

## **INTRODUCTION**

Instead of reinscribing the old dialectic of subject/object in empiricist terms it is more useful to see mapping as temporally embedded and transformative of previous discourses, rather than as an innocent inscription started afresh on blank paper. A critical move of this nature avoids comparing maps to a pre-existing normative 'real', but instead interrogates the mimetic assumptions they embody. The crucial step in deconstructing mimeticist claims is the realization that the given 'reality' is as socially constructed as the representation, and operates in a way which not only legitimizes the representation but also enables the self-privileging of Western modes of knowledge. (Tiffin and Lawson, *De-scribing Empire* 115-116)

In the doubly inscribed space of colonial representation where the presence of authority—the English book—is also a question of its repetition and displacement, where transparency is *techne*, the immediate visibility of such a regime of recognition is resisted. Resistance is not necessarily an oppositional act of political intention, nor is it the simple negation or exclusion of the "content" of another culture, as a difference once perceived. It is the effect of an ambivalence produced within the rules of recognition of dominating discourses as they articulate the signs of cultural difference and reimplicate them within the deferential relations of colonial power- hierarchy, normalization, marginalization, and so forth. For domination is achieved through a process of disavowal that denies the *differance* of colonialist power—the chaos of its intervention as *Entstellung*, its dislocatory presence—in order to preserve the authority of its identity in the uni- versalist narrative of nineteenth-century historical and political evolutionism. (Bhabha, *Location of Culture* 111)

This study proposes a close analysis of selected colonial travel writing texts on Assam with the help of postcolonial travel theories. The project tries to explore different facets in the narratives that the American and European travellers had written on Assam during the nineteenth and early twentieth century. It explores what Mary Louise Pratt calls 'anti-conquest'—the strategies used by the colonial travellers while representing or constructing the 'other.' The colonial travel writers adopted various methods for representing the inferior 'other' through a process of self-fashioning as well as self-realization. The study also examines the spatial politics and the layered rhetoric that

determined the subject positions of the narrators. The project examines the factors that were influential in the structuring of the narratives.

It may be noted that the study covers a period when Assam was first, a part of the Bengal Frontier of British India and when it became a separate region in 1874, it included the entire North East. The colonial travel writers in their depiction of the local inhabitants, therefore, included all the communities in the entire region. Apart from ethnographic description, the narratives engage in the politics of representation pertaining to the colonial project. These travellers, coming at different points of time had agendas of their own which get reflected in their representation of the travelled region. One can see similarities and differences in the narratives, in the attitudes of the travellers and their subject positions while representing the 'other' which involve cultural, political and economic factors that contributed towards the writings. In this study, selected travel accounts written by different categories of travellers are examined with the help of postcolonial tools. It attempts to explore the differences in the projection of the 'other' depending on the kind as well as social standing of the travel writers. The project proposes to offer a critical reading of the travel texts and to inquire about their veracity and reliability at the backdrop of the colonialist design.

Clearly, it is necessary to identify the various factors that determine the travel writer's framing perspective while looking at the alien object. The fact that writers mix fact and fiction, and tend to attach known frames of reference to unknown entities, contributes to the construction of the 'other.' The subject position of the travel writer refers to modes of self-fashioning and permutations and combinations that inform the representation of the alien object. In fact, it often determines the constitutive principles of 'othering' the travelee, and is an indispensable tool in any study of colonial travel writing. As Bhabha observes, "colonial discourse produces the colonised as a fixed reality which is at once an 'other' and yet entirely knowable and visible. It resembles a form of narrative whereby the productivity and circulation of subjects and signs are bound in a reformed and recognisable totality" (*Location* 72). If the colonised is a fixed entity in colonial discourse, the colonial writer in turn tends to operate from a position of fixity, doing things in a predetermined way: "Fixity, as the sign of cultural/historical/racial difference in the discourse of colonialism, is a paradoxical mode of representation: it connotes rigidity and an unchanging order as well as disorder, degeneracy and daemonic

repetition” (*Location* 66). To this extent, the project explores different facets of representation or construction of the indigenous ‘other’ in colonial travel narratives on Assam.

It is argued that such texts not only fashion the ‘self’ through various processes of othering but also inscribe protocols for subject positioning and subject formation. It is further argued that such inscriptions point to what can be called a constitutive ethics, which, in turn, is informed by the author’s professional awareness and social standing in the colonial location. In other words, it is important to look at the specifics of colonial assumptions in relation to the profession and location of the author.

In *Imperial Eyes: Travel and Transculturation*, Mary Louise Pratt explains the term ‘anti-conquest’ as “the strategies of representation whereby European bourgeois subjects seek to secure their innocence in the same moment as they assert European hegemony” (8). This in fact is a way by which the colonialists endeavoured to have both cultural and political hegemony over the ‘native’ subjects. Pratt illustrates how this strategy aimed at legitimating the takeover of the travelled ‘other’ by the colonial authority. She particularly highlights the ‘innocence’ that the colonial travellers assume while portraying the ‘other’ in order to make their narratives look reliable. This study sees how this ‘innocence’ comes as a strategy adopted by the travellers in the representation of the ‘other’ and how the narrators use the rhetoric of ‘anti-conquest’ in their narratives.

Second, the study addresses the two-fold aspect of travel narratives—a report of the travelled region and at the same time a revelation of traveller’s ‘self.’ What kind of negotiation between the ‘self’ and the ‘other’ takes place in the ‘contact zone’ is an important point and this could hint at the prejudices, which work behind a particular representation. Travel engages a process of comparing and contrasting and then condescending one culture against the supremacy of another. This involves self-fashioning and at times, attempts of self-effacement. The proposed study explores what Carl Thomson terms as the ‘negotiation between self and other’ (10) in the selected texts in postcolonial terms. It also addresses how copresence of two groups was influenced by power relations resulting in assimilation and transculturation in the ‘contact zone.’

The third aspect addressed in this dissertation is the complexities involved in the idea of travel writing as a fact based narrative form which implies a problematic inquiry into the

authenticity of the narrative itself. According to Thompson, “a degree of fictionality is thus inherent in all travel accounts” (28). Since travel can be called the translation of ‘travel experience’ to ‘travel text’ the standpoint of the traveller is invincible who accomplishes this task through a process of selection and rejection. In doing so, the travellers engage themselves in a task of constructing the image of a people or a place and this invariably questions the authenticity of the narrative itself. In the colonial texts, this process of selection and rejection is done in accordance with the colonialist motive. There are times when the narrator includes anecdotes as a persuasive method for establishing the importance of colonization and thereby to justify their actions. The proposed study aims at exploring these aspects so as to inquire about the reliability of the select narratives.

The fourth aspect that this study addresses is that of the role of gender in the representation of the ‘other.’ It is an attempt to find whether women’s travel accounts provide a ‘discourse of difference’ apart from offering scopes to women travellers beyond the societal and cultural norms. It also sees if the women writers differ from their male counterparts in holding colonialist position. However, since the women writers included for this study were all missionaries this aspect is explored only in Chapter III, which deals with missionary women’s writings.

An interesting aspect about the colonial travel narratives is that they provide instances where the writers sometimes exhibit what Leela Gandhi calls the ‘politics of friendship.’ There were travellers who expressed empathy for the ‘travelee’ which is free from traditional colonial appendages. This study explores these ‘affective communities’ within the colonial surroundings.

The main objectives of this project are:

- i. To explore the ways in which the travel writers engage in the process of othering;
- ii. To examine the strategies identified by Pratt as the ‘anti-conquest’ in the narration of travel accounts;
- iii. To explore the twining of self-fashioning and exclusion vis-à-vis the ethnocentric politics of the narratorial self;
- iv. To explore what Blunt and McEwan call the spatiality of colonial discourse and the spatial politics of representation in travel writing.

The project begins with the following hypotheses:

- a) That both the narratives and the perspectives of colonial travel writing are ideologically grounded;
- b) That the process of ‘othering’ is often a strategy used to legitimize the colonial project;
- c) That the construction of the ‘other’ is a means of justifying the conduct of the colonial traveller towards the colonial subject;
- d) That the self-fashioning and the measuring of the ‘other’ are based on the template of a particular culture that is universalized in the narratives.

### **Review of Literature:**

The material under review has been divided into three main groups. The first group includes works on the history and reception of postcolonial theory in general and travel writing in particular: Aime Cesaire (1955), Frantz Fanon (1963, 1967), Albert Memmi (1974), Edward Said (1978), Homi Bhabha (1985), Abdul R. JanMohamed (1985), Chris Tiffin and Alan Lawson (1994), Sara Mills (1991), Mary Louise Pratt (1992), Patrick Holland and Graham Huggan (1998), Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri (2000), Alison Blunt and Cheryl McEwan (2002), Peter Hulme and Tim Youngs (2002), Carl Thompson (2011) etc. While critics and theorists of postcolonialism help in the understanding of the nature, scope and politics of colonial discourse, travel theorists explore different aspects of travel and the ways of representing the colonialist agenda.

The second group includes books on European travellers in Assam: William Foster (1921), Surjyakumar Bhuyan (1949), Nirode K. Barooah (1970), Manilal Bose (1979), N. N. Acharya (1983, 1985), Meena Sharma Barkataki (1985), H. K. Barpujari (1986), etc. The writers have given a general idea on colonialism in Assam right from the first European traveller till the conduct of colonial people in early part of the twentieth century.

The third group includes the body of colonial travel narratives on Assam selected for the project. For a clearer analysis, the chosen texts are divided into four categories: (i) accounts by colonial administrators; (ii) missionary writings; (iii) narratives dealing with the tea industry and life on the plantations; and (iv) books written by professionals whose work is not covered above as they were from different walks of life.

The first category includes John Butler's *A Sketch of Assam* (1847) and *Travels and Adventures in the Province of Assam* (1855), Alexander Mackenzie's *History of the Relations of the Government with the Hill tribes of the North East Frontier of Bengal* (1884), T. T. Cooper's *The Mishmee Hills: An Account of a Journey Made in an Attempt to Penetrate Thibet from Assam to Open New Routes for Commerce* (1873) and Bampfylde Fuller's *Some Personal Experiences* (1930).

John Butler's *A Sketch of Assam* and *Travels and Adventures in the Province of Assam* are based on the writer's personal experiences during his expeditions into the interiors of Assam. The common issues addressed in both the texts are the immoral nature of the 'native,' their British protectors, and the development brought about by the new government. Butler tries to draw attention of the government to issues which could be beneficial to it and offers his suggestion to enhance it.

T. T. Cooper's *The Mishmee Hills* deals with the writer's experience in the region during his unsuccessful attempt to reach Tibet via Assam. During his journey Cooper came to be in contact with many indigenous communities which he narrates in his book. Cooper's focus too is on the protector image of the British government.

Alexander Mackenzie's *History of the Relations of the Government with the Hill Tribes of the North East Frontier of Bengal* was a Memorandum prepared at the request of the then Lieutenant Government Sir William Gray. He supplemented and expanded the memorandum at the repeated and pressing demand of the Foreign Officer which he published in the year 1884. It was reprinted in India in 1979 under a more precise title, *The North-East Frontier of India*. The memorandum was entirely an official report which was written as an instruction for the government officials. Mackenzie discusses the colonial policies implemented in different places of the North East India.

Bampfylde Fuller's *Some Personal Experiences* is an understanding of the Indian society under the British rule. Fuller observes the people's relation with the colonial administration. The book highlights both the positive and negative sides of the colonial government in its dealings with its subject.

The second category includes Susan R. Ward's *A Glimpse of Assam* (1884), Mildred Marston's *Korno Siga, The Mountain Chief; or Life in Assam* (1889), Ellen Elizabeth Vickland's *Through Judy's Eyes* (1923) and *With Christ in Assam* (1925), and Oscar L.

Swanson's *In Villages and Tea Gardens* (1944). The works by these women missionaries could be taken to at once endorse and undermine the discourse of difference.

Susan R. Ward's *A Glimpse of Assam* is a sketch of Assam in its developing stage under colonialism. The book was meant for the European investors who were willing to come to the region. Ward depicts Assam as a place of prospect and full of future possibilities for the western businessmen.

Mildred Marston's *Korno Siga, The Mountain Chief; or Life in Assam* describes the writer's accomplishments in Assam as a missionary. With the use of framed narratives Marston endeavours to establish the triumph of Christianity over other religions in Assam.

*Through Judy's Eyes* and *With Christ in Assam* are two texts based on Elizabeth Vickland's travel experiences in the region. The books can be called comparative studies of Christianity and other religions where Vickland shows the superiority of Christianity.

Oscar L. Swanson's *In Villages and Tea Gardens* is a very significant text so far as the different facets of Missionary writing are concerned. It records the author's forty three years of missionary service in Assam. Swanson observes the conduct of the Mission; he records the difficulties faced by the Mission, its success and failures in Assam.

The third category includes Samuel Baidon's *The Tea Industry in India, A Review of Finance and Labour, and a Guide for Capitalists and Assistants* (1882), George M. Barker's *A Tea Planter's Life in Assam* (1884), Charles Dowding's *Tea-Garden Coolies in Assam* (1894), T. Kinney's *Old Times in Assam* (1896) and Henry Cotton's *Indian and Home Memories* (1911).

Samuel Baidon's *The Tea Industry in India* can be called a study of the tea industry of India from a capitalistic concern. The book was meant to be a guide to the aspiring tea planters. Baidon gives an overview of the industry in India along with the difficulties faced by the planters. He gives an analysis of the whole system and offers suggestions to the government. As he intends to give an impartial view of the industry, Baidon highlights the contribution of colonialism in bringing development to remote places like Assam.



George M. Barker's *A Tea Planter's Life in Assam* is a descriptive account of Assam. It is a study of the region as a whole. Barker describes Assam as a strange place which is inferior in every manner to the British. In fact, the book can be called a critical observation of Assam and its people.

Charles Dowding's *Tea-Garden Coolies in Assam* is an important document addressing the colonial condition in the tea gardens of British Assam. The book is a compilation of the articles and letters that Dowding and a few colonial people wrote to the editor of *Indian Churchmen* on the migration of Central Indian labourers to work in the tea gardens of Assam. It is Dowding's critique of the systems in the tea gardens in colonial Assam. Dowding gives an analysis of the whole system with special emphasis on the condition of the tea garden workers on Assam plantations. However, the debate on the matter offers varied opinions which complicate the issue.

T. Kinney's *Old Times in Assam* is a collection of writings published earlier in the *Englishmen and the Indian Planters' Gazette*. It is in fact a collection of the diaries and write-ups of an assistant manager in a tea estate of colonial Assam. Kinney's book depicts two different phases of colonial Assam and of the tea industry. He shows two pictures of the region within a gap of thirty years and realizes that colonialism, which also brought the European people, improved the province immensely.

Henry Cotton's *Indian and Home Memories*, although an autobiography, a part of it gives significant details on Assam and its social condition from 1896 to 1902. Cotton offers critical observations on the conditions in the tea gardens of Assam. Although an administrator, considering the importance he has given to the tea garden life in colonial Assam, the writer has been included in this category of travellers.

The fourth category includes Francis Hamilton's *An Account of Assam* (1840), William Griffith's *Journals of Travels in Assam, Burma, Bhootan, Afghanistan and the Neighbouring Countires* (1847), Colonel F. T. Pollock's *Wild Sports of Burma and Assam* (1900), A. C. Newcombe's *Village, Town, And Jungle Life in India* (1905) and Walter Del Mar's *The Romantic East* (1906).

Francis Hamilton's *An Account of Assam* is one of the earliest texts written on Assam by a British writer. A physician by profession, Hamilton wrote this book on the request of the Company. However, he never visited the place and depended on hearsay as his

source of information. In his book, Hamilton gives a description of the region and its people, and a note on the history of the then ruling community of Assam.

William Griffith's *Journals of Travels in Assam, Burma, Bhootan, Afghanistan and the Neighbouring Counties* records Griffith's experience during his visit of Assam which was a part of the research initiated by the Tea committee in 1836. The book is a collection of letters and notes that Griffith wrote from different places where he stayed during his journeys for collecting seeds and tea plants; it was compiled posthumously by his colleague, John McClelland. Apart from giving reports on his botanical explorations, Griffith tries to give some idea on the life of the people living in that part of the country. His personal journal too is included where Griffith describes his journey through the Mishmi Hills and other places of Assam that he visited.

*Wild Sports of Burma and Assam* is a book by Colonel F. T. Pollok and W. S. Thom written in collaboration based on the writers' experiences of travel and residence in Assam and Burma. Pollok was an engineer by profession who was employed in the government project of road making and surveying in some of the districts of British Assam. He spent thirteen years in Burma and over seven years in Assam; his colleague, W. S. Thom too had eleven years of experience of living in the two provinces. Both the men took sport as a passion and hence did a lot of hunting in the jungles of Assam and Burma which they have described in *Wild Sports of Burma and Assam*. It sketches the province as a rich and commercially profitable field for the colonial people.

Alfred Cornelius Newcombe was an engineer at the Public Works Department in colonial India. His *Village, Town, And Jungle Life in India* is based on the writer's experience in different places of the country. It can be called a promotional account for colonialism which has been projected as enlightening scheme in the region.

Walter Del Mar, in *The Romantic East* describes his experiences of visits to Burma, Assam and Kashmir. It is basically about Del Mar's observations on tea and its commercial prospects in Assam. He has depicted Assam as a prospective field although remote and as a place not without discomforts for the Europeans.

The rationale for the selection of these particular texts denotes the objective of this project. This particular body of texts not only comprises writers from different spheres but also from different phases of the colonial period in Assam.

## **The Beginnings: Early European Travel Writing on Assam**

Records of travel to Assam by European travellers date back to the late sixteenth century when Ralph Fitch, a merchant from London, “being desirous to see the countreys of East India” (Foster, 8) set foot in the country in 1583. In his travel account which covers his eight years of travel in a few eastern countries, Fitch has mentioned Kooch Bihar and Bhutan and tells about his experience in midst of the people in those places. He writes:

The people have eares which be marveilous great of a span long, which they draw out in length by devices when they be yong. Here they be all Gentiles, and they will kil nothing. They have hospitals for sheepe, goates, dogs, cats, birds, and for all other living creatures. (25)

He gives an idea of the security system in the region and gives the picture of a people who were caring towards animals.

As informed in S. K. Bhuyan, in 1626, two Jesuit Missionaries named Stephan Cacella and T. Cabral visited Assam who wrote reports on the places visited. Bhuyan further informs, “Mirjumla, who invaded Assam in 1662, brought with him a large number of Dutch soldiers ... the experiences of one of these sailors in the pestilential regions of Assam have been graphically recorded in the Loss of the Ter Schelling compiled by Glanius in 1682.” (*Early British Relations*, 2)

Jean Baptiste Tavernier in *Travels in India* (1676) writes about Assam as self-sufficient country and as one of the best in Asia. He also mentions Mir Jumla and his invasion of Assam in 1662.

More than a century later, Captain Welsh wrote on Assam who came to this region to suppress the Moamoria rebellion in 1792. In his reports on Assam Welsh commented on the local administration and gave description of the systems. Welsh also gave information on the natural resources of the country and commented on the possibilities of trade benefits with Assam.

Dr. John Peter Wade, a surgeon who came with Welsh also wrote on Assam. His *An Account of Assam* (1800) which is a history of the Ahom dynasty, the incumbent ruling community, endows him with the credit of being the first European to do historical

research on Assam. Wade also wrote an article titled “A Geographical Sketch of Assam” which was published in the *Annual Asiatic Register* in 1805.

During 1808-14, Dr. Francis Hamilton or Francis Buchanan, under the Company’s instruction, compiled a report on Assam with the title “An Account of Assam”, which has been included in the fourth volume of Buchanan-Hamilton Manuscript. More than a century later of its compilation, the report was published as a book in 1940 edited by S. K. Bhuyan.

H. H. Wilson’s *Documents Illustrative of the Burmese War* appeared in 1827 which documents the history of Assam during a transitional period.

It was indeed a transition in the history of Assam as the whole region came under the British rule with the Yandabo treaty in February 1826. The discovery of tea plants in this region was another significant happening of that time. A new era began for Assam as the Europeans came to set up a new government. All kinds of travellers started visiting Assam and many of them wrote about their travel experiences in the newly annexed region to the British territory. During the period between the mid nineteenth century and early twentieth century numerous travelogues were written by the colonial people. Besides the ethnographic description, these narratives also provide information on different social and political aspects that draw critical attention.

Interestingly, it is hard to determine whether the Christian missionaries made successful incursions into the Northeastern states of the country before the advent of the British colonial administrators. Given the fact that the region came under British control to a great extent in 1826, historians like David Syiemlieh conclude that “the flag representing the colonial administration and the *Bible* representing one or the other of the Christian missions went almost together into the North East” (“Colonialism and Christian Missions in North East India,” *Indian Church History Review*, 2, 2013, 1). As informed by Syiemlieh, “after the Charter Act of 1813 permitted missionaries to propagate their faith in British India,” British missionaries established missions in Gauhati and Cherapunjee in the early part of the nineteenth century, but unable to sustain them for long, they were glad to welcome American Baptist missionaries in 1836. This was followed by Welsh missionaries in 1840 (1). Further,

It is at about this stage of British colonial interest in the region that their administrators encouraged and supported the work of the Christians missionaries. David Scott, Commissioner approached his Government as early as 1819 for its approval to invite missionaries to work among the Garos....Scott then made another request to Government in April 1825. Governments did not think there would be any difficulty to extend financial assistance to Scott's plan but since religious neutrality was the professed policy of government, he was informed that the missionaries could only be given salaries if they were called schoolmasters! (Syiemlieh, "Colonialism and Christian Missions in North East India," 1)

However, the authorities advised the administrators to desist from any kind of religious intervention as "the declared policy of the authorities in Britain then was religious neutrality towards its Indian subjects" (1). Although the Garo mission folded after a couple of years as Syiemlieh reports, and the Government's policy notwithstanding, the efforts of Jenkins ensured that the American Baptist missionaries in Burma were persuaded to work in Assam:

Despite this censure, Francis Jenkins, Chief Commissioner supported the beginnings of the American Baptist mission in Upper Assam. Son of a clergyman and with strong evangelical belief, Jenkins' correspondence with the American Baptist missionaries in Burma reveals his personal faith and conviction. In one such letter he wrote that while he was interested in the educational work he certainly would not object if that work resulted in the conversion of the people. Jenkins' enthusiasm for missionary work brought in the American Baptist mission who arrived (in) Sadiya in upper Assam in 1836.

("Colonialism and Christian Missions in North East India," 3)

Vashum's observations in this context explain the attitude of the British officials towards missionaries from elsewhere:

It was a known fact that there was a working relation between the British colonial powers and Christian missions in Northeast India. Although the British government, maintained the existence of their policy of neutrality, this policy did not stop some of the individual government officers from indulging in religious activities by way of either helping Christian missionaries or the native people. While the British government denied its involvement officially, the irony was

that the government went on to justify its support of the missionaries. (“Colonialism, Christian Mission, and Indigenous” 4)

Not only did the American Baptist missionaries receive support from the colonial government officials, this help was extended to other missionaries like the Roman Catholics as well (4). Vashum cites evidence drawn from the work of Downs (*North East India*) as well as Barpujari to support his claims that Roman Catholic missionaries like Fr. Rabin, Fr. Bernard and Fr. Krick received material support from colonial officials on their arrival in Gauhati in 1850 (4).

The missionaries themselves, specially the American Baptist missionaries, are seen acknowledging the help received from British officials in India as pointed out by Vashum:

In recognition of the invaluable services rendered to the Christian missions the American Baptist Mission’s home board in its official organ, the Baptist Missionary Magazine, published their words of appreciation and recognition to the British officials. While this appears to be a normal circumstance in which due appreciations were expressed upon someone in return for the invaluable help received, in this case, in advancing the missionizing project, it also underscored the deep connection that existed between the missionaries and the colonial governing officials. (“Colonialism, Christian Mission, and Indigenous” 6)

While this in no way attests to their complicity in the project of colonialism, the fact that they worked together to their mutual benefit would suggest that the missionaries were not unaware or totally negligent of colonial designs:

Even if this was a case of relationship entered out of necessity as often argued by some, for advancing their respective projects, what mattered was that they worked together. The missionaries did receive help and in return contributed toward the colonial projects regardless of their good intention. (“Colonialism, Christian Mission, and Indigenous” 6)

The contribution of the American Baptist missionaries is discussed in Chapter 3, as the narratives of some of these missionaries—wives and women serving the missions—are

examined as travel accounts. However, Barpujari's observations help to fill in the picture regarding the advent of American missionaries.

According to Barpujari, "They were told that the language of the Shans or the people near about Sadiya was similar to that of the Burmese and might easily be acquired by a missionary who had resided in that country....A mission at Sadiya, it was fondly hoped, would enable the Baptists to convert the frontier tribes into Christianity and also open up an entrance into the Celestial Empire. He adds that

Unhesitatingly the Board accepted the proposal and directed Revs. Nathan Brown and Oliver T. Cutter then working at Moulmein to commence a mission at Sadiya. Already Brown learnt the Burmese language and Cutter had experience in printing. Accompanied by their families and with a printing press the missionaries reached Sadiya on 23 March, 1836. (*The American Missionaries and North-East India 1836-1900*, xv)

Although, resistance from the local people forced them to move out of Sadiya and first settle in Jaipur, and gradually move to Sivasagar, for health reasons, the American Baptist missionaries carried out their project of evangelisation as well as printing of books in English and in the vernacular. Their interest in the people and their language helped the American Baptist missionaries to succeed in their work amongst the people where the British had failed. This fact is significant in the context of colonial travel and ethnographical writing because amongst accounts by British officers and professionals, planters and peers, the non-secular quarter is represented by American women missionaries. Most of the writings are by missionary women as men appear to be too deeply engaged in their work to take time off for descriptive narratives about the indigenous people they come across in Assam and its neighbouring areas.

To return to the matter of colonial government support to the American missionaries despite a public declaration of neutrality in religious affairs of the indigenous people, it is seen that some help was extended to Catholic missionaries as well in the North East. This is pointed out by Vashum in "Colonialism, Christian Mission, and Indigenous" where he examines the role of colonial officials in helping missionaries from different countries to set up missions.

## **Chapter Plan:**

Apart from the Introduction and the Conclusion, the thesis is divided into five core chapters. The Introduction explains the thesis in a nutshell and gives a sketch of pre-colonial travellers of prominence in Assam.

Chapter 1, titled “Politics of Representation in Colonial Travel Narratives: Types and Tropes,” offers a theoretical study of the discourse of colonialism in the travel texts on Assam. It provides the theoretical parameters for the dissertation as a whole. This chapter examines the cultural and spatial politics of representation in colonial travel writing. At the same time, it studies the implications of the ‘traveling gaze’ as discussed by David Arnold. It shows how travel and ethnographical accounts are imbricated in the discourse of Empire and yet informed by specificities of location and profession.

Chapter 2, titled “Assam through the Eyes of the Administrators: Masques of Conquest,” examines the projection of the indigenous people in the writings of colonial administrators. The aim of this chapter is to explore the ways in which these writers engage in the process of othering, the strategies used in their politics behind such construction. Taking the cue from Bhabha it shows that “the exercise of colonialist authority requires the production of differentiations, individuations, identity effects through which discriminatory practices can map out subject populations” (*Location* 111).

While many of the administrators focus on establishing the rescuer image of the colonizer some of them also highlight the biases in their treatment of the ‘other.’ For instance, John Butler and T. T. Cooper appear to be content to maintain the patronizing gaze of the colonial government; Fuller concentrates on the unfair means of the same. However, the administrators do not appear inconsiderate in their description of the indigenous people although they agree that the latter was ‘inferior’ and therefore needed to be colonized. The administrators’ narratives show some restraint when compared to other colonial representations of Assam.

Chapter 3, titled “Missionary Writing and the Narratives of Anti-Conquest,” discusses the selected texts written by American Baptist missionaries and the representation of the indigenous ‘other’ in their narratives. It deals with issues that were imperative to the survival of the Mission in Assam and its relationship with the colonial government. It is argued in this chapter, *qua* Pratt, that missionary writings use the discourse of ‘anti-



conquest,' a paradoxical combination of innocence and imperialist ideology in the representation of the 'other.' The missionaries maintained a relationship with colonial governance that is both significant and intriguing in the sense that there was a mutual understanding between the two amidst disavowal of colonial hegemony. The fact that they tried to assert the relevance of the Mission and the importance of Christian education as well as vernacularism in the colonial project is an interesting example of 'anti-conquest' othering. This is available in the writing of Ward and Vickland, for instance, who emphasize the enlightenment brought about by the colonial government whereas Marston and Swanson highlight the misery of the indigenous people under their rule.

It is interesting to note that missionary wives played as important a role as the men or women who were directly engaged as missionaries amongst the people. From supporting their spouses, these women gradually gained recognition for their work which claimed a separate space for themselves and allowed for the articulation of "women's missionary duty as an imperial duty" as pointed out by Midgley (*Feminism and Empire* 111). In a way, these writers endorse the civilizing mission of the colonial government through their travel accounts and play an important role in figuring otherness.

Chapter 4, titled "World within a World: Tea Gardens and the Literature of the Contact Zone," is the study of selected colonial texts that deal with the tea industry of Assam. This includes planters and other people who wrote on life on the plantation. It deals with what Pratt calls transculturation of a people in the 'contact zone' and in the context of colonial Assam, the migrant tea garden workers. This chapter highlights the representation of the transcultured 'other' in the texts. It gives a clearer picture of the clashes and conflicts within the colonial world. For instance, regarding the workers' life on the plantation, people like Cotton and Dowding have a perception which is in contrast to the views of Baidon and Barker. The ways Dowding and Kinney had been condemned and suppressed by the European community only show how cultural demand and the role of the reading community contribute towards the structuring of colonial narratives.

Chapter 5, titled "'Affective' Forms of Otherness," includes accounts of colonial writers from fields other than the ones discussed above: doctors, engineers, writers, explorers,

surveyors, etc. This chapter deals with narratives that do not fit into the scheme adopted in the earlier chapters, given their diverse points of origin and social formation. Being only indirectly connected to the colonial project, these writers enjoyed greater latitude as there was scope for them to record the anthropological and cultural details that caught the eye. Interestingly, writers not directly related to the areas discussed above, create a spectrum of narrative engagement that is akin to what Leela Gandhi calls ‘affective communities.’ It is possible to suggest that free from traditional colonial appendages, men and women look at the ‘other’ as human and subject to human foibles and frailties. While there is no consistent pattern in the presentation of such ‘affective possibilities,’ the fact that this happens is significant.

The conclusion sums up the findings of the individual chapters and of the dissertation as a whole. It is found that the differences and similarities in the projection of the ‘other’ in the writings of travel writers depend on their positions. Differing attitudes and nuances are observed in their treatment of the ‘other.’ All, however, engage in ‘anti-conquest’ to project the inferior ‘other’ and legitimate the colonialist project. The presence of blunders, misrepresentations, inconsistency and self-contradictions on the part of the writers not only question the authenticity of the narratives but also confirm the ambivalent position of the narrators.

The project offers critical insights into the construction of colonial otherness in the travel narratives on Assam. It helps in the understanding of imperial strategies and social implications carried by the narratives in critical inquiries in the social sciences as well as literary and cultural studies.