children and 42 orphans into a premier educational institution in Shillong. Similarly they made a great impact with the school which was started in Haflong in 1914.⁶⁵¹ In 1937, St. Mary's college was officially inaugurated and affiliated to the Calcutta University.⁶⁵² It also had a teacher training centre which provided training for girls who had finished high school. Today it continues its valuable service in the field of education for the women of the region.

The congregations of sisters had great numerical strength with women qualified to impart not only academic knowledge but also a wide variety of skills and trades. They very soon made an enormous impact on the educational front. The Salvatorian missionaries had expended most of their energies among the Khasi and Jaintia peoples because they did not have the resources in personnel which the new body of missionaries had at their command. The Salesian Sisters immediately began the work of educational expansion which was to

⁶⁴⁷ Dr. Dominic Jala & Ms Patricia Mukhim in 'Contribution of the Catholic Church Towards Education in North- East India', in *Centenary of the Catholic Church in North-East India 1890-1990, A Souvenir*.

⁶⁴⁸ C. Becker SDS, *Early History of the Catholic Missions in Northeast India: (trans. & ed.), op. cit.*, p.175.

⁶⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p.88.

⁶⁵⁰ *Op. cit.*

⁶⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵² Mother Anne, A Seed is Sown, in *St. Mary's college Golden Jubilee Souvenir*, Shillong, 1937- 87, p.3.

reach out to every corner of the Northeast except those regions to which entry was barred by the government. The opening of primary, middle and high schools, both for boys and girls, colleges and hostels throughout the vast region could have been brought about only by a congregation able and willing to send numerous personnel to undertake the great task. The establishment of the high schools in Shillong by the Salvatorian Prefect apostolic had given to the catholic mission a prestige and influence among the general public. The image of the Catholic Church as an institution which could provide educational facilities was thus firmly established from the earliest days. That image was maintained and further enhanced through the unflagging efforts of the new missionaries.

The initial choice of Shillong by the Salvatorian missionaries had been the expressed desire of the *Propaganda Fide* that the centre of the Prefecture of Assam should be there. It meant that the Khasi Hills should be the location for the apostolate of catholic education as an essential part of that activity. That is why the Shillong area, as the mission centre, was earlier developed as an educational 'metropolis' than any other place in the whole of Northeast India and it still maintains its pre-eminence as an educational centre in the region. Only Arunachal Pradesh was forbidden territory for catholic educational effort.⁶⁵³ With the setting up of the Prefecture of Haflong and its being entrusted to the missionaries of the Holy Cross, the Brothers of that congregation opened three High Schools in the Lushai Hills. With the erection there of a separate diocese, the schools passed under the care of the Brothers of St. Gabriel. Nagaland, for so long a closed territory for catholic missionaries, can boast of a number of catholic schools- in Wokha manned by the Brothers of St. Gabriel while the school run by the Sisters in Kohima was probably the first catholic school in the Naga Hills. The Jesuit fathers of the Karnataka province were in charge of a college at Jakhama which is now handed over to the diocese. Recent years have witnessed the coming of the Franciscan Brothers to North East India who have a number of foundations in different parts of the region and they seem to concentrate their efforts in remote villages' where they work for the educationally less favored ones.

The pattern set by the pioneer missionaries is consistently followed in the Northeastern missions as mission and school go hand in hand and wherever possible, high schools have been established. With the gradual political transformation in Northeast India, Assam, of the early missionaries became the land of the seven sisters. In the new situation, it

⁶⁵³ R.P.Tewari, *Problems of Education in North East India*, quoting from *Education in India*, 1976-77 Prakash Brothers, Ludhiana, p.71.

proved easier to develop primary and High schools among the hill people of Meghalaya, Manipur and Nagaland, obtaining for this work generous help from the government. According to the 1988 statistics of the Catholic Church in Northeast India, there are 5 colleges, 87 High Schools, 161 Middle English medium Schools, 1192 Primary and Kindergarten Schools and 56 centres for Vocational and Non-formal Training in the diocese of Shillong, Diphu, Kohima, Silchar and Tura. These institutions run by the various religious congregations provide a foundation for building up of modern Northeast Indian society.⁶⁵⁴

The primary concern of the sisters in the schools was to offer its students a milieu conducive to their integral development in a Christian atmosphere. Great stress was laid on forming an academic community of parents and teachers whose concern was the promotion of sound education.⁶⁵⁵ Though generally the first beneficiary of any schools or college could be the neighborhood community, however, after so many years of service there still exists much illiteracy and social backwardness. Often the catholic schools and colleges are accused of being ivory towers in a world of poverty, ignorance and somewhat result oriented. People have appreciated what the sisters have contributed to the education of women in the past. They feel that educational efforts could become a vocation and a mission, and therefore, transcend the immediate goals such as excellence in academics, cultural and sports performance.⁶⁵⁶ However, a critical survey would reveal how far educational efforts of the sisters have succeeded in imparting moral and social values and how far they have led to class distinction and elitism in society.

4.3.2 Social

People in general are concerned with three essential choices of leading a long and healthy life, acquiring knowledge and having access to the resources needed for a decent standard of living.⁶⁵⁷ Today the credibility of the church's mission hinges on her interest in the matters of social justice. It is felt that people need to be taught to fight for their rights and justice in the gospel spirit of non-violence, peace and love.⁶⁵⁸ In certain quarters it appears

⁶⁵⁴Dr. Dominic Jala & Ms Patricia Mukhim, *op.cit.*

⁶⁵⁵ S. Karotemprel SDB, The Catholic School and A Growing Church, in *Indian Missiological Review*, July 1980, p. 249.

⁶⁵⁶*Ibid.*

⁶⁵⁷Janusz Symonides (ed.), *New Dimensions and Challenge for Human Rights*, Rawat Publications, UNESCO Publishing, New Delhi, 2003, p. 4.

⁶⁵⁸Thomas Manjaly, Peter Haokip, James Thoppil, *Towards Building up the Local Church : Priestly Ministry for 21st Century*, *op.cit.*, p.43.

that there is a growing appreciation of the church's pro-life approach, defense of the human person, dignity and liberty, opposition to abortion and the control of population through artificial means.⁶⁵⁹

Social justice is thought to be a part of the integral mission of the church.⁶⁶⁰ Down the centuries the Catholic Church has championed the teachings of social justice. The same thing is spoken in terms of Human Rights. The needs of the vulnerable groups in society such as the children, women, persons with disabilities and / or HIV-AIDS, gays and lesbians, older persons and victims of racism are enlisted among the human rights. They belong to the pastoral agenda of the church as well.⁶⁶¹ Unlike catholic parishes, which are faith communities designed specifically to serve the religious needs of Catholics, the services provided by catholic charitable institutions are generally provided to all without distinction as part of the church's social apostolate. The number of charitable institutions often reflects the vitality of religious institutes of sisters, Brothers, and priests, who often provide staff or sponsor such institutions as part of their particular charism or mission.

In this region the missionaries come across a rich variety of peoples and cultures probably not encountered elsewhere in the world within such a small region. The mission comprised the hill tribes as well as various ethnic groups which inhabit the plains of Assam. It embraced the tea garden labourers in the Assam Plains and the farmers of the hills. Economically, the people who were entrusted to the missionaries were of the poorer group. But the new mission land offered much scope not merely for preaching the Gospel and baptizing but also for bringing about radical transformation of society.⁶⁶² The social work ministry of the church communicates in action solidarity with the poor and commitment to justice. Social work seems to have made a significant contribution to the development of Northeast and the empowerment of the poor. This mission is appreciated for fostering people's participation, networking with NGOs and enabling the church to cross boundaries and collaborate with all.

4.3.3 Health and family welfare

⁶⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p.45.

⁶⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p.42.

⁶⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p.89.

⁶⁶² Dr.Dominic Jala & Dr.J.S.Shangpliang in 'The Contribution of the Catholic Church towards Socio-Cultural Development in North- East India', in *Centenary of the Catholic Church in North-East India 1890-1990, A Souvenir*.

The religious sisters, through their apostolate of the sick make healing present to those who need it the most. Through their dedicated service to the sick, they incarnate the most attractive aspect of the figure of Christ to the sick and the needy.⁶⁶³ In the field of health and family welfare all the sisters have rendered services in the civil hospitals as well as in dispensaries. The church run hospitals in the Northeast are administered efficiently and they succeed in delivering quality healthcare at affordable rates. The Mercy Home in Dibrugarh, Nazareth hospital in Shillong and the Borgang hospital by the sisters are worthy of mention. The nursing school of Shillong has contributed to the preparation of nurses in northeast India. Through a large network of dispensaries, the sisters have provided medical services, particularly in the rural areas. The mobile clinics are a great help to the poor and the sick in the villages. The marriage preparation courses conducted by the sisters have produced far reaching effects towards good family life and Christian living. The medical camps at various centres proved to be very effective towards better health and hygiene. It is asserted that the medical care the sisters give has brought down the level of child mortality. Christians assume that much more could be done to awaken them to better understanding of health and family ministries in the particular context of the church in Northeast India.⁶⁶⁴

Fernando and Gispert-Sauch mention the following number of catholic health institutions in India in 2001:

TABLE NO. 2

| | |
|---|------|
| Hospitals | 737 |
| Dispensaries | 2429 |
| Leprosaria | 248 |
| Homes for the aged and the 'differently endowed' | 865 |
| Orphanages | 2112 |
| Nurseries | 2021 |
| Marriage counseling centres | 587 |
| Special centres for social education and re-education | 4969 |
| Other institutions | 694 |

⁶⁶³S. Karotemprel SDB, The Nurse Sister and Family Welfare in a Growing Church, in *Indian Missiological Review*, January 1980, p.29.

⁶⁶⁴*Ibid.*, pp.31-32.

Source: Leonard Fernando and G.Gispert-Sauch, Christianity in India, Penguin Viking, 2004, pp.232-236.

4.3.4 Evangelization

It may be evident that many of the religious congregations of sisters have worked tirelessly in the missions to evangelize and catechize. Their activities seem to have borne much fruit in the spread of the gospel. The role of the religious sisters in the task of evangelization is significant. For the past 120 years religious sisters are involved in the task of direct evangelization. The sisters by their continuous touring of the villages and instructing the people as well as making new contacts seem to have contributed to the growth and deepening of the Christian faith. The regular house visits and the personal contacts of the sisters have helped to revive many lapsed and broken families. By and large it is generally the sisters who prepare children and adults for the reception of the various sacraments. Conducting of Bible camps, youth camps and retreats has helped to the strengthening of Christians in their faith. It is to be noted that in some places the sisters paved the way for the missionaries to enter. In Nagaland, which was closed to the missionaries, the sisters of Christ Jesus did the pioneering work. In Manipur, the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians and in Mizoram and Tripura, the sisters of the Little Flower of Bethany prepared the way for the catholic missionaries, through their contacts and humanitarian services.

Frederick S. Downs gives the following data: ‘At the beginning of the War there were about 50,000 Catholics in the region: by 1977 there were 369,681... now they began to expand throughout the region.’⁶⁶⁵ It would seem that the mission of evangelization has been understood in a particular way, namely, as a call to believe in Jesus and express it in a change of religion, leading to the establishment of the Church as an institution. It appears that the sisters lacked initiatives to adapt and integrate themselves to the social customs of those to whom they preached the gospel. Perhaps they were slow to change, and could not integrate themselves to the culture and customs of the people. At the same time, a new and heightened awareness of the need to learn the languages, customs of the people, the new mission theology and methods is noticeable among the sisters.

4.3.5 Pastoral

⁶⁶⁵F. S. Downs, *History of Christianity in India, op.cit.*, p.47.

The term 'pastoral' comes from the Latin word *pastor* meaning 'shepherd.' The term is applied to that action of priests and sisters with a view to the 'care of souls' exercised by virtue of the faculty granted by the church.⁶⁶⁶ The pastoral ministry consists of healing, sustaining, guiding and reconciling the troubled persons whose concerns arise in the context of ultimate meaning in life. Strictly speaking the pastoral acts are related to the special care given to the baptized members of the church. It is distinct from what is called 'humanitarian care' amidst conflict, violence, disaster, although broadly speaking the pastoral care embraces all these.⁶⁶⁷ It may be noted that the six areas of the pastoral programme pertain to the care of the needy affected by hunger, thirst, being strangers, nakedness, sickness and imprisonment. The pastoral actions thus consist of giving food and drink to the hungry and thirsty persons, welcoming the strangers, clothing the naked, visiting the sick and the imprisoned. These are considered by Christians as authentic expressions of concern, generating from the heart and the depth of the person. The sense of sharing and the courage to do it is an act of the will and of the intellect.

Christians believed that they have the obligation to get involved in the kind of ministry to love, to share and to care.⁶⁶⁸ It is also thought that the well being of the individual person, of the human and Christian society is intimately linked with the healthy condition of the community through marriage and family.⁶⁶⁹ The apostolate of the family is of importance to the church. The sisters in various parish centres have marriage preparation courses in order to instruct and prepare couples for married life. In certain places such courses are conducted twice a year and over 1000 couples are prepared for Christian marriage.⁶⁷⁰ It is evident that in the field of catechesis the sisters render service by conducting Sunday school catechism for children, organizing youth movements and leadership courses to prepare community leaders. The congregation of the Daughters of St. Paul has provided Christian literature for individuals and families on mass media and communication. They also provide audio-visual programmes on biblical and catechetical themes in schools and villages.

Considering the growing number of missionaries in the region, it was felt that the sisters could develop helpful ways to involve in pastoral ministry and ensure collaboration for

⁶⁶⁶ Thomas Manjaly, Peter Haokip, James Thoppil, *op.cit.*, pp.74-75.

⁶⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p.73.

⁶⁶⁸ *Op.cit.*, pp. 80-81.

⁶⁶⁹ *Lumen Gentium*, Encyclical Letter of the Vatican II, para 11.

⁶⁷⁰ E. Packumala, The Role of the Religious Sisters and their Contribution to the Adivasi Community in the Assam valley, in *Indian Missiological Review*, April 1985, p.182.

the common goal of building up the local church. Their charisms and specialized ministries could be of great help for the overall growth of the church and a source of inspiration and insight for others.⁶⁷¹ While the changing circumstances and new challenges call for rethinking in understanding the implications of new trends such as post-modernism and New Age, facing challenges posed by Pentecostal Movements/ fundamentalist tendencies and dealing with the dangers of consumerism/ materialism appear to demand the need for developing new methods and fresh pastoral strategies.⁶⁷² In the context of the Northeastern region, there are customs and practices of supporting fellowmen and women, including the orphans, the widows, the sick and the disabled.

Teaching of catholic doctrine is looked upon by the adherents as what gives catholic identity to catholic schools and educational institutions. Catechism is being taught at the convenience of the school curriculum⁶⁷³ and very little seems to be done in vernacular for the benefit of the masses. The sisters felt that the house visits are becoming a difficult task due to the time factor in modern life style though the tradition of fostering relationships among people is central to the Christian heritage. The Christian community took it as its special mission to identify and strengthen the relationships that link Christians with each other, with the rest of the human race and with the whole created universe.

Christianity in India is an active force in society and in the lives of many people of Northeast today. But missionaries seem to have failed to win a section of the people, isolated societies, marginalized groups or ostracized individuals, who join the church to escape the pains of isolation and scorn and to acquire a sense of belonging.⁶⁷⁴ The Catholic Church in Northeast India has witnessed considerable growth during the last century. The religious sisters seem to have made contribution to its growth and the development of the people in this region. It is asserted that if the sisters could follow the path of inculturation, dialogue, ecumenism and other such wider avenues of involvements, their contribution could be more effective and that calls for further collaboration, participation and involvement in the life of the church and the people of the region.

Among the many congregations of sisters working in the region, the Sisters of the Little Flower of Bethany (henceforth addressed as Bethany Sisters), being an indigenous

⁶⁷¹ Thomas Manjaly, Peter Haokip, James Thoppil, *op.cit.*, p.49.

⁶⁷² *Ibid.*, p.63.

⁶⁷³ *Ibid.*, p.65.

⁶⁷⁴ Thomas Menampampil, *An Introduction to North-East India: Culture and History, op.cit.*, pp. 40-41.

congregation were the first catholic sisters to venture into missionary activities in Mizoram as well as in Tripura. They have been involved in humanitarian activities such as medical care, social work as well as education. So far there is no record of study of the activities of such a congregation undertaken. No attempt has been made to assess the role of the Bethany sisters on the socio-economic lives of the people of Northeast. The need to study the impact of the work and activities of the sisters was keenly felt. Hence an attempt is made to have an in depth study on the activities of the Bethany sisters and to assess their role in the lives of the people of Northeast.

CHAPTER V: ORIGIN, GROWTH AND ACTIVITIES OF THE BETHANY SISTERS

The congregation of the sisters of the Little Flower of Bethany – familiarly known as Bethany Sisters, is a religious family consisting of 1350 members. The entry of the Bethany sisters in Northeast India seemed to have ushered in a significant change in the lives of many people of the region. The Bethany Sisters in the Northeast region are still in its nascent stage, predominantly taking roots among the ‘tribals’ of the region. Here an attempt is made to find out the extent to which the Bethany sisters operated and liaise with elements of the state as well as civil society in providing welfare services and provisions as the congregation is very much involved in developmental activities through its numerous educational institutions, medical care, together with its many charitable and social institutions.

5.1. The Origin

The congregation of the Sisters of the Little Flower of Bethany was founded on 16th July⁶⁷⁵ 1921 by a visionary priest, namely Raymond Francis Camillus Mascarenhas⁶⁷⁶ in St Sebastian’s parish of Bendur, Mangalore (Karnataka). The members of the congregation are familiarly addressed as Bethany⁶⁷⁷ Sisters. The institute is a Roman Catholic religious order founded with a purpose of uplifting the needy and the downtrodden. It was the work of an Indian priest with purely Indian material and Indian means.⁶⁷⁸ It is believed that like all founders of religious congregations, who were responsive to the needs of the people among whom they lived, RFC Mascarenhas- the founder of the Bethany congregation, decided to meet the twin needs of the time by starting a religious congregation for women.⁶⁷⁹

⁶⁷⁵Henceforth referred as Bethany Sisters

⁶⁷⁶ Henceforth referred as RFC Mascarenhas

⁶⁷⁷ Was the name of the first house at Bendur, Mangalore where the four pioneers began their common life under the direction of their Founder. Raymond Mascarenhas as he wanted his followers to emulate the spirit of contemplation and loving service practiced by the famous residents of Bethany of the Gospels, namely, Martha, Mary and Lazarus.

⁶⁷⁸ Sr Jessy Rita B.S. *The Ripples: The Origin and Development of the Mangalore Province, The Congregation of the Sisters of the Little Flower of Bethany, Mangalore*, Bethany Publications, Mangalore, 2006, p. 10.

⁶⁷⁹ Sr. Mary Naulak B.S., *Leaven in the East, Sisters of the Little Flower of Bethany in Northeast India (1962-2012)*, Blossom Books(P) Ltd. Guwahati, 2012, p. iv.

Firstly, a number of young women who wanted to devote themselves for the works of charity were unable to do so owing to financial constraints and lack of higher education. There was also scarcity of dedicated teachers to take care of children's educational needs in remote villages. Besides another challenge was the lack of primary educational facilities especially for girls. RFC Mascarenhas had realised that the religious congregations involved in the educational apostolate were mainly catering to the needs of the upper and the middle classes. The medium of instruction in their institutions was English and their activities were confined to the developed towns and major cities. No initiatives were taken to provide education with lesser expenses for the poor students.⁶⁸⁰

The starting of the Bethany institute was in response to the crying need of numerous girls who had a desire to become sisters but could not get admission to the then existing congregations for want of higher education and dowry.⁶⁸¹ Besides, the pressing need of the Church in the 1920s for education and catechetical instruction also led RFC Mascarenhas as the then parish priest of Bendur to found a new institute. The congregation was founded to participate in the mission of the church by responding to the prevailing needs of the times.⁶⁸² Thus it would seem that the chief aim in founding this new congregation was for enabling the young girls to become sisters, the education of the rural poor especially girls, teaching catechism in parish communities and schools, the instruction of catechumens and neophytes, care of the children, sick and elderly.

Four teachers of the St. Sebastian's parish school, Marceline Menezes, Flora Mathias, Alice Mathias and Regina Gertrude Gonsalves became the pioneers of the new congregation he founded. After a period of instruction and preparation for the new way of life they were to adapt, these four young women entered their new way of life on 16th July 1921. To signify their new lifestyle they were given new names as Sr. Clare, Sr. Martha, Sr. Lourdes and Sr. Gertrude. These sisters shared the vision of RFC Mascarenhas and their way of life attracted many more young girls. It answered the triple needs of that period, i.e., providing catholic education for the poor especially the girls, presenting an opportunity for the girls who had genuine vocation to consecrate their lives to God as sisters irrespective of their status in

⁶⁸⁰ Geo Payyapillay and Mary Benedict, *Fullness of Life*, Bethany Publications, Mangalore, 2003, p. 32.

⁶⁸¹ The first report on Bethany submitted to Rt. Rev. Dr. Paul Perini, SJ, the Bishop of Calicut and the Administrator Apostolic of Mangalore Diocese, on the feast of St. Joseph, 1925, p.2.

⁶⁸² *The Catholic Directory 2013*, *op.cit.* p. 2410.

society and to supply good, dedicated and qualified permanent teachers to teach in the schools and to impart Christian doctrine in schools and parishes in the rural areas.⁶⁸³

Besides, the pastoral and educational needs were to be met by the members, particularly by being in service of the girl children, women and rural masses of Mangalore and the society at large. Thus, these sisters were involved in educational, social, pastoral, medical apostolate and ministry of hospitality according to the needs of the place.⁶⁸⁴ For the first time, the village schools were run entirely by an indigenous order of sisters without foreign control or guidance and the Bethany congregation heralded a self-governing Indian church. The Institute was canonically erected on July 28, 1932.

5.1.1 Raymond Francis Camillus Mascarenhas -The Founder

RFC Mascarenhas was an educationist, intensely concerned with contemporary problems, particularly those of education. He was brought up in a family which had undergone the difficulties and hardships of bringing up children and giving them proper education and this experience helped him to play his role as a priest in a more zealous manner. Through the Bethany Sisters he was able to realize his dream for the development of women, poor, marginalized, down-trodden and needy irrespective of caste and creed.⁶⁸⁵

RFC Mascarenhas was born on January 23, 1875 in Mangalore. He was ordained priest on March 4, 1900 and as a parish priest of Agrar, Udyavar and Bendur in Mangalore, Karnataka, as an assistant parish priest of three parishes of South Kanara in Mangalore and as a Vicar General of the diocese of Mangalore from 1931-1941, he aimed at bringing the compassionate love and teachings of Jesus to the poor and the neglected. Being a man of vision, he foresaw that education was the best means of spreading the Good News and empowering the poor. He visualized a society where education would be everyone's privilege and concretized these ideas as early as 1930, which were later taken up by the government.

RFC Mascarenhas opened orphanages so that the poor children could be fed, looked after, educated and thus be empowered. He led the sisters to go into neglected areas where no one wanted to go. His interest in education of the poor did not stop at primary level only but he established craft schools and non-formal education centres for the empowerment of

⁶⁸³The Compassionate Pastor, Vol.01, No.01, December 2008, Congregation of the Sisters of the Little Flower of Bethany, Bethany Generalate Publications, Mangalore, *A Magazine*.

⁶⁸⁴*Op.cit.*

⁶⁸⁵*Op.cit.*, pp.33-34.

women who could earn their livelihood through arts and crafts. In 1922 he started St. Martha's- the first industrial school for girls at Bendur in Dakshina Kannada District of Karnataka, for the purpose of training women for self-employment resulting in their consequent empowerment and self-reliance. The establishment of a handloom weaving industry in Bethany was his idea of imparting training in a trade to youngsters, including inmates of Bethany, in the art of handloom weaving. In 1930 he composed and got printed a booklet in the local language namely Konkani and when the literacy campaign started in 1980, this booklet was used as the material for teaching children and illiterate adults, to read and write. Pope Pius XII conferred on him the honour of Domestic Prelate in 1955. He died on 23 December 1960 and was buried at St. Sebastian church, Bendur, Mangalore which was his own handiwork. His cause of Canonization (process of declaring a person as a saint in the Catholic Church) was taken up in 2007 and was declared Servant of God by Vatican on May 3, 2008.⁶⁸⁶

5.1.2 Contribution of RFC Mascarenhas

The educational endeavours of RFC Mascarenhas at the beginning of his priestly ministry at Udyavar and Agrar in Mangalore were in terms of helping out numerous poor students in their education. In 1927 when universal and compulsory education was introduced in every province of India, there was increase in demand for teachers for primary and secondary education and he was the first to respond by opening new communities and sending sisters to the remote elementary schools. Boarding houses and free orphanages for girls facilitated education for the poor children of the remote villages. He was the first one to establish girls schools in the villages and advocated lady teachers' training. RFC Mascarenhas focused not only on the literary side of education but also on the industrial role of education especially for girls through which they were able to earn their living. He envisioned higher education for women and in 1957 sought permission from the Bishop of Belgaum, Karnataka to start women's college at Dharwad realising that there were no colleges exclusively for women.⁶⁸⁷

Within two decades a large number of girl students had their primary, higher primary and higher education as well. Following the footsteps of RFC Mascarenhas, the Bethany

⁶⁸⁶*The Catholic Directory of India 2013*, p.131.

⁶⁸⁷ Lillis and Trecilla, 'A Champion of Education- Mgr. Raymond Mascarenhas' Bethany Educational Society-II Convention, Mangalore, Karnataka, November, 2008, *A Paper*.

Sisters seem to have been taking a stand in empowering women through various means especially through education which is the main apostolate of the congregation. Bethany institute seems to be the first congregation to start educational institutions in the vernacular for the poor, the marginalised, Dalits and tribals of South Kanara and later in other parts of India.

5.1.3 Relationship with the Civil Society

RFC Mascarenhas held many important responsibilities in the government machinery and in the Diocese. In 1923, he was elected to the Municipal Council and he continued in that post till 1929. He prepared a memorandum of educational and other grievances of the catholic community and was sent to Madras as a delegate to appear before the Simon Commission. The result of this representation was the government order of 1929, which may be called the '*Magna Carta*' of the catholic schools in India, recognizing their rights. He was President of Catholic Association of South Kanara in 1931 and served in that capacity for 10 years. He also figured prominently in the civic activities of the city and was the only catholic and influential member of the District Education Council, serving two terms.

He was appointed to different boards and commissions of the diocese. He was a consulter of St. Joseph's Inter Diocesan Seminary, Mangalore; Vice-President of Catholic Board of Education, diocese of Mangalore from 1932 to 1941. From 1932 to 1936, he was the diocesan supervisor of catholic Elementary and Secondary schools. He was sent as diocesan representative to amicably solve serious disputes and conflicts in the parishes and was nominated official of the diocesan ecclesiastical court.⁶⁸⁸ He became the President of Konkani Catholic Pioneer Truth Society in 1938 and served as the President of the Mangalore Roman Catholic Pioneer Fund from 1941-1942. Through this fund, he gave leadership to plan and execute several projects, especially for the economic self-reliance of the poor in South Kanara. In all these responsibilities he sought to be compassionate towards the marginalised section of the society.

5.2. The special charism of the Bethany Sisters

The educational, pastoral and missionary dimension of RFC Mascarenhas' mission was guided by the compassionate love of Jesus which captured him. He had love for the poor,

⁶⁸⁸ Payyapilly and Benedict, *op.cit.*, pp. 85-87.

especially women of rural areas, zeal to communicate God's love through Christian doctrine. This probably urged him to share with the members of the institute, the elements of his mission through the first constitutions that he drafted, the letters that he wrote, the messages that he gave, the general chapters that he guided and the literary works that he undertook. The life lived by the sisters directed by him and the mission undertaken under his guidance provides some insights into his charism. One of RFC Mascarenhas' dreams for the church in India and for his newly founded congregation was that they should be rooted and developed in Indian culture.

The first four sisters of 'Bethany', Martha, Clare, Lourdes and Gertrude remained in close association with RFC Mascarenhas once they came to live together as a formal group. Even before that he instructed them every Friday and shared with them his vision. So the communication of his aspirations began much earlier than the foundation of 'Bethany.' They saw him, heard him and communicated with him daily. Though not directly, he shared with them during the weekly conferences the contents of his spiritual experiences and invited them to participate in the same. They tried for their part to capture his vision through the personal sharing done and spiritual direction given. They watched from a close distance his dispositions towards religion, attitude towards life, the priorities that he set, the values that he upheld, the compassionate nature that he exhibited when the poor and the needy approached him. In the meantime, they also realised that their call was to become partners in his vision and mission. The congregation that came into being primarily to educate the poor girls who had no opportunities as well as to dedicate their lives for the service of humanity helped in inculcating in its members a true missionary spirit, besides helping them to acquire the necessary skills and knowledge.

5.3. The Growth of the Institute

On 21st July 1927 the strength of the Institution that was founded in 1921 had risen to 26.⁶⁸⁹ For the first time the Bethany sisters took charge of St. Joseph's school, Kankanady, Mangalore on 1st June, 1928. On 29th July, 1932 Bethany was recognized as a religious family in the church by the Decree of Canonical Erection (Institute approved by the Pope) received after 11 years of its existence as a pious association. On 26th May 1934, fifty two sisters who had lived together from the time of the foundation of the congregation made their religious profession. While Bethany grew in number RFC Mascarenhas motivated the sisters

⁶⁸⁹Letter of Administrator Apostolic of Mangalore, Bishop of Calicut, dated 21st July, 1927.

to grow in spirit by developing an intimacy with Jesus.⁶⁹⁰ Heeding the invitations, the pioneers ventured into new mission territories in Kerala and North Karnataka. In 1936 the congregation crossed the boundaries of Mangalore and launched into the Wyanad mission in Calicut, Kerala. Eude's Convent in Kerala was inaugurated in 1938 and sisters began to teach in the existing St. Michael's School. The spirit of expansion had gripped Bethany and in 1939, North Karnataka received their own share of 8 sisters at Dharwad and Guledgudd.

As the number of members increased and the apostolic works multiplied, more trained personnel were required to direct the various institutions of the congregation. RFC Mascarenhas gave priority to the education and training of the sisters for the various works of the institute. Lack of financial resources, illness and death of many young sisters and other trials did not prevent the young institute from growing in number and merit.⁶⁹¹ 24th May, 1937 marked the final profession of the first twenty sisters of the congregation. In the 1940s invitations had been received from as far as Patna in North India to send the sisters to undertake educational services there. However, the possibility of opening convents in North India was explored only towards the end of 1960. In 1971 the congregation celebrated its fiftieth anniversary. On this occasion of the Golden Jubilee of the institute the congregation was declared of Pontifical Rite by a Decree of Praise from *Propaganda Fide*, Rome by which it was placed directly under the Pope and no more control from the diocese. The institute experienced unprecedented growth and success in its undertakings. The Bethany sisters extended their activities all over India and even beyond. Many priests and lay persons familiar with the congregation's past struggles called this decade as 'the golden age of Bethany.'⁶⁹²

The members increased year after year. At the invitation of bishops and priests working in rural areas, Bethany penetrated into the interior villages bringing comfort and solace to the poor through formal and non-formal education, developmental works, faith formation and medical care. The institute started with just 4 sisters has at present 1350 members residing in 171 communities all over India, Europe and Africa. The sisters hail from different states as well as tribes of India. The advent of the Bethany congregation in the Catholic Church has brought about some changes in the lives of the people through the Bethany institutions which stretched across the length and breadth of India and abroad.

⁶⁹⁰Sr. Jessy Rita, *op.cit.*, p.18.

⁶⁹¹Sr. Mary Naulak, *op.cit.*, p.v.

⁶⁹²Sr. Violette D'Souza, *The Vine That He Planted*, Bethany Publications, Mangalore, Karnataka, 1989, p.148.

Bethany sisters have 3 Novitiates in Mangalore, Mysore and West Bengal where 76 young girls receive two years intense training to become sisters. While 51 young girls are preparing themselves in 3 pre-novitiates to become the future Bethany sisters, 145 candidates in 6 provinces have joined the Bethany sisters in their mission activities after their training. The sisters render their services in 47 dioceses of India and 6 dioceses abroad. In India their presence is felt in the states of Karnataka, Goa, Kerala, Maharashtra, Tamilnadu, Andhra Pradesh, Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Delhi, Jharkhand, Uttaranchal, Orissa, Gujarat, West Bengal, Assam, Nagaland, Manipur, Tripura, Mizoram, Meghalaya, Arunachal Pradesh. In Europe and Africa, the sisters serve in Germany, Italy, Austria, France, Belgium and Mauritania in West Africa, Tanzania and Senegal.⁶⁹³

For effective administration the congregation has been divided into units. The administrative units of the congregation consist of central administration which has 13 convents such as the Bethany Generalate, common training House, Bethany Motherhouse and the Delegation abroad. Mangalore province of the congregation has 34 convents, Bangalore province consists of 19 convents whereas the Western province owns 23 convents. The Southern province has 22 convents in the states of Kerala, Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu, the Northern Province has 15 convents, the newly erected Eastern province has 14 convents whereas the Northeast province owns 30 different centres of the Bethany sisters.

During the tenure of Macrina as leader of the institute, many ventures were undertaken, such as, extending the branches of the congregation far and wide to the Northeast and North-West of India, as well as Rome and Germany making the congregation truly missionary. Hence, under her leadership Bethany became the first sisters' congregation to enter Mizoram and Tripura.⁶⁹⁴ The Congregation that was started in 1921 has spread through the length and breadth of India as far north as Chandigarh, as far south as Kanyakumari, as far east as Tripura and as far west as Gujarat in India.

5.4. Activities of the Bethany Sisters

5.4.1. Education

Before Bethany was founded, there were other congregations devoted to the education of girls. But their efforts were confined to the well-to-do class of girls, who had the necessary

⁶⁹³*Handbook*, The Congregation of the Sisters of The Little Flower of Bethany, Mangalore, 1921-2010, Bethany Publications, Mangalore, pp. 7-8.

⁶⁹⁴Sr.Jessy Rita, *op.cit.*, p.22.

means to avail of the expensive education which they gave. However, the Bethany sisters' schools were mainly meant for the poor and needy. Further, Bethany sisters probably were the pioneers in starting technical, industrial and vocational training centres, especially for dropouts, the unemployed and economically backward girls. RFC Mascarenhas had installed weaving looms for self-employment⁶⁹⁵ the purpose of which was to train girls in tailoring, needle work, lace-making and preparing church vestments. Another great need of the time was in the field of health care and health education of poor villagers. Realising this he initiated the sisters in the elementary medical care.⁶⁹⁶

The opening of convents in rural areas, with schools attached to them, not only in South Kanara District but also in missionary areas of Calicut, Belgaum and Mysore helped to bring education to the poor people. As an ardent promoter of primary education, RFC Mascarenhas' main concern was also to provide good and efficient teachers for primary schools. Therefore, he opened a teachers' training institute at Kinnikambla (Karnataka) in 1945 which helped to provide teachers to the various village parish schools. To facilitate education for the children of the poorer families and remote villages, orphanages and hostels i.e., free boarding homes, were opened at Kinnigoli, Kinnikambla, Taccode and Kulshekar in Mangalore, Karnataka. These orphanages became centres of learning and education spread to their respective villages through these girls. These schools and orphanages have become centres of vocations to sisterhood as well.

Through the determined efforts of RFC Mascarenhas to organise Bethany's educational efforts in a systematic way, the Bethany Educational Society (BES) Mangalore, was founded. It was registered on 4th September 1948 with the title, 'The Bethany Educational Society, Mangalore', under the Societies Registration Act, 1860.⁶⁹⁷ His vision of education is borne out by the record of institutions listed for the registration in 1948 spread over the provinces of Madras and Bombay.⁶⁹⁸ They numbered 34, including boarding houses, orphanages, industrial and farm schools.⁶⁹⁹ Today the BES manages 58 KG schools, 46 primary and higher primary schools, 53 high schools, 18 senior secondary/ pre-university colleges, 2 degree colleges, 1 teachers' training institute, 23 Balwadies and non-formal

⁶⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p.13.

⁶⁹⁶ Payyapilly and Benedict M., *op.cit.*, pp. 76-78.

⁶⁹⁷ Diamond Jubilee of Bethany Educational Society (R) Mangalore, 1948-2008, *A Souvenir*, p.4.

⁶⁹⁸ Sr. Violette D'Souza, *op.cit.*, p.87.

⁶⁹⁹ *Op.cit.*

education centres, 36 hostels and orphanages, 22 vocational training centres, 6 community colleges, 6 production centres and a crèche.⁷⁰⁰

Through all these institutions, the BES seems to disseminate its seven core values such as God experience, compassionate love for all especially the poor and the marginalized, communion, collaboration, team spirit, excellence in terms of developing each ones unique potentials to build a just and humane society, truth, love, justice, peace, simplicity of life-style, dignity of labour, respect for life, nature, cultures, religions and love for the nation.⁷⁰¹ Bethany's educational apostolate continues through her various endeavours in the remotest areas of the vast Indian sub-continent.

The first national convention of BES held in 1988, the XII General Chapter in 1992, the XIII General Chapter in 1998 and the second national convention of BES in 2001, reformulated the vision, goal and objectives of BES. Its purpose was clarified as 'fullness of life for all' especially the poor, marginalised and women in particular and emphasised on the liberation and empowerment of women.⁷⁰² Here 'all' would mean those who come into the caring fold of the Bethany Sisters-girls and boys as well, whether in schools, vocational or non formal educational centres, boarding houses, hostels or social work centres. Through a long drawn process it evolved a vision statement.⁷⁰³ Rose Therese in her article on 'educating students in the changing scenario opines that 'the constant effort of the BES, will be to ensure that good education which is an inalienable right of every individual in virtue of one's dignity as a human person.'

In the words of Telesphore P. Cardinal Toppo 'True and faithful to their charism Bethany sisters have been able to achieve success in the field of education. Besides this, they are also involved in the pastoral care, socio-medical, hostel and youth ministry. Through these ministries they strive to uplift the condition of the poor and the needy, particularly of the girl children and the women.'⁷⁰⁴ From this point of view it is probable that the contribution of BES as an educational agency cannot be sidelined. Its main concern has been bringing modern education to the marginalised, the rural poor, tribals and girls. Even today vast majority of the schools are in the remote areas, serving the poor and the underprivileged.

⁷⁰⁰ The Sisters of the Little Flower of Bethany, Mangalore, *Hand Book, op.cit.*, pp. 45-64.

⁷⁰¹ Education for fullness of life, second National convention, *Post convention Document 1*, BES vision and core values.

⁷⁰² Lillita, 'The Plight of the Girl Child and the Response of Bethany.' Bethany Educational Society II Convention, Mangalore, November, 2008, p.6, *A Paper*.

⁷⁰³ Diamond Jubilee of Bethany Educational Society (R) Mangalore, *op.cit.*, p. 5.

⁷⁰⁴ Golden Jubilee of the Northern Province of Bethany Sisters, *A Magazine*.

Education imparted by the BES has perhaps opened doors of knowledge to countless marginalised persons and endowed them with dignity and status, competencies and upward mobility across the nation. As per the congregational statistics of 2008-2009, the total student strength of BES schools was 63,271 out of which 34,163 were girls and 29,108 were boys. The ratio reveals that the girls outnumbered the boys which serve as an indication that the sisters in administration are conscious and make effort to keep alive the charism of the founder primarily the education of the girls. There were 1,611 teaching faculties out of which 1,318 were female staff and 293 were males. Out of 307 non-teaching staff of BES schools, 204 were females and only 103 were males. At present Bethany sisters are involved in the work of education in 21 states of India and their presence is felt in Europe and Africa as well.⁷⁰⁵

The BES adapts child oriented education as the dynamics of class room pedagogy that is, the materials taught are contextualized and relevant, audio-visuals are used in teaching and each student is given individual attention. The content is simplified, probing questions asked, learning made interesting and experiential. Four ways of interaction such as teacher – class, student – student, student – text and group interaction are introduced. Role plays, field trips, workshops, debates and games are organized and self-evaluation facilitated. Learner involvement and motivation, adapting classroom situation, introducing activities in the class room and encouraging learning in pairs forms an important part of the BES pedagogy. For the slow learners conducting remedial classes, introducing each one teach one, project work and group study, visiting the houses of students to know the family background and providing extrinsic and intrinsic motivation is stressed. Knowledge about the environment and background of the students, their economic condition, cultural set up, religious and family background is taken into consideration while teaching.

Keeping in focus the above mentioned pedagogy, vision, goal and core values, the BES at present manages a total of 252 educational institutions. The Bethany sisters serve in 131 institutions managed by the various dioceses and the other congregations. A total of 399 sisters are serving in the institutions of the congregation and 151 sisters serve in the institutions of the dioceses as well as other religious congregations. In the words of Raphael

⁷⁰⁵ Diamond Jottings published on the occasion of the Diamond Jubilee celebration of Bethany Educational Society, p.134, *A Magazine*,

Cheenath, 'The sisters are engaged in pastoral, educational, social and evangelical activities.'⁷⁰⁶

5.4.2. Social Welfare

The initiative of RFC Mascarenhas to found and foster an indigenous congregation of sisters for education of girls seems to be one of the significant events in the history of the Catholic Church in India itself. A separate Trust viz: Bethany Social Service Trust (BSST)⁷⁰⁷ was started in 1995 in order to focus on developmental activities. This society is known as Sahodaya. Through the social work activities the Bethany Sisters share compassionate love for the people especially the dehumanized poor. The vision of the BSST is to create a just and humane society and the mission is aimed at restoration of human dignity through a process of empowerment to them. The trust envisages the objectives as God experience, liberation of women from the oppressive system, promotion of holistic community health, self-reliant communities of focus groups, promotion of leadership for effective governance, integrated development of children and youth, respect for life, nation and culture in order to bring freedom to the poor and the marginalized sections of the society.

The sisters are engaged in multiple works such as family visits, instruction of children, hygiene and child care for the womenfolk, health care, village touring, catechetical activities and homes for the aged. The sisters are engaged in youth centres, crèches, dispensaries, knitting and sewing centres rendering service in the surrounding villages as well. They have extended their field of activity to vocational training schools and continue to serve the people through various charitable institutions. In the words of Albert D'Souza, 'The sisters seem to have contributed towards the upliftment of women as the vocational training given in weaving, sewing, tailoring, typing, knitting etc. enables youngsters to earn their livelihood. The missionary collaboration rendered by the Sisters of the Little Flower of Bethany in different fields of apostolates has added vitality and evangelical fruitfulness to the church through the years.'⁷⁰⁸

According to Anthony Fernandes, 'The congregation founded for the education of girl child and women continues its mission of empowering women in India.'⁷⁰⁹ A large

⁷⁰⁶*Ibid.*

⁷⁰⁷Henceforth addressed as BSST

⁷⁰⁸*Ibid.*

⁷⁰⁹*Ibid.*

number of poor girls, mostly school dropouts, are being trained for the government school certificate in cutting, tailoring and embroidery.⁷¹⁰ Besides, issues such as human trafficking are taken up and women in villages are instructed in hygiene, food habits, child care, first aid, etc., for better living conditions. The sisters probably have played a role to raise the dignity of women in society through various conscientisation programmes. Similarly at the economic level they perhaps have enabled many girls to secure adequate employment and reduce the level of poverty. In the words of Vincent M. Concessao 'There is no doubt that their contribution in the field of development and relief has not been any less, thus ensuring that their services are available to one and all. The efforts and sacrifices, dedication, commitment, efficiency and hard work of the sisters need to be appreciated and also imitated.'⁷¹¹

The focus of their mission is mainly promotion of communal harmony and peace, education, development through self help groups and mahila mandals (women's groups), training of women, youth and others in job oriented skills by setting up vocational training and production centres, integrated child welfare and development through promotional schools at all centres of work, education and rehabilitation of street children and slum dwellers' children. These centres are set up in Karnataka, Kolkata, Ludhiana, Faridabad, Silchar and Guwahati. Tribal development initiatives among the tribals of Northeastern States, West Bengal, Orissa, Jharkhand, Uttaranchal, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh and Kerala are taken up. There are some community based rehabilitation of differently-abled at Doddabelavangala, Santibastwad and Guledgudd in North Karnataka. Integrated development of children and micro-entrepreneurial development initiatives through Jyothi Seva Kendra, Chittapur, and Gulbarga in Karnataka are taken into consideration. Youth development and leadership programmes are undertaken at all the centres, prison ministry at Naini in UP, Ludhiana, Dharwad, Chevayur in Kerala, Mangalore and Aachen in Germany. They have also different works in the area of housing, sanitation and drinking water for the poor at Wayanad in Kerala, Chittapur in Karnataka and Chintalpudi in Andhra Pradesh. Watershed management and organic farming in Mangalore and Badibahal in Orissa are given importance.

⁷¹⁰ I. D'Souza, Salesian Sisters in Northeast India, in *Don Bosco in India, commemorative brochure* published by the six Salesian provinces of India, pp.31-33.

⁷¹¹ Golden Jubilee of Northern Province, *Magazine*, *op.cit.*

Sarat Chandra Nayak opines that ‘Right from the time of the pioneers till today, the sisters’ continuous service in various fields has contributed greatly in the nation building.’⁷¹² Kurien Valiakandathil says that ‘With the collaboration of the sisters, we have made remarkable progress in our pastoral, educational and health apostolates. The missionary zeal and the courage of the sisters have brought comfort to our poor tribal people who are marked by poverty, ignorance and illiteracy.’⁷¹³

5.4.3. Pastoral Care

‘Sachetana’, the pastoral wing of the congregation focuses on the goal of bringing good news to the poor, to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind as proclaimed by Jesus before starting his mission.⁷¹⁴ Pastoral care runs through all the activities of the congregation. Sachetana by its all embracing nature concentrates on deepening the faith of the people through catechesis, sodalities, youth movements and meetings of small Christian communities of the parish community. Pastoral care of the school community involves catechesis, annual retreats and recollections for staff and students, counseling, visits to the families and value based education on the core values of BES. Pastoral care of children in the hostels/boarding houses includes moral instruction, counseling and visits to their families as well. Pastoral care is given to the sick through their spiritual care in hospitals and homes such as visiting and praying with them, empathetic listening and counseling.

The Bethany sisters take interest in the prison ministry by visiting the prisons, praying with the inmates, listening to them and providing them with some kind of material help. Pastoral care of the migrants is carried on by offering spiritual and emotional support, accompanying them in their pain, isolation and rehabilitation. The aspect of family ministry is done through visits, reaching out to the women in distress, rehabilitation of broken families, sharing in their struggles, joys and sorrows. The Pastoral care of the aged carried on by attending to their needs, offering comfort, listening to their woes, supporting and accompanying them on their death bed and offering solace in their loneliness. Last but not the least is the pastoral care of the domestic workers that involves faith formation, catechesis, payment of just wages, treating them with kindness, respecting their dignity and assisting

⁷¹²*Op.cit.*

⁷¹³*Ibid.*

⁷¹⁴ New Testament in the Bible, *Luke 4:18*.

them to find a better future. Pastoral care is also given priority by the sisters in countries like Germany, France and Italy by accommodating the visitors, looking after the elderly and so on.

Bethany sisters give importance to the role of lay men and women for the growth of the church and the society. The Bethany Lay Association (BLA) consists of people who are married, but participate in the charism of the sisters by prayer, humanitarian and welfare activities. The sisters invite people of good will to join them as lay associates to participate in their charism, spirituality and collaborate in their mission. Therefore, lay associates constitute all those catholic men and women who respond to this invitation to share in the life and mission of the Bethany sisters. They participate in community development, charitable services, youth ministry, developmental and self help groups, counseling at rehabilitation centres, social work, ministry to the sick and giving people pre-marital and post-marital guidance at counseling centres etc.

In the words of Julius Marandi, Bishop of Dumka diocese ‘children in the schools run by the sisters are given faith formation, human and intellectual formation to stand on their own feet. Many students in general and especially poor and under privileged benefit from sisters’ service.⁷¹⁵ ‘Prompted and motivated by RFC Mascarenhas’ charism, the sisters according to the needs of the time and place are engaged in the apostolates of catholic education of the rural poor specially girls, teaching of catechism in the parish communities and neophytes, care of children, the sick and the elderly and socio- developmental works. The sisters have made a difference in the lives of thousands of people’ says Felix Toppo.⁷¹⁶

5.5. The financial management of the Congregation

The Congregation of the Sisters of the Little Flower of Bethany is a Registered Trust. The members of the Congregation involve in various charitable activities especially in the remote areas of the country. Their activities consist of education, social work, medical work, care of the elderly, vocational centres, empowerment of women, production centers, legal aid cells and such other developmental activities. The institutions that hold these philanthropic activities are affiliated to a registered Society or Trust. To cite an example, most of the educational institutions that the Congregation runs are affiliated to Bethany Educational

⁷¹⁵*Op.cit.*

⁷¹⁶*Ibid.*

Society which is a Registered Society. The accounts of the society as well as the individual institutions are audited and the returns are filed.

There are other educational institutions under different trust/ societies and the accounts of the institutions are audited under the particular trust or society following all the requirements of the government. The activities of the Congregation are also supported by the governmental and nongovernmental organizations. The sisters who receive the salary for their services pool their income together and use it for the expansion of the charitable activities that are already mentioned in this thesis.

5.6. Bethany Sisters in Northeast India

The year 1960 marked the death of RFC Mascarenhas-the founder and it marked an important transition in the life and development of the congregation. Since then the Bethany sisters extended their activities all over India and even beyond.⁷¹⁷ Specifically, the history of Bethany in Northeast began in 1962, when Macrina, the then Superior General sent four sisters to Kolasib to open the first convent in the Mizo district of Assam. Jean Vezina, the parish priest of Kolasib wrote to the Mother General on the 8th of August 1962: ‘May I start with a very sincere thanks for the fine religious you have sent over here. They seem to go along together and they have been tried through sickness. The sisters are a part of our mission work. These trials and difficulties will seal the blessings of God for the excellent work performed by your loving daughters. We are still very few missionaries and priests and our means very limited. Let your daughters pray that we may be very faithful servants of the Lord in these difficult places.’⁷¹⁸

For better administration, the General Chapter in 1969 decided to divide the congregation into regions. Accordingly, the Northeast mission was raised to the status of a region in 1971 with Sylvine as the first regional superior. On the 8th of March 1980 Northeast region was annexed to the Northern region with headquarters at Sacred Heart’s Convent, Ludhiana in Punjab and Canice became the regional superior. In 1986, the congregation was re-organized into five administrative units. Mangalore, Bangalore and Northern Regions became provinces and Northeast and Kerala unit were raised to the status of vice-provinces.

⁷¹⁷ Violette D’Souza, *The Vine That He Planted, op.cit.*, p.112.

⁷¹⁸ Letter in the Archives of Bethany Congregation

The Northeast province of the congregation was established on the 14th of July 1986. Holy Family convent in Silchar was chosen as the official province headquarters and Lillis was installed as the first provincial superior. Her priority was to review the situation of Bethany's mission in the Northeast- the achievements, the failures and look for new ways to make the mission relevant. Perceiving the real need of the people led her along with her team members to realize the importance of social service in the region. Although Bethany sisters had been doing some social and medical work from the beginning, the organized way of carrying out this mission started with the use of Noeline's training which she received at Coady international institute of St. Francis Xavier University, Canada. During the next decade there was surge in the social work activities of the province and this mission gained importance. From the 1990s sisters were sent for training in social work making them sufficiently equipped for the ministry.

The first training house for the aspiring girls of the region was established on 3rd of January 1969 and pre-novitiate as well as novitiate houses at Kolkata in the 1990s. While there were six sisters from Northeast at the time of province's silver jubilee in 1987, there were over sixty sisters from this region in the golden year of the province in 2012. Noeline, the former Provincial superior of the sisters in the Northeast province opines that 'Walking in the footsteps of the pioneers, the sisters over the five decades have left no stone unturned in contributing their share in the making of what Bethany in north east India is today. Fifty years ago, the sisters of the Little Flower of Bethany in north east made an option to enter the history and share their life with the people. At a time when existing congregations think of inter congregational formation houses due to lack of aspirants, sisters in Northeast India are blessed with good number of vocations from the region itself.'⁷¹⁹

Carrying forward the common mission and building on what had been achieved, the provincial superiors and their teams continued to give priority to the training of personnel for the various apostolates. Having entered fields like Media, Homeopathic Medicine and many sisters having completed their post-graduate degrees, importance was also given to the training of young sisters of Bethany in the Northeast. Keeping in mind the future thrust, sisters are now crossing over to areas like Law, Post Certificate in B.Sc. nursing and a few sisters have completed research as well.

⁷¹⁹Golden Jubilee of the Bethany Sisters in the North east Province, *A Magazine*.

Education, socio-medical ministry, pastoral care, rehabilitation of drug addicts, hostel and youth ministry, geriatrics and service of charity as per the needs of the society and signs of the times are the works that the sisters carry on in the Northeast.⁷²⁰ The present study is limited to the fifty years (1962- 2012) of missionary work of the Bethany sisters in the Northeastern states and West Bengal where the sisters worked in various mission stations with a variety of missionary activities, methods and strategies.

The mission which started with just four sisters at Kolasib, Mizoram in 1962, the cradle of Bethany Sisters in Northeastern India, appears to have taken roots in this soil and grown up in stature spreading its branches across the seven states in the North-East and over to West Bengal. At present they have their foundations at Aizawl, Kolasib, Sihphir and Mamit in Mizoram; Silchar, Guwahati, Lumding and Nalbari in Assam; Agartala, Kattalcherra, Depacherra, Dharmanagar and Khayerpur in Tripura; Dimapur, Kohima and Viswema in Nagaland; Kolkata, Barasat, Behala, Chittaranjan and Sulantu in West Bengal; Shillong, Umsning and Jongksha in Meghalaya; Canchipur in Manipur and Namsai and Manmow in Arunachal Pradesh.

It may be probable that for the growth of the church in Northeast India, the contribution of the Bethany Sisters cannot be underestimated. Wilberta, the present Superior General of the Bethany Congregation opines that 'It was in 1962, when Bethany was merely 41 years old that she made a leap into Northeast India. During these fifty years Bethany has percolated into the interiors of the North-eastern states. James Knox, the Apostolic Internuncio, invited Bethany to Northeast India. His letter to Macrina, in response to the request made by George Breen, Prefect Apostolic of Haflong for a congregation of sisters to serve in Mizoram reads that he thought of appealing to the Bethany congregation which would be eminently suited for the pioneering work that needs to be done in this part of his jurisdiction. I feel satisfied that Bethany has striven hard to prove her trustworthiness. All the missionary priests, diocesan as well as religious, the sisters and lay collaborators have always infused in Bethany sisters a sense of confidence and enthusiasm by their support and solidarity.'⁷²¹

Little did the superiors as well as the pioneer missionaries realize how their new fertile mission field would contribute to their growth in the whole country. After fifty years of

⁷²⁰www.bethanymangalore.org

⁷²¹*Op.cit.*

that first arrival in 1962, the Northeast Province of the Bethany congregation today counts about 196 members. The northeast has emerged as one of the seven provinces of the Congregation. The increasing number of young girls coming forward to join the team of Bethany Sisters' missionary work is perhaps a proof that the presence of the sisters and their work is appreciated by the people of the region.

Keeping in mind the charism of RFC Mascarenhas and in keeping with the original purpose of the congregation, the Bethany sisters seem to have concentrated their efforts in the education of girls and the poor. 'Through their high quality educational institutions and their social interventions they have shaped and molded hundreds of young men and women to be responsible citizens of India. They have formed the personalities and made them men and women in character. Through their institutions they endeavor to uplift the poor and the downtrodden and thus bring about a society based on justice and equality' says Anil Couto, bishop of Jalandhar.⁷²² House visiting, care of the sick, teaching of catechism to the little ones, religious instruction to the adults, teaching of hygiene and child care, the settling of irregular marriages and catering to the needs of the hostel children are the usual activities of the sisters. Staying in the villages they come into contact with the people by sharing their life and struggles, gladly accepting the meager food the villagers offer.

In Northeast India, where medical facilities were poor and infant mortality rate was high, the sisters took the lead in establishing better living conditions by undertaking first-aid and hygiene programmes, courses on home nursing, cooking and nutrition, mother and child health programme and non- formal education of women and children. The importance given to health care can be seen from the fact that the fully trained doctor and sister nurses fulfilling their healing ministry in the villages, in the boarding establishments and in village dispensaries. Health care is one of the most important activities the Bethany Sisters have undertaken in this region, while education is another important field of their activity. Boarding schools, established for the poor children, who have no means of education due to their poverty, are said to be maintained at the cost of facing many difficulties and deprivations.⁷²³

⁷²²Golden Jubilee of Northern Province, *Magazine, op.cit.*

⁷²³The description of the various activities of the Bethany sisters has been taken from official reports by the congregation.

The headquarters of the Northeast Province of the Bethany sisters is situated at Mangalore in Karnataka state. Joy, the provincial superior of Northeast is the overall in charge for the life and mission of the sisters in the Northeast and is based at Bethany Provincial House, Guwahati, Assam. The congregation has sisters and candidates from all over India including Mizoram, Assam, Nagaland, Manipur, Meghalaya, Tripura Assam and West Bengal.⁷²⁴ The different centres continue to carry on the mission of the church, to evangelise and catechize, along with other activities like schools, boarding houses and dispensaries.⁷²⁵ ‘The congregation getting vocations from tribal communities reveals that it does the work of God, fulfilling the church’s missionary character and the responsibility of the local church’ says Binay Kandulna.⁷²⁶

The study of the assessment of Bethany sisters in this region would be incomplete without a consideration to trace the situation of the region in the 1960s, when the Bethany Sisters made their entry. In the words of Lucas Kerketta, ‘Sisters lived in an old building for several years. They have been working selflessly with a deep spirit of commitment facing many hardships while catering to the poor and the backward areas.’⁷²⁷ At that time the sick were unattended to and there were no hospitals or dispensaries to cater to the needs of the common folk. The sisters had heard about the traumatic experiences of missionaries in the hills. Though the political instability of the place, the non-availability of food, lack of communication facilities, the constant threat to their lives have always caused great distress and anxiety to the sisters in the past, the friendliness and loving attitude of people made them feel at home among the people.

However, one of the serious difficulties sisters met with in places like Silchar was that a large number of Christians lived in distant villages. After heavy work in the school the sisters could not visit the villagers regularly. Though the visits were few, people were deeply moved by the contacts made by the sisters. The sisters would sit with them near the hearth and enjoy hearing a little conversation in their native tongue, while their children attending Bethany schools acted as interpreters. As there were no schools in most of the villages, the little children remained in the hostels for education. Their love for the fresh air of the village was great that it was hard to make them feel at home in the hostels. They came to the hostel

⁷²⁴Jeyaseelan L., *History of the Catholic Church in Manipur*, Diocese of Imphal, Manipur, 1994., p.101.

⁷²⁵Violette D’Souza, *The vine that He planted*, op.cit., p.112.

⁷²⁶Golden Jubilee of Northern Province, *Magazine*, op.cit.

⁷²⁷*Ibid.*

from the age of seven to nine and with the careful attention given by the sisters, they could manage to cover up the portion of two or three classes in a year.

Lillis, the Assistant Superior General of the congregation opines that ‘I nostalgically recall my life spent in northeast as the most challenging yet enjoyable and enriching years of my religious life. The seven hills with multi tribes, their melodious music, open mindedness, the solidarity I felt with the co-missionaries, the challenges of communication system, the frustrations faced in the administration, the joy I experienced seeing sprouting of Christian faith in the people, climbing the hills in the Khasi villages, the deadening night travels with the convoys of Tripura, being stranded on the way to Thanlon in Manipur, the fear psychosis after Mathew Manianchira was shot dead in Imphal were some the missionary events wherein I could experience the God of hills and valleys.’⁷²⁸

5.6.1 Bethany Sisters in Mizoram

Letter written by Macrina to J.R. Knox, Apostolic Internuncio on the 1st of April 1962 states ‘Personally I visited the place. There is good scope for missionary effort. George Breen would have us select any one of the two places viz, Silchar or Kolasib. I chose the latter as there is greater need of sisters there than at Silchar although there are several difficulties to overcome there.’⁷²⁹ Four sisters were sent to the Mizo district of Assam in 1962 to take charge of the girl’s hostel and teach in the high school.⁷³⁰ On the 1st of July 1962, Misericors, the first superior of the convent wrote to the Superior General: ‘happy to inform you that the house consists of just a hall, the kitchen is not yet ready. We enquired about milk, eggs, vegetables etc. as we can’t get anything here.’ The dire need of the church then at Kolasib was to educate the youth of St. John’s high school run by the Holy Cross Brothers and to staff the girl’s hostel.

The apostolic prefect, George Breen, seeing the need of a middle school for the mixed population asked the sisters to open such a school. In January 1963, an English medium middle school was opened by the congregation. In March 1963, the superior wrote: ‘we have 56 children in the nursery and in the Middle School we have 24 children’ On 15th February 1965 again she wrote to the headquarters, ‘last year there were three classes-nursery A and B and class IV of Middle School and Superior with two girls (aspirants) was managing

⁷²⁸Golden Jubilee of North East Province, *Magazine, op.cit.*

⁷²⁹ Letter in the Bethany Archives at Mangalore.

⁷³⁰Violette D’Souza, *The Vine that He Planted, op.cit.*

all these classes. She has overworked and found it too hard to manage alone. The education minister had come to our Mizo Hills this morning; we met him at the inspection bungalow. He has promised a grant for children's park and school building.⁷³¹ The nursery and the primary school were housed in temporary sheds, permanent quarters were completed in January 1966. The sisters gradually picked up the local language and adapted themselves to the culture which enabled them to identify themselves with the people as they moved into the villages meeting the people in their families.

Report written by the superior of the community in 1970 reads thus: 'The Mizos are interested in education. The villages are not connected by roads, the houses are built of wood with aluminum sheet roofs, as it is difficult to transport material. They are constructed on slopes or terrains and sisters have to climb 181 steps from the road to the convent. The road too is like a ramp. The weather is quite cold. Sisters are really having a hard time on account of weather and scarcity of food stuffs.' On 9th of June 1968 P. J. Joseph of St. John's wrote: 'May I tell you right now how much we are delighted to see your sisters among us and how much we expect from them for the good of our girls. Before many years, you'll be able to train some local vocations to enlarge the ranks of your dear congregation. We are so badly in need of teachers in Mathematics and science and if they are from your congregation, they would be immensely helpful to give some sort of catholic education to the students. It is so hard to get a teacher from outside because in a disturbed area like the Mizo district we cannot assure him/her of their safety as we can't afford to give them lodging and still worse, they wouldn't get food quite easily.'⁷³²

On 18th of April 1966 Misericors wrote to Superior General: 'We are still alive and safe but always in fear. If you wish to write to us sometime please write to the address of an army commanding officer who helps us a lot to get foodstuff from Silchar. Many of the children from school and hostel are taken out by their parent's because of fear. They have left Mizo district and have gone to Silchar and Shillong. Now the fear is that at any moment the MNF party may start firing and in that case the whole village will be burnt so the people are afraid and running away to faraway places with their belongings. I do not know how long we will be in this situation.'⁷³³

⁷³¹ Letter kept in the Bethany Archives, Mangalore.

⁷³² *Ibid.*

⁷³³ *Ibid.*

Gradually Madonna Convent Kolasib, founded in 1962, became the centre of various missionary activities. The welcome address accorded to the Mother General by the Catholics of Kolasib parish states that ‘Our priests here have kindly provided us with a boarding house for girls since 1961, and that quite a number of girls even from interior villages come here as borders to get education and better discipline, but to our great regret so far it has been rather difficult to have suitable guardians for these borders. We are anxious to have this - the only catholic hostel for girls in the district. It would be a blessing not only to all the Catholics, but also to all in the district.’⁷³⁴ The number of children in the hostel increased in leaps and bounds as it was the only hostel for girls in Mizoram. A new hostel building was put up in 1991. In 1987, the National Open School was started at Kolasib, to serve the vast number of high school drop –outs. Nearly 700 students all over Mizoram have passed out of this institute.

During the insurgency period which spanned roughly twenty years, the missionary activities of the Bethany sisters were confronted with many problems. No moral support came for the sisters from anywhere since mail delivery had been suspended. The sisters’ school was the only school functioning in the entire Mizo district during those troubled times. Even during the most turbulent period they continued to provide the homeless with food and clothing as far as they could. Although they and the children under their care remained safe during those frightful days, they suffered from anxious moments and inconveniences. The community report of Madonna convent in Kolasib on educational apostolate written in 1983 states that the community consisted of 10 members who were all engaged in teaching apostolate, while two sisters taught in St.John’s High School.

Initially the sisters faced a lot of uncertainty and fear. On 18th of September 1965 Misericors wrote to Superior General: ‘Two MNF men entered the convent asking for money and threatening our lives.’ John Martin wrote to the Superior General on the 13th of March, 1966: ‘everything is fine at Kolasib and the sisters are all safe and sound just in case you have not heard from them since the communications were interrupted’. In a letter to the sisters on 15th February 1984 the then Superior General Sylvine writes: ‘I have noted the difficulties of dealing with students whose parents do not cooperate with the teachers. Please do not give up your efforts to make the students morally good.’

⁷³⁴ Reports of Communities in Bethany Archives, Mangalore.

Students were given special attention in their studies. They were given free education including all the accessories during the academic year. In one of the community reports it is mentioned that 'Our main apostolate at present is only teaching in the school, teaching catechism in the school and on Sundays in the church. We visit the houses of the locality and the sick people in hospital on holidays. No other village work or social work we can do since we are busy with the school work and in the hostel.' Catechism was taught twice in a week. The values of personal cleanliness and cleanliness of surroundings were inculcated. With the purpose of making the students fit to earn their living, practical experience was given by manual labour and thus the dignity of labour was upheld. At the demise of students or their parents, prayer hours were conducted in respective families.

The sisters rendered service in the parish in preparing the first communicants and assisting whenever the parish priest needed help. They attended rosary in the houses on Sundays and in the month of October and also took turns for preaching. On Sundays they visited those who were sick and advised the families. They attended funerals and consoled the members. During the longer holidays, sisters took turns to visit the nearby villages and spent some days with the people, catechizing and praying with them as well as teaching them hygiene. Particular interest was also taken in certain backward villages. Since conveyance was a major problem, the sisters had to reach to the villages on foot, yet sometimes it was not possible to keep in contact with the people of distant villages. They took active initiative to help the village schools by guiding the teachers in teaching and even supplying the learning material.

Education was imparted to the people of an area who were completely Christian but coming from different denominations. The sisters worked whole heartedly to impart and to maintain the good educational standard catering to the needs of the students. To tap and exploit the innate qualities and to promote the all round development of the students regular co-curricular activities were organized and conducted from time to time. Though the school was situated in the rural area, it was a common saying among the people that the school was equivalent to that of a town, which spoke of the rapid progress of the school and it was proved by the merit scholarships achieved by the students for studies outside Mizoram. Physical education was also given equal importance to promote physical development and discipline of the students. Special interest was taken in the backward students in giving coaching classes and visiting their parents to solve their educational problems. Teaching of

Moral science was a must in order to instill moral and spiritual values, prayer services were conducted as part of moral science.

In a letter to the Superior General written in 1980 the superior mentions ‘We try to help out the weaker and poorer students by supplying them with books, stationary, fee concessions and special coaching.’ Sisters took keen interest in learning the local language. On 30th June 1984 Neomi wrote to Sylvine, ‘Over here in Mizoram I feel quite at home. I’m trying to know the people and I think learning their language is not so easy. Anyway, we have begun to learn Lushai everyday seriously.’ On 15th March 1970 P. J. Joseph of St. John’s High School, Kolasib wrote to Macrina ‘thanking you for sending such good sisters who mean really a lot to the church in Kolasib and the Mizo District.’ The life of the sisters was an inspiration to the young girls who desired to collaborate with the sisters in their missionary activities by joining their order. Misericors wrote on 30th May 1963 ‘Two of my teachers want to become sisters. One has already decided to join our Congregation and we’ll have to help for her only brothers’ education if we take her away from here.’

Kolasib was fast growing into a town and there were many children seeking admission in the school. As the number of students increased, they were accommodated in the hostel but the rooms in the hostel were dark without proper ventilation and congested too. On 24th April 1982, Sylvine wrote to Claudia the superior: ‘why not utilize the hostel building for classrooms?’ Hence four classes were put up in the hostel. Though the people were poor and unable to pay the fees, they desired to improve the standard of the school and thus assisted to build the additional block required. Sisters had applied to the education department for building grant. They were also helping in a school which was 8 kms away from the station. Once in 15 days sisters used to take up the classes for the students with the intention of helping the other teachers teaching in that school. On 22nd June 1983, Jose the then Headmaster of St. John’s Kolasib wrote to the Superior General Sylvine on the transfer of two sisters ‘I am very happy and pleased, so are all the Brothers, the pupils and their parents with the work and help the two sisters are giving to the people through this school and have no complaint whatsoever, on the contrary only appreciation and gratitude. I most sincerely thank you and the sisters for their dedicated and selfless service rendered to this institution. Words are insufficient to describe our appreciation of their services.’

There was a request from the Mizo Catholic Welfare Service, Kolasib which read: ‘Sister, we beg to remind your kindness to extend your helpful hands in opening a dispensary

and an orphanage here at Kolasib for the benefit of poor Mizos who are now facing all sorts of difficulties, hardships and problems. There is a government dispensary here at Kolasib, but, Kolasib is now a big village with more than 5000 population. Though the government dispensary provides good medicines and staff, yet the supply of medicine is always limited as other grouping centres also need the same. Besides, if the church could run a dispensary, it would be a great blessing and a service to the poor people of Mizoram especially under our present condition. Secondly, ever since the disturbance in the district, our condition of living has become poor due to many social and economic problems which lead us to poverty, high rate of death and ill health. As a result many babies and children are now left motherless, homeless and without food. We therefore request you earnestly to kindly open an orphanage here at Kolasib so that at least the church with the help of some volunteers may accommodate and feed those poor people.'

Requests also came from the government officials for sisters but there weren't sufficient personnel to attend to this need. The then superior Misericors wrote to the headquarters on 30th May 1963: 'We have just received today Rs.1200 from the Block Development towards our Nursery School. We will also be receiving some teaching aids for the nursery by the end of the week. We have a request from the Block Development Officer (B.D.O.) to take up some cooking classes to the young girls of Mizo District. They'll provide whatever is necessary. We have only to go to the office and give them instruction and teach them how to cook. B.D.O has already opened the Home Craft wing and she had sent her representative here to request us to take up the classes. It is better for us to be of some use to the people directly by having some craft centres such as embroidery, needlework, cooking which do not exist in Mizo District. The people want their children to be taught by the sisters. All the officers' children attend our school and all of them were educated by European nuns and priests. So they expect from us the European standard.'

On 29th of September 1968 a welcome address to Mother General by the members of the Catholic Church read: 'We the catholic community of Kolasib had an opportunity to see the happy faces of sisters whom we never saw before in this Mizo hills. The sisters teach our children and help us in many other ways. Allow us to ask from you 3 things: Firstly, we feel that one convent to serve the whole Mizo District is quite insufficient. So we request you to open another convent either at Aijal or at Chhingchhip. Secondly, as you can notice, our living condition in this district is extremely poor, the trouble in our district has made the

situation worse, which has resulted in many boys and girls to be orphans. We, therefore, request you to bless us with an orphanage or dispensary at Kolasib and to provide with trained sisters in this field. Lastly, we request you to remember us always in your prayers, especially the hardships and difficulties we are facing.’

The origin of Mary Mount School at Aizawl can be traced back to the year 1952 when it was a Mizo medium elementary and middle school named St.Paul’s. It was started by the Canadian Brother, Godfrey. In 1968, since the Canadian Brothers had to leave Mizoram for good, George Breen invited the Bethany sisters to administer this school. In February 1969 the sisters took over the school to serve the educational and pastoral needs of the people and of the neighbouring villages. Gretta, the superior writes to Superior General on 24th of February 1971: ‘Just three months ago I was informed properly that we had to find out a new place. At once I tried with the district council to get a plot for the convent and school. They gave all the hope and assurance to find out a suitable plot for us but not so immediately due to the present crisis the government is facing. ‘To buy the land the question does not arise at all. Here the government is ready to give the land free of cost for the purpose of education, but it may take one or two years more.’ We have only 138 pupils. The school is far away from the town on a hill and it is impossible to get more students. The cost of living is extremely high.’

When Mary Mount was started, it was the only English medium school in the whole of Aizawl town. There were 300 students from K.G.I to class VI. On the 26th of February 1984 the then Headmistress of the school, Edleburgh wrote to the Superior General: ‘I had just gone to pay a visit to Mr.Malsawma, the education minister and when he asked whether he can do anything for us, I asked for help. He told me to make the estimate and give a copy to the department of education in the first week of December. The department has promised Rs.25, 000 in the month of March and the rest before we lay the foundation for the ground floor. They will give their contribution for every floor. The Public Works Department Engineer and the architect told me to collect the cement whenever it is available. It seems the steel and iron is cheaper now, and they advised me to collect from the factory and they will help me out. They are ready to help us out, as they know a building is very essential, as they themselves have seen the rush for admissions. Parents feel the need for helping and I’m receiving financial help without asking.’ Though the people had no appreciation for English medium education but once they realized the importance of it and the presence of the sisters

in the school changed their attitude. They rushed for admissions and some even opted to be Catholics to get a seat in the school.

The pioneering missionaries took keen interest to visit every village of the parish in Aizawl on foot without minding the scorching heat and piercing cold. They took the survey of every family in the villages and registered the society as Bethany Social Work Society under the government of Mizoram. Sisters took active part in instructing the people on health, hygiene, preventive and curative medicines to keep them healthy especially in areas where there were no medical facilities. Community report in 1983 states that ‘Catechism is taught in local language on Sundays by two sisters. We have Mass for catholic children in local language once in fortnight. We invite the priest on occasions like children’s day and school feast day to speak on gospel values. A passage from the Bible is read by children during assembly and the reflections are given by Headmistress and the children reflect for a while and pray. Songs on Jesus are freely sung by children during assembly.

Collection of old clothes is done once a year to instill in the students that they should share their goods with the have not’s. Mission Sunday collection and other charitable collection is made by the children themselves. As it is the custom of the place, children make a collection of money in case some member of their classmate’s family expires, buy something worthwhile, conduct prayer service in their houses with the help of the teachers and thus console the family members. Teachers or sisters take turns to speak a few words on the gospel passage. House visiting is done on Sundays and other days according to sister’s convenience. Sisters take turns to go to Dawrpui and Ramhlun Churches for Mass in spite of the non availability of conveyance. At times the whole day is spent for visiting the people of those areas. Sisters show lot of interest to visit people and help them out. Sisters give talks when people request. People are friendly with us and want us to visit them often and pray with them. Whenever there is a chance to go to the villages sisters go and stay in the villages.’

Mary Mount has produced a number of doctors, engineers, nurses, Indian Administrative and civil service officers, politicians and priests, Brothers and sisters as well. The school at present has a total of 1675 students hailing from Aizawl town as well as the neighbouring villages who are being trained to be the future leaders of the church, society and the country. The school lays emphasis on value education and faith formation. Inter house and Inter school competitions are conducted keeping in mind the core values of the Bethany

Educational Society. Attention is paid to the all round development of the students to make them good citizens. Catechism is taught for the catholic students and moral education is given to all the students. School assemblies are conducted with relevant themes in line with the BES core values. Orientation programmes are conducted for the staff which consists of 49 teachers including the sisters. The school has infrastructure consisting of 4 buildings built in 1980, 1986, 1995 and 2013 respectively with the financial aid from the congregation, province, government and partly from the parents. Sisters engage themselves in pastoral, family apostolate, devote to the church activities, family visits, organizing the small children into some associations and any services the community calls for.

Due to the family visits and interaction with the parents of the students, the services of Bethany sisters are appreciated by the people. Sisters also collaborate with the Montfort Brothers of St.Gabriel by the service of two sisters in St.Paul's Higher Secondary School. P. J. Abraham Principal of St.Paul's writing to the Superior General on the 21st of June, 1976 says 'My superiors were so happy to hear about the coming of sisters and they told that the school has a good future. Their coming will be of great help to the school in general and to our girls in particular. The sisters are very cooperative and they help us very much. They are contributing much for the up keeping of the good spirit among the religious families here. We are really privileged to have such understanding and helpful neighbours.'

Bethany convent, Sihphir founded in the year 1991 is the third foundation of the Bethany sisters in Mizoram. Here the sisters assist in the administration of Holy Angel's diocesan school and are engaged in parish activities as well. On 26th of November 1990 at the arrival of the sisters, there were nearly 100 people gathered to admit the children to K.G.I and around 115 children were registered for the school. The sisters began their teaching apostolate with 4 classrooms. Few of the constraints experienced by the sisters were financial problems, lack of transport and knowledge of the local language. Later on through constant family visits and conducting of awareness programmes in the villages, change was noticed in the attitude of the people towards the sisters. People were happy with the education imparted to their children and they were a source of encouragement to the sisters. The parents co-operated with the sisters in the character formation of their children. Later on a hostel was put up both for boys and girls and medical help was made available through mobile clinic by the sister nurse.

A number of girls were housed and educated under the guidance of the sisters, rehabilitation centre provided good treatment for the drug addicts and a dispensary had been set up thus extending healing and wholeness to many. People have been empowered in the villages and they are quite supportive in sisters' mission. Empowerment through various apostolates like pastoral, social, medical and educational has been carried on. The main apostolate being teaching in the school, sisters give extra care to the weaker students by visiting their families. All the sisters are actively involved in visiting the families and the sick, conducting prayer services, seminars as well as teaching catechism to the children. As a part of social work, the sisters conduct awareness programmes, formation of self help and support groups, counselling sessions to the drug abusers etc. Medical apostolate seems to be a great help to the villagers as they hardly have any access to hospitals or dispensaries in their village.

In response to the invitation of the Congregation of the Capuchin Fathers in the mission at Mamit, two sisters were sent to Mamit on the 14th of June 2001 to make a study of the situation and the possibility of opening a convent there. A typical Mizo house with one bedroom and a kitchen was rented out for the sisters. The sisters started their educational ministry in St. Francis of Assisi primary school run by the Capuchin priests on the 18th of June. Along with the daily chores of the house which consisted of cooking, carrying water and cleaning the house, sisters made time to gather children for morning prayer and the Mass. They started visiting the families, praying with them, teaching catechism and even joining for social work with the local people. As the sisters knew the local language, people felt free to approach them and share their lives with the sisters. On the 21st of July, 2002 Bethany Health Centre was inaugurated for the care of the HIV/AIDS patients and on 21st of September, the tailoring centre was inaugurated.

Bethany sisters started a school at Mamit Bazaar Veng in 2003 and a simple wooden structure had been built on it. A double-storeyed structure was built on the land at Ngharpet Veng in 2006 to house the National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS). In 2007, the office of the Bethany Social Service Society, drop-in-centre and health centre were shifted to this place. Meanwhile, the school had reached high school level and admissions were increasing. Hence a need was felt to shift the high school section to Ngharpet Veng. Two more floors had also been added to the existing building. On March 25th 2011, the community was bifurcated

and a second Bethany convent named St Theresa Convent was inaugurated at Ngharpet Veng. This building houses the convent, high school and NIOS.

5.6.2 Bethany Sisters in Assam

John Martin, parish priest of Holy Cross Church, Silchar, wrote on 10th September 1962 to the Mother General: ‘Two of your sisters were sick so they spent some few days here in Silchar. I just want you to know how well they impressed me by their simplicity and prayerful spirit. I’m looking forward to the time when we also in Silchar will be blessed with their presence.’ Thus the second foundation of Bethany in the Northeast was at Silchar town. Though the Holy Cross Parish at Silchar was founded only in the year 1957, yet as early as in 1947, the Holy Cross Fathers began to reside at Silchar and cater to the educational needs of the villagers around it. In the late fifties, a residential mission school with Khasi as the medium of instruction was started by John Martin to provide education to the Khasi children. By and by English was found necessary to help the Khasi village children to continue their studies in the neighbouring states where High school education was imparted in English. Realising this need, in 1966, the Khasi medium school was switched over to English Medium. In the very same year, George Breen approached the then Superior General of Bethany, Macrina, to send sisters to this new mission. In response to his invitation, Bethany had its second foundation in Silchar in 1966.

On 11th June 1966, when the three sisters arrived at Silchar they were welcomed by the flood refugees sheltered in the church complex. The mission was started to impart education at the Holy Cross Diocesan School. The sisters assisted in the day today administration of the school. Eventually when the Holy Cross foreign missionaries had to leave Silchar for good, they entrusted the school to Denzil D’Souza, Bishop of Silchar. The records of Holy Cross School indicate the school’s good result and good discipline. Sylvine, the Superior General wrote to the then principal of the school, Jyoti in 1986: ‘Holy Cross School has a special place in my heart. I remember with joy all the happy years I spent with the students there. It’s indeed a source of pleasure to see the progress and the accomplishments of this institution year after year. I congratulate the students who have walked out of the portals of this school for bringing much credit and glory to their Alma Mater. I’m proud and happy to note that every year the academic results have been excellent. However, the progress of the school is not limited merely to excellence in academics. The school has provided opportunities to draw out the talents and abilities in every child and to

bring out the best in them. The school can proudly boast of its democratic service to the pupils hailing from a variety of backgrounds and social strata, by developing in them a sense of brotherhood and personal integration.’

Camps are conducted for teachers and students of VIII, IX and X separately for inculcation of values. Under the patronage and chairmanship of late Bishop Denzil D’Souza followed by his successor Bishop Stephen Rotluanga as well as the co-operation and tenacity of the staff members, the school with a boarding attached to it, caters to the education of the less fortunate Khasi children, children of those who work in the tea gardens and imparts value based and quality education to thousands of students. Gradually the sisters moved out to the remote Khasi villages, to meet the needs of the tribals, who had neither education nor medical facilities.

The Girl’s hostel at Silchar caters to the needs of Khasi village girls studying in Holy Cross English Medium School. Besides the school work, all the sisters are engaged in the village missions too. Sisters are set apart for evangelical and developmental works in the Khasi missions of the parish. Sisters spare no pains to master Bengali and Khasi languages. In 1982, sisters ventured into Balia mission and their strenuous efforts to build up this mission by preaching, teaching, catechizing and identifying with the people seems to bear fruit. Sylvine wrote to the superior on 25th February 1983 saying ‘Marie Celine and Assumpta Maria can be fully engaged in social work. They should not in any way be called for school work. Marie Celine has great capacity for work as she’s a nurse, full of zeal. She has keen interest in the poor. Then to one of the nurse sister she wrote: ‘do not wait for the jeep. You can go on your own to the villages and spend a few days there with the Adivasi’s. People will appreciate it and if they have nothing to give you, you may use food from the community.’

The beginnings were not without difficulties. To start with, the sisters often felt the pangs of hunger. Water for drinking was brought by bullock-carts from the parish pond. Justina wrote to Mother General on 27th August 1984: ‘Bishop has asked to raise the front wall of the school and the work is going on. But some local boys who used to come to our playground are creating troubles. They are angry because we don’t allow them to play inside our compound. On 24th night someone broke open the office room lock and took away trophies that our students won in the games and sports.’ Constant floods have caused havoc at times. Justina writes to Mother General on 1st August 1985: ‘The recent flood in Silchar has

caused a havoc which brought a great loss to our school, hostel and convent. Our compound wall has been washed away during the floods.’ The Sisters are engaged in various activities directed to the upliftment of the poor in and around Silchar. Weaving and tailoring classes are conducted by the Sisters for the benefit of a good number of girls. Holy Family Convent, Silchar served as the first regional, provincial and transit house for about 25 years. At present the sisters run a full- fledged Higher Secondary school, a dispensary and also do house visiting in the areas.

Silchar community report on 19th April 1984 states: ‘We have about 100 tribal catholic children whom sisters love and give extra coaching to bring them to the standard of the other children. Due to the continuous efforts of the sisters, the children are able to continue their studies with ease and learn to pray. Maria works for Badarpur parish and teaches the catechumens and neophytes. She works among the Rongmei and Chorei tribes. Otilia works for the Khasi tribals and their work is much appreciated by the Bishop and the people. Other Sisters too accompany them during the holidays. Malati’s work in the hospital has been appreciated by the doctors and patients of a non Christian hospital. Her selfless services, prayer for healing in the hospital has witness value too. 4 children are given free accomodation in our hostel and another 4 are kept in the neighboring hostel. Besides, from time to time help is given according to the means of the community. Most of the people are very poor and do not attend our school. We need to take steps to include them in our circles.’

The sisters travelling from Nagaland and Manipur to Silchar or Guwahati and vice versa often spent time at the railway station as they waited for their connecting trains. The gap between train timings was long and during one such wait, some sisters befriended an Assamese catholic gentleman namely Mr. Baruah, an Anglo Indian male nurse employed in the railway hospital. He was of the place and was instrumental in getting the sisters to Lumding in Assam. On the 10th of January 1979, the first batch of sisters arrived in Lumding. The opening of this convent served educational needs of the people of the locality, the spiritual needs of the few Catholics who were already settled there and it served as transit house for the sisters travelling by train. At first the sisters immersed themselves in the educational apostolate and in no time they started visiting the families after the school hours, praying for the sick, consoling the sorrowful and the disheartened.

As the school progressed and the mission got established, the sisters wanted to do more for the rural women and girls. Hence a vocational Training centre named Jeevan Jyoti

Vocational training centre for girls was opened in 1989. It offers 18 months course in tailoring, weaving, embroidery, knitting, home-management and literacy to girls or school drop outs. Every year at least 15 girls complete the certificate course. A hostel for girls was also opened in 1992. Apart from their engagements at the school, hostel and at the training centre, the sisters reach out to villages around Lunding town. Whenever possible the surrounding villages inhabited by the Garos, Mizos, Nagas, Dimasas, Karbis etc. are visited.

On 1st August 1997, with the intention of starting the slum apostolate the Provincial Superior and would be pioneers went to Guwahati. The two sisters were to start a mission among the slum dwellers of Guwahati and side by side begin the construction of the Provincial House at Garchuk. On 8th of August 1997, they began to stay in a house used as a store house for grass. Whenever the sisters could spare a little time they visited the neighbouring families. The discovery of the city slums and the venue of their future apostolate brought them much joy. The newly renovated house was blessed on October 31, 1997 by Archbishop Thomas Menampampil. Staying in this house the pioneers catered to eight slums of Guwahati city which were registered under the Municipality. In December of the same year another sister joined the community and her experience in various new missions as well as interest in gardening, preparing food for the sisters was a great help. She planted fruit trees and vegetables which brought much improvement in the campus. There were four catholic families in the Garchuk area. The sisters took up the responsibility of getting these families the spiritual benefits like Mass, catechism and reception of Sacraments.

In January 1998, the Superior General offered Rs.10000/- to start the slum apostolate and with this sum the literacy programme in Fatasil Harijan Colony was begun. About 50 to 60 students between 4-12 years regularly attended the literacy classes. They were provided with books, slates and other necessary materials. The sisters themselves were teaching. Seeing many young girls with no useful employment, a sewing machine was purchased and tailoring was taught. On September 7 1998, Slum Literacy Programme for ten slums of Guwahati city was officially launched. The project was sponsored by 'Andheri Hilfe.' Illiterate children between the ages 4-14 were admitted to the literacy classes. They were divided into two groups: 4 years to 7years in one group and 8 years to 14 years in another group. Each group had an average of 35 students. Each year about 700 students were getting the benefits of literacy from this project. Every year the 4 to 7 years group was admitted to the local formal vernacular medium schools. The children above 7 years were taught to read

and write, up to class IV syllabus and regular classes were held in all the subjects. Two supervisors were appointed for this work and the project was carried on for three years.

The year 2000 saw the launching of Health and Hygiene programmes and Self Help Groups. On the social work front, a new project-tailoring for the women of Self Help Group was started in 2003. In 2007, four workshops were conducted on Right To Information Act in collaboration with Legal Cell for Human Rights, Guwahati where 150 adults participated. In order to focus on youth, especially girls, the first community college of the Province was opened in 2008. The classrooms of the existing school were used for the purpose initially. 26 girls were admitted in the first batch, out of which 12 were regular. Their curriculum includes the four subjects of Life Skills, Work skills, Dress-making and Computer education. Prison ministry was introduced from late 2007. Once a fortnight, sisters especially the social work personnel visit the central jail along with the Prison Ministry of India team. They conduct recreational and educational programmes for the inmates.

On 28th January 2000, Bethany Convent School was opened with 16 students in K.G. and the school has reached up to class X. The new Provincial House at Garchuk was inaugurated on the 25th of March 2004. Bethany at Garchuk is also the place where the sick, the young and the old sisters are cared for. Being the Provincial House, sisters working in other states of the region go there for medical treatment. The sisters take care of the liturgy with the cooperation of the laity. They prepare people for the sacraments, visit families and guide the youth and children. The membership of the catholic community of Garchuk has grown up to 100 approximately.

Bethany Convent, Nalbari was inaugurated on 2nd March 2009, which was an extension service of the Garchuk Bethany Community. Their immediate task was to teach in the newly founded St.Mary's School at Panigaon. On the 23rd of December 2010 the community kept up the 50th Death Anniversary of RFC Mascarenhas and distributed blankets to ten poor families on this occasion. John Moolachira, Archbishop of Guwahati writes that 'The institutions and centres where the Bethany sisters worked seems to have contributed for the educational, pastoral, hostel, medical, social growth and development of many people. Sisters have also taken up ministries to reach out to the abandoned and the lonely such as rehabilitation of Alcoholics, HIV/AIDS victims and prisoners, drug addicts which has been an expression of the sisters to make the compassion of Jesus a reality in the world of today.

The members of the congregation have proved their generosity in the mission field and social upliftment programmes in remote areas.⁷³⁵

5.6.3. Bethany Mission in Nagaland

As a response to the invitation of Bishop Hubert Rosario of Dibrugarh in August 1967, Macrina, the then Superior General of Bethany paid a visit to Kohima in October 1968. The next year saw the opening of two convents at Dimapur and Kohima. Understanding all the implications and commitments of the ministry that the sisters were to shoulder in a place of various ethnic and cultural groups, the sisters responded to the call in order to offer their service to the people of this sector. Doreen writes to Mother General on the 24th of February 1969: ‘We live in one of the rooms of the school without sufficient things. We are so happy here in the missions.’

As the apostolate of education is one of the prime apostolate of the congregation and in fact a way of sharing in the mission of the church specially in the North- east, the first group of sisters were to undertake the day-to- day administration of the academic activities of Holy Cross School, Dimapur which had about 150 students in 5 classes in 1969 and today this school is catering to about 2000 students of the state. It has grown in strength and merit and is a boon to the Nagas as well as to the migrants of Dimapur. On 8th May 1970 P. C. Mani of Dimapur wrote to Mother General: ‘The vicars general, administrator of the diocese as well as the Archbishop Hubert Rosario were very pleased with the progress of the school and the way the Sisters manage the school.’

A sister who was specialized in catechetics was appointed by Bishop Abraham Allangimattathil, as a member of the Diocesan Catechetical Committee and a representative of the same in the North- East regional catechetical team for preparing catechism books for the schools of the region’s dioceses. The books are already in use in most of the catholic schools. The sisters have also undertaken the day- to- day administration of Christ school, attached to the pastoral centre in Dimapur. The crowd of kids who flock to this school are themselves a proof of the people’s appreciation of the sisters who dedicate themselves to the care of the children.

Report of the village work at Holy Cross, Dimapur on 1st of November 1984 stated: ‘The people are very happy for the time which we spend with them. Our visit to 4th mile

⁷³⁵Golden Jubilee of North East Province, *A Magazine, op.cit.*

made us to understand that some of our catholic families are completely abandoned. Due to the language problem the Lotha people in 4th mile keep themselves away from others. Mrs. Vincent Lotha comes with us to visit the other catholic families and helps us to instruct them whenever she is free. The healing ministry is improving. They do realize that the human power alone is not enough but the divine power is necessary in life. Some non Catholics do ask us to pray for them and also visit the Church in order to have a happy life. The sisters render great service to the poor by medical help and by visiting and listening to their problems. Other Sisters are engaged in teaching and they take special interest in weaker students by teaching and helping them in their studies. Sisters also spend some time every day helping the boarders in their studies and giving them moral instruction on Sundays. The poor from villages and towns are given medical care and lots of marriage problems are settled. Sisters conduct prayer services for women's association. Mother and Child Health programme is undertaken to help 100 poor families of the locality.'

Christ King Convent was started on 21st January 1969. Loyola, the Superior wrote to Mother General on 25th September 1969: 'we have night school for grownup catholic girls from 4.30 to 6.30 p.m. We had many trials and difficulties during the past few weeks and are greatly disappointed to know that you have no sisters to give us. The need for more sisters is so great which can be understood only by seeing the situation. It is very hard to work in the missions. Many of the institutions are facing the trials and the cause of the church suffers. This is a fast developing town and hence we want good teachers who can talk English correctly.' One sister, being a nurse was engaged in medical care of the people, while the other three taught in the newly opened Primary School. A classroom served as a dispensary. The few hours after school and weekends were spent in the villages of Nerema, Merema, Lazami, Tseminyiu and Khonoma catechizing, praying and giving medical care, preparing people for liturgy and as a result of which catholic communities came to be established eventually. Thus, besides education, a lot of importance was given to pastoral care and the impact the sisters had on the people can be gathered from the memories people share about them.

Half yearly report of Christ King community at Kohima in December 1983 states: 'To instill the gospel values in the minds of the student's Bible is taught for all. Moral science is taught by teachers on every Monday. On Tuesday Bible service is conducted for all the students. On every Friday the sisters prepare the catholic students for confession. A retreat

was preached for all the teachers in November. Free education is given to poor students. Extra coaching is given to poorer and weaker students after class. The value of personal cleanliness has been stressed much in the school. The sister's visit the student's houses regularly and the parents are informed about the progress of their wards. The working girls are taught to read and write in English and Sister in charge of them teaches catechism on Sundays. The Sister in charge of the boarders conducts special prayer services twice a week and teaches catechism on Sundays. Our student's are from the villages and the average number of students in each class is 65 and it is difficult to give special attention during the class hours. They do not have enough facilities to study in their houses. Most of the Catholics have concessions and some are completely free. Boarders have recollections occasionally.' Mr. Philip Suosahie, one of the first Angami catholic and a retired catechist stated: 'I was associated with the Bethany Sisters from the beginning. In the school they taught catechism besides other subjects. After school they visited families which made people feel familiar with them.'⁷³⁶

Ms Margaret Pienyu Deputy Director of State Horticulture Nursery, Dimapur claims that the daily Mass and Catechism classes had a great impact on her life and made her what she is today. She recalls those Marathi and Hindi dances taught for the Parents' day and the school functions when they would get dressed up in sarees, ankle bells and wear lots of makeup. Ms Azenuo Concepta, recalls the early morning marches to the church with folded hands, the trip to the pond for a session on dental care with a piece of charcoal in hand, the devotional singing during Mass and the lessons in reading and discipline. Dr Kiyasetuo Stephen appreciates the right mix of kindness and discipline practiced by the pioneering sisters of Kohima. He speaks about the medical apostolate as sisters taking the help of the students in visiting families to treat patients because the children had learnt to communicate in English and thus could act as interpreters. The personal touch and care of the sisters seem to have borne fruit as it is evident in the number of past pupils occupying key positions in administration today.

In 1971, a hostel for girls was opened and two sisters started teaching in Don Bosco High School run by the Salesian Fathers which lies in the same parish. The hostel renders invaluable service by offering a home to children from far flung villages who study in Christ King and Don Bosco Higher Secondary Schools. Half yearly report of Christ King Convent,

⁷³⁶ Sr .Mary Naulak B.S., *op.cit.*,p. 43-44.

Kohima reads 'Various competitions are held to help the children to develop their hidden talents. During holidays all the sisters go to visit the far away villages. They teach catechism through slides and pictures. Health and hygiene is taught. Once a month they visit the civil hospital, pray over the sick and conduct a prayer service there. On Sunday catechism is taught for Catholics and Bible for Christians. Each child is given special attention in his/her studies.' The mission that started with a handful of students has grown and now the stress is on education along with hostel ministry and some pastoral work. A lot of time is spent on training the girls in the hostel in various activities.

The mission centre at Viswema was managed by the Jesuits of Karnataka Province. Stanley was in charge of this mission in 1977 when Bethany sisters set out to collaborate in this mission. After the survey of the area the sisters realized that the urgent health problems of the people can be solved by a well planned net work of mobile health work. The transport facilities were very limited and villagers usually cultivated things for themselves. A. D'Silva wrote to the superior general on November 22, 1976 states: 'The people are very eager to see the school run by sisters. We get wonderful co operation from the villagers of Viswema. They wanted to offer their land free. They have done up the road by themselves in order to facilitate transport to the school.' The sisters began classes on 12th February.

T. Resto SDB on 31st January 1969 wrote to Macrina: 'From what I can see, your good sisters seem to be quite happy and full of enthusiasm. But they have to put up with the cold of Kohima. Right from the start they have endeared themselves to the local people and this is a great thing for them and the local people'. The sisters' reached out to other villages especially on weekends when they could free themselves from school work. On Sundays each sister took up church service in one village since Mass could not be celebrated in every village due to lack of priests. Along with Bible and prayer book, they also carried a few medicines and catered to the needs of the sick people in the villages.

When the sisters arrived, St. Joseph's school started in 1974 had reached up to class 2 with 89 students on the roll. By 1986 it had reached up to class 8 with 450 students. In 2009, the school was upgraded to higher secondary level in Arts Stream with 66 students in the first batch. From 1986, girls from different states of the Northeast were admitted to the Bethany congregation to continue their high school education here. From the beginning education was given great importance in Viswema along with co-curricular activities. As early as in 1978,

students were taken on excursions to other towns of the state like Dimapur. In later years, trips were arranged to places outside the state and beyond the boundaries of the region.

The presence of teachers from South India, Manipur and Assam with diverse cultural background contributed to the all round education of the students in this mission area. Being the first high school of Bethany Educational Society in Northeast, the financial help from the Province and the Generalate made it possible to keep this village school maintain good standard. The school was also fortunate to benefit from the Territorial Army at Jakhama. The Education Department, Government of Nagaland had given 10 computers for having classes to the students and in 2008, the school received ten more computers from State Council for Educational Research and Training along with the required furniture that helped in making the school sufficiently equipped to impart computer education.

Closely attached to the school is the hostel which was started to accommodate the children of Viswema itself. In 1977, there were 13 girls and as the school grew and infrastructure improved, children from outside Viswema village were also admitted. At present there are girls from K.G.I to class XII and boys are admitted up to class 4. The average strength of the hostel is about a hundred. Most of them are from the villages where there is no good English medium school or from the towns where busy parents have neither time nor the skill to care for their children, besides struggling to earn their daily bread.

The first batch of sisters of Viswema were teachers, nurses, social workers, evangelists and catechists all rolled into one. The sisters started moving out to the villages with medicine in their little bags. It was with the power of medicine that the sisters were able to enter the villages. Within a few months of their life at Viswema the sisters felt the need to have a mobile medical unit. Organised medical work started on the 29th of October 1978. The sisters extended the much needed medical assistance to 8 villages of the Southern Angami area of Kohima district. They visited the villages on a regular basis and ministered to the sick. As time went by and the demands of the mission increased, the activities of the sisters became more organized. From early 1980s two sisters were set aside for the socio-medical and pastoral work.

On 30th September 1980 Stany Coelho wrote to Sylvine: 'I wanted to explain to you what we intend to do at Eden garden, Khuzama. Your sisters have been helping me there as best as they could. I personally am of the opinion that in the long run this will be our best

work as it is exclusively for the poor. It is a very promising experiment in rural education and if continued according to plan over a period of five years, it is bound to produce good results. The Nagaland government's department of education is keenly interested in this work of ours and has already recognized the non-formal education centre. More and more people are now convinced that non-formal education is the only solution to the problem of educating the masses and unemployment, especially in Nagaland. As regards the financing of the project, apart from the initial expenses for which I have applied to various agencies for aid, I expect the project to be self-sufficient within the next five years. What we need is a group of sisters to work full time at this centre, young and old can all find ample scope for their talents and zeal provided they come prepared for a novel experiment with its uncertainties, risks and possible failures.'

At the early stages, besides treating patients at the dispensary, the sisters trained selected groups of villagers in health care and hygiene, animal husbandry, weaving and similar activities turning many of them as effective workers. Every weekend the socio-medical and pastoral work personnel extended similar services to one or two villages. The target group was always women and girls. Mother and Child Health programme was taken up with great momentum and school Health programmes were initiated. In the 1990s, sanitation drive was taken up and seventy toilets were constructed in Viswema and Kezoma villages. Dispensaries and weaving centres were constructed at Kezoma and Kidima villages and equipped with the necessary equipments. On the economic front, animal husbandry project was introduced about the same time.

The community report of Viswema on mission activities for the months of July to December, 1984 reads: 'Sisters carry on their apostolic activities such as teaching and village visiting faithfully. A nurse sister is completely set apart for the work of healing ministry and evangelization. People have faith in her medicine and so many are attracted towards our dispensary. She also visits the villages with her companion. School going sisters regularly visit the villages on Thursdays and Sundays. Recently, five sisters visited two faraway villages and spent three days in teaching catechism, singing, film-show, giving talks on health and hygiene. There was very good response from the people. There is lot of love and friendship, concern for each other and family consciousness among the boarders and helpers are taken good care of. Sports and games are given due importance in the school under the direction of a good physical educationist. Two sisters regularly visit the women in two

villages and guide them to follow Natural Family Planning (NFP) through periodical explanations. Mother and Child Health (MCH) is another programme carried on by the sister nurse in charge.’

The dispensary has become a boon not only to the people of Viswema but even to people across the state border. Patients come from villages as far as Kaibi, Tadubi and Tungjoy in Manipur’s Senapati District bordering the Southern Angami area where the sisters work. Self Help Groups started in the year 2000 now function in Viswema, Mima and Mitelephe. They had been initiated into income generating activities like surf and candle making besides their traditional practice of animal rearing, handloom and agriculture. From 2001 Development Committee was formed in each village and regular meetings were conducted with them. Ways of networking with Government Organizations and other local Non Governmental Organizations was tried out around this time. Village health workers and members of the Self Help Groups were trained in reproductive health, HIV/AIDS, communicable diseases and herbal medicine. Women Development Programme supported by Caritas India was held in 5 villages of southern Angami area. There were twenty fully functional Self Help Groups and members were given refresher courses, leadership training and exposure programmes. Education on National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) was given to a few villagers.

Through these fifty years the sisters seem to have been able to contribute to the evangelization work of this region in a very significant way. Especially in the field of education, health-care and social work the sisters have been doing pioneer work in the Northeast. The diocese of Kohima was one of the first beneficiaries of the congregation’s apostolate in Northeast India. Many people have benefitted through the good work of the Bethany sisters. Thanks to the selfless, dedicated service rendered for the mission’ writes James Thoppil, the Bishop of Kohima.⁷³⁷

5.6.4 Bethany Sisters in Tripura

The Bethany Sisters entered Tripura in 1968 at the invitation of the then Bishop Denzil D’Souza of Silchar and so they were the first religious women to come to work in this state. Today the sisters serve in Holy Cross Schools at Agartala, Depacherra, Dharmanagar, Kattalcherra and Bethany Convent School, Khayerpur. In each of these centres they are also

⁷³⁷Golden Jubilee of North East Province, *A Magazine, op.cit.*

involved in multi-dimensional apostolates like health care, formal and non-formal education and women empowerment.⁷³⁸ In 1960s the need for the services of sisters was felt. Boarding houses both for boys and girls had to be started in 1961. It was at this time that Roger Marcel requested the services of the Bethany Sisters to meet the needs of the Church in Tripura.

On 27th July 1968, the first group of sisters arrived in Agartala. The then Superior General, Macrina accepted the invitation saying ‘My Sisters are used to putting up with inconveniences and it does not matter much if little things are wanting. They are young and will know to improvise things to meet the situation.’ It seems to have been a great challenge for the sisters in the land of varied language, culture and life style. The main involvement of the sisters was with the boarding children from the interior villages of Tripura. Gradually their services were extended to other fields of apostolates such as education, medicare, evangelization and developmental works. Sisters started teaching in the Bengali medium school run by the parish. They were able to capture the hearts of the people and students by their efforts to speak and teach in the Bengali language. One of the sisters, moved out to the villages under the parish for tailoring, social work and evangelization.

Holidays were opportune time for the sisters to visit the far away villagers. Sisters who were engrossed in educational apostolate were called upon to engage in healing apostolate at the onset of Bangladesh War in 1971. Having mastered the elements of nursing, they rushed to the refugee camps and kindled hope in the hearts of thousands. Roger Marcel wrote to Macrina on July 28, 1968: ‘I would feel remiss if I did not convey to you the gratitude of our people as well as my own for having selected for our humble Church so fine a group of religious.’

Claudia wrote to Mother General on 9th October 1971: ‘Glad to inform you that all of us are keeping well in the midst of refugees. Sisters were very busy visiting the camps giving medicines, distributing clothes etc during their school holidays. Some Sisters went to Kumarghat to help the nurses there. There is lack of medicine. The nurses from different places were coming and helping. Now all of them are gone back. No hope of anyone coming back. There is need to open a dispensary close to the Church and appoint a permanent sister nurse.’

⁷³⁸ David R. Syiemlieh, (ed.) *Diocese of Agartala: op.cit.*,p.15.

Under the expertise of a nurse sister, medical apostolate was re-organized. The nurse worked in collaboration with the missionaries of charity who were engaged in the same apostolate. People flocked at the parish dispensary. A mobile unit was set in operation for extending medical facilities to the neighboring villages. But the communal riots of 1980 paralyzed all the works of the sisters. One of the sisters who were the victim of the riots says, 'On the 6th of June 1980, there were communal riots between the people of the plains and the hill tribes. On the 11th of June at 3 p.m. a large number of young men came by trucks with loud shouts, sharpened knives, bamboos and surrounded the whole compound. From among them a few went ahead with their planned task of the day and set the parish house ablaze. Seeing the fire close by, we all escaped to the jungle thinking that our convent would be the next target. The whole night we remained in the jungle helpless and in fear. The next day the Central Reserve Police Force came to our rescue. We were taken to Holy Cross Convent at Durjoynagar where we stayed for three months till the situation calmed down.' Later the convent was closed down and the sisters were withdrawn. The past ordeal at Mariamnagar evokes fear and disappointment, but the mission there yielded a rich harvest in the persons of Tresa Lagardo, Malati and Sumita who were the vocations that bloomed in Mariamnagar parish.

It was in June 1986, in response to the request of the parish priest of Mariamnagar, Sylvine sent a sister for a diploma in Grihini Training and a nurse to continue the medical and developmental works in the villages of South Tripura. They stayed every month for about 20 to 25 days at Amarpur and extended their services to the neighboring villages. Developmental works such as mass immunization programme, saving scheme and faith formation activities were organized by the sisters in collaboration with the priests who were stationed there. Now they render their services, in three schools managed by the Holy Cross Fathers but they have boarding's and social development projects of their own.

Roger Marcil of Holy Cross School Agartala wrote to Macrina on April 30, 1970: 'our proposition of starting an English medium school has brightened up quite a bit and the whole town is fired up with the idea. The response is good. I'm sure that we can make of this institution a living witness. This will go a long way towards a greater acceptance of the church by the public at large, a gain by no means small in Northeast India. People are very glad over the prospect of having a private English medium school and they are ready to pay whatever it will cost. The director of education has been after us for years as he wants us to

start an English medium school. As this project may still take a year or two, i.e. after the Silchar English medium school is put up on a better footing, he suggests that we help him with his own Central School in Agartala, until such a time as we wish to start our own school. He would provide for transportation to and from town, would give the standard salaries to the Sisters, etc. In fact, it looks rather interesting, from the point of view of the project itself. Education in Tripura is certainly worthy of our efforts. The Sisters could do a tremendous amount of good, even amongst the staff of the school, beyond what they could do to the children in the manner of education. The director, Mr. Chatterjee, spoke of 100 children, from ages 3 to 5, whom he would like to admit to the kindergarten of the said school. He also said that when you start your own school, I'll be behind your project, giving all my strength. He's extremely keen on getting some sisters since the administration has been trying for years to put up an English medium school of all India standards without success. The Sisters would have to be all trained for nurseries. This question of training is extremely important as the school in question is a central school, formally approved by New Delhi, where wards of officers will come and therefore standards as regards qualifications have to be met.'

In 1970, at the request of Marcil who started the Holy cross English Medium School, sisters from Mariamnagar community started teaching in this school situated in Abhoynagar, six kilometers away from Mariamnagar. The sisters would stay at Abhoynagar during the week and return to Mariamnagar at the week end. In June 1974 Holy cross community was established in Abhoynagar. In 1976 when the school was shifted from Abhoynagar to Durjoynagar, the residence of the sisters too was shifted. The sisters taught catechism and needlework classes in the school. Later the sisters studied language and took up teaching as their skill in the language improved. Roger Marcil wrote to Macrina on 4th March 1971: 'I have only praise for the work of the Sisters, they have worked to the satisfaction, if not the amazement of everybody. By obtaining good results at teaching, their first task and through their whole style of life the Sisters have contributed a great deal towards fostering better understanding and good will for the church in this part of Northeast India.'

Kattalcherra village, wherein the convent is situated, is mainly of Darlong tribe. Though each village has a Bengali medium Primary school, the tribal's who are pushed to the background in the state, have a longing to send their children to English medium school. With the united efforts of Denzil D'souza, Bishop of Silchar, Mathew Vadakkedom, the Provincial superior of Holy Cross, Sylvine, the Superior General of Bethany congregation,

Hormis John, the Parish priest and Canice, the regional superior, the long felt need of the tribals of Kattalcherra and nearby villages was met.

On the 3rd of July 1983, a community was erected. The very next day of the arrival, sisters took up a plan of action and conducted a socio economic survey. Sisters were engaged in teaching and hostel apostolate. The school has progressed in leaps and bounds in these years under the management of the Holy Cross Fathers and the leadership of the Bethany sisters. Two sisters were set aside for social, medical and pastoral work. The sisters started visiting the villages, forming the women's groups and Self Help Groups, working with the youth, and developmental activities like tailoring, weaving and making of agarbati. The sisters were also involved in medical apostolate, attending to the sick and visiting the villages. Late Irene Teresa strained every nerve muscle to uplift the people from hunger and poverty by introducing saving scheme, animal husbandry, informal education and sewing classes.

The Holy Cross Dispensary at Kattalcherra, in the Dhalai District of Tripura was established in 1984. The dispensary is managed by the Bethany Sisters and is one of the oldest dispensaries in the Diocese of Agartala. The sisters in its early stage had a very vast area to reach out with their medical assistance. The sister nurse from Kattalcherra with the help of catechists and health workers looked after the health needs of the people now belonging to the parishes of Kumarghat, Ambassa and Kattalcherra. In the initial days of the dispensary there were no other medical facilities available in the region where people could confidently approach to get help for their ailments. Hence the Holy Cross Dispensary was the only source of consolation for them. The objectives of the Dispensary were to carry on the mission of Jesus the compassionate healer, to impart knowledge on the preventive, promotive and curative aspects of health, to promote wholeness of health, to motivate the people to practice home remedies and herbal medicine. The Dispensary provides awareness programmes on health, healthy environment and ecology, training to the health workers in order to assist the villagers and provide first-aid to the people. They are trained to help the people live healthy and hygienic lives, immunization programme, mobile clinics, training on herbal medicines, and school health programmes.

As the need was felt, Bethany Sisters started one more community in Depacherra, in the south district of Tripura in the year 1988. Initially the sisters came from Agartala and stayed in the village for 15-20 days in a month. They were engaged in treating patients,

conducting immunization camps regularly and instructing people on health and hygiene. Sisters carried on the work of catechizing the people, teaching them prayers and praying with them. Weaker students who were attending Bengali medium schools were given coaching classes. Adult education classes, teaching knitting, tailoring and weaving to the women folk, taking an economic survey of the area and teaching them saving schemes were a few of the daily activities of the sisters. They started a Grihini centre as Nirmala Vocational Training Centre where the girls are trained in tailoring, weaving, knitting and are taught to read and write.

The Bethany sisters started St. Joseph's Health Centre at Depacherra, a very remote area on the 8th of February 1988. The objectives were to share in the healing ministry of Jesus, to be compassionate, kind and loving to the helpless and needy people, to conduct health awareness programmes, to train community health workers and to form village community health centres. The nurse sister conducted a mobile clinic and incidental health teaching to individuals and groups in the families and in the villages. In the past years many health programmes have been conducted both at the centre and in the villages around. In September 1990, the sisters got a tube well drilled with the financial help of the Block Development Officer (BDO) and were blessed with sufficient water. On a portion of the land demarcated for the use of the convent the sisters planted rubber in 1991. In 1992, the BDO provided barbed wire for fencing the rubber plantation. Around 1991-92 the community also got a fishery pond constructed with the assistance of the BDO who sent his men to do the digging.

Bethany's mission at Depacherra had been multi-dimensional. While two or three sisters teach in the parish school, a nurse sister and a social worker attend to the socio-medical and pastoral aspect of the mission which includes varied activities. The sisters in this field were always on the move, touring the villages to give medical aid, instructing, catechizing, assisting the local church in their activities and conducting seminars. They had built up credibility with the government officials, security personnel and even doctors. That was why the Chief Medical Officer of the District Hospital would provide free medicine to the sisters. Doctors volunteered to give free service in the dispensary and in the villages. The BDO was ever ready to be of help and went out of his way to assist the good works undertaken by the sisters in the villages of Depacherra. In April 1992, the tribal Welfare Secretary gave Rs.8000/- to take the hostel children on excursion. Such was the concern of

the officers and they were willing to support a good work when they saw it being done with a good intention.

The sisters worked in collaboration with the Government as well as Non-governmental Organizations. They conducted training programmes for the health workers, seminars for youth, women and leaders of the villages became a yearly feature from 1991. They also made time to register and coach school drop outs to continue their education through National Institute of Open Schooling. On 28th April 1992, a rehabilitation camp for the handicapped was held as part of a government project called Community Approaches to Handicap Development. Under this project, four persons were trained and appointed mainly to identify different types of handicaps like mental, physical, blindness, dumbness, deafness, paralysis stroke, nutrition deficiency etc. A survey conducted under this programme identified 120 cases of total disability and they were given treatment and taught to rehabilitate themselves in their own villages. Some of them have formed a Self Help Group. From 1998, the sisters would go to the villages twice a week to conduct Bible classes and join them in prayers. The presence of the sisters seems to have a positive impact on the life of students, parents and people in general. The sisters also look after the girls' hostel which belongs to the parish. From 2005 the community has taken up the prison ministry. In a span of two and a half decades, Depacherra village has offered three sisters to Bethany.

Nirmala Vocational Training Centre was formally inaugurated on February 10, 1991. It provides skill training in weaving, tailoring, embroidery and knitting to drop outs and illiterate girls. Literacy programme for trainees, preparing herbal medicine and food preservation skills, like pickle and juice making are the other activities done to empower women. In the first year there were 14 girls at the centre. Besides empowering themselves, they also turned out to be good support staff for the sisters. They developed leadership skills and accompanied the sisters on their family visits and prayer services in the villages. In November 1991, the first batch of trainees appeared for an interview in the Block Office and succeeded in getting jobs. Every year, a steady number of girls came and joined the course. Some of the trainees were receiving stipend through Training of Rural Youth for Self-employment a central government scheme. In 1995 some Grant in Aid was received for the centre, but otherwise the centre was financed by the Province. On completion of their training, the girls were given a certificate, a sewing machine and some help to establish themselves.

In the year 1999 a fourth community of the sisters was started in Dharmanagar in North Tripura. This community mainly worked in the school.⁷³⁹ The sisters continue to work hard to bring up the new school giving all round development to the students. The first batch of class x students wrote examination in 2009 and came out with 100% result. The same standard continues till today. People seem to be happy with the services and the value based education, they co-operate well with the administration and support it. On January 21, 2009 a hostel for Catholic girls was opened with 13 girls. At present the number has reached to 46. While one sister is in charge of the hostel, a warden is also employed to look after the day-to-day activities. The girls are given faith formation and material, spiritual and emotional needs are also taken care of. The government of Tripura provides hostel stipend to tribal children. Hence they are able to pursue their education without much financial burden on their parents.

During the subsequent years, the school building was put up. The works begun by the pioneering sisters have been carried on, with a few additions made. Sisters make it a point to make a prayer for the families they visit. Local people are invited for some celebrations in the school. Despite the challenges, the sisters have survived the floods and all the hurdles placed on their way. The mission seems to be moving from strength to strength. The local people, the youth, members of the Lion's Club and parents have been instrumental in protecting the sisters when on the 24th of October 1999 the miscreants made an attempt to burn the abode of the sisters made of small thatched building.

Bethany had a long cherished dream to start an educational institution of its own administration in the Golden Jubilee Year (1962-2012) in the Northeast. January 9, 2012 was the day when the new convent at Khayerpur in Agartala was inaugurated and on the 25th of January of the same year Bethany Convent School was opened with 47 children; 24 in Nursery and 23 in K.G.I. The parents are supportive to the institution. Upon their initiative the children had a picnic along with the teachers and the parents within a month of the opening of the school which reveals the rapport built up by the sisters with the parents and the teachers. Stephen Rotluanga, the Bishop of Aizawl opines that 'We are privileged and indebted to sisters for quality education, health, social and pastoral ministries. We are grateful for their exemplary and faithful commitment, dedication, selfless sacrifices and for many local vocations to strengthen the local church. Just a handful of sisters set foot in Northeast

⁷³⁹ *Op.cit.*,pp.116-121.

mission in 1962 and today they are grown into a province. Their membership too has grown and it is a matter of great pride to note that they have promoted local vocations.⁷⁴⁰

5.6.5 Mission in Manipur

Bishop Abraham Allangimattathil, Bishop of Kohima-Imphal Diocese was on the lookout for a religious congregation to take care of the Thanlon mission, in Manipur's Churachandpur District. Though the Bishop asked Bethany sisters to take up, the congregation was not keen due to its extreme isolation from other houses of the institute. As Bethany had already made an agreement with the Jesuits to open a house in Viswema and the Bishop would not permit unless a house was also opened in Thanlon, the Superior General was forced to send the sisters to Thanlon mission. The beginning was difficult and it took a considerable time for the sisters to adjust to the new environment, people and the culture.⁷⁴¹ A girls boarding was opened in February 1987. Sisters spent hours after the school doing gardening and visiting families. They put all their efforts in teaching which was well appreciated. In order to help out the less privileged children who had no option but to continue their higher studies in the local government school, the school was upgraded to High School in 1989. The ethnic conflict between the Kuki and Paite tribes in July 1997 led to shower of bullets on the convent on 16th July. This tension continued for months together and the school could not be reopened even by the beginning of January 1998. Finally the sisters officially left Thanlon on 15th April 1998. In their twenty years of existence in Thanlon, Bethany sisters were blessed with two vocations from the place.

Bethany Convent, Canchipur in Imphal- being Bethany's second house in Manipur was opened on 23rd January, 1989. The sisters lived in the school rooms and continue to do so with some modification and additions. Their main apostolate is teaching. People of the place opine that if not for the sisters, the school would not have flourished especially when Mathew Manianchera- the principal of the school was brutally murdered in 1990 by an underground faction, the sisters manifested their courage and carried on the administration of the school. Apart from school work the sisters visited houses and prayed for the families. The sisters have taken up teaching of catechism in the Boy's Boarding run by the priests. They prepare them for the Liturgy and in the villages children are prepared for baptism and confirmation whenever the need arises. They accompany the priests to the villages for Sunday Mass. But in

⁷⁴⁰Golden Jubilee of North East Province, *A Magazine, op.cit.*

⁷⁴¹ Sr.Mary Naulak B.S., *op.cit.*,p. 67-68.

the given circumstances their movements were rather restricted due to the fear of what might happen. Demands for money and threats from the various groups of insurgents continue unabated. The convent also serves as a sort of transit house for candidates from different districts of the state. A good number of girls have joined Bethany from these areas.

‘The Bethany sisters have seen the growth and development of the church in Northeast India. The congregation has contributed its share in the growth and development of the church in the region. The sisters are approachable, cordial, hospitable, accommodative, missionary minded and people-friendly. I am particularly grateful to the sisters who have supported, encouraged and helped to grow as a priest in the first years of my priestly pastoral ministry. I must acknowledge that the congregation stood by us in the most trying circumstances in the history of the Archdiocese-the assassination of Mathew Manianchira, the then principal of catholic school, Canchipur near fatal shooting and wounding of Tomy Manjaly, the then principal of the same school, during the ethnic conflicts, student unrest in catholic school, Canchipur’ says Dominic Lumon, Archbishop of Imphal.⁷⁴²

5.6.6 Bethany Sisters in Meghalaya

Shillong was inaccessible to Bethany sisters in spite of persistent efforts to set foot into this city and avail the opportunities to educate the young sisters, specially the daughters of the soil. On 16th July 2002, forty years after Bethany Sisters had set foot in Northeast India, they were privileged to have a house at Nongrimbah in Shillong. This house would serve as study cum transit house for the sisters of the Province but the sisters started to involve themselves in the life of the parish, taking active part in liturgical celebrations, weekly prayer meetings, attending funeral rites and taking initiative in praying at the deathbed of the dying in the locality. They started preaching the Word of God at the weekly prayer meetings as and when requested by the catechist in charge. Regular family visits on Sundays brought them closer to people.

One of the apostolates after learning the need of the people of the locality was to reach out to the children with single parents. Therefore a project of helping children from K.G to class X was launched with the generous help of Swedish Organization for Individual Relief (SOIR). The project provided the children with monthly school fees, books and uniforms, gifts on occasions like Christmas celebrations, sports items, Christmas play etc.

⁷⁴²Golden Jubilee of the North East Province of the Bethany Sisters, *op.cit.*

Remedial classes for slow learners helped the children to measure up to their counterparts in different schools.⁷⁴³ The sisters have built rapport with their neighbors and the people feel at home with the involvement of the sisters in the pastoral activities. Sisters avail their services in the parish as and when required. They join the Sunday family prayer along with the people, visit families, hospitals and attended funerals. The 'Bethany Lay Association' was formed in 2008 and six members made their commitment in 2010. The sisters formed the 'Little Flower Club' with the little children of the neighborhood in 2008. These children enjoy spending their precious two hours on Sundays at the Convent with Sisters. Pre-Christmas Celebrations are held annually mainly for the sponsor-children, members of the 'Little Flower Club' and other neighboring children.⁷⁴⁴

The pioneering group of sisters entered Jongksha village on 2nd February 2004. According to the terms of agreement between Bethany sisters and Holy Cross Fathers, the community should have a nurse for the dispensary, two sisters for pastoral work which includes touring the villages and two sisters to teach in the school that has classes up to higher secondary.⁷⁴⁵ The patient's began to drop in for treatment. Initially, the Province gave financial support for the purchase of medicines and other requirements. The nurse sister not only treats the patients but also takes classes for the people of the village on health and hygiene. They have formed Self Help Groups in the village as well.⁷⁴⁶ Quality education is imparted with the cooperation of the Holy Cross Fathers. Academic performance of the students over the years has been progressive with good results. Discipline, character formation, all round development and awareness of social concerns are emphasized with much effort applying many tips and measures by the priests and sisters.

Assemblies are conducted on value-based themes. Prayer experiences are given for the school children through retreats. In-service training for teachers is provided every year in order to improve the quality of teaching. Sunday catechism was regularized in the year 2004 with the help of the youth and the teachers of the parish. In 2006 'Christeen', an association for teenagers was initiated and is carried on by the sisters. The women, men, youth and teenagers associations are guided and supported by the sisters through mentoring and spiritual guidance. Thus, the catholic families especially the children and youth are helped to form right values and good character. Irregular marriages are rectified and relationships outside the

⁷⁴³ *Op.cit.*, p.162.

⁷⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p.163.

⁷⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p.183.

⁷⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

wedlock are on the decrease. There is decrease in the dropouts among the students, most of them complete their higher secondary education, pursue higher education, find jobs and a decent living.⁷⁴⁷ Overall the sisters have built good rapport with people. People render support, cooperation and encourage the sisters through their appreciation for the services rendered to them.

When the Bethany Sisters took up the hostel ministry there were 35 girls from classes V to XII. Gradually the number in the hostel increased. In 2010, there were 69 girls and a warden assisted the sister in charge of the hostel. Mawkynew Development Block assisted financially to build a new kitchen for the hostel in 2009. Social Welfare Centre provided financial assistance for buying foodstuff for the hostel. Sisters spend 20 days in a month visiting 22 villages of the parish. They visit the families and conduct prayer services, prepare the people for the reception of Sacraments, preach the Word of God, help in arrangement of the Church services and celebrations. They also assist the priests in house and cemetery blessings.

The sisters involved in other apostolates are closely in touch with the people of the parish. They assist in pastoral work joining in prayer services, attending funerals, visiting families of the village, visiting the sick in their homes and hospitals, praying with families in their special needs. The sisters have made efforts to learn the local language, the culture and the customs of the people and adapted themselves to the climatic conditions. They take care of the parish church with the help of the hostel girls especially seeing to the cleanliness, decoration, order and maintenance of the church articles. Apart from catechizing, instructing and preaching in the villages, Catholics in every village are helped in their spiritual growth through regular administration of Sacraments with due and appropriate preparation. In 2007, Bethany Lay Association was formed with eight members and the number increased very soon. In 2009, eighteen members made their commitment. Sisters have motivated the parents of boys and girls of the village who did not attend school and were engaged in grazing the cows for evening literacy classes. The project was supported by 'World Vision.' The Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan has supplied tape recorder and benches for the evening literacy classes. At present the sisters help about 60 weaker students who do not have the facility for learning in their homes, by taking classes in the evenings regularly.

5.6.7 In Arunachal Pradesh

⁷⁴⁷*Ibid.*, p.186.

By 2008, Bethany had established houses in six of the seven Northeastern states and was waiting for an opportunity to serve the people of Arunachal Pradesh. George Palliparambil, the Bishop of Miao offered an invitation to work at Namsai in the diocesan school and help out in the parish. A house, hostel for girls, opportunity to take part in the evangelisation and catechetical work of the parish and stipend for maintenance of the sisters was offered to the sisters. On the 1st of June 2008 the school reopened with 54 students in K.G and class I. Sisters opened a girls' hostel with 13 girls. Thus the 30th Bethany Community in Northeast Province and the first house in Arunachal Pradesh was officially established on July 15, 2011. Sisters have built up good rapport with the parents and the neighbourhood community.

5.6.8 Mission in West Bengal

Sisters working in North East India had to pass through Calcutta and halt there to get their train reservations, as direct trains from South India and the Northeast were not available. Sisters were often stranded at Howrah station for several days and usually spent time at the railway station or sought accommodation in some convent far away. So the convent at the Cathedral campus was opened on 27 May, 1980. Over the years the convent has become a home away from home for many priests and sisters passing through the city and in need of a place to rest. The sisters offer the hospitality of the original Bethany home of the Gospel in their life and services.

In the beginning, the sisters assisted in the parish activities like teaching of catechism, liturgical instruction and club for the children. They joined to pray with the people while visiting the houses which helped them to discover the plight of the working girls in Kolkata. To improve their condition, sisters started adult education and sewing classes but they were on the lookout for a more lasting form of involvement in other fields as well. At the request of Archbishop Henry D'Souza, the sisters were involved in diocesan schools' administration, supervision and teaching in Loyola school at Kidderpore since 1987. In 1989 the educational ministry was extended to St. Berchmans School, Moulali and in 1988, evening classes for school going students were started and conducted regularly.

Literacy classes for the street children and slum children were also initiated and later organized in 1992 with the acquisition of two classrooms for about 100 children. Students were prepared to get admission in formal schools for class I-IV by way of awarding

Promotion Certificates. In 1993 sisters gave up teaching in St. Berchmans School, Moulali and extended their services to St. Aloysius Orphanage and Day School, Howrah. Sisters are in charge of Primary and Secondary sections. They teach and help in the administration of the school. They take active part in conducting assembly and looking after the discipline. In the 1990s sisters took up the work of sponsorship for over 90 poor students which was a great help for the children from the lower economic strata. The programme was headed by the Calcutta Salesians (Don Bosco Nitika).

Individual Health Care (IHC) for elderly was started in 1989. The sisters are actively involved in faith formation. They give religious instruction to people of different age groups and also prepare children and adults to receive the sacraments. Thus the institutions of the Bethany sisters in the major cities like Silchar, Calcutta, Aizawl, Agartala and Dimapur have always been places of welcome to all missionaries and serve as a base and support in transit, for business and contact with government departments. As the number of institutions grew, this service also demanded greater sacrifices on the part of those inmates stationed in the transit houses.

At the invitation of Henry D' Souza, the then Archbishop of Calcutta diocese, the first batch of Bethany sisters reached Chittaranjan in June 1990 to take over the administration and management of St. Joseph's Convent High School as well as St. Joseph's Hindi Primary School. The sisters strive to achieve high standards of moral, spiritual and academic distinction. Much care is taken to keep up quality in all spheres. All round development, value based education, development of personality, computer education and leadership training were given prime importance. The institution kept growing in number and merit.⁷⁴⁸ All through the years, the Chittaranjan Locomotive Works administration saw that every facility was provided within their limits for the education of their wards. In 1998, they began construction of another building to accommodate the growing number of students. To keep the school abreast and to benefit from the latest technology, Smart Class e-learning was introduced in 2009. Computer literacy was introduced from class I.

St. Joseph's Hindi School saw remarkable progress. Education is imparted to all types of children who speak 17 different languages with a mixed group of parents to deal with, hailing from different parts of India as they are the employees of Central Railway Locomotive Engine Producing Company. A few of the lepers' children were attending the

⁷⁴⁸ *Op.cit.*, p. 117.

Hindi Primary School.⁷⁴⁹ The sisters visit the families particularly students' and teachers' houses. They pray for them and with them on various occasions. Bethany Lay Associates too are vibrant in all church activities. The school has been extending non-formal education to the school drop-outs and to the less privileged of the locality through evening school which is organized systematically. Sashi Rosalia who joined the Bethany institute from this place in 1992 now serves in Africa, thereby partaking in the mission of Bethany across the seas.

On 7th June 1991 another community was formally established to run the Meghmala Roy Education Centre for the Archdiocese of Calcutta and take it up to High School level. Sisters were free to go beyond the school and take up other activities, like tailoring centre, spoken English classes etc for the upliftment of the poorer sections of the society. Though teaching remains the chief work of the sisters in Behala, fee concessions and attention to the economically weaker students featured on a priority list where about 10% of the income is spent on them. Between 2006 to 2009 the school scaled its height by obtaining shields in inter school competitions and the students participated in the national level quiz. The parent's day which was held in Rabindra Sadan on the theme 'The Evolution of India' was highly appreciated by the parents and the general public. The quality of education was applauded by an officer of the State Education Department in these words, 'We are never aware of such a good school in Behala! The sisters are a real boon to the people of Behala who should be grateful to them and cooperate with them in the education of their children.'⁷⁵⁰In 2010, the community introduced Bethany Lay Association and 10 members have been initiated so far.⁷⁵¹ The Campus also has a pre-novitiate where the future's Bethany Sisters receive their training as well.

The sisters intensified their friendly visits to the neighborhood and the villages with the purpose of reaching out through some form of ministry. They initiated the work of women –organization with the support of Panchayat Pradhan and ward members. They ventured into getting to know the unknown ten villages around their convent. They exercised courage and patience in initiating the socio-medical ministry at Barasat. The sisters took up mobile health care services to 10 villages of Kadambagachi from 1999. Self Help Groups too were initiated in six villages, women animators were selected and trained. From 2005, skill training of women in tailoring and animal rearing was introduced to the women of the

⁷⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 125.

⁷⁵¹ *Ibid.*

villages through a two-year project through Functional Vocational Training Forum, Bangalore. This project helped the villagers whereby women came forward to utilize employment opportunities through six months' courses in tailoring. This particular training is continued even today by way of shifting the village based training centre. The impact has been in terms of women progressing towards a just society, socially and economically. The increasing number of Self Help Groups became a base for adopting more development initiatives in the form of education on socio-political issues, gender justice and skill training for women. The women empowerment activities were conducted in an all inclusive pattern by way of including the Panchayat personnel, local leaders and the men from the villages in the process of planning the change initiatives for the villagers.

The socio-medical endeavor of the community was given official identity as Bethany Janvikas Samiti in 2005. In 2006, 'Limerick Ireland Calcutta Calling Group' a voluntary group of donors from Limerick-Ireland came forward to support the development activities of the sisters in the villages. With their annual monitoring visits they have committed themselves in supporting the entire socio-medical programme of the sisters year after year.⁷⁵² A few batches of novices and pre-novices too had their village exposure programme in these villages which has enhanced the effect on the mission of the sisters. Spoken English classes for the youth in 2008 and tailoring classes for girls of the neighbourhood were conducted. Beside productive gardening and other aspects of housekeeping, preparation and practice of home remedies among the members of some Self Help Groups were introduced. Two sisters are set apart for the village ministry. Over the years, the sisters enjoy a cordial rapport with the neighbourhood and have made their presence felt in the society through their ministry of caring for the poor and the marginalized.⁷⁵³

Bethany Novitiate, Barasat is another training house where the young girls begin their life of discovery and growth in the peaceful atmosphere under the guidance of their formators. Starting from 1998 when the first batch of novices made their first commitment till 2011, two hundred and twenty four novices have professed from this novitiate and have been sent out to different states for the mission.

⁷⁵² *Ibid.*, pp.143-144.

⁷⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 145.

On 31st May 2006 the community at Sulantu was erected although the admissions to nursery started on the 18th of April and the classes were formally started on 8th of May of the same year. The parents of 34 newly admitted students were invited for a special prayer service on this historic day. When the school re-opened in June after the summer holidays the number of students in the school had increased so much that it became necessary to divide the students into two sections and so the hall was used as classroom. On 7th May 2007, school reopened in the new building. The number of students in the school had reached to 183. On 3rd April 2008, the new academic year started with two sections in each class. The number of students in the school had reached up to 295. In the 3rd year of its being, three teachers had joined the staff of the school. The staff strength rose to 7. Besides school work, the sisters at Sulantu are engaged in pastoral works like visiting families in the neighborhood.

5.6.9. Northeast Presence in Mangalore, Karnataka

The dream of the sisters to have a community of their own in the historical setting of the origin of Congregation fulfilled in a place not far away from Bethany Motherhouse, Bendur (Mangalore) in 2007. The Bethany Generalate put up a huge building for the service of the senior citizens who want to spend their time peacefully surrounded by sisters. Having worked closely with the Bethany sisters for more than a decade, Dr. Jessy Tellis Nayak, a leading social activist of Mangalore, was appreciative of their service to the marginalised children of the society. She was a source of inspiration to her sister Mrs. Roshni Tellis Bandarkar to donate her land as a gift to be used in the best way possible to benefit the deserving people. Soon 'Devakripa' had a stream of visitors. The number of inmates gradually increased and presently there are twenty inmates at Devakripa. The home has seen the deaths of quite many inmates till date.

Within a short span of time, the sisters established cordial relationship in the neighborhood by their participation in the activities of the parish. Members gathered occasionally at Devakripa for their spiritual activities giving the sisters much joy. Sisters visit the sick in the neighborhood and in old age homes, attend funerals, prayer meetings and make their presence felt in the locality. People expressed satisfaction with the involvement of the sisters. The convent also serves as a study house and training house for the young girls of the Northeastern Province. Student sisters as well as aspirants of the Province pursue their education in various institutes of the city. Their spiritual and all round training is taken care of through guidance and other activities.

Bethany sisters in the Northeast work in a number of institutions owned by the institute but managed by the Northeast Province. There are a number of educational institutions both formal and non formal, health centers as well as other centres where they render their service. The sisters manage one Higher Secondary school of their own, four High Schools, three Primary and Higher Primary schools, six Kindergarten or Nursery schools, four Balwadies and Non Formal education centres, one National Open school, nine Boardings and Orphanages, two Vocational Training Centres, one Community College, five Health centres, two de-addiction/rehabilitation centres, one house for the aged and the needy and lastly the Bethany Social Service Society of Northeast in Shillong. Beside these there are a number of diocesan as well as other religious institutions where the Bethany sisters work as well.

Since 1962 the Bethany congregation, despite the upheavals, regularly supplied the missions in this region with a considerable number of persons to enlarge the area of missionary work. This perhaps is no minor contribution and the wisdom and foresight of the administration and training personnel led them to select and train young girls from various parts of India to share the work and ensure the continuity of the developmental work started by them. Thus there was not only a smooth transition from sisters from Mangalore to vocations from the Northeast since 1984 onwards. A rapid expansion of various works because of the large number of girls joining the mission, working with the sisters, learning their method of mission work and even more importantly their spirit of work, sacrifice and service is quite encouraging. The Bethany congregation itself and home communities became the support of the sisters in many ways.

CHAPTER VI: ASSESSMENT OF THE BETHANY SISTERS

RFC Mascarenhas was a dedicated priest who served the poor and the marginalized selflessly till his death on 23rd December 1960. He founded the Congregation of the Sisters of the Little Flower of Bethany who at present work all over India and abroad in several fields, especially the education of the girl child and women empowerment programmes. They are involved in the mission of formal and non-formal education, health care, social and evangelization work, managing de-addiction centres, prevention of HIV/ AIDS. From the present study it is felt that as far as the knowledge of the missionary activities of the Bethany sisters are concerned, their involvement with the people plays a crucial role in determining the impact that the sisters have made on the people. The staff, parents and the general public is a witness to the activities of the sisters in the social, medical and the educational sector. They are appreciative of the missionary activities of the catholic missions and in particular the mission work done by the Bethany sisters in the Northeastern region. Over the years an honest introspection of the missionary activities would help in order to be effective and to make genuine contribution towards the society.

This chapter presents an analysis of the data collected from different categories of respondents in order to address the different objectives set for the present research. As the first four objectives of the study were already achieved through the technique of content analysis, the focus of data collection was mainly to meet the fifth and sixth objectives namely: to investigate the extent to which the Bethany sisters operated in the Northeast region, to study the challenges faced by them and to bring out the position of their mission

enterprise in the postmodern world. With this purpose in mind, the data was collected using quantitative and qualitative techniques of questionnaires and interviews.

6.1. Data analysis of the questionnaires and interviews

In the course of the field visit the researcher felt that there is significant knowledge among the people about the activities of the catholic missions and the Bethany sisters in particular. The level of understanding about the catholic missions and the Bethany sisters is quite satisfactory. The general public is knowledgeable about the work done by the Catholic Church in the field of education, medical, pastoral and social sector. People in all the centres wherever the researcher went to collect data are aware of the presence and activities of the catholic missions and that of the Bethany sisters.

6.1. 1. Educational Contribution

Responses from Staff, parents of students and the past pupils of the schools

No. of respondents: 105

| TABLE NO.3 | | Yes | | No | | Can't Say | |
|-------------------|--|------------|------|-----------|------|------------------|------|
| 6.1.1.a | Views on Educational contribution | 2 | % | 1 | % | 0 | % |
| 1. | The educational institution of the Bethany Sisters is administered effectively and competently | 102 | 97.1 | 1 | 0.95 | 2 | 1.9 |
| 2. | The Sisters working in the school are role models for the staff and the students | 88 | 83.8 | 14 | 13.3 | 3 | 2.86 |
| 3. | Their mission of education has a vision, goal, common thrust and uniform policies | 95 | 90.5 | 5 | 4.76 | 5 | 4.76 |
| 4. | There is understanding and cooperation among the different educational institutions in your area | 69 | 65.7 | 25 | 23.8 | 11 | 10.5 |

| | | | | | | | |
|-------------------|--|-----------|-------------|-----------|-------------|------------|-------------|
| 5. | Teachers appointed in the school are well qualified and competent | 66 | 62.9 | 33 | 31.4 | 6 | 5.71 |
| 6. | The school tends to cater to the poor | 80 | 76.2 | 18 | 17.1 | 7 | 6.67 |
| 7. | The education imparted seems to be more result-oriented rather than value oriented | 48 | 45.7 | 45 | 42.9 | 12 | 11.4 |
| 8. | The Sisters in the school work as a team | 91 | 86.7 | 7 | 6.67 | 7 | 6.67 |
| 9. | The school has helped to create an elite class with no social commitment and concern for the poor | 45 | 42.9 | 52 | 49.5 | 8 | 7.62 |
| 10. | Education is seen more as a source of financial gain than as a service | 34 | 32.4 | 64 | 61 | 7 | 6.67 |
| 11. | The staff are paid just and fair wages | 48 | 45.7 | 40 | 38.1 | 17 | 16.2 |
| 12. | The Sisters maintain relations with the people of their locality | 81 | 77.1 | 16 | 15.2 | 8 | 7.62 |
| 13. | The students who pass out of this school are value oriented | 75 | 71.4 | 19 | 18.1 | 11 | 10.5 |
| 14. | Poor and weak students are supported to cope with their studies | 86 | 81.9 | 15 | 14.3 | 4 | 3.81 |
| 15. | The educational mission of the Sisters has helped to gain recognition and respect in the wider society | 99 | 94.3 | 3 | 2.86 | 3 | 2.86 |
| Avg of 105 | | 74 | 70.3 | 24 | 22.7 | 7.4 | 7.05 |

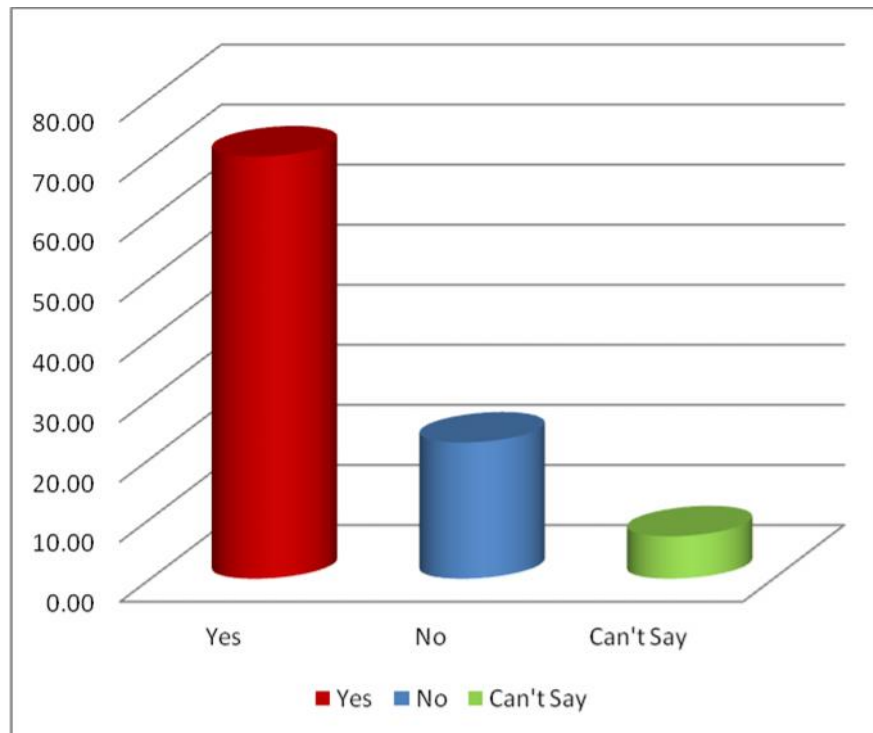


Figure No.1.

Responses from priests and sisters

No. of respondents- 28

TABLE NO.4

| | | Yes | | No | | Can't Say | |
|-----------------|--|-----|------|----|------|-----------|-----|
| 6.1.1.b. | Views on Educational contribution | 2 | % | 1 | % | 0 | % |
| 1. | The educational institution of the Bethany Sisters is administered effectively and competently | 26 | 92.9 | 2 | 7.14 | 0 | 0 |
| 2. | The Sisters working in the school are role models for the staff and the students | 19 | 70.4 | 7 | 25.9 | 1 | 3.7 |

| | | | | | | | |
|------------------|--|-----------|-------------|------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| 3. | Their mission of education has a vision, goal, common thrust and uniform policies | 26 | 92.9 | 1 | 3.57 | 1 | 3.57 |
| 4. | There is understanding and cooperation among the different educational institutions in your area | 18 | 64.3 | 5 | 17.9 | 5 | 17.9 |
| 5. | Teachers appointed in the school are well qualified and competent | 18 | 64.3 | 10 | 35.7 | 0 | 0 |
| 6. | The school tends to cater to the poor | 13 | 46.4 | 13 | 46.4 | 2 | 7.14 |
| 7. | The education imparted seems to be more result-oriented rather than value oriented | 12 | 42.9 | 15 | 53.6 | 1 | 3.57 |
| 8. | The Sisters in the school work as a team | 20 | 71.4 | 7 | 25 | 1 | 3.57 |
| 9. | The school has helped to create an elite class with no social commitment and concern for the poor | 10 | 35.7 | 17 | 60.7 | 1 | 3.57 |
| 10. | Education is seen more as a source of financial gain than as a service | 5 | 17.9 | 21 | 75 | 2 | 7.14 |
| 11. | The staff are paid just and fair wages | 18 | 64.3 | 9 | 32.1 | 1 | 3.57 |
| 12. | The Sisters maintain relations with the people of their locality | 24 | 88.9 | 1 | 3.7 | 2 | 7.41 |
| 13. | The students who pass out of this school are value oriented | 18 | 64.3 | 7 | 25 | 3 | 10.7 |
| 14. | Poor and weak students are supported to cope with their studies | 20 | 71.4 | 7 | 25 | 1 | 3.57 |
| 15. | The educational mission of the Sisters has helped to gain recognition and respect in the wider society | 26 | 92.9 | 1 | 3.57 | 1 | 3.57 |
| Avg of 28 | | 18 | 65.3 | 8.2 | 29.4 | 1.47 | 5.26 |

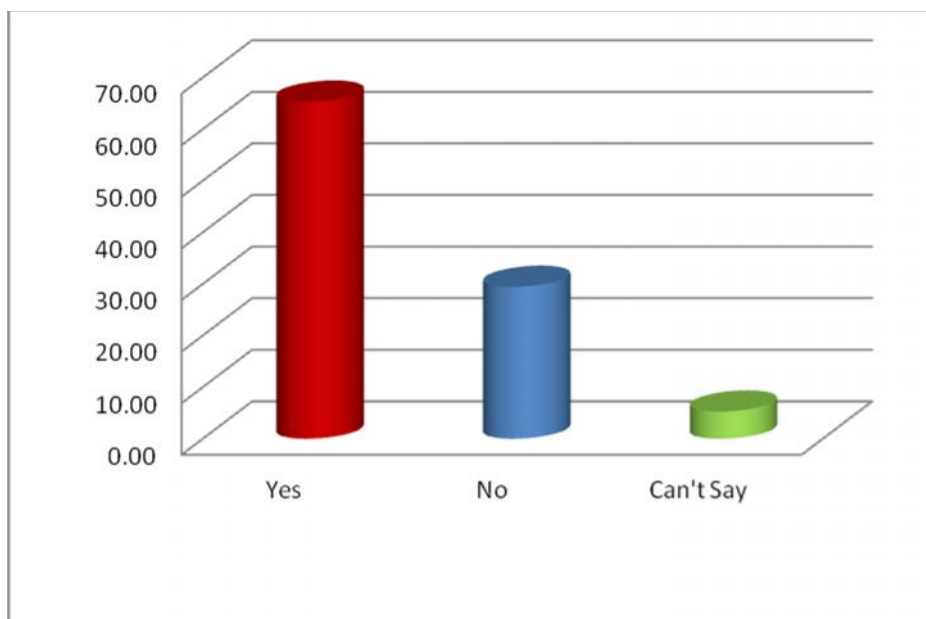


Figure 2

The above tables 6.1.a, 6.1.b. and figure nos: 1 and 2 depict a consensus of opinion among the staff, parents, past students, the sisters as well as priests regarding the role played by the Bethany sisters in the educational sector. It is found that 70.28 per cent of the staff, parents, the past pupils and 65.47 per cent of the priests and the sisters agree that the educational institutions of the Bethany sisters are administered effectively and competently. The sisters working in the schools are role models for the staff and the students. Sisters' mission of education has a vision, goal, common thrust and uniform policies. The sisters are qualified and their quality of teaching is appreciated. There is understanding and cooperation among the various educational institutions of the sisters with the respective state authorities where they render their services.

Sisters in the schools where they serve work as a team and appoint qualified teachers in their educational institutions. Their schools not only cater to the poor but they are helped and supported to cope with the demands of their studies. Those students who are unable to pay their school fees are either exempted from payment and sometimes are helped out by paying from the salary of the sisters too. Some less privileged students are also educated without any expenditure from their side. The sisters impart value based education in their institutions and their schools have helped to create a class of citizens with social commitment and concern for the poor. They consider education as service but pay just, fair wages to the staff in their institutions. Good relations are maintained with the people of their locality by

admitting all those neighborhood children despite their poor social and economic condition. The students who pass out of sisters' schools are value based and continue to live those values inculcated in them. Their contribution to the educational sector has enabled the Bethany sisters to be widely recognized and respected in the society and the Northeastern region as well.

22.66 per cent of the people are not quite satisfied with the quality of education provided by the sisters. The above table nos. 6.1 a, statement no. 2, 4 reveal that the sisters working in the schools have failed to some extent to be role models and they seem to be rather independent in their administrative set up. Some of the parents do not seem to be satisfied with the qualification and competence of the teachers appointed by the sisters in their educational institutions. The number of respondents who agree that the education imparted by the sisters is more result oriented than value oriented also seems to be rather equal with those who agree that the education is value based. But this opinion differs among the people in the religious circle namely the priests and the religious.

There are an equal number of priests and sisters who do not agree that the Bethany sisters cater to the poor in their educational mission which certainly needs a serious introspection as Bethany Congregation was founded to cater to the needs of the poor and the marginalized. Another grievance seems that the staffs are not content with the wages paid to them. 29.28 per cent of priests and religious (see table no. 5.1b) on the whole do not seem to have been satisfied with the education imparted by the Bethany sisters. 5.23 per cent of the priests, sisters and 7.04 per cent of the people are either not aware of the education imparted by the Bethany sisters. This may be as they are not directly associated with the sisters in their educational work as some of these institutions are managed independently by the sisters.

The researcher also gave out questionnaires to 100 students studying in catholic schools in Assam, Tripura and Mizoram. The questions generally related to the quality and value-based education was instilled in them or not. The students were from high schools as well as higher secondary sections. 92 of them responded.

Students' Responses

No. of respondents: 92

TABLE NO. 5

| | | | |
|--|---|---|---|
| 1. Who is your favorite teacher in the school? | 1 | 2 | 3 |
|--|---|---|---|

| | | | |
|---|----|----|---|
| i. Sister | 62 | | |
| ii. Lay teacher | | 30 | |
| iii. Don't know | | | 0 |
| 2. What in him/her did you like? | | | |
| i. Strictness | 14 | | |
| ii. Kindness | | 78 | |
| iii. Don't know | | | 0 |
| 3. What special quality in a sister did you like? | | | |
| i. Creative teaching | 30 | | |
| ii. Compassion | | 58 | |
| iii. Can't say | | | 4 |

From the above table no. 6.1.1 the researcher finds that 62 out of 92 students like the sisters for their kindness and compassion. There is also a significant number of students who like the creative teaching which the researcher considers as creative methods of teaching employed by the sisters in their teaching.

Students' Responses

No. of respondents: 92

TABLE NO. 6

| | | | |
|--|----|---|---|
| 1. Are you happy that you are studying in this school? | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| i. Yes | 90 | | |
| ii. No | | 1 | |
| iii. Can't say | | | 1 |
| 2. What impact has the school had on you? | | | |
| i. Lasting impact | 88 | | |

| | | | |
|--|---|----|---|
| ii. No impact | | 2 | |
| iii. Can't say | | | 2 |
| 3. Do you think you would be a better person if studied in another school? | | | |
| i. May be | 9 | | |
| ii. No | | 74 | |
| iii. Can't say | | | 9 |

Table No.6.1.2 depicts the difference between educational institutions managed by the catholic missions and others. 90 out of 92 students are happy and satisfied to be a part of the catholic institutions where they study and 88 of them feel that the educational institutions have had great impact on them and 74 of them expressed that they would not have been better if they were studying in some other institution. This is an indication that the catholic schools have been making a difference in the lives of those who are part of their institutions perhaps through the values that they inculcate among their students.

Students' Responses

No. of respondents: 92

TABLE NO. 7

| | | | |
|---|----------|----------|----------|
| 1. What co-curricular activities do you have in the school? | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| i. Sports and competitions | 13 | | |
| ii. Co curricular activities | | 75 | |
| iii. Don't know | | | 4 |
| 2. Do you prefer these activities to teaching? | | | |

| | | | |
|---|----|----|---|
| i. Yes | 78 | | |
| ii. No | | 10 | |
| iii. Can't say | | | 4 |
| 3. Have these activities helped you in your all round development and character formation | | | |
| i. Yes | 86 | | |
| ii. No | | 5 | |
| iii. Can't say | | | 1 |

The above table no.6.1.3 indicates that the catholic schools are different in the sense of having lots of co-curricular and extracurricular activities like sports, cultural programmes, competitions and so on which are preferred by the parents for their wards as it gives them all round development. This is also an indicator of the rush for admissions in catholic schools. 78 of the students feel happy to participate in these activities and feel that these activities have helped them in their growth as well as for what they are today. The catholic schools are well known all over the world for their value based and quality education.

Students' Responses

No. of respondents: 92

TABLE NO. 8

| | | | |
|--|----------|----------|----------|
| 1. What have you learnt as a student of this school? | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| i. Values | 72 | | |
| ii. To compete | | 20 | |
| iii. Can't say | | | 0 |
| 2. What values has the school inculcated in you? | | | |

| | | | |
|--|----|----|---|
| i. compassion for the poor and the needy | 75 | | |
| ii. Competitiveness | | 14 | |
| iii. Can't say | | | 3 |
| 3. How do you live those values in daily situations? | | | |
| i. Awareness | 41 | | |
| ii. Desire | | 48 | |
| iii. Don't know | | | 3 |
| 4. What values linger in your mind? | | | |
| i. to help others in need | 67 | | |
| ii. to adjust with all in the society | | 25 | |
| iii. Don't know | | | 0 |
| 5. What gives you purpose in life? | | | |
| i. Values | 49 | | |
| ii. Moral Science classes | | 40 | |
| iii. Don't know | | | 3 |

Table no. 6.1.4 denotes that the catholic institutions are known for their value based education. As mentioned earlier, students are instructed often to help out the poor and the needy in whatever way possible. This is a regular feature of the Bethany schools where a week is marked as social service week and whatever the students contribute during that week is distributed to the less fortunate one's in the villages at least once a year. Most of the students as indicated in the table feel that they have inculcated values mainly the value of compassion and the desire to help out the needy ones in their own ways. Besides they feel that the moral science classes taught by the priests and sisters have helped them to inculcate these values and they have not only awareness but also desire to live those values.

Students' Responses

No. of respondents: 92

TABLE NO. 9

| | | | |
|--|----|----|---|
| 1. In what way are you different from students of other schools? | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| i. Helping those in need | 80 | | |
| ii. Same like them | | 10 | |
| iii. Don't know | | | 2 |
| 2. Do you like to help the poor and the needy? | | | |
| i. Yes | 68 | | |
| ii. Sometimes | | 20 | |
| iii. Can't say | | | 4 |
| 3. Do you like to pray? | | | |
| i. Yes | 79 | | |
| ii. No | | 9 | |
| iii. Can't say | | | 4 |
| 4. Does prayer help you to live better? | | | |
| i. Yes | 80 | | |
| ii. No | | 4 | |
| iii. Can't say | | | 8 |
| 5. How often do you pray? | | | |
| i. Often | 87 | | |
| ii. Never | | 3 | |
| iii. Can't say | | | 2 |

According to table no.6.1.5 seventy six of the students feel that they have been different at least in the practice of the value of charity towards those in need. They have also

inculcated the value of prayer in their lives and 80 of them expressed that prayer helps them to live better lives.

Bethany sisters feel that their past is a story of struggle to bring in peace and harmony in the society. They feel happy that they are useful and are satisfied to work in this part of the region as they have familiarized themselves with the language, culture and customs of the people. They are well accepted by the people. Recalling the initial days of the missions, sisters expressed happiness and pride that there are many officers from among the past students, there is a sense of satisfaction for working hard. The school assemblies were held under the trees and it was a joyful time. Sisters' residence was made of mud but it was a precious place for the sisters as they enjoyed their time with the little children. There were lots of celebrations in the schools including the first Independence Day which was celebrated with mass drill and was well appreciated by the people who attended it. Generally the whole village used to be present for any programme in the school without any formal invitation. No tuitions were taken and no child absented from the school, neither were there any failures in the school. Life was difficult but enjoyable and the moments spent together in the company of each other were happy and joyous.

The sisters have maintained good relations with the neighborhood community. (See table 6.1.ab, statement no.12). The students who pass out from the institutions of the sisters are value oriented.(see Table no. 6.1.a,b: statements no.12,13 and 15) The staff in the schools of the Bethany sisters has high regard for the missionaries as a whole and is admirable of the managing capacity of the sisters. They also find the school as their second home where they are able to forget their home worries and concerns as they find that the sisters are understanding (see table no. 6.6. a, statement no. 10) and give due respect to all those who work with them.

The educational institutions of the Bethany sisters are known for their practical vision and mission statements such as 'Transformative education for fullness of life' and the core values like 'respect for life, nature and culture, excellence in academics, organization as well as co-curricular and extra-curricular activities. (See table no.6.1a, statement no. 3) Their institutions are well organized and known for their discipline, punctuality, cleanliness, strictness and affection. The sisters offer a platform for systematic and focused education. They ignite the hearts and minds of the students through whatever they do for the cause of education. The parents feel that their choice of catholic institutions for the education of their

children was due to the discipline they impart and the methods of teaching which seem to be appealing too. The wards are taught how to pray especially during difficult times, to behave well and to be value oriented (see table no. 6.1a, statement no.13). Sisters have inculcated in the students desire to try their best in whatever they do. Sisters make their classes interesting through the use of stories, posters and other teaching aids. Students feel free with the sisters as they mix freely with all the students.

Some of the parents though they were educated in vernacular government run schools, they had admiration for the students studying in catholic institutions, their disciplined way of life, punctuality in attending the schools as well as the values that they imbibed from the schools where they studied which inspired those parents to send their children to catholic institutions. They feel satisfied with the quality of teaching, the care with which the students are looked after by the sisters has been quite fulfilling to the parents. Etiquettes and good manners are given shape in the lives of students in the schools. Such students who have passed out of the catholic institutions have been successfully coping through life's struggles. The catholic schools give emphasis to spoken English. The general remark of the parents is that 'if someone wants his/her child to be fluent in English and converse, then the option should be a catholic school. Practical knowledge is imparted to the students in the classrooms which brings in good results in the Board Exams. Fee structure is affordable to most of the parents.

On the whole, the Catholic Church is forward in the field of education in the Northeastern part of India. Sisters in particular have been able to change the backwardness of the place through their education. Sometimes people of other religions approach the Catholics to get their wards admitted in catholic schools. Missionaries provide good infrastructure for education of the children. The students belonging to other religions are treated equally and the students are taught to respect all the religions. (See table 6.6 a, b, statements no's: 34-35) Most of the students from the villages are accommodated in the hostels managed by the sisters. (See table 6.3. a, b, statement no.1) All the Catholic students are given admission in catholic schools.

People opine that the Bethany sisters have been doing commendable job in imparting quality education to the children of the region and their dedication to the cause of education has been incomparable. They seem to have been impressed by the discipline of the schools as well as the hostels. The sisters with a vision, goal, common thrust and uniform policies are an

example of hard work, commitment and dedication to the staff. (See table 6.1.a, b, statement no: 3). Though the sisters work under adverse conditions, they bear smiles on their faces. They are trained to work capably in their own field. (See tables 6.6.a, b, and statement no: 4) Staff is happy to work with the Bethany sisters and prefer to be educating their wards in catholic institutions. The love, guidance and support that the staff receives enable them to give their best in service. The staff give the credit of being what they are today to the sisters with whom they have worked and who have been a source of strength and encouragement to them. Whenever needed the staff members are given friendly corrections individually. The staff feels that their association with the institutions of the sisters has been pleasant and fulfilling as well.

Some of the general public has known the catholic schools through the reading of magazines, books, journals, newspapers and the Television shows. They are of the opinion that the catholic schools in general are very impressive. The Catholic Church contributes to the improvement of the society through their social, educational and medical services. The people feel that there is a marked difference between education imparted by the catholic and non-catholic institutions. The curriculum provided by the catholic institutions is advanced, up to date and the way of teaching is student friendly. The rules and regulations of these institutions are appreciable. They have everything in black and white, properly planned and implemented as well. Their system of education is so close to the hearts of its pupils that there exists a lifelong association between the institution and its students which is so visible even after they leave the institution. (See tables no: 6.6.a, b, statement no: 44) The students educated in catholic schools are found to have achieved success in all walks of life and they even remain indebted to their alma mater.

By providing quality education to the children of this region, the Catholic Church has helped to improve the standard of living and the condition of the people. The catholic schools have helped to develop education in the region and these schools are preferred by a majority of the population besides they are also dedicated to their responsibilities which make them successful and effective in their mission field. People are appreciative of the way the missionaries work for the welfare of the human society. They feel that the catholic educational institutions are the best in the country and even outside. Missionaries are the brave hearts who do not hesitate to go to the distant and remotest areas to be part of those societies and uplift the less fortunate and help the people of the area to develop themselves.

They constantly think and take up initiatives to help the masses as they are being focused about their work. The catholic schools have brought about the all round development of school children through the education that they impart. (See table no: 6.6 a, b, statement no: 25) They are committed to the cause of the poor and the marginalized of the society and always give preference to such class of people in admissions as well as fee concessions. (See table no: 6.6 a, b, statement no: 32)

The missionaries are zealous and enthusiastic for mission, working for the benefit of the state and the region where they work. They are tolerant towards all religions which they manifest in their love for brotherhood and unity. (Table no: 6.6.a, b, statement no: 15) The education imparted by them is unparalleled as they also include in their curriculum humanitarian training like community service. Their education system is effective due to the use of smart technology in the class rooms. Those educated in catholic institutions are able to establish themselves, interact and face the challenges of life.

Catholic educational institutions differ from other institutions in their way of teaching and in the way the values are inculcated among their students. Studies are given prime importance and taken seriously by those students who study in convent schools. The concept of 'Parents Day' which is meant to honor the parents can be traced back to the catholic schools and so the catholic missionaries have been trend setters for Government and schools run by other organizations as they too have started emulating the example of the missionaries. The sisters have taught the value of manual work to their students as well as make the students to plant trees in the school campus and around their houses in order to teach the value of caring for mother earth. Time to time, the sisters take the initiative to motivate the students to contribute generously towards the cause of the poor and the less fortunate of the society by distributing clothes, toilet articles and other stuff. (See table no. 6.6. a, b, statement no: 34) By this action, the students are taught the value of charity and love for the poor. The students are made to realize how fortunate they are and their responsibility to care for their own brothers and sisters.

Working in catholic schools has helped the teaching and non-teaching staff to gain knowledge about the Catholic Church and the catholic missions in particular. They feel that the school is their second home. School makes them smart and active. They owe their personality development to the missionaries who work in their schools and also feel fortunate to have associated with them which have enabled them to inculcate important values of life.

(See table no: 6.6 a, b, statement no: 13) They feel that the Catholic Church is not only a place of worship, but also a place to meet people from different parts of the country. Missionary schools provide a serene atmosphere for work. The members of the staff and the parents were of the opinion that their choice of catholic schools for themselves as well as their wards was mainly because they themselves received best education from these institutions and were happy as well as satisfied to have grown up in a catholic environment. As a result they also have realized the value of making their children great human beings through the education they receive in catholic schools. They want for their children not only bookish knowledge but more than that to take part in co-curricular activities which in their opinion will help their wards to adjust themselves to life and the society in which they live.

Some of the staff members opt to work in catholic institutions because of their desire to experience the discipline and the environment of good management along with a desire to develop themselves and their personality. Some of them feel that job satisfaction is what gives them joy, peace and not the amount of salary. They do get opportunities to visit and interact with the staff of other Bethany schools. They also feel that the personnel in catholic institutions work more and speak less. There is a greater need to increase the level of competition between schools, to employ better qualified teachers and to maintain the experienced teachers without replacing them too often.

6.1.2. School Administration

Responses from Staff, parents of students and the past pupils of the schools

No. of respondents: 105

| TABLE NO.10 | | Yes | | No | | Can't Say | |
|--------------------|------------------------------|------------|---|-----------|---|------------------|---|
| 6.1.2.a | School Administration | 2 | % | 1 | % | 0 | % |

| | | | | | | | |
|-------------------|---|-----------|-------------|-----------|-------------|--------------|-------------|
| 1. | The Headmistress monitors and coordinates the teaching in the school | 99 | 94.3 | 4 | 3.81 | 2 | 1.9 |
| 2. | Her leadership style inspires trust and confidence | 92 | 87.6 | 9 | 8.57 | 4 | 3.81 |
| 3. | She takes decisions after proper consultation and due deliberation | 73 | 69.5 | 20 | 19.1 | 12 | 11.4 |
| 4. | Is approachable and available to the staff and students | 86 | 81.9 | 13 | 12.4 | 6 | 5.71 |
| 5. | The Headmistress deals with all justly and fairly | 78 | 74.3 | 16 | 15.2 | 11 | 10.5 |
| 6. | She does not hesitate to call to account those who deviate from the norms and policies of the school | 82 | 78.1 | 9 | 8.57 | 14 | 13.3 |
| 7. | Shows special concern for the welfare of the poor and the marginalized | 86 | 81.9 | 11 | 10.5 | 8 | 7.62 |
| 8. | There is openness and transparency in the administration of the school | 71 | 67.6 | 18 | 17.1 | 16 | 15.2 |
| 9. | The management and administration of the school plan and prepare personnel in advance for the needs of the school | 84 | 80 | 11 | 10.5 | 10 | 9.52 |
| 10. | The appointments in the school are made with fairness and impartiality | 67 | 63.8 | 19 | 18.1 | 19 | 18.1 |
| 11. | The teachers are enabled to play their rightful role in the school | 73 | 69.5 | 19 | 18.1 | 13 | 12.4 |
| Avg of 105 | | 81 | 77.1 | 14 | 12.9 | 10.45 | 9.96 |

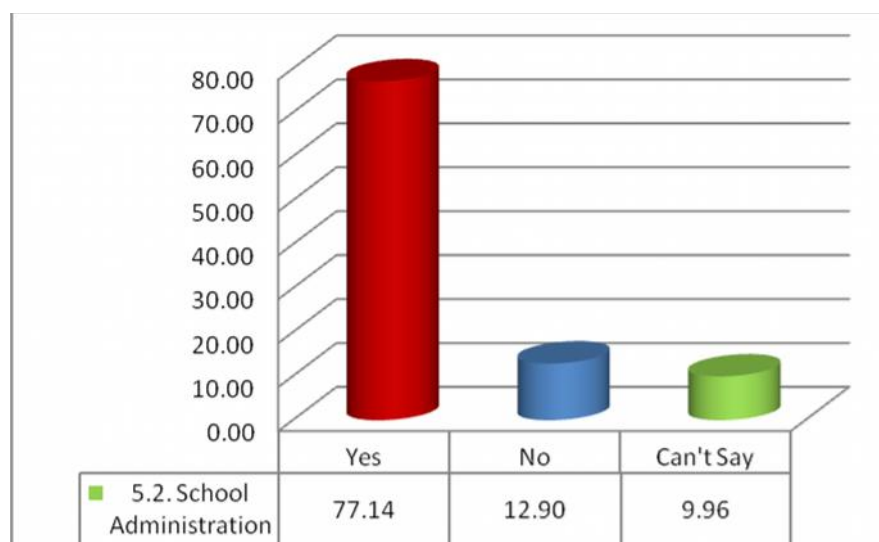


Figure 3

Responses from Priests and Religious

No. of respondents: 28

TABLE NO.11

Yes

No

Can't Say

| 6.1.2. b School Administration | | Yes | | No | | Can't Say | |
|---------------------------------------|--|------------|----------|-----------|----------|------------------|----------|
| | | 2 | % | 1 | % | 0 | % |
| 1. | The Headmistress monitors and coordinates the teaching in the school | 23 | 82.1 | 3 | 10.7 | 2 | 7.14 |
| 2. | Her leadership style inspires trust and confidence | 20 | 71.4 | 5 | 17.9 | 3 | 10.7 |
| 3. | She takes decisions after proper consultation and due deliberation | 20 | 71.4 | 5 | 17.9 | 3 | 10.7 |
| 4. | Is approachable and available to the staff and students | 24 | 85.7 | 3 | 10.7 | 1 | 3.57 |
| 5. | The Headmistress deals with all justly and fairly | 16 | 57.1 | 7 | 25 | 5 | 17.9 |
| 6. | She does not hesitate to call to account those who deviate from the norms and policies of the school | 20 | 71.4 | 2 | 7.14 | 6 | 21.4 |

| | | | | | | | |
|------------------|---|-----------|-------------|------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| 7. | Shows special concern for the welfare of the poor and the marginalized | 18 | 64.3 | 7 | 25 | 3 | 10.7 |
| 8. | There is openness and transparency in the administration of the school | 19 | 67.9 | 3 | 10.7 | 6 | 21.4 |
| 9. | The management and administration of the school plan and prepare personnel in advance for the needs of the school | 17 | 60.7 | 3 | 10.7 | 8 | 28.6 |
| 10. | The appointments in the school are made with fairness and impartiality | 20 | 71.4 | 3 | 10.7 | 5 | 17.9 |
| 11. | The teachers are enabled to play their rightful role in the school | 20 | 71.4 | 4 | 14.3 | 4 | 14.3 |
| Avg of 28 | | 20 | 70.5 | 4.1 | 14.6 | 4.18 | 14.9 |

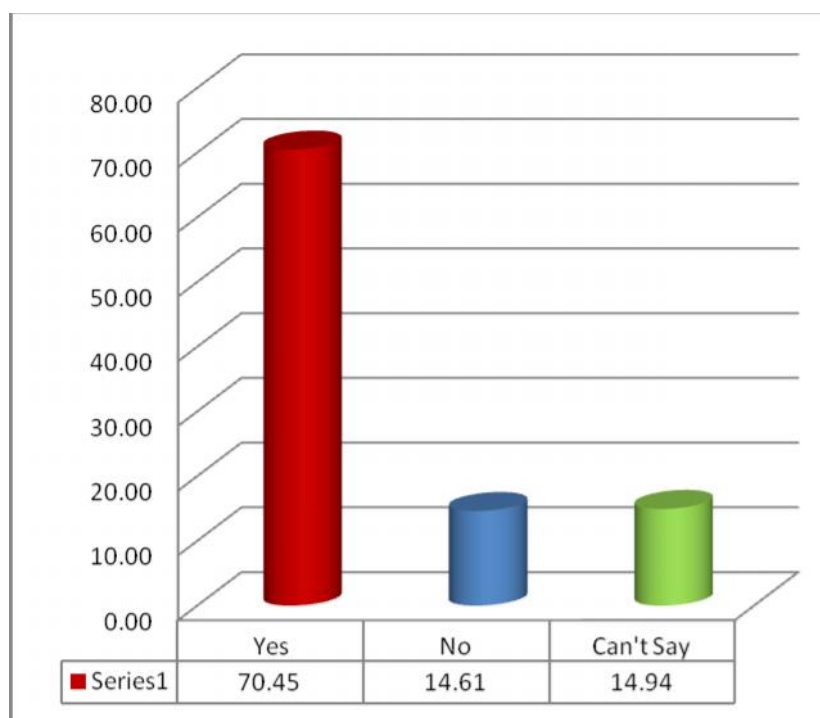


Figure 4

With regard to the administration of the school 77.14 per cent of the people and 70.45 per cent of priests and the religious opine that the Bethany sisters are good administrators and management is quite efficient. The authorities of the school monitor and coordinate the

teaching in the schools. Sisters' leadership style inspires trust and confidence. The staff and the students feel that the authorities are approachable and available. There is fairness and justice in the dealings of the administration. Those who deviate from the norms and policies of the school are called to account. Poor and the marginalized are shown special concern by the administration of the school. Openness and transparency is found in the administration of the school. The management plans and prepares personnel in advance for the needs of the schools, teachers are appointed with fairness and impartiality and the teachers are enabled to play their rightful role in the schools. The administration of the schools is very helpful towards the staff and whenever any guidance or advice is sought, the sisters avail their time for it.

12.90 per cent of people and 14.93 per cent of priests and religious also feel that the school administration is not so efficient. Among all the statements in the above table no. 6.2.b there is no consultation and deliberation while taking decisions especially in matters concerning the schools. The staff are not sufficiently taken into confidence and involved more in taking disciplinary actions or other decisions to facilitate the teachers to play their rightful role in the school. 9.95 percent of the people and 14.61 per cent of the sisters and priests also seem to be unaware of the school administration of the Bethany sisters which could be as mentioned earlier due to non-involvement of these respondents in the educational mission of the Bethany sisters. Frequent change in the administration of the school due to transfers affects the working of the school as well as the staff.

The strength of the management in Catholic Schools is found in its infrastructure, manpower, trust, committed staff, sincerity, discipline and proper utilization of time, friendly social environment, loyalty to the mission and service mindedness. The sisters show their capacity in handling every issue efficiently there is a homely atmosphere for work in their schools. (See table no: 6.6.a, b, statement no: 26) As a result of the education provided by the Bethany sisters people have been able to perceive changes in the society. The presence of the sisters, their visits to the families, listening and talking with the people has helped to improve the condition of the villagers. (See table no: 6.6.a,b, statement no: 31) Sisters have learnt a lot from the people and vice versa.

Though initially there was criticism from the public regarding the work of the sisters, the latter continued with their good work without minding the criticism and that has served as an example for some of the local girls to join the sisters in their missionary endeavors.

Though some of them were attracted by the teaching of the sisters, yet they hardly got an opportunity to teach after becoming sisters as they were engaged either in social or medical work.

6.1.3 Hostel Work

Responses from Staff, parents of students and the past pupils of the schools

No. of respondents: 105

| | Yes | | No | | Can't Say | |
|---|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|--------------|-------------|
| | 2 | % | 1 | % | 0 | % |
| 6.1.3. a. views on Hostel Work | | | | | | |
| 1. The Boarding has played a role in making education accessible to the poor | 65 | 61.90 | 10 | 9.52 | 30 | 28.57 |
| 2. The Boarding is generally equipped with adequate facilities and infrastructure | 61 | 58.10 | 9 | 8.57 | 35 | 33.33 |
| 3. The Boarding has functioned as effective channel of faith formation | 67 | 63.81 | 2 | 1.90 | 36 | 34.29 |
| 4. The Boarding is administered efficiently | 61 | 58.10 | 5 | 4.76 | 39 | 37.14 |
| 5. Boarding succeeds in inculcating and maintaining discipline among the students | 65 | 61.90 | 9 | 8.57 | 31 | 29.52 |
| 6. Today Boarding seems to be more concerned about generating income than about empowering the poor | 27 | 25.7 | 40 | 38.1 | 38 | 36.2 |
| Avg of 105 | 57.7 | 54.9 | 12.5 | 11.9 | 34.83 | 33.2 |

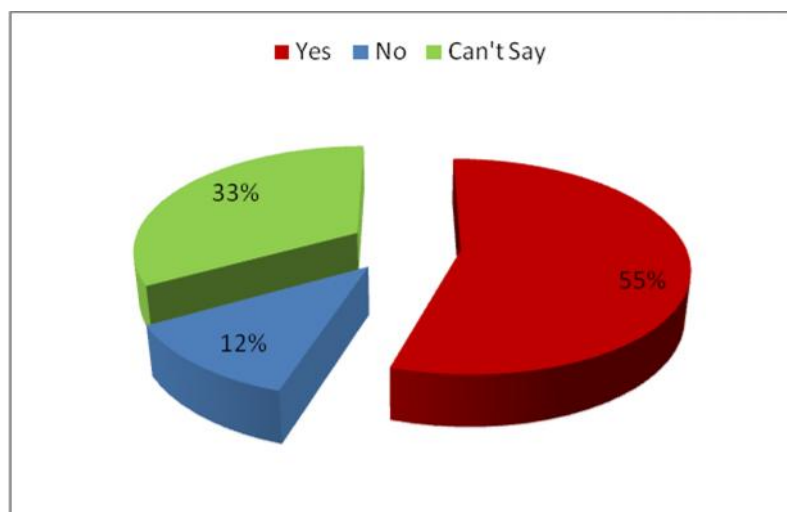


Figure 5

Responses from Priests and Sisters

No. of Respondents: 28

TABLE NO.13

Yes No Can't Say

| 6.1.3.b Views on Hostel Work | 2 | % | 1 | % | 0 | % |
|---|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| 1. The Boarding has played a role in making education accessible to the poor | 22 | 78.6 | 6 | 21.4 | 0 | 0 |
| 2. The Boarding is generally equipped with adequate facilities and infrastructure | 22 | 78.6 | 6 | 21.4 | 0 | 0 |
| 3. The Boarding has functioned as effective channel of faith formation | 19 | 67.9 | 9 | 32.1 | 0 | 0 |
| 4. The Boarding is administered efficiently | 19 | 67.9 | 5 | 17.9 | 4 | 14.3 |
| 5. Boarding succeeds in inculcating and maintaining discipline among the students | 21 | 75 | 5 | 17.9 | 2 | 7.14 |
| 6. Today Boarding seems to be more concerned about generating income than about empowering the poor | 10 | 37 | 16 | 59.3 | 1 | 3.7 |
| Avg of 28 | 18.8 | 67.7 | 7.83 | 28.1 | 1.17 | 4.19 |

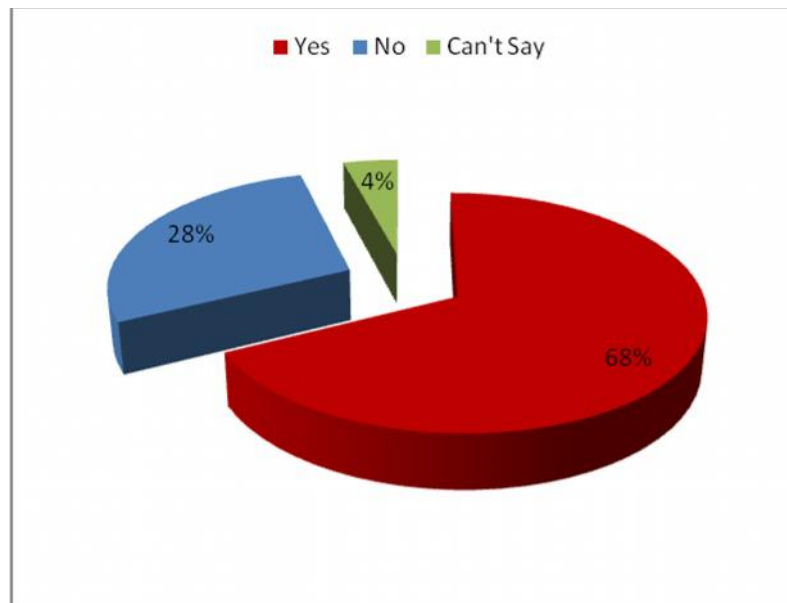


Figure 6

Presently the congregation is privileged to have 36 hostels in different provinces of India under the care of the sisters. These hostels have been a source of religious vocations to Bethany and other congregations. Table no. 6.3. a depicts that 67.26 per cent of the priests, sisters and 54.92 per cent of the people agree that the boarding's managed by the missionaries have played a role in making education accessible to the poor. Boarding's are managed efficiently and equipped with adequate facilities and infrastructures. The boarding's have been places where the faith of the children has been strengthened and deepened. Discipline has been inculcated and maintained and the poor have been empowered. The hostels of the Bethany sisters cater to those students who hail from villages and have no facilities for education. Many of the students were and are provided free accommodation and food when they are unable to pay the boarding fees. The boarding's have helped in educating the poor and the slow learners by giving them special attention in their studies. The sisters have been a source of inspiration for the young girls of the region to join the Bethany sisters in continuing their mission in the Northeast.

There are also a significant percentage of priests and sisters and 11.90 per cent of the people do not seem to be quite satisfied in the way boarding's are maintained by the sisters. Though a significant number disagree that the sisters' boarding's are concerned with generating income, yet there is still a feeling that sisters have not focused on empowering the poor through their hostel ministry. There is need to maintain discipline in the boarding

houses. What is more alarming is that 33.17 per cent of people and 4.70 per cent of priests and sisters are neither aware nor want to say anything about the hostel ministry of the sisters. Many of the respondents had left blank the space for statements no. 1-6.

6.1.4 Social Work

Responses from Staff, parents of students and the past pupils of the schools

No. of Respondents: 105

| TABLE No. 14 | | Yes | | No | | Can't Say | |
|--------------------------------|--|-----|-------|----|-------|-----------|-------|
| 6.1.4. a. Views on Social Work | | 2 | % | 1 | % | 0 | % |
| 1. | The Bethany Sisters give due importance to social ministry; initiatives in social work are encouraged and supported | 90 | 86.54 | 7 | 6.73 | 7 | 6.73 |
| 2. | Social Ministry is planned, organized and coordinated well | 86 | 83.50 | 6 | 5.83 | 11 | 10.68 |
| 3. | The Sisters involved in social ministry have requisite training and competence | 71 | 67.62 | 15 | 14.29 | 19 | 18.10 |
| 4. | Social ministry of the Sisters has made a contribution to the economic and social development of the people | 74 | 70.48 | 14 | 13.33 | 17 | 16.19 |
| 5. | Social ministry has enabled the Bethany Sisters to cross boundaries and collaborate with all | 74 | 70.48 | 12 | 11.43 | 19 | 18.10 |
| 6. | Their ministry of Social work successfully networks and collaborates with other NGOs | 60 | 57.14 | 17 | 16.19 | 28 | 26.67 |
| 7. | Social workers of today are functioning like as 'friends of the poor', who identify with them in all their struggles | 74 | 70.48 | 16 | 15.24 | 15 | 14.29 |
| 8. | Sometimes funds are not spent for the purpose they are obtained | 11 | 10.48 | 41 | 39.05 | 53 | 50.48 |
| 9. | Social ministry is often viewed as a means of income generation | 17 | 16.19 | 52 | 49.52 | 36 | 34.29 |
| 10. | Domestic workers (cooks, drivers, watchmen, etc.) employed by the institution are paid just wages | 50 | 47.62 | 21 | 20.00 | 34 | 32.38 |

| | | | | | | | |
|-------------------|---|--------------|--------------|-----------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| 11. | There is no system to effectively monitor and coordinate the different social as well as pastoral work | 21 | 20.19 | 41 | 39.42 | 42 | 40.38 |
| 12. | Social ministry communicates in action the Sisters solidarity with the poor and commitment to social justice. | 69 | 65.71 | 10 | 9.52 | 26 | 24.76 |
| Avg of 105 | | 58.08 | 55.49 | 21 | 20.06 | 25.58 | 24.44 |

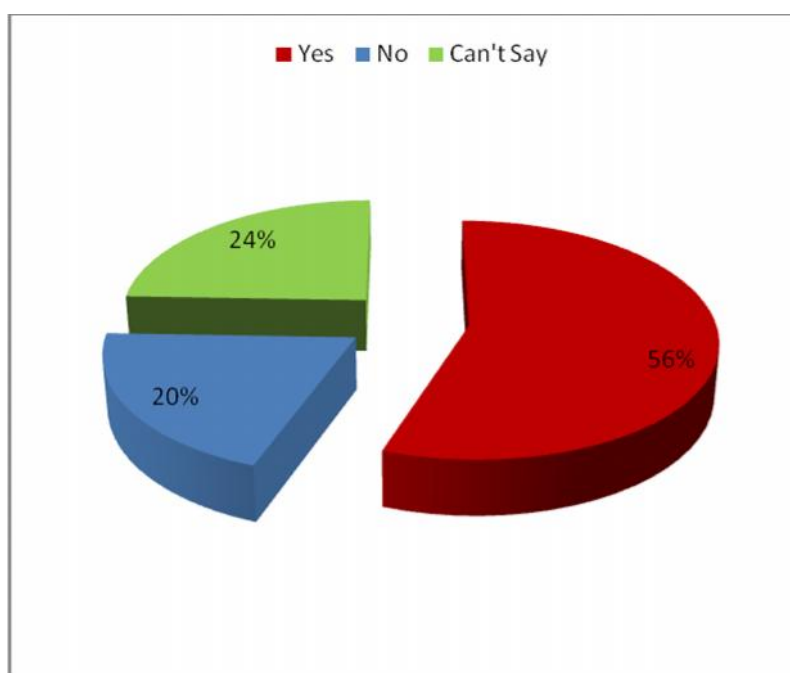


Figure 7

Responses from Priests and Sisters

No. of Respondents: 28

| TABLE No.15 | | Yes | | No | | Can't Say | |
|-------------------------------------|---|------------|----------|-----------|----------|------------------|----------|
| 6.1.4.b.Views on Social Work | | 2 | % | 1 | % | 0 | % |
| 1. | The Bethany Sisters give due importance to social ministry; initiatives in social work are encouraged and supported | 23 | 82.14 | 4 | 14.29 | 1 | 3.57 |
| 2. | Social Ministry is planned, organized and coordinated well | 21 | 75 | 3 | 10.71 | 4 | 14.29 |

| | | | | | | | |
|-----|--|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|------------|-------------|
| 3. | The Sisters involved in social ministry have requisite training and competence | 21 | 75 | 5 | 17.86 | 2 | 7.14 |
| 4. | Social ministry of the Sisters has made at contribution to the economic and social development of the people | 25 | 89.29 | 2 | 7.14 | 1 | 3.57 |
| 5. | Social ministry has enabled the Bethany Sisters to cross boundaries and collaborate with all | 25 | 89.29 | 1 | 3.57 | 2 | 7.14 |
| 6. | Their ministry of Social work successfully networks and collaborates with other NGOs | 18 | 64.29 | 7 | 25 | 3 | 10.71 |
| 7. | Social workers of today are functioning like as ‘friends of the poor’, who identify with them in all their struggles | 17 | 60.71 | 8 | 28.57 | 3 | 10.71 |
| 8. | Sometimes funds are not spent for the purpose they are obtained | 6 | 21.43 | 13 | 46.43 | 9 | 32.14 |
| 9. | Social ministry is often viewed as a means of income generation | 6 | 21.43 | 16 | 57.14 | 6 | 21.43 |
| 10. | Domestic workers (cooks, drivers, watchmen, etc.) employed by the institution are paid just wages | 18 | 64.29 | 8 | 28.57 | 2 | 7.14 |
| 11. | There is no system to effectively monitor and coordinate the different social as well as pastoral work | 10 | 35.71 | 13 | 46.43 | 5 | 17.86 |
| 12 | Social ministry communicates in action the Sisters solidarity with the poor and commitment to social justice. | 21 | 75 | 3 | 10.7 | 4 | 14.3 |
| | Avg of 28 | 17.6 | 62.8 | 6.92 | 24.7 | 3.5 | 12.5 |

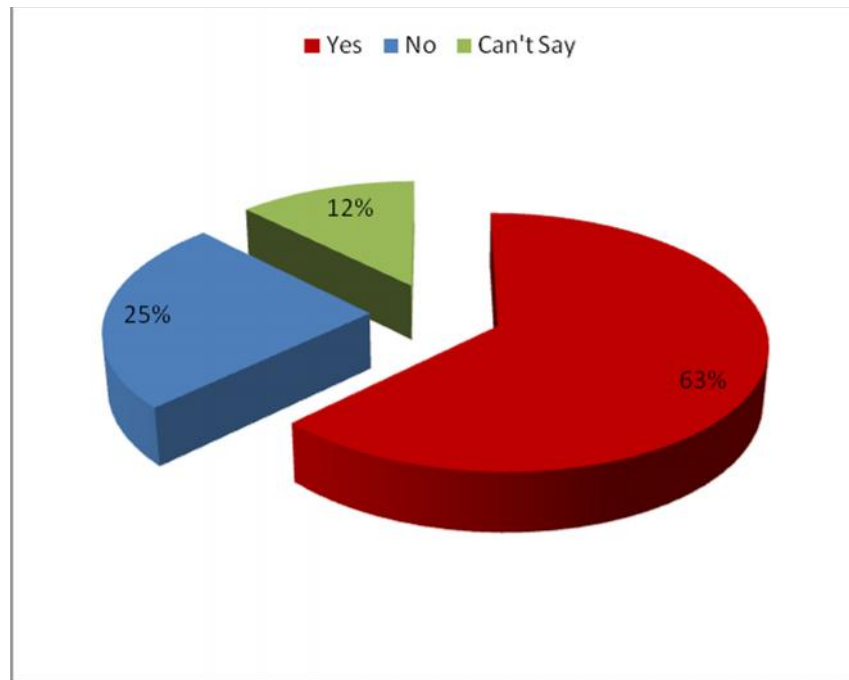


Figure 8

The sisters in the social work field at the congregational level have created visibility for their good works as religious. A total of 55.84 per cent of the people and 62.79 per cent of sisters and priests agree that the Bethany congregation and the Northeast province of the sisters in particular gives due importance to social work where the sisters are encouraged by the higher superiors and initiatives in social work are supported equally. This mission of the sisters is planned and organized at the congregational and province level. The sisters are given required training and are competent in social work. Social work activities of the sisters have made a significant contribution to the socio -economic development of the region. Bethany sisters seem to have crossed boundaries and collaborated with all in this mission especially by networking with the Non-Governmental Organizations.

The sisters engaged in social work have become 'friends of the poor', identifying with the people in their struggles. Funds are spent for the purpose they are obtained. Social work activities are carried on for the welfare of the masses rather than as a means of income generation. Domestic workers such as cooks, drivers, watchmen employed by the institutions are paid just wages. The different social and pastoral works are effectively monitored and coordinated at the Generalate and province level and above all through this mission sisters have been communicating in action solidarity with the poor and commitment to social justice.

20.19 per cent of the people and 24.70 per cent of the religious personnel do not agree that the Bethany sisters working in the social field have requisite training and competence. 24.59 per cent of the people and 12.5 per cent of the priests and sisters do not seem to be quite satisfied or do not know about the social work done by the Bethany sisters. Many of the respondents from the people's group had marked the column 0- can't say, as they were not sure of the social work of the sisters. One of the reasons could be that Bethany sisters are more visible in the educational field rather than social sector and hence there is a need that the sisters as a whole take up more social welfare activities along with the activities of education.

Bethany sisters in Northeast have made efforts to match the signs of time by undertaking the work of Bethany Promotional Schools in Guwahati which is a cohesive strategy to reach out to the city migrants. The intervention consists of education of children towards mainstreaming through promotional schools in the slums of Guwahati since June 1998. At present, it is done through 8 centers located in different slum/rural areas of Guwahati, the nonschool-going/drop-out children attend classes on 6 days a week, for 3 hours. They are of age group of 5-12 yrs in the same classroom. The optimum number per class is 30. Focus group for the intervention 2012-14 was Direct focus group: 240 non school-going, drop out children of the age 5-12 yrs and the indirect focus group is 240 families especially parents of the children from slums and a total of 800 families (100 families at random x 8 slums) in general. Activities of the year included: Daily Literacy/study classes, Co curricular activities/ celebrations, Follow up of past students, Self Help Group action, Rights Education and Advocacy. The results were 240 children became literate, about 170 children entered formal schools for class 1-4, 240 poor women and men were aware of their rights, improved cleanliness in the slum environment, 14 Self Help Groups(SHGs) formed among focus parents.

Rights Based Approach (RBA) in relation to promotional schools at the level of economy as means to support the education of the children was taken up and Self Help Groups were organized among the parents of these children. At the level of social exploitation, the sisters took to educate the parents on human rights, right to life, right to education and find better prospects for their children. At the level of corrupt governance it was decided to educate and organize the illiterate people of the slums especially women to approach the local government schools to admit their children without being harassed for

bribe. At the level of child rights the parents and adults were educated on the existing child labor prevention act, in cases where supplementing income by the bigger children was essential study classes were arranged to such children for imparting education.

The significance of the programme was that the teachers of the promotional schools also acted as social work animators as they facilitated the SHG functioning in addition to the particular social workers. Rights education helped the people to some extent to become aware of the available government benefits. In the year 2013 about 120 families re-applied for ration cards, of which 17 have already received the cards. A few have applied for pension benefits and scholarships. Follow up of promoted students through a study done in January 2013 of the mainstreamed students of the years 2008-12 (total 5 yrs.) through 8 centers, shows that, of the total 712 students promoted to formal schools, 669 (i.e., 94%) were found regular to schools.

Glimpses of other significant Bethany moves are care of injecting Drug Users (henceforth referred to as IDUs) Alcoholics and prevention of HIV/AIDS. Bethany Social Welfare Society, Mamit, Mizoram, serves as a drop-in center for IDUs. Here the combined project of Mizoram State AIDS Control Society (MSACS) and National AIDS Control Organization (NACO) is implemented in the care of IDUs, Alcoholics, and HIV/AIDS patients. There is a total 30 staff including a part time doctor who cover 34 distant villages of Mamit district. Bethany Health cum Rehabilitation Centre at Sihphir, Mizoram conducts the programme on Care of IDUs and alcoholics, and Awareness building towards prevention of HIV/AIDS in about 30 villages around Sihphir (Aizawl Dt.) since 1995. Since then hundreds of clients have been helped and rehabilitated, accompanied with planned follow up. Vocational and Skill training programmes for rural youth, Self Help Group (SHG) Action for Women Empowerment, Livelihood creation and Social Progress are undertaken by the Bethany sisters.

Bethany Social Service Centre at Barasat in West Bengal is the Social Service wing of Bethany Social Service Society (BSSS) of North East India, having its headquarter in Guwahati, Assam. Bethany sisters came to Barasat in the year 1997 and initiated the mission work in the rural communities of Kadambagachi Panchayat, Barasat district of West Bengal. The people here are belonging to the lower strata of society both economically and socially. It was a venture of learning the unknown 10 villages in the beginning. Though initially it was a struggle but sisters continued the work with the persistent efforts. Here Bethany sisters aim at

health care and women empowerment towards sustainable development. After 16 years of Bethany sisters' presence there, the sisters have reached to 6 Gram Panchayats rendering both medical and social service to 13 villages in 41 centres, formed 63 Self Help Groups out of which 45 Self Help Groups are functional. The sisters impart skills training such as cutting and tailoring, spoken English and poultry keeping. Herbal and alternative system of medicines is taught and the center has coaching classes for the Bengali school going children who are called evening stars. Through all the above mentioned activities the sisters are striving towards integrated development of the rural communities' particularly of rural women.

At Kattalcherra, in Tripura which is a hub of social, medical and educational activities of the Bethany sisters, leadership training programs, income generating programs, animal rearing, etc are conducted in almost 30 villages every year. Agarbati, agriculture, animal husbandry, weaving, tailoring, poultry rearing are a few of the skills taught by the sisters. Power tiller is given to two areas of this centre, families have profited from the rubber plantation made available to the villagers. Pineapple plantation is provided, there are 20 Self Help Groups and government resources are tapped by the local people with the encouragement of the sisters involved in social work activities. Candle making is taught and is carried on for two groups of 12 members each. 200 women are organized into a wing and sisters are fully in charge of their activities. Leadership, awareness programmes, charitable works are performed by these groups of women, they also contribute to parish development and sponsor the poor girl students by paying their school fees.

Para legal programs on Right Based Approach (RBA) are undertaken, Para legal personnel and coordinators are trained and they have fought with the government for their rights through Right To Information. The success stories of these programs are that they have succeeded in getting electricity and water for their villages. Indira Awaz Yojana, old age pension schemes have been availed for the people and retailer shops, non-governmental schools have started to function as a result of these programs. In all this sisters have acted as grass root level facilitators. Malaria control programs have been successful and there are 5 coordinators, 30 community health volunteers joining their hands with the sisters and doctor functions as a district project manager.

Catholic missionaries in general are involved in a lot of social work. Their social ministry is planned and organized well. (See table 6.4a, b, statement no: 2) In places where

the sisters are involved in social and medical activities, there is a lot of appreciation regarding the presence and work of the sisters. The Bethany sisters have undertaken various initiatives to help the poor and the needy. They give social awareness to the people, some of them expressed that they even learnt household works from the sisters. Sisters expressed that they were close to people and vice versa. There was a sense of belongingness to each other. People helped the sisters in many ways in the initial stages from carrying water to even preparing the food for them. They would reach out to the sisters in their every difficulty. The people also started family prayer after the visits of the sisters to their families. There was unity in the family as a result of family prayer. Students would not dare to go to school without completing the home work or carrying the needed books though there was no electricity in the initial days of the sisters' presence. Children would wait in their houses to see the sisters visiting their families after school because they felt close to them.

Sisters in the social work field work very hard and do a lot of good to the people and society at large through their activities. They are involved in the social life of the people, carry out social obligations and duties satisfactorily. Working with different Non Governmental Organizations has helped the sisters working in the social sector to have known important officers. Though their lives were threatened at times, the sisters feel grateful for the help they received from government officials and sponsorship which they make available to the immigrants and the poor students. A few of the sisters who work as social workers also provide shelter homes for children with poor and unhealthy home situations. Even the social workers who collaborate with the social work activities of the sisters have imbibed the spirit of missionaries from the sisters. They link religion with social work and are able to impart spiritual formation through their work as they have learnt it from the sisters. (See table no: 6.6.a, b, statement no: 16) These volunteers of social work try to maintain good relations with the church leaders, the leaders of the state and try to do their best as lay leaders.

The people expressed satisfaction with the social welfare activities of the Bethany sisters. The sisters go from door to door in the villages to teach the illiterate by involving themselves in the outreach programme. They work impartially for the welfare of the areas of their concern. The sisters arrange programmes for the poor and the needy. Collections are done to help the prisoners, for the calamity stricken masses and to help the poor families. The students are taught the value of not wasting food but rather to share it with the needy. (see

table no: 6.2 a, b, statement no: 7) During their family visits, the sisters do discuss on family issues, give family counselling, catechize and are happy with their contribution to build up the faith of the people. A few of the sisters have written catechism books for the diocese which are used as Sunday School Curriculum. Sisters approach those who are well off to contribute their might to reach out to those in need. Good rapport built with the neighborhood community and the locality. Sisters visit the families in the locality and attend the marriages, funerals etc. (Table 6.6. statement 31)

In earlier times, sisters used to visit the families quite often, every evening they were seen walking from house to house to know the family background of each student, sometimes even to find out why a student absented oneself from the school. While the parents were unable to pay the fees, the sisters would ask them to pay whatever they could and thus families of students were helped out. Knowing the family background of students enabled the sisters to build rapport with the parents, give fee concessions to the deserving ones and help out those who were not financially self sufficient. Students who excelled in studies but were unable to pay the fees were exempted in order to encourage such students in their studies. Parents at times felt unworthy to accommodate the sisters in their little huts but on the part of the sisters, they would accept anything offered by the people, sit with them and thus identified with the people. The people in the villages expect more social services from the sisters through their visits.

Sisters are involved in the training of women and youth in job oriented skills through vocational training thus enabling them to face life meaningfully by standing on one's own feet. (Table 6.4, statement no: 3 and 4) Cultivation has improved in the villages due to the learning of manual work from the sisters and people are able to sell their products instead of buying them. Evangelization is given priority through all the social work, Small Christian community prayer meetings are attended. As a result of sisters' work, sisters feel that the faith of the people is strengthened and there is good leadership among the people. Sanitation, cleanliness, women's status and financial status of the families has improved. Many parents have realized the importance of education to their children. The people have been able to tap government resources. Due to Malaria Control Program in the interior villages death toll has been reduced. On the whole, people seem to be happy especially in the non Christian areas with the services of the sisters. Bethany sisters therefore seem to be relevant.

6.1.5 Medical Work

Responses from Staff, parents of students and the past pupils of the schools

No. of Respondents: 105

| TABLE No.16 | | Yes | | No | | Can't Say | |
|---------------------------------------|--|-------------|--------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|--------------|
| | | 2 | % | 1 | % | 0 | % |
| 6.1.5.a. Views on Medical Work | | 2 | % | 1 | % | 0 | % |
| 1. | The dispensaries run by the sisters are administered effectively | 55 | 52.38 | 4 | 3.81 | 46 | 43.81 |
| 2. | These dispensaries deliver quality health care at affordable rates. | 72 | 68.57 | 6 | 5.71 | 27 | 25.71 |
| 3. | The personnel in health-care ministry are adequately trained and professionally competent | 67 | 63.81 | 7 | 6.67 | 31 | 29.52 |
| 4. | As improved government-sponsored health-care services are now available free of cost, fewer people come to sisters' health care centre's | 53 | 50.48 | 16 | 15.24 | 36 | 34.29 |
| 5. | Health-care ministry of the sisters needs to be integrated with social ministry and pastoral ministry | 50 | 47.62 | 11 | 10.48 | 44 | 41.90 |
| Avg of 105 | | 59.4 | 56.57 | 8.80 | 8.38 | 36.8 | 35.05 |

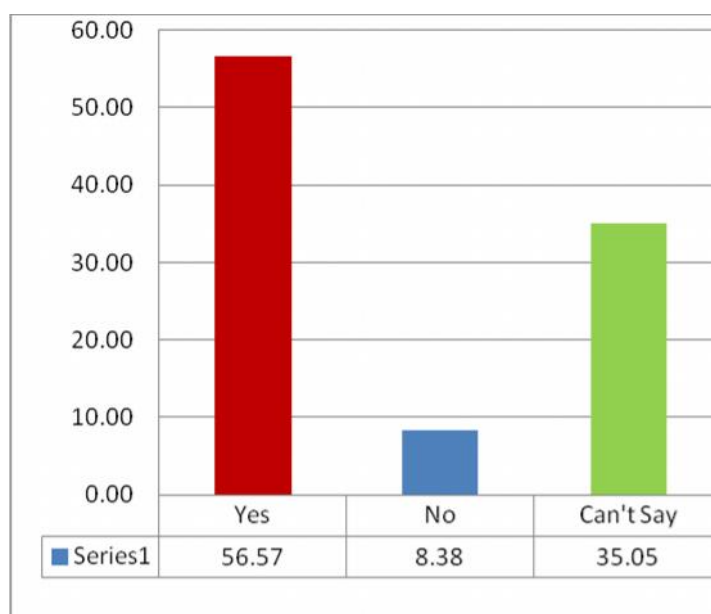


Figure 9

Responses from Priests and Sisters

No. of Respondents: 28

| TABLE No.17 | | Yes | | No | | Can't Say | |
|---------------------------------------|--|-----------|--------------|-------------|--------------|-------------|-------------|
| 6.1.5.b. Views on Medical Work | | 2 | % | 1 | % | 0 | % |
| 1. | The dispensaries run by the sisters are administered effectively | 22 | 78.57 | 4 | 14.29 | 2 | 7.14 |
| 2. | These dispensaries deliver quality health care at affordable rates. | 21 | 75 | 5 | 17.86 | 2 | 7.14 |
| 3. | The personnel in health-care ministry are adequately trained and professionally competent | 21 | 75 | 5 | 17.86 | 2 | 7.14 |
| 4. | As improved government-sponsored health-care services are now available free of cost, fewer people come to sisters' health care centre's | 14 | 50 | 11 | 39.29 | 3 | 10.71 |
| 5. | Health-care ministry of the sisters needs to be integrated with social ministry and pastoral ministry | 22 | 78.57 | 4 | 14.29 | 2 | 7.14 |
| Avg of 28 | | 20 | 71.43 | 5.80 | 20.71 | 2.20 | 7.86 |

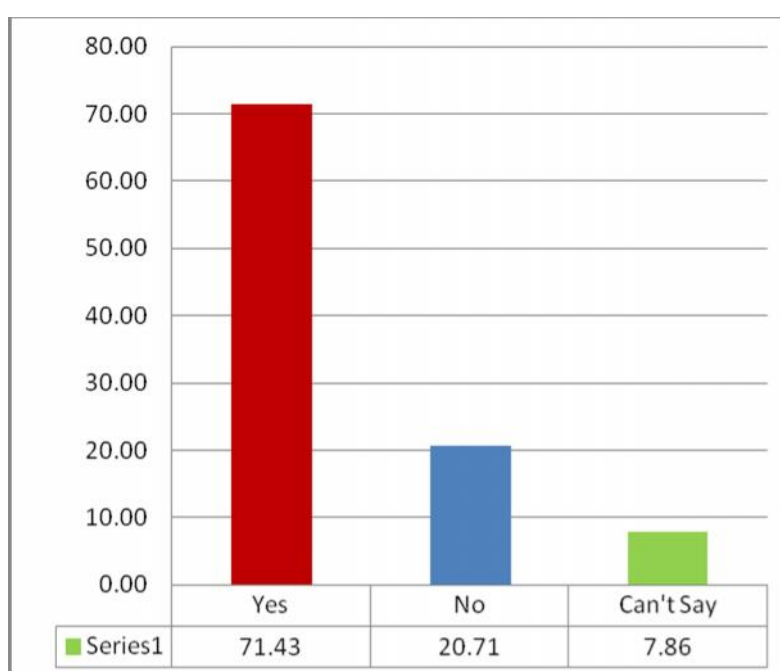


Figure 10

There is a marked difference of opinion among the people and the sisters as well as priests regarding the health care activities of the Bethany sisters. 71.42 per cent of priests and sisters are of the opinion that the dispensaries run by the Bethany sisters are administered effectively and that they deliver quality health care at affordable rates. Health care seems to be viewed by them as the effective activity of the Bethany sisters. The dispensaries of the Bethany sisters are managed efficiently. The nurse sisters are always available for the patients. What is most alarming is that 35.38 per cent of the people seem to be unaware of the medical services rendered by the Bethany sisters.

57.11 per cent of the population feels that the personnel in health care mission are adequately trained and are professionally competent. Though the government-sponsored health care services are made available free of cost in the remote areas, the number of patients coming to the dispensaries of Bethany sisters is not less and the general feeling of the respondents is that there is need to integrate health care activities with the social and pastoral activities which would make the sisters effective in their mission and make their presence felt among the masses.

The health ministry and specially the service to the addicts by the sisters is appreciated by the people they cater to. Because of the medical care the nurse sister feels that malaria has been controlled in some areas of the region. Medical work was difficult in earlier times due to lack of transportation, personnel and so on but at present the sisters are making a greater contribution and people are aware of it. People's houses have become their homes as sisters spent 3-4 days in a village to distribute medicine where medical facilities were totally unavailable. Health has improved due to the instruction on health and education provided by the sisters. Sisters' hard work has brought awareness among the people and helped to build confidence. They have acted as women of inspiration in self discipline. People value the medical services of the sisters as they are well known for their care, importance for cleanliness, morality, counseling and service. They expect the sisters to have more health centres which they feel is the need of the hour and more local sisters from the region itself could be involved in this mission. The staff employed in the health centers managed by the sisters work hard as missionaries and peer educators. Sisters motivate and instruct them periodically. Though they cannot be paid high salary due to lack of funds for medical activities of the sisters, the staff is satisfied and much of their joy comes from the fact that

they are able to work with the missionaries and contribute service to the society of which they are a part. The sisters take pains to train them for their work.

Kattalcherra, in Tripura is one of the medical care centre of the Bethany sisters. Babassa to Ambassa is the coverage area for social work in this centre, 20-25 villages are covered for community health programs such as Immunization, Mother and child health care, health camps, 30-40 patients in each village are catered to. Community health awareness program in each village is undertaken in which 50 to 80 participants are actively involved. Medical treatment is given to each family of 30 villages without any disparity on religion or denomination. Sisters pray over the sick and in the locality 4 villages are provided with day and night medical service. Nutrition program, environment, hygiene program, ecology awareness, alternative system of medicine is taught, 6 herbal gardens in 6 villages are maintained. Sisters work among the the most primitive tribes of Reangs and Garos who are poor, underprivileged, landless people occupying government land and cultivating. 30 Panchayats consisting of average 10-12 villages are established. Every year one village is taken for intensive malaria control program and various activities are conducted. The nurse sister along with her health workers caters to almost thousand outpatients per year as well as patients from the village. Nearly 10 health camps with 500 participants are conducted every year. Since those who cannot afford to pay for the medicine come to sister's dispensaries, they find it difficult to maintain the same.

The informants at Mamit are happy that sometimes all the addicts are brought together and programmes are held and medicines, cotton rolls and bandages are distributed. Abscess are cleaned and treated by the sister nurses, old syringes are replaced with the new ones. People opine that all these activities would have been impossible without the presence of the Bethany sisters and so the activities of the sisters are well appreciated. Even when the people of the locality have an aversion and hesitate to mingle with the HIV/AIDS patients, addicts and alcoholics, sisters take a risk for their own lives. As the de-addiction centre is located in the heart of the village, some locals complain about the presence of the addicts, their treatment as there have been instances of thefts which disturbs the peace and tranquility of that particular locality. The work is done not for salary and the addicts who are suspected by the local people for stealing their valuables, spreading AIDS and so on, the sisters consider them as their own and instruct them on many good things for which they are grateful

to the sisters. Without the presence of the sisters, the local people feel that more of infectious diseases would continue to exist.

Sisters are doing a good job in social sector especially the way they care for the addict is appreciated. People have good rapport with the sisters. Valsala, the pioneer of this de-addiction centre and Premiot- the Headmistress and superior who served at Mamit sacrificed their lives at young age and even after six years of their demise they are still missed a lot by the people and are considered as the most dedicated sisters who gave their all for others despite their illness. They are the benchmark for social work in Mamit district. Premiot had created a history in 2009 and 2010 with cent per cent result, distinctions and first divisions including letter marks in class X result in the district. People feel proud of them for such quality education.

Drug users feel free to share their problems and difficulties with the health workers and the sisters. The health workers consider themselves as missionaries. They were able to give up alcohol, popping pills and have developed the ability to empathize with the clients as they themselves were the victims of drugs and alcohol. The training given to them by the sisters is a great help in this regard. They feel that the sisters are pleasant and nice to everyone (see table no. 6.6, statement no: 14) There is mutual understanding and respect between the health workers and the sisters. With regard to the changes in the lives of the addicts, they have stopped sharing of needles, save money as needles and vitamins are provided free of cost by the nurse sisters, wounds are dressed free of cost and this has inspired the addicts to give up drugs and lead normal lives.

6.1.6. General Opinion about the Bethany Sisters

Responses from Staff, parents of students and the past pupils of the schools

No. of Respondents: 105

| TABLE No.18 | | Yes | | No | | Can't Say | |
|--|---|------------|-------|-----------|------|------------------|------|
| 6.1.6.a. The Bethany Sisters I Know | | 2 | % | 1 | % | 0 | % |
| 1. | Are women of prayer and spiritual depth | 93 | 88.57 | 5 | 4.76 | 7 | 6.67 |

| | | | | | | | |
|-----|--|----|-------|----|-------|----|-------|
| 2. | Have genuine religious motivation | 98 | 93.33 | 3 | 2.86 | 4 | 3.81 |
| 3. | Are genuine, sincere and trustworthy | 88 | 83.81 | 7 | 6.67 | 10 | 9.52 |
| 4. | Are just and fair in their dealings | 79 | 75.24 | 10 | 9.52 | 16 | 15.24 |
| 5. | Are capable and competent in their ministries | 95 | 90.48 | 0 | 0 | 10 | 9.52 |
| 6. | Rise above differences to reach out and relate to all | 82 | 78.10 | 10 | 9.52 | 13 | 12.38 |
| 7. | Are interested and involved with the people | 87 | 82.86 | 11 | 10.48 | 7 | 6.67 |
| 8. | They cooperate and relate with the people | 86 | 81.90 | 15 | 14.29 | 4 | 3.81 |
| 9. | Are detached from positions of power, prestige and money | 58 | 56.31 | 23 | 22.33 | 22 | 21.36 |
| 10. | Are approachable, available and helpful | 88 | 83.81 | 10 | 9.52 | 7 | 6.67 |
| 11. | Have special concern for women and girl child | 91 | 86.67 | 5 | 4.76 | 9 | 8.57 |
| 12. | Cope well with the demands of their work | 86 | 82.69 | 5 | 4.81 | 13 | 12.50 |
| 13. | I am happy to have known the Bethany Sisters and work with them | 92 | 87.62 | 6 | 5.71 | 7 | 6.67 |
| 14. | In their dealings with people they are pleasant and courteous | 92 | 87.62 | 8 | 7.62 | 5 | 4.76 |
| 15. | They respect and adapt themselves to the culture of the people | 92 | 87.62 | 11 | 10.48 | 2 | 1.90 |
| 16. | My acquaintance with them has helped me to be God oriented and people oriented | 89 | 84.76 | 9 | 8.57 | 7 | 6.67 |
| 17. | They are compassionate, kind, gentle and patient in their dealings | 82 | 78.10 | 16 | 15.24 | 7 | 6.67 |
| 18. | They play a vital role in the character formation of the students | 95 | 90.48 | 8 | 7.62 | 2 | 1.90 |
| 19. | They have knowledge of those who live in their neighborhood | 81 | 77.14 | 8 | 7.62 | 16 | 15.24 |
| 20. | They are known for their collaboration and team spirit | 91 | 86.67 | 9 | 8.57 | 5 | 4.76 |

| | | | | | | |
|---|----|-------|----|-------|----|-------|
| 21. They are simple in their life style | 95 | 90.48 | 4 | 3.81 | 6 | 5.71 |
| 22. They pay special attention to the slow learners and poor | 80 | 76.19 | 15 | 14.29 | 10 | 9.52 |
| 23. They equip themselves and adapt to the new methods in teaching | 81 | 77.14 | 9 | 8.57 | 15 | 14.29 |
| 24. The Sisters promote love and respect for all | 93 | 88.57 | 6 | 5.71 | 6 | 5.71 |
| 25. They take interest in the all round development of their students | 97 | 92.38 | 6 | 5.71 | 2 | 1.90 |
| 26. Their presence is a source of comfort and help to the people | 89 | 84.76 | 10 | 9.52 | 6 | 5.71 |
| 27. They are one with the people and proficient in the local language | 56 | 53.33 | 31 | 29.52 | 18 | 17.14 |
| 28. They cater to the needs of only the rich | 14 | 13.33 | 72 | 68.57 | 19 | 18.10 |
| 29. In their dealings with people they are pleasant and courteous | 80 | 76.19 | 19 | 18.10 | 6 | 5.71 |
| 30. They encourage leadership of people | 89 | 84.76 | 7 | 6.67 | 9 | 8.57 |
| 31. Sisters visit families and help those in need | 76 | 73.08 | 13 | 12.50 | 15 | 14.42 |
| 32. They work to promote harmony and peace | 98 | 93.33 | 3 | 2.86 | 4 | 3.81 |
| 33. Sisters work to empower the weaker sections | 82 | 78.10 | 15 | 14.29 | 8 | 7.62 |
| 34. The sisters are familiar with and are well informed of the current problems of the society and respond creatively | 70 | 66.67 | 15 | 14.29 | 20 | 19.05 |
| 35. The co-workers in their institutions feel that they are understood and treated with respect | 75 | 71.43 | 11 | 10.48 | 19 | 18.10 |
| 36. Sisters are kind and respectful to the general public and children in their dealings | 96 | 91.43 | 7 | 6.67 | 2 | 1.90 |
| 37. They have special training to work with the youth | 70 | 66.67 | 8 | 7.62 | 27 | 25.71 |

| | | | | | | | |
|-------------------|--|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| 38. | The people appreciate the sisters for their service | 96 | 91.43 | 5 | 4.76 | 4 | 3.81 |
| 39. | Sisters give priority to human empowerment and engage in social work activities | 85 | 80.95 | 10 | 9.52 | 10 | 9.52 |
| 40. | Bethany's presence in the society today is not relevant as it was in the initial years | 28 | 26.67 | 52 | 49.52 | 25 | 23.81 |
| 41. | Today there is a movement among the Sisters to have great love for the poor | 70 | 66.67 | 13 | 12.38 | 22 | 20.95 |
| 42. | Bethany has a promising future because more youngsters are joining the Congregation | 61 | 58.10 | 10 | 9.52 | 34 | 32.38 |
| 43. | Sisters are relevant to the changing times | 78 | 74.29 | 11 | 10.48 | 16 | 15.24 |
| 44. | I was happy to be a student of Bethany School | 74 | 70.48 | 2 | 1.90 | 29 | 27.62 |
| 45. | The school has had a great impact on me | 81 | 77.14 | 5 | 4.76 | 19 | 18.10 |
| Avg of 105 | | 81.31 | 77.50 | 11.96 | 11.40 | 11.64 | 11.10 |

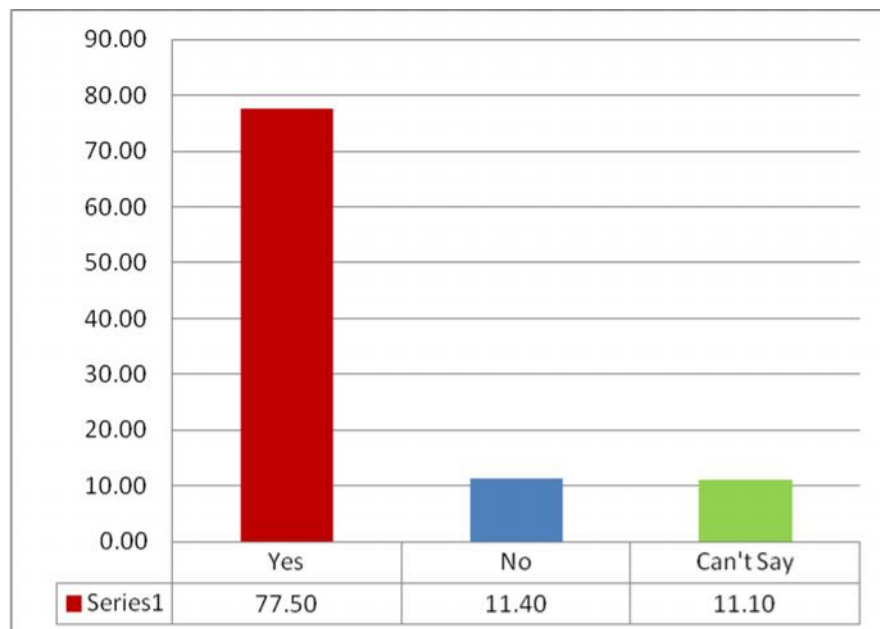


Figure 11

Responses from Priests and Sisters

No. of Respondents: 28

| TABLE No.19 | | Yes | | No | | Can't say | |
|---|--|------------|-------|-----------|-------|------------------|-------|
| 6.1.6. b. The Bethany Sisters I Know | | 2 | % | 1 | % | 0 | % |
| 1. | Are women of prayer and spiritual depth | 21 | 75 | 5 | 17.86 | 2 | 7.14 |
| 2. | Have genuine religious motivation | 20 | 71.43 | 4 | 14.29 | 4 | 14.29 |
| 3. | Are genuine, sincere and trustworthy | 17 | 60.71 | 8 | 28.57 | 3 | 10.71 |
| 4. | Are just and fair in their dealings | 13 | 46.43 | 12 | 42.86 | 3 | 10.71 |
| 5. | Are capable and competent in their ministries | 24 | 85.71 | 3 | 10.71 | 1 | 3.57 |
| 6. | Rise above differences to reach out and relate to all | 11 | 40.74 | 13 | 48.15 | 3 | 11.11 |
| 7. | Are interested and involved with the people | 23 | 82.14 | 4 | 14.29 | 1 | 3.57 |
| 8. | They cooperate and relate with the people | 22 | 78.57 | 5 | 17.86 | 1 | 3.57 |
| 9. | Are detached from positions of power, prestige and money | 6 | 21.43 | 17 | 60.71 | 5 | 17.86 |
| 10. | Are approachable, available and helpful | 22 | 78.57 | 5 | 17.86 | 1 | 3.57 |
| 11. | Have special concern for women and girl child | 26 | 92.86 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 7.14 |
| 12. | Cope well with the demands of their work | 20 | 71.43 | 6 | 21.43 | 2 | 7.14 |
| 13. | I am happy to have known the Bethany Sisters and work with them | 20 | 71.43 | 2 | 7.14 | 6 | 21.43 |
| 14. | In their dealings with people they are pleasant and courteous | 14 | 50 | 10 | 35.71 | 4 | 14.29 |
| 15. | They respect and adapt themselves to the culture of the people | 17 | 60.71 | 10 | 35.71 | 1 | 3.57 |
| 16. | My acquaintance with them has helped me to be God oriented and people oriented | 14 | 50 | 10 | 35.71 | 4 | 14.29 |
| 17. | They are compassionate, kind, gentle and patient in their dealings | 20 | 71.43 | 7 | 25 | 1 | 3.57 |
| 18. | They play a vital role in the character formation of the students | 26 | 92.86 | 2 | 7.14 | 0 | 0 |
| 19. | They have knowledge of those who live in their neighborhood | 20 | 71.43 | 5 | 17.86 | 3 | 10.71 |

| | | | | | | | |
|-----|---|----|-------|----|-------|---|-------|
| 20. | They are known for their collaboration and team spirit | 17 | 60.71 | 10 | 35.71 | 1 | 3.57 |
| 21. | They are simple in their life style | 21 | 77.78 | 3 | 11.11 | 3 | 11.11 |
| 22. | They pay special attention to the slow learners and poor | 16 | 57.14 | 6 | 21.43 | 6 | 21.43 |
| 23. | They equip themselves and adapt to the new methods in teaching | 18 | 64.29 | 7 | 25 | 3 | 10.71 |
| 24. | The Sisters promote love and respect for all | 23 | 82.14 | 4 | 14.29 | 1 | 3.57 |
| 25. | They take interest in the all round development of their students | 23 | 82.14 | 3 | 10.71 | 2 | 7.14 |
| 26. | Their presence is a source of comfort and help to the people | 23 | 82.14 | 5 | 17.86 | 0 | 0 |
| 27. | They are one with the people and proficient in the local language | 7 | 25 | 19 | 67.86 | 2 | 7.14 |
| 28. | They cater to the needs of only the rich | 3 | 10.71 | 21 | 75 | 4 | 14.29 |
| 29. | In their dealings with people they are pleasant and courteous | 11 | 39.29 | 9 | 32.14 | 8 | 28.57 |
| 30. | They encourage leadership of people | 24 | 85.71 | 4 | 14.29 | 0 | 0 |
| 31. | Sisters visit families and help those in need | 24 | 85.71 | 2 | 7.14 | 2 | 7.14 |
| 32. | They work to promote harmony and peace | 24 | 85.71 | 2 | 7.14 | 2 | 7.14 |
| 33. | Sisters work to empower the weaker sections | 21 | 75 | 4 | 14.29 | 3 | 10.71 |
| 34. | The sisters are familiar with and are well informed of the current problems of the society and respond creatively | 16 | 57.14 | 10 | 35.71 | 2 | 7.14 |
| 35. | The co-workers in their institutions feel that they are understood and treated with respect | 19 | 67.86 | 7 | 25 | 2 | 7.14 |
| 36. | Sisters are kind and respectful to the general public and children in their dealings | 21 | 75 | 5 | 17.86 | 2 | 7.14 |
| 37. | They have special training to work with the youth | 6 | 21.43 | 16 | 57.14 | 6 | 21.43 |
| 38. | The people appreciate the sisters for their service | 26 | 92.86 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 7.14 |
| 39. | Sisters give priority to human empowerment and engage in social | 21 | 75 | 7 | 25 | 0 | 0 |

| | | | | | | | |
|-----|--|--------------|--------------|-------------|--------------|-------------|--------------|
| | work activities | | | | | | |
| 40. | Bethany's presence in the society today is not relevant as it was in the initial years | 8 | 28.57 | 18 | 64.29 | 2 | 7.14 |
| 41. | Today there is a movement among the Sisters to have great love for the poor | 10 | 35.71 | 11 | 39.29 | 7 | 25 |
| 42. | Bethany has a promising future because more youngsters are joining the Congregation | 14 | 50 | 7 | 25 | 7 | 25 |
| 43. | Sisters are relevant to the changing times | 13 | 48.15 | 11 | 40.74 | 3 | 11.11 |
| 44. | I was happy to be a student of Bethany School | 9 | 32.14 | 2 | 7.14 | 17 | 60.71 |
| 45. | The school has had a great impact on me | 10 | 35.71 | 3 | 10.71 | 15 | 53.57 |
| | Avg of 28 | 17.42 | 62.37 | 7.20 | 25.78 | 3.31 | 11.85 |

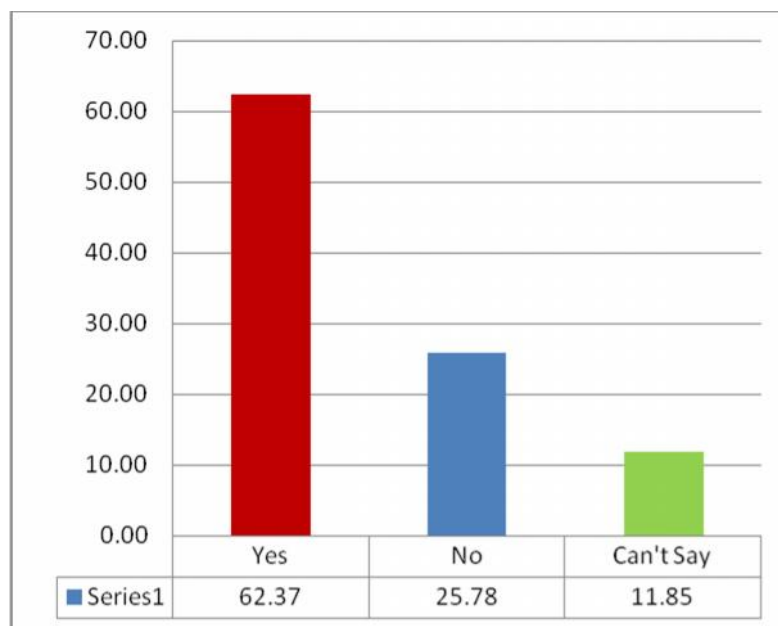


Figure 12

It is satisfying to know that 81.31 per cent of the people are happy to have the presence and services of the Bethany sisters in their area. They find that the sisters are women of prayer and have spiritual depth. They have genuine religious motivation, are sincere and trustworthy, just and fair in their dealings, competent in the ministries they undertake, rise above differences of language, religion and culture to reach out and relate to all, take interest and are involved in the welfare of the people. 62.22 per cent of the sisters

and priests too feel that Bethany sisters cooperate and relate well with the people, are detached from positions of power, prestige and money, are approachable, available and helpful, have special concern for the women and girl children, cope well with the demands of their work and the co-missionaries are happy to work and collaborate with the Bethany sisters.

The respondents expressed that the sisters are pleasant and courteous in their dealings with the people, they respect and adapt to the culture of the people and that their acquaintance with the sisters has made them to be God oriented. Sisters are found to be compassionate, kind, gentle and patient in their dealings. They care for those people who live in their neighborhood, are known for their collaboration and team spirit, simple in life style, pay special attention to the poor and the slow learners, promote love and respect for all and equip themselves and adapt to the new methods of teaching.

The presence of the sisters is found as a source of comfort and help to the people as they mix well with the people. They encourage leadership in people and visiting the families enables them to help those in need. Sisters also work to promote peace and harmony, to empower the weaker sections and are respectful in their dealings. Being familiar with the current problems of the society helps them to respond creatively to the situations around them. Bethany sisters are trained to work with the youth. They give priority to human empowerment and engage in social work activities. There is a movement of the sisters to love for the poor and the sisters are relevant to the changing times. The feeling among the respondents is that the sister's presence in the society today is relevant as it was in the initial years and they have a promising future as more young girls are joining the congregation from the northeast region.

25.71 per cent of the sisters and priests seem to disagree as in the present days sisters are not seen much involved in village visits or even with regard to learning the local languages. There is a greater desire on the part of the respondents that the sisters rise above differences to reach out to all the people. Only 11 per cent of the people as well as the priests and sisters feel that they are not quite knowledgeable about the Bethany sisters and their activities in general.

People feel that the sisters are active, friendly, caring, co-operative, simple, impartial, well organized, sincere in their commitment, people oriented, God conscious, efficient in

their work, compassionate, relevant to the times, live an austere life, helpful, down to earth in their approach, loving and ready for any help. They work tirelessly in the mission field. They are innovative in ideas, talented and rich in cultural concepts as well. (Table no: 6.6, statement no's: 1-7) The sisters organize good programmes with special ideas. They are an inspiration for the people, staff and inculcate confidence in the staff and people as well. The sisters are simple in their life style (table no: 6.6, statement no. 21). People find them as disciplined which helps them to inculcate discipline among their students. Bethany sisters have a human touch in their work, they are amiable, respectful (table no: 6.6, statement no.15) and are good in administration. People feel proud of the work of the sisters and are inspired by the way sisters live their lives. Sisters adapt well to the culture and customs of the people of the locality. (Table no: 6.6, statement no.15) People appreciate the sisters for their sacrifice of family and marriage and feel that they are privileged to have the presence and active involvement of the sisters in their area. They are grateful for the services rendered by the sisters to their society. Sisters value life in all its forms and work for the upliftment of the girl child.

The faculty of the staff in sisters' institutions opines that whoever comes in contact with the Bethany sisters do not remain the same but their life and way of thinking changes due to the help they receive through prayer and especially during illness the sisters visit them and comfort them. They do experience care from the sisters about their well being. The sisters visit people in the hospitals, pray for them which is a unique feature of the catholic missionary work. The people desire to have more sisters in the teaching work as they feel that the sisters are motherly in their approach (table no: 6.6, statement no.10) and they feel free to approach them. Sisters are seen many times engaged either in cultivating vegetables or looking after flower gardens. Sisters are appreciated for their skills in writing, talking etc. giving an ambition in life, vision and goal of education and team spirit. Sisters are very cooperative, systematic, supportive, teaching the value of the preciousness of life and the public in general are grateful to the sisters as they teach them to work for the society. Sisters are active, persons of prayer, (Table no: 6.6, statement no.1) and their policies as well as methods of education encourage students to achieve highest aim in life.

Sisters are known for their quality of education, ability to adapt themselves to any circumstance or situation, capability and competency in their ministries, service to the poor in the society and training of women and youth in job oriented skills through vocational

training. These are the special qualities that have adhered the Bethany sisters to the people of the northeast region. They respect, cooperate and relate with the people (Table no: 6.6, statement no: 8). They are exemplary for others especially the students, caring and concerned about them and make all efforts to mould them in their character. Loyalty to God, love for the people, commitment to work and service to mankind is appreciated by the public. People feel that they are privileged to have the services of the catholic missions in the field of promoting education of the youth. Catholic missionaries are known for their friendly approach. Through quality education, they strive to bring about national integration.

Social work, health care, de-addiction centres, prevention of HIV/AIDS, formal and non-formal education are a few of the means used by the missions to reach out to people of all strata of the society. The way the missionaries mix with the traditions and cultures which are alien to them is appreciated. Their core values in education and health care ministries are always looked up for emulation by the people of other religions. Their contribution to the economic and social development of the people of northeast is praise worthy. Punctuality, planning and organization in work, knowledge about the current issues, taking decisions after proper consultation is appreciated by the respondents in general. (Table 6.3, statement no: 3) Sisters have religious motivation and are patient in their dealings. (See table 6.6. statements no's: 10 and 17) Their staff members too are service minded, desire to help the poor, build up the character of students.

Quick adaptation to the surroundings is noteworthy of the Bethany sisters. Dispensaries run by them are effective and help is given to the poor. They are ready for services at the calls. Involvement and dedication, interest in the people are the special characteristic features of Bethany sisters. Sisters are interested in the development of the society. Students feel that the advice of the sisters is helpful for their bright future and they find that the sisters co-operate with the people of the society as well. Their social work activities, evangelization work, women's empowerment are much praised by the people whom the sisters meet in their mission. Life style of the sisters is appreciable and they appreciate the sisters' work for the addicts. The informants expressed that the sisters have opened schools, hostels in backward areas. People find that the 7 core values of their education are practical, their respect for life, nature and culture, love for the poor is worth mentioning. Bethany sisters are educating the society by imparting all round knowledge and the discipline that is being preached is practiced by them. Sister's boarding's have helped in educating the poor. The time spent in sister's school as students has huge impact on the

personal and professional life of the people and this success is credited to the Bethany sisters who have taught years ago.

Bethany sisters played a great role in educating the people of Northeast. When they first came, there were very few English medium schools and they educated as well as gave moral values to children from rich and poor families alike. They have helped the officers to become what they are today, not only through the schools but also as close acquaintances of the families. Some of the respondents expressed that the Bethany sister's presence in the Northeast has been God's gift to the area. Even if they are thanked all life, they cannot be repaid for what they have done for the society. A few of the respondents being the beneficiaries of the activities of the Bethany sisters expressed thankfulness to the Bethany sisters for giving education and guiding them during their childhood days in the school. They feel that their position today is because of the efforts of the sisters and their devoted service. Bethany sisters have done invaluable service in Northeast in all the fields of humanitarian work.

The priests, Brothers and sisters appreciate the sisters for their missionary spirit, simple life style, witness value, zeal, love for the poor, commitment and dedication to the people and the mission, love, unity and hard work of the sisters is appreciated. They feel that the sisters are simple, conscious of mission work, take risk, responsible, adapt to culture, customs and the language of the locality. They are approachable, hard working, prayerful, hospitable, self sacrificing and efficient administrators, cordial and welcoming. Sisters have compassion and concern for the poor and their value based education is appreciated much. They work for the upliftment of the poor. Sisters adapt themselves to the changing times and are committed in their service. They are people oriented and are united with the people in their endeavors. They possess leadership qualities, love for the mission and are cheerful in service. Always they are available, friendly and helpful.

The religious personnel are happy to have known the Bethany sisters and feel blessed to work with them as they have played a vital role in reforming many lives, concerned about the demands of their work and they find ways to uplift the weaker sections of the society. Some of the informants felt that the society identifies their sacrifices and cooperates with them and is always obliged and thankful for the innumerable lessons learnt from them. They have changed their lives after the acquaintance with the sisters. Sisters are daring, put up with inconveniences and people friendly. Bethany sisters are applauded in their mission to promote not only quality education but also in promoting the human dignity among the

Northeast people. The co-workers in social and medical work of the sisters expressed happiness to be a part of Bethany sisters in their ministry in northeast. The sisters are committed to pastoral work. The pioneer missionaries were courageous and took bold steps to reach out to the Northeast and the rich heritage of the Bethany is transmitted to the people in their mission.

Bethany sisters are well trained to teach in the schools. Their system of education is inspiring and they are trained to be smart and active. The poorer sections of the society get an opportunity to receive good and quality education through the Bethany sisters. Many students gain leadership qualities in their institutions. The BES has changed the education system by promoting quality and positive competitive mind among the students. The schools managed by the BES are models of imitation for other schools. Bethany sisters have contributed a great deal to the church in the Northeast by reaching out to many remote villages. Sisters are hard working and share in the struggles of the people. They are rendering yeoman service especially to the villagers. As pioneering women missionaries, Bethany sisters have played leadership role in the church by taking up the tough Northeast mission.

The informants suggested certain changes they would like to see in the Bethany sisters and their mission in the Northeast. Recruitment of teachers to be done on the basis of quality, the employees need to be given the freedom to put forward their opinions and to treat everyone equally in the mission. They suggested that the sisters could work to stop child labor and give those children chance for education. The unchanged method of rote learning and home work could be looked into by the Bethany educators. There is need to maintain adequate student teacher ratio, rather avoid overcrowding the classrooms, provide opportunity for all the teachers to go for in-service training etc., and enhance their knowledge and skills. Special training needs to be given to the sisters to work with the youth in order to cope with the changing times, to adapt with the changing world and to impart scientific training. Better involvement with the parents-teachers of the school would facilitate better learning.

Special training is also required for the sisters involved in the frontier ministries, more involvement in the society is needed in order to equip with the modern challenges. Greater emphasis could be given to learn the local language, to go out and interact with the society. Stress on the use of English in the school campuses, on manners and etiquettes could help to satisfy the expectations of the parents. More institutions need to be established by the sisters, more of sisters to teach instead of employing teachers, involve parents in some

important decision making concerning the school like raising of school fees and hold parents day annually. Schools could undertake outreach activities to reach the poor and help to reduce the poverty of the people. Sisters need to be well trained and there could be more institutions for vocational training. Family apostolate and counseling could be stressed to bind the families together and teach the young ones the meaning of life.

The sisters need be seen in different social work field and they could have special training for the work they are engaged in. They could relate with the students and the common people a little more; health care ministries could be integrated with NGOs. Syllabus could be reduced, more opportunities in games and sports, extracurricular activities could be made available. They could also be available for service in government run institutions as model teachers. Youth ministry needs more attention. Communication with the people, concern for the families and sense of communication could be developed. More young sisters could work against drug addiction and alcohol and promote harmony and peace in the Northeast. There is also need to give counseling to the adolescents, children and women, to be available to people in times of their need and to be more concerned about the social evils afflicting the society.

Some of the sisters are transferred within a short time which affects the mission work. Sisters could widen the sphere of work so as to reach more people as more work needs to be done to save the people from drug addiction, bring more children to the path of education and to live a self sufficient life. Initiative and creativity in dealing with the people, the youth, and new way of going about may add to the effectiveness of the mission. More co-curricular activities, meditation and yoga classes could be introduced and competitive programs could be arranged to bring out the innate qualities of students and teachers. Priests and sisters responded saying that there is need to coordinate education, social and health ministry. Right personnel to right job and collaboration of sisters as staff members will make them effective in their mission. Sisters could be well equipped, knowledgeable of media and latest electronic gadgets. Sisters could focus on only one mission and be trained in different skills according to their interest. Social work needs to be given importance, train more sister doctors in medical field and involve in family counseling. They can equip their schools and keep up the continuity of the social ministry. Opening more houses in the remote villages, involving more in the pastoral activities is essential as mission field is very vast.

When asked for comments, concerns and suggestions for the Bethany sisters and their mission in the Northeast the informants expressed that they were happy to be a part of this

study and hoped that a research study of this kind will definitely help to improve the various missionary activities in the Northeast. There is scope for improvement in public relation. Sisters could take up education in rural areas. As an institution of missionaries, sisters could work towards teaching the gospel of Christ. Sisters' mission has been a success and expected to carry on in the future too. Staff feels that they and their families have always been supported by the presence and loving attitude of the sisters. Counseling could be arranged for the problematic. Sisters could work more for the improvement of the conditions of women and girl children of society especially in villages. In spite of all the debates and controversies about the ills and wells of Christian missionary work, there is no denying the fact that the sisters have networked the entire northeast in an enviable circuit of education. Ignoring every other thing, he /she could not have been what the person is today if not for sisters in the Bethany schools.

School administration need to be aware of the students problems, teachers appointed in the schools could be competent, result oriented education could be discouraged. There is need to do away with the method of memorizing and introduce internalization of concepts and application, learning could be meaningful, relevant and useful for students. Sisters need to have a deeper level of God experience. Young generation of sisters needs to cope up with the value based life of the senior sisters. The spirit of the pioneering missionaries in the field of evangelization could be emulated by the younger sisters. Pastoral, social and health ministries need to get their due place in the service to the poor and the needy. Specialized training for youth ministry, counseling etc, need to be given and sisters could be well trained in a particular field instead of little knowledge in many fields of activities.

There is a sense of satisfaction especially among the pioneer missionaries to the Northeast that their hard labor has borne fruit and it has resulted in the establishment of standard schools, social service centre's and dispensaries catering to thousands of people of the region. Over all there is a general satisfaction regarding the activities of the sisters. The Bethany sisters manage well the social, medical or educational sector. They are strict disciplinarians and discipline in life is what one learns from the catholic missionaries and particularly from the Bethany sisters. Seeing their activities quite many young girls from the Northeast have joined the Bethany sisters to collaborate with them in their mission. At present Bethany in the Northeast has 75 local vocations collaborating with the sisters in their mission. Some people have also volunteered and joined the sisters as Bethany Lay Associates to carry on the activities of the sisters according to their capacity and are satisfied that they

can be of some use to the society through their mission. Civil society has been helpful, co-operative and encouraging especially with regard to the humanitarian activities of the sisters but the sisters have failed to tap the resources from the government and non-governmental organizations. The church, state, society or many associations have played a great role in supporting Bethany sisters without which the institute would not have flourished. Civil authorities are quite satisfied with the sisters in the field of education, health, and developmental work. They do not have any expectations from the sisters instead are grateful for what the sisters are doing because quite a number of them were trained and educated by the sisters and they have become great in life.

Some of the pioneer missionaries of the Bethany congregation were interviewed. Though some of the sisters came providentially to Northeast but they consider it a blessing in disguise as they had desire and dream to work in missions and to be missionaries. The first challenge as missionaries they had to face was to teach in mission schools which had vernacular as the medium of instruction. Everything in the beginning like culture, language, people and their way of thinking, acting etc. were hurdles but made possible little by little as long as there was enthusiasm and interest to work. Some of them were the witnesses of the indo- Bangladesh war in 1971-72 and cared for the refugees in the relief camps and were actively involved in the relief work. They are happy that they learnt a lot by being with the medical personnel. Looking back over those years of mission work they feel fully satisfied and contented for the opportunities provided and for making full use of those chances which have made them strong to face life, challenges and hardships.

When the Bethany sisters first came to Tripura in 1968 for mission work, the need in those years was education, evangelization and Bethany sisters were the first to cater to those needs. Every community had set apart two sisters for socio-medical work coupled with pastoral work. There was only one mission centre and sisters reached out to almost all the villages giving medical facilities and non-formal education. Bethany sisters were quite forward in those humanitarian works than the other congregations or even denominations. They were the ones who set a pattern of going about with the mission work. There were qualified medical personnel and it was easy to meet the government officials and tap the resources and the assistance through projects. Though it was not so easy to work in Northeast with the southern background and upbringing but looking back over the challenges faced, it gives them a sense of satisfaction of doing God's work. They are quite positive about working in the region and would not like to change the place of work as they have learnt the

language and feel quite comfortable with the people and their culture. They feel that of late Bethany sisters have not been able to venture into new fields in a creative way and have been sticking to the old ways of working.

Young Bethany sisters feel that the congregation has given them platforms to live their vocation and consecration. Northeast province has many mission stations to fulfill their aim in life which is 'Service born out of love' and they share the compassionate love of God to people through their activities. Bethany sisters are good educators in the Northeast. Witnessing the dedication and hard work of the sisters in every field of activity many volunteers and well wishers joined them to work hand in hand. Wherever they worked the local people support them and added to that they received support from the state government as well. Through the educational apostolate they tried to develop the individuals in the families, responsible members of the society and builders of the nation. Love for the poor and marginalized, care for the lonely, concern for the elderly were a few of those qualities bestowed on them from childhood which they were called to utilize in service of the people through the Bethany congregation. They had their anxious and fearful moments as things and people were new to them. The encouragement, support, love, care, life example of some of the sisters thrilled them with joy and enthusiasm to work for the people. They loved to do pastoral work as it meant spending all life in preaching the Good News of the Lord.

Through the missionary work of the Christian missionaries all over the Northeastern states there is a lot of change, improvement in all the spheres of the society. People are educated and given the knowledge to choose between good and evil, to have a judgment and so on. In this the contribution of the Bethany sisters too included. The people are happy with the work done by the sisters who have taken the challenge to come to the region and adjust to new culture, climate, language, inconveniences and be compassionate, loving and committed to the services of the people. Now that more of facilities are available, the sisters can do more by reading the signs of the times. There is need for personnel in various fields and sisters need to be trained which alone will help to be more effective in present day society.

Interviews were also conducted with a few local sisters hailing from the states of Nagaland, Manipur, Meghalaya and Mizoram. They opine that 'from childhood there was desire to become a religious and render service to humanity and were directed to Bethany through people who had received good education and care from the early sisters. They do not mind to work anywhere as they have one desire be missionaries in the mission areas like Africa or wherever needed but far away from home town. They expressed that Bethany

sisters have done marvelous work in the society and because of them the societies have improved. The state government has recognized the services of the sisters and helped them financially to clear the roads during landslides, to make good roads, offered computers, filters to the school etc.

Archbishop Salvatore Pennacchio, Apostolic Nuncio in his message on the golden Jubilee of Northeast Province said 'Bethany sisters had set out as a new venture into the Northeastern part of India. It is a proud moment to have 30 convents and being engaged in educational, pastoral, hostel, medical and social apostolates. They have taken up very difficult and challenging ministries of rehabilitation of Alcoholics, HIV/AIDS victims, drug addicts, prison ministry and other forms of services which are the need of the fifty years. It is a moment to acknowledge having so many centres, educational, pastoral, medical and social apostolates among the less privileged and deprived.'⁷⁵⁴ Wherever Bethany sisters work, people are happy about their mission. Sisters' services are visible and appreciated by many. In order to be relevant to the changing times and the world, Bethany sisters need to update the knowledge and be exemplary otherwise it will be a hard time to handle the situations of the present time. Socio medical mission seems more in line with Bethany's charism and interested in this mission. Most people are satisfied with Bethany's mission yet in some places some parents and people feel that Bethany sisters are not fully available for them, due to perhaps heavy work load in a particular field of mission. Hence the congregation needs to have sufficient members in each of the field. People expect sisters to be more associated with them and to be hospitable. People look up to the sisters especially for spiritual needs. Hence sisters need to grow in spiritual depth.

The local girls have been influenced by the work and mission of the Bethany sisters which created in them desire to work in the Northeast, educate their own people in all the spheres of life and strengthen the faith of the people as seen in the missionaries who worked in their own place. They are interested in social work and rehabilitation of addicts. They also expressed dissatisfaction of working as they cannot involve much in the apostolate of their choice, which is to be with the people and to preach. They are happy with the activities of the sisters but feel that sisters could involve more in the lives of people. Bethany sisters' work, mission and the enthusiastic lives motivated to choose Bethany for her life career. Being the daughters of the soil it's their joy to be in Northeast and reach out to their own people with the advantage of knowing the cultures, traditions and ways of life as it will make their

⁷⁵⁴ Golden Jubilee *Souvenir*, p.10

mission effective. They prefer to be in the villages going about with social pastoral work. People feel that the sisters are relevant with the place, time and culture. Bethany being the first indigenous women religious congregation in the Northeast people remember the beginnings, the hard labor and the simplicity of the sisters but presently as per their observation that enthusiasm and zeal of the earlier missionaries is lacking.

Nurse sisters from the Northeast who render their services to the addicts and the alcoholics for several years in the region opine that they are in line with their interest to be nurses and happy to work with youth using drugs and people living with HIV/AIDS. Their desire is that the Bethany congregation or rather the province could open more mission centres in remote areas and network with other NGOs. Parents expect more from the sisters at the pastoral level and in schools and so sisters could be trained according to their interest of activities and in specialized fields. The mission that they looked ahead was to work for the betterment of the society. They never thought of life beyond family circles but they are happy to have become part of Bethany in serving and loving people. They prefer to work in the Northeast because of the desire to do something to the people associated with them and help them to improve their social life particularly in the field of education. Though interested in teaching but are not satisfied with the task due to minimum knowledge and not able to do much. Though they're happy with the work of the Bethany sisters but feel that it would be better if sisters could cross the boundaries of classrooms, school campuses so that along with the teaching, children and parents could be helped, educated beyond books and classrooms. Teaching is in line with the charism of Bethany because it aims to form human persons with respect to life and responsibility to love, to lift up the poor and the marginalized. People associated with sisters give lots of encouragement, support and cooperate in the sister's mission.

Catholic Church is much forward in the area of education, health and Catholic institutions reach out to the remotest areas to serve the people selflessly. Earlier or present times do not make work easier or tough but the need to follow the signs of the time and to be present to the era of generation will make a difference. Sisters could update themselves and be willing to learn in order to adjust and feel comfortable in the mission field. There is need to encourage, support and lend helping hands to those sisters who have interest in certain area of apostolate. Bethany has contributed to the growth and development of Northeast in the past 50 years. There is change in the life style of the people and reap they reap the fruit of Bethany's labor with great respect and with an attitude of gratitude. Many enjoy life and are

able to stand on their own feet because of Bethany sisters. Sisters could be involved more in being with the people than just doing for them and advice them with words, ideas and knowledge. Efforts could be made to carry the classrooms to people's verandahs, be it in the school or the social apostolate. Sisters could attend to the urgent needs such as broken marriages, broken families, alcoholism, addiction, HIV/AIDS and so on.

In this modern age, the only way to improve the quality of mission is to make use of all the modern gadgets and reach out to the people. There is satisfaction in working in this region as people willingly and joyfully accept any service big or small. Bethany sisters have brought faith to the people, love for mission and for religious life. They have even proved the path for many of a better future through education as many are today great leaders and officers. The parents are happy as their children are taken care of. Though most of the informants feel that the Bethany sisters impart good education, yet value based education seems to be the need of the hour. Sisters do teach the students to preserve the forest, treat others as their brothers and sisters and broaden the vision as well as thinking of the people. Sisters are motivated to influence and form the minds of the students with values and convictions by giving them a feeling that the sisters themselves have lived experience of those values. The students could be given proper motivation for life.

Some of the educational institutions nowadays lack committed individuals and parents also expressed deep concern that the values and care with which they were nurtured as students of these institutions were lacking. As the members of administration of the school come for a limited period to serve these institutions, there is lack of passion and zeal to bring about a transformation. There is need for coordinated effort on the part of the staff and the administration for respect and appreciation which would help to contribute more to the society than what is being done at present. Frequent family visits of the students and interaction with the parents would enable the sisters to know their views. There is need to maintain discipline in their boarding's, the teaching and non teaching staff should be paid just and fair wages. Great desire is expressed that more catholic institutions to be started in rural areas to cater to the needs of the underprivileged and poorer students of the society in order to give them better education in all respects with a view to help them build stronger societies with their advanced knowledge and also to build stronger families. This is to be done with a view to develop the villages faster and to make the nation stronger in all respects. The need is felt for a close relationship between the management and the staff where the gaps could be built up. The sisters could be more innovative and reach out to those who do not have an

opportunity to come to their schools like the slum and street children through the outreach programme by involving their own students in programmes like 'Each one teach one.'

Sisters could respond radically to protect and raise voices for the rights of the people. The need is to work from charity based to rights based approach integrating religious identity and mission by getting in to a system, involving ingovernment sectors and government opportunities like Sarva Siksha Abhiyan, Juvenile Justice Board, Child Welfare Committee etc. By becoming network partners the sisters may be able to protect and promote the interests of all the Non Governmental Organizations, institutions, schools, hospitals, and social work units irrespective of caste, creed and religious affiliations. Some of the informants observed that the Bethany sisters have not been forward in social work and that at present sisters are self sufficient, and do not involve much with the people. There is a need to involve more in the lives of the people, to be persons of prayer and filled with zeal for the mission. The parents desire that their wards be given all the goodness of a human being and make them the most respectful human beings of the society.

Sisters have been thinking in line with capitalizing on the social relations as religious and making the people the agents of change through larger networks with all the catholic NGOs, institutions, schools, colleges, hospitals and social work units through regular training programmes for the partners at various level, involving them with the Government especially in monitoring the social development programmes, getting into the government structure for a better participation in governance and social empowerment through networks. Catholic institutions are definitely different because of which pastors and officials having their own schools continue to send their wards to the catholic schools. Earlier they used to spend the weekends with their families elsewhere villages were considered unfit to bring the families but at present due to the improvement in the educational facilities, especially because of the existence of catholic schools, spending the weekends in their own families in villages has become more convenient. People cannot separate the church from the school and the complaint against the school becomes the complaint against the Catholic Church. There needs to be better communication between church and the school personnel.

Medical services of the Bethany sisters is a great help to the society but the society would benefit much more if the medical services offered by the sisters are advertised on television, more people would avail such facilities especially in the interior areas. Health workers do feel that there should be a bonding with the clients in order to make them feel

comfortable enough to share their problems. The health workers and the sisters could be friendly with the clients in order to make them feel comfortable enough to share their problems. The counseling given to the clients on health and hygiene in the initial stage could be given always. Primary importance could be given on the prevention of HIV/AIDS. The expectations of the people are that the sisters continue with the Self Help Groups as it helped poor womenfolk especially the growing of herbal medicinal plants.

From the responses of the informants, the researcher has realized that the involvement of the sisters in the families of peoples is impacting their lives more than mere being social workers, educationists or nurses. People feel free and closer to the sisters to share their problems when they are one with them in their families. There is less contact between the people and the sisters. A greater rift is created due to concentration on academic excellence, orientation on results and neglect of interaction with the society which has made the people to look at the sisters more as mere educationists, social workers and not as people who are ready and willing to share their experiences with the people.

A greater need is felt to balance the social, pastoral and educational activities of the sisters. Though the sisters are enthusiastic in their mission, their frequent transfers at times affect the mission. In centres where the sisters are involved only in educational activities, a greater desire is expressed that the people want the sisters to pray with them, listen to them and be with them. The public in general desire that the sisters involve themselves in many more activities that would bring peace, love and harmony in the society. More needy people could be reached out by lending helping hands and the sisters could make a greater commitment to eradicate the social evils existing in India and thus make the nation strong. Sisters also need to reach out to a larger section of the population.

Bethany congregation has been founded in the actual cultural context of the people of India. The charism is based on the actual needs of the people of the country. The members who join from other parts of India have been formed in the cultural context of the place and as such they have inculturated themselves to a great extent. The sisters in the mission stations maintain rather good interaction with the people and with the cultural environment in which they find themselves. In this way they are able to make themselves accepted in the socio-cultural situation of the people. Besides, the members also exhibit a spirit of simplicity, cordiality, hard work and dedication. In general they maintain a non-institutionalized attitude which facilitates their missionary work and allows them greater space and time in their

pastoral work. As a specific field of activity, the congregation chooses the territories, giving preference always to the most difficult and needy mission, so that the missionary aim of the institute would be faithfully preserved. The sisters seem to be inspired by the desire of carrying the message of Christ to the farthest and most needy peoples.

CHAPTER VII: SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Anthropology, psychology, philosophy, theology and sociology attempted to look at the origin of religion, its function and developed their own theories. Some of the most well-known approaches across the human sciences are put forward by sociologists like Karl Marx, Max Weber and Emile Durkheim. Sociology of religion has as its subject the study of religion in its social context dealing with the beliefs, practices and organizational forms of religion using the tools and methods of sociology.

Christianity inaugurated by Jesus of Nazareth was part of the Roman legacy to medieval Europe and the Europeans took Christianity far beyond the limits of the Roman Empire. At the start of the third millennium, Christianity is still a major world-wide religion. From its very beginning Christianity looked after the widows, orphans, travelers, sick, infirm and the needy. The doctrines of Christianity offered a high moral code, belief in one God and a view about appeasing guilt as well as a sense of common bonds within their fellowship. This research is an attempt to find out how Catholicism fared in the past years, how far its field of action and mission expanded and to what extent Catholic Missions have been able to carry forward the work begun by its founder, Jesus Christ.

The Catholic Church played a significant role in the development of higher education in the region. The church saw education as one of the practical means of transferring faith into action among the marginalised people. Religious orders founded by some unique, devoted and faithful Roman Catholic personalities constituted a significant addition to the existing structure of the Church administration. Catholic Church is mostly known through the work of the Priests, Brothers and Sisters who belong to different Religious congregations within the Catholic Church. Religious congregations whether of men or women, are founded by an individual or individuals (founders) in response to a particular need of the time and the place. The methods and practices of various missions are not the same. For example, the method of the Salvatorians was not the same as that of the Jesuits, nor is the method of the Salesians identical with that of the Bethany sisters or the Cleretians or of the various missionary congregations of Brothers and Sisters. In India there are 96 Institutes of Priests, 29 Institutes of Brothers and 343 Institutes of Sisters.

The number of Sisters' congregations increased steadily over the century with a noticeable expansion. 80 congregations of Sisters are working in the Northeast. They are

involved in the mission of education, health care, social work and pastoral care. In education Sisters run Colleges, Higher Secondary and High Schools, Grade Schools, Kindergartens, creche, hostels for boys and girls, as well as working men and women. In caring for the sick they have dispensaries, mobile clinics, rural health centres, hospitals, leprosaria, nursing schools and medical schools. For the poor and oppressed there are homes for the destitutes, social welfare and tribal welfare centres, vocational centres, geriatric homes, orphanages, rehabilitation centres for HIV/AIDS patients, to care for the mentally challenged there are social institutes and grass root activities for organizing and conscientising. In mass media there are periodicals, newspapers, audio-visual centers, radio, television and film projects.

The Salvatorian Sisters or the Society of the Divine Saviour were the first ones to make their entry in the region in the year 1891 at Shillong and to begin evangelisation and educational service. They were followed by the Loreto Sisters who arrived in 1908. Among the international institutes the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians were the first Sisters to enter Manipur in 1958 and among the indigenous orders the Bethany Sisters were the first to set their foot in Mizoram in 1962 and Tripura in 1969. It may be pointed out from this study that the Sisters of the Little Flower have made important and significant contribution in the field of education. The Sisters manage a vast number of elementary schools, Middle Schools, High schools and Higher Secondary schools, hostels, colleges and adult education centres.

The congregation of the Sisters of the Little Flower of Bethany is an institute of religious sisters founded on 16th July, 1921 by a visionary priest, namely Raymond Francis Camillus Mascarenhas in St Sebastian's parish of Bendur, Mangalore (Karnataka). The members of the congregation are familiarly addressed as Bethany Sisters. The institute was founded for uplifting the needy and the downtrodden. It was the work of an Indian priest with purely Indian material and Indian means. Like all founders of religious congregations, who were responsive to the needs of the people among whom they lived, RFC Mascarenhas- the founder of the Bethany congregation, decided to meet the twin needs by starting a religious congregation for women.

Thus, these sisters were involved in educational, social, pastoral, medical apostolate and ministry of hospitality according to the needs of the place. A report on the Belgaum mission of the Jesuits that was written by Walter Mathias gives a brief paragraph on Bethany sisters. He writes: 'Their five convents in North Karnataka are a great help in mission work. It is amazing to see how cheerfully with so little at their disposal the Sisters have adapted

themselves to the laborious circumstances of our infant mission where the method of adaptation is slowly being put into practice.’

The educational works of the Bethany Sisters are carried on through the Bethany Educational Society (BES) Mangalore that was registered on 4th September 1948 with the title, ‘The Bethany Educational Society (BES), Mangalore’, under the Societies Registration Act, 1860. At that time BES listed 34 institutions including boarding houses, orphanages, industrial and farm schools spread over the provinces of Madras and Bombay. At present BES manages 58 KG schools, 46 Primary and Higher Primary Schools, 53 High Schools, 18 Senior Secondary/ Pre-university colleges, 2 Degree colleges, 1 Teachers’ Training Institute, 23 Balwadies and non-formal education centres, 36 hostels and orphanages, 22 vocational training centres, 6 community colleges, 6 production centres and a crèche.

As per the congregational statistics of 2008-2009, the total student strength of BES schools was 63,271 out of which 34,163 were girls and 29,108 were boys. The ratio reveals that the girls outnumbered the boys which serve as an indication that the Sisters are making effort to keep alive the original purpose of the institute by prioritizing the education of girls. There were 1,611 teaching faculty out of which 1,318 were female staff and only 293 were males. Out of 307 non-teaching staff of BES schools, 204 were females and only 103 were males. The BES manages a total of 252 educational institutions. The Bethany sisters serve in 131 institutions managed by the various dioceses and the other congregations. A total of 399 sisters are serving in the institutions of the congregation and 151 sisters serve in the institutions of the dioceses as well as other religious congregations.

The institute which started with just 4 sisters in Mangalore (Karnataka) has at present 1334 members residing in 171 communities all over India, Europe and Africa. The Sisters render their services in 47 Dioceses of India and 6 Dioceses abroad. For effective administration, the institute has been divided into smaller units called the Provinces. The Northeast province of the Bethany sisters has 30 communities’ with 198 members.

In 1962, the mission started with four sisters at Kolasib in Mizoram which later became the cradle of Bethany Sisters in Northeastern India. At present there are foundations at Aizawl, Kolasib, Siphir and Mamit in Mizoram; Silchar, Guwahati, Nalbari and Lumding in Assam; Agartala, Kattalcherra, Depacherra, Khayerpur and Dharmanagar in Tripura; Dimapur, Kohima and Viswema in Nagaland; Manmow and Namsai in Arunachal Pradesh; Jongksha and Laitumkhrah in Meghalaya; Canchipur in Manipur and Kolkata, Barasat,

Behala, Chittaranjan in West Bengal. As such, the need to study the effectiveness and impact of their work and activities was keenly felt.

From this research it may be concluded that at the educational level, the sisters have played a role to raise the dignity of women in society through education and various conscientisation programmes. Similarly at the economic level, they have enabled girls to secure adequate employment and reduce the level of poverty. The people in general opine that the sisters in Northeast India have contributed towards the upliftment of women. The vocational training given in weaving, sewing, tailoring, typing, knitting etc. enables them to earn their livelihood. A large number of poor girls, mostly school dropouts, are trained for the government school certificate in cutting, tailoring and embroidery. The Grihini schools run by the sisters in various places in the region are of great help as number of girls pass out of the Grihini and vocational training schools of the sisters every year. Besides, women in villages are instructed in hygiene, food habits, child care, first aid, etc., for better living conditions.

In the field of health and family welfare the Sisters have rendered services in the civil hospitals as well as in dispensaries. Through a large network of dispensaries, the sisters have provided medical services, particularly in the rural areas. The mobile clinics are a great help to the poor and the sick in the villages. It is asserted that the medical care the sisters give has brought down the level of child mortality. The political instability of the place, the non-availability of food, lack of communication facilities and the constant threat to the life causing great distress and anxiety to the sisters in the past did not stop them from opening basic schools as a preliminary step to evangelization.

The sisters in the Northeast manage one College and a Higher Secondary school, four High Schools, three Primary and Higher Primary schools, six Kindergarten or Nursery schools, four Balwadies and Non Formal education centres, two National Open schools, nine Boardings and Orphanages, two Vocational Training Centres, one Community College, five Health centres, two de-addiction/rehabilitation centres for Alcoholics and Drug Users, one house for the aged and the needy. Beside these there are a number of diocesan as well as other religious institutions where the Bethany sisters work.

Having entered fields like Media, Homeopathic Medicine and many sisters are educated with Post-graduate Degrees, importance is also given to the training of sisters to carry on the important task of guiding the young sisters of Bethany in the Northeast. Keeping

in mind the future thrust, sisters are now crossing over to areas like Law, Post Certificate in B.Sc. nursing and a few Sisters have got into research.

In order to find out the level of awareness of people about the Bethany Sisters and their activities, the states of Assam, Tripura and Mizoram were visited. Questionnaires were distributed to the staff, parents as well the past students. of 8 different Catholic mission centers. 50 Priests as well as Sisters including Bethany Sisters were interviewed. Group discussions with health workers were conducted and personal meetings with a few people of the locality were held.

70.28 per cent of the staff, parents and the past pupils and 65.47 per cent of the Priests and the Sisters agreed that the educational institutions of the Bethany sisters are administered effectively and competently. Sisters' mission of education has a vision, goal, common thrust and uniform policies. There is understanding and cooperation between the educational institutions of the sisters with the respective State authorities where they render their services. Sisters helped and supported those students who are unable to pay their school fees by exempting them from payment. The sisters impart value based education in their institutions and their schools create a class of citizens with social commitment and concern for the poor. Some of the parents do not seem to be satisfied with the qualification and competence of the teachers appointed by the Sisters. With regard to the administration of the school, 77.14 per cent of the people and 70.45 per cent of priests and the sisters opine that the Bethany Sisters are good administrators and the management is quite efficient and smooth. The staff and students feel that the authorities are approachable and available to them and there is fairness and justice in the dealings of the administrative staff.

Questionnaires were given out to 100 students from High Schools as well as Higher Secondary sections. 67 percent of students liked the sisters for their kindness, and compassion. Students are happy and satisfied to be a part of the Bethany Schools where they study and feel that the educational institutions have had great impact on them. This is an indication that the Bethany Schools have been making a difference in the lives of those who are part of their institutions. Students on the whole feel that sisters too have had an influence on them through the value based education imparted through Catechism and Moral Science classes taught by the sisters. There is a notable difference in the lives of those who pass out from the Bethany Sisters' schools. Sisters concentrate on the all round developments of their students for which co-curricular activities are well planned and organized in their institutions.

The schools run by the Bethany sisters are different in the sense of having lots of co-curricular and extracurricular activities like sports, cultural programmes, competitions and so on, for which they are preferred by the parents. Students are instructed often to help out the poor and the needy in whatever way possible. The regular feature of the Bethany Schools is that a week is observed as 'Social Service Week' and whatever the students contribute during that week is distributed to the less fortunate one's in the villages at least once a year. Many people feel that they are able to stand on their own feet because of Bethany sisters. As per the original purpose of the institute, Bethany has striven hard to fulfill its mission in educating the poor in the villages and reaching out to them through social work.

The boarding's or hostels of the Bethany sisters cater to those students who hail from villages and have no facilities for education. Many of the students are provided with free accommodation and food. The boarding's have helped in educating the poor and the slow learners by giving them special attention in their studies. Discipline has been inculcated and maintained and the students have been given opportunities to use their talents. The boarding's maintained by the sisters make education accessible to the children of the remote areas.

Social and pastoral work is given the priority in the congregation with the sole aim of human empowerment. Sisters are well trained, regular trainings are conducted and social work is well co-ordinated by those in charge. In this field, the sisters have created visibility and enormous awareness among the local people for their good works. 55.84 per cent of the people and 62.79 per cent of sisters and priests agree that the Bethany sisters in the Northeast Province give due importance to social work. This mission of the sisters is well planned and organized. The Sisters are given required training and their competence in social work has made a significant contribution to the socio-economic development of the region. Bethany sisters seem to have crossed boundaries and collaborated with all by networking with the Non-Governmental Organizations.

The Sisters engaged in social work have identified themselves with the people in their struggles. Social work activities are carried on for the welfare of the masses. Domestic workers are paid just wages. Many of the respondents had marked the column 'can't say', as they were not aware of the social work of the sisters. One of the reasons could be that Bethany sisters are more visible in the educational field rather than social sector.

57.11 per cent of the population feels that the personnel in health care mission are adequately trained and are professionally competent. Though the government-sponsored health care services are made available free of cost in the remote areas, the number of patients

coming to the dispensaries of Bethany sisters is not diminished. 71.42 per cent of priests and sisters are of the opinion that the dispensaries run by the Bethany sisters deliver quality health care at affordable rates. In this field, the sisters emphasize on herbal medicines, sisters are trained as doctors and nurses, drug addicts and HIV/AIDS patients are given shelter, care and counseling is also done.

81.31 per cent of the people are happy to have the presence and services of the Bethany sisters in the region. They find that the sisters are competent in the ministries they undertake, rise above differences of language, religion and culture to reach out and relate to all. They take interest and are involved in the welfare of the people. 62.22 per cent of the sisters and priests too feel that Bethany sisters cooperate and relate well with the people, are approachable, available and helpful, have special concern for the women and girl children, cope well with the demands of their work. They are happy to work and collaborate with the Bethany sisters.

The Sisters respect and adapt to the culture of the people. They care for those people who live in their neighborhood, are simple in their life style, pay special attention to the poor and the slow learners, promote love and respect for all and equip themselves and adapt to the new methods of teaching. Their presence is found as a source of comfort and help to the people and they make efforts to learn the local language. People appreciate the sisters as they give priority to human and women's empowerment. They have paved the path for a better future for quite many of their students through education as many are today great leaders and officers. Bethany sisters' hard labour and simplicity are quite relevant to the place, time and culture, yet the enthusiasm and zeal of the earlier sisters is found lacking nowadays. The people expect the sisters to go to villages, door to door visiting them and seeing what their life situation is.

Though some of the sisters providentially came to Northeast India but later they considered it a privilege as they had desire and dream to work in mission areas and to be missionaries. In general sisters feel happy to be known as Bethany sisters as they feel that Bethany has provided them with the opportunities to serve the poor and the marginalized of the society. Seeing the dedication and hard work of the sisters in the educational field, many volunteers and well wishers have joined hands to work with them. Wherever the sisters worked they felt fully supported by the local people. The local people where the Bethany sisters serve also feel happy with the presence of the sisters and are grateful for the services rendered with dedication.

The Sisters from the region expressed that Bethany Sisters have done marvelous work in the society. The local young girls have been influenced by the work and mission of the Bethany sisters. They show interest in social work, rehabilitation of alcoholics and drug users which they feel is the most important mission in the Northeast today. They opined that sisters could involve more in the lives of people. Sisters feel that they are in line with their interest to be nurses and happy to work with drug users and people living with HIV/AIDS. They desire that the Bethany sisters could open more mission centres in remote areas and network with other NGOs.

Parents are happy with the mission of the sisters and they always appreciate them for their work. They feel happy and contented that the Bethany sisters are fulfilling the needs of the people to a great extent and feel inspired to be a part of God's mission. Most people are satisfied with Bethany's mission yet in some places some parents and people feel that Bethany sisters are not available for them as they expect sisters to be more associated with them. People look up to the sisters especially for spiritual needs.

The Church, State, society or many associations have played a great role in supporting the Bethany sisters without which the institute would not have flourished. Civil society too is helpful and cooperative with sister's mission. As per the civil authorities there is not much expectation instead they are grateful for what the Bethany sisters are doing because quite a number of them were trained and educated by the sisters and they have become successful in life.

Bethany Sisters carry out their mission with a vision, goal, common thrust and uniform policies throughout the Congregation especially guided by the Bethany Educational Society and Bethany Social Service Trust. The authorities at the congregational and province level take keen interest in planning, evaluating the activities and re-inforcing the sisters with the missionary interest. Sisters maintain good relations with the staff, students, parents, government officials and other non-governmental organizations as well.

The government appreciates the services done by the Bethany sisters to the society. The State governments have recognized the services of the sisters and helped them financially to clear the road, to make good roads, offered computers, water filters to the schools etc. First Degree College of Bethany Northeast Province was inaugurated on 2nd August 2014 at Manmow in Arunachal Pradesh. The State government was full of praise for the change that was observed in the students within a span of about 2 weeks. The government officials who were present on the occasion called upon sisters to continue to

open more such institutions across the State. The superiors were requested not to stop sending sisters from Mangalore, for they wanted more sisters in the other parts of Arunachal Pradesh, for Quality Education. The sisters were promised all support, including financial assistance to the extent possible.

The outstanding feature of the Bethany Congregation is that it was founded on the Indian soil by an Indian priest. Like most of the Congregations, Bethany had a very simple beginning; however, it had noble ideals rooted in Indian philosophy. Self reliance, dignity of labour, simplicity of life, education in the vernacular with a special focus on primary education, particularly girls, adult education and vocationalisation of education, improvement of villages for the progress of the country and empowerment of women were some of the ideals that RFC Mascarenhas-the Founder and the founding members upheld much against the criticism of the elite of the society who could not appreciate the sisters engaging themselves in the works done by the common people of the villages. However, these characteristics have made Bethany relevant to the society.

Bethany congregation has been founded in the actual cultural context of the people of India. The charism is based on the actual needs of the people of the country. The members who join from other parts of India have been formed in the cultural context of the place and as such they have inculturated themselves to a great extent. In this way they are able to make themselves accepted within the socio-cultural milieu. Besides, the members also exhibit a spirit of simplicity, cordiality, hard work and dedication. As a specific field of activity, the congregation chooses the territories, giving preference always to the most difficult and needy mission, so that the missionary aim of the institute would be faithfully preserved. The sisters performed mediatory role by opposing violence, standing for the genuine aspirations of the people and letting political and ethnic consciousness become mature in order to accept some form of meaningful co-existence.

From this research, it may be concluded that though the Catholic missions have catered to the people of the Northeast, yet there remains much scope for further development. The Bethany sisters in particular have been concentrating on education, providing health care facilities and social service which has provided enlightenment, jobs and awareness to the students, youth and the people in general. At the same time, the Congregation felt greater need for personal contact, family visits, counseling in marriage and other needs that could be attended to and make the mission effective as well as fruit bearing.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Alangaram, A., *Religions for Societal Transformation: Interreligious Dialogue from Subaltern Perspectives*, Asian Trading Corporation, Bangalore, 2005.
- Aleaz, K.P. *Harmony of Religions: The Relevance of Swami Vivekananda*, Punthi Pustak, Calcutta, 1993.
- _____, *Theology of Religions, Bermingham Papers and other Essays*, Moumita Publishers & Distributors, Calcutta, 1998.
- Allen, N.J., Pickering, W.S.F. & Miller, Watts (eds.), *On Durkheim's Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, Routledge, Taylor & Francis e-Library, London, 2002.
- Aluckal, Fr. Jacob, *The Catholic Church in Northeast India*, Archbishop's House, Shillong, July 2006.
- Amaladoss, Michael *Walking Together: The Practice of Interreligious Dialogue*, Anand: Gujarat Sahitya Prakash, 1992.
- Anthony, Sr. Maria, Joseph, Sr. Lucy, George, Sr. Pushpa, "Missionary Sisters of Mary Help of Christians and their Contribution to the Church in North East India", in S.Karotemprel (ed.), *The Catholic Church In Northeast India 1890-1990. A Multi-dimensional Study*, Vendrame Institute Publications, Shillong, 1993.
- Antonovsky, A., *Unraveling the Mystery of Health*, San Francisco, Jossey-Bass, 1987.
- Asad, Talal, *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam*, Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993.
- Bagshawa, Rev. J.B., *The Credentials of the Catholic Church*, Publications, London, 1879.
- Beales, A.C.F., *The Catholic Church and International Order*, Penguin Books Limited, Britain, 1941.
- Beaver, R. Pierce, (eds.), *A Lion Handbook: The World's Religions*, Lion Publishing, England, 1982.

- Becker, C. SDS, *History of the Catholic Missions in Northeast India, (1890- 1915)*, (trans. &ed.) G. Stadler SDB & S. Karotemprel SDB, Firma KLM Private Limited, Calcutta, 1980.
- _____, *Early History of the Catholic Missions in Northeast India, 1598-1890* (trans. &ed.) F. Leicht SDS, S. Karotemprel SDB, Vendrame Institute Publications, Shillong, 1989.
- _____, *Father Otto Hopfenmueller*, Salvatorian spirituality & Charism Series, No.12, Society of the Divine Saviour, Bangalore, 2008.
- Beckford, James 'Religion', in Bryan S. Turner (ed.), *The Cambridge Dictionary of Sociology*, Cambridge University Press, UK, 2006.
- Benson, H., Koenig, H., *The Healing Power of Faith*, New York, Simon and Schuster, 1999.
TE Oxman et al., *Psychosomatic Medicine* 57:5-15. 1995.
- Benson, H., *Timeless Healing: the Power and Biology of Belief*, New York, Scribner, 1996.
- Berger, Peter L., & Luckmann, Thomas, 'Sociology of Religion and Sociology of Knowledge', in *Sociology and Social Research*, (Vol.47), 1963.
- Bertha, Mary Mgr. *Raymond-Mystic and a Prophet*, Bethany Generalate Publications, Mangalore, 2007.
- Bihlmeyer, Karl H. *Church History*, Vol. III, West minister, 1958.
- Bokenkotter, Thomas, *A Concise History of the Catholic Church*, Image Books, USA, 1977.
- Bond, Helen K., et.al., (eds.), *A Companion to Religious Studies and Theology*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 2003.
- Bowie, Fiona, "Anthropology of Religion: An Introduction" in Robert A. Segal (ed.), *The Blackwell Companion to the Study of Religion*, 2nd edition. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2006.
- Boyer, Pascal, *Religion Explained: The Evolutionary Origins of Religious Thought*, Basic Books, New York, 2001.

- Caffey, Rev. James Mac, *History of the Catholic Church*, The Macmillan Co. USA, 1912.
- Capps Donald, (ed.), *Freud and Freudians on Religion: A Reader*, New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2001.
- Carlo, Gratian S.J., & Raj, Paul, S.J., *Formation of Priests and Religious in North East India, An Exploratory Study*, Jesuit Institute of Religious Formation, Guwahati, 2005.
- Chamberlain, T. and Hall, C., *Realized Religion*, Templeton Foundation Press, Philadelphia, 2000.
- Chunkapura, Lilly, *Empowerment of Women through Education and Employment*, Bharani Publications, Bangalore, 2002.
- Cunningham, Lawrence S., *Introduction to Catholicism*, Cambridge University Press, New York, 2009.
- D'Souza, Violette, *Major Milestones in the History of Bethany Educational Society*, Bethany Publications, Mangalore, Karnataka, 1998.
- _____, *The Vine That He Planted*, Bethany Publications, Mangalore, Karnataka, 1989.
- _____, *Unless the Seed Die*, Bethany Publications, Mangalore, Karnataka, Re-printed, 2010.
- Desrochers, John CSC, *The Social Teaching of the Church in India*, NBCLC/CSA, Bangalore, India, 2006.
- Dillon, Michele, "The Sociology of Religion in Late Modernity" in Michele Dillon (ed.), *Handbook of the Sociology of Religion*, Cambridge University Press, United Kingdom, 2003.
- Don Peter, W.L.A., *50 Questions about Catholicism*, St. Paul Press, Mumbai, 1998.
- Downs, Frederick S., *Christianity in Northeast India: Historical Perspectives*, ISPCK, New Delhi, 1983.

- _____, *History of Christianity in India: North East India in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, Vol V, Part 5, The Church History Association of India, Bangalore, 1992.
- Durkheim, Emile, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life: A Study in Religious Sociology*, (trans.) Joseph World Swain, George Allen & Unwin, Free Press, New York, 1915.
- Edamattathu, Thomas, and Rodrigues, Ida, “Contribution of the Religious Sisters to the Church in Northeast India”, in S.Karotemprel (ed.), *The Catholic Church in Northeast India 1890-1990. A Multi-dimensional Study*, Vendrame Institute Publications, Shillong, 1993.
- Ember, Carol R. et.al. ‘*Anthropology*’: Dorling Kindersley, New Delhi, 2002.
- Erikson, Erik H., *Gandhi’s Truth*, New York: Norton, 1969.
- _____, *Young Man Luther: A Study in Psychoanalysis and History*, New York: Norton, 1958.
- Evans Pritchard, E.E., *Nuer Religion*, Clarendon Press, Oxford Publications, 1956.
- _____, *Theories of Primitive Religion*, Oxford, New York, 1965.
- _____, *Witchcraft, Oracles and Magic among the Azande*, [1937], Eva Gilles, (ed.), Abridged ed., Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976.
- Fernandez, Dr. Francis S.D.B., & Varickasseril, Dr. Jose S.D.B., (eds.) *Mission: A Service of Love, Essays in Honour of George Kottuppallil, S.D.B.*, Vendrame Institute Publications, Shillong, 1998.
- Frazer, August, *A Concise History of the Church*, Publishers, New York, 1969.
- Furseth, Inger & Repstad, Pal, *An Introduction to the Sociology of Religion : Classical and Contemporary Perspectives*, Ashgate Publishing Limited, London, 2006.
- Galloway, George, *Philosophy of Religion*, T & T Clark, Edinburgh, 1956.
- Geertz, Clifford, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, Basic Books, New York, 1973.

- George, Mary *The F.M.A. Contribution to the Missions in Northeast India*, All India Symposium on Salesian Missions in India, Shillong, 1983, *A paper*.
- Grensted, L.W. *The Psychology of Religion*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1952.
- Grimm, Fr.William, in “Change is a must for all”, *Smart Companion India: National Monthly for Christian Leadership*, June 2012 / Vol.3 / No.5.
- Handbook*, The Congregation of the Sisters of The Little Flower of Bethany, Mangalore, 1921-2010, Bethany Publications, Mangalore.
- Henkel, Willi. *Religion Past and Present*, Hans Dieter Betz, et.al.,(eds.) Don S. Browning, Bernd Janowski and, Eberhard Jüngel, Brill Online 2012, 18 July 2012.
- Holmes, J. Derek & Bickers, Bernard W. *A Short History of the Catholic Church*, Inforum Ltd, Portsmouth, 1983.
- Hrangkhuma F. & Joy Thomas (eds.), *Christ Among the Tribals*, SAIACS Press, Bangalore, 2007.
- Isaacson, Walter, *Benjamin Franklin: An American Life*, Simon & Schuster, New York, 2003.
- Hughes, Philip, *A Popular History of the Catholic Church*, 3 Vols. London, SAW, 1948.
- Jastrow, Morris Jr., *The Study of Religion*, Scholars Press, USA, 1981.
- Jeyaseelan, L. *Church's response to the Phenomenon of Violence in North- East India*, Archbishop's House, Manipur, 1999.
- _____, *History of the Catholic Church in Manipur, Diocese of Imphal*, Manipur, 1994.
- _____, in *Education for transformation: a Pastoral Priority in Thomas Manjaly*, Peter Haokip, James Thoppil, (eds.), *Towards Building up the Local Church : Priestly Ministry for 21st Century*, Oriens Publications, Shillong, 2004.
- Jones, Kenneth W. *The New Cambridge History of India: Socio Religious Reform Movements in British India*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1994.

- Karotemprel, Dr. Sebastian, “ The Impact of Christianity on the Tribes of North East India” in J. Puthenpurakal SDB (ed.), *Impact of Christianity on North East India*, Vendrame Institute Publications, Shillong, 1996.
- _____, *Albizuri Among the Lyngams (A Brief History of the Catholic Mission among the Lyngams of Northeast India)*, Vendrame Missiological Institute Publications, Shillong, 1985.
- Kivisto, Christiano, Swatos, et.al., *Sociology of Religion: Contemporary Developments*, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, New York, INC. 2008.
- Klass, Morton, *Approaches to the Anthropology of Religion*. Boulder, CO: West view Press, 1995.
- Knitter, Paul F., *One Earth, Many Religions: multi-faith dialogue and Global Responsibility*, Orbis Books, USA, 1995.
- Koenig, H. *The Healing Power of Faith*, Simon and Schuster, New York, 1999.
- Kunin, Seth O., Jonathan Miles-Watson (eds.) *Theories of Religion: A Reader*, Edinburg University Press, Edinburg, 2006.
- Levi-Strauss, Claude, *The Savage Mind*, London, Chicago, 1965.
- _____, *Totemism*, Rodney Needham, (trans.) *Introduction to Claude Levi-Strauss*, 1962.
- Main, Roderick, “Psychology of Religion”, in Robert A. Segal, (ed.), *The Blackwell Companion to the Study of Religion*, Blackwell Publishing, 2006.
- Malinowski, Bronislaw D.Sc., *Crime and Custom in Savage society*, Littlefield, Adams & Co, Paterson, New Jersey, 1959.
- Manimala, Varghese, *Toward Mutual Fecundation and Fulfillment of Religions*, Media House & ISPCK, New Delhi, 2009.
- Manjaly, Thomas, Augustine, Graviour, Palely, Tomy, (eds.), *Challenges of Faith Formation in North-East India*, Oriens Publications, Shillong, 2009.

- Manjaly, Thomas, Haokip, Peter, Thoppil, James, *Towards Building up the Local Church: Priestly Ministry for 21st Century*, Oriens Publications, Shillong, 2004.
- Manners, John Mac (ed.), *The Oxford Illustrated History of Christianity*, OUP, Oxford, 1990.
- Marx, Karl, 'On the Jewish Question' and 'Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right', in T.B.Bottomore (ed.), *Karl Marx: Early Writings*, London, 1963.
- McCullough, Michael Timothy Smith, "Religion and Health: Depressive Symptoms and Mortality as Case Studies", in Michele Dillon, (ed.), *Handbook of the Sociology of Religion*, Cambridge University Press, United Kingdom, 2003.
- Mckenzie, John L. *The Roman Catholic Church, Image Books*, New York, 1971.
- Meersman, Achilles, 'Can We Speak of Indigenization of the Catholic Church in India during the 19th Century?' in *Indian Church History Review*, December, 1973.
- Melton, J. Gordon and Baumann, Martin (ed.), *Religions of the World: A Comprehensive Encyclopedia of Beliefs and Practices*, Oxford, England, 2002.
- Menamparampil, Archbishop Thomas *An Introduction to North-East India: Culture and History*, Guwahati, 2006.
- _____, *Church in North East India*, (MS) Shillong, 1974.
- Mitchell, Margaret M. & Young, Frances M. (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Christianity, Volume 1, Origins to Constantine*, Cambridge Histories online, Cambridge University Press, 2006.
- Morris Jastrow Jr., *The Study of Religion*, Scholars Press, USA, 1981.
- Mundadan, A.M., *Sixteenth Century Traditions of St. Thomas Christians*, Bangalore, 1970.
- Naugle, David K., *Worldview: The History of a Concept*, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, Michigan /Cambridge, U.K., 2002.
- Naulak, Sr. Mary B.S., *Leaven in the East, Sisters of the Little Flower of Bethany in Northeast India (1962- 2012)*, Blossom Books (P) Ltd., Guwahati, 2012.

- Needleman, Jacob, et.al. *Religion for a New Generation*, The Macmillan Company, New York, 1973.
- Neill, Stephen F.B.A., *A History of Christianity in India: The Beginnings to AD 1707*, Press Syndicate of the University of Cambridge, United Kingdom, 1984.
- Paviotti, O. *The Work of His Hands: The Story of the Archdiocese of Shillong-Guwahati 1934-1984*, Archbishop's House, Shillong, 1987.
- Payyapillay, Geo, and Benedict, Mary, *Fullness of Life*, Bethany Publications, Mangalore, 2003.
- Ponraj, S. Devasagayam *Tribal Challenges and Church's Responses*, Mission Educational Books, Madhupur, 1996.
- Radcliffe-Brown, A.R., *Structure and Function in Primitive Society*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London & Henrey, 1982, Rep.1976.
- Rao, C.N.Shankar, *Sociology- Principles of Sociology with an Introduction to Social Thought*, 5th Edn., S.Chand & Company Ltd., New Delhi, 2006.
- Rita, Sr Jessy B.S. *The Ripples: The Origin and Development of the Mangalore Province, The Congregation of the Sisters of the Little Flower of Bethany, Mangalore*, Bethany Publications, Mangalore, 2006.
- Rosman, Abraham, Rubel, Paula G., and Weisgrau Maxine, *The Tapestry of Culture: An Introduction to Cultural Anthropology*, Ninth Edition, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., United Kingdom, 2009.
- Schreck, Alan *The Compact History of the Catholic Church*, St.Paul's Press, Mumbai, 1987.
- Seybold, Kevin S. & Hill, Peter C. 'The Role of Religion and Spirituality in Mental and Physical Health' in *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, Vol. 10, No. 1, Sage Publications, February 2001.
- Snaitang, Dr. O.L., *Christianity and Social Change in Northeast India*, Vendrame Institute, Shillong, 1993.

- _____, (ed) *Churches of Indigenous Origins in Northeast India*, Cambridge Press, Delhi, 2005.
- Spiro, M. E. *Culture and Human Nature*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1987.
- _____, in M. Benton (ed), *Anthropological Approaches to the Study of Religion*, London, 1966.
- Sreshta, M. S. *Farewell Address of the catholic association of south Kanara to Rt Rev. Mgr RFC Mascarenhas read at a party given at the Catholic Bank on 27 March Mangalore, April 1941, Vol. No XIV, No.10.*
- Steadman, L.B. and Palmer, C.T. *Beyond Belief, A Review of the Supernatural and Natural Selection: Religion and Evolutionary Success*, Boulder, CO: Paradigm, 2008
- Schilbrack, Kevin “New Directions for Philosophy of Religion: Four Proposals”, *Studies in Religion/Sciences Religieuses*, 2012. Accessed 9 May 2012. Available from <http://sir.sagepub.com>.
- Swatos Kivisto Christiano, et.al. *Sociology of Religion: Contemporary Developments*, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, New York, INC. 2008.
- Syiemlieh, David R., (ed.) *Diocese of Agartala: Ten Years and Onward*, Don Bosco Press, Shillong, 2005.
- Symonides, Janusz (ed.), *New Dimensions and Challenge for Human Rights*, Rawat Publications, UNESCO Publishing, New Delhi, 2003.
- T. Chamberlain, and C.Hall, *Realized Religion*, Annals of Behavioral Medicine, Templeton Foundation Press, Philadelphia, 2000.
- T.B. Bottomore (ed.), *Karl Marx: Early Writings*, London, 1963.
- Thadathil, Jane Mary *A Great Missionary Legacy: A Brief History of the Origin, Growth and Charism of the Missionary Sisters of Mary Help of Christians founded by Archbishop Stephen Ferrando*, Centre for Indigenous Peoples and Missionary Sisters Publications, Shillong and Guwahati, 1997.

- Thekkekara, Mathew S.D.B. *The Face of Early Christianity: A Study of the Pauline Letters*, KJC Publications, Bangalore, 1988.
- Thomas Bokenkotter, *A Concise History of the Catholic Church*, Image Books, USA, 1977.
- Tirkey, Christopher Augustus Bixel, *Religion / Primal Religions*, ISPCK, Delhi, 2005.
- Tiwari, Kedar Nath *Comparative Religion*, Motilal Banarsidass Publishers Pvt. Ltd., Delhi, 1997.
- Tylor, Edward Burnett, *Primitive Culture*, (Vol. I), New York, 1874.
- Vadakumpadan, Dr. Paul SDB, (ed.), *Apostle of Christ: Essays in honour of Archbishop Stephen Ferrando SDB*, Vendrame Institute Publications, Shillong.
- Varghese Manimala, *Toward Mutual Fecundation and Fulfillment of Religions*, Media House & ISPCK, New Delhi, 2009
- Walter Isaacson, *Benjamin Franklin: An American Life*, Simon & Schuster, New York, 2003.
- Watts, Fraser, et.al. *Christian Ministry*, Routledge, London, 2002
- Woods, James Haughton *Practice and Science of Religion: A Study of Method in Comparative Religion*, Longmans, Green and Co., New York, 1906.
- Young, Lawrence (ed.), *Rational Choice Theory and Religion: Summary and Assessment*, New York, Routledge, 1997.

DICTIONARIES

- Stuckrad, Kocku Von (ed.), 'Religion' in Introduction: The Academic Study of Religion-Historical and Contemporary Issues, *The Brill Dictionary of Religion*, (Revised edn.), Metzler Lexikonin (ed.), (trans.) Christoph Auffarth, Jutta Bernard & Hubert Mohr., Vol. III M-R, Martinus Nijhoff publishers, Boston, 2006.
- The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, Oxford University Press, 2005. Available from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/See_of_Rome. Accessed 19 July 2012.

DIRECTORIES

Catholic Directory of North East India, Ecclesiastical Province of Shillong-Guwahati, Archbishop's House, Shillong, June 1990.

The Catholic Directory of India 2013: The Catholic Bishop's Conference of India, Claretian Publications, Bangalore, India.

ENCYCLOPEDIAS

Alles, Gregory D., 'Religion: Further considerations', in Lindsay Jones (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Religion*, Vol.11 (2), 2005.

Britannica Online Encyclopedia.

Catholic Encyclopedia, Robert Appleton Company, New York, 1913. Accessed 18 July 2012
Chernus, Ira, "Religion as a Cultural System: The Theory of Clifford Geertz." Accessed 14 March 2011.

Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences, IX, The Macmillan Company, New York, 1933, Reprint 1949.

Everett, John R. 'Religion' in *Encyclopedia Americana*, s.v., Vol.23.

Huber, Mary Taylor, 'Christianity' in Alan Bernard, Jonathan Spencer, (eds.), *Encyclopedia of Social and Cultural Anthropology*, Routledge, New York, 2002.

Hull, E. (1910), India. *Catholic Encyclopedia*, New York, Robert Appleton Company. Retrieved February 19, 2013 from New Advent: <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/07722a.htm>

James Smallwood, 'Christianity' in Frank Magill et al., *International Encyclopedia of Sociology*, Chand & Company Ltd., New Delhi, 2000.

Josef Wicki, S. *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol.7.

- King, Winston L., 'Religion' in Lindsay Jones (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Religion*, Vol.11
Second Edition, 2005.
- Kitagawa, Joseph M. 'Religious Communities' in Lindsay Jones (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Religion*, Vol.11 (2), 2005.
- Mircea Eliade, 'Religion' in Mircea Eliade, (ed.), *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, Vol.12,
Macmillan Publishing Company, New York, 1987.
- Smallwood, James 'Christianity' in Frank Magill et al., *International Encyclopedia of Sociology*, Chand & Company Ltd., New Delhi, 2000.

HANDBOOKS

- The Sisters of the Little Flower of Bethany, Mangalore, *Hand Book*.

JOURNALS

- Burton, Laurel Arthur & Bosek, Marcia Sue Dewolf 'When Religion May Be an Ethical Issue' in *Journal of Religion and Health*, Vol. 39, No. 2, 2000.
- Cacioppo, J., et al., Loneliness and Health: Potential Mechanisms, Psychosomatic Medicine, *Journal of Religion and Health*, (Vol. 3), No.4, 2004.
- Hill, P.C., & Butter, E.M., The Role of Religion in Promoting Physical Health, *Journal of Psychology and Christianity*, 1995.
- Hill, P.C., et.al. Conceptualizing Religion and Spirituality: Points of Commonality, Points of Departure, *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour*, 2000.
- J. J., Raymond, Seeger, Thomson, &, Anglican, 'Perspectives on Science and Christian Faith, *The Journal of the American Scientific Affiliation*, 1986.

Jones, James W. 'Religion, Health, and the Psychology of Religion: How the Research on Religion and Health Helps Us Understand Religion' *Journal of Religion and Health*, Vol. 43, No. 4, 2004.

Larson, D.B., et.al., Associations between Dimensions of Religious Commitment and Mental Health, *American Journal of Psychiatry*, 1978.

Luckmann, Thomas, 'Religion in Modern Society', *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, (Vol. II), April, 1963.

Paul, Gregory S., Cross-National Correlations of Quantifiable Societal Health with Popular Religiosity and Secularism in the Prosperous Democracies, *Journal of Religion & Society*, (Vol. 7) A First Look, Baltimore, Maryland, 2005.

Thoresen, CE. (ed.), Spirituality and health [Special issue], *Journal of Health Psychology*, 1999, 4(3)

W.Strawbridge, et.al. *Annals of Behavioral Medicine, Journal of Religion and Health*, (Vol. 3), No.4, 2001.

MAGAZINES

Bethany on the Seven Hills-Platinum Jubilee of the Congregation, *A Magazine*.

Golden Jubilee of the Bethany Sisters in the North east Province, *AMagazine*.

Golden Jubilee of the Northern Province of Bethany Sisters, *AMagazine*.

Mission Today, January-March 2005, Vol.VII, No.1, *A Magazine*.

National Monthly Magazine for Christian Leadership, Smart Companion- India, July 2012/
Vol.3 / No.6.

UNPUBLISHED PAPERS

Brooks, Mr.Allen, "Challenges and Opportunities Facing the North East Region", North East Regional Assembly, 23rd-27th August 2000, *A Paper*

Conference of Religious Women India (CRWI) Superiors' General Meet, Bethany Convent (Pushpalaya) Mangalore, 2 January 2008, *A Paper*.

Lillis and Trecilla, 'A Champion of Education- Mgr. Raymond Mascarenhas', Bethany Educational Society- II Convention, Mangalore, Karnataka, November, 2008, *A Paper*.

Lillita, 'The Plight of the Girl Child and the Response of Bethany', Bethany Educational Society II Convention, Mangalore, November, 2008, *A Paper*.

REPORTS

Larson, D.B., Swyers, J.P., & McCullough, M.E., (eds.), Scientific Research on Spirituality and Health, *A Consensus Report*, Rockville, MD, National Institute for Healthcare Research, Levin J.S., & Chatters L.M., 1998.

REVIEWS

Bellah, Robert N., 'Religious Evolution', *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 29, 1964.

Karotemprel, S., SDB, The Catholic School and A Growing Church, in *Indian Missiological Review*, July 1980.

Karotemprel, S., SDB, The Nurse Sister and Family Welfare in a Growing Church, in *Indian Missiological Review*, January, 1980.

Karotemprel, Sebastian S.D.B. The Theology and Morality of Development, in *Indian Missiological Review*, July 1984.

SOUVENIRS

Anne, Mother A Seed is Sown, in St. Mary's college Golden Jubilee, Shillong, 1937- 87, *ASouvenir*.

Bednarz, Dr. Julian, SDS, "Salvatorian contribution to the church in Northeast India" in Centenary of the Catholic Church in North-East India 1890-1990: *A Souvenir*.

Diamond Jottings published on the occasion of the Diamond Jubilee celebration of Bethany Educational Society, *ASouvenir*.

Diamond Jubilee of Bethany Educational Society (R) Mangalore, 1948-2008, *A Souvenir*.

Diamond Jubilee of the Prefecture Apostolic of Haflong, (1952- 2012) Diocese of Aizawl, *A Souvenir*.

Jala, Dr. Dominic, & Shangliang, Dr. J.S., in 'The Contribution of the Catholic Church towards Socio-Cultural Development in North- East India', in *Centenary of the Catholic Church in North-East India 1890-1990, A Souvenir*.

Kottupallil, Dr. George, in 'A Historical Survey of the Catholic Church in North-East India from 1627 to 1983', Centenary of the Catholic Church in North-East India 1890-1990, *A Souvenir*.

OTHER SOURCES

D'Souza, I., Salesian Sisters in Northeast India, in Don Bosco in India, published by the six Salesian provinces of India, *commemorative brochure*.

Education for fullness of life, second National convention, *Post convention Document 1*, Bethany Generalate Publications, Mangalore.

WEB REFERENCES

Goldsmith, Amrit Kumar, *Article: The Christians in the Northeast India: A Historical Perspective, 1819-2004*, accessed 20 June 2013.

[http:// en.wikipedia.org /Theories_of_religion#cite_note-Kunin.2C_page_153](http://en.wikipedia.org/Theories_of_religion#cite_note-Kunin.2C_page_153) accessed 20 September 2012.

http://atheism.about.com/od/philosophyofreligion/a/marx_4.htm accessed 20 September 2012.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Catholic_Church#Papacy_and_Roman_Curia Accessed 10 July 2012.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christianity_in_the_16th_century accessed 4 December 2011.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Francis_Xavier Accessed 15 December 2011.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Catholic_Church#cite_note-ranzen_325-181
Accessed 4 December 2011.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sociology_of_religion#Karl_Marx accessed 20 September 2012.

<http://www.colorado.edu/ReligiousStudies/chernus/4800/GeertzSummary>.

<http://www.jstor.org/stable/20182684> .Accessed 12 June 2012.

<http://www.jstor.org/stable/27511432> .Accessed 12 June 2012.

[http://www.knowledgerush.com/kr/encyclopedia/Magic_\(religion\)/](http://www.knowledgerush.com/kr/encyclopedia/Magic_(religion)/) accessed 19 April 2011.

<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/15614b.htm>, Accessed on 18 July 2012.

indiaonlinepages.com accessed on 3 May 2014.

Livesey, Chris, "Religion, Functionalist Perspectives." Accessed 14 May 2011. Available from www.sociology.org.uk.

The Catholic Encyclopedia, Robert Appleton Company, New York. Available from <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/15614b.htm>, Accessed on 18 July 2012.

www.bethanymangalore.org accessed on 11th June 2013.

www.bible 411.com accessed on 12 July 2012.

www.cleretianpublications.org. Accessed on 12th May 2013.

www.sociology.org.uk.

APPENDIX

Major Roman Catholic Countries of the World (% of Population)

Table 2.1

| Sl No | Country | % | Sl No | Country | % |
|-------|--------------------|------|-------|---------------|------|
| 1. | Austria | 85 | 22. | Lesotho | 70 |
| 2 | Belgium | 75 | 23. | Liechtenstein | 87.3 |
| 3 | Belize | 65 | 24. | Lithuania | 90 |
| 4 | Bolivia | 84 | 25. | Luxembourg | 97 |
| 5 | Brazil | 74 | 26. | Malta | 95.3 |
| 6 | Burundi | 63.1 | 27. | Mexico | 93 |
| 7 | Chile | 70 | 28. | Monaco | 90.6 |
| 8 | Colombia | 96 | 29. | Nicaragua | 95 |
| 9 | Costa Rica | 90.6 | 30. | Panama | 85 |
| 10. | Croatia | 85 | 31. | Paraguay | 90 |
| 11. | Dominican Republic | 95 | 32. | Peru | 81 |
| 12. | East Timor | 90 | 33. | Philippines | 81 |
| 13. | Ecuador | 96.5 | 34. | Poland | 96 |
| 14. | El Salvador | 79.1 | 35. | Portugal | 97 |
| 15. | France | 90 | 36. | Puerto Rico | 85 |
| 16. | Gabon | 50.2 | 37. | San Marino | 95 |
| 17. | Grenada | 65 | 38. | Seychelles | 87 |
| 18. | Guatemala | 75 | 39. | Slovakia | 68.9 |
| 19. | Haiti | 80 | 40. | Slovenia | 96 |
| 20. | Honduras | 97 | 41. | Spain | 99 |
| 21. | Hungary | 76.6 | 42. | Uruguay | 58 |

Source: The Catholic Directory of India 2013, The Catholic Bishops Conference of India, Claretian Publications, Bangalore, India, p.96

| STATISTICAL DATA (AS PER CONFERENCE OF RELIGIOUS INDIA) | | | | | |
|--|-----------|---------------|----------|---------|-------|
| Name | Sisters | | Brothers | Priests | Total |
| | Apostolic | Contemplative | | | |
| Number of Congregations | 244 | 9 | 17 | 64 | 334 |
| Number of Major Superiors | 569 | 55 | 38 | 160 | 822 |

| | Candidates | | Novices | | Professed | Number of Communities |
|--------------|---------------|-----------|-------------|-------------|--------------------|-----------------------|
| | | | 1st year | 2nd year | | |
| | Sisters | Apostolic | 9910 | 2926 | 2975 | 9316 2 |
| | Contemplative | 30 | 17 | 18 | 863 | 63 |
| Brothers | 588 | | 128 | 125 | 2592 | 502 |
| Priests | 5877 | | 1027 | 471 | 1897 0 | 2835 |
| Total | 16405 | | 4098 | 3589 | 1155 87 | 16269 |

| For Priests' Congregations | | |
|-----------------------------------|----------|-------------------|
| Priests | Brothers | Major Seminarians |
| 13235 | 1333 | 5735 |

The following is a list of the Church's Institutions in India:

| | | |
|----|----------------------------------|--------|
| 1 | Mission Stations | 17,867 |
| 2 | Parishes | 6,477 |
| 3 | Religious Congregations | 251 |
| 4 | Major Seminaries | 62 |
| 5 | KG & Nursery schools | 3,785 |
| 6 | Primary Schools | 7,319 |
| 7 | Universities (Colleges) | 240 |
| 8 | Technical Schools | 1,514 |
| 9 | Hostel & Boarding Houses | 1,765 |
| 10 | Hospitals | 704 |
| 11 | Leprosaria | 111 |
| 12 | Rehabilitation Centres | 102 |
| 13 | Homes for the aged & Handicapped | 455 |
| 14 | Creches | 228 |
| 15 | Orphanages | 1,085 |
| 16 | Dispensaries | 1,792 |
| 17 | Weeklies | 14 |
| 18 | Daily Newspapers | 3 |
| 19 | Other Periodicals | 272 |

Source: Mr.Allen Brooks, "Challenges and Opportunities Facing the North East Region", *A Paper Presented in the North East Regional Assembly, 23rd-27th August 2000.*

| Sl No | Diocese | Total Population | No. of Catholics | % of Catholics | Diocesan Priests | Religious Priests | No. of Priests Congregations | Brothers Congregations | Sisters Congregations | Religious Institutes | Priests | Brothers | Sisters | Secular Educational Institutions | Social Welfare | Health Services |
|-------|------------|------------------|------------------|----------------|------------------|-------------------|------------------------------|------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|---------|----------|---------|----------------------------------|----------------|-----------------|
| 1. | Agartala | 3,200,000 | 31,848 | 1 | 4 | 53 | 5 | 1 | 12 | 5 | 1 | 12 | | 21 | 11 | 14 |
| 2. | Aizawl | 4,226,960 | 33,329 | 0.79 | 29 | 20 | 5 | 2 | 12 | 5 | 2 | 12 | 1 | 56 | 37 | 11 |
| 3. | Bongaihaon | 5,500,000 | 67,077 | 1.22 | 28 | 36 | 6 | 2 | 21 | 6 | 2 | 21 | - | 47 | 42 | 13 |
| 4. | Dibrugarh | 5,329,982 | 113,177 | 2.12 | 75 | 52 | 8 | 2 | 13 | 8 | 2 | 13 | 1 | 65 | 14 | 19 |
| 5. | Diphu | 1,001,150 | 57,279 | 5.72 | 29 | 28 | 6 | 1 | 20 | 6 | 1 | 20 | - | 61 | 30 | 22 |
| 6. | Guwahati | 6,500,000 | 56,137 | 0.86 | 31 | 105 | 16 | 3 | 37 | 16 | 3 | 37 | 1 | 77 | 30 | 23 |
| 7. | Imphal | 2,700,000 | 90,785 | 3.36 | 93 | 44 | 6 | - | 16 | 6 | - | 16 | - | 64 | 71 | 30 |
| 8. | Itanagar | 725,591 | 82,093 | 11.31 | 9 | 62 | 9 | 2 | 16 | 9 | 2 | 16 | - | 38 | 35 | 13 |
| 9. | Jowai | 379,294 | 78,139 | 20.6 | 13 | 16 | 6 | 1 | 10 | 6 | 1 | 10 | - | 9 | 2 | 3 |
| 10. | Kohima | 198,602 | 58,090 | 29.25 | 82 | 11 | 6 | 1 | 17 | 6 | 1 | 17 | 1 | 137 | 46 | 15 |
| 11. | Miao | 473,120 | 50,476 | 10.67 | 27 | 57 | 11 | - | 16 | 11 | - | 16 | 1 | 28 | 24 | 12 |
| 12. | Nongstoin | 296,049 | 123,912 | 42.86 | 15 | 22 | 6 | 1 | 7 | 6 | 1 | 7 | - | 3 | 6 | 13 |
| 13. | Shillong | 1,082,439 | 270,353 | 24.98 | 61 | 100 | 9 | 4 | 20 | 9 | 4 | 20 | - | 91 | 20 | 35 |
| 14. | Tejpur | 822,561 | 198,972 | 24.19 | 59 | 33 | 2 | - | 12 | 2 | - | 12 | - | 44 | 3 | 15 |
| 15. | Tura | 862,473 | 234,621 | 27.2 | 48 | 41 | 6 | 2 | 17 | 6 | 2 | 17 | - | 114 | 85 | 39 |

Source: The Catholic Directory of India 2013, The Catholic Bishop's Conference of India, Claretian Publications, Bangalore, India, pp.77-83

| Congregations | Founder | Place of foundation | Year of Foundation | Total Membership | Convents in India | Establishment in the Northeast | Educational centres | Health centres | Social- Welfare centres |
|--|--|---------------------|--------------------|------------------|-------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------|----------------|-------------------------|
| 1. Apostolic Carmel (ac) | Mother Mary Veronica of the Passion | Bayonne, France | 1868 | 1605 | 128 | 1966 | 128 | 4 | 12 |
| 2. The Daughters of Mary Help of Christians (fma) | Ss John Bosco and Mary Domenica Mazzarello | Mornese, Italy. | 1872 | 1256 | | 1923 | 107 | 21 | 64 |
| 3. Sisters of Franciscan Clarist Congregation (fcc) | Srs. Mariam Clara a, Coletha, Agnes, Margareetha, Mariam Thresia, Mariam, Magdalena & Bishop Charles Lavigne, SJ | Changanacherry | 1888 | 6938 | 689 | 1966 | 365 | 113 | 132 |
| 4. Missionaries of Charity (mc) | Bl Mother Teresa BoJaxhiu MC | Calcutta | 1950 | 1798 | | 1974 | | | 21 |
| 5. Missionary Sisters of Mary Help of Christians (msmhc) | Late Archbishop Stephen Ferrando SDB | Guwahati, Assam. | 1942 | 1044 | 163 | 1948 | 52 | 30 | 12 |
| 6. Missionary Sisters, Servants of Holy Spirit (ssps) | St. Arnold Janssen, Bl Mother Maria & Josepha | Steyl, Holland. | 1889 | | 56 | 1995 | | | |

| | | | | | | | | | | |
|-----|---|---|-----------------------------|------|-------|-----|------|-----|----|----|
| 7. | The Sisters of Charity of Sts.Bartholomea Capitanio and Vincenza Gerosa (sccg) | Ss Bartholomea Capitanio & Vincenza Gerosa | Lovere, Italy. | 1832 | | 206 | 1970 | | | |
| 8. | Sisters of our Lady of Fatima (fs) | Msgr Francis Xavier Kroot MHM | Bellary, India | 1893 | 412 | 77 | 1988 | 31 | 9 | 23 |
| 9. | Srs. of St.Joseph of Annecy (sja) | Fr. Jeanne Pierre Medaille SJ | Le Puy, France. | 1650 | | 16 | 2007 | | | |
| 10. | Sisters of Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament (sabs) | Servant of God Bishop Thomas Kurialacherry | Champakulam, Kerala | 1908 | 4583 | 589 | 1990 | 308 | 31 | 9 |
| 11. | Sisters of the Little Flower of Bethany (bs) | Msgr Raymond Francis Camillus Mascarenhas | Mangalore, Karnataka, India | 1921 | 1306 | 172 | 1962 | | | |
| 12. | Daughters of Charity of St.Vincent de Paul (dc) | Ss Vincent de Paul & Louise de Marillac | | 1633 | 20000 | 62 | | 8 | 24 | 52 |
| 13. | Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate (Nirmala Sisters) (msi) | Ven Fr Paolo Manna, Mother Giuseppina Dones & Mother Igilda Rodolfi | Milan, Italy | 1936 | | 65 | | | | |
| 14. | Sisters of Charles Borromeo (scb) | Fr. Adrien Bresy | Wez-Velvain, Belgium | 1684 | | 60 | 2005 | | | |
| 15. | Ursuline Franciscan Sisters (ufs) | Fr. Urban Stein, SJ | Mangalore, Karnataka, India | 1887 | 800 | 110 | 1976 | 64 | 14 | 41 |

| | | | | | | | | | | |
|-----|---|---|--------------------------|------|-----|----|------|----|----|----|
| 16. | Ursuline Sisters of Tildonk (osu) | St. Angela Merici and Fr. JMC Lambertz | Tildonk, Belgium | 1818 | | 19 | 1974 | | | |
| 17. | Augustinian Sisters (osa) | Srs. Dominika Barth, Kaveria, Luessen, Aloysia Tychen & Antonia Sporken | Cologne, Germany | 1838 | 166 | 26 | 1997 | 5 | 3 | 2 |
| 18. | Clarist Franciscan Missionaries of the Most Blessed Sacrament (cfmss) | Venerable Servant of God Mother Seraphina Farolfi | Bertinoro, Italy | 1898 | 451 | 69 | 1974 | 31 | 5 | 11 |
| 19. | Congregation of Jesus (cj) | Venerable Mother Mary Ward | Saint Omer, France | 1609 | 232 | 55 | 1997 | 7 | 5 | 1 |
| 20. | Congregation of Sisters of Nazareth (csn) | Mar Augustine Kandathil, Frs. John Pinakatt & Mathew Mankuzhikkary | Padupuram Kerala | 1948 | 638 | | 1984 | 9 | 11 | 11 |
| 21. | Franciscan Servants of Mary (fsm) | Marie Virginie Vaslin | France | 1852 | 237 | 47 | 2009 | 21 | 13 | 16 |
| 22. | Franciscan Sisters of Our Lady of Graces (fslg) | Archbishop Joseph Bartholomew Evangelisti | Dehradun, India | 1965 | 281 | 39 | 2009 | 9 | 7 | 10 |
| 23. | Handmaids of Mary (hm) | Fr. Edmund Albert Joseph Harrison SJ | Kesaramal, Odisha, India | 1944 | 492 | 66 | 1999 | 9 | 16 | 4 |
| 24. | Hospitellar Sisters of Mercy (som) | Princess Teresa Orsini Doria | Southern Italy | 1821 | 71 | 15 | 1996 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 25. | Medical Mission Sisters (mms) | Mother Anna Dengel scmm | Washington D.C. USA | 1925 | | 35 | 1972 | | | |

| | | | | | | | | | | |
|-----|---|---|--------------------------------|------|------|-----|------|-----|----|-----|
| | | | | | | | | | | |
| 26. | Sisters of the Sacred Heart (sh) | Fr.Mathew Kadalikkattil | Pala, Kerala, India | 1911 | 3568 | 421 | 1969 | 57 | 53 | |
| 27. | Sisters of Charity of St.Vincent de Paul (scv) | Cardinal Armand Gaston de Rohan | Strasbourg, France | 1734 | 225 | 20 | 2011 | 2 | 5 | 1 |
| 28. | Sisters of St.Ann of Providence (sa) | Marchioness Giulia Faletti Colbert & Marquis Carlo Tancredi of Barolo | Turin, Italy | 1834 | | 100 | 2001 | | | |
| 29. | Sisters of St.Joseph of Cluny (sjc) | Blanne Marie Javouhey | Chalon, France | 1807 | | | 1996 | | | |
| 30. | Sisters of the Cross of Chavanod(scc) | Mother Claudine Echernier | Chavanod, Haute-Savoie, France | 1838 | | 145 | 1979 | | | |
| 31. | Sisters of Mary Immaculate (smi) | Bishop Louis la Ravoire Morrow, SDB | Krishnagar, West Bengal | 1948 | 613 | 64 | 1984 | 28 | 31 | 37 |
| 32. | Daughters of Presentation of Mary in the Temple (dpm) | Francesca Butti, Maria Rossi | Como, Italy | 1833 | | | 2010 | | | |
| 33. | Congregation of the Mother of Carmel (cmc) | Bl Kuriakose Elias Chavara & Fr. Leopold Boccaro OCD | Koonamavu, Kerala, India | 1866 | 6343 | 621 | 1966 | 682 | 65 | 140 |
| 34. | Handmaids of Christ (hc) | Msgr Herculano Gonsalves | Calangute, Goa | 1935 | 155 | 30 | 2012 | 12 | 2 | 21 |

| | | | | | | | | | | |
|-----|---|--|----------------------------------|------|------|-----|------|-----|----|----|
| 35. | Maestre Pie Venerini (Religious Teachers of Bl Rosa Venerini (mpv)) | St. Rosa Venerini | Viterbo, Italy | 1685 | 260 | 23 | 1989 | 5 | 1 | 3 |
| 36. | Prabhudasi Sisters of Ajmer (Handmaids of the Lord (psa)) | Fr. Fortunatus Henry Caumont ofm cap | Ajmer, Rajasthan, India | 1906 | 892 | 55 | 2010 | 10 | 9 | 1 |
| 37. | The Catechist Missionary Sisters (Salesian Missionaries of Mary Immaculate) (smmi) | Fr. Henri Chaumont & Madame Carre de Malberg | France | 1872 | | 120 | 1987 | | | |
| 38. | Sisters of Notre Dame (snd) | Srs. Mary Aloysia & Mary Ignatia | Coesfeld, Germany | 1850 | | 32 | 2005 | | | |
| 39. | The Sisters of Our Lady of the Missions (rndm) | Euphrasie Barbier | Lyons, France | 1861 | | 30 | 1915 | | | |
| 40. | The Sisters of the Destitute (sd) | Fr. Varghese Payapilly | Chunangamvely, Aluva, Kerala | 1927 | 1396 | 200 | 1991 | 175 | 72 | 94 |
| 41. | Visitation Sisters of Don Bosco (vsdb) | Archbishop Hubert D’Rosario SDB | Shillong, Meghalaya, India | 1983 | 74 | 19 | 1983 | 1 | | |
| 42. | Assisi Sisters of Mary Immaculate (asmi) | V ery Rev. Msgr Joseph KW Thomas Kandathil | Cherthala, Kerala | 1949 | 765 | 98 | 2007 | 18 | 70 | 2 |
| 43. | Daughters of Divine Providence (fdp) | Ven Sr Elena Bettini | Rome | 1832 | | | 2007 | | | |

| | | | | | | | | | |
|-----|--|--|---|------|------|-----|------|----|-------|
| | | | | | | | | | |
| 44. | Congregation of the Sisters of the Catholic Apostolate (Pallotines) (csac) | St. Vincent Pallotti | Rome | 1843 | 129 | 12 | | 4 | 2 |
| 45. | Daughters of St.Paul (Dsp) | Bl James Alberione | Alba, North Italy | 1915 | 163 | 15 | 1973 | | |
| 46. | Daughters of the Cross (Liege) (fc) | Bl Mother Marie Therese Haze | Liege, Belgium | 1833 | 489 | 63 | | 25 | 15 20 |
| 47. | Sister Disciples of the Divine Master (pddm) | Bl James Alberione | Alba, Italy | 1924 | | | 2005 | | |
| 48. | Sisters of Charity of Jesus and Mary (scjm) | Fr Peter Joseph Triest | Lovendeghem, Belgium | 1803 | | 40 | 2000 | | |
| 49. | Sisters of Mercy of the Holy Cross (scsc) | Fr.Theodosious Florentini &Bl Maria Theresa Sherer | Bettiah, Bihar | 1856 | | 136 | 1999 | | |
| 50. | The Congregation of Holy Family (chf) | Bl Mariam Thresia Chiramel Mankidiyan | Thrissur District, Kerala, India | 1914 | 1950 | 227 | | | |
| 51. | The Fervent Daughters of the Sacred Heart of Jesus (fdshj) | Sr.Marykutty of the Sacred Heart | Perunna West, Changanacherry, Kerala, India | 1981 | | 22 | 2009 | | |
| 52. | Daughters of St.Thomas (dst) | Fr Jacob Thazhathel | Aruvithura, Pala, Kerala, India | 1969 | | 28 | 1975 | | |
| 53. | Ursulines of Mary Immaculate (umi) | Bl Mother Brigida Morello | Piacenza, Northern Italy | 1649 | | 84 | 1996 | | |

| | | | | | | | | | | |
|-----|--|--|------------------------|------|-----|-----|------|----|----|----|
| 54. | Carmelite Sisters of Charity-Vedruna (ccv) | St.Joaquina de Vedruna | Barcelona, Spain | 1826 | 194 | | | 8 | 14 | 18 |
| 55. | The Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of | Mother Marie Louise de Meester | Mulagumoodu, Tamilnadu | 1897 | | 27 | | | | |
| 56. | Mary (icm) Missionaries of Christ Jesus (mcj) | Mother Pilar Navarro & Fr. Angel Ayala SJ | Javier, Spain | 1944 | | 15 | 1948 | | | |
| 57. | Society of the Sisters of St.Ann of Luzern, India (sas) | Rector Fr.Wilhelm Meyer | | 1909 | 782 | 108 | | | | |
| 58. | The Congregation of the Sisters of St.Elizabeth (csse) | Mother Mathilde Otto & Fr. Joseph Oechsler | Freiberg, West Germany | 1925 | | 14 | | | | |
| 59. | Daughters of the Heart of Mary (dhm) | Fr. Pierre Joseph de Clonviere & Sr. Marie Adlaide de Cice | France | 1790 | 73 | | 2011 | | | |
| 60. | Congregation of the Sisters of St.Joseph of Chambery (csj) | Fr. John Peter Medaille & Bp Henry de Maupas | Velay, France | 1650 | 482 | 20 | | 17 | 15 | 4 |
| 61. | Franciscan Sisters of St. Mary of the Angels (fsma) | Sr. Marie Chrysostom & Fr.John Chrysostom ofm Cap | Angers, France | 1892 | | | | | | |
| 62. | Sisters of Providence (sdp) | St. Luigi Scrosoppi | Udine, Italy | 1837 | | 16 | 2009 | | | |
| 63. | Carmelite Missionaries (cm) | Bl Fr. Francisco Palau ocd | Spain | 1860 | 131 | | | 4 | 5 | 1 |

| | | | | | | | | | | |
|-----|---|---|------------------------|------|-----|----|------|----|----|----|
| 64. | Congregation of the Sisters of St. Martha (csm) | Fr. John Kizhakoodeen | Trichur, Kerala | 1948 | 35 | 33 | | 3 | 1 | 8 |
| 65. | Daughters of Our Lady of Marcy (fdm) | St. Mary Joseph Rosello | Savona, Italy | 1837 | | 28 | | | | |
| 66. | Franciscan Missionaries of Service (fmss) | Sr. Heide Brauckmann | South Korea | 1983 | | 5 | | 1 | 1 | 2 |
| 67. | Franciscan Missionary Sisters of Sacred Heart (fmsh) | Duchess Laura Leroux de Beufremont & Fr. Greigory Floravanti | Gemona, Northern Italy | 1861 | | 16 | | | | |
| 68. | Sisters of the Holy Spirit (shsp) | Mother Irmina Hoelscher | Germany | 1857 | | 28 | | | | |
| 69. | Sisters of Holy Cross (menzingem) (hcm) | Fr. Theodosious Florentini ofm cap. & Mother Bernarda Heimgartner | Menzingen, Switzerland | 1844 | | 80 | 1959 | | | |
| 70. | Franciscan Sisters of the Sacred Heart (fssh) | Fr. Simpliciano ofm | Rome | 1886 | | 7 | 2008 | | | |
| 71. | The Loreto Sisters (ibvm) | Ven Mary Ward | Dublin, Ireland | 1821 | 111 | 20 | 1905 | 14 | 98 | 17 |
| 72. | Shanti Nilayam Benedictine Abbey, Order of St. Benedict (osb) | St. Cecilia | Isle of Wight, England | 1970 | | 43 | 1991 | | | |

| | | | | | | | | | | |
|-----|--|--|------------------|------|----|-----|------|---|--|---|
| 73. | The Salvatorian Sisters (sds) | Fr. Francis Mary of the Cross Jordan & Bl Mary of the Apostles | Tivoli, Italy | 1888 | | 9 | 2003 | | | |
| 74. | Augustinian Missionary Sisters (ams) | Srs. Clara Canto, Monica Mujal & Querubina Samarra | Madrid, Spain | 1890 | 72 | 9 | 2011 | 1 | | 1 |
| 75. | Daughters of St. Francis de Sales (dsfs) | Fr. Carlo Cavina | Lugo, Italy | 1872 | | 25 | 1994 | | | |
| 76. | The Congregation of the Sisters of the Imitation of Christ (sic) | His Grace The Most Rev. Geevarghese Mar Ivanios | Kerala, India | 1925 | 32 | 900 | | | | |
| 77. | Society of Christ Jesus (scj) | Mother Camino Sanz Orrio | | 1944 | | | 1948 | | | |
| 78. | Sisters of the Holy Cross (ose) | | | | | | 1987 | | | |
| 79. | Sisters of Providence (spg) | Bl Jean Martin Moye | Lorraine, France | 1838 | | | | | | |
| 80. | Congregation of the Sisters of the Holy Cross (csc) | | | | | | | | | |

| State | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|----------------------|---------|---------|--------|---------|--------|---------|-------|---------|-------------|---------|--------|---------|----------|---------|-------------------|---------|-----------------|---------|----------------|---------|--------------------------|---------|------------------|---------|-------------|---------------|
| | BES HSS | DIO/OTH | BES HS | DIO/OTH | BESPRY | DIO/OTH | BESKG | DIO/OTH | BES BALWADI | DIO/OTH | BESVTC | DIO/OTH | BES NIOS | DIO/OTH | BES comty college | DIO/OTH | BES health care | DIO/OTH | BES deadd/reha | DIO/OTH | BES Houses for the needy | DIO/OTH | BES Regd society | DIO/OTH | BES HOSTELS | BES BOARDINGS |
| 1. Mizoram | - | - | 1 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 1 | - | - | - | - | 1 | - | - | - | 2 | - | 2 | - | - | - | - | - | 2 | - |
| 2. Meghalaya | - | 1 | - | 1 | - | - | - | 1 | 1 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | 1 | - | - | - | - | - | 1 | - | 1 | - |
| 3. Manipur | - | - | - | 1 | - | - | - | 1 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| 4. Nagaland | 1 | 2 | 1 | 2 | - | 3 | 1 | 2 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | 1 | | - | - | - | - | - | - | 3 | - |
| 5. Tripura | - | 2 | 1 | 2 | - | - | 1 | 3 | - | - | 1 | - | - | - | - | - | 1 | 1 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | 3 |
| 6. Arunachal Pradesh | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| 7. Assam | - | 1 | 1 | 3 | - | - | 1 | 3 | 2 | - | 1 | - | - | - | 1 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | 3 | - |
| 8. West Bengal | - | 1 | - | 4 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 3 | 1 | | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| 9. Karnataka | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | 1 | - | - | - | - | - |
| Total | 1 | 7 | 4 | 15 | 3 | 6 | 6 | 14 | 4 | - | 2 | - | 1 | 1 | - | - | 5 | 1 | 2 | - | 1 | - | 1 | - | 9 | 3 |