

CHAPTER-2

SOCIO-CULTURAL LIFE OF THE BODOS

Every ethnic group has its own distinct culture, language, dialect and traditional institutions. The fact of belonging to a group gives rise to fellow feeling and sentiments. The Bodo is both in an ethnic and linguistic group. The Bodo ethnic group observes various ceremonies and festivals in relation to birth, marriage, death and agricultural activities. The Bodo culture is rich and multi-faceted. It is a part of the Indo-Mongoloid or Kirata culture. According to Sydney Endle the culture of the Bodos is very rich in Assam, which is influenced by the land where they currently live. For a long time, Bodos have been farmers, with a strong tradition of fishing, rearing poultry, piggery, cultivation of rice, jute and betel nut plantation. The Bodos were the earliest to arrive and settle in the region. They are mainly followers of an indigenous religion, *Bathouism* from ages. In recent decades, they have been influenced by social reforms under Brahma Dharma, Assamese Sarania and the spread of Christianity (Endle 1990).

The first Christian missionary came to preach as early as in 1864. In 1875, the first Bodo Christian church was built at Bengbari in Harisinga in Udalguri district. In an effort to adjust to the new politico-economic changes generated by British regime, the leading members of Bodo community realized the need for education and development of Bodo language. The American Baptist Missionaries were the first to evangelize the Bodos. It cannot be denied that these missionaries were largely responsible for awakening the Bodos and for the pioneering studies on the amalgamated Bodo people and their languages. These colonial works contributed greatly to the development of Bodo languages and growth of ethnic and racial consciousness among the Bodos. The missionaries had no real enthusiasm for the creation of a written Bodo language and literature, whatever the move the missionaries had taken in this regard was solely based on the need for spreading the gospel.

They follow the patriarchal form of society; even though they follow the patriarchal form, the Bodo women enjoy equal status with men. The male member is the head of the family

and owner of family property. The social life of the Bodos is closely compact and organized one. They obey certain strict rules and regulations in their social life as they do in building their houses and maintaining their house. Community living, team work, fishing and merry making is prevalent among the Bodos. The primitive method of social government and polity is prevailing among them. There is a democratic setup where every member of the society has a say in the social council or Gram Panchayat or village council headed by the village headman. Earlier the traditional age old social institutions performed all the activities performed now-a-days by educational and economic institutions. The setting up of educational institutions in Bodo villages was initiated by socio-religious reform launched by Gurudev Kalicharan Brahma in the first decade of the 20th century. Nowadays there are libraries, socio-cultural associations or clubs in the remote areas inhabited by the Bodos showing a shift in social transition. Weekly markets and shops have grown up along with the government and non-government financial agencies. The emergence of these new institutions earmarks the growth of consciousness and political awareness among the Bodos. They have been launching a series of movements to assert their distinct socio-ethnic, cultural and political identity. (Boro 2010, 10-11)

2.1 Bodo Concentration and Population

The Bodos represent one of the largest ethnic and linguistic groups of the Northeast India particularly in Assam. The 1971 census report indicated that the Bodos were the 8th largest scheduled-tribe (ST) group in India with a total population of about 6, 10,459 in Assam. The population of Bodo speakers according to 1991 census report was 11, 84,569, that means there were 1.2 million Bodos in Assam which makes for 5.3% of the total population in the state. Then they were reported as about 13, 52,771 in 2001 national census and it constitutes 40.9% of the total ST population of Assam. (Brahma 2001, 5)

The Bodos are recognized as a plains tribe in the Sixth Schedule of the Indian Constitution. Udalguri and Kokrajhar are considered as the nerve centres of the Bodo area in Assam. According to Anil Boro (2010, 89), the following are the areas of concentration of the Bodo people in the northern tract of Assam-

- a) North and Eastern parts of Dhuburi district, the whole of Kokrajhar district and parts of Goalpara and Bongaigaon district (now Chirang district).
- b) Northern part of Barpeta, Nalbari and Kamrup districts (now Baksa district).
- c) Northern parts of Darrang and Sonitpur (now Udalguri district).
- d) Northern parts of North Lakhimpur and Dhemaji.

These areas of concentration in the northern tract cover an area of 10,000 square kilometres.

And the areas of Bodo concentration in the southern tract are

- a) Dudhnoi and Dhupdhara areas in the Goalpara district.
- b) Boko-Chaygaon and Rani areas and South Guwahati- Sonapur, in the southern part of Kamrup district.
- c) Jagiroad, Morigaon areas in the Morigaon district and Rupahi, Dhing areas in the Nogaon district.
- d) Most of the southern part of Sibsagar district.
- e) Howraghat, Langhin areas of Karbi-Anglong district.
- f) North-Eastern part of Dibrugarh district.

Again the areas of Bodo settlement in the neighbouring states, according to him are-

- a) Tikrikilla area of Garo Hills in the state of Meghalaya.
- b) Dimapur area in Nagaland state.
- c) Northern part of Jalpaiguri in the state of West Bengal

Table: 2.1 Population of Major Scheduled Tribes, 2001 Census

SL. No.	Name of the Scheduled Tribe	Total population	Proportion to the total ST population
1	All Scheduled Tribes	3,308,570	100%
2	Boro	1,352,771	40.9
3	Miri	587,310	17.8
4	Mikir	353,513	10.7
5	Rabha	277,517	8.4
6	Kachari	235,881	7.1
7	Lalung	170,622	5.2
8	Dimasa	110,976	3.4
9	Deori	41,161	1.2

Source: Office of the Registrar General, India.

On 10th February, 2003, the Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) has been created under the provision of the modified sixth schedule of the Indian Constitution in accordance with the Bodo Accord. The geographical area of Bodoland Territorial Council comprises of four districts in Assam, viz. - Kokrajhar, Udalguri, Chirang and Baksa. As per the census report of 2001, the total population of Bodoland Territorial Council was 26, 31,289. (Goswami 2012, 89). The figure indicates both Bodo people and Non-Bodo people living in the area under BTC or Bodoland Territorial Autonomous Districts (BTAD).

2.2 Religion

Traditionally, the Bodos were followers of the ‘*Bathou*’, an indigenous religion. However, through the ages, a large number of Bodos have converted into other institutionalized religions of the world like Hinduism, Christianity etc. It is assumed that 18% of the total Bodo populations in Udalguri District are followers of Christianity, the rest 65% are of Bathouism and the rest 17% are followers of the Brahma Dharma and indigenous religion. The traditional religion of the Bodos known as *Bathou* is invariably linked up with the worship of *Bathou Brai* or *Sibrai*. *Bathou* means five principles of creation which must

be followed by every devout member of the race. The Bodos have no fixed place of worship like the temple, or the church or the mosque. But in every Bodo household one can see a *Sijou* (*Euphorbia Splenden*) on the *Bathou* altar in the courtyard. There is no place for idol worship in *Bathou* religion. A clean surface near home or courtyard is considered as an ideal place for worship where a '*sijou*' is planted. Usually, a pair of '*goi*' (arecanut) and '*pathwi*' (betel leaf) are used as offering. On some occasion, the offerings also include rice, milk, fruits, and sugar, sometimes dresses to the ancestors depending on the occasion.

Sidney Endle writes: "In the typical Kachari village as a rule neither idol nor place of worship is to be found; but to the Kachari mind and imagination earth, air and sky are alike people with a vast number of invisible spiritual beings, known usually as '*Modai*', all possessing powers and faculties far greater than those of men and almost invariably inclined to use these powers for malignant and malevolent rather than benevolent purposes". However, the traditional religion of the Bodos has undergone some changes and innovations. (cited in Boro 2010, 11)

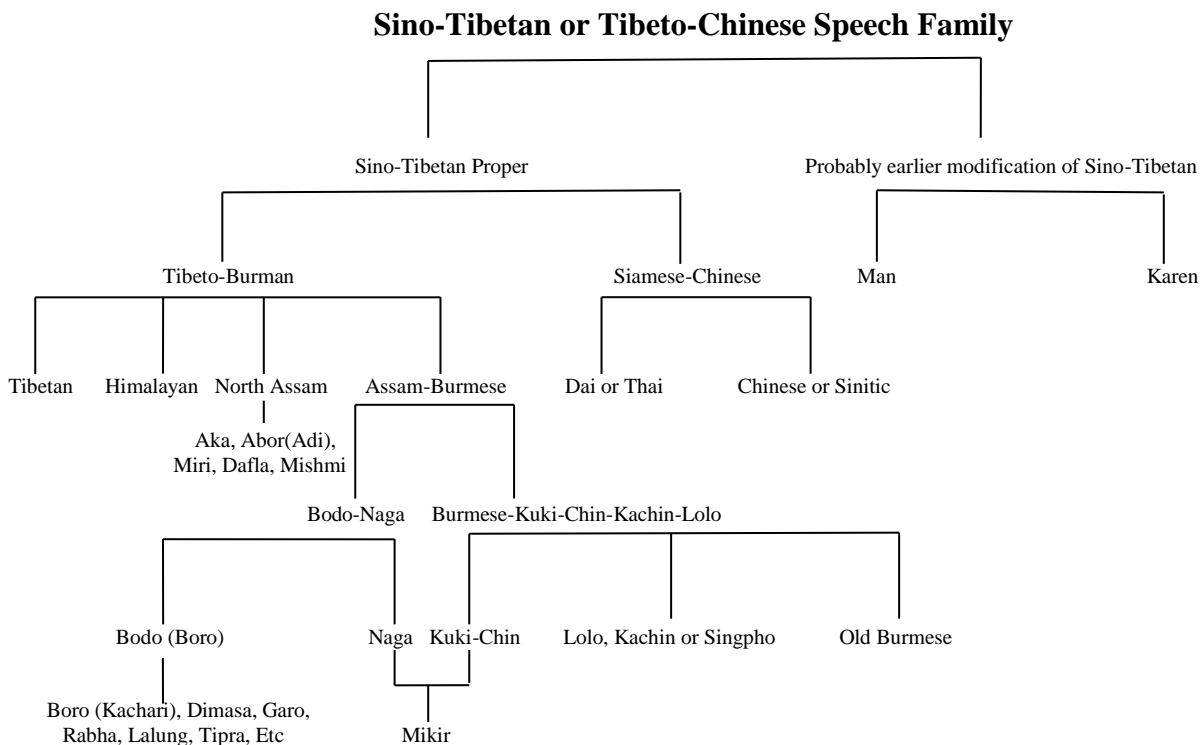
The *Bathou* religion incorporates rites, rituals, social norms, ethics and philosophy of the Bodos. P.C. Bhattacharjee (1977) opined that the supreme God of the Bodos, '*Bathoubrai*' also known as *Sibrai* (Siva in Hindu) created the Universe with the help of his wife *Sibrui*. The *sijou* tree (*Euphorbia splenden*) is taken as the symbol or created as an emblem of supreme god and the altar. The religion '*Bathou*' is based on the 'philosophy of five' or 'the principle of five'. In the Bodo language '*Ba*' means five and '*thou*' means deep. Their philosophy is- "*Sijoua siriba, Bathoua bandoba,*" which means *Sijou* tree has five spines and *Bathou* has five ties. Five is a significant number in the *Bathou* religion which denotes the five spiritual elements viz.- *Ong, Hring, Khling, Fwt* and *Che*, they are - soil, air, water, fire and sky. *Bathou* always believes in five principles. They believe that, though *Bathou* the creator is not visible, He can be realized by his five elements or virtues. Those five elements of earth and sky have been tied into five bond unions or principles. (Brahma 2006, 15)

2.3 Language and Literature

Bodo language to the branch of Barish section under Baric division of the Tibeto-Burman languages belonging to the Sino-Tibeto family of language. It is spoken by the Bodo people

of India and Nepal (Brahma 1998, 3). It is the major language of the Bodos of Assam. This language has also been accepted in the 8th Schedule of Indian Constitution and it is regarded as one of the 22 scheduled languages that are given a special constitutional status in India.

The following is a brief tabular representation of the Sino-Tibeto family of languages following the Linguistic Survey of India as relevant to the Bodo language under analysis:-



(Fig: P.C. Bhattacharya, a Descriptive Analysis of the Boro language, p-8)

The Bodo language shares some common features in respect of vocabulary, phonology, morphology and syntax with other sister language of the Bodo group. It is a rich and ancient language which is closely related to the Dimasa language of Assam and the Garo language of Meghalaya. It is also very closely related to the Kokborok language spoken in Tripura. The Bodo speaking areas of Assam stretch from Dhubri in the west to Sadiya in the east. The Bodo language of Assam has at least four clear-cut dialect-areas with a sufficient number of dialectal variations; these may be called North-eastern, south-western, north-central and southern dialect areas with phonological, morphological and glossarial differences. i.e.- (a) The Western Boro dialect,(b) The Eastern Boro dialect, c) The Southern Bodo dialect and (d) The Northern Boro dialect.

The Bodos generally speak the Bodo language, since the official language of Assam is Assamese, they also speak Assamese. The Bodos also learnt to speak and write the Hindi language as they are viewers of the Hindi films and serials and as both the written script of the Hindi and Bodos are devanagiri script. The educated Bodos can speak English also. And it is found that if the neighbours are Bengali speaking, they learn to speak Bengali also, if they are Nepali they learn to speak Nepali. In case of village, the situation is the same, other than the bodo language, they speak Assamese as well as the language of their neighbours.

Although the Bodo language is a rich and ancient language, it did not have a written literature until the second decade of the twentieth century. This language however does not preserve any written record of the glorious past of the race which indicates that the language remained confined to its spoken form until recent past. The Christian missionaries, who entered the Bodo speaking areas with intent to spread Christianity, published some books on religion, tales, rhymes and songs. Those missionaries also published some books on grammar and dictionary. Rev Sidney Endle compiled *An Outline of the Kachari Grammar* in 1884. The grammar is based on the dialect of Darrang district. Sidney also wrote an important monograph on the Bodos which is entitled *The Kacharis*. It was published in 1911 and it contains chapters on social customs, agriculture practices, festivities, food habits, life cycle rituals, crafts and textiles of the Bodos. The book has also incorporated specimens of Bodo folktales, rhymes and grammars. J.D. Anderson's *A Collection of Bodo Folktales and Rhymes* (1895) incorporated seventeen Bodo folktales translated into English, besides the original versions in Bodo language. The Christian Missionaries were the first to publish books on religion, tales, rhymes, songs and translation of the Bible into Bodo language. The contribution of the missionaries in the development of Bodo language cannot be called literature in proper sense. The first Bodo Magazine *Bibar* was published in 1924 as the mouthpiece of the Bodo *Chatra Sanmilani*, late Satish Chandra Brahma was the Editor. *Olongbar* is another Bodo Magazine published in 1938 with late Promod Chandra Brahma as Editor.

In the aftermath of socio-political awakening and movement launched by Bodo leaders, the Bodo language was introduced as the medium of instruction in primary and high schools in Bodo dominated areas of Assam since 1963. The language has attained a position of pride with the opening of a subject as Modern Indian Language (MIL) in Higher Secondary level

in 1996 and then in 2004, Bodo language has been introduced in major courses in colleges of Assam. This was followed by the establishment of an independent academic department of Bodo in 2006 at Gauhati University. The UGC (University Grants Commission) has also included Bodo as subject in NET (National Eligibility Test) from December, 2011.

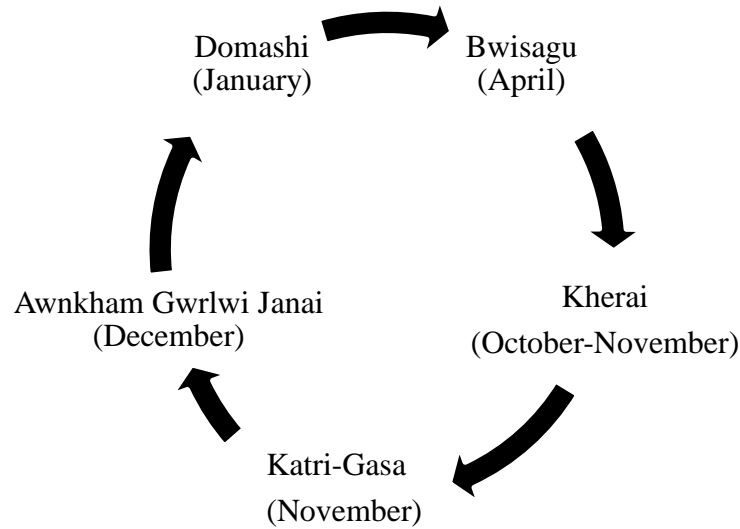
The Devanagari script is being used for the Bodo language at present. The script movement lasted for more than three decades and finally the Devanagari script has been accepted. The Bodo language has to its credit large number of books on poetry, drama, short story, novel, biography, travelogue, children's literature and literary criticism at present.

2.4 Festivals

The Bodos observe several major and minor festivals and ceremonies. These festivals may be broadly classified under three kinds: religious, seasonal and agricultural. In fact, all the major festivals are closely connected to agriculture. *Kherai* festival and *Bwisagu* festival are the major seasonal festivals of the Bodos.

Bwisagu festival is a kind of worship as well as festivals performed for good agricultural product. By celebrating the *Bwisagu*, Bodos welcome the New Year and bid fare-well to the old year. These festivals start celebrating from the day of *Chaitra Sonkranti* i.e. from 14th of April and continue to seven days. It is spring-time festival and is full of feasting, dancing and merry making from house to house in Bodo villages and in cultural functions of the community. The traditional rice beer of the Bodos is consumed and pork is the most served dish in every Bodo house during this festival.

Kherai festival is celebrated in the month of *Kati* (October-November), before harvesting and just after completion of all plantation work. Bodos believes that this festival has some sort of relationship with the fertility cult. During this festival, for performing the *Kherai* Puja, the altar is placed in the open space. Other important festivals of the Bodos include *Katri-gasa*, *Awnkham Gwrlwi Janai* and *Domashi*. The following is the circular diagram of the festivals of the Bodos-



2.5 Textile, Dress and Ornament

Weaving is an integral part of Bodo culture. Many families rear their own silkworms, the cocoons of which are then spun into silk. Bodo girls learn to weave from a young age, and no Bodo courtyard is complete without a loom. The products are noted for their various colorful design, warmth, softness and durability.

The womenfolk weave their own dress. The dress of the Bodo women is called *Dokhona* and that of the men is called *Gamsa*. Weaving is undertaken by Bodo women as a part of domestic chores. The rich culture and tradition are reflected in the costume and textile designs. The association of the Bodos with nature, its love for nature, has found expression in various textile designs of the Bodos. Textile weaving has played an important role in the economic and social life of the people throughout the ages. This art of the community has found its expression in various songs also.

BRAWFED (Bodoland Regional Apex Weavers & Artisans Cooperative Federation Ltd.) was formed towards the end of the year 2008. The Bodo community of north eastern region has an age old traditional cultural background, particularly in weaving and making of handicraft products. This very existence has been able to create fascinating product lines according to tastes & skills being improvised along with the changing times by the weavers & artisans.

BRAWFED has opened Emporiums named 'ARONAI' in North East and other parts of India. It has also participated in crafts fairs across the borders viz. - China, Italy, Bhutan, Nepal in 2011 and in 2013 in England, Nepal and South Africa.

Various small organization as the Self Help Group, the Co-operative societies have being encouraged to produce various products, the government provides various kinds of training and assistance to produce and promote the various designs as the carpets, curtains, cushion covers, dories, ties, waist coats etc.

A species of various types of *Agor* (handy work design) which bloom in the art of Bodo women are given below:-

- *Agor gubwi* (Main design)
- *Phareo Megon* (Pigeon eye)
- *Daorai Mokhreb* (Winkle of peacock)
- *Phul Mobla* (Varieties of bloomed flowers)
- *Daosha Mokhreb* (Winkle of chicken)
- *Maoji Agan* (Footprint of cat)
- *Dingkhia Mohor* (A design representing fern of Dhekia)
- *Gangu Godo* (An Agor representing the shape of a kind insect called Gangu)
- *Singri Bibar* (A design representing the Singri flower)
- *Boigri Bibar* (A design representing the flowers of plum)
- *Gongar thaiship* (A design representing the fruit of Nui tree)
- *Thaigir Bibar* (A design representing the flower of Thaigir plant and it also feeling of failed love)
- *Gandoula agor* (A design representing an insect Gandoula)
- *Khusli Denta* (A design representing the spoon)
- *Muphur Apha* (A design representing the footprint of bear)
- *Laosong Agor* (A design invented by a Bodo girl called Laosong)
- *Mokhordoma Agor* (A design representing a litigation or zig zag)
- *Bandhuram Agor* (A design first crafted by Bandhuram kachari)
- *Agor Gidit* (A design representing a Diamond shape)

- *Gorkha Gongbrai Agor* (A design representing twill)
- *Daokhi Agor* (A design representing stool of a hen)

The most popular among the agor design is the *Agor gubwi*. The favourite colours of the Bodos are generally *Gwmw* (Yellow), *Gwthang* (Green), and *Bathogang* (Colour of parrot's feathers). So Bodos' most popularly used words "*Gwmw-Gwthang-Bathogang*" represents the tribe. It is well known fact that the Indo-Mongoloid Bodos used abundance of gold ornaments available in those days. Gradually silver, bronze etc. became popular among them. There were about ten streams which produced gold more or less abundant in the district of Darrang. British people extracted gold from those rivers when they ruled India.

Bodo used varied types of ornaments for nose, ears, neck and hands. They wore or/ and still wear '*Phulkhuri*', '*Japkhiring*', '*Dul*', '*Boula*' (For upper ear), '*Phuti*' (A design of flower attached to earlobe) in ear.

The ornaments of the nose are- *Nakhaphu* (A hole is made on the skin of upper side of the nose for holding the ornament); *Nolot* (Holding from the middle of two nostrils); and *Buluki* (Nose pendent) etc.

Bodo women wear ornaments in the neck also. The popular ornaments are:-

- *Chandra Har* (A heavy neckless)
- *Bisa Har* (A neckless)
- *Thanka Siri* (A roundneck ornament)
- *Jibou Zinziri* (A snake like chain)

The popular ornaments of the hands are *Ashan* (bangle either big or small). Small bangle is called '*Ashan Suri*' and big bangle is called '*Ashan Shangkha*'. The dresses and ornaments of the Bodo men and women have changed radically except *Dokhna* and *Pharle* or *Orna* or *Jwmgra* of women. All Bodo women still put on *Dokhna* and *Jumgra* or *Orna* to symbolize their culture. The Bodos are skilled in weaving variety colours of flowers from *Eri* and *Muga*.

2.6 Food Habits

As agriculture is the prime occupation, major portion of Bodo diet is related to cultivation and production. Rice is the staple food of the Bodos and is often accompanied by a non

vegetarian dish such as fish, chicken or pork. Traditionally Bodos are non-vegetarians. Except beef, the Bodos eat a wide variety of food, fish, crab, snail, meat, silk pupa, rice cakes, exotic herbs and bamboo shoots are favourite cuisine. The traditional favorite drink of the Bodos is *Zu Mai* (*Zu* means wine and *Mai* means rice).

Black gram is one of the favorite cuisines of the Bodos although it is seldom eaten as a vegetarian dish. Smoked pork and chicken cooked with black gram are delicacies for the Bodos. Bodos do not eat raw black gram; it is always roasted dry and crushed to remove the skin before cooking any dish. Some of the favourite dishes of the Bodos are mentioned below

Napham is a unique dish in Bodo cuisine. It is made by grinding smoked fish, specific leafy vegetables, ground powder, and the mixture is allowed to age in a sealed bamboo cylinder. Thereafter, aged *napham* could be fried or used/applied in other vegetables.

Onla is gravy made from rice powder. It is applied in cooking slices of bamboo shoots, tomato and potato cooked lightly with *khardwi* and spices. Chicken or pork can be added.

It is the rice-beer or wine produced mainly during festivals like *Bwisagu* and *Domasi*. *Jumai* can be of two types, (a) *gishi* (wet) and (b) *gwrان* (dry). (a) *Gishi* is brewed by fermenting rice; when plum is added to the *gishi* mixture during fermentation, the product tastes like plum wine. (b) *Gwrان* is produced by distillation - it tastes like Japanese fermented liquor made from rice. The Bodos examine the strength of the wine by throwing a cup into the fire. A flash of fire indicates strong wine.

A bitter gravy that is made from dried jute leaves. Pork or fresh water fish can be cooked together to generate a distinct taste. It is a unique dish which is also the favourite one among Bodos.

2.7 Dance

With songs on their lips and rhythm on their feet, music and dance form an integral part of Bodo cultural life, with blowing movement and butterfly like strokes, the Bodo *Bagurumba* is the most popular dance. The Bodos weaves harmony and beauty in the hearts of this

culture. Spring brings a new Bodo year. *Bwisagu* is the expression of joy, it is the greatest celebration, rice beer or *jau* refreshes. Love song repairs spirits, dancing renews and reunites. The *Bwisagu* is the triumph of colour, warmth and life.

The traditional and internationally recognised dance of the Bodos is ‘*Bagurumba*’. It is practised and performed usually by young village girls and also evident in schools and colleges dominated by the Bodo community. This dance is accompanied by the *Bagurumba* song which goes like this-

Bagurumba, Hai Bagurumba
Bagurumba, Hai aio Bagurumba
jat nonga bwla khun nonga bwla
thab brum homnanwi bamnanwi lagwmwn kha
hwi lwgw lagwmwn kha...

The Bodos feel that they have been brought up in the arms of nature and that they have a strong relationship with nature like that of every mother with her child. In this dance form the most beautiful creature, butterflies have been remembered. The stroke of the arms of the dancers with the colourful cloth resembles the wings of the butterfly.

‘*Kherai* Dance’ is a symbol of the artistic tradition of the Bodos. It is the symbol of arts which are originated from rituals and closely related festivals and ceremonies. The following are some of the dances which the *Doudini* performs during *Kherai* puja,
1. Dance with a metal bowl on hand is ‘*Dao-thoi longnai*’. (It is a symbol of human power)
2. Covering with white cloth and shield (*Dahal*) over head is ‘*Masakhaori*’. These two dances are performed after every dance. All the dances are performed in the name of different gods.

2.8 Economic Background

Traditional economic structure of all the tribes in Assam or North East India is self-sufficient. Their activities in agricultural field and household works, fishing and hunting process, are based on the fulfillment of day-to-day needs, always living in close proximity to nature. Although a few of them are motivated with the trend of change and modernity of the

present day society, the majority of them are dependent on traditional mode or style of living. The case is same among the Bodos. Fishing, keeping poultry, piggery, rice, tea and jute cultivation, and betel nut plantation, cultivation of mustard and corn, weaving of traditional attire and silkworm rearing are their way for economic support. Areca nut and betel leaves are favourite Bodo *joura* (pair). Each and every courtyard has these trees that provide some amount of income every year.

But nowadays the Bodos are absorbed in other occupations, like government officials, teachers, doctors, engineers, etc and some have their own enterprise. Bodos go to the city for work. Many of them are also found to stay in the cities. They get adjusted with the city life easily and also easily get adjusted with the village life.

2.9 Marriage

Marriage creates new social relationships and reciprocal rights between the two new people, between each and the kin of the other, and establishes the status of the offspring's when they are born. The social ceremony which gives sanction to this is the marriage ceremony of the Bodos. (Goswami 2012, 98) The Bodo word for marriage is 'Haba'. In Bodo 'ha' means soil or earth and 'ba' means to bear something on the back. So 'haba' means to bear the responsibility of the earth.

The different types of Bodo marriage are (i) *Songnanwi langnai haba*-according to this system of marriage the bride is selected and then the marriage is settled after negotiation. This type of marriage is regarded as regular marriage. It is solemnized in the groom's house but nowadays it is mostly seen to be solemnized in the bride's house.

(ii) *Gwrja lakhinai haba*- this type of marriage is solemnized in the bride's house. In this type of marriage the groom comes to stay at the bride's house after marriage.

(iii) *Kharsonnai haba*- in this type of marriage the bride comes and stays at the groom's house before the settlement of marriage. It is possible if there is mutual understanding between the bride and the groom. It is sometimes without the consent of the parents of the bride and the groom.

(iv) *Bwnanwi langnai haba*- the bride is forcefully taken away from her home to the house of the groom without the consent of her and her parents and then marriage takes place. This kind of marriage is not socially accepted.

(v) *Dwnkharlangnai haba*- in this type of marriage the bride and the groom elope and get married.

(vi) *Dongkha habnai*- in this system of marriage a man comes and marries a widow and starts living with her in her house.

The Bodos also cross marry with other groups. After marriage, some change their surname but some do not. According to a general survey it is found that, the housewives generally change their surname, the working women normally do not change and it is seen that some of them write their husband's surname along with their own surname.

2.10 History and Existance

Since time immemorial, the Bodos have ruled not only the entire Brahmaputra and Barak valley, but also some parts of West Bengal, Bihar, Nepal and Bangladesh. In different places and times, the Bodos were known by different names, like the Kirata, Lecha, Kachari, Chutiya, Moran, Koch, Dimasa and Tripura. Since historically untraced ages, the Bodos had exercised highly developed political, legal and socio-cultural entities. Historical monuments and remains at Dimapur, in Nagaland, Khaspur in Maibang in Assam, Tripura Castle in Agartala, are mute witnesses to heights of Bodo Civilizations.

Today the Majority of the Bodos live in the foothills of the mighty Brahmaputra or *Dilou* river or *Burlungbuthur*. The Bodos have their own Tibeto-Burmese language; they have their own religion, laws and customs. The *Sijou* tree, five leaved is an abysmal worship. Central to Bodo ethos, is the concept of harmony, harmony with nature and harmony with community. This is well expressed through the ideas of cosmos, Bodo cosmology is reflected in Bathou, the five elements- earth, water, fire, wind and sky. The altar of worship is around the *Sijou* tree, *Euphobia splendens*, it is fenced in with a round bamboo. There is no priestly caste or caste system. Usually man of age of social respect is chosen to have spiritual responsibilities; such a Bodo is known as *deori*. Sometimes a *kherai* is special and

so it is large scale, the *doudini*, a woman possessed with divine spirit dances keeping time with music made out of *khaam*, *siphung* and *jotha*. It is an all night event.