

KHERAI OF THE BODOS: A RITUAL IN TRANSITION

“A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the award of the
degree of Doctor of Philosophy”

MADHURIMA GOSWAMI
Registration no 051



Department of Cultural Studies
School of Humanities & Social Sciences

TEZPUR UNIVERSITY
Napam-- 784028

October 2011
INDIA

ABSTRACT

This study has been primarily set in the theoretical perspective of people's culture in general and that of an ethnic community's performance-making process in particular. The framework used is that of theatrical performance and the analytical tools employed are dramaturgical. It attempts to show how an ethnic group engages itself in conserving, through creation and recreation, a traditional performance inextricably linked to a religious ritual facing extinction. In the process, the study also seeks to examine the group's engagement in using the possibilities of theatre as a mode of cultural production. This has also paved ways for questioning conventional orthodoxies and has created new challenges for both the community members and the performers in making sense of the emergent forms and contents of the performance.

The study looks into the variegated nature of religious rituals which are akin to dramatic representations. The ritual in question, Kherai, is also no exception. The study examines the relationship between 'ritual action' and 'ritual thought' as manifested in Kherai. Any change in the ritual action evokes a response from the community members which borders on uncertainty regarding the originality of the new ritual action. This uncertainty expresses itself in the 'devised work' of the community members which is concerned with the collective creation of the art. It is here that the emphasis shifts from the standard performance text to the creative performer. Devised performance is often innovative in its negotiation with cultural conventions.

The outcome is the setting in of a whole new vocabulary in the cultural process. Although different practices that are investigated and documented in this research share an aspiration to break with the tradition, they also try to find new working methods and challenge audiences through their inventive use of theatre form. The community accepts ritual action and thought as a challenge where connectivity between art and life, howsoever differently interpreted, provides a conceptual prism through which the inter-related histories of devised performance are viewed.

This study also looks at the significance of a community's avant-garde action to transform its everyday, mundane life. It shows how a community's artistic practice and the everyday life experience become embedded and how they cross-fertilize each other leading to changes in the existing cultural performances. The research also looks into the strategies, demands and needs of the community for making and organizing a performance.

The most significant part of the research is the performance of asynchronous rituals in symbolic space. The idea of performance is perceived by the community in terms of simulation. This performance is not similar to the performance in the synchronous rituals. What is interesting, therefore, is to study how the ritual performance is enacted in the symbolic space to the approval of the community members.

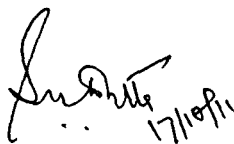
.....

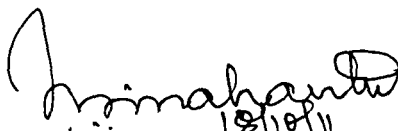
DECLARATION

This is to certify that the research material embodied and conclusions derived in the present study titled, "Kherai of the Bodos: A ritual in transition" are based on my original research. It has not been submitted in any form or part for any diploma or degree of any university. My indebtedness to other works / publications has been duly acknowledged in the body of the thesis at appropriate places.


Madhurima Goswami

Candidate


Prof. Sunil Kumar Dutta
Supervisor


Prof. Pradip Jyoti Mahanta
Head
Department of Cultural Studies
Tezpur University
Napam - 784028
Head
Department of Cultural Studies
Tezpur University



Department of Cultural Studies
Tezpur University
Napaam, Tezpur-784028
Assam

Prof. Sunil Kumar Dutta
Dean of Humanities and Social Sciences

This is to certify that the thesis entitled “ Kherai of the Bodos: A ritual in transition” submitted to the Tezpur University in the Department of Cultural Studies under the School of Humanities and Social sciences in part fulfillment for the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Cultural Studies is record of research work carried out by Ms. Madhurima Goswami under my personal supervision and guidance.

Support and help received by her from various sources have been duly acknowledged.

No part of the thesis has been reported elsewhere for award of any other degree.

Date: 17.10.2011

Place: Tezpur

Sunil Kumar Dutta

supervisor

Designation: Professor

Department : Cultural Studies

School- Humanities and Social sciences

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I would like to thank all those who have contributed to the process of writing this thesis. Above all I would like to thank my supervisor, Prof. Sunil Kumar Dutta who generously gave advice and assistance on many parts of the thesis.

I want to thank sincerely my field informants and community elders who provided me a comfortable stay and information all throughout my work. I am grateful to Shri Tajuram Narzary a retired school teacher in Ghoramari region for providing me sources and help at every step of my work. Shri Narzari also provided deep insights into the study and other problems in the area. I will be ever grateful to the women of Dhekidol village for the love and affection that was showered on me. Indeed I am indebted to them for the narration of many folkloric accounts and the effort to remember things in the natural context which gave a different dimension to the study of performance.

The next thanks goes to the villagers of Botola, Garuduba and Senhali villages of Thelamara region. The spirit and enthusiasm with which they went on answering my queries led me to a different world of Kherai altogether. I will be grateful to them forever.

My sincere thanks go to the people of Sikrajhar in Kokrajhar for allowing me to document the Kherai ritual.

I also need to thank Prof. Chandan Kumar Sharma for providing me the intellectual space and spirit at the various stages of my research.

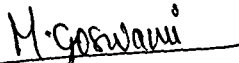
I am grateful to my departmental colleagues for the inspiration and support I received from them. They had been facilitating my absence in my workplace. My special thanks to Dr. Parasmoni Dutta for helping me in the documentation work.

I need to thank my nephew Siddharth Sharma and my student Jibon Jyoti Sharma for helping me with illustrations and in organizing the research work.

I owe a great deal to my parents --- my mother and father whom I have annoyed considerably for not being able to finish my research work in time have also contributed to the study by being generous and supportive all the time.

I thank the university authorities for the support and concern shown to me.

Lastly, I need to thank my family and specially my daughter Prachi Sharma who learnt making tea for me while I studied.


Madhurima Goswami

CONTENTS

<i>Acknowledgements</i>	vi
<i>List of figures</i>	viii
<i>List of diagrams</i>	viii
<i>List of schematic representations</i>	ix
Chapter 1 ----- Introduction	1 - 23
Chapter 2 ----- Bodo Culture and Society	24 - 64
Chapter 3 ----- Description of the Kherai festival	65 - 105
Chapter 4 ----- a) “From Ritual to Theatre” Understanding ritual as theatre	106 - 154
b) Need for a performance –centered text For the community performers.	
Chapter 5 ----- Conclusion	155 - 167
<i>Works Cited</i>	168 - 173
<i>Appendices</i> -	
<i>Appendix-I</i> ----- <i>glossary of Bodo terms</i>	xi-xii
<i>genealogy</i>	xiii-xiv
<i>Appendix-II</i> ----- <i>illustrations</i>	xv-xxiii
<i>Appendix-III</i> ----- <i>photographs</i>	xxiv-end

List of Figures

Sl. No.	Fig. No	Figures
1.	fig-1	Map of Assam
2.	fig-2	Map of Darrang district
3.	fig-3	Map of Sonitpur district
4.	fig-4	Flow chart of Tezpur*
5.	fig-5	Bodo population in Assam state
6.	fig-6	Population chart of major ST's in Assam
7.	fig-7	Total population of BTC
8.	fig-8	Transformations during ritual performance
9.	fig-9	Efficacy-Entertainment dyad

List of Diagrams

Sl.No	Dia.No	Diagrams
1.	dia-1	Fire hearths for public and god
2.	dia-2	Equilateral triangle relationship of cultural heritage
3.	dia-3	Roadside altar
4.	dia-4	Schematic representation of Kherai altar

List of Schematic Representations

SI. No.	Illustration no.	Illustration
1 .	illus no-1	Kherai altar
2.	illus no-2	Flexibility in framework: performance frame is open
3.	illus no-3	Labdinga-clockwise and anti- clockwise movement
4.	illus no -4	Namghar and <u>Deoshal</u>
5.	illus no-5	Roadside altar with variety of offerings
6.	illus no-6	Dance on plaintain leave
7.	illus no-7	Daudini fixes her torso against the rope

Photographs*

A visual documentation of the culture of the Bodos has been presented here. These photographs no. (1-112) give an idea of the preparations of the Kherai ritual, the community participation, various ritualistic performances, the environment, musical instruments used during the ritual, the dances presented by the ritual performers and the community. The symbolism and the heirophany shown are created during the performance in form of creation of ritual altars. The preliminaries of the ritual, the care that is taken to observe the ritual like to guard the arena, clearing the field, sanctification of the area etc. Various dramatic moments of the daudini's (priestess) and the leisure hours too are moments of the ritual business. The sacred tree stands as a witness to all these events that are being performed all these years. The ritual actions are also varied for e.g offerings made in river, in boat, through sacrifices. The way they use their bodies to express has also been captured in photographs.

INTRODUCTION

The Problem

This study examines the process of transition of a traditional ritualistic performance namely, Kherai of the Bodos of Assam. It explains how an ethnic group engages itself in conserving, through creation and recreation, a traditional performance that faces the threat of extinction. In the process, the study looks into the processes and strategies deployed by the community members towards making of a performance.

The Bodos

Bodos, the eighth largest tribe of India, is a dominant ethnic group of the Brahmaputra valley and the north Bengal. Known as Kiratas in the pre-historic age, Bodos belong to Tibeto-Burman language family of mongoloid origin. Bodos are numerically and sociologically one of the most important tribes of north-east India, particularly Assam. They form one of the main bases of the present day population of these tracts. Kachari¹ is the generic term used for a number of groups who claim a common mythical ancestry and speak a common language or a dialect.

Bodos were originally naturalists, through the ages a number of Bodo population has converted to Islam, Christianity, Buddhism and Hinduism. They worshipped Bathou corresponding to the Hindu counterpart Shiva. Bathou or Bathou Borai is worshipped during the Kherai festival. 'Kherai' is derived from a combination of anagrous sounds produced during the sacrifice of animals. 'Rai' means to invoke the formula which is supported by the sound 'khe'. Throughout the ritual, varieties of dance are performed to appease the gods and goddesses. The trance dancer Daudini propitiates deities through various dances relating to different gods.

Kherai is a communicative event, unfolding many an ethos and reflections of the Bodo society. It is a complex form of communication that combines the visual, kinesthetic (deflections and inter-semiotic translations) and aesthetic aspects of the human movement with the aural dimension of Bodo musical sense. It is created out of the culturally understood symbols within the social and religious context. It conveys meaning and information as ritual, ceremony and entertainment. For the medium to communicate, it abides all such cultural conventions that deal with human movement in time and space for e.g. (to greet, to tell, to pray and knowledge of fundamental cultural norms). Dance is represented here as a community's expression of its values, identity or resistance to external pressure. Dance is nonetheless an important activity across such societies.

In Cultural Studies, study on dance is still a marginal domain. This is true that the two, areas of concern are not mutually exclusive. Dance is a form of representation, and certainly any codified dance structure or technique can be conceptualized as a semiotic meaning. The textual records of dance performances were however studied but movement analysis were never carried out. The reason for this can be lack of expertise and formal training. This analysis suggests that dance would appear uninteresting to cultural studies scholar in search of materialism because dance uses bodies to transmit and represent complex cultural codes in a manner that explicitly distinguishes them from the lived experience of the non-dancing body. The training and deployment of bodies in dance is culturally significant. Especially it can tell us about the range of allowable representations of the body in motion and the policing of the bodily form in a specific time and place.

The festival

The whole performance cycle of the Kherai ritual constitutes and recapitulates the major events in the life cycle of the Bodos. Individual events are nested within, even as they as a series comprised, the small cycles of performances. The overall structure of Kherai is symbolic, while its interior structure is dramatic. The two structures are integrated because they believed in dreamtime and their own lives moved from

ordinary to super-ordinary reality. The Kherai performances were the links or points of time and space where the two realities intersected and meshed. The performances manifest a concentrated effort on the part of the community to reinforce its origin and history in the context of a perceived existential crisis to their society. Most of them are ignorant about their past, heritage because of historical marginalization by the dominant Assamese discourse. At present they are engaged in the construction of their own distinct identity by taking recourse to oral tradition. This devising of performance by the community is a response and a reaction to the prevailing ideology of one person's text and the direction of another. It is here the emphasis has shifted from the standard performance to the creative performer. This also proves that studies in dance that attempt to locate the theory, practice, and reception of codified bodily movement in the context of the problems, events, and ideologies of significance. Beyond the realm of dance alone it may have a great deal to teach us about how "social relations are both enacted and produced through the body.

The entire ritual is carried out through the medium of dance by the priests, priestess and the community members. These dances originate from the creative processes that manipulate human bodies in time and space, so that the formalization of the movement is intensified. The dance produced here is a visual manifestation of social relations, and may be the subject of an elaborate aesthetic system. The process or way of performing is important as the dance form is produced.

The individual dancing bodies are a category for analysis relevant to the cultural meaning of dance. A dance along with theatrical (symbolic enactments are important locations of larger ideological issues facing a society. Dance here encompasses not only movement style but critical reception and aesthetic motivation. These performance processes are dynamic ways of evaluating, generating, repeating and remembering the events.

Performance Studies Approach

Performance Studies is a theoretical approach which represents a movement away from the concern with the idealized form to what is actually performed and the exact context in which the performance takes place. This new trend involves the construction of a framework for a performance-centered approach to verbal art, which starts from the position of a folklorist, but draws from a wide range of disciplines, chiefly, anthropology, semiotics, sociology, etc. It reminds us about the variations in the performance and often the large role of the performer in controlling this. (Fine, Elizabeth. 1984)

Objectives of the Study:

As already mentioned, this study intends to examine the changing dimensions of the traditional Kherai ritual of the Bodos from the performance perspective. It is true that tradition passes on knowledge, beliefs, legends, practices, etc from one generation to the other. But it also refers to long established ways of thinking or acting within a continuing pattern of cultural beliefs or practices.

As tradition provides a powerful source of endorsement and sanction for certain practices, beliefs, values and norms of behavior, it is often invented or reconstructed, as against simply inherited. Many practices which are seen as tradition are in fact quite recent inventions, often deliberately constructed for a variety of reasons, such as to legitimize certain actions, power equations or social hierarchies, to foster group ethnoscenics and cement collective identities, or to support political ideologies, agendas or interests. Artistic Indian traditions are also deliberately re-described and re-invented to create new audiences and markets for them.

The present research will look into how traditions are built or constructed. The work will examine the new meanings, values and symbols that are created when a tradition is invented or reinvented or what might be excluded, lost, concealed or suppressed in the process. It is also interesting to note that the performance phenomenon alters the relationship between the artist, the art form / practice and the context of its reception

and production. It will also look into the impact and ideologies that lie underneath or determine such constructions of tradition.

The study basically undertakes under its purview the following issues:

- Study of the inter-semiotic translation that is involved in the performance of the Kherai dances;
- Study of the structures of the ritual which would include, for example, what do these ritual dances look and sound like, how do they use space, who performs them and how are they performed;
- Study of the functions of the ritual, that is, what do these dances accomplish for the community, the culture, and the individuals;
- Study the processes of the ritual, that is, the process of creation and recreation of the ritual by the performer as well the community;

Conceptual Framework

The study of ritual and performance has become one of the most important areas of Performance Studies. Though performance itself is an aspect of ritual, the ritual study has been taken seriously over by various anthropologists like Victor Turner and Richard Schechner who studied the textual part of performance. The movement part of performance was ignored for the lack of analytical tools. Indian scholars have also long studied the textual, narrative aspects of various performances.

However, the domain of Performance Studies is much wide ranging. As individuals and as parts of communities and nations, people participate and interact with other people. Their actions and interactions are guided by a set of values, norms, and prejudices. Performances of a community are significantly influenced by these subjectivities. The study of performance in Performance Studies involves understanding a performance in its relationship with these subjective conditions prevailing in a specific societal context.

As a theoretical perspective, Performance Studies takes actions very seriously. It does so mainly in four ways:

- 'Behaviour' constitutes its object of study;
- 'Artistic practice' is a big part of the Performance Studies project. A number of Performance Studies scholars are also practicing artists working as avant-garde in the community-based performance. The relationship between doing and studying performance is integral to Performance Studies approach; Fieldwork as 'participant observation' is a way of learning about cultures other than that of the fieldworker. But in Performance Studies, the 'other' may be a part of one's own culture, or even an aspect of one's own behavior. This gives the Performance Studies fieldworker an allowance for criticism, irony and personal commentary as well as sympathetic participation. In an active way, one performs fieldwork.
- Performance Studies is actively involved in social practices and advocacies. The challenge is to become as aware as possible of others- and then take steps to maintain or change positions. (Schechner:2002)

Performance must be constructed as a "broad spectrum" or "continuum" of human action ranging from ritual, play, sports, popular entertainments, the performing arts and everyday life performances. The underlying notion is that any action that is framed, presented, highlighted or displayed is a performance. Many performances belong to more than one category along the continuum. (Schechner:2002)

Performance Studies does not study texts, architecture, visual arts, or any other item or artifact of art or culture as such. They are rather studied as performances, i.e. they are regarded as practices, events, and behaviors not as 'objects' or 'things'. "The question of liveliness" is at the heart of Performance Studies. (Schechner:2002)

To examine the circumstances in which the paintings are created and exhibited, this discipline looks at how the gallery displaying it shapes its presentations. When Performance Studies deal with behavior – artistic, everyday, ritual playful and so on – the questions asked are closer to how performance theorists have traditionally approached theatre, and other performing arts.

In Performance Studies, questions of embodiment, action, behavior, and agency are dealt with in an inter-cultural manner. This approach recognizes two things. First, in today's world cultures are always interacting – there is totally no isolated group. Second, the differences among cultures are so profound that no theory of performance is universal: one size does not fit all. (Scechner:2002)

The present study deals with people's performances, the way their hidden energies, ideas, and creativities come alive in their actions and movements, the way people have been engaged in devising strategies to preserve their histories and the story of their daily life through performances. It also examines the way the people make symbolic enactments using metaphors from nature. Every part of nature to them is useful and there is an ambivalent relationship between them. They owe allegiance to nature and show it through their bodily gesture as and how it comes to them. They imagine their rhythm of life through a non-verbal medium, give meaning to it and present it before an audience. The amount of social and cultural experience the community accumulates is reflected through the rhetoric of truthfulness, honesty and authenticity. Within this context, the idea that creativity liberates the individual and the community members is highlighted in the performance. The application of various games and playful activities with years of continuous practice and improvisation has led to the practical idea of theatre making.

At this stage, it will be worthwhile to bring into the discussion some queries raised by Dwight Conquergood in *Rethinking Ethnography* (1991) regarding the application of

about Performance when we move it outside the parameter of aesthetics and situate it at the centre of lived experience?

-- Kherai is a living example of ritualistic performance where the community reinforces their imagination, their feelings and their prayers through the non-verbal medium of performance. The long practice of tradition has at times altered the structure of performance. The changes that have crept in have been a part of the process and a devised (new) strategy has been sub-consciously employed. The community is in constant process of creating or producing culture which makes the process dynamic. The community sees performance as a world to participate in.

2) **Performance and Ethnographic Praxis.** What are the methodological implications of thinking about fieldwork as the collaborative performance of an enabling fixation between observer and observed, knower and known? How does thinking about fieldwork as performance differ from thinking about fieldwork as the collection of data?

-- Although the key concepts, 'communication' and 'aesthetic' form the definition of performance, neither the well-known communication models nor aesthetic theories furnish an adequate model for verbal and non verbal art performances. The common communication models, consisting of variations on the components sender, channel, message, receiver, feedback, noise, and field of experience, fail to indicate the difference between the aesthetic and the other modes of communication. And since most aesthetic theories fall into one of the four categories set forth by M. H. Abrams – expressive, mimetic, objective, or pragmatic – they are not sufficiently comprehensive to account for the many variables comprising the aesthetic experience of a verbal art performance. Most of the aesthetic theories have been, have grown out of the Western high arts tradition and have rarely considered performance as an aesthetic category. Thinking about fieldwork as performance allows the researcher to criticize, analyse interpret in one's own way. One rather behaves as a participant performer in fieldwork. It combines scholarship, artistic training, and practice.

3) **Performance and Hermeneutics.** What kinds of knowledge are privileged or displaced when performed experience becomes a way of knowing, a method of critical inquiry, a mode of understanding?

--- Performance is a new subject of knowledge. The subjects do not occupy a proper place in knowledge. Performance studies came into existence because of a radically changed intellectual and artistic landscape emerging during the last part of the 20th century. Combined with confusion and dissatisfaction with the emerging academia was an explosion of knowledge and a new means of disseminating knowledge through modern means.

4) **Performance and Scholarly representation.** What are the rhetorical problematic of performance as a complementary or alternative form of “publishing” research? What are the differences between reading an analysis of fieldwork data, and hearing the voices from the field interpretively filtered through the voice of researcher? What about enabling people themselves to perform their own experience?

-- The Kherai fieldwork experience shows that it was a field work performance rather than mere collection of data. One needs to adopt quasi-participation method to look into the nuances of their activities. An ideal performance centered text will take care of the paralinguistic, kinesics and other nonverbal performance features in solving the problem of translating performance to print. Such an ideal text would enable readers to reconstitute the aesthetic qualities of the original performance, perceiving its unique aesthetic communicative process.

5) **The Politics of Performance.** What is the relationship between Performance and Power? How does performance reproduce, enable, sustain, challenge, subvert, critique and naturalize ideology? How do performances simultaneously reproduce and resist hegemony. How does performance accommodate and contest domination?

(Conquergood 1991:190)

-- We have innumerable examples in history of the powerful and the rich using female body as an aesthetic object of consumption. In performances like Kherai also it was observed that the priestess (doudini) who otherwise has a marginalized status in the

society is admired and feared for her vigorous feats during Kherai. She is appreciated for her artistic skill and power. She enhances the experience of the community they have during the ritual. She is also respected and feared for the potential she represents as a performer for subverting and transforming the status quo. Through this we can say that the emergent dimension in the text doesn't merely refer to the text emerging in the performance, but points out how the performance has the potential to change the social structure itself. It is the power of tradition, that the society gets approval for its own vested interests.

Performance Theory and the Social Sciences

Performance Studies share close relationship with various social sciences. Many of their issues and concerns coincide.²

For example the range of areas is many and they open a wide canvas which depicts ritualization on one end and everyday life activities on the other. The rites and ceremonies are also a part of it. Performances like gatherings and everyday behavior is also an insight for sociological investigation. The structure of the events like plays, ritual, sports, may have common concerns and issues. Various types of communication like the verbal and the non-verbal also can be analyzed through various modes. Study of body language, face to face interaction can also be relevant topics for psychotherapy to understand human psyche. This way many unified theories of performance can also be related to the artistic work and to the broad spectrum of performance.

Dance scholarship is growing at a pace never experienced before. Its energy and creativity recalling the choreographic outpouring of the dance boom years of the 1960s and 1970s. A decade ago, we could expect little more than a handful of forward – thinking work each year. This has expanded into a flood of books, articles, conferences and symposia on dance history, criticism and theory. This doesn't mean that there is simply a growth or an increase in the flow of materials produced.

A number of contemporary scholars have made theoretical contribution to the domain of dance as a medium of performance from the Performing Studies perspective. Morris (1992: 1), for example, quotes Daly who defines dance “as an aesthetic, cultural and political phenomenon, and to lead it into a more prominent place in the humanities and social sciences” (1991:50).

The potential we saw a few years ago is being realized in a host of studies that puts the dancing body at the center of research cutting across a multitude of disciplinary lines. This has changed the character of discourse in dance.

This study, in part, is also a response to the contemporary works in dance studies and the interest it has occasioned. At the same time, there are many such issues that arise in a field in dynamic transition. In the present moment every aspect of dance is being tested and debated. If we are to talk about dancing in anything other than the broadest terms, we must be able to do close analysis of dance forms, just as we might of literary texts. While most of the scholars have spent years developing analytic skills for reading and understanding verbal communication, rarely have we worked equally to develop an ability to analyze visual, rhythmic or gesture forms (non-verbal). As cultural critics we must become movement –literate.

The study of the human-structured movement was started way back in 18th century by Ray.L Birdwhistell, an English anthropologist³. The idea of dance scripting, dance-notation, and kinetography and macrokinesic translation emerged from his works. While body motion behavior is based on the physiological structure, the communicative aspects of this behavior are patterned by social and cultural experience. The meaning of such behavior is not so simple which can be easily studied (Birdwhistell, 1990).

Challenges before the Study

The basic problem was to look for a similar kind of work in the area of Performance studies. Though some work has been attempted in the past that is also not much. The ritual to be studied was performed once in a year, that too was sometimes not held for

the lack of funds. Though documentation was a tool to capture the performance, but the performances kept changing at times. No two performances were identical. The longstanding practice of tradition has altered the structure of performance. It is often re-invented and reconstructed as against simply inherited. Most of the things have been erased from the community's memory. Each time there is an effort to remember.

Research methodology:

The relationship between studying performance and doing performance is integral. A number of the performance studies scholars are also practicing artists working in avant-garde, in community based performance and elsewhere. There is no such methodology regarding the study of performance. As it mainly belongs to the domain of actions and behavior, it is the prime duty of the researcher to focus on the "repertory" and observe what people do in the activity of their doing it. A researcher will find it difficult if the community performance is under threat or transition or is no more performed. One also has to depend on the secondary data in that case. The particular research seeks constant participant observation as it also is one of the ways of experiencing these performances. The fieldworker has to get involved, participate wholly or partially in the action sequences.

The next stage is the documentation of the entire event in not in phases but in entirety. These performances are inter-linked and thus continuity may break if divided in phases. Every part of the performance needs observation. Be it any part of the day, each sequence has to be documented and analyzed. As the study is based mainly on primary data which has been gathered in the field, the secondary data consisted of basic information on the life style of the Bodo community.

Data collection was facilitated, apart from observation and documentation by traveling to the documentary sources where the social space is wider and the time span longer. Though mainly i had to attend rural assemblies and meetings, I did meet a few scholars who were at present merely passive bearers of the tradition. To gather information on the social, religious, political and economic life of the community I had to move to a

few villages for information. For ritual study, I didn't have to as the ritual was no more observed in its earlier manner.

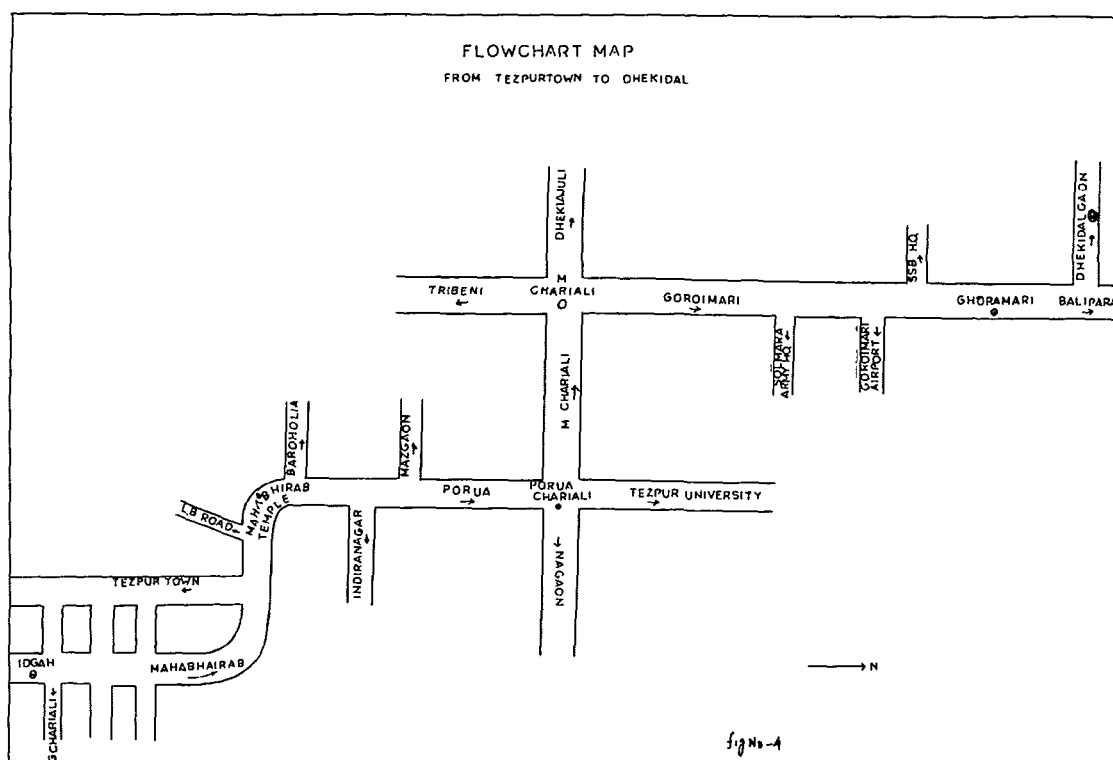
The approach needed for the particular study was quite different from what is done usually in social sciences. The questionnaire and interview method didn't work as many of my respondents didn't have high literacy level. The issues involved were at times very sensitive and it was also difficult to coax people to open up. I had to share my heart in case to elicit any meaningful information. The discussion mode happened very often during the study.

The study was vast and needed some kind of quantification. Sudden spurts of violence in the areas also deterred me from field study at times. The data was collected from three different areas of Bodo concentration, namely Sikkajhar in Kokrajhar district, Botola Dhekeri and Senhali villages in Thelamara area in Sonitpur district, Kalaigaon in Udalguri district and Dhekidol in Sonitpur district. In performance research, since no two performances are identical, it is difficult to go for quantitative research. I had tried to quantify in that regard. For the purpose of research, I had to travel various parts of Bodo concentration from Sonitpur to Kokrajhar, from the year 2000 -2010. Finally my research is based on the data that is collected from Dhekidol village in Sonitpur district as this was the village where I found that in spite of the population getting assimilated with the mainstream culture, majority of them being non Bodo speakers, still followed the worship of Bathou. The celebration of Kherai was taken seriously and effort was being made to keep it as authentic as it could be. though there was always a pressure from the outside forces to rethink about its revival and the impact on the society. The village accounts say that it is now some 180 years that Kherai is being celebrated in this village.⁵

The village setting:

For this particular research, the village from which the data is collected is some 16 kilometers away from Tezpur town in Sonitpur district, which falls under Tezpur sub-division, Ghoramari out post, and within Tezpur circle. The revenue circle or mauza is

Chariduar.(see flow chart of Tezpur*) The Sonitpur district in Assam is spread over an area of 5324 sq kilometers on the north bank of the Brahmaputra river. Sonitpur is bounded on all sides from north-east and east west. The district lies between $26^{\circ} 30'$ N and $27^{\circ} 01'$ N latitude and between $92^{\circ} 16'$ and $93^{\circ} 43'$ longitude. It is surrounded in all its four sides by holding 4-5 kilometers of area known by the name Ghoramari. Ghoramari comprises of many villages namely - oohnipahar Dhekidol , oohnipathar Botabari, Sapaguri, Paanbari sesa chah bagisa, Hahchorachah bagisa , Borpat gaon, Adabari , Sorupat Gaon, Bethabhonga, Ghoramari , Kosubil,Rowmari, Rajgarh, Sonabil Chah bagisa, Bokajan , Malijan ,Solagaon, Nij Goraimari, Goraimari , Betanijhar, Tepukijhar, Haleswar Salabonti, Borghuli Sitabonti, Sandibandha all are inside Ghoramari. Towards the north is Balipara, east is Jiyabhoroli, to the south is Salonibari and Borjhar village. Towards the west is Bindukuri, and Darrang Tea estate.



The community:

Ghoramari is a semi urban area. It seems to be a mini Assam with its varied population. To a large extent a big sizeable population of tea garden community along

with Boro- Kacharis, Koches, Ahoms, Kolitas, Nepalties, Bengalis, Biharis, and Mymensingas are living together in peace with a sense of brotherhood.

Area:

This region has bounty of natural scenic landscapes which makes the entire area beautiful. It is a rectangular isolated piece of land comprising an area of 6-7 kilometers. The river Jiya Bhoroli used to flow through the middle of the village.

Origin of the name Ghoramari in oral tradition:

Once upon a time a king let loose a sacrificial horse which was stopped by a native king. The king did not accept its supremacy and got the horse killed. Since then the place came to be known as Ghoramari. It is a well known fact that the Asura king Bana had extended his state from Tezpur to Bhalukpong. Bana's grandson Bhaluka made his capital at Bhalukpong not far from Balipara at the foothills of Akas. Remains of the old fortification are still visible there. Akas still claim Bhaluka as their progenitor.

On the other side on the National Highway NH-52, presently the village Tepukijhar still has rest shelters where the Aka people coming from the hills to plains would take rest. The places are known as Jironi Jharoni at present times also. The British also were involved in petty wars with the Akas. During some war the Akas reached even Tezpur. They used to sharpen their long daos (axe) in the fields. The places came to be known as Da-dhara since then. A. J. Moffat mill's Report⁷.

Later when the river changed its course towards the north, the silt that was left flowed into the sheet of water which in due course was thickly covered with aquatic grass. During the British rule the north trunk road was being built through the wetlands. One of the British officers during inspection slipped and fell off his horse, the horse also slipped into the pit and died. Since then the place is known by the name Ghoramari. Another account- Adjacent to the village towards the west is Oohnipathar Dhekidol

village . There are some water sources (ooh) in the field at present in the north-western side. People used to get water all throughout the year for agriculture and other needs. . Likewise people in Oohnipathar Botabari also had the privilege of these spring sources. These spring sources never used to get dry.

Origin of the name Dhekidol:

Above mentioned two villages are densely Bodo community populated. Once, the weather was so dry that the flora and fauna got reduced to dry grass. People in the village had a folk belief that in the north-western side, a mortar with a hole is stolen generally in the night i.e., on a Tuesday or a Saturday.

It is then (mortar) is cremated in a deep dug pit. If this is done it is believed that it rains. Many mortars are found cremated in the Da-dhanani pathar (field). Besides Dhekidol is the village Capaguri. It is also known by the name Champaguri. The land is also known for its fertility and bountiful nature. Towards its west at the back lay a dense forest. Tiger , elephant , monkeys ,haitha, khagara pahu, paarghuma, jamari,koliyari,, a variety of birds and big animals like bhelo ,bandordima, variety of bamboos like bijuli banh,bajal banh,makal banh, cane(bet),soka, nal khagori(dry grass),baranga kher, birina,ghorajahi, etc. was found in abundance earlier. To the west of Chapaguri there is place called Garang even today. It is said that in the higher elevation a enormous flying snake known by the name Dahi saph used to live in the place. Still known as (Dahi sapor gaat) the place is still flocked by people in search of the snake. At present the dense forest is not there. Now there exists Balipara Industrial Development Centre, Assam valley school, and two villages by the name Harchura napam and Harchura Nepali pam.

Two villages namely Borpaat gaon and Adabari are adjacent to each other. Towards the east is the village Sorupat gaon. Bethabhanga is inhabited mostly by the tea community people. The river Jiyabhoroli used to flow through this village. It is said that a boatman's oar got broke while rowing in the river. The place acquired its name from the incident. Likewise, Bokajan, Malijan, Betonijhar, Garaimari, Sandibandha,

Haleswar, Sonabil each of the places had its own historical significance. To settle the war between Ahoms and the Kacharis the Rajgarh was built.

During the rule of the British in India, the national leader of the Congress party Mahatma Gandhi on 21st August, 1921 at Polo Fields in Tezpur said in his speech addressed to the public - Motherland has to be freed from the clutches of the English, reflected his feelings on the inhuman tragedy in Punjab, ban on foreign goods, use of khadi, religious and communal divide were some of his concerns.

He ably suggested some suggestions as to how community development can be achieved. How various communities can be united in a single platform? While coming from Rangiya via Tezpur he also interacted with the communities on the issues of development for which evils like unsociability, ban on liquor, were to be eradicated. For the reason why during the Leave India agitation, the people in Ghoramari also participated in the proceedings of the movement⁶. To make people get involved in the affairs the organizers would employ various strategies. The meetings will be like assemblies, bhaona –play, bihu mela, constitution of Jatra parties, community show, monthlong –raasleela, circus –party, khol-taal, madal-siphung or gymnastics, Durga puja celebration, weekly markets, establishments of cooperative. The visits of Gandhi during the years 1921,1926,1938, resulted into formation of the congress committees here. Places like Balipara, Chariduar, Ghoramari, Haleswar, Dekargaon, Banhbari, Johamari, Dhekiajuli, Borsala, Jamuguri, also got revolutionized. The first congress committee was formed in oohnipathar Dhekidol, oohnipathar Botabari, Paanbari, Bethabhanga, and Ghoramari.

Social significance of the village: The village owes its importance and development to the Hem Chandra Ucchar Madhyamik Vidyalaya. Most of the people who contributed towards the village were the former students of the school. The political culture, social development, economic up gradation, and cultural upheaval are the main issues and concerns the community people have in general. The populace is an interesting admixture of various communities. The general population consists of – Bodos,

Misings, Ahoms, Koch, Tea tribe, Nepalis, Muslims, Biharis, Rajasthanis, Marwaris. The religious communities like Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs and Christians, Buddhist is present in this area. The multiple languages that are spoken in and around the village are Assamese, Bodo, Nepali, Bhojpuri, Sadri, Orang, Saothali, Munda, Oriya, and Gurmukhi.

Though different in their cultural traits, they have lived harmoniously with each other. With a liberal mindset people have been celebrating Durga puja, Kalipuja, Lakshmi puja, Saraswati puja, Bathou and Kherai of the Bodos, Tusu of the tea community, Karma and jhumur dance during karma puja, Vaishnavites performed Krishna janmashtami, birth anniversaries of Shankardeva and Madhavdeva etc. The integration was such that for the celebration of the anniversaries Raaslila, Bhaona, Haritalika, Muharram, Id, Medam-me-phi, Ali-ai-ligang, it was observed that the entire population participated and celebrated all the festivals irrespective of religion, caste and creed.

Means of transport, communication also have been seen as developed. At around a distance of 3-4 kilometers post-offices, telephone booths have been set up. In spheres of communication also NH 52 passes through the village, many street roads have been constructed, village authority and through Sonitpur also the roads have been built and on the top of that the villagers themselves by offering their own labour have constructed village mud roads. In case of transport, small vehicles, motors, tempos, thela carriers are mostly seen being used by the villagers.

Industry and cottage industry: Mainly jute and cane industries have come up in various parts of the region. Grain husking and mustard production are also important works the community is engaged in, brick kiln, pottery, iron smothery weaver's cooperative, silk and cotton production, Ghoramari cottage training industry centre, tea industry, and recently "Balipara Industrial Development centre has come up in around acres of land. Since majority of the people practice agriculture barring 20% of the population who are office goers, businessman, contractual workers. The reason why the

agrarians couldn't raise agriculture as a industry made majority of the people's economic condition deplorable.

Review of literature:

One of the best ways of understanding performances or performative behaviors according to Richard Schechner is to perform in all their various genres, contexts, expressions, and historical process. Though I too wanted to experience and observe as much of the village – ritual complex as much as i could. This was especially unnerving for me as i was going to observe a performance which was not aimed at the audience but rather the Gods. What the new performances has become during the past hundred years or so is much too complicated to be organized under one heading.. There is a historical innovation, a current innovation (always changing), and an intercultural innovation, a forward looking innovation and a tradition seeking innovation. These are not very neat categories they seem to get interlocked very often. This happens because of separable tendencies no longer describes the multisided activities undertaken by performance artists, directors, actors and scholars in one or more of the various worlds .

“The task of the cultural workers is to express as clearly as we can both the emotional and the logical sense of the changes taking place. We need to find ways to celebrate individual and cultural differences, even as people work towards economic and political parity.”

The Future of Ritual: Richard Schechner, 1993

Though remarkable sensitivity and adequate knowledge is necessary to represent the descriptions of the cultural expressions, David Scott's work on a Sinhalese ritual is an analysis of a facet of the production of colonial knowledge.

In a way it speaks more about ethnography and anthropology than the ritual itself. Through a series of levels of investigations a critical anthropological enquiry has been done. This is no way the traditional anthropology but rather that it admits a genealogical self-consciousness.

“The point of his argument was that our concepts and problematic – and thus the objects that get constructed in them – have histories. And it is only with an understanding of where the questions we ask are coming from and how the kind of problematic that generated them came to govern our thought about the practices constituted in them, that we will be able to ask ourselves whether we want to continue to raise these questions , to continue to raise these questions or to respond to them or whether we want to drop them”.

Formations of Ritual; David Scott, 1958.

A range of subjects from the religious rituals to nationalism and revolution, Geertz has tried to clarify the meaning of culture and to relate those concepts to the actual behavior of individuals and groups.

“ But a ritual is not just a pattern of meaning; it is also a form of social interaction. Thus, in addition to creating cultural ambiguity, the attempt to bring a religious pattern from a relatively less differentiated rural background into an urban context also gives rise to social conflict, simply because the kind of social integration demonstrated by the pattern is not congruent with the major patterns of integration in the society”.

The Interpretation of Cultures; Clifford Geertz, 1993.

The present research looks into the movements and shifts that are a part of the history building. Furthermore, the process of creating a framework through which to analyse performance –making raises questions about how history is being reconstructed. Walter Benjamin recognizes that history making is , in part ,a risky and creative process .

“ To articulate the past historically does not mean to recognize it ‘the way it really was’ It means to seize hold of a memory as it flashes up at a moment of danger.

It is also true that the cultural practices have expanded the language of performance. The forms of performance –making that will track the processes through which artistic

practice challenges cultural and social convention. The present day performance makers have re-imagined its cultural and social life”.

The Work of Art in the Mechanical Reproduction; *Walter Benjamin 1999:247.*

Chapterization

The entire work (thesis) is divided into five chapters.

Chapter-1 (Introduction)- This chapter will introduce to the readers the content of the thesis, its methodology, objectives and the parameters of the study. The concept of Performance is discussed at length. The chapter also discusses the areas of performance studies and probable insights for performance research. It will also present a literature survey of the important research works done in the area of Performance Studies. It will also delve into the challenges of the study.

Chapter-2 (Bodo Culture and Society) This chapter will give a brief ethnographic account of the Bodo people. The cultural and the social life of Bodo community with respective changes have been discussed. The chapter presents a detailed discussion on the factors of change and the role of mass-media and other ethnic movements. A report of the Bodo population is also presented. The instances as how institutions with traditional orientations are undergoing transformation have been elaborated here.

Chapter-3 (Kherai-A socio-religious ritual of the Bodos) This chapter discusses the various myths and legends associated with the Kherai festival. An elaborate description of the celebration of the Kherai ritual, pre and post festival preparations, year long festivities which culminate in Kherai are described in detail. The origin myths of the various instruments, legends of folklore heroes and heroines those which are associated with Kherai have also been discussed.

Chapter-4 (Kherai-an analytical study) In this chapter, the structure of the ritual will be decided –what ritual (Kherai) seems like and sounds like. How the community has been celebrating and performing the ritual? Secondly it looks into the functions of

the ritual as what Kherai has been accomplishing for groups, cultures and individuals. Thirdly as how these rituals enact and bring about change through their performance. Lastly the various experiences one has while participating in a ritual.

Chapter-5 (Concluding Thoughts) The chapter concludes on the note that the ritual studied has gone through transformation, and the creative ability of the human beings to change themselves is also observed as a behavior heightened. The study emphasizes how an ethnic cultural group is involved in making a strategy of performance as the ritual concerned involves a risk factor

.....

Notes:-

- ¹ The word Kachari- kos-ari is derived from the kos- arui- the sons of the Kos. The word Ari or arui is the patronymic commonly used by the Bodo people in naming their clans.
2. See Richard S̄chechner, *Performance Studies: an Introduction*, p11.
- ³ See, Ray L. Birdwhistell, *Kinesics and Context*, p12.
- ⁴ See Emma Govan, Helen Nicholson & Katie Normington, *Making a Performance*, p 5
- ⁵ Shri Tajuram Narzary , a teacher in Dhekidol village had prepared a family account or a genealogy stating about the celebration of Kherai in Dhekidol village since 1820. The facts revealed that an Ahom man came and settled in this village. He married a Bodo girl. Since then Kherai was being celebrated in this village.
- ⁶ This report was prepared by Amanda Ram Dhekial Phukan and submitted to the officer AJ Moffat Mills. Further Mills was directed by Lieutenant Governor F James Haliday to investigate and report on the administration of Assam. (A J Moffat Mills Report, 1953, Calcutta, p.71)
- ⁷ See Tajuram Narzari's Ghoramari: *eti samikhatmak etivrtta* which gives detailed information about the Ghoramari area.

References:-

Daly, Ann. What Revolution? The New Dance Scholarship in America, Ballet International. (January, 49-50). 1991. Print.

.....

Chapter – 2

The Bodos: Culture and Society

In order to understand the social processes functioning in a society it is important to know the socio-cultural milieu of the society in which they are rooted. Thus to get the necessary insights of the Bodo distinctiveness, it is essential to have some acquaintance with the various dimensions of the Bodo society. This chapter encapsulates the aspects like the ethnic background of the Bodos, their religious philosophy, economy, traditional institutions and their story of struggle since independence.

Ethnic background:

The Bodo group includes the most numerous tribes, occupying not only the hills parts but also the valley parts from Dhubri to Sadiya. Even before the advent of Ahoms the Kachari and Chutiya kingdoms were established by them. *Kachari*¹ is a generic term for a number of groups speaking a more or less common dialect or language and claiming a common mythical ancestry. (E. Gait, 1926:247) and others regarded the Kachari as aborigines, or the earliest known inhabitants of the Brahmaputra valley i.e, the whole of modern Assam, North Bengal and parts of Bangladesh. They ruled the whole of Assam up to the 12th century A.D. and moved to the western part of the Brahmaputra valley, North Cachar hills and the plains of Cachar in the 16th century A.D. to evade the Ahom onslaught. In the course of time they dispersed over a larger area, and some of their groups became isolated from others. The census of 1881 listed 12 subgroups of them, whereas (Endle 1911:5) counted fifteen of them. (Grierson, 1927) identified nine communities as members of the Bodo speaking group. If we combine all the lists, we get a list of eighteen groups, e.g. Bodo, Dimasa, Lalung, Madani, Mech, Rabha, Saraniya, Hojai, Garo, Rajbanshi or Koch, Chutiya, Moran, Hajong, Tippera, Mahalia, Dhimal, Solaimiya, Phulgariya.

A few tribes have become Hinduised and no more do they identify themselves with Kacharis. The Bodo or cognate language speakers from Tripura, due to their long isolation from the parental stock have drifted apart, and have established their separate

identity. Play air observed some linguistic and cultural similarities between the Rabha and the Garo and stated that once the former were a matrilineal society like the latter. The other Kachari groups, who followed the rule of matrilinearity earlier, are the Lalung and Hajong.

The Kachari are now represented by the Mech in Western Assam, the Bodo in central Assam, The Dimasas and Hojai in the North Cachar hills and the Sonowal and Thengal in the eastern part of the Brahmaputra valley. In the Cachar plains the Kachari are known as Barmans. As the Thengals are not schedule tribes, they have to be treated separately. The Dhimal, Mahalia, Solanimiya, and Phulgaria groups of the Kachari couldn't be traced during 1991 census. (Singh,1994;431)

It is well understood that the ethnic boundaries of various communities are not strictly fixed and as they are constantly subjected to the process of fission and fusion. (Burman, 1994:2). Ethnicity is created and re-created when societies undergo socio-economic change and structural transformation .In the context of the Bodos it would seem that all the above tribes, though they have attained a certain degree of autonomy, together they form a large group.

Linguistically the Kachari language belongs to the Tibeto-Burman family of languages. (Grierson, 1904,vol.ii) has convincingly proved that the languages spoken by all the above groups are of the Bodo family.

Bodo concentration in the north-east:

The Bodos are found in almost all the areas of Assam in various configurations though they came from Tibet and settled in the lower parts of Bhutan, later got scattered to the different parts of North-East India diachronically. They moved west and reached Cooch Behar , Rangpur, and Dinajpur districts of North Bengal and even North Bihar. Some sections of the Bodos moved southwards and settled in the Garo hills, Tripura, and Sylhet and Mymensing districts of the present Bangladesh. A section of the Bodos also migrated towards the east and crossed the river Brahmaputra, got settled in the North

Cachar Hills district. Gradually, with the passage of time many changes crept in their language and culture and they acquired a new identity called the Dimasas. Some of them moved farther and in course of time got crystallized into distinct communities such as Morans , Borahis, Chutias , Thengal Kacharis, Sonowal Kacharis, etc., inhabiting the eastern part of Assam.

The main concentration of the Bodos is in Assam. Their main habitat is now on the northern bank of the river Brahmaputra, starting from Dhuburi and Kokrajhar district, Goalpara district in the west, Dhemaji sub-division of Lakhimpur district to the east.

The northern tract of Assam covers the following areas:

- a) North and Eastern parts of Dhuburi district , the whole of the Kokrajhar district and the northern most part of Goalpara district,
- b) Northern parts of Barpeta and Nalbari and northernmost part of Guwahati sub-division in the district of Kamrup.
- c) Northern part of Mongoldoi
- d) and Tezpur Sub-division in the district of Darrang ,
- e) Northern parts of Lakhimpur and Dhemaji sub-division in the district of Lakhimpur.

The southern bank of the river Brahmaputra and these are as follows-

- a) Dudhnoi and Dhupdhara areas in the southern part of Goalpara district.
- b) Dhupdhara – Boko- Chaygaon areas, Chaygaon Rani areas, South Gauhati-Sonapur-Khetri areas in the Southern part of Kamrup district.
- a) Jagiroad-Morigaon areas and Rupohi –Dhing area of Nowgaon district.
- b) Southernmost part of Sibsagar district
- c) Northeastern part of Dibrugarh district
- d) Howraghat – Langhin areas of Karbi –Anglong district

In the neighboring states:-

- a) Tikrilla area of Garo hills in the Meghalaya state
- b) Dimapur area in the Nagaland
- c) Northern part of the Jalpaiguri district in the state of West Bengal. Among the areas of the northern tract of Assam; Kokrajhar is the highest Bodo concentrated district in the state of Assam.(Brahma ,1992 : 4-5)

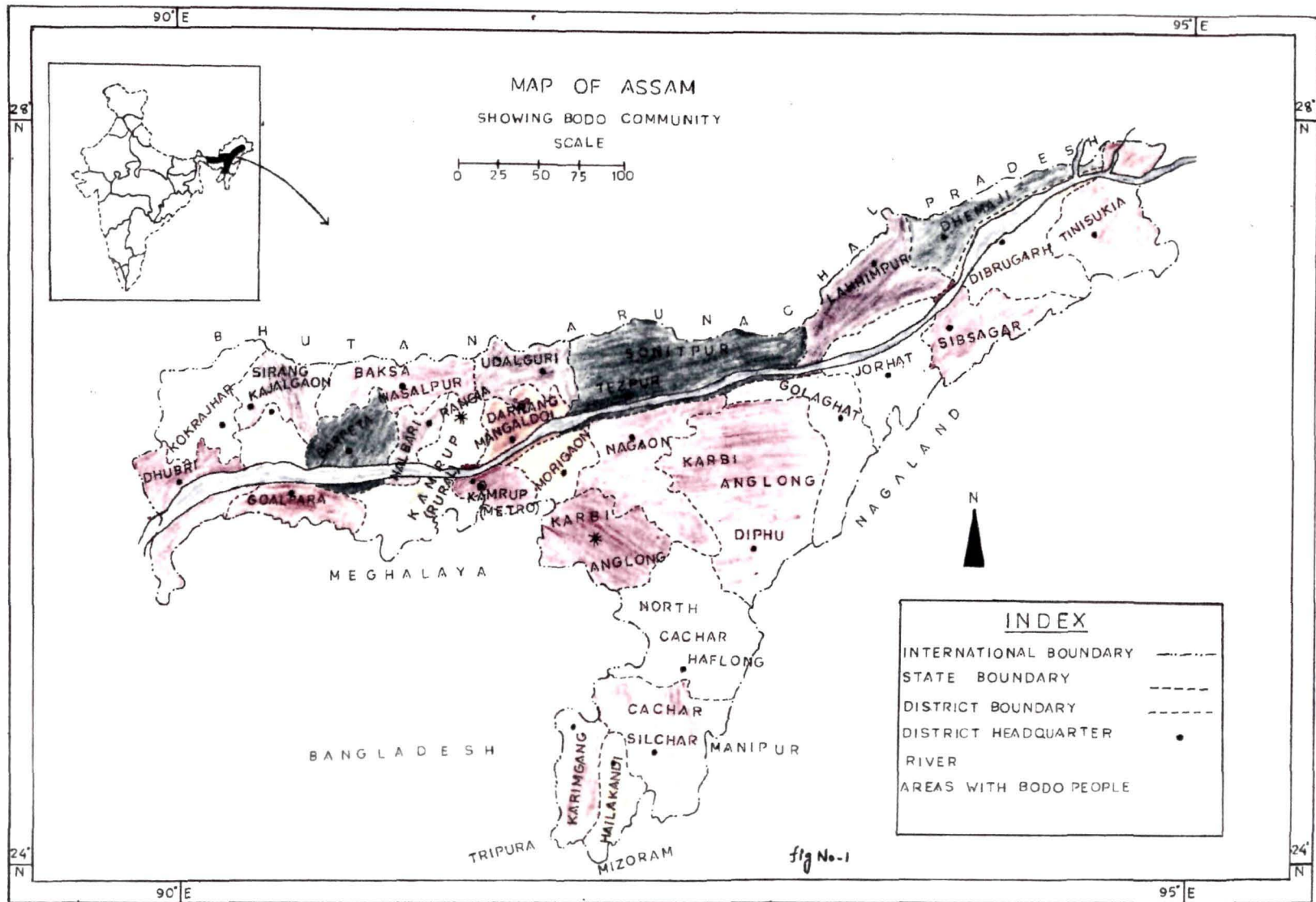


fig 1

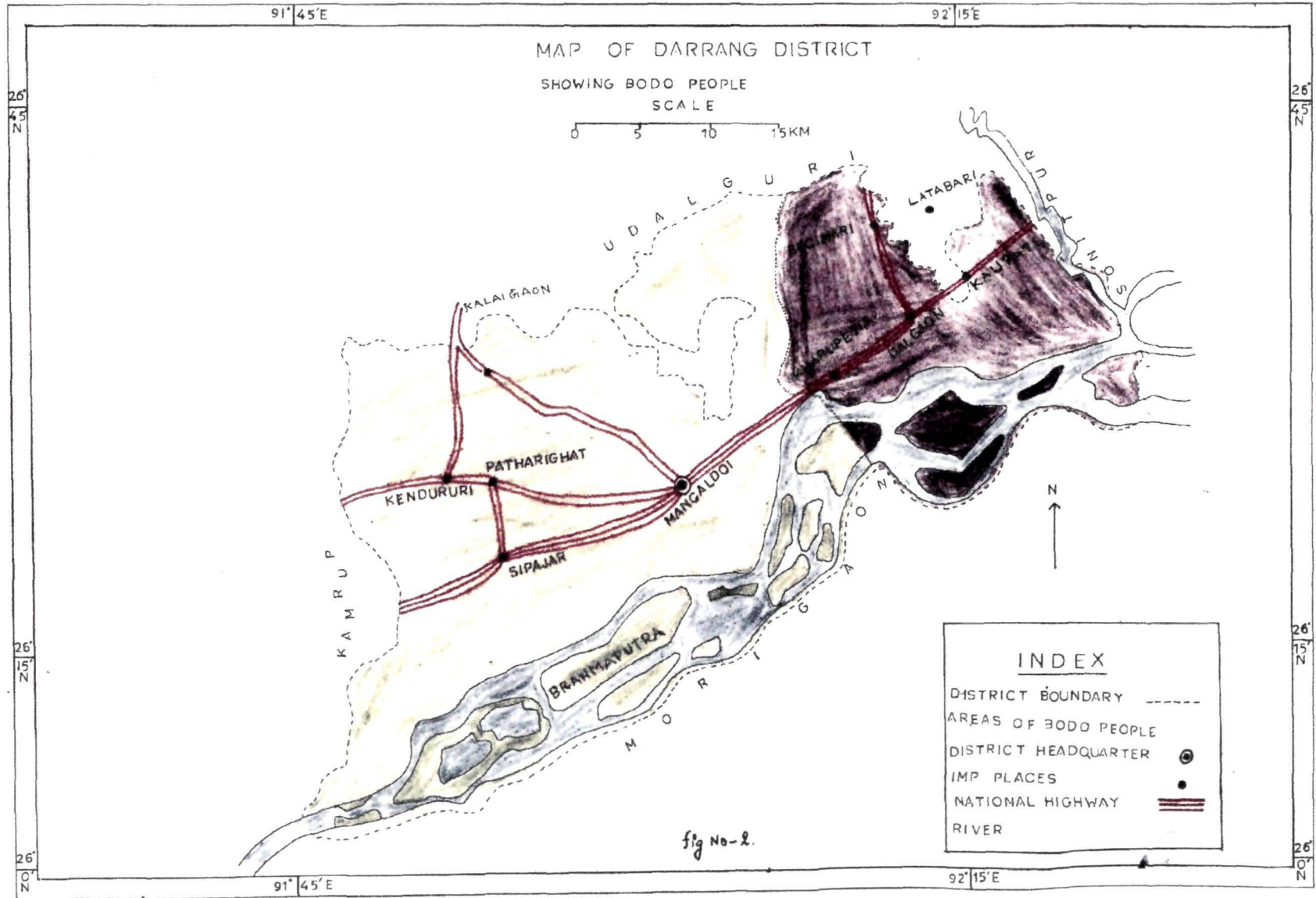


fig 2

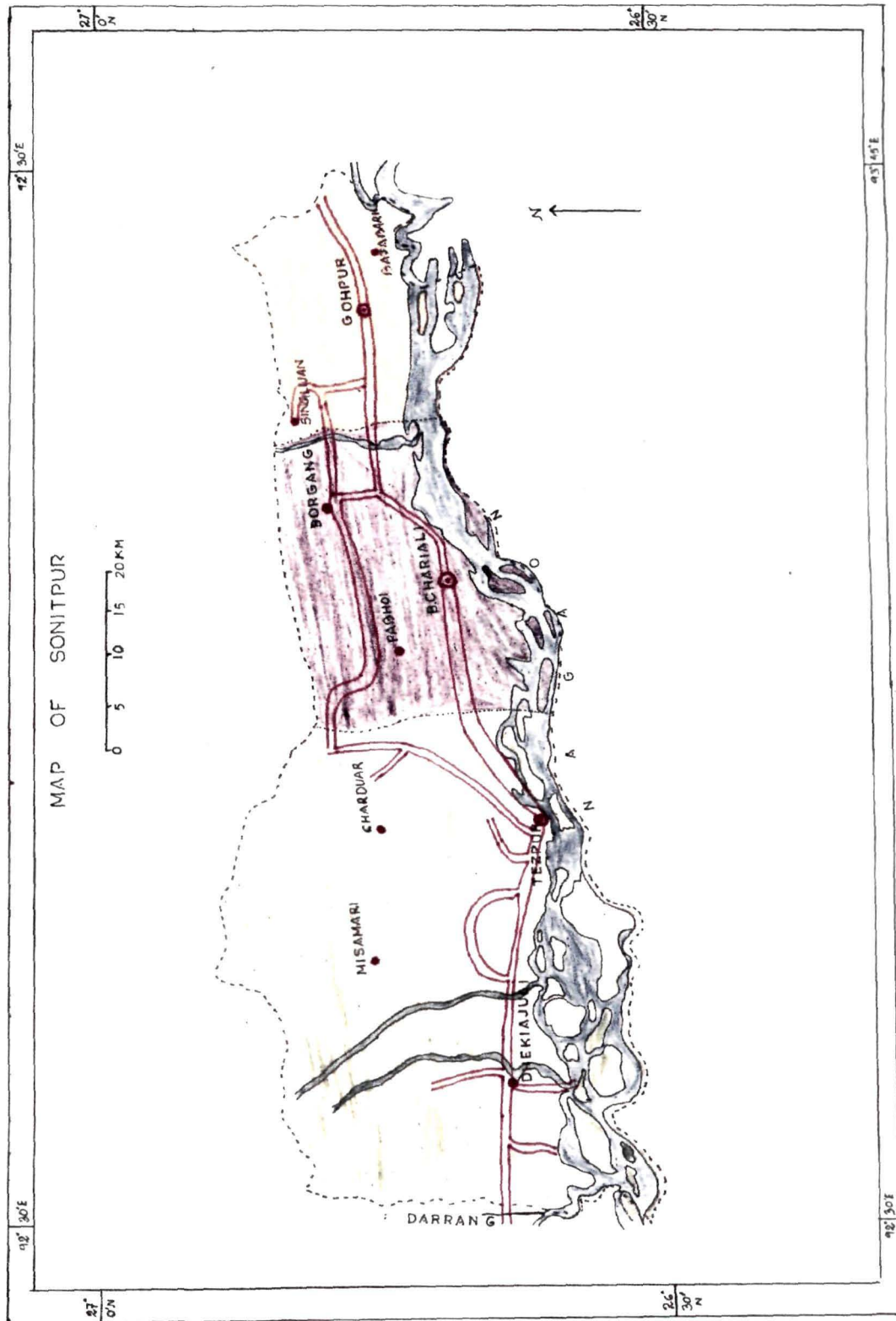


fig 3

Bodo population in Assam state

The physical area of BTC (Bodo Territorial Council) will comprise of four new districts-Kokrajhar, Baska, Udalguri and Chirang. On the north bank of Brahmaputra, is being carved out of eight districts Dhubri, Kokrajhar, Bongaigaon, Barpeta, Nalbari, Kamrup, Darrang and Sonitpur. The area of these eight districts is more than 27,100 sq. kilometers and about 35% of the total area of Assam.

Bodo population in Assam state

Districts	Population
Dhubri	16,38,589
Kokrajhar	9,30,808
Bongaigaon	9,06,315
Barpeta	16,42,420
Nalbari	11,38,184
Kamrup	25,15,030
Darrang	15,03,943
Sonitpur	16,77,874

Census report :2001

fig-5

Population chart of the major ST's of Assam

Sl.no	Name of the Scheduled Tribe	Total population	% of the total ST population
1	All Schedule Tribe	3,308,570	100%
2	Bodo	1,352,771	40.9%

3	Miri (Mising)	587,310	17.8%
4	Mikir(Karbi)	353,513	10.7%
5	Rabha	277,517	8.4%
6	Kachari	235,881	7.1%
7	Lalung(Tiwa)	170,622	5.2%
8	Dimasa	110,976	3.4%

Census report-2001

fig-6

Total Population of BTC-26,31,289

Kokrajhar	8,98,991
Chirang	3,43,626
Baksa	7,17,642
Udalguri	6,71,030

Census report 2001

fig-7

For, though the confrontation has always been called an ethnic dimension. In the case of North-East India confrontation means conflict.(See *Struggle movement of the Bodos* on page 57 of the thesis.)The main leaders and heroes on the issue of Bodo nationalistic assertion, however remain the same, though the precise nature of their roles or the names under which they operate. Things have moved so far ahead that is s fruitless to dwell on the rationale, or the necessity and feasibility of a separate political structure for the Bodo people. The Bodo people are one , if not the largest , of the eight plains tribal people of the Brahmaputra valley of Assam .

Political History:

According to Gait: There is no historical data available till Hieun Tsang . After narrating all the stories relating to the kings and others before the historical accounts of Hieun Tsang. Gait remarks' from these stories all that we can gather with certainty is

that the Brahmaputra valley was known to the Aryan invaders of India at a very early period and that the process of converting the aboriginal tribes to Hinduism, which was going on before our eyes today commenced long before the of which we have a authentic record. According to the historical sources, Bhaskar Varman was an aboriginal. *“Varman is a well known Kshatriya title, and is one which is commonly adopted today by Kacharis, when they accepted Hinduism and assume the sacred thread, on the fiction that they are concealed Kshatriyas.”* According to him, 'the presumption is further strengthened by the fact that the subjects are described as of small stature with dark yellow complexions and by our knowledge that subsequent rulers were nothing more than Hinduised aborigines.' (Gait 1895:5)

Gait(1926:47) narrates the origin of the Koch dynasty . A certain Hajo Koch had two daughters, Hira and Jira (Meches). Hajo seems to have been a powerful ruler and it was he who brought under his government the whole of Rangapur , together with a large portion of Assam, including the government of Kamrup. Hajo Koch had a grandson named Bisu Mech who was given the name of Viswa Simha and began his rule in 1509 AD. Those who accepted Brahminism along with Bisu Mech was succeeded by Malladeva (Naranarayana) who gave away part of his kingdom to his brother Sukladeva. According to the Mohammedan Historians, the eastern part was known as Koch Hajo and the western part as Koch Bihar. Naranarayana of the west died in 1584 and was succeeded by Laksmi Narayana whose rule came to an end in 1622 A. D. Prana Narayana was the last king in this line. In the east, Sukladvaja was succeeded by Raghudeva.

Parikshit who followed him died in the year 1606. One of his sons Vijit Narayana became the king of Bijni and another son Bali Narayan king of Darrang and died in 1634. A.D. His son Mahendra Narayana died in 1643 A.D who was succeeded by Chandra Narayana with whose death the dynasty came to an end. Among the other Bodo kingdoms, the Kachari kingdom in Dimapur was the most powerful. As Darshangpha was killed and the Kachari army was defeated by the Ahoms, they shifted their capital to Maibong in North Cachar Hills and then to Khaspur. The last but

one Kachari king Raja Krishnachandra tried his hand at Aryanisation which was resented by the people. His younger brother Govind Chandra succeeded him and also had tried provoking people through his anti-state strategies. But people rose in revolt against him and the colonist British annexed the kingdom.

Controversy of the racial names:

The linear progression of the racial names from Kachari (Kosari) to Boro Kachari, Boro and then to Bodo indicates that the Bodos were in search of a real racial name. It is said that the original home of the Bodos was in north of China in between the headwaters of the Huang Ho and the Yang-tzse Kiang rivers from which they moved out and dispersed in different directions.

One of the groups moved into Tibet and settled there for centuries. Thus Tibet became their home before coming to India. As is known, the original name of Tibet was Ti-bod. It is conjectured by some of the scholars that the Mongoloids who lived in Ti-bod were identified as bod who later changed to Bodo. It was Brian Hodgson who first applied the generic name Bodo to this group of languages. This generic name is also applied to the tribes and sub-tribes belonging to the Bodo group.(Grierson 1967:1) The controversial spelling of the word is 'Bodo' where the letter 'd' is pronounced not as 'd' but as hard 'r.' corresponding to in Assamese or in Devanagari. The variation of the letter 'd' as 'r' is a fact. The Bodo intellectual leaders of the national convention who took the decision to accept the generic name 'Bodo' as the racial name were aware of it as it was already in use. At present it is found that the use of the names Bodo and Boro are going on in parallel. The decision of the 1952 national convention is thus honored.

Religion:

Religion, as we know, is an ideology, a reflection of the real, material world; but it does not mirror this world in a passive, mechanical manner. It has with reality a dynamic, dialectical relationship which acts and reacts on each other finding fulfillment

in its attempt to change the face of reality itself. As Marx rightly noted, religion is not only the sigh of the oppressed creature or the heart of a heartless world; it is also the spirit of the spiritless situation; religious distress is not the only expression of real distress; it is at the same time a protest against real distress.

A section of the Bodo populace has embraced Christianity or other religious faiths; it was observed that they in their initial stage remain radical until the dominant class appropriates them. The reason can be evolutionary or natural. The idea of a detribalized society was gradually being sensed and the societies were being exposed to more developed groups and their economic and socio-cultural space was also being acculturated.

Bodo Philosophy

The Bodo philosophy in itself is unique. The five holy sermons of the Bathou Borai or the five sacraments for all the Bodos, which are prayers to God, conversing religious and spiritual matters, being charitable to poor, love the community people and be united. The five holy realizations are – realization of Sijau, the supreme soul, merger of atma (human soul) with the supreme soul (Sijau). Realization of Mainao, realization of the Panch Mahabhutas corresponding to the five main gods: Ailong, Agrang, Khoila, Sanja –Borli, and Raj Khungri. Realisation of the need of wordly affairs. The five senses of love: love to God, fellow-beings, wife and children, poor animals and nature, motherland and the world. There are many such moral and spiritual preachings which are obeyed by the followers of Bathou still.

Religion and magic:

‘We cannot even distinguish it fully from the worship of Gods, in terms of criteria often met with----- that magic is effected by formula, while the gods are moved by prayer; or that magic is always used with reference to specific problem, while the gods are petitioned for general well –being. Magic is an integral part of the tribal religion its importance is equally noteworthy in case of Bodo traditional religion. The chants of the

Deuris , the oracles of the Doudini, the different performative feats during the religious festivals are an important aspects of the ritual.

Economic life:

In the sphere of economic life agriculture still has a dominant position, yet in the contemporary times occupation like service, trade and commerce, contracts etc are adopted; but in small numbers.

Agriculture is the main occupation of any rural society. It is also the mainstay of the economic life of the Bodos. Though a large section of the Bodos were engaged in shifting cultivation (largely slash and burn variety in the plains and to some extent terrace cultivation on the fringe areas of Bhutan and the Garo hills till many years back, now the Bodos are fully settled cultivators. Before making a settlement, they select a plot which is suitable for the cultivation of paddy. They primarily look for a plot with a vast grazing field, availability of rivers, ponds or lakes, jungles and forests for hunting animals and for collecting firewood without scarcity.

For the cultivation of paddy the Bodos select a land which can sustain water for a long. The Bodos are efficient in constructing irrigation canals, embankments and minimum traditional technology for daily use. They generally cultivate such a mustard seeds , tobacco, jute, vegetables like potato, cabbage, cauliflower, cucumber, gourd, green leaves, spices, chilly. onion, ginger etc. They produce partly for domestic consumption and partly for selling in the markets. They grow areca nut and trees in their compound. Castor plants are cultivated for producing Endi cocoon, which is a part of home industries in spinning and weaving especially for women folk.

For cultivation of paddy, there are three kinds of cultivation of the land in the society. They are Self-cultivation, Adhi system, Sukhani system. The first kind is the traditional of the Bodos, but the second and the third type might have been borrowed from others in the past.

- i) Self system- The owner cultivates his land with the help of his family or male labour (Dahona) and female labour (Puwati) for a season by giving them certain amount of paddy or wages.
- ii) Adhi system-In this system the land owner gives away his land to a cultivator for cultivation for a temporary phase and the total product of the land is distributed equally between his owner and the cultivator.
- iii) Sukhani system- here the land owner fixes a contract with the cultivator , and the cultivator has to give a fixed quantity of product for each bigha of land he cultivated.

They practice both ahu (ashu) and Sali (maisali) rice cultivation. “Their indigenous devices for preserving seeds and digging dongs and canals are widely acclaimed.”(Bordoloi et al. 1987)

Endle says-

..... the people are especially skillful in the engineering works for diverting water from rice-beds into their rice fields; and their efforts in this direction are very largely aided by their closely clannish organization . Whenever, the rainfall threatens to be below average, the village headman with his associated elders fixes on the spot whence water is to be brought from the nearest river to the rice fields. At this spot very rude and primitive shelters of jungle grass, etc, are put up: and here all the manhood strength of the village, each man armed with hoe, dao etc., are compelled to take their abode until the necessary work has been fully carried out....(thus) the Kacharis have a highly efficient and very inexpensive “Public Works Department “ of their own. (1997: 12-13)

Although the old collectivist orientations are not very strong at present, the remnants of such a societal arrangement are still visible. The setting up of village granaries (raizani bakhri) with voluntary contribution of individual villagers, existence of community land in a village etc, are examples of this spirit of co-operative living in a Bodo village,

However, due to the lack of various infrastructural facilities like irrigation as many as villages are far away from a river source or else are deprived of the latter due to imaginative construction of embankments by the government or other reasons), credit, fertilizers, power , and then the occurrence of periodic floods, rise in population etc, have resulted in a steady deterioration of the Bodo agricultural economy. Moreover, uprurpation of land demarcated as ‘ Tribal block’ and ‘Tribal belt’ by non-tribals along with the requisition of such lands by the government itself for different ‘ developmental project’ has led to acute land alienation and eventual pauperization of the Bodo peasantry. Another very important factor that has caused immense harm to the Bodo village economy is the long continuance of annual lease of their landed property. About 25% of the rural Bodo-Kachari families suffer from this malady, owing to which they are not in a position to obtain loans and advances either from other financing institutions. (Choudhury 1980: 37).

Apart from rice, the Bodo peasantry is involved in the cultivation of areca nut and betel nut in their garden land . Nowadays, they are also engaged in the as the pioneers in India rising of various Kharif and Rabi crops and vegetables if there if sufficient land. The Bodos are regarded as pioneers in India in so far as the art of rearing silk extracted from worm, especially the Eri variety and spinning and weaving of clothes out of the thread thus extracted. The Bodo women are excellent weavers with magnificent sense of design and co lour. But this traditional enterprise also has failed to contribute much to the Bodo economy due to archaic technology, lack of credit and market facilities, the role of middleman, and the overall apathy of the government.

Many Bodo-Kachari people work in forest badaris (team of logging –labour engaged by forest contractors) and a few families of northern Darrang work as tea-garden labour to supplement their family income.(Choudhury 1980:36). Another important fact plaguing the Bodo society is the curtailment of forest villages had long been enjoying. This has further deteriorated the condition of the common Bodo populace. The food habit of the Bodos is also held responsible for their poverty. Excessive consumption of

rice- beer and free keeping of their domestic pigs and fowls are the two main causes of the huge wastage of foodgrains.(Ibid)

In so far as the general mode and the instruments of production are concerned, there are not many differences between the peasant economies of the Bodo and the Assamese societies. The problems like land –alienation, flood, indebtedness , lack of other infrastructural facilities like irrigation, power, credit and market are confronted by the ordinary farmers of both the communities.

Acute land alienation and poverty have compelled many Bodo youths to take up various jobs involving manual labour in the cities and the towns. Many have turned into construction labourers, rickshaw –pullers, and other low category unskilled and semi-skilled jobs. Many Bodo girls also have taken to working as construction labourers to economically engage themselves in the agricultural lean season.

In so far as the service sector is concerned, there are many Bodos in the army, police and other para-military forces. A reasonable number of educated Boros have also found employment in various public sector offices due to reservation policy. Many Bodo individuals have also occupied senior positions in the government. A section of the Bodos, though relatively small, have also entered into small - scale trade and commerce, some have become contractors and government suppliers.

Social Organization:

The social organization of the traditional Bodo society can be understood only by looking at the various institutions, customs and belief, and the social structure of the society.

Status of Women

The structure of the Bodo society is patriarchal in nature. Though man is the sole authority of the family, the families not having male issues transfer their property into their daughter's name. Though it is quoted by some Bodo scholars that women occupy

a high position in the society it was observed that it was only partially true. The Bodo women are not the members of any traditional institution. It was found that the birth of a daughter is not favoured as much as that of a son. Marital separation does not allow a woman to have a share of her husband's property. It is needless to say that the Bodo women are hardworking and industrious. They are expert weavers and have earned recognition world wide in contemporary times.

The Boro women in the Darrang district have mainly depended on settled agriculture. Since most of the villages have been created by clearing off the forests. The Boros had to stop relying on the forests and depend on settled agriculture as an alternative. The women too had to share some of the characteristics from the settled agricultural societies. They had to resort to some other means of sustenance. The women took up weaving and bamboo-craft as their past-time activities which later helped them in generating resources. It was felt that educated women are more in number than men. But the jobs would go to men only which made the women frustrated, and thus the families stopped supporting their daughters for education. The women in the village have gained control over the domestic and the social fronts by their potential to control or participate in the production process. In the socio-cultural sphere also women have been in the forefront as organizers, and at times as official representatives of the community. Women no more go to collect firewood as the forests reserves have been cleared off. Since women are generally not allowed to assist in ploughing. In the same group women do other works such as planting, weeding, spraying fertilizers, hoeing etc. Boro women generally are not seen selling produce in the market. They do not have the access to the information on their production activities. Hence, they are unable to deal with the market.

Religion plays a great role in upholding the status of Boro women in the society. The impact of conversion in general and on the women is different in the process. Christianity has brought radical changes through the inputs of education, health and social reforms. The Boros converted to Hinduism were comfortable to relate themselves with the mainstream society without relinquishing their identity, practices

and customs. But, it is difficult to say that whether these reformations laid a positive impact on the women's status.

Though the work pattern of Bodo women is traditional in nature, it is the relative autonomy that these women enjoy in particular. Earnings of unmarried young women are not appropriated by the other family members. They save it for their own expenses or invest it in pigs, goats or yarn for weaving. The women here are seen working better in groups. Since one cannot force an external system on them as they will find it difficult to adapt in such a system. They rather try to build it on the lines of their own tradition and keep relating it to the contemporary trends. The transition from the traditional collectives to Mahila Samities is also a positive factor in this regard. It was seen that rural women worked through these groups to meet their socio-economic demands, women problems, and also thought in terms of welfare activities in village.

Social Groups

There are beliefs associated with the creation of the social groups, five regulations of the Bodos known as the Baad system, beliefs and practices associated with various birds and animals, with agriculture and the penance method.

The main social groups are ; *Swargiari, Basumatari, Narzari, Musahari, Gayari, Owari, Khakhlari, Daimari, Lahari, Hajoari, Kherkatari, Sibingari, Sabairiari, Bibairiari, Bingiari, Mahilari, Ramsiari, Sangphramari, Phadangari, Islari, Ganjlerari, Bargawari, Shalimar etc. (Brahma, 1992:34-40)*

These groups seem to signify some kind of kinship. According to the belief these were mainly created on the basis of certain specific duties entrusted to a group or a clan to perform certain functions by the Monsing-Sing- Borai. (supposed to be the first human being on the earth). This resulted in a disciplined society with a healthy atmosphere.

- i) Swargiari : swarga (heaven)+ari(group)
Endle describes as a heavenly folk. The priesthood *dauris* and *ojas* are selected from this class and the society entrusts the duty of worshipping the gods from among the Swargiaris.
- ii) Basumatari: baisamata (mother earth) + ari(group)
They are known as the landlord class of people. This group is entrusted with the responsibility of solving the land problem, distribution of land, settlement of any disputes relating to land holding.
- iii) Narzari: narzoi (dry leaf of jute plant) + ari(group)
It is believed that the person of Narzari group were entrusted with the duty to collect and supply narzoi goran(dry leaves of the jute plant during the sraddha ceremony. After cremation takes place, people chew narzoi leaves to sever relations with the dead person. In the present Bodo(mech) society of West Bengal the people of this group use the surname Narzinari.
- iv) Musahari: Musa (tiger)+ ari(group)
The duty of the clan is basically to ensure the safety of the domestic animals from the danger of the attack by tigers. Some people also believed that people with magical powers could transform themselves into tigers and kill the domestic animals. Some people use the surname Baglari , instead of Mushahari.
- v) Gayari: Gay (areca)+ari(group)
This group of people were traditionally associated with the planting of areca trees.
- vi) Owari: Owa (bamboo) +ari (group)
They are believed to have planted bamboo trees for the first time. Large quantities of bamboo were collected by this group for the elaborate festivals like Kherai and Garja.

vii) Khakhlari: Khankhala(a plant) +ari(group)

A long grass like plant which is used during the Kherai festival . The belief is that people of this group were engaged to collect Khankhala plant for the Kherai festival.

viii) Daimari; daima(big river)+ari (group)

It is understood that some people who lived by the banks of the river got their livelihood by fishing. People also used to float down logs in the river to the towns or market centre where wood was sold. These people got their name Daimari also because they were suppliers of books.

ix) Lahari: lai (leaves) +ari (group)

These were the people who collected leaves in large quantities for the festival.

x) Hajoari: hajo(hill) + ari (group)

It is probable that the name of the clan was derived from the habitat. People who lived in the hills or the foothills might have been called Hajoari.

xi) Kher Katari ; kherkata (cutting of thatch) + ari(group)

The people of this group are very few in number. The people of this clan are generally found in the districts of Kamrup in Assam.

xii) Sibingari : sibing(sesame) +ari(group)

This commodity is essential in Assam. The people who were engaged in collecting or supplying sesame were called Sibingari.

xiii)Bingiari: bingi (string instrument) + ari(group)

Bingiari clan is supposed to have made this traditional instrument to play during the religious festivals. At present people of this community is rarely found.

These clans and many more have been accounted in the works of Bodo scholars. Many are no more found anywhere. The reason being that most of the duties and functions of the community barring a few are defunct. The status of the groups or the clans is of equal status. The Bodos of Assam and West Bengal have been maintaining their connection with the groups through their surnames only. Though it is observed that this clan's or group's social, cultural and economic significance has been lost today.

Traditional Institutions:

Though the characteristic and certain structures are still tribalistic in nature. It has been observed that strong community orientation is experienced conspicuously at the Bodo village society. A few institutions in the nature of people's assembly (**raizani afat** or **raizani metheng**) are formed with the community elders as its members. It can take decision regarding any welfare issue of the village. Like rendering service for the construction of roads, bridges, community buildings, dongs, etc., take decision on some crisis confronting the village, small cases are also tried out and the culprits are punished accordingly. An institution of collective public granary (**raizani bakhri**) is also instituted. The needy and the helpless are offered the minimum help from there. Another community space, a plot of land is meant for the entire village. People collectively produce and whatever is earned goes to (**raizani bakhri**). During the elaborate festivals people at the end of the festivals do the auditing for the expenses incurred in the event. Then the public is made aware of it. The left over money is spent by organizing a feast.(Rrang Bathou)

Fairs and Festivals:

Fairs and festivals are essential aspects of cultural life of the people of any region. These fairs and festivals are socio-religious in content. Since the Bodos are agrarian, most of their festivals are connected to their occupation. A few festivals are celebrated at a larger scale for thanking the gods and goddesses, and also to say a prayer for their bumper crop. The Bodos celebrate one festival or the other all throughout the year.

Kherai is the greatest national festival of the Bodos. The supreme deity Bathou Borai is worshipped along with its pantheon (attendants) for three days and nights. It involves a great number of animal sacrifices which infuses in people lot of enthusiasm and spirit. Along with Bathou Borai, Bathou Buri is also worshipped. The lesser divinities of the village are also given a place at the altar of worship. This is the Bathou altar usually found in the north-east corner of the courtyard of every traditional household. Dauri (male priest), ojha (incantist) and the doudini (female shaman) are the official priests officiating in the ritual. The doudini is the mediator between the votaries and the deities. The sacrifices are carried on simultaneously with the incantation. The doudini's performative feats are also carried out with the sacrifices.

Garja is basically an important traditional socio-religious festival. This festival has a fixed time and a place. The festival is held in the month of Magha and the place fixed for the celebration is known Garja Sali.

Prior to the celebration of Kherai festival the village goes on a cleansing mission. The deities worshipped are categorized as the traditional deities, Hindu deities and the Islamic deities. the festival concludes with the sprinkling of Holy water and is thus ceremonially cleaned.

Hapsa Hatarnai is performed by individual household while entering a new household. The main domestic deities such as Bathou, Mainao and other lesser divinities. The festival comes to an end with the drinking of Jau followed by feast.

Ongkam Goloi Janai means the first eating of new rice. The event becomes a festival because of the mass participation of the public. The ceremonial festival is marked by singing, dancing feasting and liberal consumption of the Zu. Eating of the new rice also heralds the opening of the harvest of Sali paddy.

Boisagu or 'bosorni agu' means the beginning of the year is a great social festival of the Bodos. Though hardly distinguishable from the Assamese Bihu in spirit, content

and celebration. It is celebrated in the month of Baisakha (mid April) for seven days beginning from the day of Sankranti of Chaitra, which is also the last day of the passing year. The first day is consecrated to the cattle which includes the decoration and ritual bathing of the cows. The interesting part of the ritual is performed by the cowherds who also indulge in various games, songs and dances.

The day ends with the ceremonial eating of fowl meat cooked with bitter and sour leaves at dinner time. This is called 'Goka-gokoi-janai'. It conveys the sense of severance of all connection or relationship with someone due to misunderstanding or bad feeling. The first day of the New Year is the second Bihu day which is set aside for the worship of Bathou in individual houses or jointly at the house of the village priest. At the dawn of the New Year, members of the families take ritual baths and propitiate 'Bathou' and the spirits of the ancestors with sacrifices.

In earlier times separate days were fixed for the feeding of dogs, fowls, ducks and birds. The seventh day is kept aside for visiting and receiving the relatives and friends. On this day people perform 'Putuli Baha' between male and female deities representing legendary *raona* and *raoni*. The traditional belief of the people is that if the deities are pleased the Mother earth is also pleased and produces bountiful crops. Amidst all this young people are involved in merry-making during Baisagu.

Domachi is also another important social festival of the Bodos. The Bodo way of celebrating this festival is very much like that of the Assamese. Though in the Bodo manner of celebration of this festival, the cow and cowherds play important parts as in the case of the Boisagu festival. In early days, the celebration was livelier and elaborate, busy with one thing or the other. They used to tie cords round the fruit-bearing trees, offer food to the birds, fish and animals. A special feature in the process of celebrating this festival has been construction of *Bhelaghar* on the river bank by the cowherds who spend the night in the *Bhelaghar* on the river bank by the cowherds amidst much merriment. Towards the end of the night, they usually have their dinner. With the dawn, the cowherds set fire to the *Bhelghar*, take bath in the river, warm up

themselves standing by the side of the bonfire in wet clothes, and amidst much rejoicing and dancing , they sing and recite hymns and rhyme prayers for the well being of their cattle and for the prosperity of their village. With the end of the Domachi festival, comes the completion of the terms of service contract between the cowherds and their masters. In the celebration of the Baisagu and Domachi festivals , the cattle and cowherds play important roles. The special place accorded to the cattle and herd boys reflects the importance attached to the cattle in the pastoral life of the Bodo people of the North-east India.

Language and Literature

Grierson in his monumental work, *The Linguistic Survey of India* describes the Boro (or, Bodo) - kacharis as a member of the Boro sub –section under the Assam-Burma group of the Tibeto-Burman branch of the Sino-Tibetan speech family.

According to Shafer, the Bodo language belongs to the western branch of Barish section under the Baric division of the Sino-Tibetan family(quoted in Bordoloi et al., 1987: 15) Another authority on the subject, Bhattacharya(1996: 280) holds that the Bodo language comes under the Sino-Tibetan language family. He further says,

... The Bodo language of Assam has at least four clear cut dialectical areas with sufficient number of dialectical variations... The Bodo speech areas in Assam intermittently from the western border of Golapara district to the eastern boundary of Dibrugarh district... Besides Assam where a majority of the Bodo people live, the Bodo speech area includes Tripura, the Garo Hills of Meghalaya a certain other parts of the North –Eastern India

(Quoted in Bordoloi et al., 1987: 16)

Script is a major issue in so far as the recent history of Bodo language and literature is concerned. Earlier Assamese script was used for the Bodo language. But there was a movement launched by the Bodo Sahitya Sabha in the early 1960s which was revamped again in the early 1970s to recognize the Roman script in place of the Assamese script.

However, eventually the leadership of the movement upon the request of the central government accepted the Devanagari script. Nevertheless, the Assamese script is still widely used by the Bodos. The Bodo language was introduced as medium of instruction in the primary level schools in the Bodo dominated areas of Goalpara district way back in 1963. Subsequently, it was introduced in the higher secondary and degree levels. Now, the Bodo medium is available up to post-graduate level. The Bodo language has been declared as an associate official language of the state of Assam by an ordinance on the 18th December 1984.

The Bodos have a rich repertoire of oral literature like myths, legends, folk songs, ballads, proverbs, etc. Till the first decade of the 20th century, however, Bodo literature was mainly confined to the oral form. The Bodo written literature emerged mainly as an upshot of the Brahma movement in the first two decades of the 20th century.

This movement contributed a great deal in bringing about various reforms in the Bodo society besides an identity consciousness among the Bodos. A section of the Bodo middle class that was largely an upshot of the Brahma movement dedicated itself to writing with a view to instill new consciousness amongst the other members of the community. Among the first batch of Bodo litterateurs were Pramod ch. Brahma, Ishan Basumatari, Satish Basumatari, Modaram Brahma, Dwaren Brahma and several others.

In 1952 Bodo Sahitya Sabha was formed. Since then, the sabha has been playing a preeminent role in the socio-cultural upliftment of the Bodo Society. The contribution of the Sabha in making the Bodo language a medium of instruction up to the university level is unparalleled. The Sabha is now engaged in the publication of Bodo literary works in various fields like, novel, poetry, essay, short story, drama etc.

At this stage, it would be relevant to mention that the Bodo language along with several other Indo -mongoloid languages spoken by the various indigenous communities of Assam made profound contribution to the development of the Assamese language. Various scholars have especially emphasized on the phonetically

and syntactical similarity between the Bodo and the Assamese languages. In the preface to his "Collection of Kachari folktales and Rhymes, Anderson (1895) commenting on the similarity between them while studying the Bodo folktales has said,

..... *The Kachari version is literally, a word – for – word translation of the Assamese. I can think of no other two languages in which it would be possible to translate a long statement word-or –word out of one into the other and yet be idiomatic.... (ibid: iii)*

Again on their syntactical similarity he has this to say, "*(Its (Bodo) syntax.... is nearly identical with the Assamese*" (ibid)

This clearly shows the close proximity of both the languages. It is therefore, interesting that despite this, the Bodo leadership has launched mass movements for separate script for Bodo language in place of the Assamese script asserting that the latter is incapable of expressing Bodo phonetics in a proper way.

There is much resentment though officially Devanagari has been used and a section uses roman script, they also suffer from many inadequacies like the Assamese script in representing the Bodo language. Therefore, the rejection of the Assamese script is based more on political than any substantive ground.

Food- habits

It is almost a cliché to say that the food items are used to mark ethnic groups. Food is eaten and forbidden in the name of ethnic identity. Sharing certain special foods communicates a positive identity and solidarity, as in , for example, the use of *Jumai* or *Jau* of the Bodos. However, ethnicity is less often marked by particular food items than by the complex rules for how to prepare the items and when to eat them . Though it has been observed that in the Bodo food structure, the cooking rules are specific, and the repertoire of the dishes is limited. It is the structure of dishes, the way they are combined in meals and certain flavors that communicate "Boronesh".

The ethnic cuisine can be represented in truest sense of term by experiencing the Bodo food preparation and diet. The Bodos basically are lovers of non-veg dishes. They have innovated ways to keep the food grades intact. Mainly food is boiled, steamed and the garnished with wild spices. They absolutely had no use of oil in earlier times. Many wild plants were used for seasoning and as ingredients in various dishes. The preparation methods were also very simple and less time consuming. Fish and certain plants were dried in sunlight and stored for a long period. The pungent taste and strong smell which is much liked by the Bodos is also the reason for its popularity. Under the influence of Hinduism, except for the cow they consume all kinds of meat they favor. The most favorite and prized possession is the pig. Every Bodo household has a pigsty and we can see them everywhere in a Bodo village. Non-veg preparations like dried fish and meat are made and stored for the difficult days when they are extremely busy in their fields. The vegetables they eat grow on their own in the forests and the backyards of their settlement. The spices they use as condiments are also found in the forests. The dried fish and meat known as *Na-goran* and *Bedor-goran* are further improvised by additional ingredients like stems of arum which are later grounded together with the fish and meat stock. This is again stored in a bamboo tube and the mouth of the tube is covered with plantain leaves. The prepared product is known as Nap ham and can be stored for a long period.

The vegetables collected are wild plants that are used as vegetables and for medicine also. All the wild plants are of different tastes. Some are bitter, some sweet and some are tasteless too. The most common and favourite of the wild plants are '*sibru*' (a thorny plant used as a vegetable), '*doushrem*' (a kind of small creeper of sour taste) '*jaglauri*' (a scented plant) '*ungkham gajang*' (a creeper of sour taste), '*hangso ramai*, (a small plant) '*raidang*' (cane tree). The most commonly found wild vegetable is '*anthabajab*' (a small plant with scent). The Bodos cherish a special dish of '*andla khari*' that is prepared with rice powder, the chicken and the shoot of bamboo. The alkaline dishes are hot favorites for them. *Samlaothi* and *Kheradpini* are small wild plants used or vegetables.

The varieties of meats consumed by them are of the animals that are found in their environments. Bodos basically love hunting and make every effort to collect meat and wild plants for the guests and other special occasions. Most of the animals like, fowls, deer, and goats are readily available at home. Community hunting and fishing is done at times for food.

Sacred Food

The holy offering that is offered to Bathou is raw in nature. Mainly rice flour, sacrificial animals (pig, hen and goat), entrails of the birds, jatrasi, pati-dei, jau, betel –leaf and areca- nut is offered to the gods and goddesses. The cut animals are then cooked together in a separate pan and distributed to the community members in equal share. The different meats are cooked together which in normal cooking is not done. A portion of the meat is also roasted. This transference from nature to culture is also imbued with meaning and signifies group membership. The sacrificed animals are also roasted in a separate hearth and then mixed with the rice and lentil mix (Indian khichidi) which is more in quantity and can be easily distributed

Preparation of Jumai

Jau or Jumai of the Bodos carries a significant place in the social life of the Bodos. Jau is a traditional drink which is used during celebrations, and other social occasions and as a regular drink. It is also used as medicine for various ailments like disorder of bowels and earlier in cholera. It is offered to the gods and the goddesses of the Bodo pantheon the community takes pleasure in preparation of Jau, which starts a month ago in the village. It can be preserved for two to three months. It is a custom of the Bodos to entertain their guests with Jau. Still another variety of traditional liquor, photika which is more raw and harmful to health is also made for commercial purpose.

The *jumai* or *jau* is prepared in a traditional system. The ingredients necessary for preparation of *jau* are *emaw* (medicine) , mokhana (wild flowers), Leaves of jackfruit tree, leaves of pine-apple tree, roots of agarchitha (small wild plant), bong hang rakheb (wild plant) and the tender leaves of the plantain tree. The above mentioned things are

grinded and a paste is made and later with the paste cakes are formed. These cakes are known as *emaw*. They are kept for three to four days to dry. The cooked rice is placed on a winnowing fan and the dust of *emaw* is mixed with it. Then it is kept safely in an earthen pitcher (*maldang*) for three –four days. At the maximum without preservatives it can be kept for a week or so. The *jumai* prepared from Bara rice is tasty as honey. It can be preserved for more number of days.

The entire process of preparing *jau* can be explained as a metaphor for nature versus culture. Cooking represents human ability to transform nature. Within the domain of the cooked according to Levi-Strauss in his Culinary Triangle – the raw—is contrasted with the other two points – the cooked and the rotted. Cooking signifies transformation through culture, but rotting is transformation by nature. Within the domain of the cooked, the two common processes roasting involve direct contact between fire and food, but boiling is mediated by both a pot and a cooking medium. According to Levi-Strauss, boiling is thus more culturally mediated, and roasting is closer to rawness and to nature.

Through several more steps of logic, boiling is ascribed to endo-cuisine --- that which is for domestic use, closed group; roasting belongs to exo-cuisine ----- what one offers to more close guests. Various cultures use food systems as elaborated domains of meaning to express important messages about relationships to sacred forces.

Dress and Ornaments

The set of all items worn on the human body functions as signs. The distribution of types of clothing in relation to different climatic zones and the variation in clothes worn with changes in weather conditions show their practical, protective function. Furthermore, types of clothing vary with types of social occasions, which indicate that the wearing of clothes is also subject to socio-cultural norms. The mode of dress of Bodo people is unique and full of colors, with style and attractiveness. The traditional attire was always hand woven which is also a testimony of Bodo women's talent in weaving.

The male person, both young and old put on *Gamosa* woven at home, which hangs down to the knees from the loins. In the present times they have started using Gamosas which are mainly striped and are in different colours. They earlier used to wear vests made of Cotton or Endi which is rare nowadays. Besides, they put on Aronai (a small wrapper) around their neck. The women wear Dakhana of two types for different purposes. The plain woven Dakhana is called Sala Matha and the one with woven designs is called Dakhana Thawsi is also important for marriage purpose. The designs that are mostly common are Dauthu godo (design of dove neck), Phareo Megon (pigeons eye) Phar agar (design of hill scenery), Moiden agen (designs of elephants foot print) etc. The Christian Bodos use white Dakhana and a veil for marriage purpose in conformity with the western style of dressing. The men wear suits during the occasion. The Bodos of Kamrup, Darrang and Nowgaon districts also use Sari with the Dakhana occasionally. Since the ethnic assertion of the Bodos, the Bodos of Udalguri have resorted to wearing of Dakhana only as their national dress and otherwise too. The designs, patterns and quality of the textile is such that in a very short time they have earned a reputation of producing quality material. They have started using Jacquard looms to increase production, efficiency and quality of the Bodo textiles. In Kokrajhar wearing of traditional dress is compulsory in schools and colleges too.

Finery

Apart from textiles jewellery had a minimum significance in the life of the Bodos. They seldom used to wear gold and silver jewellery. The common ornaments found among the Bodos are *Kherai or Kheru*, *Japkhiring*, *Talinglura*, *Boula for the ear*, *Nak-phul and Bulcki for the nose*, *Chandrahaar*, *Bisahaar*, *Thankasiri*, and *Jibaou-zin-siri* for the neck, and *Mutha*, *Ashan chudi* for the hands. It is true that in the present times Bodo women have resorted to modern jewellery.

Marriage system of the Bodos

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. The Bodo word for marriage is 'Haba '. The Bodos have a very high regard and dignified concept of chastity and they live by it. Traditionally the Bodos have as many as six types of marriages.

'Swngnanwi lainai haba' or arranged marriage is the most common socially accepted marriage custom of the Bodos. The bride is selected by the parents of the bridegroom and then the marriage is settled after negotiation. Till today this form of marriage is solemnly celebrated. However the bride price is no longer compulsory.

'Gwrjia Lakhinai Haba' is very rare in the present times. Earlier in the families where there were no sons or male members, member of the community or a person who works in the family is asked to be the bridegroom with his consent. He becomes a member of the family. It may be called a marriage by service.

'Kharsonnai Haba' is a mutual agreement between the young boy and the girl. The consent of the parents is not considered important. The society frowns upon such marriages but tolerates it.

'Bwnanwi Lainai Haba' was always considered by the Bodos as an evil. This system was prevalent in earlier days. The girl was forcefully taken by the bridegroom and then the marriage is solemnized.

'Donkharlangnai Haba' is not socially approved, but is still in practice in some communities. This is the marriage by elopement of both bride and the bridegroom. This is the irregular system of marriage.

'Donkha Habnai Haba' is marriage between a widow and a man from the community who stay together as husband and wife. But, their marriage has to be regularized according to the social customs. Although widow re-marriage is allowed in the society, certain restrictions are there. A widow can only marry the younger brother of the husband and similarly a widower can marry the younger sister of the wife.

‘Hathasuni Khurnai’ is a traditional form of marriage known as *Hathasuni Khurnai* was a simple affair which bears testimony where the bride offers meals to the bridegroom in a simple function. The meal consists of a special chicken curry with broken rice without applying any spices or colorings agents. This is called Ondlakhari in Bodo. After consuming a portion of the rice the couple prays to Bathou Borai for peaceful conjugal life. Before offering the meal to the bridegroom the bride offers a portion of the meal to the goddesses and god of the main house (Nomano). Introducing the bride to the god the Deuri chants mantras and the advices are given to the bridegroom by the elders of the community. The meal thus prepared is served to the villagers. The marriage festival which used to run for seven days was restricted to three days later. There was abundance of food and merry-making at various levels. Preparation of rice beer was given much importance and two persons (jau sirgra and jau rangra) were involved in distribution and making of the rice beer. The event was certainly a marked celebration for the individual and the villagers.

A few post-marriage customs are also prevalent in the Bodo communities today.

1. **‘Kholar Gothainai’** The act of returning the bride and the bride price (malsa) is known as kholar gothainai. This is done when the husband expires suddenly after marriage. The bride returns to her parents and the malsa is given back to the deceased husband’s by the parents of the bride.
2. **‘Mamai Mara’** The uncle of the deceased niece has to receive the bride –price of her female child in case it has not been payed during her marriage.
3. **‘Athmangal’** is performed on the eight day of the girl’s marriage. Only a few selected relatives are invited for a feast on the occasion. The couple leaves for the bridegroom’s place after receiving gifts by the bride’s relatives.

Divorce takes place in a Bodo society by tearing a betel-leaf into two pieces. This is known as *fathwi bisinai leng*. The betel –leaf is kept in the presence of the village elders in the house of the Gaon bura. However, if the reasons for divorce are not very serious from husband’s side, he has to pay for her livelihood. If the woman is been divorced for her unfaithfulness, the entire money spent on her by her husband’s side is to be returned. Once the amount is paid she is free to live with her new husband.

At present the Bodo society has undergone many changes. There are only a few marriages that are performed in the traditional manner. Due to the various factors that led to mass movements in this part of the state. People have mixed reactions to deliver when it come to asserting their own stand on the issue of orientation, involvement and apathy to the situation prevailing around. Most of the people who have been converted to some other religious faith at the core of their hearts do still follow the traditional religious philosophy. The Bodo - Christians wear the same traditional *dakhana* but put a veil on their heads as a part of European culture. The customs followed in the pre-marriage rituals are strictly traditional. In some places it is the standard Assamese way of celebrating marriage except for a few interludes in the marriage that are strictly Bodo in nature.

During the independence movement in India, the tribals co-operated with the other non-tribal people in their common struggle to drive out the British from India.

Though the evangelistic work done in the garb of humanism, the missionaries, however indirectly instilled in the minds of the tribals a love for western culture and distaste for what is Indian. This had widened the gap between the tribals and the non-tribals. As (Rustomji :1983) says:-

‘It was the bureaucracy and foreign missionary who had all these years taken the tribal people under their wing, clung to them as their private reserve and stood in the way of their integration with the mainstream of Indian culture’

The Bodos are a simple folk who even shy today from the hustle and bustle of the civilization and like to live in the cosy lap of nature. In most of the areas their modes of production are still simple, the primitive methods like slash and burn are still used, they somehow still are bereft of the concept of private property, they neither had the sense of acquisition nor accumulation. Gradually they are a changed lot, still much behind.

The economic degradation by the government and the exploitation by the land-owners and the trading community did also create unrest in them. The core of the problem lies in the feeling of humiliation and fear for loss of identity.

Struggle Movement of the Bodos

The Bodo movement is a tragic account of the struggle by the Bodos to safeguard and preserve their ethnic identity. It is a tale of those who fear of the extinction of culture and tradition by being reduced to an ethnic minority in their own homeland. They have the constant fear that the immigrants and infiltrators from across the border would some day reduce them to a small minority in the region. They strongly feel that they are being alienated in their own soil. This fear constantly haunts them. Consequently, this has generated ethnic tensions and conflicts in the state of Assam.

In the course of time, the Bodo movements have taken different shapes in realizing their political ambition. The Bodoland Movement is a recent phenomenon which has attracted the attention of the whole country. It is a movement launched by the Bodos with the other plains tribals of Assam, to procure for them an autonomous region in the bank of Brahmaputra. Both the Bodo leaders and the ruling political leaders are unable to come to an agreement to discuss the matter. Getting no appropriate solution to their demand for an autonomous region to be called "Udayachal" the Bodos have now launched a "do or die" movement for "Bodoland"- a separate state from Assam. The bomb-blast on the Delhi bound Brahmaputra Mail appears to have woken up to the Assam (AGP) and Central (UDF) Governments and something positive and useful to solving the problem emerged in 1997. There are several causes for such developments. In this discussion , an attempt is made to understand the real issues and the analyse the

the real issues and the analyse the deeply rooted factors responsible for the outbreak of movement which has exacerbated the situation in the State of Assam, especially, in the Bodo populated areas.

Factors Responsible For Bodo Mass Movements

There are several factors responsible directly or indirectly for the Bodoland movement. Mention may be made for the few of them which I consider are the more important.

Means of Livelihood: The Bodos are agriculturists. The cultivation of paddy is the mainstay of their economy. Though they are absorbed into the Hindu religion, they remained impoverished peasants. They lost their land in the merciless grip of the moneylenders, landlords, and were exploited by the high caste-landlord ('mahajan'-the rich) combine. The restriction on ownership and transfer on land in the tribal belt and block have been observed in its breach. Consequently, there was a large- scale alienated of land owned by the Bodos and other plains tribals. For example, in the four Mouzas, namely, Ambagaon, Harisinga, Barsilajhar and Dakuwa, in Udalguri sub-division of Darrang district, the Bodos make up twenty- eight percent of population but own only twelve percent of the land. While in Dhansiri village, ninety percent of the cultivable land is owned by Nepali Brahmins- each family owning on an average three hundred bighas (one hundred acres). The Bodos work on their farms as landless laborers. This explains why Udalguri sub-division has been the focal point where the Bodoland movement has been the most intense.

The Privileged Society: Domination by the Assamese in the Bodo populated areas, according to some authors has created a strong feeling among the Bodos that they have been deprived of their right share. The Assamese in the Bodo populated areas are faring well in all walks of life. They have better standard of living, better education and easy access to government jobs. According to these authors the Bodos conceive that they have been treated as "second class citizens" of the state. This has bought a bitter feeling towards the Assamese and frequently they use phrases like "Assamese chauvinists" to

indicate their hatred for the Assamese. They think that they have no access to the promotion of the standard of living. This suspicion has brought about an unhealthy atmosphere in the state, especially, in the Bodo populated areas.

Immigration: The fertile land on the north bank of Brahmaputra in the course of time, invited a good number of migrants to the state. The immigrant Muslims from the erstwhile East Pakistan poured into Assam's soil and constituted twenty five percent in 1945. Even today they have been gaining tremendously. Most of the Muslims have settled in the Brahmaputra valley area and have merged with the mainstream.

According to **V.M. Badola**(1983), analysis of the effect of this showed that the tribals, the original inhabitants suffered the most in the bargain. Their percentage has gone down to fifty today from seventy. The huge influx of Bengali speaking Bangladeshi refugees make the inhabitants fear getting swamped and losing their political and cultural identity, along with the loss of economic opportunities, according to Kula Saikia.

According to **Myron Wiener**(1978) the number of marwari migrants too is very high. The 1961 census estimates 22,000 migrants from Rajasthan. Today they occupy a prominent place in whole of Assam. They act as moneylenders, bankers, businessmen, traders, etc. It appears that their domination in the small towns in Assam is enhancing day by day. He also speaks of the other migrant communities which include: Tribal laborers from the Chota Nagpur region of Bihar and Orissa, namely, belonging to the Santal, Oraon and Munda tribes, who were employed in the British owned tea gardens; the Nepalis, who have settled in the low-lying hills around the Brahmaputra valley tending cattle, the Biharis, who work as businessmen and as seasonal migrants in the constructional projects and the Punjabis, who work in the transport industry.

State's attitude: After Independence, the Government of Assam was compelled to constitute thirty-three "Tribal Belts and Blocks" under the provision of "The Assam

Land and Regulation (Amendment) Act, 1947, to protect the tribal land from alienation and encroachment by the non-tribals which challenged their very existence. But according to M.C. Paul, the “loopholed Act” did not provide “adequate protection of tribals from the pressure of non-tribals,” even though the “Amendment Act” spelt that “no person shall acquire or possess by transfer, exchange, lease, agreement, or settlement any land in any area or areas constituted into belts and blocks.” There had been riots in the tribal areas due to the encroachment by the non-tribals, but the, “Government of Assam never took the necessary interest to take adequate steps to amend the wrong done to these tribal belts and blocks.”(Aluckal & Pulloppillil, 1997: 96-97)

The adoption of the Constitution in 1950 did improve matters for the Bodos and the “plain tribes” in Assam. Whereas the tribals in the hills areas of the north-east were granted a large measure of administrative autonomy and protected from land alienation through “autonomous district councils” the Bodos and other plains tribes were persuaded to accept the so called “tribal belts and blocks” where the Assam Land Revenue Rules and Regulations in theory put restrictions on possession and transfer of land by non-tribals but were not very effective. The Bodos believe that they have been robbed of the elaborate constitutional protection contained in the Sixth Schedule of the Indian Constitution.

Moreover, the 1952 report of the Commission of Scheduled Castes and Schedule Tribes states that the dwelling place of tribals are either the “forests” or the “hills”. The constitutional provisions under the Sixth Schedule for forming autonomous district councils, therefore, extended only to the hill tribes. In the line with this policy Government of India granted the hill tribals of Assam in the Karbi Anglong and the North Cachher districts the right to form an autonomous district council within the State. It is the Government’s bias against granting the district council status to the plains tribals’ which has pushed the Bodos to take up this destructive position. (EPW, 1989: 645-646)

Hinduisation: A large section of them have embraced Hinduism in the recent past. The Hinduised Bodos have abandoned their ancestral language, religion and culture. The Bodos, who are not converted to Hinduism, have been trying to retain their distinctive culture, language and tradition. They have come to a realization that their very existence as a tribe is in peril. They are devising ways and means to reunite the tribe and survive. The most compulsive force is an invitation to their original religion Bathou as Hinduism is creating a great threat to the very foundation of the Bodo culture. The feelings of deprivation, negligence and insecurity are goading them to find out the ways and means to liberate from oppression, exploitation and underdevelopment in their economy and society.

The account of the Bodo struggle, thus, indicates that the problem is serious and calls for immediate consideration and all embracing planning with assiduity.

Most of the proposals of the Expert Committee on matters relating to culture and pattern of development fall in line with Nehru's five point principles of tribal development. Again, the issues relating to land fall within the framework of Gandhiji's concept of trusteeship. But the problem is that neither Nehru's five point principles nor Gandhiji's trusteeship has fully been implemented.

To blame the Christian Missionaries for any and every movement of the Bodos is frivolous. According to some, the Christian Missionaries are involved in the past movement of the Bodos and that they have provided them with all the possible assistance, though there is not a shred of evidence. On the other hand, some observe that the Christian Missionaries have succeeded in satisfying the tribals in providing whole hearted services especially in medical and educational field, where the government agencies have failed. This is so because of the whole hearted commitment to the plains tribes. (Shourie, 1994: 206)

What is urgently needed today is the transformation of the socio-economic system in the state which would promote equality, justice and peace among all sections of the

people. It calls for the proper utilization of the natural resources and man-power in the state. The developmental programmes and schemes are required to cater to the different ethnic groups. The peaceful co-existence of various peoples in the state envisages better living standards, particularly, for the indigenous peoples.

Mass Media: Mass Media has played a very significant role in conscientizing the people of their real situation and in getting support of the movement. These include literary and analytical essays, press notes booklets and map lets handbills, circulars, folksongs and poems. Their traditional folk-songs depict profound thoughts and imaginations. Folk-songs and poems have been composed specifically on particular aspects of the movements. They are mostly composed in Bodo language. During the present phase of the movement, folk-songs and poems have played a vital role in inspiring the plains tribals. People have sorted out ways to awaken and remember their glorious past in the social, cultural and political spheres .

Conclusion

No doubt, the Bodoland movement has been gaining great momentum. Simultaneously, there is also a growth of communal tension, fear, hatred and suspicion in the minds of people. It would appear that the tension will continue to exist unless and until all concerned people come to a common understanding.

.....'

Notes:-

- 4
- ¹ The word Kachari- kos-ari is derived from the kos- arui- the sons of the Kos. The word Ari or arui is the patronymic commonly used by the Bodo people in naming their clans.

REFERENCES

- Anderson, J.D.** 'Preface ' to collection of *Kachari Folktales and Rhymes*. Folklore Society of Assam , Guwahati. 1985.
- Burman, S.** *Tradition to Modernity*. Everywhere, Guwahati,India.2002.
- Barua, K.L** *Early History of Kamrupa, From the Earliest Times to the End of the Sixteenth Century*. Published by the Author. Shillong.1933.
- Bordoloi, B. N.** *Tribes of Assam; Part-1*. Tribal Research Institute, Assam.1987.
- Boro, M. R.** *Boro Loka Sahitya.*, Priyadini Brahma, Hajo. Assam.1995.
- Brahma, K.** *A Study of Socio-Religious- Beliefs, Practices and Ceremonies of the Bodos*. Punthi Pustak, Calcutta.1992.
- Brahma, M. M.** *Folk Songs of the Bodo.*, Guwahati University. Guwahati.1960.
- Chowdhury, M.M.** *Tribes of Assam Plains: A Profile*. Directorate of Welfare of Plain Tribes & Backward Classes, Govt. of Assam , Guwahati.1980.
- Choudhury, P.C.** *The History of Civilization of the People of Assam to the Twelfth Century A.D*. Spectrum Publications, Guwahati.1987.
- Chatterji, Suniti Kumar.** *Kirata-jana-kriti, The Indo Mongolids: Their Contribution To The History and Culture of India*.1998.
- Claude Levi-Strauss.** *The Culinary Triangle* (in French) , trans. by Peter Brooks, Partisan Review 33: 586-595.1966.
- Das, B.M** *Peoples of Assam*. Gyan Publishing House, Delhi.1987.
- Elwin , V.** *A Philosophy for NEFA*. Directorate of Research, Govt. of Arunachal Pradesh, Itanagar.1949.
- Endle, S.** *The Kacharis*. Low price Publications. Delhi .1997.

Gait, E.A. *A History of Assam. Lawyers' Book Stall. Guwahati. 1963.*

Moshahary, R. N. *Traditional Religion of the Bodos of Assam.* In the Proceedings of the NEIHA. 8th session. Kohima. 1987.

Narzy. B. *Boro -Kacharir Samaj Aru Samskriti.* Bina Library, Guwahati. 1995.

Pulloppillil Thomas and Aluckal Jacob, , *The Bodos, Children of Bhullumbutte.,* Spectrum Publications, Guwahati, Delhi. 1997.

Russell, Bertrand. *Russell on Religion .* ed. By Louis Greenspan and Stefan Anderson. Rout ledge. 1999.

Rustomji, Nari. *Imperilled Frontiers: India's North-Eastern Borderlands.* OUP, New York. 1983.

Shourie, Arun. *Missionaries in India: Continuities Changes and Dilemmas.* New Delhi. ASA, 1994.

Articles

Behal, Monisha : *Women's collectives in Assam: a short history of their status and present day realities.* (collected from "Changing Women's Status in India : Focus on the North east", ed. by Walter Fernandes and Sanjay Barbora, NESRC, Guwahati, 2002. Print

Badola, V.M. *Placing facts in Historical perspective.* in Sunday Herald, 20th March, 1983. Print.

Gohain , Hiren: *Bodo Agitation : Wages of Prejudice.* in Economic and Political Weekly 1st april, 1989. Print.

Chapter -3

The festival of Kherai and its performance

Kherai

The whole performance cycle of Kherai constitutes and recapitulates the major events in the life cycle of the Bodos. These events mainly depict the rhythm of their daily lives. Kherai performances are fragments of various cycles of performance. These performances basically depict their histories, their imagination of their world, their fantasies, and also how the community tries to bridge the difference between the two worlds. They create linkages to fill the voids, the voids that have been created by the loss or shifting of memories. The community members have been practicing the performances withstanding the tradition since long. The people have been devising their strategies over the years to review their own performances and also adapt to the new environment. They have tried to infuse in their performances a energy and a spirit that is spontaneous and fresh. These performances are their own imagination, their own ideas regarding their past, their histories their daily way of life which gets reflected in their religious festival Kherai.

Kherai is the most important festival of the Bodos, since times immemorial. The Bodo people performed Kherai for the welfare of the village folk mainly and at times individual pujas were also performed. Since the entire event is symbolic, the ritual is rather said to be danced and sung by the members of the community. Singing and dancing that way are indispensable features of the Kherai ritual. Verbal and non-verbal communication takes place simultaneously throughout the ritual. Besides the welfare aspect, the Bodos being an agrarian community also see Kherai as a purpose to yield good harvest.

Myths associated with the ritual

A group of cowherds played and made their cows graze in the nearby field. One day a strange looking boy appeared before them and appealed to make him also a member of their group.

The leader of the group agreed and provided food and shelter to the boy. As the cowherds had finished their tenure of serving their masters, they had to leave the village. The cowherds requested the old village couple to provide shelter to the boy. The couple agreed. The couple thought of engaging the boy in cultivation.

There was bountiful production the following year. But, one day to his surprise the old man found that some portion of the paddy was eaten up by a peacock. He thought of laying a trap in the field. Next day the boy who had changed himself into a peacock had got caught in the trap. The old man took his long stick and thought of killing the peacock, but to his surprise found the peacock appealing him to save his life. In return he would help the old man in his fields. The old man took pity on the peacock and set him free. As he was released from the trap the peacock started attacking the old man with all his might. The old man couldn't defend himself and came back home with injuries. The boy also changed himself and reached home before the old man. The old man narrated his story before his wife and the boy. The old man had to send the boy to an astrologer to find out the way to get recovered. The old woman advised the boy to perform Kherai puja to cure the old man. Thus it is said that the Kherai puja was celebrated from that day amidst the Bodo community. There is another myth where the father-in-law has an immoral relationship with his daughter-in-law and to decurse himself he is advised to perform Kherai puja. These two myths prove that Kherai is basically a welfare seeking festival.

There are innumerable meanings associated with the word 'Kherai'. The syllable 'khe' means the sky and the word 'rai' means to invoke. The deities are invoked and welcomed to the earth on this day. Each of the deities are worshipped individually at

the altar of Kherai. The main deities and their corresponding attendants are also worshipped and offered offerings at the altar. Though the exact number of deities is 189 in some places the number varies from place to place. Each deity is invoked in a different manner with different incantations and different dances. These differences are on the basis of the attributes and natures of the deities.

It seems that Kherai is a yearlong celebration; the entire year is divided into various phases. The various phases have their own significance depending on the time and its effect on nature. The Bodo scholars have divided celebration of Kherai into four phases i.e., four times in a year Kherai is celebrated for different purposes. Though in the different regions of Darrang, people are probably not aware of the varied types of Kherai prevalent in the Bodo heartland, Kokrajhar. It is also true that for economic reasons people are not able to celebrate Kherai in the village. The community collects funds from the villagers for the forthcoming festival. There is a general notice given to the community regarding the dates and the budget of the festival. Those who don't pay are penalized and are not allowed to participate in the festival. The community keeps the accounts and on the concluding day presents a detailed report of the estimate incurred during the festival. The remaining money is spent in the welfare works of the village or is kept for future expenses. This is known as Rang Bathou. The ritual ceremony comes to an end with sending off daudini known as Gadhon –mara. The daudini is given a pair of clothes, betel nut, and money and is escorted to her village with the local men.

Structure of Kherai

Kherai is more than a mere structure and function; it can also be among the most powerful experiences life has to offer. While in a liminal state people are freed from the demand of daily life. They feel at one with their comrades, all personal and social differences erased. People are uplifted, swept away, taken over. This liberation from the constraints of ordinary life can be termed as “anti-structure” and the experience the life cycle of the Bodos. Individual events are nested within, even as they as a series comprise, the small cycle of performances. The overall structure of Kherai is symbolic

while its interior structure is dramatic. The two structures are integrated because they believed in the dreamtime and their own lives moving from ordinary to super ordinary reality. The Kherai performances were the links or the point of time and space where the two realities intersected and meshed. Surrounding the performance spontaneous communities is generated; (feeling of group solidarity) is experienced. Ordinary space (secular space) is temporarily made special. Sacred space is a natural space where one enters with care.

The daily life of the tribal people is rewarding but routine. There is a kind of low –key pace to the everyday round of living. During the celebration of Kherai the Bodos are seen to attain a heightened sense of drama. Sharp images appear and colours deepen. The tribals are masters of stagecraft and achieve remarkable visual and musical effects within the limited materials at hand. Gradually i experienced the central truth of the tribal religion: that it is not a thing by itself but an inseparable part of whole that encompasses every aspect of daily life, every individual and every time. It is nothing less than the theme of existence, and as such constitutes one of the most sophisticated and unique religions and philosophical systems known to man.

Origin of the word 'Kherai'

There are various explanations regarding the word Kherai. Bathou the chief of the gods is also known as Kharia Buroi which means the latent old man was also the godfather of the Bodos. The words “kharia”, “khuroi’ ” khubrai “might have got disintegrated and “kherai” might have got produced from that. There are other explanations about the origin of “Kherai’. The sacrificial animals when cut produce a sound “khe” which reaches the sky as an invocation to Gods. The folk etymologies produced give explanations for the origin of Kherai, the entire belt of tribal population of the North - East has similar festivals like Ker, Khernang, and Kheraima of the Tripurians, Dimasas and the Nepalis respectively.

Varieties of Kherai

Kherai is a yearlong festival with different rituals and festivities happening all over the year. The festival comes to an end during Bathou Kherai which is a melting point of various beliefs, ideas and imagination, different frames for propitiating gods, variety of performances, colour, stagecraft, etc. In the Kokrajhar region, Kherai is said to be four kinds. These forms of Kherai are celebrated all over the year by the Bodo society.

The different names are :

- (i) Darshan Kherai is celebrated during the Kati month. Since these are the winter days, the festival shows association with the winter crops for which it is known as Sali kherai and also with the Goddess of wealth Mainao who is identified with Lakhi, the goddess of wealth.
- (ii) Umrao Kherai is held during the month of Ashar and is also associated with the summer crops. It is also meant for the welfare of the villagers.
- (iii) Phalo Kherai is performed during the full –moon night in the month Magha. It was also known as Danshrang Kherai which means full moon night.
- (iv) Noani Kherai is restricted to an individual family affair and was celebrated at any time of the year when the need was felt.

Though these are said to be celebrated all throughout the year in Kokrajhar district, the Darrang district is unaware of any such kinds of Kherai. But in the Darrang district there is celebration all throughout the year and the festival culminates in Bathou Kherai which is celebrated on the first Wednesday of the Phalguna month. The festival starts with **Jumai Gathar** at Bordeori's house. The elderly folk assemble at the house of the Bordeori. The essentials and the important things are collected in the house. There is a lot of enthusiasm amongst the community. Various responsibilities are shared by the people. Five pots of rice beer (jau) are prepared and kept in Bordeuri's house. Four of the pots amongst the five are placed at the kherai altar. Two of the pots are offered to Buragarang and two to the Ranpagli. The left one is for Gangar bura at the Bordeuri's house. It is not brought to the kherai altar. A cock is sacrificed by the two Bordeoris

and Bailung as Prayaschit. The sacrificed cock is later cooked and is shared as bhog . Daudini offers bettlenut as a mutual sharing with the official priests and the people who are in the charge of Kherai. They initiate their fast together and after finishing all the rituals and ceremonies of kherai end up their fast too.

- (i) **Mahila mareh** which is celebrated in the month of April. A few sacrifices are offered in the Bor Deuri's house, it is a small ritual which marks the beginning of Kherai.

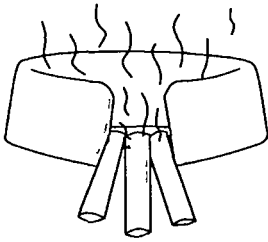
- (ii) **Zethor puja** is celebrated in the month of June. People enthusiastically participate in this ritual. Men mostly take part in it . The community offers pig sacrifice to the river goddess Bhoroli, and its attendants (eight cocks). The Bailung chants mantras seeking welfare, assuring whether the people are happy or not. Is there peace or not? The small sacrifices (8 cocks) are made and thrown into the river. The head stays intact at the altar. Finally the pig is sacrificed with much enthusiasm and spirit. The Deori performs the sacrifice. On the banks of the river Bhoroli , two fire hearths are made.

The offerings are made to the goddess Bhoroli in the river Bhoroli. Since Bhoroli is not seen, it is offered in one of the streamlet (Mansiri) about 4 kilometers from the village where the research was being documenting.

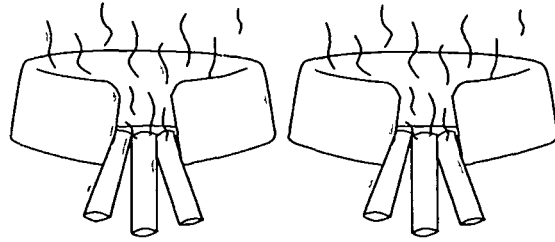
Two kinds of bhoga (offering) are prepared :-

- (i) Plain rice Bhoga is offered to Bhorali.
- (ii) Cooked rice and pig meat (pork) are offered to Bhoroli.

Public



God



Fire hearths for public and god

diagram-1

The bhogamaker takes an earthen pot full of rice khichdi and pig meat and carries it over his head. The carrier of the bhoga is accompanied by a community member and they offer the bhoga to the river. He twists his feet and tries to make a pit and places the bhoga pot under the water. Then he quickly turns to his back and starts coming out of the river, people rejoice very much when they don't see the bhoga pot coming out. To them Goddess Bhoroli has accepted the offering. There is distribution of the prasada, Both the public and privately cooked foods are mixed and served to the people present on the occasion, There is a community feast, mostly of men, who enjoy the fowl's roasted entrails first and then the cooked special food.

- (iii) **Dangoriya puja** is celebrated in the month of July. A number of twenty-five laizams (offerings) are laid in for the propitiation of various gods and goddesses, all corresponding to Bathou. Holding the sacred water, the priest invokes Bura Dangoriya (a spirit) and says "its all because of your grace this village community has 126 households at present. Do protect us from the Maor spirits. The laizams are placed in various directions for different gods and goddesses aiming at their abodes. During the ritual community sings hymns in praise of goddess Bhagawati. The interesting feature is that the Bailung initiates in the Bodo language whereas the Pathak recites hundred

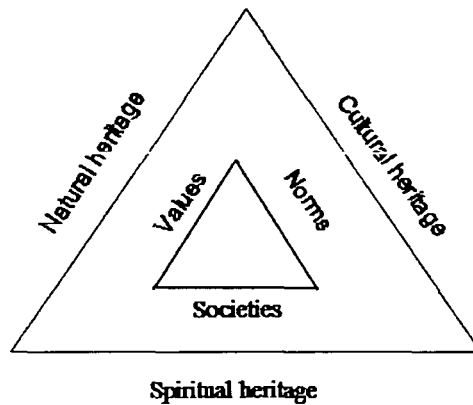
names of Bhagawati in Assamese language. The community sings the hymns of Goddess Bhagawati in Assamese language though simultaneously the Bailung forwards his ritual incantations in Bodo language.

Aakaxore pora ai nami ahe
bhoyamot patile sabha hari hei
kailaxore pora ai nami ahe
bhoyamot patile than
kaxote uroni , murote uroni
hate loi asu
Sokolu debataak namaskaar karisu

(One can see the bi-lingual aspect and the performance of the oral discourse. Though it is observed that a section of the Bodo population has merged with the Assamese society, it is for their existence that they voice their religious feelings and community's concern barring the ideological prejudices Though the process of assimilation and other such developments as such were gradually becoming repressive in character in some parts of Bodo concentration.) Here in this village as Bodo is not spoken by the majority of the people, the younger generation has neither studied nor learnt it in their families. The language remains an enigma for the community. A close proximity is observed between the tribals and the non-tribals.

Analysis: The interesting feature of this ritual is the manifestation of an object that does not constitute idolatry. It is an old tree which the community regards as sacred. This particular tree is being revered since times immemorial. A clearing is used as a ritual arena to hold the ritual. Though there is no permanent access to the ground, but it assumes eternity when invoked . it is cut off from the rest .The priest poses as if he is standing on a platform which points to a reality beyond itself. “The sacred always manifest itself as a reality of a wholly different order from”. (Eliade) It is apprehended through its diverse manifestation, which Eliade calls ‘hierophanies. Lately, people realized that though the larger portion of the tree has been cut whatever is left must be

preserved for the sake of heritage, more importantly, it is the critical tool through which societies define their relations and norms between cultural values and cultural variables. The three pillars (societies, norms, and values) are in an equilateral triangle relationship form a smart partnership that sustains cultural heritage. However, they work within a larger triangle of natural heritage, cultural heritage and spiritual heritage.



Equilateral triangle relationship of cultural heritage
 diagram-2

Here in this case the tree becoming a heirophany, does not lose its nature, it remains a tree in the ordinary sense of the word. A thing becomes sacred in so far as it embodies i.e. reveals something other than itself. The particular space in due course of time may have permanent access to the sacred. In encounter with the sacred, time and space are undistinguished in that both reflect the original moment and place of the sacred act of creation. It is also true that sometimes the sacred is not discovered by the human beings rather the sacred reveals itself to them in that place. It can be inferred that the sacred is not reducible to human effective and constitutive acts then it remains a irreducible mystery The community's attitude towards the sacred, which at once attracts and repels its members is both beneficent and dangerous, can be explained not only by the

ambivalent nature of the sacred-in itself, but also by man's natural reactions to this transcendental reality which attracts and terrifies him with equal intensity.

Lately, people realized that though the larger portion of the tree has been cut whatever is left must be preserved for the sake of heritage, more importantly, it is the critical tool through which societies define their relations and norms between cultural values and cultural variables. The three pillars (societies, norms, and values) are in an equilateral triangle relationship form a smart partnership that sustains cultural heritage. However, they work within a larger triangle of natural heritage, cultural heritage and spiritual heritage.

There seems to be a paradoxical relationship between the sacred and the profane. With every manifestation of the sacred a tension arises due to the transcendental nature of the sacred and its self – limitation in the spatial realm. The community imagines anything and everything that comes in their contact as sacred. The community enjoys, the power, the force and the holiness of the sacred. Whenever the sacred manifests, it limits itself. Its appearance forms a part of the dialectic that occults other possibilities. By appearing in the concrete form of a tree, the sacred ceases to be absolute, for the object in which it appears and remains a part of the worldly environment. In some respect, every heirophany expresses an incomprehensible paradox arising from the great mystery upon which every heirophany is centered.

(iv) **Namghoriya puja** (in the namghar) and **Bator Sabah** (at the periphery of the village) to ward off evils and other spirits from the village) are held in the month of February

Bator Sabah speaks of the entirety and the conclusion of the Kherai festival. One of the most interesting features of this event is the various altars that are constructed all over the stretch of the village road. All the deities of the Bathou pantheon are worshipped that day on the main altar. The four altars are constructed on the same road at a small distance of few steps.

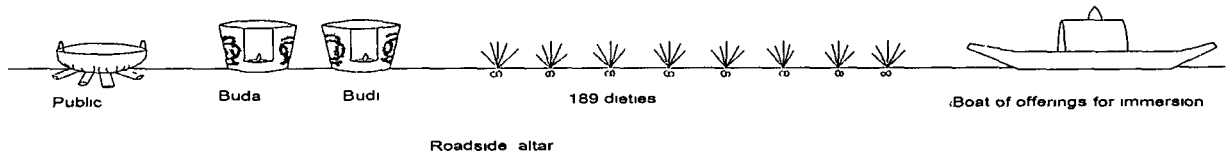


diagram-3

1st (For public)- Here food is cooked for the rest of the public and is consumed before the spirits enter the ritual arena after driving away the spirits from the village. There is lot of fun and gaiety when people see young boys dressed as spirits with sticks and baskets enter the arena . The boys make whirring sounds of thunder, ghosts and jump into the water, beat anything that comes in their way. They run and enter the village, beat the fences and the roofs of the houses as to drive away the evil-spirits .The boys wear crowns of plantain stem, make some images of the spirits on the crowns, bare bodied, have long bamboo sticks in their hands and carry baskets to collect that they get in their way. Before they leave the arena they bow before the deities at the altar. The Bailung sprinkles the holy basil water on them before they leave for the village. The community considers them as inauspicious beings and wouldn't like to see them. Women folk prefer to stay away from them. The community who is involved in preparation of the ritual seems to be hovering around them. There is whole lot of theatre that one might not see or believe but that is the essence of theatre. Something that looks like theatre or reality but still is followed as a different business. They use different attire to look as spirits. Their body language gets transformed into the language of the spirits. They move away from the ritual arena and get scattered around the village. Since it is very dark one is not able to find out from where the sounds are coming. The effect created is marvelous. They wear grotesque make-up and since its dark their appearance is all the more frightening. People finish their dinner before they

arrive on the spot. Once they are back people finish their religious singing before the spirits come. The boys once back, come and surrender before the gods. They are dispirited by the Bailing . These boys perform this act in the ritual as a religious duty conferred on them by the society. They have to continue doing this duty for a minimum of three years. A pledge is taken by the boys before the community. The entire act is energetic and creates lot of dramatic score amidst the community.

2nd (Bura and Buri)- Two fire –hearths are set for Bura (siba) and Buri (consort). A white cock is sacrificed for the Bura and a red cock for the Buri. The fire hearths are covered so that nobody can see what is there inside. The attendants of Bathou are also worshipped along with them.

3rd (189 deities)- The altar is prepared for the worship of the 189 gods and goddesses of the Bathou pantheon.

4th (boat for immersion)- A boat is made of a plantain tree. Fruits and other offerings are placed inside the boat for immersion. The Pathak (recited) recites a few hymns from the folkloric verses and the women gathered on the occasion recite after him. These are the specimens of oral –literature which has a remarkable collection of the names of gods and goddesses. In the manner of that we pray you or who will come to our rescue if not you.

- (v) Kherai is celebrated in the month of Phalguna, on the first Wednesday. We can see that the community people are busy the entire year in various celebrations and these come to an end with Kherai celebrations.

Essentialities:

Kherai ritual has certain specific requirements. These are collected by the village community well in advance before the festival commences. People collect money from the villagers for the expenses to be met. A rate is fixed for every household. Those who can provide in surplus from their own gardens do also contribute accordingly.

Ritual requirements:

(i) a sijau tree (Euphorbia splendens), (ii) a jatrasi or tulasi plant (iii) few bijuli bamboos (iv) rice dust (v) khangkhla plant (vi) plantain trees and leaves (vii) areca nuts (viii) mustard oil (ix) rayon (white) (x) rice beer (xi) rice (xii) earthen lamps (xiii) small brass metal cup (khuroi) (xiv) sufficient quantity of cotton (xv) a small quantity of grass (xvi) sindur (vermillion) (xvii) small brass vessel (ghati) (xviii) stick of cane or bamboo (xix) some pieces of jati bamboo (xx) a low stool made of special wood) (xxi) dhup sticks (incense sticks) (xxii) banana fruits (xxiii) a small cup of brass (khuroi) (xxiv) mustard oil etc.

Musical accompaniments :

- (i) Kham (drum) -2
- (ii) Jotha (cymbals)- 1 pair
- (iii) Siphung(flute) – 1

Daudini's requirements:

- (i) a red skirt(mekhela)
- (ii) a red wrapper (around the breasts)
- (iii) a red blouse
- (iv) sudang (a leather belt)
- (v) silver necklace
- (vi) keru (ear- rings)
- (vii) gam kharu(bracelets)
- (viii) japi
- (ix) bet
- (x) bow and arrow

Sacrificial requirements:

- i) thungri (sword)- one pair
- ii) dhal (shield)- one

The role of the ritual officials :

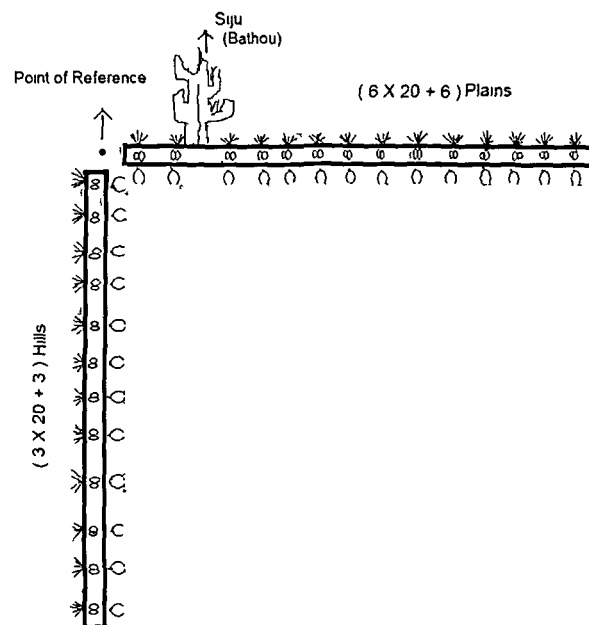
The Bodos didn't have any priestly class as such, but the presence of Bailung and Bordeuri is to be questioned . It can be ascertained that since the people started living together since the process of acculturation had taken place long back .There were inter-community marriages between the Ahoms , Misings and the Deuris. There were Ahoms who were scattered in every nook and corner of the state. Bailung is the man who recites the mantras for the ritual and Bordeuri performs the sacrifice for the ritual. In some of the places, the term Ojha is used for the ritual priest. He assists Daudini in the Kherai ritual and instructs the devotees in the puja. The community has immense faith in the oja , they believe that he can foresee the intentions of the gods . He through the help of the lady priestess (daudini) sends the prayers to various gods and goddesses. Since its not a hereditary position, a person possessing the necessary knowledge of the rituals may take over as official priests. They may even supervise the oaths and other trials in the village. But their activities during Kherai are of much significance. Mostly their affairs are action-oriented. The Bailung recites the incantation and the Deori performs the sacrifice. The official priests, who have been doing it for a long time, become well-versed with the process. They remember exactly as to what is to be offered where? They can even suggest changes provided there is a problem like scarcity of the sacrificial animals or the daudini lying unconscious on the ground. The Bailung sits in a half sit knee bend position and Deori bends his head over the thungri , as trying to concentrate or meditate for the successful completion of the sacrifices. The daudini herself takes the charge of lady priestess and performs certain feats to please the gods and the goddesses. She is the intermediary between the members of her society and the supernatural world with which she supposedly communicates either by talking to the spirits or through spirit possession. By employing various techniques of divination (singing , dancing , eating , falling into trance , playing to the accompaniment of music etc , they solve various problems. Basically she is a ritual specialist who has the individual ability to communicate and deal with the supernatural.

She performs a number of dances for the initiation of the ritual.

- 1) Tel bati dance (a cup of blood) on her (daudini's) head, the dancer takes clockwise and anti clockwise movements, drinks the blood and the dance comes to an end.
- 2) Paro uruwa (pigeon release) - Both hands combined in a gesture show a pair of pigeon, She dances with the pair making them fly high and low. She takes circular movements and then finally takes the live pigeon in her hands and makes them fly in the sky.
- 3) Taruwal ghurua (moving of swords) – The Daudini takes the pair of sword in her hands and with wrist movements clockwise and anti clockwise keeps turning the thungris (swords) and finally dugs them deep in the ground.
- 4) Suli Ghurua (moving the hair)- The dancer bows her head over the thungri (sword) and keeps moving her head in a frenzied (manner) movement as she gradually arrives at a trance.
- 5) Salita Khowa (swallowing the fire wick) The dancer lights the wick and places the burning wick inside her mouth, keeps rhythm in her feet. Finally she takes a deep breath and exhales.
- 6) Mekhela Pindha (wearing of the ceremonial skirt) The dress is placed on the thungri. The dancer takes the dress and moves it round her body with encircling movements. Both of her hands balancing the skirt make a gesture of women wearing mekhela.
- 7) Koloh loi (pitcher carrying) The performer carries the pitcher filled with sacred water and with the gesture of carrying the pitcher on her shoulders, right and left dances to the tune of the kham and siphung and enacts the act of sprinkling the holy water.
- 8.) Thungri nach (sword dance) The daudini takes out the pair of thungri from the pit and balances it in both hands. She keeps moving the sword in the air. She keeps one thungri at the front and one at the back as enacting the art of self defence. The sword is placed at the thighs and the other at the back.

9.) Paro- uruwa (releasing of the pigeons) She dances with a live pair of pigeons and finally makes them fly. Finally with folded hands leaves the ritual arena to the public performance.

With these dances the ritual is initiated and later in the larger space elaboration of the entire ritual performance takes place. This preliminary in a way is also an energizer for the ritual. The audience takes it as a warming up for the entire period of the ritual. The audience can also assess the outcome of the ritual as to how successfully Daudini will carry on the ritual and the performance. The anxiety and the enthusiasm lie entirely on the activities of the daudini. It is seen that the audience is capable of orienting itself in a situation by accepting the performed tricks on faith, treating these as signs of evidence of something greater than sign system itself.



Schematic representation of Kherai Aitar

diagram-4

Kherai Sali

The research explores the schematic representation of the kherai Sali (arena) where the sacred spaces and ritual performances are transformed in the move from ritual to performance context. The distinct performance spaces where the performers do engage themselves in ritual activity are the potential demarcates. The argument focuses on the performance of kherai puja in the physical space. It is primarily conceived in terms of a presentation of the real or the actual. Consequently these sites are envisaged in terms of conventional notions of sacred space and ritual performances, rather than as something new.

The making of the Kherai arena (altar) :

A clearing or a suitable place is selected for the Kherai ritual. In the earlier times it was in the dense forests. It is believed that the altar symbolizes a holy road from the heaven to the earth or from earth to heaven. The ideal of the philosophy here indicates a holy-link between the god of the heaven and the human –beings of the earth.

Space as such has no attribute. Sacred places located in geographical space are often identified by particular signifiers, Such as the Kherai altar. It is a right angle diagram which shows the physical movement through road like walk able structures, use of images and expected protocols of behaviour. Thinking in the Durkhemian theory between sacred and profane Mircea Eliade (1983) suggests that the sacred space is somehow marked out and distinguished from profane space. The Kherai acts as architectural signifier of sacred space,. Consequently, we need to understand sacred space as process and encounter, rather than simply as place or structure. This raises the possibility that different forms of encounter might be regarded as instrumental in construction of sacred space.

The varied images that Kherai presents as remarkable encounters are various feats of the Daudini. The various actions or dance –like movements of the priestess in the ritual space include;-

- i) The serene calm –looking daudini enters the arena after a ritual bath washes her feet, touches the ground and is seated by her attendants. Syllables of hard-boil fill the air.
- ii) The lamphi helps daudini to get dressed, hair is oiled, combed and vermilion is put on her hair parting, red color is smeared on her cheeks too.
- iii) Ritual ornaments are specially worn on the altar .
- iv) Invocatory music (saraswati seu) is played on the kham accompanied by jotha it also marks beginning of Kherai and sanctification of the entire environment.
- v) Daudini marks the opening by standing on a low stool and performs certain movements which purify her ritual dress which she puts on before the gathering. It can rather be said that the dress embodies the shamanistic spirit.
- vi) She sanctifies herself by putting a burning wick in her mouth which also testifies her supernatural power and strength.

The various encounters in the kherai ritual space include:-

- i) daudini's fights with various spirits and evils
- ii) consuming blood in one go
- iii) lay dead if not able to drink blood
- iv) plays with the wild bear and finally overpower him
- i) in spite of the deadly ants (amroli) she manages to climb down the hill
- ii) she tears off the neck of the sparrow with her teeth
- iii) kills birds with a single arrow
- iv) The most interesting grand –finale of the ritual is when daudini tries to de-spirit herself. A band of ten (young) boys hold her from her back as daudini tries to exert her strength and tries to leave her spiritual body and becomes a human – being once again. This is as much- awaited sequence and bears testimony to the sacredness of Kherai. She is lifted up and all her accessories are taken out or it is believed that if the ritual time passes out in the ritual arena, she will lose her life i.e. she will die.

Barring the properties of human perception, the phenomenological conception of space cannot be considered independently. Humans not only perceive space in a passive sense but also move through the space in an active sense. The Kherai ritual arena is cleaned and made normal as it was before. The various aspects of spatial experience are important here.

The historical fact available quotes that the king Naranarayana, though he was a patron of the neo-vaishnavite cult, did not disturb the Bodo-kacharis who followed their own system of worship. They worshipped Bathou. He divided the area into two, keeping Gohain Kamal Ali (a road by the name gohain kamal ali) in the middle. (*Kameswar Brahma, 1992.*)

*“Gohain kamal ali maddey sima kari
Uttarar phale ashe jotek kachari
Sehi phale debalay ashe jata jate
Koche mese pujibek mohor bakyat
Dakhinar phale puja bahmane karibo
Ahi nibhandhane sobe dharmaprabartiba”*

The concept of sacred space and ritual performances are discussed in this paper in relation to Durkheim’s thesis that religious thought categorizes all things into two classes, two opposite kinds, generally designated by two terms effectively translated by the words sacred and profane. Sacred space in the physical world is often demarcated from profane space by architectural signifiers.

Performance space in Kherai

The right angle space structure of the kherai ritual is self supporting. Usually situated in an open field or the courtyard of desalt (temple) or any such clearing which is used by the communities for festivals, assemblies, holding of rituals and for entertainment also.

These spaces don't lie fallow during times. They are often used in a steady basis. During large parts of the day, and often for days on end, they are relatively unused. Then, when the event starts, the spaces are used intensely, attracting large crowds, earlier it was a closed affair, nowadays it is more a less a show. Ritual (event) time is fixed. These spaces are uniquely organized. The entire area is divided into two parts. The major part is used for performance and across it is used for the audience to sit and watch. The audience group watches the performing group consisting of religious officials like Bor-deori and Pani deori, Bailung and Daudini processing the ritual. These arrangements foster celebratory feelings amongst the community.

In **Goffman's** views, *"in these spaces there is an expressive rejuvenation and re-affirmation of the moral –values of the community, in spaces where reality is being performed. Certainly, more than elsewhere, these spaces promote social solidarity"* (1959).

The polar understanding of the sacred and profane, the contrasting spatial experiences of homo-religious and modern:-

Profane	Sacred
homogenous	heterogeneous
quantity	quality
chaos	cosmos
relativity	absoluteness

Such relativity and lack of orientation is virtually equivalent to an experience of space as chaos. For sacred space that is Kherai comes through a hierophany. This manifestation of absoluteness 'real' or 'power' or 'beings' founds a world by revealing a point, a center, a fixed point of reference for all orientation. Not only does the hierophany break the continuity of profane space it also cuts an opening for communication between cosmic planes.

Hierophany is not explicit, there are signs given or provoked. For e.g. the sacrificial animals are let loose, they are fed before sacrifice, even are revered, blessings are taken before sacrifice but finally accepting the spot are sacrificed at the designated altar.

Selection of the ground:

The selection is done by the community mainly on the criteria of the land (space) having some significance, accessibility is one of the criteria; water should flow nearby, age old tree, prayer-hall (in present times). The techniques of orientation are particularly important in the selection or construction of altars. The village where i was working told me that a tree existed long ago and it beard the testimony of Kherai being celebrated in Dhekidol since times immemorial. Sometimes later, the tree was chopped off due to the construction of the namghar. The tree is taken as a centre point of reverence. And the other activities happen around it. It opens many levels of communication in the ritual space. Here an additional aspect in the consecration of sacred space comes into play, since the Kherai ceremonies are seen as a repetition of the works of the God. A place consecrated by hierophany may come to be honored as the navel of cosmos, the junction of heaven, earth an underworld.

In Eliade's (1957) interpretation of sacred space;-

- i) marks a break in the homogeneity and amorphousness of undifferentiated space.
- ii) these breaks provide a spatial orientation especially when they bear symbolism of the center.
- iii) the centre is universal , a break in the planes which creates an opening between cosmic levels.
- iv) by consecrating both a horizontal point of reference and a vertical axis of communication a world is founded.
- v) this foundation is seen as a repetition of the primordial act of creation by the Gods.

In the case of Kherai ritual space where host of activities take place like 'the chorus, the music. The dance, the seemingly unrelated comic interlude, the mixing of human and non-human worlds- permits a simultaneous presentation of alternative view points.

The performance of Kherai satisfies our ardent search for expression in all this. The situation of the Bodo community members in the ritual space is such that they are fully aware of the surroundings instinctually sensible of the critical distance they maintain from their possible predators. Through their bodies they intimately intermingled with their surroundings. Within the homogenous space they could imagine rivers, pathways, forests, mountains, which define their possibility of vision and movement in the homogeneous space.

Homogeneity of the space means that every point is of equal status to every other point. That space is continuous and infinite and no direction has privilege over any other. The northern and the eastern side two phases of directions. They are divided as eastern side the plains and the northern side as the hills. The connotation of the word 'Kherai' is "khe means sky and rai means to invoke . The gods and goddesses are invited to the earth to take the offerings offered to them. The entire arena (Kherai Sali) becomes an alternative cosmos breaking the continuity of profane space. A normal regular space acquires a special status within a time frame. It gets transferred into cosmic plane. The entire pantheon of the Bodo gods and goddesses is invited to the earth to be with their community and to listen to their woes.

The hierophant (capacity of the sacred to appear in the midst of the profane) of the space marks the sacredness of Kherai. The exact area is divided into two dimensions: horizontal and vertical. The horizontal communicating the hills and the vertical communicating the plains. A large number of gods and goddesses numbering 189 are propitiated during Kherai. On the vertical side (plains) $(3 \times 20 + 3)$ and on the horizontal side (hills) $(6 \times 20 + 6)$ numbers of various gods and goddesses are worshipped. The nature and attributes of the deities, except for the presiding deity Bathou is not known. The manner and process through which offerings are made is based on the hierarchy of the Gods. The laizams (offerings) are spread out. The deities are basically the nature counterparts like rivers, streams, rivulets, ghosts, spirits, ponds, attendants of Bathou, every element that has made an impact on the life and culture of the Bodos is given a reverential seat in the altar. This speaks of the permanence of the Bathou foundation,

though in a changed form. Even art is not destroyed but is transferred to the praxis of life.

Space –specific conduct

Since these spaces become special places, the behavior needed to enter these spaces undergoes change. A special behavior is needed in the ritual space. This behavior has an impact on the minds of the participants and (ritual officials). One enters the particular space with respect and care. The community takes great care in entering such spaces like taking off their shoes, washing their feet, not to touch anything on the altar or to get touched by the sacrificial animals on the ground, sprinkling of holy water with Jatras or Tutsi leaves if sanctification is needed. Sacred (red) thread is tied around the wrists of the people when the priestess takes leisure from the activities for some time. The normal routine affair is left behind as the space is made ready for the ritual. The people around are hesitant to touch anything lying in the field, even people are terrified to go near the priestess by mistake as she is supposed to be possessed with demonic or divine power.

Each sacrifice begins and ends with a careful supervision of the things left and sacrificed. Daudini's behavior is at times terrifying and at times fun. The community which gathers around there stops socializing and tries to get involved in the ritual. There is a sense of reinforcement of community feeling. The indicators of wealth are set aside and the community takes recourse to their folklore i.e. singing and sharing of folk narratives, speech acts and etc. These behaviors' are seen as symbolic action which is like patterned conduct or frame of mind.

Kherai dance as a performative discourse

I have tried to create or develop the Kherai dance of the Bodos as a composite formation. An attempt has been made to examine the performative discourse. Attempt has been made to establish the process through which the community gets into the process of performance making the ideas of tracing history through the medium of

performance and the folklore surrounding them amounts to various discourses that make the tradition.

In this chapter, an attempt has been made to analyse a single performative genre, the Kherai dance of the Bodos. The Kherai is a ritualistic dance of the Bodos performed by the Bodo community, men and women both traditionally mark the opening of the festival which continues from January to March, in various areas of Bodos concentration. The dance usually is about the gods and the goddesses of the Bodos institution who are propitiated on this day through the sacrifices according to their positions in the hierarchy of Bodo pantheon and are offered different sacrifices according to their positions. In Ghoramari, where I did my fieldwork it was mainly between the official priests Bordeuri, Bailung, Daudini and the people belonging to the older generation. The people who participate in the ritual performance are teachers, daily wage laborers, community elders, carpenters and mainly who do agriculture.

Present day works on performative genre tend to concentrate on the performance itself as a communicative text. This involves the analysis of the performance both as coded structure as well as an event that has to be placed in the context of its occurrence. The present work differs from the above approach to the extent that it is the performance in relation to its interpretation as well as an event that will be the focus of attention.

By looking at the dance as a discursive formation, I aim to demonstrate that the performance is not only constitutive of its tradition but that the discourses around the dance also constitute and alter the tradition. When I refer to the critical explanation of dance I have in mind the writing of the Bodo scholars who have worked on Kherai as a ritual and have not distinguished the dance event from the ritual context. The responses that these works have generated within the dance tradition itself.

The researcher will argue that the verbal discourses around the dance descriptions of what is communicated through the dance, but they also present images of dance and dancers, images that transform it. Thus the language of the discourses is not merely a

way of communicating information about dance but also is an imaginative embodiment of the dance itself. Different kinds of discourses have emerged around dance in recent years. Each of these strives to constitute a particular tradition in which to embed the dance and thus give its form a certain authenticity.

Firstly for scholars like Kameswar Brahma and Liladhar Brahma, Bhaben Narzari, the aboriginal culture of the Bodos is still visible in the deep structures beneath the thin layer of Hinduism. They have tried to prove that Kherai is basically a tribal and a magical dance. They also assume sameness in the cultural forms found in the region. However, as distinct from the scholars they treat tribal culture as superior to the other cultures. They treat them as pure and authentic. Though they fear that Hinduisation can lay an impact on them, that the dance might undergo a change. The researcher hopes to show that these views of both “Hindu” and “Tribal” culture are constructs which seek to make alike tradition that is polyvalent.

The search for the ‘authentic tradition’ of the dance by the folklorists is based on the notion of a original source. This leads to a division between the essential tribal aspects of the dance located in the music and the pattern of movements and the later accretions, i.e., the narrative themes which are the subjects of the performances. The latter are thought to be a slow process of acculturation that took place when these tribal groups came into contact with Hindu culture.

For those who participate in the dance tradition there is no such dichotomy, for though they concede that the form of the dance has altered to include people’s imagination and creativity, they consider the musical tradition on which the dance has been based on people’s understanding of the musical language and notes, rhythms of nature which have been processed through their understanding of music. For e.g., Padda Daimary, a Kham player and the leader and master of the musical troupes said that the right way of playing instruments only resulted in revealing the true essence of the performance. They try to recall and try musical tunes by remembering in a natural context. But for the dancers themselves the dance is continuously evolving. Yet the dance is not

completely porous, in that certain changes are considered compatible with the elements such as Rasa and Tala, while others are rejected as having no basis in the sastric tradition. This complex interaction between ideas of tradition and authenticity will be explained in the course of this discussion.

The discussion is divided into three parts, it describes the dance through three different types of discourses that are performative.

a. **Description of the dance:** I shall give a brief account of the dance performance, its history and the setting before moving into the interpretive discourse on the dance.

The ritual setting: The Kherai ritual is performed on the occasion of Sali Kherai or Lakhi Kherai in the month of Kati , Ashu Kherai in the month of Ashaar, Phlox kherai in the month of Magha , and Nowani Kherai can be performed anywhere whenever it is considered necessary to ward off evil or to ensure welfare. On being questioned about the kinds of Kherai being prevalent today, the community could not recollect any. There is an all night vigil the Kherai Sali on the second day of the festival. The ritual associated with the Kherai will continue for two full days as compared to five days earlier. The daudini would be initiated into the ritual by undergoing fasts and other ritual essentialities.

This is primarily a spectacular ritual. All the neighboring villages come to see the festival as a magical feat. The Daudini's various feats are much enjoyed by the people who come from far off places to watch merely for entertainment. On contrary they don't do have a religious feeling for it. The dances of the Daudini are a celebration to mark the successful completion of the Kherai festival and the return of the devotees to their normal lives after a period of austerity. Kherai still follows the traditional cycle of the dance performance. Still, Kherai is held every year during January to March without a break.

The dance performance:

Kherai is a folk type dance; it belongs to the non-classical tradition and is not elaborately codified. The performance has an episodic structure: the introduction of each Bodo god, its character in sequence, the build up of the battle and the victory dance. While this may describe the sequence in which the dance episode unfolds, it does not do justice to the polyphonic nature of the performance. What the dance seeks to do is not so much to narrate a story that already exists in different forms in oral tradition but to present a series of images that are strung together by Bodo instrumental music. The daudini wears a mask that portrays the dominant moods of the characters they are supposed to represent. Her face is smeared with vermilion. Her hair is neatly oiled and combed. She uses vermilion on her hair parting. These are all the features that are delicately modeled showing expressions that are serene or benign. The body and the hand movements are natural not exaggerated or stylized.

Hand –Gesture

The hand gestures used for holding pigeons, offering gesture, putting the burning wick inside the mouth, salutation gesture are something that can be understood at the primary level itself. They do not express the moods of the characters. This is done in terms of the styles of movement displayed through the torso, the legs and the arms. Some of the important styles of movement that portray the major characteristics are as follows:

Gait (chali)

The walking (chali) which is used in the entire dance is a half – crouched position, interspersed with high leaps, jumps and somersaults. The feet are placed flat on the ground and the steps are in curves, going three steps forward and three steps backward. As Daudini circumnates the entire arena. The Bor-deuri and the Bailung follow her and there is a long community queue following the religious officials. The circumbulation is known as Labdinga in Kherai.

It is a must for the community members to follow the priests as it is a belief among the Bodos that it is very easy to come to earth but very difficult to make a way out of it.

This can be justified by the gaits which have a clockwise and a anti-clockwise motion. The frame is open and flexible and the people can join in at any moment of the ritual. Labdinga is also a dance of joy and fulfillment. After every sacrifice that is offered to the gods and, a Labdinga is performed in the earth by the community to mark joy. . It is used as a linking device to make the performance sequence move. In addition to these there are certain dances (solo) that are performed by the Daudini. Every sequence has an offering that is finally bid by a dance by the Daudini.

The Daudini enters the sacred arena in a normal state and quickly moves into daze or stupor , sometimes there is an apparition. She supervises the ritual arena inside the Namghar and then starts taking to dance gradually with a salutation to the God and by offering a pair of pigeons (not sacrificed) in the name of peace and welfare in the village. Each of the dances she produces is associated with a character type and a dance episode will always portray a set of such characters types so that there is an interweaving of different styles of movement. The characters are classified on the moods they embody. These are largely heroic, godly and the comic.

Emotions

It was observed that two sets of emotion are simultaneously given out by the participants and the main ritual performers during the event. The daudini has a calm face while she enters the ritual arena. She stays silent for the entire period and exchanges communication through the language of gestures. She stays in a serene mood all throughout the ritual event. She gets disturbed when things are wrong, for e.g. when the ritual music is not in accordance with the mood that has to set in the particular moment. She abruptly stops and commands the accompanists to correct the rhythmic beats. She waits till they are able to set the right music. The audience feels that she experiences spiritual exaltation due to being possessed by various spirits .Her spiritual authority is well –established within the community , she without relinquishing her role as a housewife , negotiates her religious authority amidst everyday mundane life.

Music

The Bodo musical sense has a typical tone, sound and feeling. These are orally transmitted and often performed at all religious and social functions of importance. They are performed individually, in small groups and these days in modern theatre too. In the present times folk music has become more important than an artifact, and is considered a performance, not just a text with a tune. Every context can give rise to a meaning in a folk song. For e.g. the musical instruments used by the Bodos as accompaniments also do create music contextualizing the event. The sound of the flute (siphung) for the Bodo community is actually the incantation or the prayers that a community proposes. The sound of the drums (kham) is actually the rhythm for the Bodo people. The sound produced by the cymbals (jotha) makes one attentive about one's state. This is basically used for concentration. Serja brings in the melody to the song. These songs are shared among the folk groups as events in home or community gathering places in which most people take an active role, interact as listeners, players, dancers and singers.

It has the power to reach people's feelings and to move them. Affect is constituted by performance, and performance is culture specific and operates according to the rules and principles understood by performers and audience in the folk group. These performances happen intentionally; the folk groups attach meaning to the performance and intend meaning by performances. The present problem with the Bodo community is that the cultural revitalization trend in the last hundred years has led to self-conscious efforts to preserve their heritage of folk music. It has also become important for the elderly to pass it on to the next generation in some way or the other. Certain people, events, emotions, symbols and ritual from the past are these days learnt orally or are associated in some sense or the other. Some strict measures are being adopted to conserve this music as a marker of their ethnic identity. The Kherai music in general is very different from the other music in Bodo folklore.

This special music is religious in nature. The entire repertoire of Kherai music can be divided into various types. Each music is a result of Daudini's specific action. If these

music's are not played accordingly the dancers stop their dancing in between the performance. A serene and a tense moment prevail during various junctures of the ritual dances. A categorization can be done on the basis of the fieldwork the researcher has done.

Types of music:-

- i) A serene music is played on the flute to welcome the gods and goddesses at the beginning of Kherai. Same music is also played during the offering of sacrifices. Kham provides a rhythm to the whole piece or rather we can say it controls the flow of the music. This is also known as Sarasati seu by some people.
- ii) Labdinga music is played after every sacrifice and every propitiation. It resembles Bag rumba music generally played during the spring festival.
- iii) The trance music prevails all throughout the ritual performance. Whenever the Daudini goes into trance. The kham, siphung and jotha are played together in a thumping manner till Daudini regains her senses.
For e.g. , performance of the right and at the right tempo might be essential for bodily transformation in the ritual altar .iv) Certain expressions like jumping, chasing, crossing a river normal walking, are characterized by different music underlying their emotions.
- v) Clockwise and anticlockwise movements have different music for them.
- vii) The starting and ending frameworks are same. Music follows the action of the community members . Sometimes spontaneously music is made.
- viii) Though there are not too many variations in the music for e.g. a single piece of music becomes background music for the entire ritual. Different stories are enacted in the same music.

The use of music in the Kherai ritual has shown that in places it has links with the performance and at times there is no direct link between the Daudini's performance and music as there are so many other important symbols that relate altered trance states to experiences of daily life. The musical variation or improvisation, in performances of the same written score by different orchestras and conductors as there

is stability in repeated performances of a piece in an oral tradition. It has also been found that certain patterns of rhythm, tone, melody, can induce physiological responses like thumping music during any kind of transformation. The producing of the Kham beats in different tempos leads to different emotions. The performers over the years have become acclimatized to the overall structure of the music. The specificity of the tones in particular sequences is well remembered by the participating folk. All these beats can be controlled within four or seven beats.

The change from one music in a particular sequence to a different music in a different sequence in linear progression takes over naturally. It clearly proves that every episodic structure has a music that is well thought. This music takes care of the underlying emotions of the episode content.

Discourses of the Bodo Scholars

As stated earlier, our representations and interpretations of the dance are meant for an alien audience 'one that is unfamiliar with this particular performative genre. It is interesting to, observe, however, that when other writers write on the Kherai dance for an audience that is presumably familiar with this dance form, the same themes are repeated. The researcher will give one such example where a villager, Leeleshwar Narzari still talks of a unified cultural area, Sonitpur of which Ghoramari is a part. They believe Kherai dance belongs to this cultural area and is an ancient and magic dance so that the movements tend to demonstrate a particular aim which is to invoke the gods to come down to take the offerings. One discovers in its form a mimetic style.

The linear sequences in which the dance performance progresses are supposed to imitate the creation and the elements of space. The movements tend to demonstrate the will to control nature and understanding of ethereal space in their own world view. He in a way forces nature to obey him. He has no need for supplication.

According to Frazer:-

“Magic assumes that in nature one event follows another necessarily and invariably without the intervention of any spirit or personal agency. Thus its fundamental conception is identical with that of modern science, underlying the whole system is a faith, implicit but real and firm, in the order and uniformity of nature. “(The Golden Bough, 1890).

There is no confusion or disagreement between the scholars and the community people about the outline of the history of dance , only problem is regarding the values given to two cultures – tribal and Hindu. One is puzzled by the fact that such primitive people were able to preserve their dance and to portray them correctly. This for the community is degradation of culture, and of its exploitation by the outside forces. Both the outsiders and the insiders give dance homogeneity in terms of participation of dance. This is far from actual reality. Though the dance is restricted to the Bodo community, it has a structure that can easily absorb outside influences.

In this section we have seen that the discourses around the dance first create a representation of the dance that is directed at the audience. This representation gets crystallized and acquires a certain resonance so that even when the audience and the motives of the discourse changes the images remain the same. The ultimate irony is that when the dance absorbs these stereotypes and becomes what is represented as a combat dance. The numerous folk dances have become famous after performances held in and outside the state. But this has been at the cost of stylistic variation that was once a part of dance. Some of the more difficult dances are no longer performed as the Daudini's are not efficient in performing them or they have been erased from the memory.

Daudini's Choreography

Though the nature and the attributes of the gods and goddesses is not known or is generally not discussed, Daudini seems to make some intelligible choreography that the community understands its stature and importance. There can be a question as what

choreography has to do with knowledge. Clearly, choreographic works and the processes historically and typically involved in making them are the sort of things we can know something about. But does the practice of choreography itself exploit, develop or demonstrate particular kinds of knowledge? Is it a way – of knowing in its own right? Choreography is not a fact seeking exercise, not a theory building enterprise and rarely (if ever) a means to measure or quantify the objects of a supposedly mind – independent reality. So, what do and can we know through dance –making?

The experienced artist in this case is daudini's knowledge would be embodied in her conduct of the creative process: it informs the way the choreographer (daudini) relates to her co- dancers, generates movement material, manipulates and edits that material and binds the variety of choreographic elements within the emerging work. It is not a case of having a prior theoretical knowledge of what should be done in choreographic elements within the emerging work.

It is not a case of having a prior theoretical knowledge of what should be done in a choreographic situation and then putting these ideas into practice; nor it is a question of envisaging the work in theory and then finding a physical form to illustrate that idea. Rather, the intelligence of the choreographer's action is embedded in the doing, of which she may or may not be reflectively be aware. And this knowledge can be practiced through dance. It cannot be learned by rote or in the abstract. (Gilbert Ryle's : 1963) argument seems highly suggestive for the dance artist because it accords weight and value to the doing itself, instead of requiring a theorization of practice to render it epistemologically respectable. Understanding is already embodied in actions the daudini performs during the making process; there is no need to alter the nature of that process in order to give it credence as a thoughtful activity. To assume that theory must be the driving force behind thoughtful choreography would be to succumb to what Rye calls "intellectualist fallacy and to ignore the intelligence intrinsic to practice itself.

A character (image) type is not continuous with the personalities found in the oral tradition. These personalities may display a number of conflicting moods which may be

displayed in different episodes of dance. Thus, Bathou the presiding deity is visually portrayed through the Siju plant but its heroic deeds are displayed by the divine attendants of Daudini.

For e.g. Bathou becomes a tiger, a bear and the Daudini disguised as a hunter performs the heroic deed. Although the audience is familiar with the entire corpus of narratives in which Bathou disguised him as a hunter will reveal himself as Shiva. The point is that the audience knows beforehand that at the end of the narrative, the disguised hunter will reveal himself as Shiva but the dance must portray Bathos's godly character which is known to all. Similarly, there are demonic characters may embody the comic type when they bear some resemblance to the animal characters in the disjointed style of their movement.

Dance as restored behavior: dancer's discourse

The process by which the dance has been reconstituted is called 'restored behavior' by Scechner (1983). Restored behavior is 'living behavior' that has been reconstructed from the outside and viewed, " independent of the casual systems that brought them into existence."

Restored behavior can be treated as a thing, can be "put on as a mask or costume is put on. It was in the Thelamara (Dhekeri Botola village) area it was observed that the community has already started creating a tradition for the Kherai dance. The positive side of community's restoration is that restored behavior is reflexive. It is precisely the alienating nature of the discourse that makes it serve as a mirror for dance. It gives the dancer's an opportunity to stand outside tradition and view it objectively.. It has also allowed them to experiment with the cultural images outside the tradition. For e.g. scenes that of hunting, working and working in the fields are new additions in order to provide authentic sources The priest in the Borbil region has started making groups of young girls and boys and have taught them the traditional dances of the Bodos. These groups give performances in and outside the state. This has also brought some economy to the village. It is perhaps with a touch of irony that one notes the

activity of reconstructing historical traditions. The dance now returns to the people who started out by being objects of the discourse. The discourse produced by writers has now become a part of what is constituted as restored behavior for the dance. These writings can serve as mirrors through which the dancers see their dance as an objectified form on which they can now reflect in the effort to both preserve and innovate traditions.

Categorization of the Kherai dances:

According to the Bodo scholars the total numbers of dances that are performed during the Kherai ritual are eighteen in number, but there are many more that are being performed all throughout the ritual. For research purpose we will make categories of the dances for the means of organizing the material that is performed. These will have to be categorized as:

- i) Adorning dances
- ii) Linking dances
- iii) Sacrificial dances
- iv) Trance dances
- v) Propitiating dances
- vi) Invoking dances

There can also be a category of dances as:

- i) Mimetic dances
- ii) Emerging dances
- iii) Theatrical dances

Nature of Daudini's dance:

Dance is one of the most ancient arts which make use of human body to display an infinite range of postures and movements of the parts of the body. The basic feature of all these dances whether primitive or sophisticated, is the rhythmic movement in space with special skills in the footwork. But its independent aesthetic merit is challenged when it is considered as an attempt to gesticulate the content of the lyrical text presented along with dance. Dance here is not something which must necessarily

co-exist with music and be appreciated only for its visualization of music, but it can be admired for the suppleness of human body, the rhythmic foot movements and the manner of suggesting human emotions through suggestive gestures.

Susan Langer negates these observations and epithets made about dance as they do not bring forth the real essence of dance. The rhythm by itself does not make dance a great form of art. Such rhythmic actions are found elsewhere also in nature. We do not treat them as performing arts feats. Gestures are also important in dance in order to signal their mental states and events.

The most important factor of any art is to create illusions of one or the other forms of feelings, experiences by human beings. The primary illusion of dance is 'vitality' and the energy that reflects the dynamism of human life. This is physical exerted power, but appearances of influence and agency created by virtual gesture. The prototype of these purely apparent energies is not the field of forces known to physics, but subjective experience of volition and free agency. The consciousness of life, the sense of vital power, even the power to receive impressions, apprehends the environment, and meet the challenges in most immediate self-consciousness. This is the feeling of power, and the play of such felt energies is as different from any system of physical forces. Dancer's actual gestures are used to create a semblance of self-expression, and are there by transformed into virtual spontaneous movements or gestures.

The notion of self representation can elucidate performance , more particularly dance. In dance, of course, the notion of literally freezing anything and anyone in time is illusory, limited to a momentary choreographic exercise. Dancer's acts of self-representation, which are and not like written acts , create meaning in the framework of live , rather than written /read performance . I look here at Daudini's role in Kherai ritual which is a realistic portrayal of the spirit and the self and has emerged from the longstanding practice of tradition. One of these is the collective self, the community and other is the individual self through dance. This ritual creates a self – representational model which foregrounds the notion of community, and creates a

powerful envisioning of the individual (daudini) who emerges from within the collective.

* *Daudini is a shaman dancer, a temporary embodiment of spirit of God.*

A Bodo woman in her mid to late sixties performs Kherai ceremony or can be properly said as is danced, for her. The community addresses her as *nasoni* (dancer) and some as daudini, depending on the status ascribed to her in the particular society. Defining her role as a social role involves many parts and each of these different parts are presented by the Daudini's on a series of occasions to the same kind of audiences. She acts as a medium between community and God. She represents various stages of the ritual through the medium of dance. She is believed to be possessed with divine power. The process or the way of performing is important as the dance form is produced.

---- *"This particular shaman dancer, Dalimi Boro is a lady who has been entrusted with the performing of the ritual since last twenty years. She does it religiously, but very often with contempt, these days. She does it for her village and for the district also. She is hired by the other villages at a rate of two thousand rupees per festival. In a season she gets two to three ritual events to perform. Recently, she told me during my stay in the village for field-work that she is not going to perform the ritual anymore. Consuming raw blood these days makes her sick. Moreover a part of the money has to go to the village committee or otherwise she is not allowed".*

This discussion will explore the dance performances executed by Daudini. These dance performances can be divided into three types.

- i) primary dances
- ii) secondary dances
- iii) mimetic dances

Primary dances are performed to invoke the main deities and comports as deity possessed. These are remarkable dances as it fully depicts the nature and attributes of the deities.

Secondary dances are performed to appease the minor deities and are also used as linking devices in between the sequences. These can also be used as participatory dances as they make an allowance for the public (onlookers) to participate in. They primarily accompany the priest and the Daudini's.

Mimetic dances are performed by two characters known as Lampha (male) and Lamphi (female) who acts as Daudini's companions and relievers in the ritual. Both the characters imitate daudini's actions in lighter vein.

Their body language provides a kind of comic relief to the spectators from the vigorous acts of Daudini. Daudini's dances originate from the creative processes that manipulate human bodies in time and space so that the formation of the movement is intensified. The dance produced is a visual manifestation of social relations and maybe the subject of an elaborate aesthetic system. In order to detect these creative processes, observation of techniques and practices related to the memorial, codification, memorization and transmission are our main focuses. Various forms of interaction are observed and analyse as performances. The use of miscellaneous supports – gestures, motions and movements: voices, rhythms and melodies is taken into account. The objective of the discussion is to look into Daudini's role as a form of evasion and an opportunity for fantasy, as the dancer is both out of control and therefore out of reach of controlling forces. Dance is seen here as a dramatic display of the self and the body.

The various processes and dynamic ways of generating, playing, evaluating, repeating and remembering the performances are important for the performance. The characters of the ritual event have been doing this sub-consciously since the communities have been performing the ritual withstanding the age –old tradition. Their knowledge is based on personally formed values. The whole idea is primarily concerned with creating and facilitating dance with participating individuals and groups. However, this is also true that by giving the participants a sense of their own abilities, by enabling them to create material by themselves, helped to build in those individuals a sense of

agency. It also gave them an opportunity to create their own phrases of movements, and also empowers participants and brings value to what they achieve.

The notion that arts bring benefit to individuals and communities, even contribute to social cohesion and social justice can be understood by the following examples. For e.g., the community people who have been working outside the state come over during Kherai to participate in the celebration. They settle all kinds of matters in front of Bathou Buda even if somebody has performed a sin or a good deed. They take blessings from all the senior people of the village. They participate in the ritual dances and show their social solidarity.

When these individuals and the ritual officials play their part before the community they implicitly want their observers to take them seriously and also the impression that is given off. They are made to believe that what they see are actually the attributes of the gods and goddesses. This is also one way of looking at oneself when one believes that the impression of reality that he shows and makes attempt to give rise to those among whom he finds himself.

For the community this is all the more than enough to believe, but for the researcher or the scientists the question of realness lingers. The most interesting part of the Kherai event is when people who have no faith in the act, no concerns with the belief of the Bathou followers, but join the celebration with all their disinvolvement, for mere entertainments sake may experience a joyful spiritual aggression from the fact that they can play at will with something the community might take seriously. Though, it can not be said that there is private gain or self – interest of these cynical performers for deluding their audience for purposes.

The individual performers or the participants may do so as they might think that the audience might judge in a particular and they may seek this judgment as an ultimate end in itself. They may not completely believe that they deserve the valuation of self which they ask for or for that the impression of reality which he fosters is valid. There is

always a question of deception during the ritual trance. Though we are given the impression that whatever happens is a true experience. Ritual trance may constitute a hitherto neglected cultural universal. Near universality of these experiences suggest a human biological substrata or propensity; this interpretation is confirmed by observable changes in motor behavior, speech patterns and response to external stimuli in trance states reported both by laymen and by scientifically trained observers. The manner in which the ritual specialist (daudini) carries his/her activities speaks of her longstanding practice in the tradition. Though she stays calm and cool during the ritual, one can see that she gets perturbed at the slightest provocation.

We often expect an agreeable consistency between appearance and the manner of the performer participant's. It is always convenient to divide the stimuli which makes up the personal front into appearance and manner, according to the function performed by the information these stimuli convey. 'Appearance may be taken to refer to those stimuli which function at the time to tell us of the performer's status. These stimuli also tell us of the individual's temporary ritual state: i.e., whether he is engaging informal social activity, work, or informal recreation; whether or not he is celebrating a new phase in the season cycle or in his life –cycle.

'Manner' may be taken to refer to those stimuli which function at the time to warn us of the interaction role the performer will expect to play in the oncoming situation. Thus a haughty aggressive manner may give the impression that the performer expects to be the one who will initiate the verbal interaction and direct its course. A meek apologetic manner may give the impression that the performer expects to follow the lead of others, or at least that he can be led to do so.

But, of course , appearance and manner may tend to contradict each other , as when a performer who appears to be of higher estate than his audience acts in a manner that is unexpectedly equalitarian, or intimate, or when a performer dressed in the garments of a high position presents himself to an individual of even higher status. The Kherai event presents a series of such moments where in order , to explore more fully the relations

among the several parts of the social front , it will be convenient to consider here a significant characteristic of the information conveyed by front, namely, its abstractness, and generality

Notes:-

- i) The above said observations were made during my field-study in a Bodo village namely Dhekidol in Sonitpur district. The Kherai ritual held in the month of march 2008 was celebrated with much resentment in the community. Expenses for organizing the festival were too meager. Event time was cancelled thrice.
- ii) The data analyzed in this paper is collected from a village namely Dhekidol 20 kms from the Tezpur town in Sonitpur district.
- iii) My principal informant Sri Tajuram Narzary also a community elder tried to convince me by showing his family genealogy which showed that some 150 years ago, an ahom elder (khara bura) came from Sivasagar got settled in this village and married a Bodo girl . Since then Kherai is celebrated.
- iv) There stood a big tree trunk on which were inscribed some letters regarding the ancestors. The tree was chopped some years ago, by the villagers for wood. The place where the tree stood a prayer hall (namghar) was built. The tree's remaining part is cemented with a column within the namghar structure as to make the community feel the presence of an authentic setting. This stands as a testimony for tradition also.
- v) A talk on 'The significance of Kherai Dances in Bathou religion was delivered on 7th February, 2005 at Srimanta Sankaradev Kalakhetra, Guwahati by the scholar Uttam Chandra Kherkotari.
- vi) Due to the non-availability of the priestess (Daudini's) they thought of managing the event with a proxy . They also had alternative fears of acceptance by the larger society. For some it was too early to drop the traditional practice. Somehow they finally arranged for the money and Daudini.
- vii) The participant performers were never referred to as dancers or nasoni's but as supporters or rather helpers. They join the sequences and are watchful of the Daudini's activities. The organizers keep requesting the public to come and participate. They are supposed to keep an eye on the proceedings of the ritual along with performance.

.....

Chapter – 4

“From Ritual to Theatre”

A Case for Understanding Ritual as Theatre:

The ritual thesis was not dismissed despite heavy criticism by Centre for Scientific Anthropology, (Ernest .T. Kirby 2003:33) suggested a ritual theory on the basis of development of theatre from the ecstatic nature of the shamanist ritual. From the viewpoint of the creation of the theatre medium, it would appear that Kirby’s approach is advantageous. Whereas the CSA focused on the shared narrative elements of the ritual and the dramatic fictional world, Kirby focused on a performer exhibiting an identity other than his own apparently characteristic of both the shaman in a state of trance and the actor on stage. This alleged common property would appear to be more interesting, since characters are essential to acting in all dramatic media.

The term “shaman”, is of Siberian origin and originally employed in Siberian ethnography, is applied nowadays in the study of different cultures to a variety of medicine men that combine healing, worship, magic and medium ship. The common belief is that the shaman is capable of entering a state of trance, traveling to other worlds, taking control of the spirits and compelling them to cure people in the human world. The success of the shaman is measured by their mastery of the upper –worlds and, in this sense it is a kind of a ritual.

In a state of trance the priestess behaves as is possessed by a spirit, speaking in his voice. The belief is that in order to reveal itself within the human world the spirit is in need of the material body of the shaman. In this sense, she is a medium of spiritual power. This quality is essential to Kirby’s theory, because the shaman is supposed to enact an entity other than her, a denizen of another world; and this is assumed to establish her as the prototype of the theatre actors.

Despite its wide appeal, this approach is nevertheless fallacious, since it overlooks the internal viewpoint of the culture within which the shaman performs. The mere thought that the shaman is simply “acting” implies that the magical means are not effective and cannot influence the world, in particular its ruling powers. From this internal perspective the shaman is definitely not enacting the character of the spirit, but constitutes a means for its revelation in the human world; i.e., the spirit is not conceived as a fictional entity, but as a real one. She is not describing a spirit itself. The shaman performs a ritual macro-act whose purpose is to change a state of affairs in the human world with the assistance of supernatural powers. The shaman believes that she is capable of coercing spirits to speak through her mouth and that she can serve as a medium for them and so does the community. The spirit is assumed to eventually control the shaman and from this moment on its conduct is her own. The efficacy of the ritual is supposed to depend on these beliefs. If the shaman is suspected of impersonation by the community, her performance is conceived as fraud and the efficacy of the ritual is impaired. The community is mesmerized by the gimmicks performed by the shaman. They come from far off places to see the tricks for those who believe that daudini manages her theatrical acts by her skill and wisdom. Another set of believers who think that it is due to the divine power that she has acquired helps her to do the terrific acts.

In contrast, an actor genuinely enacts a (fictional) character. By means of performing verbal and non-images, which she imprints on her body, she creates a text, a description of a character, which reaches existence only in the imagination of the spectator. Throughout her performance on stage or the ritual arena she consistently preserves the duality actor/character, which cannot be cancelled without becoming something else. The audience accepts the basic convention of theatre that an actor enacts a character, displaying indexes of action that reflects, not on her but on the enacted other. Therefore, the nature of her performance cannot be perceived as fraud, but as essential to her art. Whereas the shaman’s performance can be conceived in terms of “honest” or “fraudulent”, the actors’ performances are not.

Even if we do not accept the internal view of the shamanistic believer, and prefer a skeptical scientific approach, the principles of representation do not change. For example, from a psychoanalytical viewpoint, the thesis is that in a situation of trance the shaman reflects potential entities and voices suppressed in her own consciousness. In this sense, from this viewpoint too, she doesn't enact an "other", but expresses the "other" suppressed in her soul; she enacts nothing, because this "other" enjoys real existence. Thus trance is assumed to only reflect the non-I of the shaman herself. Consequently whether the approach to shamanism is internal or external is immaterial: in any case the "other" is conceived as real. In contrast, in creating images on stage, for the sake of describing a character, the theatre actor may draw inspiration from the contents of his own psyche, including the suppressed ones, but he cannot transcend the boundaries of the medium. : She does not express a character of shaman, or even a spirit, but the shaman cannot describe or even express an actor.

The problem resides in conceiving ecstasy as a condition of theatre acting. Even in the state of extreme identification with the character, the basic duality actor/ character is not and cannot be abolished. Further more, at most, this type of identification can be conceived as a quality of a particular style of acting. Indeed, Kirby's approach definitely approaches the naturalistic style, in the vein of Stanislavski, which presupposes that the actor has to get under the skin of his character, as if she were possessed by it. Obviously, this is a metaphorical way of speaking, since, being figments of the imagination, fictional characters have no real skin: their fictional "existence" is conjured up by the very fact of being enacted. Moreover, it is very difficult to imagine, that every evening (as and when required) an actor enters a kind of trance. This assumption does not suit even naturalism, which is quite a marginal style in the history of theatre. Possession cannot be a necessary condition of theatre acting.

Although the religious official's activity focuses on the cure of an individual patient, the ritual act takes place within a community of believers and inside a well- delimited space, such as building or enclosed open space. From an external viewpoint, therefore,

the impression is that in the state of trance, the shaman “performs “in front of” audience” in a theatre”. As mentioned in the above paragraph there are always two sets of minds in the field or the ritual arena .Accordingly, the transition from ritual to theatre is supposed to happen when the belief in the shaman’s capability to dominate the spirits weakens and /or the involvement of the community in the ritual act decreases, even if they still respect his art. The community at times seems to get demoralized when the shaman is not able to perform upto their expectations. It is indeed possible that in such a process of decline, shamans mobilize all kinds of gimmicks, what Kirby terms “para-theatrical “acts, for intensifying the effect of their performances. These para-theatrical acts are like stylized or exaggerated movements, whirling sounds, devilish acts etc. This can under such conditions, create an impact on the community of believers supposed to gradually change into an audience, while the functional element of the ritual gradually disappears. In this sense, this theory is not different from that of the CSA with the creation of theatre being conceived as the outcome of a process of disintegration of a certain kind of a ritual. The problem is, therefore, whether or not in the state of deterioration of a ritual still preserves its nature, so that it can be said that it generates theatre? This is a theatre like situation where there is climax, enthusiasm, action, and reciprocity of feelings. This is probably a necessary assumption for any theory of origin of theatre, since it needs a phase in which ritual loses its essential nature in order to assume new ones.

Furthermore, in its correct functioning, the ritual community does not participate in the shamanistic act in the same way as in a theatre performance. It forms a community of believers on whose faith the efficacy of the ritual act depends. In general, there is “participation ‘ in both shamanistic ritual and theatre, but its meaning is completely different in each of these domains.

In ritual “participation” means involvement in the communal effort to change a state of affairs on a divine level for the sake of a patient’s cure. In the theatre, in contrast, it means involvement in sharing a communal form of thinking, and experiencing the potentialities of human nature.

An attempt is being made in this research to devise a unitary theory and in order to assimilate the tradition of theatre originating in the Kherai ritual. This is an example of pure shamanism. The nature of the Kherai ritual is although ecstatic; the main features of shamanism are fully present in the ritual. In conclusion, Kirby's effortful theoretical attempt infused new life into the basic thesis of CSA, by merely changing the line of argumentation. The crucial difference between them resides in the addition of the performative element, which transforms Kirby's approach into a genuine theory of creation of the theatre medium. However, as we have shown, this theory too does not stand up to criticism. If this is true, it is indeed a matter of wonder why it still continues to enjoy extreme popularity among contemporary theatre scholars.

Validity of the ritual theories

A sense of crisis with regard to the validity of the ritual theories of origin probably underlies Richard Schechner's theoretical move, inspired by Victor Turner's anthropological approach, Schechner's claims that there is no generative link between ritual and theatre, because these are different reflections of the same kind of human activity: "performance". This activity is characterized by the combination of two main elements, "entertainment" and "efficacy", which in varying proportions creates the continuum of all kinds of performance. This combination cannot be separated, and even in the extremes of the continuum no single element exists in the purity; i.e., there is no absolute entertainment or absolute efficacy.

When the element of entertainment outbalances the other, the result is usually what is called "theatre" and when the element of efficacy outbalances the other-it is "ritual". Furthermore the theories of ritual origin are the single comprehensive and dynamic category of "performance".

It is this comprehensive notion of "performance", which includes disparate activities such as ritual, football, concerts and theatre, that compel Schechner to discuss the relationship between two essentially different elements such as "entertainment" and

“efficacy”. Schechner defines “performance “as an activity done by an individual or group in the presence of and for the benefit of another individual or group.” This definition bears witness to the problematic nature of this concept, because it creates an artificial set with such a wide common denominator that it can include almost any human activity. Moreover, it is composed of activities so different from each other that its efficacious application is impaired. While the category of “performance “ stands in contrast to “work”, another comprehensive category, and would appear to apply to any kind of non-instrumental activity, it excludes artistic activities akin to theatre, which are not performed in front of another individual or group(audience) such as painting , making films and writing fiction.

Moreover, this definition of “ performance” excludes non-artistic kinds of activity, whose affinity to theatre is clear and amply demonstrated , such as imaginative sequences ; and includes activities without any connection to theatre , such as the efforts of trying to trace history, to innovate performance before a group of bystanders or community gathering, for the sake of tradition . One could also cross the risk factor as in the Kherai ritual we could see that the participation of the community constitutes an integral part of the activity of the shaman, as part of the collective effort for the benefit of the ritual participants and not for those watching the performance.

At the same time it is important to understand how the two terms “entertainment ”and “efficacy” are characterized. Schechner differentiates “entertainment “as fun only. The total emphasis is now on the performer’s actions, audience involvement, individual creativity and criticism is welcomed. In case of Kherai the lampha (daudini’s attendant) is seen providing entertainment through his jocular movements throughout the ritual. It is also felt that this diverts the minds of the spectators from the continuous sacrifices that are made on the altar. For a long stretch of time he carries on with his tricks and makes the audience get involved in the performance. At times lampha imitates the daudini’s movements and tries to innovate each time to make people laugh only. It also shows his presence of mind and his concern for the tradition. At times he does cross limits of decency but the audience does not take offence of it. At the end of the

performance people do discuss lampha's performance, appreciate and criticize it at times. For efficacy, Schechner suggests: results, symbolic time, performer is in trance, audience participates, and audience gets involved.

Ritual to performance: making of a performance

What makes an act or set of acts a ritual?

The chapter would look into the following queries:

Structures --- What rituals look and sound like, a how the community uses the space, who performs them and how are these performed?

Functions---- What rituals accomplish for groups, cultures and individuals.

Processes ---- How rituals enact and bring about a change?

Experiences -- What it's like to be in a ritual?

Firstly, ritual is understood to be a form or structure i.e., a number of features or characteristics in a more or less fixed relationship to one another .For e.g. speech acts, dances, music scores, behavioral patterns ,ritual acts etc. Performance itself is an aspect of ritual which is performed. Rituals help people deal with difficult transitions, ambivalent relationships, hierarchies.

“Ritual is to the symbols it dramatizes as action is to thought; on a second level, ritual integrates thought and action; and on a third level, a focus on ritual performances integrates our thought and their actions”. (Catherine Bell 1992:32)

Performance play gives a chance to temporarily experience the excessive and the risky.” Ritual and play both lead people into a second “reality” separate from ordinary life. Thus ritual transforms people permanently or temporarily. In religion, rituals give form to sacred, communicate doctrine, and mould individuals into communities. In

daily lives, it is difficult to distinguish among ritual, habit and routine. Rituals deal with the innermost drives and urges of human being it does not depend upon the formal structures for its existence and continuity. It represents mediation between order and chaos. This is understood in Durkheim's study on Native Australians rituals. The strategies they employ are that as of real drama, but they also see an end of the same nature.

"They make men forget the real world and transport them into another where their imagination is more at ease; they distract. They sometimes even go as far as to have the outward appearance of a recreation: the assistants may be seen laughing and amusing themselves openly." (Durkheim 1965;424-427)

Perhaps this will be clearer if we consider for a moment where these rituals are performed. This paper explores the schematic diagram of the Kherai sali, where the sacred spaces and ritual performances are transformed in the move from ritual (offline) to performance context (online). A semiotic analysis of the two spaces- Kherai sali and the virtual stage suggests the potential for demarcating distinct performance spaces, in which devotees /performers can engage themselves in ritual activity. The argument focuses on the performance of Kherai puja in the virtual stage. Interviews and insights of various performer academicians and an analysis of the ritual sites suggest that the virtual is primarily conceived in terms of a simulation of the real or the actual. Consequently these sites are envisaged in terms of conventional notions of sacred spaces and ritual performance, rather than as something new.

These sites are used by the ritual priestess as performance spaces and also as a platform for self expression .She represents stages of the rituals through the language of dance. She is believed to be possessed with a divine power. Here she presents various dances in sequential order from top to below i.e. hills to plains. (Bodos claim to have come from Tibet, the highlands).These dance performances can be divided into three types.

Primary dances

Secondary dances

Mimetic dances

In the above relevance, understanding of North-East Indian tribal situation is quite revealing. Diversity of tribes, their sub-grouping and levels, ecological variations, historical factors, lack of communication, linguistic and racial diversification etc have characterized the region and the inhabitants thereof. They have become a part of the continuous process of globalization and the tribals have to decide which direction they have to march in

Tribal culture is influenced by the various process of the culture change. Change has taken place in almost every tribal community as culture is dynamic, the tribals have faced and are facing changes. Nevertheless the tribes have retained the principal elements of their way of life though these are modified to a greater or a lesser extent. The factors responsible for the transformation are broadly of two types-traditional and modern.

The traditional process characterized by the impact of certain traditions of the major neighboring communities of the tribal group, has long been in operation and has led the resultant concept like Hinduisation, Sanskritization, and tribe –caste continuum. Tribal development schemes, democratic set up of nation, modernization in education, communication and administration are of recent origin and are directly or indirectly external factors which do not emerge as a result of normal conducts of the tribal people with the non-tribal people of the areas.

The present discussion is an outcome of my continuous observation of Bodo folk religion. Folk religion is an invisible reality. It is operated largely at the subconscious level. For us it is simply a survival of primordial superstitions. These practices and symbols provide a subconscious background to every religious system and integrate them into each other discarding their superficial sectarian contradictions.

It validates the social value scheme with divine sanction and thus-reinforce the divine order. It also provides a scheme for man's place in the cosmos and explains some profound uncertainties of human experience like success, death, failure, disease and other calamities. Human being is a symbol as well as a tool using creature, and he often turns to religion to satisfy his many varied expressions and pragmatic needs. Rituals are the set of conduct that prescribe how a man should comport himself in front of sacred things.

Efficacy – Entertainment polarity

Though Kherai is basically a welfare seeking festival but it has a fun generating mode also . The community waits throughout the year to participate and enjoy the feats of the daudini's. Daudini's presence brings in a lot of enthusiasm in the public. Her mental state and her well –being is also sought by the community. The question that arises is regarding the tension whether the performance will lay an impact or result. Whether it will provide them solutions and also give a judgment regarding their actions. They take it as an avenue where they can thrash their minds and bodies not only to have fun but also to rejuvenate themselves. Here comes the basic polarity between the dyad-efficacy and entertainment. Efficacy and entertainment are not to be understood as two opposites. Rather they form the poles of a continuum. The basic polarity is between efficacy and entertainment, not ritual or theatre, depends mostly on content and function. A performance is called one or the other because of where it is performed, by whom, in what circumstances and for what purpose. The purpose is the most important factor determining whether a performance is a ritual or not. If the performance is to effect change, then the other qualities come under the heading 'efficacy'. But if the performers' purpose is mostly to give pleasure to show off to be beautiful or to pass time then the performance is an entertainment. The fact is that no performance is pure efficacy or pure entertainment. Kherai of the Bodos in the present times is partially formal and certain scores like speech acts, audience participation, subsidiary characters in between leisure etc are enacted for mere entertainment.

Efficacy-ritual -----

Results

Link to transcendent others
 Timeless time--- the eternal present
 Performers possessed, in trance
 Virtuosity downplayed
 Traditional behaviors/scripts
 Transformation of self possible
 Audience participates
 Audience believes
 Criticism discouraged
 Collective creativity

entertainment / performing arts

for fun

focus on present
 historical time and present
 performer self aware/in co
 virtuosity highly valued
 new and traditional /script
 transformation of self likely
 audience observes
 audience appreciates
 criticism flourishes
 individual creativity

(Additions by the researcher)

Space is sacred	space is profane
Lack of standardization	strict standardization
Emphasis on authenticity	authentic is simulated
Framework is rigid	framework is flexible
Choreography is set (static)	choreography is spontaneous
Fixed images	keep evolving
Memory is intact	memory is shifted

fig-9

The values relating to entertainment and efficacy also undergo change with times . The concerns, values and social solidarity in societies is changing its meaning with times. This transformation is clearly shown in the table below.

Transformed into

Active bearers	dancing groups
Sacrifices	symbolic things
Ritual dress	costumes



fig-8

This shows how transformation has taken place on its own amidst the community. Though the scheme has been borrowed from (Schechner 2002:70) and has been set into the changes of the Kherai ritual. As “activities above the line in fig.8 grow in importance, the entertainment value of the event increases relative to its efficacy value. May be the people in the past danced to fulfill social obligations. But over the years, they came to the grounds and exchanged pleasantries so that they could dance .Or at least the motives for the gathering blurred. It was not only that the ritual officials and the community people changed positions, but also that people wanted to show off, dance and have good time. It was not only to perform results that the dances were staged, but because people enjoyed the festive celebration for its sake.

Kherai ritual performances behave like interfaces between social dramas and aesthetic dramas .The creditors like priest, trance dancer and the mediators are potential characters of the social drama that subconsciously create symbolic time, spaces and characters, the outcome of the story is predetermined by the ritual drama. Kherai as a social drama has more variables, their outcomes are in doubts and they look like games. For e.g. whether the trance dancer is pretending trance or it is simulated behavior. The consuming of blood in one go, the Daudini gets annoyed here and now and many more. Social dramas are real and happen here and now. But aspects of social dramas as with aesthetic dramas are prearranged, foreknown and rehearsed .The celebration of Kherai was somewhere between a social and an aesthetic drama. The transformations convert dangerous encounters and the blood sacrifices into mostly being aesthetic and economic performances. The situation existing between the trance dancer ,the accompanying

priest (bordeuri) and the group present is changed by the ritual .The pig –kill(Bhoroli sacrifice) and the various sacrifices at Kherai sali managed a complicated and potentially dangerous obligations with a minimum of danger and maximum of pleasure.

This success was due to performing of the ritual. Performing can be the way the participants achieve “real results” .The dancing, orating, and giving out meat did not mark or represent the results, but created the results they celebrated. Those at Kherai sali perform in two senses: they put on a show, and they get something done.

Ritual as impression of permanence

Rituals provide permanence. They help people accomplish change in their lives, transforming them from one status or identity to another. Rituals themselves give the impression of permanence, of “always having been” that is their publicly performed face. But continuous observation shows that with the social circumstances changing rituals also do change. Some times the change is accomplished informally as ritual practitioners- shamans, priest, and tribal elders-adjust their performances to suit new circumstances. Practitioners of Kherai are aware that ritual becomes static when it ceases to adjust and adapt, it becomes obsolete, empty of meaning and eventually dies out .They often express the need to modify rituals to address current social conditions. Sometimes change is the result of long deliberation, at times it is more spontaneous.

Many revisions are particularly not obvious, unless the observer is thoroughly familiar with the ritual process by having followed a number of its performance. Much in the same way a critic follows the production of a dance- theatre piece. But rituals may also be invented both by political culture and individuals. In fact, one job of political culture is to make relatively new rituals and the tradition they embody appear old and stable. Such an appearance helps support a sense of social stability. The emergence of the idea of a “nation” was buttressed by new rituals enacting social consciousness. Individual artists, especially those proficient in some discrete art, have taken to inventing rituals. Though this may sound different but to quote from the “Invention of Tradition” (*Eric Hobs awn and Terence Ranger eds. 1983:303-305*) which says:-

“ Invented tradition’’ is taken to mean a set of practices , normally governed by overtly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature , which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behavior by repetition , which automatically implies continuity with the past.”

The Kham (bodo drum) player was seen disturbed by the wrong beats played by younger (new) group. As he was too feeble to walk, he took support of the young man and almost climbed on to his back and corrected his wrong beats. He was too disturbed that the young man was not serious or had not taken sufficient efforts to learn about his own heritage. The tribal elder requested me to get the music recorded so that he could use them as teaching aid. The impulse behind these claims is an attempt to overcome a sense of individual and social fragmentation by means of art. The need is exacerbated by the fact that artists often feel excluded by organized religion. The need to build community is fostered by religion.

These rituals can also be reframed as aesthetic performances. The reshaping of ritual materials into new original work is also widespread. The ritual process itself encourages innovation by opening up a space and time for anti-structure. Sometimes rituals change formally through the work of councils; assemblies of ritual specialists’. But very often in many cultures and in widely variant situations, rituals evolve by means of changes introduced by individuals at a local level. In several areas of Bodos concentration it has been observed that animal sacrifices have been taken over by offering of flowers known as phool Bathou (offering flowers).

Creation of ritual in physical sense

This discussion presents folk religion in a new light by placing it in the broader context of social structure and cultural consciousness. Traditionally folk cults were viewed as degenerated forms of organized religions or remnants of old religious traditions .The basic premise is that folk religion is a collective intellectual exercise, which creates, transforms and even inverts traditional symbols to comprehend and explain the

complexities of experiences. The universality of religion suggests that it corresponds to some deep and probably inescapable human need. Not only have rituals been invented wholesale, but older rituals have long provided gist for the artistic mill or have been used as a kind of popular entertainment. This has to be understood in the various actions that are evoked everyday. Everything has to be performed and done with understanding. Though there is a technical difference in ritual being presented as stylized theatre and ritual in relation to “the place of montage ‘’. In the production the onlookers mind is on the montage. In the ritual, the montage takes place in the minds of the doers. This should happen almost in a physical sense. The mediums of dance, theatre and music can to a large extent be used in rituals.

The other Bodo areas are totally unaware of the variations that are taking place in the ritual. For e.g. Kokrajhar is totally unaware of the changes in Darrang district and Darrang too is not aware of the ritual proceedings, there are contradicting views regarding the origin and incidences of the ritual. Religion in Kherai case is somehow the center and source of liberation, i.e. it is also the source of anxiety. The Bodo people in the present times do make an effort to trace their history and origin by authenticating the folklore in the contemporary context. The symbolic enactments and the metaphorical expressions in the ritual revitalize vigorously in the present context. The conflict is seen here because the Bodos in my case study necessarily do not share a common concern for public welfare. There was no argument whether to continue with value disagreement leads to a deep uneasiness in the ritual .these days. Whether the supernatural concepts upon which the ritual is based were valid ones or not. We cannot attribute the failure of ritual to disinterest in the traditional ‘saving beliefs “any more than we can attribute to anomie. Kherai ritual experiences are not always pleasant or fun. They can also be terrifying. One may encounter enormous forces and memories, demonic or divine.

Mirror of group solidarity

Spontaneous communitas abolishes hierarchy and status. People encounter each other directly. Spontaneous communitas rarely “just happen”. It is generated by certain procedures. Across a ritual limen inside of a “sacred space/time,” Normative communitas usually reigns, with occasional moments of spontaneous communitas. Those in the ritual are all treated alike. People wear similar clothing; they set aside indicators of wealth or poverty, low rank or privilege. There is altogether a different space created which may not be profane but created out in spur of a moment with a liberated mind. To quote Turner:-

“I have used the term ‘anti structure’ mainly with reference to tribal and agrarian societies, to describe liminality and what I have called “communitas”. I meant by it not a structural reversal, an imaging of the “profane”: workaday socio-economic structure, or a fantasy –rejection of structural “necessities”, but the liberation of human capacities of cognition, affect, volition, creativity, etc., from the normative constraints incumbent upon occupying a sequence of social statuses, enacting a multiplicity of social roles, and being acutely conscious of membership in some corporate group.” (Turner, 1982 :44-48.)

Analysis

Ritual assures the victory over tradition and culture. Kherai was not tearing the society rather integrating it. Though rapid social change and globalization could disrupt Bodo society, but in this case the vigorous folk tradition has not weakened the moral ties between individuals in the rural set-up. Socially they want a raised status but culturally they are folk. The Bodo society at presents a transitional sort of society, that it's people stand in between the more or less fully urbanized elite and more or less traditionally organized peasantry. But on the cultural level --- the level of meaning-----there is much less contrast between the urban dweller and the village man. The patterns of belief, expression and value to which the Bodo man is committed—his world view, ethos----differ only slightly only from villager. Amidst a radically more complex social environment, he clings noticeably to the symbols which guided him through life in rural

Bodo society. It seems to me that in spite of social conflicts it also identifies cultural disintegration which is same in the case. There is no independent status of culture or social structure.

But a ritual is not just a pattern of meaning; it is also a form of social interaction. Thus, in addition to creativity cultural ambiguity, the attempt to bring religious pattern form a relatively less differentiated background into an urban context also gives rise to social conflict, because the kind of social integration demonstrated in the ritual is incongruous with the major patterns of integration in the society generally.

People are seen pressed into an intimacy they would soon avoid, where the incongruity between the social assumptions of the ritual (we are culturally homogenous peasants together) and what is in fact (we are different kinds of people who must perforce live together despite serious value is an extreme example. The driving forces in social change can be clearly formulated by one which takes into account the fact that man's need to live in a world to which he can attribute some significance, whose essential import he feels he can grasp, often diverges from his concurrent need to maintain a functioning social organism. The diffused concept of culture as "learned behavior", a static view of social structure as an pattern of interaction, and an assumption that the two must somehow save in disorganized.

The strongest formulation is present in the activities of the shaman dancer where space is used as a phase where she is suppose to demonstrate through her wit , skill or expertise to win over the deities . She has a social responsibility of mediating between god and the community. Here is a description of how she uses space through her body.

Description of the dances of the daudini's

i) Bathou gidingnai

Daudini's moves around the altar of the Bathou for several times dancing slowly to the tunes of the flute (siphung) associated with the Kham (drums) and jotha (cymbals).

ii) Chotrali

Daudini dances holding a sword by her right hand and a shield (dahal) by her left hand and moves dancing around the altar of the Bathou. She is believed to be demonstrating the war dance in the name of the goddess of war, Ranachandi or Ranphagli.

iii) Khapri chipnai

It is believed that the Daudini demonstrates tactics as to how a person can save himself from the attack of the enemies in the battle-field. This dance is related with the Bura-ailong, the bodyguard of Bathou Maharaja

iv) Khoijama phonai

With the dance the daudini demonstrates the tactics as how to destroy the enemies in the battle-field.

v) Gandoula Bonnai

This dance is related with the Manasu or the Manasa god. Subjugating the enemies is shown here through her dance.

vi) Chanalaw Bana

Through this dance Daudini's shows the preparations for a battle. This dance is related to god Abla Khungur, a very powerful god. These days it is compared with samudra manthan of the Mahabharata, although there is no strong ground to believe.

vii) Khamao Barkhonai

Rajkhandra is the god who is related to this dance. He is the grandson of Bura Bathou, At the time of propitiating this god, daudini's climbs the drums and dances on it.

viii) Dao thoi longnai While a chicken is sacrificed in the name of god, Daudini's takes the blood of the sacrificial in a cup (khuroi) and dances to the tune of the flute, and later standing before the god, bows.

ix) Mashakhaori Moshanai

This dance is related to the god khoila, the messenger of Bathou borai.

x) Maoji mambrand galena (the spotted cat dance)

This is performed by a family for the recovery of a patient of the family.

(Brahma :1992)

The dances described above are the ones that are performed in Kherai performances. Those are the main dances danced by daudini once she gets fully engrossed in her activities. Another set of dances mentioned by a Bodo scholar has certain preliminaries set in the initial stages. These preliminaries are also danced by the main dancer the shaman.

Kherai dances as described by Uttam Chandra Kherkotari*(p.105 point no.6)

i) Bathou dumonai mosanai (raising altar for bathou's consecration)

Interpretation:

Before the creation of this universe, we were five elements of space, namely earth, air, water, fire and ether. First stage i) water ii) a form of fry iii) a form of turtle iv) a baby of a wild boar who keeps itself to the brim of the womb to attain life and to attain the status of procreation. Acc to the classical tradition, it is just the reverse of the folk tradition. Formless god is imagined with the five pairs of bamboo strips and eighteen parts of bamboo pairs--- to prepare the Bathou altar. The entire preparation of the altar is demonstrated through the dance.

Bathou kharnai mosanai (laying of the Bathou altar and sprinkling of the holy water. After the raising of the altar, seat is laid for the Bathou by sprinkling holy water. Thereby purification of your inner self before the commencement of the ritual. Purification rite is also shown through the dance.

Paizam banai mosanai (laying of the seat) After purification of body, seat is laid and one is expected to bend his knees and initiate gods services thereafter.

Bathou gidingnai (re-incarnation and spiritual change of the body) depiction of all stages in life – i) childhood ii) youth iii) old age, life is dynamic, not static. For e.g., childhood and youth. The dances show the changes of various stages.

Kherai golao (limitless service) Signification of the creation has been known .Reasons of creation and dissolution is not known. In this limitless service we have a temporary existence. But till the universe exists all customs, feelings of humanity, brother hood will also exists. This is what is depicted in dance.

Kherai Gusungnai – Universe is limitless and our life is temporary, so are our services. That is how Kherai gusungnai is danced .

Gandula bonnai mosanai (dance of a fly is restricted) The guali insect cannot fold its wings. So it keeps hopping from one place to another. Man also with disinterested contemplation moves from one place to another. For controlling our senses , this particular dance is danced.

Khezoma phonai (driving away of the amroli/jamoli insects) The jamoli insects with their saliva make their homes showing their skill and live their lives with contentment. Like them human beings too need to live unitedly. This dance shows the abovesaid sentiment.

Dahal thungri sibnai mosanai (moving of dahal and thungri) For the security and defence of your own body we need weapons to protect us. Dahal is the remover of all obstacles. By moving the wrists and moving the shields and the swords they show driving away the enemies. They shake their hands vigorously as if enemies are confronting them. The wrists goes in clockwise and anti-clockwise position . No sins of the world should touch the body of the community member.

Govo khungriao gana mosanai (dancing over a sharp –edged weapon) In the earlier times people used to test valor and truth by doing dangerous plays or tricks. The enemies cannot dare to inflict any injury provided one is truthful and religious minded. The power needed to stand on the sharp edged sword needs terrific courage. It is expected from the community that they should also protect themselves amidst their enemies by showing their bravery tactics .

Arkhalajana (consuming fire) The dance basically shows people that once you are agitated you perform difficult tasks. Since it is linked to shakti mode of worship , is also teaches to control the enemies through will power. Thus this dance is danced. Old men would very often say – when angry one is a chandal, within one is a ghost.

Daukhe longnai (consuming of cock's blood) Uncontrollable powerful enemy resorts to drinking his own blood to show his indomitable strength. The priestess drinks the blood of sacrificed cock in a go ,but at times is not able to consume , lies unconscious in the ritual arena.

Gorai dabrai nai (horse) Our body is made of various parts. As a horse with his healthy body moves around. Our mind also takes our body as it desires . the dancers go in circular motion in this dance .

Xat hengra sifai na- In this world of maya we all born are third category people. We are lured by property , wealth, children, etc. People cannot rely on hopes and faith. Still one has to leave everything behind .

Nao bonai (boat rowing dance) There is an imaginary boat which in our bodily form goes from one place to another. Some day we will reach its end. We will complete our lives on earth that day.

Raigung sibnai - It is difficult to see religious turmoil in the state. It is true that it is very narrow. The anti people try to transgress the boundaries of the religious. It is difficult for them. The religious bondage can never be negated.

Khamao barkhona mosanai (dance over the mardala(kham) One who does not have the spiritual mind cannot do the religious works. The daudini is able to dance on the kham only because she has a pious mind and she knows that the kham is a instrument of the gods. She offers sacrificial things to the kham as worship offerings.

Ranchandri mosanai - As the depth of the sea can never be assessed, religious teachings are also dry and insipid. It is said that the Bathou followers won the religious debate when religious argument was going on. People as a mark of bravery dance Ranachandi with enthusiasm and celebrate victory.

Jaraphagala dia- The daudini's shows mental condition of the punished father –in-law. since he is driven away from home he wanders from one place to another. The daudini is in frenzied movements during the travel.

Analysis of the performances: - It is seen from the above descriptions that people interpreted their actions and their behaviour in a form that was formalized and intense. These actions were largely a part of the larger activity system. It is difficult to say as what they were doing was actually dance, but definitely was a structured movement. In these societies these actions were used as a ritual to worship, but same movement sequences when performed for the audience became dance. People tried making their impressions turned into reality by using their creativity and energy. For these communities dance may be considered as a ritual, normal work, entertainment. It is quite understood that since dance is not a cross cultural category these can be understood only in terms of individual traditions. What is performed by the priestess's is understood by the specific individuals. In the recent times scholars and the native scholars have tried to give a philosophical interpretation on the notion of being a elite class. But within the context the community members don't understand the

philosophical explanations given by the scholars. They take recourse to oral tradition for the sake of understanding them. The movement dimension in Kherai communicates to specific supernatural beings and the ritual is carried out to obtain specific ends. The same vocabulary of movements will have different meaning when performed by a different set of performers. These movements will also be carried out in a different way. The movement result is a beautifully shaped folk movement that gets its form from the creative processes of the people.

The movement is a basically a circular path like structure. The performers (community members) walk and move in a semi –circle formation encircling a right angled structure. They show crossing of river , moving inside a boat , climbing a hill ,coming down to plains ,the passing of the entire year , the pleasure moments with the community members, the movements of wild animals , survival tactics, killing of the wild animals, the skill needed to trace wild animals in a forest, etc, It is interesting to observe that the movement technique employed by the community members are mainly that are created by themselves .

Most of the non-verbal communication that is carried out by them is spontaneous. As such, the movements don't enhance the texts they accompany. They are basically abstract ideas and vibration of the inner self .The priest dancer has consciously imbibed the act of moving her body and limbs in the space in a meaningful manner. Some movements she has learnt from her peers. The other movements have been carved out from her understanding of the space and time. The act of climbing a hill here she takes three steps forward and three steps backward. Her hands also go up in the space as trying to experience the pathway of the hill. She tilts her head as she takes the curvaceous path in the movement. She tries to hold the space in a unilateral dimension. Since she performs the acts before the public she assumes as if she is enacting the sequences for the community to see and enjoy. There is an artistic flavor in the entire display of the act.

There is definitely a mime or the movements are mimetic in the ritual theatre. The priestess becomes a tribal girl when she comes from the hills to the plains. This is exactly where we can say that these movements belong to the larger activity system that onlookers must understand in order to understand how movement communicates in a particular situation. The mimetic movements of the tiger, ants, birds and other animals are part of the ritual dealing with bio-diversity and fertility of their land. There is also a content of drama involved in the ritual. This also tells a story through the realistic means in which the community members are actors where even the community members enact a story using their whole body to showcase various incidents. It is also important at the same time that through the years of practice they actually where particular acts have to be placed. The subsidiary members also know how they have to behave during some of the moments where their participation is needed.

Structure and meaning; - The movement system must be grammatical, in order to make communication possible. There will be definite codes, rules and regulations to any such movement system. In the Kherai ritual, the way the performers comport in the ritual arena is also a part of the ritual norm. A group of the performers do take the lead in almost all the patterns of performances. Their work is to facilitate the performance of the official priests. Here individual performers don't tell the actual story but act as passive receivers who enjoy the performance of the main performers. They too have learnt most of the things by watching, observing and participating in them.

The community is not aware of the multiple abstractions that take place in the performance, although it is said that the gestures communicate. It is very difficult to say as what is being communicated. The main dancer i.e., the Daudini's expresses through many such gestures that are not understood by the people. One such gesture is when she de-spirits herself she moves her hands in such a way that clearly shows that she is letting the spirit go out of her. Here the hands tell the story. Though in great Indian sastric tradition such gestures have names like Alapadma which denotes a ---

..... full blown lotus, elephant apple, circular movement, a breast, separation from the beloved, looking glass, the full moon, beauty, the hair knot, a moon tower, a village, height, anger, a lake, a cakravaka, murmuring sound and praise.

It is also interesting to see how the usage gets differentiated in different cultural settings and different styles. But these gestures have been used since times immemorial even by the community members without having a referential meaning. They lifted their hands when they wanted to express joy without knowing that hands up in the air meant expression of joy. When they started feeling more enthusiastic their hands started moving in a rhythm gracefully. They continued and formed syntax of movements.

These provided a challenge to the observers to understand the movement as a cultural artifact and to have the communicative competence in the medium, socially as well as cognitively constituted. Once competence is gained it is possible to improvise in a culturally appropriate manner. This is why for doing research understanding of the people's action and people's behavior is important.

Since these community performances don't have a definite or a institutionalized learning and teaching process. People spontaneously join the group and since the framework is flexible can join and leave the performance any time. Since dance is a symbolic medium and is specifically a part of unique human communication in social and cultural systems. It is also true that as a system it operates through tradition which creates meanings that can be changed or can adapt to a new situation. The community understands these conventions of social and cultural constructs as they are a part of it.

The nature of Kherai dance –

The entire form and content of the dances is mimetic in nature. All throughout the form a stylized form seems to evolve an extraordinary expression through the language of gestures. A structure that conveys its message through the visual and the tactile channels of expression and that is characterized by the features of narrative, time and space, and impulse and weight. The Kherai ritual drama is best suited for the noun

word mime as it appropriately does the imitation of the natural world as it comes to them

The priestess or the Daudini does a symbolic interpretation for the audience to understand. The dancer shows the ordinary person in commonplace situations like at the beginning of the ritual for the welfare of the entire community a pair of pigeon is flown in the sky, the dancer carries a living pair of pigeons, crisscrosses her hands, dances for a while interacting with the space once making the pigeons go up in the sky and finally they are let loose. She shows the gesture of salutation and proceeds for the next act. Each of her act has some very thought provoking performances. Though the movement scheme in Kherai is highly stylized based on the principles of counterpoise, which frequently calls for the opposite of what one would normally do in a particular gesture in order to make it intelligible and convincing to the audience.

Though it has been observed that in the Kherai performance i.e., dances communicate without the words and the scholars have often held up the primacy of gesture as deceit, or a second hand portrayal of feelings and action. Gestures as such are meant to be the true expressions of the feelings. It can also be that gesture precedes the spoken word and truly expresses what one feels. It emphasizes the kinesthetic, visual and aural channels of expression. The entire act is visual and kinesthetic; at times the images that are created have a illusion of a much larger world than what is being showcased. Through the process of illusion the space used for the ritual event is filled with objects, settings, and community people. The performances sequences are simplified as people need to understand and also try to participate in the process. These sequences sometimes also look exaggerated which in turn makes the gestures meaningful to the spectators. At times mimicry or caricature becomes the strength of the event. It also is a medium to fill out the intricate thoughts, intense moments, and actions. The impact of an imaginary object on the Daudini's body has to be visible to the onlookers.

One of the striking features of the Kherai performance is the use of props and masks. Smearing of white powder on the face at the same time brings immediate recognition of a type. Tactility in mimetic performances refers to the sense of touching and experiencing space and also creating the relationship with that space. The act moves as if space interacts with them and the performers feel the weight and volume of it.

The performance moves around three important components without the spoken or the written word. The three important components are – narrative function, time and space, impulse and weight .

Narrative function- There is an elaboration of the universal truth, a type of commentary on the life of the Bodo community, story telling as to how these myths came into existence. There is continuous portrayal of emotions. At times one sees as if simply story-telling about the folklore and the life of the Bodos is in progress. This is necessarily done in through the medium of substituting it with the gestures for words. For, onlookers to understand the narrative meaning of these performances is certainly symbols and metaphors.

The symbols used are understood by the people immediately. There are types of symbols that are generally used. The representations used are recognized by the audience consciously and immediately. They are from their own surroundings. In the initial type we see directly representatives of objects, people, animals and behaviors. For e.g. – birds, ants , worms ,wild animals, chewing beetle-nut , enjoying dry fish, merrily crossing river, playing a game , cultivating land through imagination and also in the process try to trace their history.

In the second type we see more abstract representations like feelings or moods. The main dancer (Daudini) and the ritual priests in a way show their emotions and their full Involvement through the way of experiencing the universal truth and its philosophy. The moods that are presented are of happiness, anger, peace and goodness. The completion of anything is marked by a revolution of movements. Some of these are fast

and some very slow. The slow movements look very graceful and carefully drawn out. Each step is taken with deep concentration and thought. The slow ones depict a kind of serious thought or tragedy. The fast ones are more enjoyed by the community members, at times are hilarious too. The speed of the movements is important as it marks the intensity and need for the situation. The spectators move with their own understanding with this kind of symbol at a subconscious level.

In the third category, symbols are used as markers. These markers show the change of scene, direction, passage of time, these include taking a round of the ritual arena , finishing a circle , stopping and taking rest before they go for the next stage. At times slowly closing and opening eyes change of music, bowing head, The timing and use of these symbols is very effective. The performance of Kherai condenses time, it does not take too long to explain something, it is understood instantly. Majority of movements of the Daudini are executed at slow speed, though at times speeding up gives a energetic effect, otherwise are lost on an audience. These performances by nature are closer to ordinary rhythm. There is also a heightened rhythmical time that gives Kherai dance its ability to call forth a kinesthetic response.

In a sense these performances use the space in a restricted sense or make it more concentrated. It creates the image or illusion of a vast space that is larger than life in volume, one feels secured and creates a relationship with it through its mass and body. Space has tension and resistance as the body of the mass moves through it and shapes it. Space gets transformed into fields, heaven, ritual altar, resting place, pathways and transformation platform as and how it is needed. The medium (dance and mime) keeps carving the volume and the size of what the dancer (artists) portrays.

The most important feature of the Kherai performance is the sudden urge to join the performance by the audience and also by the chief dancer's .They initiate every move with a energy and a quick release of energy before the regular flow of movement or gesture. This is the urge and it gives motivation to the movement and the gesture. It rather describes them, making them clear and distinct rather than undefined and vague.

It attracts the spectators attention. These type of mimetic performances succeed in its images (illusions) wherever the perception of heaviness to the invisible is needed.

To make it more convincing for the audience there has to be a strong part about it. There is a continuous metamorphosis from human to spirit and back again. The performer is successful in changing the density of her body to match the representations.

The body agility and flexibility that is needed to use the body is naturally imbibed. The daudini and her co-performers do lot of acrobatic movements which needs a well balanced body. The body discipline that is needed to put the performance is naturally acquired throughout the years. The hard work and the labor they regularly do tones up their entire body .The purity and the exactness of the movements are well established. They seem to be just replicating the everyday life. The stretches, bends and deflections depict the energy they carry within to execute the performance.

Though these seem to be aesthetically pleasing, movements can be also used as a decorative item (cultural artifact) that primarily conveys the primary message that these movements in particular belong to a specific culture . It entirely depends on the spectators as to how they look at it. They might empathize or feel like participating or simply may admire it as art or work.

These movements may not be understood by the commoners but they are to be preserved as they have been created by the people as references to their ethnic identity or cultural identity. These as forms of cultural expression are processed through the cultural identity. With repeated observations and understanding of the choreographic dimensions the movement system can be understood by placing it in the larger activity system. What is also important is that the teaching –learning system is not practiced. The people have been observing these since their childhood and a section has been regularly participating in it also.

The debate is here basically of transforming the ethnographic text into a script of performance and then to act it out again. The performers or the choreographers have to fully take into account the text necessary for performance potential in their subconscious minds.

It is difficult, furthermore, to separate aesthetic and performative problems from various interpretations. For the purpose of performance these still simple looking descriptions have to be distilled. To do it in an effective manner, good knowledge of important socio-cultural backgrounds must combine with presentational skills to bring forth an effective play script. Both individual psychology and social process articulate in terms of the models provided by a particular culture. One advantage of scripting ethnography in this way is that it draws attention to cultural subsystems, such as that constituted by witchcraft / divination / performance of ritual, in a dramatic way. The avant-garde choreographers would like to produce a dance theatre presentation in the background of the naturalistic ritual portraying the Kherai ritual and the other characters of the ritual. This might be an effective device for revealing the hidden, perhaps even the unconscious levels of action.

Our own observation of the Kherai ritual was that the performative potential derived out of the members of the community is amazing. With an ethnographic text in their minds which is in due course of performance is turned into a workable script. The technical know-how of the performance --- their sense of musical play, dialogue, dress sets and props, performance sequences, spontaneous improvisation all went in a logical sequence. This is more like an ethnographic drama, where not only the individual characters but the social processes of life also become important. Every aspect of life small, significant or of minimum value is shown in the dramatic ritual. At times details of a process like the priestess getting ready for ritual, taking ceremonial bath and finally women adorning her with ornaments and dresses. Even the putting on of a ritual dress to the minute nuances of the daily life are the varied images shown here. Offering food and love to the sacrificial animal before sacrifice also gave a lesson to the

community to love animals. The agrarian way of life was acted out by showing the agricultural process.

The joy and gaiety seeing the abundance and prosperity of the crops is demonstrated with jumping and thumping the mother earth. The climbing down from the hills to the plains is perfectly time and space oriented. The leisure one needs to cross a river is aptly demonstrated in the act . Mutual talking and sharing of bettle-nut is enacted in perfect time co-ordination where the people merrily take the time needed in chatting and chewing of tobacco. The Naga lady coming down is ably shown in a hill girl's dress. She comes with a bow and an arrow and shoots the sparrow in a single shot. This is actually not a shot but an arrow pierced through the body of the sparrow. It gives the idea and precision of a hill girl who is well versed in hunting.

Though acting is ambiguous here, the ritual theatre shows doing things in everyday life in a ritual arena. It can be the way of working or moving a body, or it can be the art or just work. It can also be an expression of truth or reality where one performs with an essence of honesty and sincerity on ethical lines. At the same time it can be also a performance of pretence where one does perform under social force or pressure or in order to conceal. Both the factors are ideal though may have different importance's at different times. They may be ideal for some situation and may happen at everyday work. But basically when the community is engrossed in playing a role it does it as a serious activity. Acting out therefore for them is both work and play in what we do or behold in ritual.

The attraction in the ritual is basically not the ritual but the way community dramatizes it, evaluates the acting capacities of the members, the work of the musical accompaniment, etc. in a performance. But, like Geertz had said, these are exclusive meta-commentaries on Bodo society. Whatever be the plot, context, whether drawn from the folklore for e.g. from myths, oral traditions, or historical accounts, they are strictly "reflexive ". Reflexive means when much thought is not given to a work. The reflexivity of performance dissolves these bonds and creatively democratizes .

As pointed out by **Turner** in **“From Ritual to Theatre” 1982.**

“It is perhaps perfectly natural that an anthropology of performance should be moving to meet dramatic performers who are seeking some of their theoretical support from anthropology . With the renewed emphasis on society as a process punctuated by performers of various kinds , there has developed the view that such genres as ritual , ceremony , carnival , festival , game ,spectacle , parade , and sports event may constitute, on various levels and in various verbal and nonverbal codes , a set of intersecting met languages. The group or community does not merely “flow “ in unison at these performances ,but , more actively, tries to understand itself in order to change itself.

This dialectic between “ flow and reflexivity characterizes performative genres : a successful performance in any of the genres ; a successful performance in any of the genres transcends the opposition between spontaneous and self-conscious patterns of action.

Though many social scientists don't do agree upon the terms performance and drama . Performance we have seen is derived from the Middle English parfounen, later parfoumen, which is derived from the French parfounir- par (“thoroughly) plus fournir (“to furnish”) ---- hence performance does not necessarily have the structuralist implication form , but rather the processual sense of “ bringing to completion “ or “accomplishing “. To perform is thus to complete a more or less involved process rather than to do a single deed or act . To perform ethnography, is to bring the data home to us in their fullness, in the plentitude of their action meaning. The patterns can be elicited , but the wishes and emotions , the personal and collective goals and strategies, even the situational vulnerabilities, weariness, and mistakes are lost in the attempt to objectify and produce an aseptic theory of human behavior modeled essentially on 18th century” ‘scientific’ axioms of belief about mechanical causality. Feelings and desires are not pollution of cognitive pure essence, but close to what we humanly are.

Kherai in a symbolic context

Kherai is basically a spectacle replete with visual imageries and dramatic action that is watched by a mass audience. The audience generally sits in one side of the ritual arena from where they can watch the ritual drama from all angles. These days one finds plastic chairs being arranged for the audience. Public speakers used as a communication mode. At times it is seen that the central dramatic event is surrounded by other events and attractions like the community will advertise their regular events to be held throughout the year. The defaulters are reminded of their penalties.

All extra sideshows do take place along with the main ritual ----- including the crowd behavior. The images one comes across keeps lingering in their vision and mind for long. There are sufficient ancillary activities practiced as there is no restriction of space. We see people making small groups, within the crowd and try to participate in the ritual in their own way. Some of them sing, some dance, and some just appreciate or make a critical account of the happenings. This is the juncture when the old and aged try to evoke their remembrance in a natural context, try to trace the missing links and also assess the changes. The Kherai spectacle is a visually attractive public event which evokes responses of varied nature. The community seeks refuge in the event as if they see their world, their saviors (their gods and goddesses) their ancestors, in the heirophany that is created at the ritual space. The spectacle shows its connection with the cultural productions and secondly shows a relationship about the effects and value of the ritual event.

The social scientists and humanities scholars have shown their interest in studying the popular performances in respect to modern as well as traditional cultures. The scholars who studied the performances are anthropologists like Clifford Geertz and Victor Turner. This is also a compiled and collectively authored text 'which tells a story about the Bodo community'. Turner observed that the public events those of the nature of spectacles as one of the forms of performances symbolize though in a slight dramatic manner, the assumptions, norms, and conventional roles that govern their ordinary

lives. He also authoritatively said that these genres are like surrogates of religious ritual in traditional societies but emphasized that they have a greater potential for creativity and change. Though the traditional ritual temporarily suspends but ultimately validates the principles of social structure, modern performance genres have the capacity to subvert the system and formulate alternatives. Since life follows performance such a spectacle imposes their symbolism on social processes and often exerts a major influence.

Within a community various genres of performance work as a communicative frame. Here are certain meta messages that are seen as one of entertainment and detachment. The audience or the spectator remains individuated and uncommitted. The spectacle event also invites access to the other genres it contains. To understand the underlying significance of the ritual the spectator is not merely an onlooker but is also a participant, believer and observer. This also is a kind of confirmation for the onlookers or the modern people to think or get an assurance that there are some truths to be known and certain values to be practiced. These events do have a dual set of appearances, one that attracts the audience and secondly through inner sense of involvement that can be transacted through empathy and participation.

Kherai as public attraction:

Any public attraction accounts for a great deal of exuberance, budget, and commercialization. The community attempts to arrange for the festival by sending communications to far off villages. People come from far off places to witness the event. Minimum essentials and public facilities are acquired, for e.g. a public address system, plastic chairs, disposable things, extra gamosas are woven to be presented to some of the guests. This also brings prestige to the entire event and the village. This also adds sparkle to the event and enhances it. This is also an opportunity for the community to view their own society as glorious, spurious or etc. The people seek deeper meaning which exposes them through cultural productions to the enacted versions of their own heritage. The daily life of the people is less disturbed by the discontents of modernity. The entire semiotic meaning is designed to create a sense of authenticity by drawing them "backstage" giving them an insider's understanding,

Since Kherai is a religious rite , community tries to create and communicate a sense of reality, truth and value. Performance here becomes a secular version of pilgrimage . The visual images seen in the context may also enhance their portability and their potential to be qualified as a modern performance .

In the sense that a modern performance has the required leisure and emphasis on free time. The community has full freedom to spend time in a manner of their personal choice. Such events can also be potentials for modern leisure past time, there is no such moral binding to stay till the event is over. People can leave at any juncture of the performance. The community can be a part of it wholly or partially as and how they enjoy themselves. There is no over-emphasis on the use of money to purchase commodities, services and experiences to enhance the performance .

These events are to be taken as a setting where everything happens spontaneously. The event gives the feeling of a sequence of real or imaginary images like that is seen in a dream. People see and enjoy the event like a virtual theatre. The blood sacrifices and the terrific dance feats that are presented in a dramatic style provide a kind of phantasmagoric experience to the audience. The audience also shows in affirmation their pleasure and discontent through their body language. For e.g. if the Daudini is not able to consume the blood in one go, people would say alas ! people will suffer this year. The spontaneous reaction otherwise would have been a high –spirited dance sequence accompanied by music . People look through for such events for fulfilling their religious appetite. The packaging that is done within the performance in the present day context is to unify the fragmentation. This consciousness is present there. This consciousness is present there in the minds of the community members. These spectacular events do bring in around an approximate picture of the modern world 's impact and also make a sense out of it.

The most distinguishing feature of the Kherai ritual is its accommodating capacity. The community people and the outsiders join in and participate as and when they

want. There is a liberal atmosphere of activities going round . In the leisure time people do have tea and bettle – nut and also do exchange pleasantries with each other . The outside guests are also served lunch and tea separately. The official priests do not partake any food until the ritual is over. The purity of mind and body is thoroughly maintained. Thus the sanctity of the ritual is kept intact. It is very interesting to see the capacity of the human's to relate to one another socially through religion and rituals as the essence of the universe. It also helps us in understanding the religious nature of man by putting up an important and regular aspect of humanity. In short , the two ends of the religious life correspond to the two states through which all social life passes . Between the sacred and the profane there is the same contrast as between the states of collective well being and ill –being .But since both are equally collective there is , between the mythological constructions symbolizing them ,an intimate kinship of nature. The emotions and the sentiments held in common do differ from extreme dejection to extreme joy, from painful irritation to ecstatic enthusiasm, but in any case there is communion of minds and a mutual comfort resulting from this communion. The basic process is always the same , the situations present them differently. So at the bottom it is the unity and the diversity of sacred beings and the things .

To sum up one would say that in human history people have been engaged in acting and dancing out their dreams and imaginations throughout their lives . Whether these activities were done seriously or merely for fun sake ,is not important . Their ideas and imaginations were engaged in performance –making all the time. The actors or the dancers (community members) constitute themselves anticipating a performance. This anticipation bears the anxiety of uncertainty, of something that can be completed only through communication. The audience has no identity as audience prior to and apart from the performance agency which has occasioned it . As such, the audience is intrinsically unstable, both in terms of its own presence and its ability to occasion and then disrupt the very anxiety of performance . At the same time, it is the work that he audience does , the participation that it lends to performance to make the latter possible that is irrecoverable to representation .

It is, like the performance activity itself, forms of representation rarely make an effort to recognize audience participation, which springs from this disruptive potential, itself an indeterminacy of representation internal to the performance. So in research if writing and documentation cannot recuperate the traces of participation found in performance, minimally they can recognize the disruptive effects of the work of participation lost to representation.

The shift in perspective to participation rather than representation as suggested by the conceptual challenges posed by dance, here understood as the particularization of the performer and audience where the activity of performers (the artistic object of performance) puts into operation the notion of agency,” and where the audience suggests a mobilized critical presence.

.....

Notes:

i)The observations made in the chapter are based on the field experiences and interactions. However, some of the events during the performance had not been found occurring naturally to most of the Bodo communities. Most of the experiences shared were at the request of the researcher.

ii) The young people of the community who are well positioned have desired to creatively combine aspects of community’s folk art to various other artistic and commercial engagements.

iii) Members of the Dhekidol village have also agreed upon to become commentators of their own cultures rather than being commented on all the time.

iv) Possibilities of folk performers visiting outside and also how they had refused to part with their physical heritage when approached by the tourism people speak of their genuine involvement with heritage.

v)My continued interest in their folklore material has also given them the feeling of respect that their heritage owes. The technology that i had used also gave them the idea that their folklore can be a part of glamour. It also introduces them to the expertise of technology. Doing so communicates that their folklore is worthy of display and recording.

vi) I did my major part of fieldwork in Dhekidol village though I had travelled to other parts of Bodo concentration, as I found this village at the roadway of transition and also how some people's intervention were solving the unrest.

vii) Informant: Shri Khagen Basumatary, age-65 yrs; Aflagaon, Kokrajhar.

viii) Informant: Tajuram Narzary, age-60yrs; Dhekidol, Tezpur.

ix) Informant: Padda Daimary, age-72yrs; Dhekidol, Tezpur.

x) Informant: Illa Boro, age – 52yrs; Senhaligaon, Thelamara.

* A talk on 'The significance of Kherai Dances in Bathou religion was delivered on 7th February, 2005 at Srimanta Sankaradev Kalakhetra, Guwahati by the scholar Uttam Chandra Kherkotari.

Part-B

Need for performance –centered text for the community performers

We have almost examined the necessary factors that makes a Kherai performance. Now it is important that we have a record or a report of the performance. This report is a text that will have an ideal view for the readers to perceive the performance. This will not only transact the communicative process but the aesthetic process also.

The orient list exercise is to make clearly a modern perspective on arts that are pass off as traditional. Truly, the converse also follows. This tradition then imposes its metaphysics on to the modern, making the traditional and the stagnant elements in our culture look modern. The status of text as understood by the performing class is that text is basically a handbook for the performers. The text must have all the necessary information and the account of para-theatrical features which will also give the performers an idea about the improvisations one can make while participating .Even the flexibility in the framework can lead to heights of creativity.

Another more pertinent reason may be found in what Richard Bauman calls "*the emergent quality of performance*". Through this he refers not merely to the text emerging in performance but more importantly he points out how the performance has the potential to change the social structure itself. The question of orality and the convergence /divergence of the performance text from the written text is an issue that confronts all students of performance. This question is all the more complex in folk traditions where the written component comprises a small portion and where the performance text may differ radically from one show to another. Each performance draws out a oral reserve memory by the performer. Though it may be a unwritten convention but years of long standing practice controls and facilitates the performance. Any query that can be posed by a participant for e.g. is regarding the labdinga (the symbolic entry and exit from the world) enacted in Kherai. Indeed, we need to develop theoretical postulates, drawing more from the repository of native wisdom of the

performers'. Since this was not going to be an easy task for the community. The community on its own devises strategies to remember things as they are. They try to record events in audio and video. These days there is a trend of taking photographs. To their mind any short snippet is a data of memory. The educated in the village also are trying to keep records by writing descriptions of Kherai. But the problem is for those who have never seen the performance should also be able to appreciate the performance as if they were members of the performer's audience.

There are many problems between this ideal conceptualization of the folklore text and its realization. By identifying our roles, we may begin to find solutions. The idea for e.g. that a text-maker must somehow repeat, or represent a performance in another medium reveals the text maker's role as a relay, a communicator between one communication system and another.

The Kherai of the Bodos is a strict categorization of the opposition "inclusive" and "exclusive" representing two different world views. Kherai is symbolically represented inside the Namghar for the Gods and is then taken out for public celebration and viewing. There are simultaneously two different performances being played one after another, at the same time.

Official and unofficial ideologies

In case of the Kherai celebration in the present times it has been felt that in order to get approval of the society for continuation of the performance tradition, the value systems and the world view of the dominant are upheld. This may be called the official ideology and at the same time though there is no subversion the community tries to re-inforce their own histories by devising various performances,

Another important role is played by the clown or the lampha in Kherai. They have the freedom to make fun of even the gods and the spirits. The performance space makes an allowance for this. There is enough space for the lampha in the entire performance event to critique or subvert/push hard the message. A performance text may assert

differing messages which may even contradict one another. There is always a danger of preconditioning people's perception of performance by the literate associations. We have to keep in mind that most of the social meaning of a message is carried in non-verbal elements. At the same time the real import of the message lies not in what is said but in how it is said. People in the village also may not approve or understand the physical act of making a text from a performance,. Still we must translate the performance to interpret or analyze it. At least making a text gets the translation process out in the open where critics can compare the textual record, and can even compare the textual record, and can even compare the textual record to an audio or video recording of the performance. It is also true at the same time that still some part of the nonverbal aspect of performance may simply be untranslatable.

Performance Text: Everything that takes place on stage that a spectator experiences from the movements and speech of the dancers and actors to the lighting, sets, and other technical or multi-media effects. The performance text is distinguished from the dramatic text. The dramatic text is the play, script, music score or dance notation that exists prior to being staged.(The rhythm of the lives of the community members becomes the text of their performances.)Though some effort has been made in this context by the educated in the village .There is a report which is actually a simple description in one 's own words , the content and /or form of the live performance.

Dell Hymes uses "report" to describe a rendition in which an informant fails to assume responsibility for performance.

The medium of 'performance' has been popular in the analysis of ritual. Text is considered inferior to the metaphors of performance and dialogue, The latter advanced to compensate for the apparent failings of the former. Metaphors of text tend to construe ritual as an almost automatic acting out of the rules based on an underlying logic .This turns ritual action into symbolic action, and an analysis becomes the disclosing of the meaning embedded in the symbols. But the rituals involve more than this. The participants and the (religious officials ,the deuris , daudinis and bailungs(

always bring their own competencies ,reputations and interests to a event ,so that the ritual becomes a specific performance rather than an exercise in repetition, what is important is the personnel make of the opportunities. (A text cannot encapsulate the strategic properties of a performance).

Consequently, textual metaphor with their emphasis on meaning, displace the doing, the per formative dimension of the action . Ritual action, however, works not only on the level of meaning but also emotionally and socially the events of any particular occasion being conditioned by many factors other than the prescribed rules.

There can be two queries in this discussion :-

i) to make a case for the continuing significance of text.

ii) to trace some of the relations between text and performance.

Argument- Text and performance are not the same, while they may be produced out of one another. This is very different from saying that they are reducible to each other. They may be reducible to each other. They may share some qualities with each other. They both have a sequential pattern, an internal structure, and they may be self-referential. Moreover”it is the performativity of the performance for which there is no analogue in the text.

Performativity , thus, recaptures the elements of uniqueness, strategy, evanescence, presence and becoming in social action that are thought to be lost by concentration on the meanings in the fixed texts. Acc- to Scheffelin-----texts are changeless whereas performances are assertive, strategic properties are destroyed when it is considered or reduced as a text. Unlike text, performances are ephemeral . They create their effects and then they are gone.- leaving their reverberation(fresh insights, reconstituted selves, new statuses, altered realities behind them.

Once we label a performance as a text, we will have no way of knowing whether a scholar is referring to a live performance or textual record since both will be texts according to the views expressed. The danger is that these literate associations may fundamentally precondition our perception of a performance. If performance can be thought as a text to be read. We may unconsciously ignore interpreting features that fail to confine themselves to the habits of silent reading and visual literacy. We commonly conceive of the printed word as an abstract, linear, disembodied, and in some cases, with greater status than the spoken word.

Ritual is basically communicative because symbols carry meanings, and understanding the efficacy of symbols is mostly a matter of revealing the logic of thought and the motivational force that underpins them. Rituals are texts which can be read for their symbolic significance. Like the 'Kherai' of the Bodos which gives a meta-social commentary on experience, they are the stories which people enact about themselves. People describe their own activity in terms of players, actors, audiences. The text analogy is outlandish. The activities of spies, witch doctors, shamans, animals are moves or performances is surely a good deal more plausible than the notion that they are sentences. However, **Geertz**

“Maintains that it is the apparent dissonance between text and social action, which gives the former its interpretive force”. (Interpretation of Cultures;1973).

Since the entire ritual is performed it is their enactment which is significant and the questions of meaning may not be always relevant. Though there is sharp contrast in way the rituals are enacted and the way the meanings are embedded.

Fixation of meanings- Recording and fixing of meanings. This contrast with the stress, in much writing on the ritual, on doing certain actions have to be performed, it is their enactment which is significant and questions of meaning may not be always relevant.

In ritual what is more important is the apt performance of what is prescribed. This involves not symbols to be interpreted but abilities to be acquired according to rules that are sanctioned by those in authority. A concentration on the decoding of the meanings loses sight of the performance aspect of even the most textually bound and prescribed ritual activity.

If inscription is as much about doing as it is about meaning, then everything about a performance is liable to be inscribed, not just its purported meaning. As Bloch pointed (1974) out “,*Much ritual activity is highly formalized and in restricted codes, and therefore cannot carry a rich informational content*”.

An important aspect of the Kherai performance is the roles participants play of, the manipulation of objects, of the incantation of unintelligible words, of songs and dances, is the enacting and consolidating of specific, often hierarchical social relationships. While anthropologists may stress the purported meaning, participants care whether the doing is effective or not. In this sense the inscription is what is done. The action is inscribed in the body movements, habits memories and experiences of people.

Audience's problem with the text

The conception of folklore as artistic verbal performance establishes the text maker's goal, three different types of audience relationships effectively constrain its realization. Starting with the most obvious and significant problem for folklorists, we will examine the difficulties of suiting the text to the demands of different types of readers. Then i will focus into two less obvious but equally influential audience relationships---- the text maker as a reader and the text maker as audience of the live performance

Reader's adaptation to text

Fixing the text to readers is quite a complex problem. There is widespread and diverse interest in folklore among the scholars and the public. The problem is basically of presenting the data in an accurate manner. To a great extent, the performance approach appears to unite these two disparate audiences into one, since it insists that the truth of

the performance is the art. That is, the performance approach argues that to study verbal and non-verbal arts in the most appropriate manner, we must study as an aesthetic transaction situated in a particular context. In terms of the performance approach, a text which fails to present the aesthetic transaction, distorts performance by representing it as some other mode of speech communication.

Types of text

The scholars who want to make a performance –centered text can choose among the three styles as precedents. The first style building on the work of Birdwhistell and others uses notational symbols to record discrete elements sound and movement. While the text is not accessible to those unfamiliar with Birdwhistell's work, it is evident that Birdwhistell did not intend for it to be understandable apart from the essay in which it is embedded. Rather than furnishing one accompanying key to all the symbols used in the text, Birdwhistell clarifies the meaning of the symbols as he discusses various levels of the text in the course of his essay. Indeed, before he presents this text with both linguistic, para-linguistic, and kinesics notations, he uses another type of text—multiple texts. He presents texts of linguistic and para-linguistic feature alone, and the kinesic features alone.

This second style – presenting multiple texts of a performance can be used in several ways. Birdwhistell uses multiple texts to clarify various levels of performance features before presenting all the features in a composite text. Other users of multiple texts seem to employ to meet the demands of different readers. Many early ethno linguist text makers used multiple texts , including the native text with an interlinear and translation text. Presumably the scholar interested in the native language could read the interlinear text and the general reader could read the free translation.

The third style would record a performance through a hybrid art form which is readily understood. The existence of these three different ways of recording performance seems to place the textmaker in a dilemma. It is a difficult situation as we cannot completely say that which of the styles or mixture of styles will give an accurate and

complete record of aesthetic transaction. We have to consider the features of both performance and text and also by looking at the characteristics of an adequate translation and exploring the audience's relationship to the text. What is also important is the availability of the text to an accessible audience and an inaccessible audience. A particular text prepared necessarily has to be intelligible to the community where it is practiced. The symbols, notations, figure have to be community literate.

Nature of text

The text, like any translation should make sense to the reader. Second, the text should convey the 'spirit and manner' of the original message.. This point seems especially important for the text maker. Since verbal art is characterized by distinctive features, Any text which obscures or neglects to present these features keeps the reader from experiencing the performance as an aesthetic mode of communication. However, a text like a translation carries the reader into the world of the original event with a force of immediacy. As J.B. Phillips considers

“ Test of real translation is that it should not read like a translation at all”.

Since so many simultaneous actions occur during performance, it is hard to conceive of how they could be recorded in the two dimensional , visual channel or print. The translator should aim at producing a response in his audience similar to the one produced in the audience in general. Confirming this principle to the performance – centered text, it is important that a successful text should enable the audience to experience an aesthetic transaction of performance also apply to the reader's transaction with the text. A text style which is difficult to decode demands laborious, analytical effort , how can the reader apprehend the performance in an immediate, intuitive , and reanalysis way? But still the tension of conveying the original form of the performance without sacrificing the audience's ability to comprehend its sense and spirit .

Text specific audience

Since the audiences differ in their educational backgrounds and abilities, it is necessary to specify the types of readers for which text has been designed. For the performance – centered text which this work advocates, the audience includes both formally trained folklorists and interpretation scholars interested in artistic verbal performance, as well as educated readers, with no formal training in these fields, but who nevertheless have an interest in the non-verbal art forms of various cultural groups.

Information load in text.

The text, whether read by an average reader or a scholar, should not overload either's capacity to participate in the performer's aesthetic transaction. The text, if it is to represent an aesthetic transaction, must maintain the type of perpetual "focus" employed by a participant engaged in an aesthetic transaction. Through a text which mechanically records minute particles of behavior, but fails to synthesize them into meaningful serious action. Long descriptions can sometimes lose the reference to the context.

The Textmaker as Receiver of the Text

The Text maker's prior experience with the performance may make it easy for him or her to read an elaborate scheme of notations easily, outsiders lacking this experience may find the text obscure and difficult. Moreover, it is important that he uses universal features so that text becomes intelligible to people outside. Paradoxically, the same familiarity with the live performance can lead to unloading of the text. On reading a bare transcription of the words alone, the textmaker's memory of the live performance may enable him or her to fill in the missing tones and gestures. While the text may seem charged with life to the text maker, it is likely to appear rather lifeless to those without a similar memory of the live performance.

The Text maker as receiver of the Performance

The Text maker is usually an outsider to the group being recorded and may lack familiarity with the performance tradition. It is difficult in that case for the text maker

to even perceive significant aesthetic patterns. For e.g. in many performances “call response” pattern in which the audience is expected to punctuate the performances with audible responses. A text maker unfamiliar with this tradition might consider such audience response as “noise”, or insignificant information and omit such features. For e.g. a performer might strategically interrupt a performance process, with each interruption to build a suspense.

Conclusion

Since the text maker’s conception of nature of folklore determines how he or she will translate a performance., the text maker’s task has been defined as one of recording the aesthetic transaction and reporting the aesthetic field. Translating performance often demands crossing cultures as well as media., it is difficult to convey the original form of the performance without sacrificing the audience’s ability to comprehend its sense and spirit. The specific audience for the performance centered text as one including not only folklorists and interpretation scholars, but also educated readers with no formal training in these fields, who nevertheless had an interest in artistic performance. One way of evaluating the information load is through having the other reader’s perform the text. This act of restitution, or second intersemiotic translation from print to performance, should enable the text maker to judge how clearly and easily the text conveys the form and content of the original performance.

With a performance –centered text, we should be able to better appreciate the aesthetic patterning of Kherai performance. Without a record of the non-verbal, paralinguistic, and contextual features of a performance, it is difficult to do more than make generalizations, such as the performer dramatizes characters, or uses his voice and body effectively. It is also advantageous from the point that we are in a prime position to explore what happens when a literary text enters a performance tradition. It will appear slightly in this way.(using pitch patterns to create suspense, using body movements in highly patterned, rhythmic, and symbolic way. Since Kherai is basically a movement –oriented structure, I thought in enriching the performance. the body movements can be used as a part of the rhythmic structure. The frequent head turns,

combined with basic hip/hand/ arm stances and the forward and the backward tilts provides a basic rhythmic grid from which all the other non-verbal images emerge. These movements provide a rhythmic context for the experiencing and development of the images ; they shape the external form of the performance and are most significant and functional aesthetically.

They are the flow from which the images are particularized, a flow which in its nonverbal character unites artist and audience, tying them emotionally , much as music and dance can do. One way in which the non-verbal rhythmic grid functions aesthetically is to build anticipation in the audience. As the non-verbal patterns begin to emerge, the audience's attention is captivated by the attractiveness of the patterned repetitions. This attention is perpetual, immediate, and sensuous. A final aesthetic function of the nonverbal rhythmic grid lies in its effect on the perception of narrative time. Even though the story seems longer, the performance ends in a few minutes. The continuous repetition of some of the basic stances , even though new modifying actions and words occur with them, seem to work against the progression of time . It is said that the most well thought of , almost identical repetition of the image sequences play havoc with the audience's experience in real time .

.....

Notes:

i)The process of a writing a performer's guide is in process in the village .A few young men and women have taken the responsibility of writing records and reports .

ii) The researcher will also stage a performance production, taking people from the community as artists. People from nearby cities and towns can also be employed .

iii)People with political backing have also joined the endeavor and have supported the cause.

.....

Chapter-5

Conclusion

The hypothesis of this research is not clear cut and specific. This was deliberate considering the nature of the present study which was to understand the ways, demands, and the need for a performance in a community. For the purpose of this research, I have employed a strategy that has combined various levels of investigation where the Kherai ritual of the Bodos has been studied and defined as an experience and a function that fulfills certain social functions. The work evaluates the social significance of a live ritualistic performance through some of the tools of performance. The performance that is observed constitutes a heightened behavior on the part of its participants. The observation about amorality (good or bad) of performance too came from performance subject, change or transformation, the creative ability of human beings to make themselves, to change, to become –for good or worse –what they ordinarily are not.

The perspective employed in this research is that of the theatrical performance and the principles derived are dramaturgical. An attempt has been made to identify the particular research that has been primarily set in the theoretical perspective of people's culture in general and that of the ethnic people's performance making process in particular. It emphasizes to show how a ethnic cultural group is involved in making a strategy of performance as the ritual concerned involves an extinction risk factor. It also thinks in the lines of possibilities of theatre as a mode of cultural production.

This has also paved way for questioning orthodoxies, and has set new challenges for both the community members and performers, devising performances has also set new challenges for both the community members and performers, during performances and has thereby made a significant and enduring contribution to the contemporary art landscape. Quite a considerable number of items have been carved out of the ritual performance sequences. These are being improvised and are given an independent status.

The research evaluates the religious rituals and finds that they are as variegated as religion itself. Even though it seems that communities follow one religion, but in actuality they follow more than one religion. There were many sequences that were imagined within the ritual structure. These rituals are akin to dramatic representations. It questions the relationship between 'ritual action' and 'ritual thought'. Rituals are also thought in as /actions. Everyday the ritual action is evoked anew. It also evokes a response from the community members where they think of reframing or reshaping of ritual materials into new 'original works.

It is very clear from the present research as to how human mind is prone to change. Culture goes on changing itself synchronizing with the changing times. It has been noticed as to how certain rituals have changed overtime and how some have remained intact as before. A ritual sequence has both new and old elements at the same time. One reason that can be attributed for these changes in Kherai performance is the acceptance of the various religious sects by the Bodo population in general such as Sankardeva's Neo-Vaishnavism, sects of Anukul Thakur, Krishna Guru and the Christianity. The small group of the Bathou followers left to make changes with the existing structure of the ritual. They tried infusing their creative energies and wisdom to performance to make it look more convincing and aesthetically refined.

It is a truism that economy always influences culture. It is quite evident from the traditional celebrations of a community which mainly manifests its past agricultural practices. The Bodos still are predominantly an agricultural community and their cultural and religious life and their celebrations are deeply intertwined with agricultural ethos. The converted Bodos, however, no longer follow these ceremonies. Besides, the changes in economic life has also to some extent has influenced the cultural practices.

However, the contemporary identity movement has steered them to think anew about their traditional culture and religion and even non-bathou religious practitioners among them follow traditional practices (Kherai, for instance).

The strategy of devising performance has also given the community members a free hand to exercise and interpret their imaginations. Devised theatre is concerned with the collective creation of art and it is here that the emphasis has shifted from the standard performance-centered text to the creative performer. Devised performance is often seen to be innovative in its negotiation of cultural conventions. A whole new vocabulary seems to be setting in the cultural process. Although variously inflected and different practices that are investigated and documented in this research share an aspiration to break with the tradition, to find new working methods and to challenge audiences through their inventive use of theatre form. The community takes ritual action as a challenge where connectivity between art and life, however differently interpreted provides a conceptual lens through which the inter-related histories of devised performance can be viewed.

The thesis also looks at the power of innovation to transform everyday life by enabling the people to recognize the oppressive patterning of daily existence. This may therefore be seen as a precursor to both personal liberation and social change. Then the thesis claims that the central characteristics of this trend are artistic practice and the art of living which are mutually embedded. Art is not to be destroyed, but to be transferred to the praxis of life into which it would be transferred, though in a changed form. It is also true that the people themselves feel that practice of art leads to improvisation of the nature

The research, in part, is a response to the current works in dance scholarship. It also explores the changing character of discourses in dance. The various dance numbers performed during the ritual bear a philosophical significance which was subconsciously performed by the ritual priests. Dance sequences from the ritual act and also have been

devised as individual dance numbers. These numbers have been improvised, set into historical perspective and later have become discrete items.

The research also looked into the strategies, demands and needs of the community for making a performance. It also studies how the community has been organizing their performance. The most interesting part of the research is performance of different rituals in virtual space. The idea is perceived in terms of simulation. This performance is not similar to the performance in the synchronous rituals.

Kherai is indeed very interesting for me as a performer scholar. I have observed and experienced the Kherai performance many a times over the period of last twelve years. At times I found it was rather complex getting inside the village and the ritual. I have had to participate in the ritual performances to learn and sometimes just to understand as to how the community makes these performances. This research shows the fact that Kherai's elaborate structure has made the understanding of the ritual much easier. A long series of imageries, sequences, improvisations, etc made by the community, linking devices, time taken to complete the story, behavioral patterns, etc are some of the important aspects of the ritual performance structure. The more the time it takes to perform, enact and present, the less complex the structure becomes. Community also thereby takes time and leisure to understand things in natural context. Since the study was conducted over a long period of time I have had to consider things provisionally at the initial stage and then could see the changes over time.

In human activities there are actually many characters with different and opposing points of view, goals and feelings. The performance tool helped looking into things that are otherwise closed for enquiry: the entire gamut of questions regarding space and time, roles, attire, performers, and the control of the events.

Again, no community is isolated today. They are related to the world outside their own environment through various agencies of mass media. The latter provides an unlimited quantity of information and entertainment. There is exposure as to what is happening

outside, how they need to adapt and look at the presentation formulae, and so on. This has also happened in case of the Bodos and their Kherai performance.

The complex situations like the performance sequences both formal and informal in the ritual structure were ordered into arrangement of performance genre, behaviors, and performance activities into a continuum. These genres, behaviors and activities have no separate existence. They smoothly blend into each other. The various examples like games, performing arts, theatres and entertainments in daily life of the Bodo people do form a strict performance range. It appears as a big confusion in the initial phase but falls into places (various types) as we gradually saw the processes.

The people of a community or a group can get through difficult period of transition. It is also a medium where people collectively can build their mythic past through performance. This way social solidarity to build a community also exists. The community takes it as an avenue or a platform to perform basic human interactions. The basic idea of the performance is to get entertainment through the medium of ritual. They would please their gods and ancestors through the entertainment quality of performance along with the ritual. Their imagination and their ideas had some relation with the situations and environments they inhabited.

The concerns of these people were important to be noticed at the macro level as these people within their traditional structures had survived the ravages of dominant structures. In the performance scenario too people depicted what they had experienced in their surroundings and what had imagined as their authentic history.

They were trying to trace their history through varied images of their everyday life. As such theatre is much closer to real life than any other genres of performance. In the simple societies like the Bodo community, where there are complex set of rituals which act not only as means of 'reanimating sentiments of social solidarity' but also acts as space whereby the difficulties and conflicts of the present are articulated and are given meaning. There is also contextualization in an abiding cosmological scheme.

These ethnic groups belonging to diverse racial backgrounds have come to inhabit the region with their distinctive cultures and heritages. These groups in the historical times lived in a tribal social formation within their structures of economy and traditional technology. The making of performances by the community members over the years has led to a practice and a habit of creating visual forms based on their imagination and ideas. This movement choreography and making of long dramatic sequences have indirectly enhanced their idea regarding visual perception, sequential organization and intellectual maturity. This shows their ability to imagine and also to differentiate between imagination and reality.

As the Bodo society has experienced a transformation from an egalitarian tribal social formation to an emerging Hinduised social order many of their religious faiths and customs were also incorporated into the folds of local Hinduism and vice versa. Most of their hymns and religious prayers have similarity with the Assamese prayers sung in the Namghars. The Bodos and other tribal groups of Assam today seem to stress more on the ritualistic dimension of their culture.

Suddenly there was a spurt of revivalism of the various cultural genres that a community possessed. People started performing their rituals and festivals inside and outside the village. Performances were devised as to take them to a national audience. The ethnic community that comprised of active and passive bearers of the tradition got into the task of re-inventing their own traditions.

Kherai offers an example of such a tradition which is being re-invented within the Bodo society. The community is becoming aware that the ritualistic sacrifices are not going to be performed after a year or so. They continued restoring all concerned activities, elaborate organization and regulation. The structure of Kherai comprises of a large dimension of dance which in ethnological accounts is usually given a place quite unworthy of its social importance. It is often viewed as an independent activity and is described without reference to its contextual setting in native life. Such evaluation

leaves out many problems regarding the composition and organization of the dance and also hides from view its sociological function.

The entire idea of understanding the disconnect with nature and its fury to eventually make sure that the people of the village by the river-side do reconnect with their life line and source of livelihood, through their cultural traditions, by trawling their own arts and by invoking their own will power to survive, was perhaps the best way to bring them home to the world. The rural folk always had a ambivalent relationship with nature. They imagined their lives and its existence within the forces of nature. It was felt that even the incantations made to the god had references to the direction , name of the river mentioned that were a part of their habitation. This definitely looks into the area where stress and well-being of both the practitioner and audience is taken care of.

This was also one of the strategies towards our objective of understanding the function of performance as to what these dances accomplish for groups, cultures and individuals. The arts involved in our cultural material will minimize polarization by using the creative approach and the performing arts to end decisiveness in communities created by religious and economic factors. The tendency to ignore nature has also made them take recourse to art. Alternatively they increasingly become our only link in re-connecting with nature.

This kind of theatre also becomes a medium for social healing. The impact of these arts to find out the impact of finer impulses on health and psyche was never known. The particular study shows how the arts have contributed to the humanity and these practitioners show activation of brain at a high scale. Field observations have proved that these arts do work as a therapy for the young and old. It was seen that the older group was more involved and emotional about the affairs of Kherai

Kherai, in a philosophical sense, brings a balance between the inner being and the outer universe. Most of the movements are repetitive. This repetition seems to have many advantages at many levels. It becomes easy for the community to learn and observe the movement. It also makes the performance smooth and satisfactory. The speed, stamina,

dexterity, endurance and grace all come in a package naturally. There is a high degree of genuine enjoyment.

Erving Goffman (1959) makes theatre a metaphor of social life. According to Goffman individuals do manipulate their performances. The individuals in a society are cynical manipulators who act mainly for their personal gains. The sense of trust is evident in the rural setting rituals in case of everyday encounters. Goffman describes "The Presentation of Self" as a sort of report outlining six dramaturgical principles. This key term generates an often bewildering array of definitions and classifications as they reorder the social world according to a theatrical perspective. The idea of performance as an activity of a given participant on a occasion which serves to influence in any way any of the other participants. He has been using the term 'performance' to refer to the entire activity of a individual which occurs during a period marked by his continuous presence before a particular set of observers and which has some influence on the observers²."

In case of the community ritual performances, people assume complete responsibility of the fact that the ritual event has to be successful. If performances are to be successful, individuals must demonstrate their conviction that what is enacted is "the reality" while sustaining a viable 'front'. This 'front' comprises stage props and appropriate facial expressions and the role attitudes. By such means, performances are both realized and idealized as our all-too-human selves are transformed into socialized beings capable of expressive control. In the course of the Kherai performance, the individual attributes may be stretched to the occasion; different audiences will be held at a distance. The performer hopes to look more interesting from there. In many cases, the only mystery is that there is no mystery. And the dramaturgical problem is that no one should realize this fact.

In the case if we consider Kherai as a performance that can be successful it needs to be staged by *a team* and not mere collection of individuals. Kherai as such has complete

community participation. Everything is transparent. To sum up the entire work, we can quote the cultural anthropologist **Herskovits** who said:

“If the culture stresses change, there is a tendency to slight the vast body of stabilizing elements that are lying beneath the changes that actually in the process gives continuity in the way of life.”¹

There is change and continuity in the various aspects of Bodo society and culture. The rate of change and rate of continuity differ depending on the social and demographic contexts. In the villages of Senhaali and the Botola Dekeri in the Thelamara area the range of change is much less depending on the various factors such as the heavy population of the Bodos staying in the area. The Bodos in the particular area have stucked to their basic religion. Since their was a mass acceptance of Bathouism, the society did not confirm to the scenario of changing ideals in the society. The customs traditions were followed by all in the same manner. Even non-bathou’s participated in the affairs of the festival.. There is social cohesion felt when unanimously they voiced their feelings, celebrated their occasions and felt united for whatever the reason might be. Religion provides strong moral justification and support for taking care of traditional ways. The validation by the religion is also one of the reasons . It is also true that same culture has different manifestations in different areas. Though one can see more or less a universal pattern in most of the areas of the same socio-demographic context, it varies, sometimes significantly, in another context. Thus, we see different patterns, for instance, in Sonitpur, Udalguri and Kokrajhar.

The factors which are responsible for change and continuity of such cultures can be attributed to the following:-

i)Endogenous Factors - The process leading to change within society includes cultural loss of values and identity. The exercise of seeking solutions to problems includes deliberate inventions. The ideological inventions include at times innovations like creation of people’s performance as a replacement for the text-centered performance. The changes that are brought into the society also has a post effect. People start

thinking in terms of development, better status and provisions. They are even ready to forego their own religion for the sake of enlistment. These changes have resulted in the proselytization of the religious culture of the Bodos and are also enhanced by the contact between societies.

ii) Exogenous Factors - The processes leading to change as a result of contact between societies such as assimilation, transculturation, and syncretism are the result due to the contact with neighbouring tribal and non-tribal communities. These are often resisted by older people who often do not want to part with their long familiar cultural patterns. For them, habitual behavior provides emotional security in a threatening world of change.

iii) Natural Environmental Factors - Drastic changes in the natural environment have affected the life and economy of the Bodos. They have lost their traditional land and livelihood due to floods and erosion. There has been loss of traditional habitats. It does not need mention that these landscapes also had certain values which the community had given them. In many places, on the other hand, streams and streamlets have dried up. The natural water springs are not seen now which were of much use during Kherai celebrations in the yesteryears. These have inevitably affected their cultural idioms and practices. **Herskovits** also does make a reference of the environmental factors and its effect on change.

According to him:

“Conservatism and change in culture are the result of the interplay of environmental, historical, and psychological factors. All must be considered when studies of cultural processes are made”³

iv) Technological Factors - The rapid technological changes have also significantly affected the culture of the Bodos. The traditional rhythm of life has naturally changed due to this. This has led them to sense a loss of tradition and identity consciousness. Though there has been apathy for their own culture they have been forced to deny the

importance of cultural achievements in lieu of economy and technology. The pace of development has left even their cultures behind. The loss of values and identity has forced the people to migrate and escape domains of threatening. The latter are after all the foundations on which a culture is built. We cannot tend to visualize culture as existing in vacuum, without giving adequate attention to the foundations on which the culture is

v) Government provisions - The opportunities for education and self employment has a strong influence in the Bodo society. It has increased the literacy rate amongst them. Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan* (at primary and high school level) has to an extent enabled the poor Bodo families to secure education. This is a government of India's mission to provide free education for all children till 14years of age. Government of India's reservation policy has definitely produced positive results, particularly in enhancing of literacy and employment rate among the Bodos. All these in turn have a significant influence on their understanding and treatment of their culture.

vi) Revivalist tendency - In sharp contrast to change, some factors tend to maintain a changeless stability in a society and its culture. The in-group and out-group dynamics are the social and psychological forces that operate in the interaction between groups of people and societies. These are responsible for maintaining continuity in their society. The cultural loss is an inevitable result of old cultural patterns being replaced by the new ones. The recent forced or intentional innovation includes deliberate inventions to seek solutions for some problems a group faces in relation to other groups. The outcome of this is ethnocentrism which not only impels a people to consider their culture as the best but also thereby acts as a resistant to change. Revivalism and in-group and out-group dynamics commonly result in resistance to dynamics of change and thus act as an intervening force between tendencies of change and maintenance of tradition as a continuous process.

An attempt has been made to study the socio-religious aspects of the Bodos with special reference to the Bodos of the Darrang and Sonitpur districts. It is here in these two districts we still see the traditional religion (Bathou) being practiced amongst them. In the first chapter of the thesis performance has been described as a tool to analyse the actions and behaviors of the community. The second chapter gives an ethnographic description of the community and also looks at the factors of change. The third chapter elaborates on the process and preparation of the ritual. From process to production of the ritual every stage is replete with actions, enthusiasm, and innovation. Their imaginations and their creative energies also do bring in social solidarity, and also form a community. Understanding these rituals also helped in understanding the basic human interactions. The fourth chapter (part a) deals with understanding of ritual as a theatre. It showed how performance of a Kherai ritual looked like social dramas. An effort has been made to study the structures and nature of the Kherai performances. It was found during the research an anti-structure already has been constructed with invention of new rituals and entertainment. The various experiences of the researcher in the field also has substantiated to the knowledge acquisition regarding performance. The concluding remarks that have been given in the fifth chapter are observations about transformations and creative ability of the human beings to make them change.

The most interesting aspect is how community takes ritual action and performance practice as a challenge which separates artistic movement from the regular or day today life. The community takes it as an avenue to perform basic human interactions. Their regular day today life is enacted in the performance scenario. People do depict what they had experienced in their surroundings and what had been imagined by them regarding their authentic history. It came out clearly that though alienation from nature is evident, still communities have tried their best to re-connect with nature by taking recourse to art.

Though in the particular research structure of the society and economic system have also been dealt with, but emphasis has been laid on the quality of social life and the nature of work the community seems to be doing .They may not fit into a system or a plot of others but have formed their own lines which is not temporary but with which they can live peacefully all the time.They have been sharing this world despite boredom and terror. Their concern for the expressive aspects of culture and traditional life of their own society, enjoyment of, and caring for is concealed behind a mask of theoretic. To understand Kherai we had to move beyond the conception of it as a disembodied super organic folklore stuff. The thesis viewed it contextually, in terms of the individual , social , and cultural factors that gives it shapes, meaning and existence .

.....

¹ Melville J. Herskovits, Cultural Anthropology,(New Delhi. Oxford & IBH Publishing Co ., 1969), p 447. pp Print.

² Goffman, Erving. Presentation of Self in everyday life, 1959, 1-29 pp. Print.

³ Melville Herskovits, op.cit.,451.

.....

Works Cited:

- Awasthi, Suresh. *The Scenography of the Traditional Theatre*. TDR:18; 1974. Print.
- Aristotle, *The Poetics of Aristotle*. University of North Carolina Press: Chapel Hill, 1987. Print.
- Austin, J.L. *How to Do Things with Word*. Cambridge: Harvard University P, 1962. Print.
- Bateson, Gregory *Steps to an Ecology of Mind*. New York : Ballantine Books 1972. Print.
- Baruah, K.L. *Early History Of Kamrupa. From the Earliest Times to the 16th Century*. Published by the author, Shillong. 1933. Print.
- Brahma, K. *A Study of Socio-Religious Beliefs. Practices and Ceremonies of the Bodos*. P unthi Pustak, Calcutta, 1992. Print.
- Birdwhistell, Ray, L. *Body Behaviour and Communication*. in International Encyclopedia of Social Sciences, New York: The Free P, 1952. Print.
- *Kinesics and Context*. University of Pennsylvania P, Philadelphia, 1970. Print
- Bordoloi, B.N. (e.d.) *Tribes of Assam : Tribal Research Institute (TRI) , Assam, 1987. Print.*
- Boal, Augusto. *Theatre of the Oppressed* New York, Urizen Books, 1979. Print.

Bryski, Christopher. *Concept of Ancient Indian Theater*. New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers Pvt. Ltd, 1973.Print.

Bharat –Muni, *The Natyasastra*. New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publisher, 1996.Print.

Bell, Catherine . *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice*. New York; Oxford University Press. 1992.Print.

Bharucha, Rustom, *Theatre and the World : Performance and Politics of Culture* . London, New York: Routledge, 1993.Print.

Bauman , Richard, *Folklore, Cultural Performances, and Popular Entertainments*. New York, OUP, 1992.Print.

Butterworth, Jo. *Contemporary Choreography A Critical Reader*. Taylor and Francis Group, New York, Routledge, 2009.Print.

Chatterjee, S.K. *Kirata Jana Kriti*. Asiatic Society, Calcutta, 1974.Print

Choudhury, M.M. *Tribes of Assam Plains A Profile*. Directorate of Welfare of Plain' s Tribes & Backward Classes.Govt. Of Assam . Guahati, 1980.Print.

Choudhury, P.C. *The History of Civilization of the People of Assam to the 12th Century A.D*. Spectrum Publications.Guwahati, 1987.Print.

Datta, B. *Folklore Foragings in India's north –East''*. ABILAC. North Guwahati, 1999.Print.

Durkheim, Emile. *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*. New York : Free P, 1965.Print.

Diamond, Stanley. (e.d) *Primitive Views of the World*. New York, Columbia University Press.1964.Print.

Elwin V. *A Philosophy of NEFA*. Directorate of Research, Government of Arunachal Pradesh, Itanagar, 1949.Print.

Endle, S. *The Kachari*. Low Price Publications. Delhi, 1997.Print.

Ekman, Paul. *Emotion in the Human Face*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 1982. Print.

Eliade, Mircea. *The Sacred and the Profane* Harcourt, inc. USA, 1957.Print.

Fergusson, Francis. *The Idea of Theatre*. Princeton: Princeton University P, 1949.Print.

Freud, Sigmund. *Creativity and Consciousness*. New York, Harper and Row, 1958.Print.

Fine, Elizabeth C. *The Folklore Text From Performance to Print*. Indiana University P, Bloomington and Indianapolis, 1994.Print.

Foster, Susan Leigh. *Reading Dancing : Bodies and Subjects in Contemporary American Dance* . Berkeley: University of California P, 1986.Print.

Gait, E.A. *A History of Assam*. Lawyer's Book Stall. Guwahati. 1963. Print.

Geertz, Clifford. *The Interpretation of Cultures* . New York: Basic Books, 1973.Print.

Gennep, Arnold van. *The Rites of Passage*. Chicago; University of Chicago Press. 1960. Print.

Goffman, Erving. *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. Garden City, New York; Doubleday. 1959. Print.

Govan, Emma. Nicholson, Helen. Normington, Katie. *Making a Performance, Devising Histories and Contemporary Practices*. Taylor and Francis Group, London and New York, Routledge. 2007. Print.

Halprin, Anna. *Dance as a Healing Art*. Mendocino: Life Rhythm, 2000. Print.

Herskovits, M. *Cultural Anthropology*, Oxford & IBH. Publishing Co., New Delhi, 1969. Print.

Hobsbawm, Eric & Ranger, Terence eds. *The Invention of Tradition*, Cambridge University Press, 1983. Print.

Humphrey, D. *The Art of Making Dances*. New York and Toronto: Rinehart, 1959. Print.

Kakkar, Sudhir. *The Analyst and the Mystic*. Penguin Books. 1991. Print.

Kaeppler, A. *Method and Theory in Analyzing dance Structure with an analysis of Tongan Dance*. 1972.

Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, Barbara. *Destination Culture* University of California P. 1998. Print.

Langer, Susan. *Feeling and Form*. New York: Scribners, 1953. Print.

Levinson, D. & M. Ember. *Encyclopaedia of Cultural Anthropology. Vol. II*. Henry Holt & Company. New York., 1996. Print.

Morris, Gay. *Moving Words*. Taylor and Francis Group, New York, Routledge, 1996. Print.

Nayar, Pramod K. *Reading Culture: Theory, Praxis, Politics*. Sage Publications, New Delhi, 2006. Print.

Narzy, B. Boro. *Kacharir Samaj Aru Samskriti*. Bina Library, Guwahati, 1996. Print.

Nehru, Jawaharlal. *The Discovery of India*. New York, The John Day Company, 1946. Print.

Pullopillil, Thomas & Aluckal. *The Bodos: Children of Bhullumbutter*. Spectrum Publications, Guwahati: Delhi, 1997. Print.

Richmond, Farley. Swann, Darius L. Zarrilli, Philip B. *Indian Theatre: Traditions of Performance*. Motilal Banarsidass Publishers Pvt. Ltd. Delhi, 1990. Print.

Sen, Amartya. *The Argumentative Indian: Writings on Indian Culture, History and Identity*. Penguin Books, 2005. Print.

Scott, David. *Formations of Ritual*. University of Minnesota P, London, 1994. Print.

Schechner, Richard. *Performance Theory*. London; Routledge, 1973. Print.

----- *Future of a Ritual*. London; Routledge, 1993. Print.

----- *Introduction to Performance Studies* Routledge, 2002. Print.

Srinivas, M.N. *Social Change in Modern India*. University of California P. Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1996.Print.

Turner, Victor. *The Ritual Process* Chicago; Aldine, 1969. Print.

----- *From Ritual to Theatre* PAJ Publications, New York, 1982. Print.

Williams, D. *The Nature of Dance , An Anthropological Perspective , Dance Research Journal*. 9,1:42-4, 1977. Print.

.....

Journals:

Bascom, William. " Folklore, Verbal Art and Culture" *The Journal of American Folklore*, vol.86, No.342. (Oct, -Dec., 1973), pp 374-381,

[http:// www .jstor .org/search](http://www.jstor.org/search)

Kirby, Ernest .T " The Ritual Origin of Theatre" *The Journal of Religion and Theatre*,vol.2, No.!, 2003. p 1-7.

Krout, Maurice H. "Culture and Culture Change. " *The American Journal Of sociology*, vol.38, No. 2, (Sep., 1932), pp 253-263.

[http:// www.jstor.org/stable / 2766459](http://www.jstor.org/stable/2766459)

Websites:

AlfredC. O' Connell Library. Chicago Style Sheet [http:// www.genesee.edu/ library / citation/ ChicagoStyle sheet.doc](http://www.genesee.edu/library/citation/ChicagoStyle%20sheet.doc)(accessed January 2010)

.....

APPENDIX-I

GLOSSARY OF BODO TERMS

i) daudini -	the ritual priestess
ii) raizani bakhri-	granaries
iii) raizani afat --	people's assembly
iv) rrang bathou-	settling of accounts
v) baisagu-	bihu
vi) sibru-	shiva
vii) doushrem-	small creeper of sour taste
viii) jaglauri-	a scented plant
ix) ungham gajang-	a creeper of sour taste
x) hangso ramai-	a small plant
xi) raidang-	cane tree
xii) anthabajab -	a small scented plant (used in fish curry)
xiii) andlakhari -	a dish prepared with dust of rice, chicken and bamboo shoot
xiv) samlaothi -	wild plant used as vegetable
xv) kheradpini-	„
xvi) jatراسي –	tulsi plant
xvii) pati dei-	red leaf plant earlier used for sprinkling holy water
xviii) jumai, jau-	traditional drink
xix) emaw-	medicine
xx) mokhana-	wild flowers
xi)maldang-	earthen pitcher
xii) deoghar-	god's abode
xiii) nasoni-	dancer

xiv) labdinga -	entry and exit movement in Kherai, dance of joy
xv) hapsa hatarnai -	entering a new household
xvi) onkam golai janai-	eating of new rice
xvii) gadhon mara-	sending daudini off with presents and cash after Kherai
xviii) photika -	traditional liquor
xix) na-goran ,	dried fish
bedor –goran -	dried meat
xx) putuli baha -	doll's marriage
xxi) goka –gokoi-janai-	severance of relationship due to bad feeling
xxii) sala matha –	plain dakhana
xxiii) dakhana thawsi-	dakhana with designs
xxiv) dauthu godo-	design of dove neck
xxv) phareo megon-	design of pigeon's eye
xxvi) phar agar -	designs of hill scenery
xxvii) moiden agen-	designs of elephants footprints
xxviii) haba-	marriage
xxix) noamno-	main house
xxx) fathwi-bisina	tearing off the betel leaf into two piece
-leng	
xxxii) malsa -	bride price

Genealogy chart

This chart was prepared by Shri Tajuram Narzary a school headmaster which gives a genealogical account of his family tree since 1820 A.D. This was prepared by him to make me understand the history of Kherai in Dhekidol village , Sonitpur district , Tezpur sub-division, Goroimari mauza, Chariduar revenue circle,, greater Goroimari village area, Uhanipathar Dhekidol village .According to him since the Mann (a Burmese ruler) invasion in 1820 A.D. people in this village have been performing Kherai. He has divided the entire period till now with a gap of thirty years.

For e.g.

1820 →

1850 →

1880 →

1910 →

1940 →

1970 →

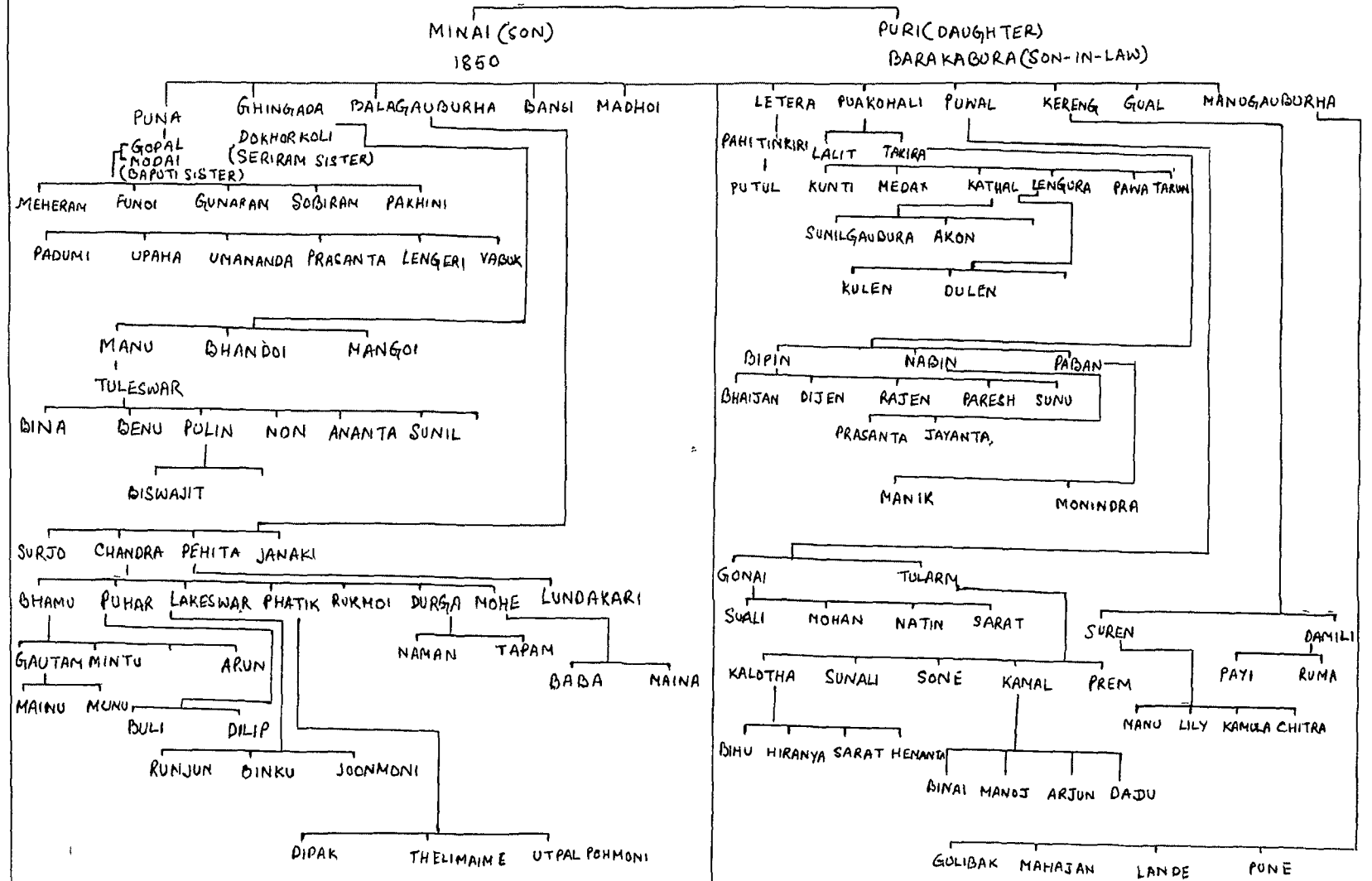
2000 →

From this we can ascertain about the ancientness of the Kherai festival .In chapter II a description has been given regarding the Ahom man namely (Khara Bura) who came and settled here after marrying a Bodo girl. Even though there are contestations regarding the time but it has given the people of the village a validation to continue with the religious heritage. This re-inforces the notion that antiquity also adds to the dynamics of the tradition. A clear testimony to the dynamics of culture based on the principles of continuity and change.

A schematic representation has been given in the following page .

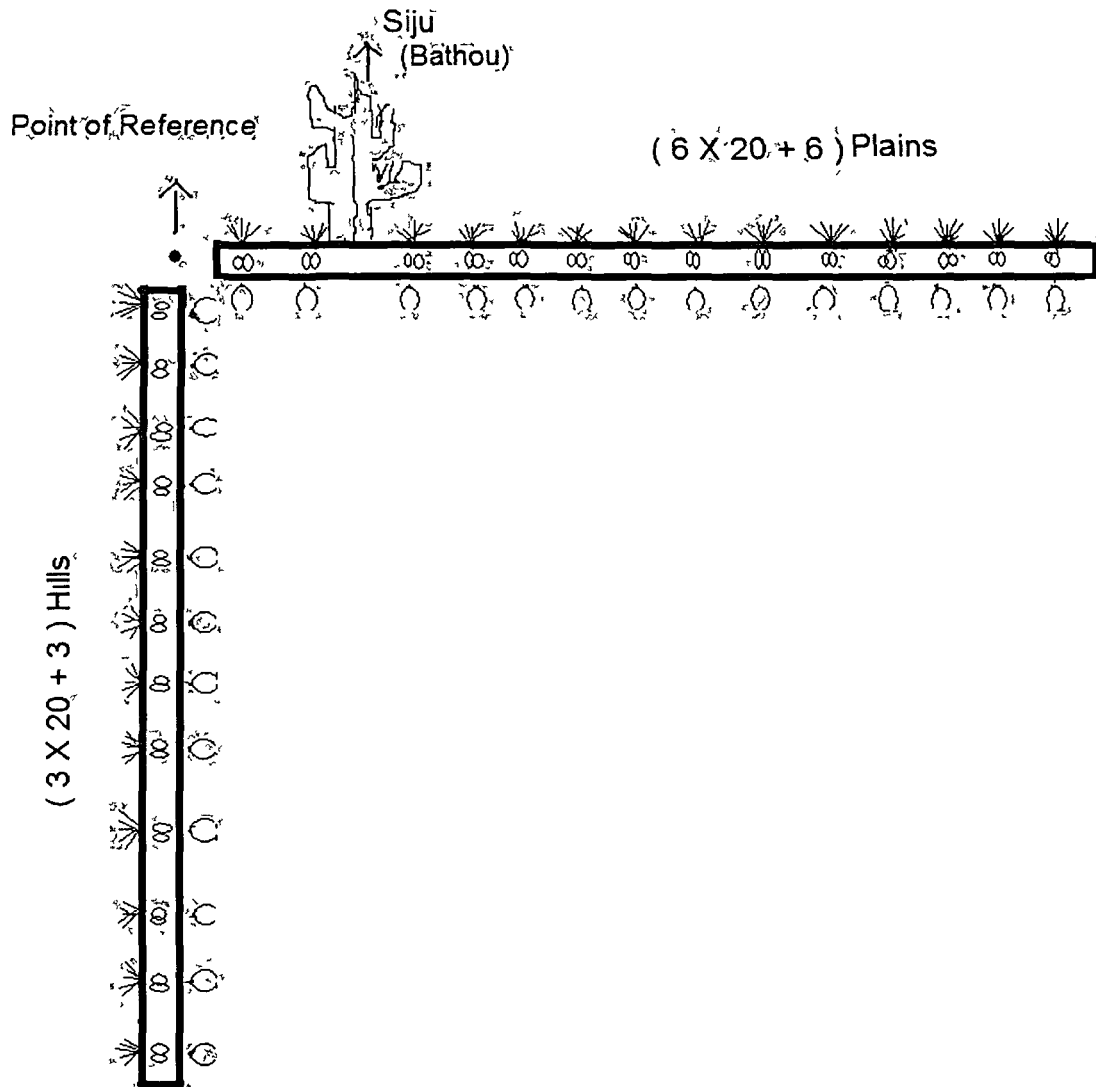
GENEALOGY CHART

KHARABURHA (1820)



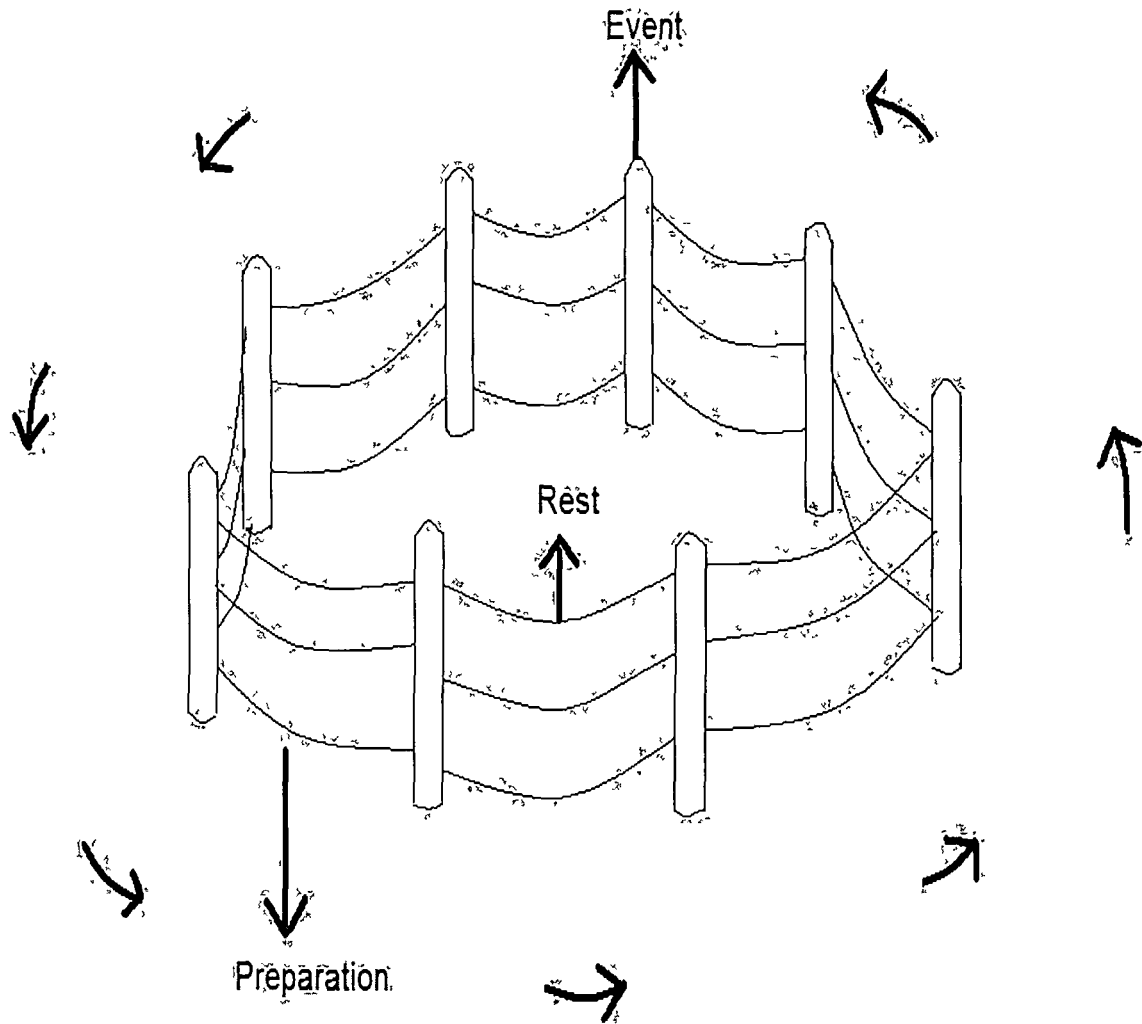
AIX

ILLUSTRATIONS (1-7)



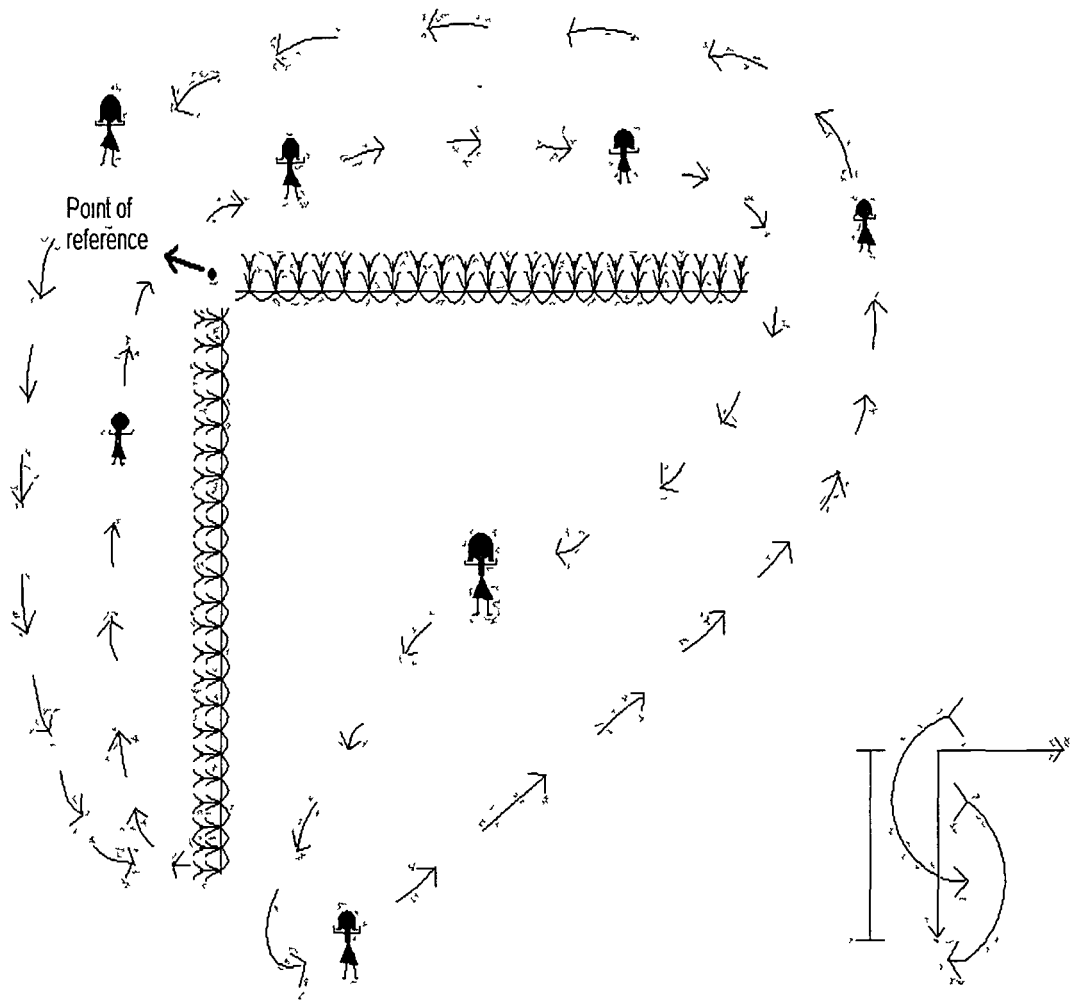
Schematic representation of Kherai Altar

Illustration no -1



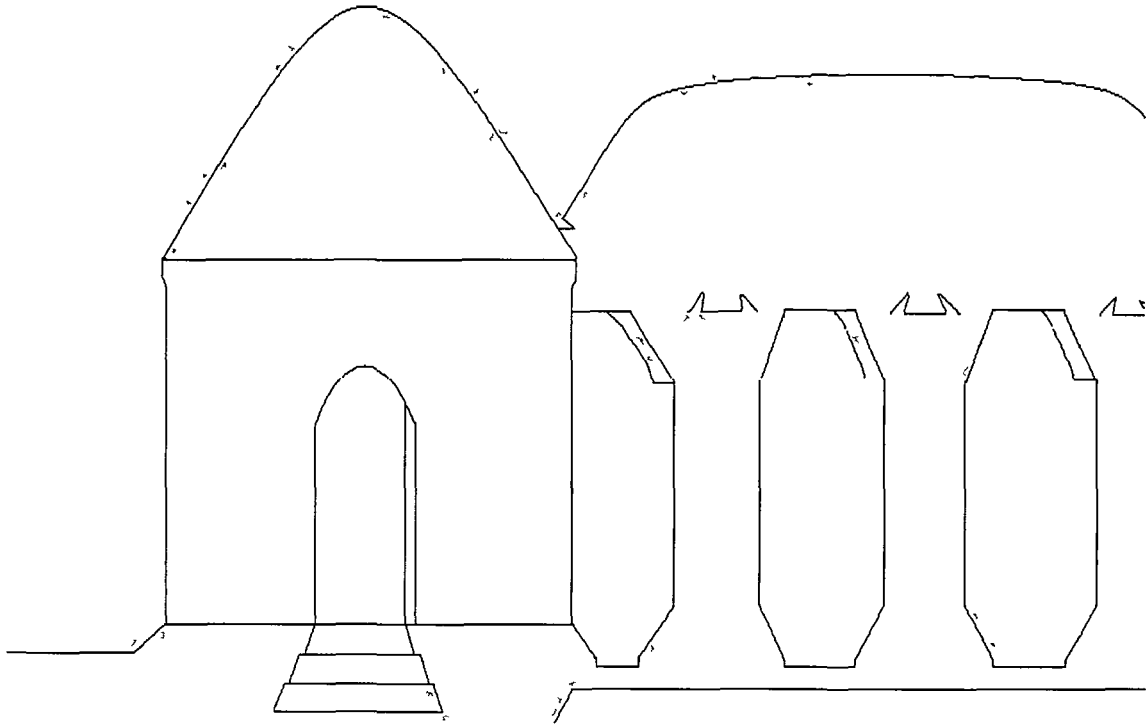
- Flexibility in framework : performance frame is open

Illustration no.-2



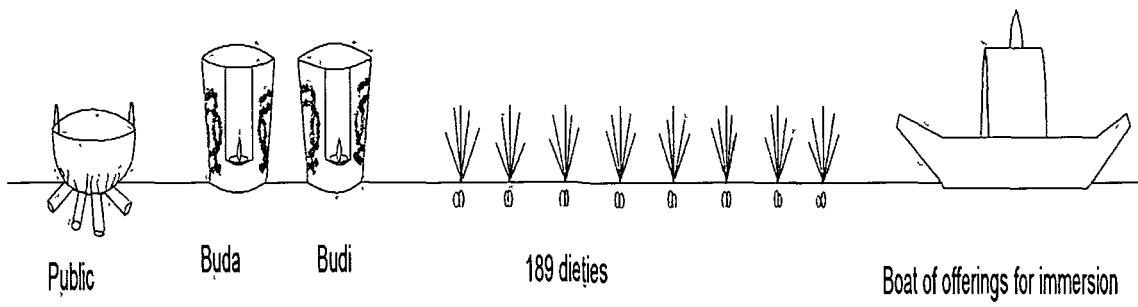
- Labdinga - People move around the altar in clockwise and anticlockwise direction . People believe that this earth is like a chakravuy, one can easily enter .but should also learn to come out of it.

Illustration no.-3



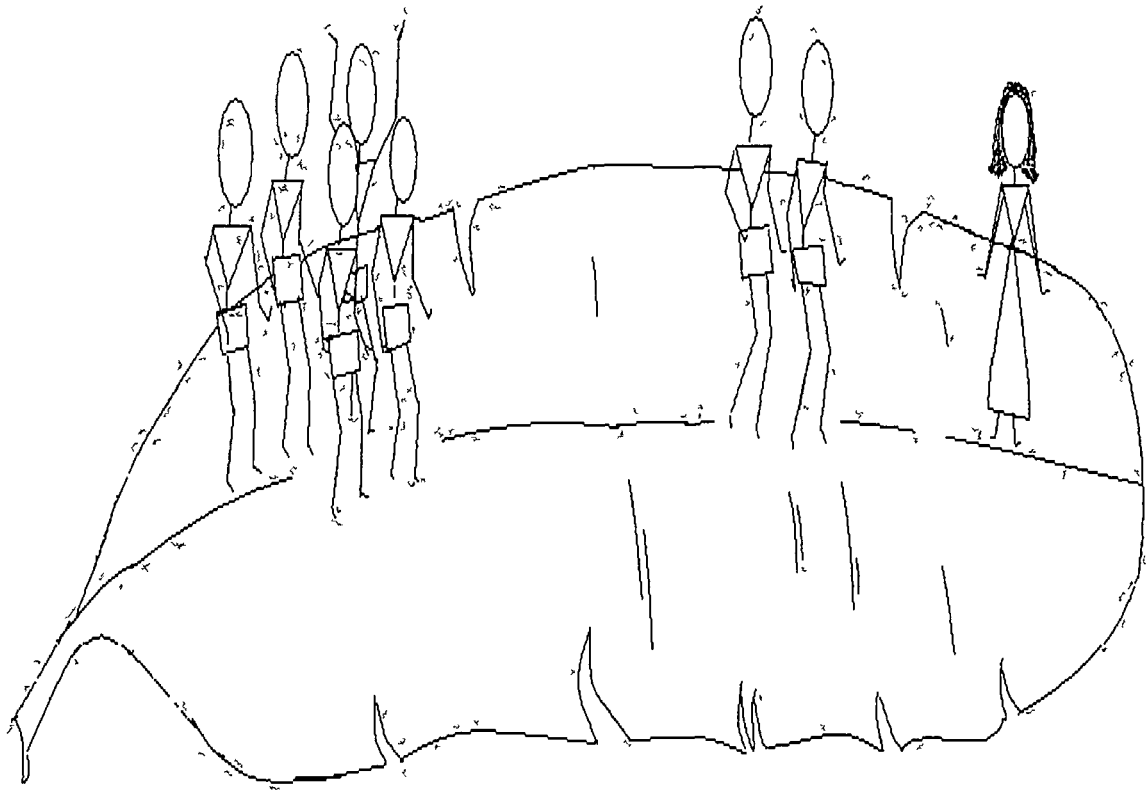
- Namghar
- Deoshal (sacrifice are also, made)
- On the previous day of kherai, a corresponding altar is laid simultaneously inside the deoshal
- Preliminaries of the ritual, like fasting, taking a vow by tying threads to each binds them towards the ritual

Illustration no -4



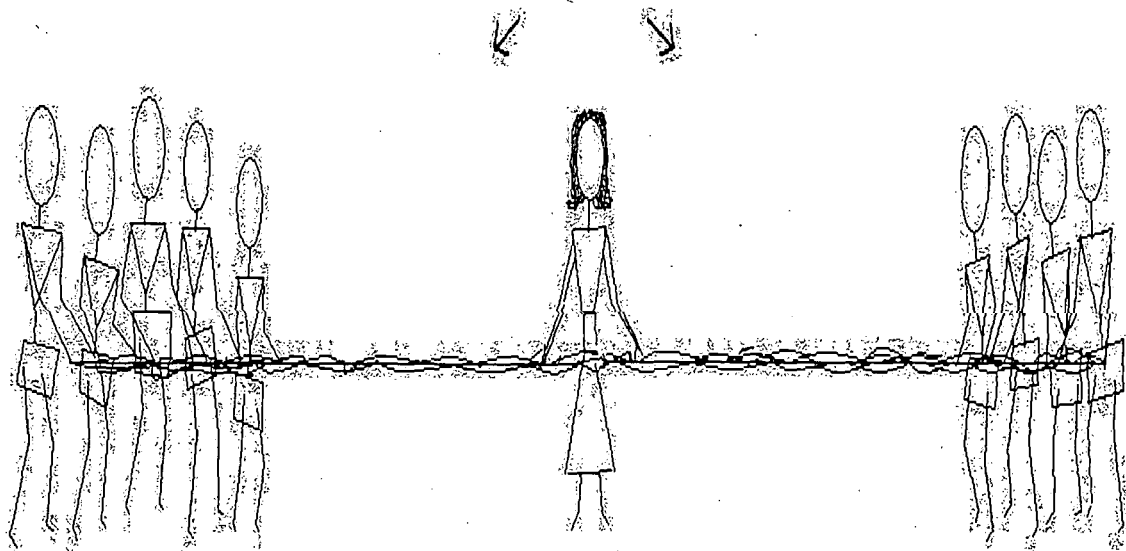
Roadside altar

Illustration no.-5



- Plain leaf is indicative of boat ; dancers in slow movements, merrily chatting, chewing tobacco and betel nuts; do share it with others also.
- Boat shows crossing of river, coming from the hills to the plains

Illustration no.-6



- Daudini is climbing a hill, path is curvaceous and not smooth. This dance shows how she struggles and easily overcomes that. Twirls and twists her body
- Daudini holds on to the rope and fixes her torso and moves

Illustration no-7

PHOTOGRAPHS



adorning the daudini

aged women dancing



altar of deities by the roadside

bowing before the bordeuri



bamboo grooves



boat for immersion with offerings

boys praying before the deities



boat with alaribatis

burrah and burrhi



bow to the earth

bordoishila dance



bura dangoria puja

collection of offerings



community feast

dance showing ring of defence



cows crossing the stream

clearing off the ritual arena



community follows the dafla lady

community helps her to leave
the world of spirits



zethor puja

boat in the night with lamps lit on



boys being blessed by the
bailung

criss-cross gait used for walking



women accompanying
daudini at the altar



dancing depicting self defence

dances with a cup of blood
on her head



dancing girls getting ready
in rest room

dance showing sowing of seeds





daudini overcomes difficult paths

doashrilagnai



daudini

daudini in pensive mood





daudini in trance

daudini despirits



daudini goes hunting

daudini imitates shooting of a bird



daudini sanctifies the path



daudini steps on thungri

deuri and bailung holding the sword



deuri's wife accepting
mainao's blessings

dhakua



digging pits for firestove

daudini



young men playing kham



daudini and lamphi praying

daudini becomes a hunter



daudini exerts to leave the world of spirits

daudini in garb of a hill-girl





daudini performing oracles

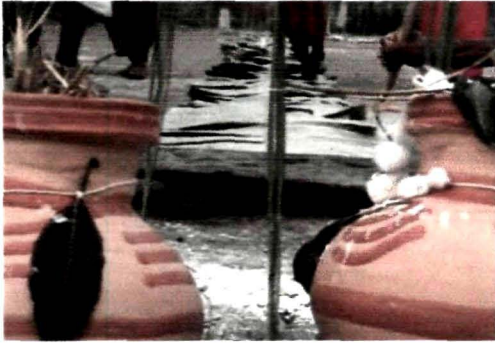
Daudini pledges before
the sacrifice



Daudini sets the bamboo bet in the
ground (self-defence ring)

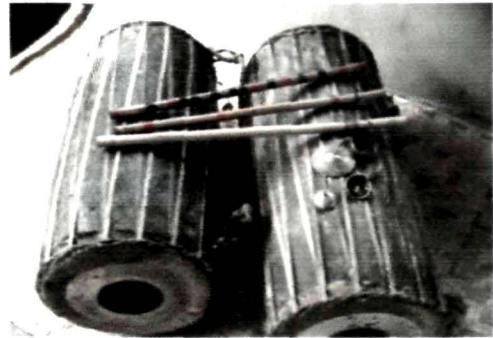
Daudini shows wind and
thunderstorm





daudini walks to the southern side of the altar

kham and siphung



daudini being followed by the instrumentalists

driving away spirits



exchanging pleasantries



exchanging salutations



fetching water from mansiri stream



final moment in kherai

food distribution



former daudini dancing

girls depicting wind



going inside water to throw
the things collected

hair being combed before the ritual



heirophany created

heirophany in tree



hymn singing

imitates a fly and show hopping



imitating bird in nature

inside the namghar



labdinga

labdinga inside namghar



lampha and lamphi imitates daudini's action

lampha imitates daudini



lamphi accompanies daudini

mainao's being invoked



mainao's place

man busy digging pit



man imitates animal

offering of jau to daudini
before puja



offerings in different directions



offerings offered in mid waters

old man teaches kham beats to
the young man





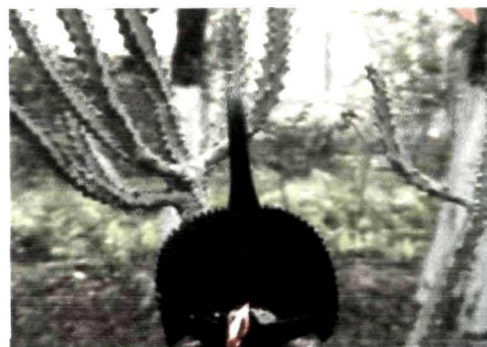
one side of offerings

oracles



zotha

traditional lamp





people help daudini to regain consciousness

people make a security chain around daudini



play on both sides of the altar

priestess offer obeisance to instrumentalists

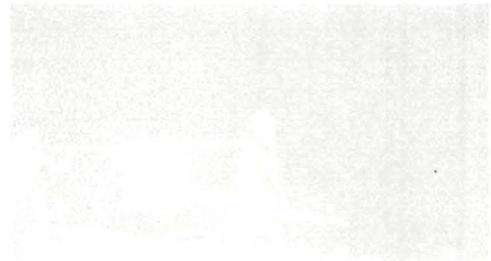


preparation of food

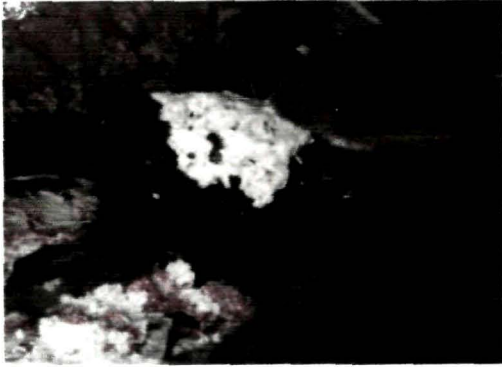


ranachandi dance

ready to jump into the water



sacred tree under which ritual takes place



sacrificed goat at the altar

sagarfena sijou



sanctifies her path

security ring in hands of the dancers



singing hymns before the boat
of offerings



spirits collect alms from the
village households

spirits coming out of water



sacrificed goat's head

spirits taking blessing from
the deities



supervision of the boat of
offerings

symbolic shields



tejbati dance



the official priests following daudini

thungri in both hands



thungri nach

waiting for the bailung to make them human from spirits





tries hard to cross the road

tug of war



welcome dance

panchmukhiya sijou



Details of Photographs

Serial no	Photo caption	Ref. page no.	Details
1.	adorning the daudini	p 82, chap.II	people dress her up like a bride
2.	aged women dancing		earlier aged women never danced. This is a new trend.
3.	altar of deities.....	p 69, chap.2	
4.	bowing before bordeuri		a gesture of respect
5.	bamboo grooves		natural heritage
6.	boat for immersion	p. 76, chap-3	
7.	boys praying before.....	p. 75, chap	young boys participate in the ritual
8.	boat with alaribattis	p.76	
9.	burrah and burrhi	p.76	deities
10.	bow to the earth		gesture of respect to mother earth
10.	bordoishila dance		young girls perform in the ritual arena.
11.	burra dangoriya puja	p.71, chap-3	celebrated in the month of July .
12.	collection of offerings	p.44, chap-2	raizani Bakhri
13.	community feast		after sacrifice in Zethor puja a feast is arranged
14.	dance showing ring.....		bet (cane) ring is used .
15.	cows crossing the Mansiri stream		natural landscape .
16.	clearing of the ritual		thereafter,offerings are shared .
17.	community follows the dafla		people accompany daudini from the hills to the plains
18.	community helps her.....	p.82, chap-3	
19.	zethor puja	p.70, chap-3	held in the month of June.

20. boats with lamps lit on	p.74, chap-3	evening spectacle
21. boys being blessed	p.75, chap-3	before the ritual starts
22. criss-cross gait	p.91, chap-3	walking gait in dance
23. women accompany		showing respect and comaradie
24. dancing depicting self.....		dancers imitate daudini
25. dances with a cup of blood	p.79, chap-3	tej bati dance
26. dancing girls in rest room		temporary arrangement in the field .
27. dance shows sowing of seeds		representation of fertility being enacted.
28. daudini overcomes difficult paths		rope symbolizes road here. Daudini deflects her body to show difficulties.
29. daosrilagnai		dance depicting sparrows bathing in river.
30. daudini	p.92, chap-3	serenity in her face .
31. daudini in pensive mood.	„	various emotions .
32. daudini in trance	p.106, chap-4	
33. daudini dispirits	p.82, chap-3	
34. daudini goes hunting		with a bow and a arrow.
35. daudini imitates shooting.....		shoots and then throttles.
36. daudini sanctifies the path		sprinkles holy water.
37. daudini steps on Thungri		steps and dances on the sharp sword.
38. deuri and bailung holding.....		daudini rests her head on the sword and meditates.
39. deuri's wife accepting Mainao's		she is the custodian of public granary.

40. dhakua (lunch bowls)		specimen of tribal craft.
41. digging pits for fire stove		to prepare community feast .
42.daudini releases herself.		becomes a normal person .
43.young men playing Kham		a pair of Khams is used to give a good musical effect.
44.daudini and lamphi praying		lampha is an attendant of daudini .
45.daudini becomes a hunter		see serial no 34.
46.daudini exerts to leave	p.82,chap-3	
47.daudini as a hill girl		she wears a cap of bird feathers and carries bow and arrow.
48. daudini performing oracles		daudini tries to solve the problems and also offer solutions .
49.daudini takes a pledge		she begs excuse from the sacrificial animal and feeds him Jatrasi leaves.
50.daudini digs the bamboo		she prepares a security ring for herself for final release.
51.daudini shows wind and thunderstorm.		the origin of the Bordoishila dance of the Bodos.
52.daudini walks to		change of direction ,malevolent spirits reside here.
53.kham and siphung	p.77, chapter-3	ritual requirements .
54.daudini being followed.....		the official performers take a circumbulation of the arena.
55.driving away spirits		the young boys drive away the spirits by beating with sticks .
56.exchanging pleasantries		people smear rice powder to exchange wishes.

57. ,, salutations		the official priests exchange by bowing to each other .
58.fetching water from.....		water is used for cooking and also for offering sacrifices.
59.final moment in Kherai		daudini changes her direction and moves to South
60.ex-daudini dancing .		they also show their obeisance to Bathou.
61.girls depicting wind		through their vigorous stances
62. food distribution		feast in an open field.
63. inside water		all evil things are thrown in water.
64.hair being combed		to put vermilion in the parting
65.hierophany created		tree manifests sacredness.
67.hierophany in tree	p.72-84,chap-3	
68.hymn singing	p.74, chap-3	bator sabah
69.daudini imitates fly		hopping movement
70.inside the Namghar		ritual for the deities
71.labdinga	p.144,chap-4	symbolic celebration
72.labdinga inside Namghar		mainly by the ritual priests
73.lapha and lamphi.....	p.145,chap-4	both imitate daudini
74.lamphi accompanies		lamphi is her attendant,
75.mainao being invoked		daudini takes basketful of rice offers it to Mainao .
76. mainao place		goddess of wealth , has a special place in the altar.
77.man busy digging pit		for the fire stove
78.man imitates animal		shows relationship with nature.
79.offering of jau to mainao		showing respect to the priestess.

80.offerings in different directions	p.71,chap-3	offerings for different deities in different directions.
81.bhog offered in		offering for goddess bhorili.
82.old man teaches kham.....		preserving tradition
83.one side of offering.....		laizams laid in h east side.
84.oracles.....		people listen attentively to fortune telling.
85.zotha		a pair of brass cymbals.
86.traditional lamp		a stand lamp
87.people help daudini.....		hold and sprinkle holy water to calm down.
88.people make a security.....		people comfort her during spirit release
88.play on both sides.....		the serious and comic both natures follow.
89.priestess offers salutations.....		bowing before them .
90.preparation of food	p.71,chap-3	food for public and god made in separate hearths.
91.ranachandi dance		young girls dance with swords.
92.ready to jump.....		young boys dressed as spirits jump into the pond in search of evils.
93.sacred tree.....		stands as a testimony to tradition.
94.sacrificed goat at the altar		a severed head adorns the altar.
95.sagarfena sijou		a type of cactus plant.
96. security ring in the hands		encircling movements around themselves to show security ring.
97.singing hymns		people sit by the side of the boat and sing religious hymns.
98.spirits collect alms		people stay indoors when spirits come and collect things from their courtyard.

