

Chapter: IV

Social and Cultural Life of the Bodo

1. Family Structure of the Bodo:

Family is a universally recognized social institution, which may be described as oldest human institution tracing back its antiquity to the food gathering stage. Bodo as a tribe or community follow and prefer to live in a patriarchal family. This form of family system is the foremost and socially recognized among the Bodo and commonly practiced which is also supported by Rev. Sidney Endle¹, Bhaben Narzi², P. C. Bhattacharya³, R. N. Mushahary⁴, Kameswar Brahma⁵, Dr. Kameswar Brahma⁶, Sekhar Brahma⁷, Satyendra Nath Mondal⁸, Medini Choudhury⁹, Dr. Anil Boro¹⁰, Dr. Premananda Mushahary¹¹, Premlata Devi¹², Boro Samajni Nemkanti¹³ and etc. It clearly indicates that patriarchal family is a common form of family system or institution among the Bodo since ancient times, which continued till date as the most socially accepted traditional as well as approved form.

The Bodo has the concept of family by the word *Nokhor* which literary means the household. The word denotes both biological family as well as household. Family which formed the basic unit of Bodo society is patriarchal. Right from the ancient days the Bodo family is patriarchal in nature, the head of the family usually being the father and he is called *Nophang*¹⁴ in Bodo language. If the Bodo family is to be confirmed patriarchal, the head of the family must be having absolute control over the family property. And the Bodo family structure has the entire basic requirement to be called as patriarchal family. Absolute control implies the disposition of property in any way the patriarch chooses. He may give the property away, sell it, alienate it, or transfer it by testamentary disposition in any way he thinks proper. The oldest member in the family held the supreme authority over the maintenance and administration over the family. The head of the family is the fountain of all power and retained all such powers of the family affairs. He exercises the power for the well being and welfare as well as upliftment of the

family. All the family property belonged to the head of the family as he is the owner and administrator of the family property and rights¹⁵. The members in the family are subordinate to the patriarch since father (head of the family) exercised full power over his subordinate family members- younger brothers and their wives, married sons and their wives and children born to them. He is in-charge of the family kinship relationship, worship and offering. Being head of the family, sole authority in family management, he represented his family in any other social functions of the community. He is just like godfather to the family members who paid respect to him. A good head of the family is the one who can give love and affection to his subordinate family members, properly guide in a right way, equal treatments to all the family members, to be able to make them social responsibility, could create healthy family environment and prosperity and so on. After the expiry of the head of the family, his eldest son will be the head of the family because normally in the patriarchal system a father is succeeded by his eldest son after his death. But according to Bhaben Narzi¹⁶, in the absence of father, widow mother takes the responsibility of the family. Sometimes she hands over this responsibility to her eldest son. If the eldest son is minor, it is the mother who took the charge of all the family as did by her deceased husband on behalf of minor son till he attained age of maturity. It is called *Garjjo*¹⁷. This may be in the case of the nuclear family or where there are no mature male persons in the family. It is also informed that when head of the joint family died, the next successor would be his brother who should be the senior to the son of the deceased head of the family¹⁸. The most important thing to be noted here is that the eldest person of the family of Bodo who acted as the head of the family in most of the time used to consult juniors members of the family irrespective sex in some important as well as delicate matters of the family. It is the humble, transparency and democratic functioning of the family of the Bodo.

When both parents (father and mother) died, the sons of the deceased parents assembled together and may divide among themselves in equal share, the estate, for they have no power over it while the parents alive. After the death of the father, the eldest son who is becoming the head of family is required to support the younger brothers and other family members. In returned of that the brothers in accordance with the law of the Bodo should behave towards their eldest brother as their father. It is the eldest son who could make family prosperous or could bring it to ruin. The eldest is regarded among man most worthy honour and could not be treated with disrespect by the virtuous. By the way of

treatment of the eldest brother towards his younger brothers and family members that could bring harmony or disharmony in the family. If the eldest brother behaves as a father and discharges the duty of a true father towards his brothers, he is regarded like a parent. If his behavior and conduct is in a manner of not good enough of an eldest brother, he is honoured like a kinsman and lost the privilege and respect that of a father as he could not fulfill the desire of the family members or his act is against the wishes of family members because of his autocratic nature or dictatorship in character. If such situation arises, either they may live together or get apart if they desire so, by separate living their advantage increases, and hence separation is meritorious which led to the formation of a nuclear family of the Bodo society. The undivided joint family seems to be the normal characteristic of a Bodo family. The members of a Bodo family used to reside in a state of jointness unless, contrary is proved. Joint family of the Bodo means joint in food, worship and stay which continues to be joint. The presumption is also that it continues to be joint. It is a notion that one who desires to separate he has to prove it satisfactorily. If the separation is on forcibly, he may not be satisfactory. Generally, preliminary burden of parting is on him who sets up partition¹⁹. In the present society of the Bodo, nuclear family became a trendy one as a result of the impact of the modernization. Many of the joint family of the Bodo slowly and steady disintegrated into nuclear family hoping that it may lead a happy life. In most of the cases of the Bodo society, as and when the younger brother got married, shortly the married elder brother separated and remaining brothers also follow in the same way of separation from the joint family to make their separate nuclear families. However, the respect to their elders always remained in the minds of the younger brother even when they got severance.

In certain case, among the Bodo, we find bridegroom goes to live permanently to the residence of bride²⁰ by adopting parental clans of the bride but this is not a factor to determine patrilocal or matrilocal society or does not lead to describe matrilocal as it is exceptional case (rare case) and not practice in general.

In the traditional Bodo family, no doubt, father, the head of the family enjoyed the supreme authority. Mother also being the first woman in the family plays a very important role over the management of family affairs by superintending and training younger members of the family in respect to household activities²¹. She is also responsible to train the juniors in the family to be a good man of the community and society by teaching manners, behavior, good habits, moral conducts, discipline, customs,

traditions, way of thinking, way of speaking, etc. She plays a decisive role in selection of bride or bridegroom. She also plays some important role in the religious activities in family as well as in community level of social function. In the matter concerning to the grown-up daughters, the decision of the mother is always prevalent and will be given more weightage and strong.

It is customary of the Bodo to be used father's clan name. However, a woman loses her identity with her patriclan immediately after her marriage and takes her husband patriclan by adopting it as her clan name²². The Bodo prefer joint family. The joint family of the Bodo consisted of many family members who are mainly included father, mother, uncles and their wives, unmarried aunt, married sons, grandsons-daughters, unmarried sons and daughters, grandfather, grandmother, great-grand-father, great-grand-mother, daughter-in-law, etc. with common property, common house, common kitchen, common dining room and collective work for the family. They always tried to maintain good family atmosphere and all the members enjoy equal status within the family. The member of the joint family used to have had their meals together in the open space of courtyard²³. This practice was common in olden days but due to the advancement of the civilization, now a days, they used to have their lunch and dinner in the dining hall of the joint family. The tendency of joint family was very strong in early days. Generally, in the olden days the concept of nuclear family might not be present in the mind of the Bodo as it is the product of modern society. In modern day man seems to be very individualistic. In the Bodo family, it seems that several generations lived under the same roof.

Marriage becomes the determining factor of the clan (surname) of the female. When she enrolled to a new family through marriage, her identity of parental clan ceased to exist, taking surname of the parental clan of her husband. But if the female member of particular family married to another family and got divorce then she is allowed to stay back to her parental family. In such case she will remain as the member of the parental family as earlier, bearing her original patriclan but automatically loses her identity to her husband patriclan²⁴. In another words, a divorce woman when she left her husband house and reside her parental house as a result of divorce, she resume to use her patriclan by abandoning her husband's surname.

2. Village and Village Administration:

A village is cluster of dwelling houses normally situated in the rural area with no specific numbers of houses that can be considered as village where population may be of minimum few hundred and maximum few thousands. It may be built in a location which is habitable for human beings as well as for other animals (domesticated) having more or less cultivable and uncultivable land around it. Usually, it may be situated in plain, hills and low areas in which water, plants, trees, grasses and other essential commodities are locally as well as easily available. So, it is normally a clustered of human settlement generally permanent in nature with dwelling houses, common grazing field, common pond, common play ground, etc.

In early days the Bodo village was covered by the thick bamboo groves and dense fruit trees of different kinds of species. When any one moved towards the village of the Bodo, he could find the rows and rows of bamboo groves, areca nut trees and banana plants in the midst of the paddy fields. Until and unless one did not enter into the village he would not be able to witness the houses of the Bodo that existed under the bamboo groves and dense fruit trees and to the onlooker it would not be possible to see the sign of standing of the houses from the distance as all being hidden. While discussing on the village of the Bodo, it is asserted that the Bodo village comprised several hamlet and numbers of the households constituted a hamlet²⁵. Both homogenous and heterogeneous characters of the villages were found, however, homogeneous village became very common without any exception. The size and population of the village varied from one village to another and no hard and fast rule had been found the numbers of the households that constituted a village. The Bodo generally constructed their houses on both sides of the road, lane etc. They also built the houses on any vacant lands in helter-skelter. The boundary between two households or each house was marked by garden, ditch or any kind of barrier²⁶. It is recorded that the village of the Bodo-Kachari was a rule much more compact than the Hindus. The houses were constructed very closely with one another. Every house was surrounded by a ditch and a fence. The Bodo-Kachari village had plentiful of livestock like ducks, fowls, goats, pigs, cattle etc. However, they constructed separate buildings for the livestock i.e. ducks, fowls, goats, pigs, cattle etc., a little distance from the dwelling house of the family²⁷.

With the advancement of the civilization and advancement of human knowledge, the structure of the village of the Bodo slightly changed in some area but in some area it remained as it was earlier. No changes have been seen in some villages but some villages witnessed some changes due to the advancement of the knowledge of the Bodo in course of time or as the time changed. As the population increased, with the advancement of knowledge as well as due to impact of the modernization, many things have been changed. Disappearance of dense forest, decreasing of bamboo groves, beautification of village, set-up of village (modern village club, village library), emergence of new or modern educational institutions, coming up of new building, increase of the houses, drainage system, systematic graveyard and so on have been appeared. Better health facilities or health care is another important change in the village life of the Bodo. It also come to our notice that during olden days when modern medical or health care facilities was absent and any epidemic like cholera, typhoid etc. struck any particular Bodo village, then the entire villagers left their village to save themselves from the epidemic as during that time modern medical facilities was totally absent²⁸. Urbanization, the dominant characteristic of the modern period has made its impact on the Bodo village. Due to the rise of modern industrialism, the rural group began to lose its importance. However, in spite of growth of urbanism, it is a fact that even at present time, a large proportion of Bodo people lives in traditional villages.

Village as Unit:

The Bodo village, in general was a loose unit in the early days. Each and every family or household had a freedom to remain in the village as long as they desired. In the past, the Bodo had the tendency of migration and to settle to the new place by leaving their original settlement. It was a common phenomenon that whenever they faced any trouble or difficulty in their respective villages, they were free to leave the said village and migrated to another place or they were free to search a new settlement which is known as *Hadan Nagirnai*²⁹ even today. The Bodo word *Hadan Nagirnai* means searching of the new place for settlement. This word *Hadan Nagirnai* clearly indicated that the Bodo had the habit of migration. This migration was not only for the purpose of the settlement but also might be in search of fertile land. The different families or members of migrant when they settled down together in a particular place, that area emerged as village. The bond of unifying between the household in a village was very

much unfastened. The member of the Bodo village owes strong allegiance to *Bahagi* (relative from father side) and *Kurma* (relatives from mother side) firstly and secondly to his village as the Bodo belief that their allegiance to the village was secondary one. When any dispute arose between two different individuals, they used to seek help of their respective closest relatives whether it might be *Bahagi* or *Kurma* to sort out the matter. And dispute between the two individuals of the village was regarded to be the dispute of the respective *Bahagi* and the respective *Bahagi* tried to defend and protect their own person who belonged to the particular *Bahagi*. The Garo, one of the cognate tribes of the Bodo also followed the same rule in their respective village³⁰. The past tradition and practices are still not extinct.

Village Sanitation:

In respect to the village sanitation of the Bodo, we may recall and analyse the observation made by the different scholars. Rev. Sidney Endle³¹ remarked that the Bodo-Kachari reared different kinds of domestic livestock. Because of the livestock as they reared, village became uncleanliness. R. N. Mushahary³² opines that as rearing of numbers of livestock by the Bodo, their villages and household were not free from the cleanliness to some extent.

In the Second Boro Maha Sanmilan which was held in Rangia of Kamrup district in 1925, it was resolved that pig rearing was to be banned as it caused dirty in the whole compound of the house and made pollution in the environment³³. However, it is also fact that the Bodo had been provided separate buildings of different livestock which were a little away from the main house. As for example, *Goli* is the cowshed of the Bodo where they kept all their cows and oxen, *Oma Gondra* for pig, *Dao Gondra* for fowls and ducks. The keeping of different livestock separately from the main house by constructing different dwelling places most probably proved that the Bodo had good sense of hygiene, sanitation, civic sense and attention to the health to some extent even in the early days. The word of William Robinson³⁴ who commented that the poultry and livestock were kept under the same roof along with themselves cannot be wholly acceptable with the evidence of the existence of different dwelling places for different poultry and livestock. But, it is also cannot be denied that some family might not be able to construct separate buildings for their livestock due to poor economic condition. It does not mean that all the Bodo are ignored for the construction of separate buildings for their livestock. Even

today, the Bodo continued to practice the keeping of livestock separately by constructing separate dwelling places for those livestock a little away from the main house.

Saori Lengnai (Community work):

Saori Lengnai is another important social institution of the village, which has been term as community work³⁵. As and when the cultivator could not be finished his work of cultivation which included any work relating to agriculture namely- transplantation of paddy, harvesting etc. he might be requested the villagers to help him to complete the task by offering meals, rice-beer, pork etc. whatever one can afford it³⁶. It is not only applicable to the agricultural activities but also done in other purposes for example construction of the house, preparing the marriage tent, arrangement of the marriage etc. Thus, *Saori Lengnai* may also be considered as village labour crops dealing with the social and economic life of the village with the aim of helping other person voluntarily during the needs of any person in the village by rendering their voluntary service to the concern family or person.

Bakri (Granary):

Bhakri is the term used for granary by the Bodo. This word signified both for individual granary and common granary. In the ancient days *Bhakris* (granaries) were used by the Bodo to keep all the provisions or all the articles of food including grains. Even now, common granaries are found in some villages of the Bodo but not compulsory in every village as earlier. Granaries are mainly built in the centre place of the village³⁷. The granary has the floor with the height of four or five feet above the ground level to protect from infestation, fungus, rats, birds, fowls etc. They are made of thatched like the dwelling houses and have their floors and walls bamboo matting with one small door from where people can enter granary. Some rich individuals also has acquired such granaries more than one. The numbers of granary of individual mainly depend on their capacity of earning or depending on the acquired of land and which product. In some houses the grains are stored in *Duli* (matting basket) which keep inside the room of the house. Nowadays, the existance of common granary gradually reduced in many of the Bodo villages but family granary is still present.

Gwtwi Sali (Village Graveyard):

The word *Gwtwi Sali* is the graveyard or cremation place. It seems that in ancient days the Bodo did not developed the concept of the graveyard³⁸ or cremation. It is

reported that they left the death body in the open field or in the jungle far from the village. Burial of death body was very rare as very few people practiced it³⁹. Bhaben Narjari⁴⁰ says in this regard that “*Pwtarao langdangwi garna pwiyw. Kaipalo kaipalo pobw*” which indicated that buried of death body was rare and not widely practiced. At present, the Bodo do have their permanent graveyard or cremation ground where they buried or cremated dead bodies.

Mechanism of social control in village level:

Each and every Bodo village has been governed by their traditional customary laws and managed by village council. The Bodo called the village council as *Gami Dwiden Afad* or *Gamini Samlai Afad*. The traditional village administration formed a very important mechanism for the social control of the Bodo society which directly related to their socio-cultural and religious life. The traditional village council of the Bodo retained vast power to solve all types of cases, be it civil or criminal and settled the disputes under the rule of the customary laws. Any individual who intended to seek justice from *Gami Dwiden Afad* or *Gamini Samlai Afad* had to file their petition orally in the past but written application is at present. Before the knowledge of the use of money, the people might have been offered something whether it would be rice-beer or something else as a court fee. Afterward, when money came to be used in the society due to the advancement of civilization, a nominal fee in the form of money was most probably introduced as a court fee. The person who lodged the complaint against anyone has to pay a *Sabri*⁴¹ (complaint fee). The Bodo have their own unwritten constitution or customary laws since the ancient day which is popularly known as *Bad. Bad* or customary laws were composed orally and handed down from one generation to another generation. The polity was based on convention and nothing written laws belonged to ancient time⁴². The primary objective of the *Gami Dwiden Afad* or *Gamini Samlai Afad* is to maintain peace and order and established harmony between the individuals, peaceful livelihood, justice, prosperity etc. in the village. The members of the village council discharged their duty sincerely. Justice is delivered quickly and it became inexpensive and free from complex procedural. Justice is given equally to everybody irrespective of sex and no difference between poor and rich and all are eligible to obtain justice as all are treated equally in the eyes of law. Even after having well established

laws of the country, the Bodo still followed their traditional customary laws in many cases.

Composition of Traditional Village Council:

The traditional village council of the Bodo consisted of numbers of member to function the council effectively and properly. The village headman, popularly known as *Gami Bengiri* is assisted by his subordinate members namely *Lengyai Gami Bengiri* (assistant village head), *Gamini Dwori* (village priest) and *Tandoi* or *Halmazi* (village messenger)⁴³. Village administrative system was based on gerontocracy in early days as the village elders took important role. This gerontocracy system is still found in village administration. *Hadungwra* and his assistant *Hasungwra* were also another two important key posts in the council which found mainly in the Goalpara district, southern part of Kamrup district and in the Nagaon district of Assam⁴⁴. The post of *Hadungwra* and his assistant *Hasungwra* are seems to be disappeared at present.

Gami Bengiri:

The village chief is called *Gami Bengiri*. He is supreme authority in almost all affairs of the Bodo village⁴⁵. He is assisted by the members of the village council. Prosperity and development of the village depend upon the statesmanship of the concerned chief. The main function of the chief and his council of members are to protect the villagers, to look after their welfare and to make prosperity, to administer justice and to perform communal rites and rituals.

The eligibility to become *Gami Bengiri* should be that one should be old married man. Old married man should be one who possessed skill of administration, experience as well as well verse in the customary laws and practices. As per the tradition, unmarried old man even though he possessed the knowledge of customary laws is not entitled to the post of *Gami Bengiri*. There is no formal election for the post of *Gami Bengiri* but it is done on the basis of selection. The post is not hereditary and do not confine to any clan or social groups. Regarding the tenure of village chiefship, there is no fixed term. But tenure is varied from one place to another place ranging from two to five years or sometimes it depends on the will and wishes of the villagers⁴⁶.

Lengyai Gami Bengiri:

Lengyai Gami Bengiri is the assistant or deputy of village headman. In the absence of village headman or chief, he should act and takes decisions in consultation

with other members of the village council. He plays an important role along with *Gami Bengiri* because they are working together for the general welfare of villagers. However, he has no power to over-rule *Gami Bengiri*.

Gamini Dwori:

The village priest is known as *Dwori* who is selected for the purpose of performance of rites, rituals and ceremonies of the village from time to time. He is the highest authority and adviser in the matter of religion⁴⁷. The village priest is very important as well as indispensable person whose religious service is required in social and individual life of villagers. His main duty is to perform all the rites, rituals and sacrifices for the safety of the village, to protect from any kind of natural calamities, evil spirit, protection of village from enemies, etc. and offering prayer for plentiful harvest. During the time of *Garja puja* and *Kherai Puja*, *Dwori* has to perform all the rituals including the sacrifices of livestock. He also performed *Hambai Hwnai* ritual along with villagers by offering and sacrificing goat or fowl or pig for appeasement of gods and goddesses and beasts and insects for plentiful harvest. All the rites and sacrifices are carried out by *Dwori* and no sacrifice can be performed without him.

Among the followers of traditional *Bathwo* religion there should be a village priest in their respective villages. The process of selection of village priest is done after the end of *Kherai Puja* by *Doudini*⁴⁸. In course of selection, *Doudini* dropped holy water of *Kherai Puja* on the head of the person who took part in *Kherai Puja*. The person on whom the water is dropped is selected as *Dwori* of the village. In certain villages where *Kherai Puja* is absent or not performed, *Dwori* is selected during the time of *Garja Puja*⁴⁹. Nowadays, in the process of selection of *Dwori*, dropping water on the head is disappeared in some areas and selection is done on rotation basis as per the convenience of the respective villages.

Among the Bodo, there is no priestly class. The *Brahmans* are not employed in the religious ceremonies as it is performed by *Dwori*⁵⁰. The post of the priest is not hereditary; anyone who is living devout life could be a priest⁵¹. No remuneration is awarded to him.

Halmazi or Tandwi:

The lowest post of village council is *Halmazi* or *Tandwi*. He is the messenger of village. The main function of *Halmazi* or *Tandwi* is to convey information and other

news to the members of the village council or to the important officials of the village administration. In addition, village council used to send him to make notice to the public any news when needed. As and when the date of a meeting of the village committee is fixed, the *Halmazi* or *Tandwi* has to go from door to door to invite the people of the village for the meeting and also informed the venue of the meeting. The *Gami Bengiri* also ordered him to call in anybody of the village for consultation or discussion on any matter at any time. He is bound to carry out the command of *Gami Bengiri* of the village council⁵². A *Halmazi* or *Tandwi*, it is said, should be very active in his service. He is selected by the villagers to acts as a messenger. He is entitled to receive remuneration.

Hadungwra:

In early days, the Bodo who were inhabited on the northern part of present Goalpara district, southern parts of the Brahmaputra river of Kamrup district and Nagaon district used to select one *Hadungwra* for twelfth (12) villages authorizing him to administer criminal cases or any cases which considered as complicated where *Gami Bengiri* could not decide the cases⁵³. A person was also selected as a *Hasungwra* or *Lengyai Hadungwra* to assist *Hadungwra*. He used to give or render his mental as well as physical support to *Hadungwra*. In his absence he represented *Hadungwra*. The post *Hadungwra* and *Hasungwra* or *Lengyai Hadungwra* are seem to be disappeared.

Salary or Remuneration:

Almost all the posts of the village administrative council are of honorary nature except *Halmazi*. No salary is paid to them. They are not entitled to enjoy salary for their service to village. Generally, the members including *Gami Bengiri* work on honorary capacity as a result they do not receive any salary or remuneration. However, it is reported that in ancient days they were entitled to get a portion of meat of animal sacrificed at ceremonies and festivals as well as privileged of getting a share of hunted wild animal's meat by his villagers. These privileges were given to them as a mark of obligation and respect to them⁵⁴.

On the other hand, *Halmazi* (messenger) of the village used get salary from the village. He received two *don* (bamboo basket) of paddy from every household of the village annually as remuneration for his service⁵⁵. The amount or salary which is supposed to be enjoyed by *Halmazi* is fixed in advance before the assignment of duty. His salary is collected from each and every household of the village including from

Gami Bengiri. In early days his salary was paid in kind i.e. rice. But nowadays all the members of the village council who hold the important positions including *Halmazi* are entitled to enjoy certain amount of fixed remuneration which is paid in the form of cash or kind which depend on the capacity of respective family of the village.

Venue of Meeting:

Generally, the residence of the chief is made as the court for minor cases. In case of major, administration of justice is done in open fields or village playground or shade of big trees etc. In early days, meeting of village council was usually convened at nightfall because the villagers were free from doing agricultural works and other activities engaged by them by that time⁵⁶.

In past days, there was no professional or expert persons to deal with the cases of law of justice for civil and criminal law. Under the supervision of head of the council including his subordinate members of the council and along with the experience village elders who were versed in their customary laws and practices implemented the laws to bring proper justice. The administration of justice was done in accordance with the customary laws of the Bodo. The civil and criminal cases were governed by the customs and tradition practiced by the Bodo. The laws had social sanction behind and each and every villager was bound to follow. Even the *Gami Bengiri* and other members of the council were not above the law. Till now, the Bodo's customary laws is not codified but transmitted orally from one generation to another. The forms of punishment were various types which based on the degree of the crime or the nature of the dispute. At present also, the Bodo are governed by their traditional customary law and all the past practices are still found in the village administration with certain modification to suit the time.

The complaint which brought to the notice of village headman should be discussed in the open meeting. Both complainer and accused person are to be answered the queries of the village elders who are involved in discharging the duty of justice. In the procedure of administering of justice, the statement given by both parties are listen and carefully investigated and examined by the council. Certain methods like swearing of oaths by taking the name of god, touching the fire, water, earth, even the head of his or her children are followed to ascertain and to prove a person's culpability or the guilt or innocence of a person⁵⁷. The same procedures are also applied to the witness for verifying whether the statement given by him or her is authentic or false. If the accused

is proved to be guilty, the council award punishment. The punishment is in the form of penance, fine or boycott which mainly depends on the nature of crime committed by the culprit. Imposition of fine is very common to wrong doer. In some cases, wrong doer is required to do penance or purification along with the payment of fine⁵⁸. In early days, fine was given in kind i.e. rice, livestock such as pig, cow, wine etc. Sometimes, physical punishment is also awarded to guilty person⁵⁹. In the customary laws of the Bodo, the severest and highest form of punishment is *Gaminiprai Arkonai* (social boycott)⁶⁰ of the concerned culprit who repeatedly committed the crime. Capital punishment is rare and almost absent as we do not find any information in this regard so far. The decision of the council and village elders who are present in the meeting is final and required to be honoured the said decision by both the parties.

Thus, every Bodo village has independent unit with definite boundary and all the activities are confined to the village. The village administration contained the element of gerontocracy with democratic principle. The village headman or *Gamini Bengiri* discharged his duty with the advice and assistance of his subordinates namely *Lengyai Gami Bengiri* (assistant village head), *Gamini Dwori* (village priest) and *Halmazi* or *Tandwi* (village messenger). On top of it, the village elders also take a very important role for smooth functioning of the council and for providing good administration of justice. Under the traditional village administrative system of the Bodo, all and sundry in the village is equal.

3. Kinship of the Bodo:

Kinship is the technique to understand the relationship. The relationships which based on marriage or blood tie are known as kinship relation. In each and every society of the world, social relationship is considered to be more important than biological bond. The relationship is not socially recognized, it fall outside the realm of kinship. Since kinship is considered as universal, it plays a vital role in socialization of individuals and maintenance of social cohesion of the group. Thus, kinship is considered to be the study of the sum total of these relations. The kinship of the Bodo is bilateral. A person is related through father as well as mother. The kin through father is known as *Bahagi* in Bodo whereas the kin to mother is called *Kurma*⁶¹.

There are three types of kinship namely i) consanguinal kinship ii) collateral kinship and iii) affinal kinship which are very common in the kinship system of the Bodo which may be discussed as follows:

Consanguineal Kinship:

The relationship based on blood is called consanguinal kinship. For example the relationships between parents and their offspring or sons or daughter and that between siblings of the same parents are universally recognized consanguinal kin⁶². It is to be noted that for determining the consanguineous kin, only the biological fact or blood relation will not be counted but social reorganization is also an important factor because an adopted child is treated everywhere as biological offspring of the adopter. It is clearly indicated that biological relation is not only the factor for determining consanguinal kin. The following are the Consanguinal kin of the Bodo:

English	Bodo (term of address)
1. Father's father	<i>Abwo</i>
2. Father's mother	<i>Abiwi</i>
3. Mother's father	<i>Abwo</i>
4. Mother's mother	<i>Abwi</i>
5. Father	<i>Apha</i>
6. Mother	<i>Ai</i>
7. Son	<i>Pisala</i>
8. Daughter	<i>Phisajw</i>
9. Son's son	<i>Phiswola</i> (term of address <i>Abwo</i>)
10. Son's daughter	<i>Phiswojw</i> (term of address <i>Abwi</i>)
11. Daughter's son	<i>Phiswola</i> (term of address <i>Abwo</i>)
12. Daughter's daughter	<i>Phiswojw</i> (term of address <i>Abwi</i>)

Ose is the Bodo word which means one's own which applicable to direct blood relation and comes under the category of consanguinal kin. When introducing one's own parents to others it is said as *Apha Ose* (person speaking) and *Bipha Ose* (terms of reference). It is in the case of father. For mother, it is called as *Ai Ose* (person speaking) and *Bima Ose* (term of reference). The term of reference, *Bida-Pongbai Ose* is applied to brothers of same parent or at least of same father or mother. In the same way, the term of

reference *Bibo-Binanao Ose* is to the sisters of same parents. The term of reference *Bida-Binano Ose* is used to the elder brother and younger sister. The term *Bibo-Pongbai Ose* is used to the elder sister and younger brother. The relationship between a person and his elder brother's children of both sexes is called *Biptoi-Biyadoi Ose*. The cousin brothers and sisters do not come under *Ose* kin group and used the term *Bida-Pongbaini-Fisa-Bida-Pongbai* which means the brothers being the children of the brothers⁶³. The term *Bida-Binanaoni-Fisa-Bida-Binanao* or *Bida-Pongbai* or *Bibo-Binano* or *Bibo-Ponbai* is applied to the children of elder brother and younger sister. In case of the children of elder sister and younger brother, the term *Bibo-Pongbaini-Fisa-Bibo-Pongbai* or *Bibo-Binanao* or *Bida-Pongbai* or *Bida-Binanao* are used. *Bibo-Binanaoni-Fisa-Bibo-Binanao* or *Bibo-Pongbai* or *Bida-Pongbai* or *Bida-Binanao* is used to refer the relation between the children of elder sister and younger sister⁶⁴.

Collateral kin:

An individual's siblings and descendent of their siblings can be termed as collateral kin. The collateral kin are those sibling's of an individual's lineal or direct kin. In simple term, it may be described as sort of side branches of a family. It mainly includes sisters, brothers, aunts, uncles, nieces, nephews and even cousins etc. Collateral kin of the Bodo are as follow:

English	Bodo (term of address)
1. Father's elder brother	<i>Ayong</i>
2. Father's younger brother	<i>Adwi</i>
3. Father's elder sister	<i>Anwi</i>
4. Father's younger sister	<i>Anwi</i>
5. Father's brother's elder son	<i>Ada</i>
6. Father's brother's younger son	<i>Phongbai</i>
7. Father's brother's elder daughter	<i>Abo</i>
8. Father's brother's younger daughter	<i>Binanao</i>
9. Father's sister's elder son	<i>Ada</i>
10. Father's sister's younger son	<i>Phongbai</i>
11. Father's sister's elder daughter	<i>Abo</i>
12. Father's sister's younger daughter	<i>Binanao</i>
13. Mother's elder brother	<i>Amai</i>

14. Mother's younger brother	<i>Amai</i>
15. Mother's brother's elder son	<i>Ada</i>
16. Mother's brother's elder daughter	<i>Abo</i>
17. Mother's brother's younger son	<i>Phongbai</i>
18. Mother's brother's younger daughter	<i>Binanao</i>
19. Mother's elder sister	<i>Ayong</i>
20. Mother's younger sister	<i>Madwi</i>
21. Mother's sister's elder son	<i>Ada</i>
22. Mother's sister's elder daughter	<i>Abo</i>
23. Mother's sister's younger son	<i>Phongbai</i>
24. Mother's sister's younger daughter	<i>Binanao</i>
25. Elder brother	<i>Ada</i>
26. Younger brother	<i>Phongbai</i>
27. Elder sister	<i>Abo</i>
28. Younger sister	<i>Binanao</i>
29. Elder Brother's son or daughter	<i>Biyadoi</i>
30. Younger Brother's son or daughter	<i>Biyaiyong</i>
31. Sister's son	<i>Biyanwi</i> (term of address <i>Banaisw</i>)
32. Sister's daughter	<i>Biyanwi</i> (term of address <i>Anwi</i>)

Affinal Kinship:

The relationship that formed on the basis of marriage is known as affinal kinship. They are the in-laws which included mother-in-law and father-in-law, sister-in-law, brother-in-law but it doesn't stop there. It is said that the desire for reproduction resulted two kinds of bonds i.e. i) the bond between spouses and their relatives on either side and ii) the bond between parents and their children and that between siblings, i.e. children of same parents. The first kind of bond is called affinal kinship as it arises out of a socially or legally defined marital relationship. It is the kinship which does not linked through the blood. In another word, the affinal *kin* are the kin, who do not connected to each other through blood⁶⁵. Thus, the ties resulting from marriage or relationship establish by marriage generally known as affinal relationship. The following are the affinal kinships of the Bodo:

English	Bodo (term of address)
1. Father's elder brother's wife	<i>Ayong (Hinjao)</i>
2. Father's younger brother's wife	<i>Madwi</i>
3. Father's elder sister's husband	<i>Amai</i>
4. Father's younger sister's husband	<i>Amai</i>
5. Mother's elder brother's wife	<i>Anwi</i>
6. Mother's younger brother's wife	<i>Anwi</i>
7. Mother's elder sister's husband	<i>Ayong</i>
8. Mother's younger sister's husband	<i>Adwi</i>
9. Husband	<i>Pisai</i>
10. Husband's father	<i>Apha</i>
11. Husband's father's brother	<i>Apha</i>
12. Husband's father's brother's wife	<i>Ai</i>
13. Husband's father's sister	<i>Ai</i>
14. Husband's father's sister's husband	<i>Apha</i>
15. Husband's mother	<i>Ai</i>
16. Husband's mother's brother	<i>Apha</i>
17. Husband's mother's brother's wife	<i>Ai</i>
18. Husband's mother's sister	<i>Ai</i>
19. Husband's mother's sister's husband	<i>Apha</i>
20. Husband's grandfather	<i>Abwo</i>
21. Husband's grandmother	<i>Abwi</i>
22. Husband's elder brother	<i>Beoai</i>
23. Husband's brother's wife	<i>Abo</i>
24. Husband's elder sister	<i>Bajwi</i>
25. Husband's younger brother	<i>Bibwnang (term of address)</i>
26. Husband's younger sister	<i>Agwi</i>
27. Wife	<i>Bisi</i>
28. Wife's father	<i>Apha (term of address Bwraipwr/Bihao)</i>
29. Wife's mother	<i>Ai (term of address Buripwr/Bikunjw)</i>
30. Wife's father's brother	<i>Apha</i>
31. Wife's father's brother's wife	<i>Ai</i>
32. Wife's father's sister	<i>Ai</i>

33. Wife's mother's brother	<i>Apha</i>
34. Wife's mother's brother's wife	<i>Ai</i>
35. Wife's mother's sisters	<i>Ai</i>
36. Wife's father's sister's husband	<i>Apha</i>
37. Wife's mother's sister's husband	<i>Apha</i>
38. Wife's grandfather	<i>Abwo</i>
39. Wife's grandmother	<i>Abwi</i>
40. Wife's elder brother	<i>Gumwi</i>
41. Wife's younger brother	<i>Agwi</i>
42. Wife's elder sister	<i>Beoi</i>
43. Wife's younger sister	<i>Bibwnang</i> or <i>Agwi</i>
44. Wife's sister's husband	<i>Salti</i>
45. Son's wife	<i>Bihamjw</i>
46. Son's wife's father	<i>Biai</i>
47. Son's wife's mother	<i>Zamaizo</i>
48. Daughter's husband by Father-in-law or mother-in-law)	<i>Bijamadwi</i> (<i>Zaoisw</i> terms of address)
49. Daughter's husband's father	<i>Biai</i>
50. Daughter's husband's mother	<i>Zamaizo</i>
51. Elder brother's wife	<i>Bajwi</i>
52. Younger brother's wife	<i>Beoi</i>
53. Elder sister's husband	<i>Gumwi</i>
54. Younger sister's husband	<i>Bwinai</i> or <i>Bibwnang</i>
55. Step father	<i>Pipa Batul</i>
56. Step mother	<i>Bima Batul</i>
57. Co-wife	<i>Bihari</i>
58. Step son	<i>Pisala Batul</i>
59. Step daughter	<i>Pisajw Batul</i>

Sex of Speaker:

In the kinship system of the Bodo, the term kinship indicates sex of speaker's except few terms like *Ayong*. The term *Ayong* denotes both male and female individual

who is elder or senior to speaker's father or mother's elder sister. The kinship terms given below used to indicate the speaker's sex i.e. male and female: *Abwo, Apha, Adwi, Ada, Pisala, Pongbai, Gumwi, Amai* etc. are all indicates the male kin terms whereas *Abwi, Ai, Pisajw, Madwi, Abo, Binanao, Bajwi, Anwi* etc. are female kinship terms⁶⁶.

Age of Speaker:

In the kinship system of the Bodo, elder person cannot be addressed by their personal name directly without a prefix. One has to add some prefix before calling an elder person by their personal name. A term is used to address elder without calling their personal name⁶⁷. The prefix *Ada* is used in addressing to person of speaker's elder brother's age or who is senior to speaker's age. Similarly, *Abo* prefix is used while addressing to a woman of speaker's elder sister's age. While addressing to a person who is senior to speaker's father's age or mother's age, the term *Ayong* is used in both male and female, whereas the term *Adwi* is used to address the person who is junior to speaker's father's age. Likewise, *Madwi* is used to address a woman who is younger to speaker's mother's age. *Abwo* and *Abwi* are used respectively to address the person whose age is equivalent to speaker's grandfather and grandmother. While referring to junior male and female person to speaker's age the terms *Pongbai* and *Binanao* are respectively used. However, their personal name also could be used while addressing to them. It is well known that the age of person whom one speaks is estimated and suitable kin term is always applied while addressing to anyone according to their ages⁶⁸.

Honourific term:

According to Oxford Advanced learner's dictionary, the word honorific means "showing respect for the person you are speaking to"⁶⁹. The term is generally used while addressing to senior male and female individuals. Among them the term *Nwngtang* is used while addressing to senior male and female person. A suffix *mwn* is added to the term *Nwgtang* to address a group of elders or seniors. The term *Nwng*, which means you in English is used while addressing a person who is junior or may be less important individual than the speaker or speaker's relation or equivalent to speaker's age. This term i.e. *Nwng* became honourific term only when a suffix word *Tang* is added i.e. *Nwng+Tang=Nwngtang*. Again, while addressing his or her senior person to others, the speaker will use the term *Bitang*. Here, *Bi* means he in English and the term *Bi* is used

while addressing to junior person. The term *Bi* became honourific only when the suffix *Tang* is added to *Bi* i.e. *Bi+Tang=Bitang*⁷⁰.

Avoidance:

The interpretation of anthropologists on the subject of avoidance is a sign of respect rather than bad feelings. The relationship of the avoidance is generally involved the persons of not same sex who have a specific kin relationship with each other. In the opinion of A.R. Brown⁷¹, 'on every occasion people came into contact with each other, the possibilities of the corporation and conflict are equally always existed. However, some kinds of kinship where hostility is regarded as manifest it to put restrictions on the growth of intimacy and hence the kinship usage of avoidance'. The main purpose of avoidance is to avoid any kind of physical relationship as it would amount to incest⁷².

Some sort of avoidances has been maintained by the Bodo. Of the avoidance observe by the Bodo, the most rigid being between a man and his wife's elder sister and younger brother's wife. In true sense of the term, a man generally avoids or keep distance from the wife of his younger brother and the wife of his son's likewise a woman generally avoids the husband of her sister. It is also to be noted that in the rules of avoidance of the Bodo, a man may not utter the name of his or her mother-in-law, father-in-law and vice-versa which indicated that he treated the father-in-law and mother-in-law as own father and mother. The patterns of avoidance have been noticed in brother-sister, father-daughter and father-in-law and daughter-in-law relation. It is said that the relationship between a husband and elder sister of his wife and his younger brother's wife come under the category of avoidance. It is taboo to call each other's name, freely talking, sitting together and so on⁷³.

There is universally avoidance found in the relationship between a man and his mother-in-law and the Bodo are also not in exception. In the relationship of avoidance, ego must maintain respect, reserve and usually used second person plural form of address. In avoidance relationship, ego always has an avoidance relationship with his parents, children and female siblings and his parent's generation like his uncles and aunts. Free talking of anything he likes to his brothers, sisters and even cousins also restricted to some extent. Even changing of cloth before each other or nude in presence of each other is not common or not encourage in accordance with the law of avoidance. It is the custom of the Bodo that while sitting husband and wife together in the same

place, the wife will leave that place and offers the same place or seat if the elder brother of her husband comes as a mark of respect. If the elder brother touched his younger brother's wife's body, it is belief that he will become a *Gandlet* (a kind of leech) in his next life. This indicated that touching of younger brother's wife by elder brother is totally taboo and avoidance⁷⁴.

Joking Relationships:

Joking relationship is an extreme degree of familiarity expressing through joking relationship which reverse of avoidance relationship. It may also be called as mutual reciprocity. Thus, the term joking relationship may be described as a relation between individuals in which one is by custom authorized, in some instances needed, to make joke of other person, who in turn do not considered as offence⁷⁵. The joking relationship may also be considered as a peculiar combination of friendliness and antagonism. It includes expression and also arouses hostility to some extent but it would not be taken as seriously as there is pretence of hostility and a real friendliness. Joking relationship is one of permitted disrespect⁷⁶.

The Bodo also do observed joking relationship between a man and his wife's younger sister or between a woman and her husband's younger brother. The joking relationship that practiced among the Bodo are as follows⁷⁷:

- i) Joking relationship between sister-in-law and brother-in-law i.e. wife's younger sister and the husband.
- ii) Joking relationship between sister-in-law and brother-in-law i.e. wife and husband's younger brother.
- iii) Joking relationship between grandfather and granddaughter.
- iv) Joking relationship between grandmother and grandson.

It is rightly observed that the relationship of grandparents and grandchildren is always considered in the term of love and affection rather than discipline and authority. The grandparents treated their grand children more liberally and allowed them to do anything or behave anything in such a way which the parents would normally thwart. When grand children are sufficiently grown up, the relationship between them turned to joking in nature and relationship between grandfather and granddaughter is like that of husband and wife, in the same way the relationship and behaviour between grandmother

and grandson in term of joking relationship⁷⁸. It is commonly found that joking relation is always existed between grandparent and grandchildren and very oftenly grandparent used to impart moral education, cultural tradition, practices, beliefs and thoughts of the society as a whole as well as communities.

Joking relationship is prevalent between a man and wife of his elder brother and between cross cousin brothers and sisters or even between parallel cousin brothers and sisters. The relationship between man and his wife's younger sister is of husband and wife nature in the context of joking relationship among the Bodo. This rule is very regular with tolerable levirate and sororate marriage in the social system of the Bodo⁷⁹. In joking relationship two persons may be potential mate if they are not the nearest kin. In Bodo society some of the terms used in the joking relationship are as: *Bima Kale, Bida Kale, Bibo Kali, Binanao Kale, Bibajwi Kale* etc.⁸⁰

When a grandchild who is mature and attained the age of marriage, could not find suitable girl for marriage or fail to have love affairs with any girls than the grandmother used to cut the following joke:

If you do not have any lover, you marry me instead staying as *Jiya Balonda* (*Jiya Balonda* means a man who is already crossed the marriage age) as your time for marriage has come or seems to be over. Similarly, grandfather cutting such type of joke saying *Adhungari* (Mature or aged female who is outside the marital life is called *Adhungari* in Bodo) to his mature granddaughter when she failed to get married on time. The reason for joking or teasing relationship is nothing but encouraging or instigating their grandchildren to enter into marital life in proper age or on time⁸¹.

We may conclude with the word that the relatives, as a class, have a special status; as already noted, elaborate rules provide appropriate attitudes and standards of behavior towards them. These rules covered protection, affection, care and concerned, familiarity (joking relations), avoidance (of physical, speech or visual contact), deference, respect, intervention and obedience. Kinship also has important role in social, economic and political⁸². All the kinship relation i.e. consanguinal, collateral and affinal have their own sphere of influence as well as importance and plays a very crucial role in the daily life, rituals and ceremonies in the society of Bodo. The use of these kinship terms brought a healthy relationship in a particular family or in and around the family i.e. village, locality as well as in the society as a whole. The consanguinal kinship maintained a peaceful relation and co-existence among the members of a family as well

as balanced the relationship between parents and siblings. The use of collateral kinship conveyed closeness relationship among side branch or members of a family. Whereas, affinal kinship relations help the society to build a complete social relation between two parties i.e. husband's kins and wife's kins. In other word, it helps the society to build a system through which the society tried to maintain social relationship of community or society in good equilibrium. Again, kinship is socially important because of its connection to obligations, social rights, responsibilities and power, inheritance of property and status etc.

4. Traditional Law of Inheritance and Succession:

Inheritance is defined by Morgan⁸³ as the partition of property among the cognate family members. *Manu*⁸⁴ gives the law of inheritance and partition in the following words: 'after the death of father and mother, the brothers, having assembled, may divide among themselves in equal shares, the estate, for they have no power (over it) while the parents live. Or the eldest alone may take whole paternal estate and others shall live under him just as (they lived) under their father'. Inheritance may be denoted as bequeathing the fruits of one's life from one generation to the next. It put into practiced of transferring of property, rights, obligations, titles, etc. upon the death of a person. The importance of inheritance cannot be denied in human society as it regulates social system. The rules of inheritance differ from society to society and many changes also have been seen in due course of time to meet the needs of changing social system.

The anthropologists and sociologists have been made extensive studies on the custom of inheritance. In the patrilineal inheritance, only male children can inherit but matrilineal succession is also found, where property can be transmitted along the female line. In fact, most modern states make use of egalitarian inheritance without discrimination based on gender or birth order. The detail rules that governing the transfer of property and estate to another upon reaching death have become an integral part of societies since olden days which is known as laws of inheritance and also called law of succession. In the eyes of law, an heir is the one who has the right to get a share of the deceased property. So long as the owner of property is alive, it is the discretion of the said owner to deal with the property as he likes. He also has freedom to lay down the

scheme of distribution of his own property after his expire by writing a will during his lifetime which is known as testamentary disposition. If someone died without leaving a will, it will be the concerned of the law of inheritance to decide to whom the property will transfer. The law of the succession may be categorized as under⁸⁵:

- i) Testamentary succession: it is concerned how best effect could be given to the wishes of the testator, the person who made the will; what are the set of rules in connection to making of a will and allied and subsidiary matters. The testator had full autonomy and wisdom of bequeathing his property.
- ii) Intestate succession: It deals with the matter to determine who are entitled to get the property i.e. who are the heirs, disqualification of the heirs, etc.

The law of inheritance included the rules to determine the mode of devolution of property of deceased person on heirs based on their relationship to particular deceased person whereas the law of testamentary succession is concerned with rules in connection to devolution of property on relation as well as other.

Every society has certain traditional rules whether it may be written or unwritten to distribute and transfer the properties both movable and immovable to the descendants or to the next generation of the owner of property during life time or after the death. Many of the tribes of the North-East India pursued their own customary law by oral tradition which has been handed down from one generation to another generation with regard to the distribution of property. The Bodo also have been applied the old age customary law of inheritance to the division of property.

General Law of inheritance:

The laws and customs of the Bodo in connection with the inheritance of property seem to be very fuzzy. It is not an easy task to draw an accurate picture on the subject. Sidney Endle⁸⁶ says that after the demise of head of the family, all the properties that belonged to the deceased would be under the control of the eldest son. Becoming head of the family, he should live along with his widow mother, brothers and sisters and look after them till the marriage of grownup children. When the marriage took place, the father's property will be divided into equal share. The married daughter cannot claim on the property. When a man died without his male heir, the property goes to his eldest brother who makes some provision for the widow of the deceased and daughters. However, it is also reported that the deceased person who do not have the male child, the

property will be divided among the daughters who can enjoyed such properties even after the marriage⁸⁷.

Inheritance of the property of Father:

The Bodo society firmly accepted the patriarchal family system. They have been pursuing the line of father in matters of descent and male children alone become inheritor of fatherly property. As a result of which all the property of parent passes through male descendent only however, in some cases female members or daughters also became inheritor by receiving parental property.

Like other patriarchal society, the Bodo considered father all in all in the family since has absolute authority over the family property and rights. The father enjoyed the supreme and exclusive authority to deal with and give share of his properties to his family members including sons, brothers, daughters who so ever and also to dispose of⁸⁸. All the family members are living under his controlled. The family property have been divided after the death of patriarch among his sons equally or as determined by father before his death. The closest one to the father or one who have more favor or sympathy of father or youngest one or one who look after the aged father or parents or one who take care the parents during their old age may get lion share or more share. One interesting aspect of the law of inheritance of the Bodo is that any son do not have right to claim or inherit the property of the father during the life time of father. However, it is the right and duty of the father to give some portions of his property to any married son because he is allowed to live separately by bifurcating from original family as separation is permitted by the Bodo society. In some cases, if the father is not willing to hand over the properties to his son, the son may not get the parental property as it is absolutely under the controlled and authority of the patriarch of the said family⁸⁹.

The head of the family has not merely a right to distribution his properties but he also got the authority to effect a division of the property among the sons *inter se*. It is to be noted that the head of the family of the Bodo, being a patriarch, he might or might not be seeking advice from any of the family members regarding to the distribution of property that belong to him. While exercising the power, the opinion or dissent of the family members especially sons are immaterial but the father must act bonafide and should treat all his sons equally and should not cause any hurt to any member of the family by way of his conduct. He should not act unfair to his subordinate members of

family. During the life time of the patriarch, if he settled the matter relating to division of his property among the sons or who so ever entitled to the property, there would be no problem after his death except the authority to maintain the joint family⁹⁰.

Woman:

Woman property is known *Stridhan* by the Hindu. In the history of Hindu law, woman's right to hold and dispose of the property has been well established recognized law. Right of woman on property is recognized by some of ancient Indian law givers in their respective works. *Manusmriti*⁹¹ also mentioned woman property right enumerating various kinds of woman property. *Yajnavalkya*⁹² furnished the information referring to the woman property as what was received by the woman from the parent side during the time of marriage will be considered as the property of the woman. *Smritikars* also mentioned *Stridhan* which included mostly movable property as well as gift made to her by stranger at the time of marriage before the nuptial fire or at the time of bridal procession⁹³. It is unambiguously recognized woman's right to hold and dispose of property⁹⁴.

In many systems of law, it is evident that wife occupied special position in the family of her husband. Traditional customary law of the Bodo implicitly recognized woman property right. In the patriarchal system the position of the wife of the head of the family is next to the concerned patriarch, recognizing her special position in the family. The Bodo society permits the woman to enjoy property right and a female may inherit the property either from her parent side or from her husband side or from both sides. So far, woman property is concerned, it included movable as well as immovable. It is true that a wife may not be entitled to have any share of the property of her husband during the life time of her husband however, it is absolute right of the husband to give some portion of his property to his wife for future security. The law of inheritance of the Bodo keeps some provision for the woman property right nevertheless at no time the quantum of her property may be anything but skimpy or small in quantity. The important thing to be highlighted here on the basis of present scenario is that some family property, not the immovable property, like pig, fowls, duck etc. are under the absolute control of wife⁹⁵ for the management of family. The management of family by the wife seems to be old age practice which still in continuity. A Bodo woman who is the owner of property

has full right of disposal but the consent of her husband is always predominant. And husband got the power to use the property of his own wife.

The wives of a man who practiced polygamy by fulfilling all the social norms of the Bodo are entitled to receive equal share of husband's property whether they are childless or not, does not matter. However, those wives who do not received social sanction of marriage or their marriage considered to be invalid or those wives whose conjugal right may be continued and enjoyed but social disapproved or society does not recognized or no socially reorganization of the marriage, they are not entitled to husband's property. A woman who married to a widower by fulfilling all the social norms but she is childless may claim a share of property during the time of partition after the death of her husband for her future maintenance. In such a case her husband's offspring from first wife may not raise any objection to give a share of property to their step mother⁹⁶. According to R. N. Muhahary⁹⁷, a widow who owned a portion of her deceased husband's property has a right to confer to any one at her own will or she can dispose it. Generally, the property which received from the deceased husband will be transferred to her children as and when children attained the age of maturity. It is also to be noted that after the death of a widow all the properties which owned by her will pass to her own heirs. Issueless widow who do not re-enter into second marital life may inherit the deceased husband's property only for her lifetime. After her death, relatives of her deceased husband family has right to inherit the property as she does not have any legitimate successor or inheritor⁹⁸.

If a widow married to another person under *Dongkha Habnai Haba* (widow remarriage), the newly married husband is fixed the responsibility to look after her children of the deceased husband as well as property⁹⁹. In this case all the sons of the first and second husband have equal right on the property. In absence of male child, daughters of first and second marriage are entitled to the property. However, the children of the first wife of a widower who married with a widow are not entitled to property of stepmother. Even though, sometimes they are also given some share of property on humanitarian ground¹⁰⁰. After the death of remarried widow and her husband (second) without any successor (no child born from first and second husband) the property is automatically passed to her first husband family, not to second husband family.

If a widow run away or eloped with another person and enters into marital life leaving her deceased husband house, she loses her right on the property of deceased

husband. Her remarriage will lead to forfeiture of the claim of maintenance as well as property right as it is the custom of the Bodo that the brothers of the deceased will take the charge of the minor children as well as property of the deceased¹⁰¹. During the time of partition of parental property, if there happen to be a widow or divorcee sister in her parental residence then sometimes she is allowed to choose with whom she is supposed to stay or sometime she is allowed to have a little share of properties for her maintenance. But generally she prepares to stay with her brothers. This is mainly in the case of childless widow or divorcee woman. On another hand, a widow who has offspring mainly used to stay at the house of her father-in-law and her children are entitled to parental property¹⁰².

Son:

Since patrilineal is the basis of the Bodo society, son inherits the family property. The eldest son is regarded as continuator of family lineage as well as religion or rites and rituals. After the death of patriarch, generally the eldest son inherits all the rights exercised by his father¹⁰³. It is the eldest son who will bear all the expenses relating to marriage ceremony etc. of unmarried brother or sister. It is his duty to take care of his widow mother. It is customary of the Bodo that the eldest son have complete right to inherit the parental property where father required no will to be made. It is also said that all the sons are entitled to get equal share of parental property. The parent may decide with whom among their son will live during their old age. The son, one who takes care of parents till death may receive an extra share of land of the parent¹⁰⁴. Another interesting aspect of traditional laws of inheritance of the Bodo is that during the life time of patriarch or father, a son cannot insist for property from his father. He can only inherit the property after the death of his father. Sometimes, a father may give a share of property to his married son when he separated from his parental home to lead a separate new life with his wife and children.

Daughter:

Daughter has no right on her fatherly property as she is to renounce her family lineage after marriage and entered into her husband's kinfolk in the Bodo society. However, in certain cases, daughter also enjoys parental property by becoming inheritor or by receiving parental property where there is no male issue or male child. In the absence of sons or any male heir in the family to inherit the parental property, daughters

are allowed to enjoy the property of their father even after the marriage. Sometimes, parents look for a suitable bridegroom to marry with their daughter in the form of matrilineal marriage¹⁰⁵ which is known as *Garjia Lakhinai* in Bodo. The son-in-law used to stay in the house of father-in-law. It is also firmly reported that all the married daughters along with their husbands lived together in the house of sonless parent. Daughters enjoy equal right on the parental property. When family becomes bigger, they are separated each other by forming their own families taking equal share or proportionate property of the parent. But one of the daughters will look after the aged parent by living together. The daughter who lives with aged parents will get more share of property¹⁰⁶. In the present society, no hard and fast rule is found for the inheritance of parental property by a daughter. It is the discretion of father to give his property to his daughter. Even after the death of father, the daughter also could get some share of property of the deceased father. However, the receiving of parental property by daughters is still rare.

Minor:

When a father died before maturity of son or daughter, it is the widow of the deceased husband to look after the minor children. She will supervise or control or manage the property of deceased on behalf of the minor. Because of tender age mother generally take charge of her minor children as well as property. She discharges this duty till her children attain the age of maturity. After attaining maturity if the son is there he can legally inherit the parental property, if not, the daughter may inherit otherwise it goes to the nearest relatives¹⁰⁷.

Next Kin:

When both husband and wife died without leaving natural or adopted child, the property will pass to brother of the deceased husband if he has brother otherwise, the property will automatically transfer to the nearest relatives. The transferring of property is only on to the side of husband's blood relation or family and not to the wife's family side. With regard to transfer of property of the deceased to the next kin, Sekhar Brahma¹⁰⁸ asserted that after the death of childless husband and wife, the property that belong to the deceased will be received by the nearest relatives. In general practice, the property of an issueless deceased person is always goes to brother or brothers or relatives of the deceased whether they live in a joint family or not, it does not matter¹⁰⁹. The

brother or brothers or relatives who are residing jointly or separately during the life time of the deceased are entitled to inherit the property of childless deceased as per the customs of the Bodo.

Adopted Child:

Customary law of the Bodo does not make any distinction between natural and adopted child. The right and obligation of both types of children are all same. Like natural child, an adoptee (adopted child) have equal right, equal obligation, equal duty, etc. towards the parents and family as well as in society. In general rule of law, adopted son or daughter is not need to have biological recognition but social recognition is must and mandatory for the person who is being adopted to inherit the property or family lineage of the adopter. It is clearly mentioned that adopted son or daughter is considered in every where as adopter's own biologically produced children. A couple who do not have their own offspring generally adopted a son or daughter preferably son with the motives to take care of them when they become old and to inherit property and to perform last dead rites and rituals. Adoption is an old age tradition among the Bodo which is still prevalent and practiced by many childless parents to fulfill their desire to have child. Adopted children enjoy all the rights and privileges that have been enjoyed by natural son or daughter considering them as full-fledged member of the concerned family. No doubt, they are completely eligible to inherit the property because they are rightful legal heir according to the traditional custom of the Bodo. It is clearly affirmed that the adopted children are entitled to inherit the property belong to the adopter¹¹⁰. It is also to be noted that not only the male adopted child but also the female adopted child also can inherit the property of the foster father¹¹¹.

Among some communities of the Mongoloid tribes of North East India, an adopted person has the right of inheritance of property and as it is duty and obligation of the adopted person to take care his or her adopter when they are old age but they can not become head of the clan or sub-clan or clan chief. It is practiced by the Vaiphei tribes of North East India. It is stated that the customary law of Vaiphei does not permit the adopted person to be the head of clan or sub-clan or chief but allowed him to inherit the property of whom he is adopted and to look after the adopters during the old age¹¹². But among the Bodo, it is uncertain whether such custom of the Vaiphei tribe i.e. to become head of the clan or chief by the adoptee has followed or not.

Duty of Inheritor:

The important obligation, responsibility and duty of inheritor is to perform last rites of the parent or of the person from whom he received the property. He is also bound to take care of the widow and children of the deceased. The inheritor has to pay all the debt of the deceased. In case, an inheritor failed to discharge the duty of inheritor to the best satisfaction of the society or he failed to perform the duty prescribed by custom and tradition or refused to abide the duty of inheritor fixed on him such as performing of last rites, repayment of debt if any etc., the property of the deceased pass to the next legitimate heir who can successfully perform the duty of inheritor¹¹³.

Legitimate and Illegitimate Inheritor:

The question of legitimate or illegitimate arises mainly at the time of inheritance of property and succession. The legitimate child is the person who is born by performing all norms of marriage. A child who is born within a law full wedlock is known as legitimate child since he or she is born after fulfilling all social norms of marriage. On the other hand, an illegitimate child is the child who is born without fulfilling of social norms of marriage. In another word, a child born outside the law full wedlock or outside proper norms of marriage or born from the illegal sexual relationship is called illegitimate. The illegitimate child is related to his or her parent by illegitimate relationship. A natural son or daughter or legitimate son or daughter has absolute right and duty as well as privileges of the property of the father or family property including other individual and social obligations. As illegitimate child falls outside the category of legitimate inheritor, he or she has no right to claim property¹¹⁴. He or she cannot enjoy the right, benefit and privileges which enjoyed by legitimate offspring. In case of the Vaiphai tribe, any male child whether he may be the eldest but cannot inherit if he is illegitimate because he is born out of incestuous relationship or illegal marriage, considering him as illegitimate son in the matter of inheritance even though he may be the real blood of the ego. A genitor is not equated as a father who confront with the marital norms whereas the genitor knowing it void¹¹⁵. R.N. Mushahary¹¹⁶, while writing about the law of inheritance of the Bodo mentioned that no clear cut distinction is made among the sons by marriage, adoption or concubinage or concubine. But we cannot fully accept his view on the ground that the traditional custom of the Bodo society as a rule does not encourage illegal sexual relation and in the eye of law it is a punishable offence.

5. Traditional Food Preservation:

Our ancestors had developed certain methods and techniques to preserve seasonal and also unseasonal (the foods available throughout the seasons) food intact for later use. The methods and techniques which had been formulated by our forefather have been following even today in preservation of food. Food preservation is inevitable owing to many reasons and it has been practiced by many communities since early days¹¹⁷. Most of the communities in the world have been adopted different methods and techniques which included sun-drying, salting, fermentation, smoking, etc. for the preservation of foods.

The Bodo too have their own traditional methods of production, preservation and processing of foods since ancient periods. They have good knowledge on food preservation. Flesh of animals, be it wild or domesticated, various type of fishes, fruits and vegetables etc. are main food items which are preserved for its later consumption. Preserved food items have been enjoyed by them when such foods are not available in fresh and in case of available, people wanted to consume preserved foods as that have different taste from that of the fresh. Besides, people also generally preserved the foods for consuming when they are busy in seasonal works including agriculture or other activities where they could not find enough time for hunting, fishing, collecting fresh vegetables or fruits etc. A wide range of natural food items which have been found easily and available in every nook and corner in their habitation occupied a place in the food habits of the Bodo. The Bodo have been preserved many food items by applying and adopting old age traditional methods i.e. sun-drying, fermentation, smoking, burning, cooking etc.¹¹⁸ In the process of preservation of varieties of food items namely pork, chicken, flesh of some wild animals and varieties of fishes are sundried and smoked. Some favourite vegetables like *Narzi Gwran* (dried jute leaves), *Mwita* leaves (Rosilee) etc. are also sun-dried. Whereas food items like *Kardwi* (alkali), *Jwo Bidwi* (rice-beer) etc. are done by burning and cooking respectively. For the preparation of *Napam* (rotten fish), the adopted methods are sun-dried, smoked and pounded of small fishes.

The traditional preserved food items are discussed under the following head:

Na (Fish):

The Bodo used to consume fresh fish, dried fish and rotten preserved fish¹¹⁹. The fresh fishes are instantly prepared for consumption soon after their hunt. Both dried fish and rotten fish are preserved for future consumption. The Bodo are very fond of fishes. So they consumed varieties of fishes which are locally available in their settlement areas. Fishes like *Magur* (Mud-water-fish), *Kursha* (*labco gonius*), *Singi* (Scorpion-fish), *Tota* (*nandus marmoratus*), *Tengwna* (*macrons canasius tengra*), *Gwri* (Green snake head or Spotted snake head), *Maoya* (Mola or Indian carplet), *Pitikri* (Carp or Fry or *Puntius chola*), *Bwtiya* (Loach), *Bami* (Eel), *Turi* (One-strip spiny eel), *Kusia* (Hag fish), *Barli* (Freshwater shark), *Mutra* (Tang gobi), *Mijwo* (a species of small fish, *Barbus ticto*, *Barbus conchoniis*, *Barbus Phutunio*(Zoo) or Green barf, *Puntius Phutunis*, *Phutunis*), *Nangdor* (a big sized ell fish), *Natur* (prawn), *Aleng* (robora elonga), etc. are worth to be mentioned. These fishes are locally hunted by using their traditional fishing implements like *Jekai*, *Koka*, *Sen*, etc.

Na Gwran (dried fish) and *Napam* (rotten preserved fish) are two types of preserved fishes which commonly used to take by the Bodo.

Na Gwran (Dried Fish):

The dried fish is called *Na Gwran* in Bodo. Almost all the varieties of fish mainly small fishes are made dried up. Three methods namely sun-dried, smoked and sun dried-smoked have been applied to dry fishes¹²⁰. The fresh hunted fishes are properly cleaned with water and exposed in the sun light by spreading at *Sandanga* (Large Sieve) or *Sandri* (Sieve) till the fishes are dried up. In another method, a fire is used to create the heat needed to dry the fishes and smoked them well. Under this method special care is taken to produce more smoked than flame as smoked is more important than the flame to dry up the fishes. The last technique is combination of sundried and smoked. In this method, fishes are kept in the sun light after cleaning with water properly for some hours and smoked them in fire. While fishes are smoked in fire, the same technique which applied in the second method should be followed but duration of time is less to that of the second as fishes are already exposed to the sunlight for some hours and almost dried up. The fishes which are dried up following any one of the three methods i.e. dried, smoked and sun dried-smoked generally put in a container or basket called *Kobai* which

is made of bamboo and kept above the hearth in the kitchen to get smoked and heat of the fire in order to protect from all kinds of damages which may be caused by insects, fungus etc. Sometimes, the dried up fishes are also exposed in the sun light periodically whenever it found necessary to protect from fungus, insects etc. and to free from all kinds of infection and damage of the fishes by taking out from *Kobai*. The dried fishes which are properly cared by smoked, heating of fire and periodically exposing in the sun light can be preserved for a long time without any detrimental to the fishes. It has been informed to us that among the delicious food items of the Bodo, *Na Gwran* (dried fish) is one of them. The fishes are collected in huge quantity from different sources like rivers and simply dried up those fishes in the sunlight. The dried fishes are greatly prized by the Bodo¹²¹.

Napam (Preserved Rotten Fish):

Napam means preserved rotten fish which has been consumed widely by the Bodo as it is one of the delicious food items for them since early days¹²². The preparation for making *Napam* and to bring it to edible form is a long process. *Napam* is mainly made of small fishes. Among the small fishes *Na Mizwo* (a species of small fish, *Barbus ticto*, *Barbus conchoniuis*, *Barbus Phutunio*(Zoo) or Green barf, *Puntius Phutunis*, *Phutunis*) is regarded as the best fish for making *Napam*. For the preparation of *Napam*, small fishes are to be collected first and clean properly with water. Then, they are to be dried up either in the sun or in the fire smoked. Sometimes both sun dried and fire smoked is also commonly practiced. The dried up fishes are mixed up with any one of natural ingredients such as *Taso Denta* (Stem of Arum), *Kumbra* (Vegetable-marrow) or *Kopi* (Cabbage) or *Mwita* (Rosilee) by means of pounding with *Gaihen* (pestle) in the wooden mortar known as *Uwal*. The *Taso Denta* is commonly used for making *Napam* considering that by mixing with this ingredient, tasty *Napam* can be produced¹²³. In mixing natural ingredient with *Na Gwran*, considerable care and attention is always paid about the quantity of ingredient that to be mixed up with *Na Gwran*. The Bodo have good conventional knowledge of the required proportion in mixing the ingredient with *Na Gwran*. The quantity of natural ingredient should not be exceeded than the quantity of *Na Gwran*. It is asserted that if the mixing is not in a proportionate way, *Napam* may not be savory¹²⁴.

The mixed pounded fish is immediately put into bamboo pipe known as *Napam Hasung*¹²⁵. As and when mixed pounded fishes have been put into *Napam Hasung*, the open hole or mouth of *Napam Hasung* is immediately covered by dried banana leaves and then plastered by mixing mud and alkali over it to seal air tightly. The main reason for immediate store of pounded mixed fishes into bamboo pipe and sealing the mouth of the pipe immediately is to prevent from any kind of infections. When it is exposed for longer time, there always has a chance to lay eggs by the *Tampwi Dangra* (a fly of big size) into the mixed pounded fishes. Once eggs are laid down, the pounded fishes would be infected and spoiled. If the infected or spoiled pounded fishes are preserved, that could not be turned into a good form of *Napam* for eating. As a result, they put the non-infected mixed pounded fishes into the pipe without any delay with the aim to produce good quality of *Napam* which they like most. The minimum period of preservation is at least one month and maximum period will be three years or more. According to Bhaben Narzi and Kameswar Brahma, it can be preserved for two or three years¹²⁶. It is generally agreed that if the duration of preservation is longer, good quality and good taste of *Napam* can be produced. The taste and quality of *Napam* is mainly based on the duration of preservation. The practice of preservation of *Napam* is still continuing in the Bodo society. However, some people began to use glass bottle for preservation of *Napam* instead of *Napam Hasung*.

Narzi Gwran (Dried jute leaves):

Narzi Gwran is dried jute leaf. A traditional food item of the Bodo known as *Narzi Wngkri* is made of *Narzi Gwran*. The process of making *Narzi Gwran* is very simple and easy. First of all, a good number of fresh jute leaves are collected and made dried up in the sun light properly for few days or several days up to its requirement. After properly dried up they are stored in a container or bag. In order to protect from insect and others which may be caused harm to jute leaves, the bag which contained the jute leaves are kept upon the kitchen just above the hearth to get smoke considering that the smoke will prevent from all kinds of insects, fungus etc.¹²⁷. *Narzi Gwran* (dried jute leaves) is preserved for so many days or even years however, they are thrown out when any member of the family died. At the same time, the members of deceased family are forbidden to consume the curry which is made with *Narzi Gwran* for one year¹²⁸. This tradition is still continuing.

Mula Gwran (Dried Radish):

Mula Gwran is another preserved food item of the Bodo¹²⁹. In the process for preparation of *Mula Gwran*, numbers of mature radish are collected and clean them properly with water. In the next step, the cleaned radishes are sliced. These small pieces are kept in *Sandanga* (Large Sieve) or *Sandri* (Sieve) and exposed to sun light for few days till dried up. The third step is that these dried up radish pieces are smoked in the fire for about half hour. In the four step, the smoked radish pieces are kept outside to absorb moisture for whole night. In the next day, they are again kept in the sun light to evaporate moisture from the slice radish. In the six step, the pieces of the dried radish are put into a bamboo container or earthen pot and preserved for consumption during the off season¹³⁰. Now a day, people used bottle also for preservation in place of bamboo pipe or earthen pot. As and when, the preserved *Mula Gwran* found seems to be spoiled by insects, fungus etc. then immediately *Mula Gwran* is exposed in the sun light to prevent from further damages.

Kardwi:

Traditionally prepared alkali or baking soda is known as *Kardwi* in Bodo. For the preparation of traditional *Kardwi*, plants like *Besor* (mustard), *Sibing* (black gram), *Sobai* (pules), *Talir Posla Gwran* (dried banana peels), *Owa Swikwnda Bibu* (remains of splitted bamboo), *Katri Pipang* (wild turmeric plant) etc. are required and they are properly made dry in the sun light. The dried plant which is to be used for making *Kardwi* is burned down into ashes. The ashes are sifted with the help of *Sandri* (sieve) to take out unburned or unwanted things. They are preserved either by making cake or directly storing into a bamboo container. In making cake, the ashes are mixed up with a little amount of water and then exposed in the sun light till they are properly dried up¹³¹. For producing *Kardwi*, in the *Kardwi Kolong*¹³² some *Sal Daokumwi* (*Nephrodium cucallatum*), *Turi Jigab* (straw) are put first, then the preserved ashes or cake¹³³ are placed over that and started the filterization by pouring water on it. In this way the traditional alkali solution is produced for the purpose for using in cooking items. It is stated that *Kardwi* which made from the ashes of mustard, black gram and sesame are the best¹³⁴.

Zumai or *Jwo* (Rice Beer):

Zumai or *Jwo* is the name given to traditionally prepared rice beer. For the preparation of *Zumai* or *Jwo*, the rice is properly cleaned with water and cooked properly. The cooked rice is taken out from the cooking utensil and placed on banana leaves which are kept already on *Dhara* (bamboo mat) or *Songrai* (winnowing fan). When rice is on tepid condition, *Emao*¹³⁵ is crushed in to powder and thoroughly mixed with the cooked rice. The mixed rice with *Emao* is kept for one day for fermentation in summer season and three to four days during winter season. Some *Hangar* (charcoal), *Hasib Suwa* (used broom) and *Banlu Gwran* (dried chili) are kept on it believing that by doing so it can be free from destroying by evil spirit¹³⁶. After semi-fermentation of the mixed rice, those things which were kept to prevent from evil spirit are removed. Then, the semi-fermented rice is stored in *Dabkha* or *Jong-ya* (Earthen vessel specially made for storing fermented rice)¹³⁷. The mouth of *Dabkha* or *Jong-ya* is covered by banana leaves and fasten it with the string of bamboo or jute for preservation. The minimum period of preservation of *Jumai* or *Jwo* is five to ten days and maximum period is six to twelve months or even more. The view of Sidney Endle is that it may keep for six to twelve months¹³⁸. It is said that for long period of preservation of *Jumai* or *Jwo*, the requirement of *Emao* cake would not be more than one and for shorter period, the number of *Emao* cake would be two in the five kg of cooked rice. In case of later, *Jumai* or *Jwo* can be consumed within six to ten days from the date of preparation, afterward the taste would be sour and unbearable¹³⁹. Sometimes, a pit or hole on the surface of the earth is dug and *Dabkha* or *Jong-ya* is buried upto its neck for preservation for long time. It is belief of the Bodo that by preserving in this way good quality and good taste of rice beer can be produced. Now a day, very few people practice this system of preservation.

Some of the preserved food items of the Bodo occupied a very important place in traditional rites, rituals, ceremonies and festivals. After the funeral ceremony, members of funeral party purified themselves by taking bath and chew small quantity of *Narzi Gwran* and throw away which signified to bid final farewell to the death person. The importance of *Narzi Gwran* is noticed from the funeral ceremony of the Bodo without it the ceremony is considered to be incomplete¹⁴⁰. Some traditional rites and rituals like *Garja Puja*, *Hambai Hwnai* etc. can not be performed without *Jumai* or *Jwo*. In such rites and rituals, *Jumai* or *Jwo* are required. *Jumai* or *Jwo* is made compulsory not only

in traditional marriage ceremony but also in the festivals like *Bwisagu*¹⁴¹. The rice beer is also required when a person made complain to the village authority as well as settling of any kind of disputes¹⁴².

Thus, the preservation of food items is not only for consumption purpose but also has a close association with socio-cultural life. It is evidenced that some preserved food items are made compulsory in certain rites, rituals, ceremonies and seasonal festivals. The practice of preservation is still in vogue and the importance of preserved items in the rituals and festivals are also still remained valid among the traditional practitioner. The techniques of preservation have been learned by the Bodo from their ancestors and handed down from one generation to another generation. The traditional methods for preservation of different food items are still retained by the Bodo with or without so much modification. No doubt, the preserved food items have special place as well as significance in socio-cultural life owing to its festive, cultural, ethnic and nutritive values since remote past.

6. Traditional House of the Bodo:

Each and every society has a set of beliefs, practices and concepts with regard to the nature of plot selection and house construction. Human society has been developing certain rules and regulations relating to plot selection and house construction, be it magico-religious, secular, empirical, scientific etc. right from the ancient days till now. Such rules and regulations have been passed down from one generation to another. Those sets of rules are following with or without modification or supplementing and formulating new methods and concepts based on the original structure to meet the needs of times. Since time immemorial, the Bodo have their own traditional methods for plot selection and construction of house which inherited from their ancestors. Much care is taken in selection of a plot for house construction. The days in a week are examined to know which day is the best for the selection of plot. The Bodo believed that the days which fall on *Okapwr Jahabnai* or *Okapwr Twinai* in Bodo (dying moon or dark fortnight) or Saturday or Tuesday are considered to be good day for the site selection of house construction. If *Okapwr Jahabnai* which is fallen on Saturday or Tuesday, it is regarded as auspicious. Generally, on *Okapwr Jahabnai* or Tuesday or Saturday, the

Bodo begin the selection process of a plot for a house. The process of selection of a site begins from the evening and to be completed by the next morning. An *Oja* or elderly person who possesses the knowledge of site selection is engaged for the task. A place in the propose site is cleaned with the help of spade and plastered on it by mixing mud and cow dung on the day of site selection¹⁴³.

For purification of the place, a glass of holy water is arranged in which nine numbers of *koro baiywi mairong* (intake grain rice) are put and sprinkled with one branch of *Jatrasi* (a kind of plant used in any religious purpose) or Basil (*Tulsi*) leaf and nine numbers of *Dubri Hagra* (conch grass) which are tied nine times with white thread. After the purification is over, one banana leaf is placed on it. On the banana leaf, a pair of *Alari bati* (an earthen pot for illumination), areca nuts, betel leaves, *Dhub*, *Rang Jora* (one rupees coin), basil leaves along with grain rice, sugar and milk are kept. A new *Dwihu* (new earthen pot) which fill up with fresh water is also placed on the banana leaf. When the arrangement is completed an *Oja* chants the mantra in the name of *Bathou Bwrai* and also offers prayer to other gods and goddess requesting to give indication whether the proposed site is suitable or not for human habitation. Along with the offering items, the place is covered by a *Don* (bamboo basket which is used to measure rice) and left for the night to observe good or bad sign of the proposed site¹⁴⁴.

In the four corners of proposed site, four posts of bamboo or jute plant of about five feet height are made erected. The *Oja* or elderly person is made fencing the whole proposed site by tying with white thread three rounds on the erected bamboo or jute plant. Each round of the fencing thread should be about 1.5 ft. gap and 1.5 ft. height gap should also be maintained from the ground level. In the next morning, *Oja* or elderly person along with some members of the concerned family before brushing and washing their faces used to go to the proposed site to examine whether the fencing threads and offering articles are remained unchanged or not. If the thread of fencing is found to be torn or broken, it is presumed that the plot is the way or path of evil spirits and the site is not good for construction. A plot is considered to be good for house building if the fencing threads are untorn or unbroken. After observing the fence, they also observed the condition or position of the offered items by removing *Don*. If the offered items are in the same position as earlier, it deemed to be good or fit for construction. However, if the offering things are found in scattered and not in their position as left earlier in the last evening then the plot is regarded as inappropriate or unfavorable for construction. It is

also believed that if the water in the pot which was kept in the last evening is found empty or half empty then the plot is regarded as *Raikos Bita* (*Raksas Plot*). On the other hand, the water which left in the last evening is remained as it was as earlier and no change is found, it is considered as *Mainao Bita* (*Laxmi Bita*). It is the customs and beliefs of the Bodo that if a house is constructed on the plot which is identified as *Mainao Bita* then the family would be prospered and lived happily without any trouble in future. If the construction is made on the plot which is identified as *Raikos Bita* then it is believed that family would face a lot of hardships, troubles, unhappy etc. in their life¹⁴⁵.

Regarding the selection of site for construction of house, it is written as:

“*Boro-Kacharifwra jerao gw dan nokor gaisongwn bay jaigayao no lunaini cigang gwjang bwtwr tamhinba meseng bwtwrni mwnabili somao gosongnanwi naiyw. Gosongnai jaigani hakwo gudung mwnwbla bay jaigayao no lunanwi songsar jaywbla nokorao bemar-ajarfwra jablebai tagwn hwnnanwi sannai jayw. No lunw saikonai hakwo aba jaigakwo gusu mwnwbla Sonibar aba mongolbarni mwnabili somao bay saikonai jaigakwo fwsabnanwi lotase gwtar dwijwng liranwi talir laiwo gangse bonanwi jorase tulusi bilai, gor gu koro baisoywi mairong alua dwnnanwi mai sugra gongse don jwng kwbnanwi dwyw arw donni swrgiding hajwng mwjangywi sitabnanwi tanai baidi habrujwng lirtenanwi dwnw. Okanaywi donkwo bwkarnanwi naigwn. Talir bilai sayao dwnnai mairongpwra gwsarla bainanwi taywbla bay jaigayao no luywbla kwipwd-apwd jagwn arw gwsara jase sigang dwnnai baidinw taywbla bay jaigayaonw sahani nomano lujagwn hwnnanwi pwtaiyw*”¹⁴⁶.

From the above paragraph it comes to know that for the selection of a site, the Bodo used to stand on the proposed site in the winter evening or late –autumn to examine whether it feels warm or not. If the proposed site gives warm it is presumed that the site is not good for construction. It is believed that if a building is constructed on that site many misfortunes will be occurred to family members. On the other hand, if it feels fresh and cool while standing on the proposed site, it is considered as good place for construction. Then, in the evening of Saturday or Tuesday the proposed site is cleaned and plastered on it with water. One tender banana leaf is placed on plastered area. Afterward, pair of basil leaves, nine numbers of *Koro Baiywi Mairong* (intake grain rice) are placed on the banana leaf. Then, offerings are covered by a *Don*. To prevent the offering from insects the covered *Don* was attached properly to the ground by means of plastering with mud. The process of observation for good and bad of the proposed site is similar as cited earlier. If everything is found okay and deemed to be fit for construction then main house called *Noma No* is constructed on the northern site of the selected plot.

Another method for the selection of site for construction is soil testing. In this method, the proposed site is dug and flavor of the soil is examined. If the soil has sweet taste, it is considered good site for construction. The flavor of the soil is salty or bitter it was regarded as medium and house can be constructed on that site. If the taste of the soil is soured, it is believed that the site is not good. In this connection it is stated as follows:

“*Boro-Kacharipwrni makase gwrwng mansipwra talir laijwoyao donjwng mairong kwbnanwi anjad nainaini ongaywibw no lunw nagirmai jaigani hakwo nwi putsw gwtwo hakor jaonanwi singni hakwo janainanwi anjad naiyw. Haya gwdwibla no lujatao jayw arw gwbab-gwkabla bangdrai gajri nongya. Gwkwi mwnwbla gajri arw asebw no lujatao nongya hwnnanwi sanjayw*”¹⁴⁷.

So, three methods seem to be followed by the Bodo in the selection of a site for the construction of house. No much difference has been seen in the methods in the processes of site selection except soil testing. The Bodo adopted any one of the methods in course of selection of a plot for house construction.

A typical Bodo house consisted of four houses on four sides of a *Sila* (courtyard)¹⁴⁸. *Noma No*, the main house is built on the northern side of the selected plot facing to the south. Generally, the Bodo first build *Noma No. Bakri* (granary) is to the eastern side of *Noma No*. Guest house which is called *Chourano* is built on the western side of *Noma No* or near the gate of the house¹⁴⁹. Binoy Kr. Brahma¹⁵⁰ advocated that *Chourano* (guest house) is built on the west. They build *Goli* or cowshed in the south-east corner.

Before constructing any house, the Bodo built granary¹⁵¹. Along with Bhaben Narzi, Dr. Kameswar Brahma¹⁵², Binoy Kr. Brahma¹⁵³ and other writers also maintained the same view. But this view cannot be acceptable because most of the economically poor Bodo people neither they do have the capacity to build granary nor to store rice or any other things for future used. On the other hand, Dr. Anil Boro¹⁵⁴, Premlata Devi¹⁵⁵, Midini Choudhury¹⁵⁶ etc. are remained silent on this matter. The social scientists, anthropologists, social anthropologists as well as historians believed that first shelter built by human being are dwellings for human beings and later on for other purposes.

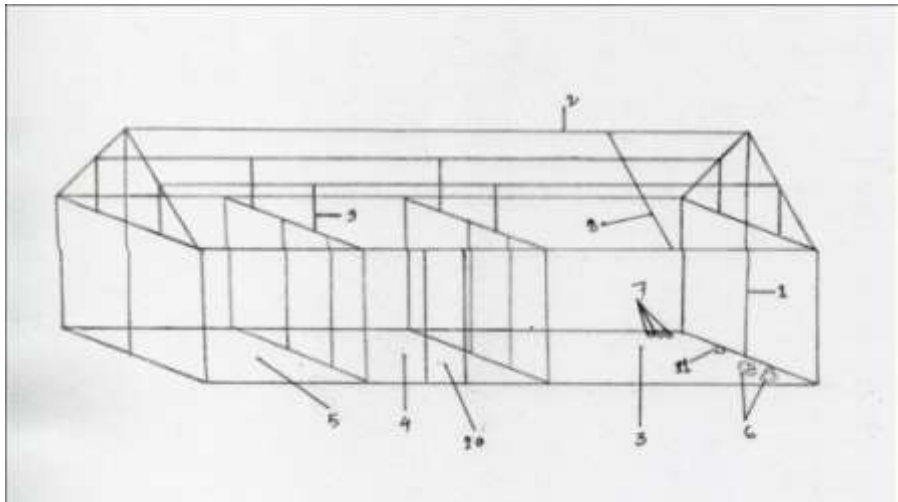
Noma No:

The construction of *Noma No* is started after the completion of plot selection. Generally, *Noma No* is built on the north side of the selected plot in the east-west direction facing to the south¹⁵⁷. *Noma No* has three rooms. The eastern most room is

known as *Ishing*, the middle room is called *Okhong* and *Kopra* is the third one in the extreme west¹⁵⁸. Though, *Noma No* has three rooms but its door is only one at the front side of the house and all the rooms are interlinked with each other.

The construction of *Noma No* and other house has been guided by certain traditional rules and regulations. The length of *Noma No* should be 16 *Akai*¹⁵⁹. Both bamboo and wood pillar are used for the construction of *Noma No*. There are five (5) *Mandali*¹⁶⁰. The length of the bamboo of *Mandali* should be 16 *Akai*. Each *Mandali* should be of a single bamboo. It is totally prohibited to join two bamboos for making a *Mandali*. *Farai*¹⁶¹ should be also of 16 *Akai*. The length of *Ruali* (rafter) should be of 8 *Akai*. The total numbers of *Farai* and *Ruali* are varied which depend on the size of the house. Numbers of *Dhorna* also varied according to the size of house. *Sokti*, a bamboo post which supported the roof of the house to stand in a fixed position is also very important component of the house. The numbers of *Sokti* post that used in the construction of a house are not in equal numbers from house to house. Some houses used more *Sokti* post and in some houses less numbers are utilized. It is believed that more used of *Sokti* posts in the house; the house would be more strength and long lasting. *Silimala Hebnai*¹⁶² is also important constituent in the construction of *Noma No*. *Swima* is bamboo which supported the roof to remain without bending in the middle part of the house¹⁶³. The two *Mandalis* at bottom were left untied because it is the traditional beliefs of the Bodo that if tied, the wind god would get angry and destroyed the house considering the act is a kind of challenge to him¹⁶⁴.

The place and position of the above mentioned posts, pillars, etc. including some important place are shown in the following figure:



1. Main pillar 2. *Mandali* 3. *Ishing* 4. *Okhong* 5. *Kopro* 6. Fireplace 7. Place of *Mainao*, *Songraja* and *Aileng* 8. *Swima* 9. *Solti* 10. Door 11. Place of *Maihungdw*

For the construction of *Noma No* numbers of materials like bamboo, cane, thatch grass or straw, reeds etc. are required¹⁶⁵. After the collection of all these materials, the Bodo started to build traditional house called *Noma No*. Bamboo or timbers are the main important materials for the construction of a house which are used for making pillars, walls etc. Roofing is done with thatch or straw. The splitted bamboo or reeds are used for making walls of house. Cane or immature bamboo is required for the purpose of making rope or wire for binding anything in the construction of house. Soils are collected to make mud. The mud is mixed up with cow dung. The both side of the framework of the walls are properly plastered with the mixed up mud with cow dung. For colouring both inner and outer part of the walls, *Hama Mata*¹⁶⁶ was mixed with a little amount of cow dung and plastered on both side walls. The floor of house is level properly and plastered nicely by mixing mud and cow dung in proportionate way.

Though *Noma No* has three rooms but it does not have ventilations or windows except one door. *Ishing* is used as kitchen in which a place is reserved for *Mainao* (*Mainao* is the Goddess of wealth and prosperity) and *Songraja* (husband of *Mainao*) on the north-east corner of the room. In some houses, the place of Goddess *Aileng* is also kept adjacent to the place of *Mainao* and *Songraja*. However, generally the Bodo do not

want to keep *Aileng* in their *Ishing* because she used to give troubles to the family members if they are not able to follow the rule and regulation of the goddess strictly¹⁶⁷. So, whenever she is not happy with the activities of the family or if any member of the family failed to maintain the rules or violate the traditional rule then some misfortune may be occurred in the family. Besides the place of *Mainao*, *Songraja* and *Aileng*, an earthen pot called *Maihungdw* is kept to store rice. Generally, two *Odab* (fireplace) are made to the east-south corner of *Ishing*. Most of the cooking activities including washing of rice, utensils etc. are done inside *Ishing*. Only the family members are allowed to enter into *Ishing*. The outsiders are strictly prohibited to enter into *Ishing*. Even the married daughters also do not allow to enter *Ishing* room. *Ishing* is also used as bed room for father and mother of the family. *Okong* is reserved for the purpose of dining room. All family members, relatives etc. are free to enter into *Okong*. However, it is also stated that only the relatives of father side are allowed to enter in to *Okong* and not the relatives of mother side. *Kopra* is reserved for bed room of unmarried girls of the family¹⁶⁸.

When the construction of a new house is totally completed, the family offered a pair of chicken, pigeons and *Mwnswr Talet Jabtam* (a kind of banana used by the Bodo during religious rites, rituals and ceremonies) to purify the newly constructed house believing that on that plot or area where the new house is constructed, some immoral activities, burial of dead body etc. might had been done earlier before the erection of the building¹⁶⁹.

Thus, the traditional rules and regulations followed by the Bodo for the selection of a plot and construction of house are not new one but old age tradition. These practices and traditions cannot easily be out rightly rejected by anyone as it became a well established culture among the Bodo. The application of the traditional rules and regulations to the selection of site and construction of the house denoted having rich customs and tradition of the Bodo. The observation of good and bad omen are closely associated with the plot selection which lead to the cultural milieu of the Bodo right from the time immemorial without neglecting; such rules are brought from their original home to the present settlement. Due to the influence of other cultures and religions many changes have been seen in the systems of plot selection, house construction, reserving rooms for family members according to sex and age etc. The traditional rules and regulations have been neglecting wholly or partly in due course of time.

7. The Life of the Bodo from Birth to Death:

Life cycle is regarded as the sequence of stages man pass through commencing with birth and concluding with death. Life of a man, since the earliest days, has been regulated by numbers of the rites, rituals and ceremonies which may be called rites of passage. The rites of passage denote the rites and ceremonies which marked the transition in the life cycle of man in different stages like pregnancy, birth, childhood, marriage, death etc. in their own society. Arnold Van Gennep¹⁷⁰ remarked that severance, insertion and come back (separation, inclusion-transformation and return) to the society are three steps of the ceremonies, the form of which repeatedly vary however, their function is same. The individual life cycle of the Bodo is control through their own customs which associated numerous rites, rituals and ceremonies. The life cycle of the Bodo may be discussed under the following head:

- i. *Gwrbwao Tanai* (Pregnancy)
- ii. Dos and Don'ts
- iii. Determination of sex
- iv. *Goto Jaginai* (Child birth)
- v. *Jaajha Ujinai* (Twins-birth)
- vi. *Utumwi Hanai* (Cutting of umbilical cord)
- vii. *Jwr Pobnai* (After-birth)
- viii. Taboo condition and Introduction of child to family and society
- ix. *Mung Dwnnai* (Naming ceremony)
- x. *Dwi Sarnai*
- xi. Protective rite and ritual after childbirth
- xii. *Wngkham Dwojennai* (First Feeding)
- xiii. *Khwma Tuplongnai* (Ear perforation)
- xiv. Puberty
- xv. *Haba* (Marriage)
- xvi. *Twinnai* (Death)

i. *Gwrbwao Tanai* (Pregnancy):

Pregnancy is called *Gwrbwao Tanai* which is the combination of two words *Gwrbw* and *Tanai*. *Gwrbw* means womb and *Tanai* means conception. In general, life cycle initiates with birth, yet it embarks on normally with conception. In early days, as people did not fully developed scientific and medical knowledge for detecting conception, some traditional techniques were employed by the Bodo to identify whether a married woman had conceived or not. The traditional knowledge and practice for confirming pregnancy of woman are still practiced by the Bodo mainly who are residing in remote area where there is no modern medical facility. The following ways are to be observed for understanding the conception of a woman¹⁷¹:

- a. The Bodo adopted time tested know-how that the stoppage of menstrual cycle of a woman who entered in marital life for about two or more months gives the first clue of conception.
- b. When tendency of vomiting and avoiding of food occurred, it denoted the signed of pregnancy.
- c. If growth and changes of breasts and abdomen are found, it is presumed as indication of pregnancy.

Even today these simple indications are taken into account for determining a woman whether she is pregnant or not. When such symptoms are found by the expectant mother, she immediately brought it to the notice of her husband¹⁷² as well as mother-in-law or any elder female members of the family or nearest relatives or her own mother. To confirm the pregnancy of a woman, elder members of the family who possessed the knowledge on it observed carefully the stoppage of menstrual cycle, vomiting tendency and other changes in her body. In absence of expert elderly female members in a particular family, generally consultation is done with the expert woman of the village for confirmation of conception¹⁷³.

ii. Dos and Don'ts:

As and when, pregnancy is verified many dos and don'ts are to be strictly observed by the pregnant woman and husband. The dos and don'ts are known as *Hama* in Bodo. Certain norms that to be maintained by the concern couple during pregnancy are given below:

Observances of food taboo are as follow:

- a. The expectant mother should avoid eating of double banana or any kind of twin fruits. It is the beliefs of the Bodo that if such fruits are consumed by pregnant woman, twin child would be born.
- b. Eating of bitter things, sour food, hot chili, etc. should be ignored by expectant mother.
- c. Eating of egg is also disallowed believing that she might be born speech-impaired or dumb child or the child would speak less when he or she grownup.
- d. The expectant father is also forbidden to consume some of the foods which prohibited to expectant mother¹⁷⁴.

Observance of social restrictions:

- a. The expectant father and mother should not kill any animal or living being.
- b. The expectant father is prohibited to join hunting party as it involved killing of living being.
- c. The pregnant woman is not allowed to see and touch dead body.
- d. She is banned to visit the place of disposal of dead body or graveyard or cremation ground.
- e. In case, husband of a pregnant woman or her own mother, father, mother-in-law, father-in-law or nearest blood relatives died, she is permitted to see and touch the dead body. However, she should be purified in front of the *Bathou* with the help of *Dwori* or *Oja* as she became impure due to her contact with dead body or breaking the taboo condition¹⁷⁵.
- f. An expectant mother is debarred from sitting on double tools (placing one tool on another) believing that if she seat on such tools, twin child may be born.
- g. The expectant mother is also suggested not to talk on the subject matters like evil spirits and devils. It is the belief of the Bodo that if pregnant woman spoke on evil spirits and devils, the evil spirits or devils may create harmful to fetus as well as may generate problems during delivery.

- h. The pregnant woman is strictly refrained from talking and thinking of blind, handicap, psychopathic, etc. believing that such negative words and thoughts would effect to fetus and blind, handicap, psychopathic baby may be born.
- i. The expectant parents are cautioned not to talk each other or with other persons on the topic of death so as not to cause any unwanted accident during the time of delivery to both baby and mother as the Bodo believed that talking on the matter of death may cause hitch at the time of delivery to both mother and child.

Worship of the *Bathou*:

After confirmation of pregnancy, expectant mother worshipped the Supreme god and goddess i.e. *Bathou Bwrai* and *Bathou Buri* as well as other household gods and goddesses known as *Noni Mwdai* informing them about the conception and seeking their blessings and good help.

Propitiation to evil spirit:

The Bodo called evil spirit as *Hagrani Mwdai*. *Hagra* means jungle and *Mwdai* means devil or evil spirit. In general the Bodo tried to avoid *Hagrani Mwdai* because of their negative intention. To prevent from the influence of *Hagrani Mwdai*, a pregnant woman is not allowed to go to graveyard, jungle, touching or looking at dead body, etc. When pregnant woman faced problems, the family consulted with a *Dwori* or *Oja* to identify the source of trouble or to know whether pregnant woman is under the bad influence of *Hagrani Mwdai*. If the source of trouble is on account of *Hagrani Mwdai*, then propitiation is done through a *Dwori* or *Oja* not to cause further trouble to pregnant woman and her fetus. The offering and sacrifices are made by the respective family on the advice of *Dwori* or *Oja* who could negotiate with the evil spirits or devils¹⁷⁶.

The pregnant woman is also advised to avoid hard labour or any kind of works which may cause problems to her. However, this restriction seems to be imposed in the initial stage of pregnancy to avoid from miscarriage. It is reported that later on when fetus is strong enough to be remained in mother's womb, she is permitted to do all kinds of work as a physical exercise¹⁷⁷. It is regarded that by doing physical exercises, a pregnant woman will not face any complicacy or big problem when delivery. Thus, it

clearly shows that avoidance of hard labour is only in the early stage of pregnancy but it does not mean that she is allowed to do all kind of works which cause danger to her as well as to baby in her womb.

An expectant mother is continuously advised by her grandmother, mother-in-law, own mother as well as by elderly women to observe taboos and restrictions relating to pregnancy strictly to avoid any kind of complicity. They believed that if the expectant mother or father violates or fails to observe the taboos and restrictions, she (expectant mother) may face some serious consequences or troubles during the time of child delivery or it perhaps may affect the fetus also. In spite of observance of such social code of conducts or taboos by both expectant mother and father, there are miscarriage and unhappy delivery where mother or child or both mother and child died during delivery. The death of either mother or newly born baby or both at the time of child birth is called *Sor Nangnai* among the Bodo¹⁷⁸. B. H. Hudgson¹⁷⁹ reported that deliveries are almost always very easy and death in childbirth scarcely known. However, *Sor Nangnai* became very common in past days¹⁸⁰. Even today also such incidents are also occurred but become very rare as a result of modern medical facilities.

It is the tradition of the Bodo that when pregnancy is about seven or eight months due for delivery, a beverage called *Jumai* or *Jwo* (rice-beer) is made and preserved to entertain the midwives, old ladies of the village or village elders when the child is born. It is said that this type of function is performed generally in the evening. However, some families began to discard these traditional practices as influence of other cultures, modernization, etc.

iii. Determination of Sex:

The Bodo do have some beliefs about the determination of sex of unborn baby. The practices of sex determination of unborn child which based on some beliefs are as follows:

- a. It is believed that if the labour pain is frequent in normal condition, it indicated that the child may be a girl.
- b. If the labour is pained beyond normal condition in recurrent manner then it is believed that the baby may be a boy¹⁸¹.

- c. If either expectant mother or father have dreamed like weaving, husking rice or any activities which normally done by female then it is believed that the unborn child may be a girl.
- d. Dreaming of digging or ploughing or any other activities relating to male is taken as an indication of a boy.

The above mentioned beliefs whether it may be right or wrong but the ancestors of the Bodo had a deep faith on it in determining the sex of unborn child. Till today it is advised that careful note should be taken of the dreams to know the sex of unborn child.

iv. *Goto Jaginai* (Child birth):

Bodo called child birth as *Goto Jaginai*. The term *Goto* means child and *Jaginai* represent delivery. Generally, child birth was taken place at home for which no separate hut was required. The Bodo followed age old customs, traditions and methods at the time of child birth. However, nowadays the past practices are not adopted because of modern medical knowledge and facilities. However, some peoples who are living in remote areas where modern advanced knowledge and medical facilities are not reached, they still used to continue the past practices of delivery. During the time of delivery, the duty of midwife is performed by elderly women of the village who possess the knowledge and experience of child birth. Sometimes, two or more midwives are also attended in course of delivery. Elderly women of the village assembled and helped each other for delivery. It is asserted that among the Bodo there was no formal midwives and any experience persons or competent matron could give attendance and assistance at the time of delivery¹⁸². B. H. Hudgson¹⁸³ says that at the time of delivery any midwife was not required as mother did everything without the help of any one. The observation of B. H. Hudgson may be in some exceptional cases, not in general. But it also can be presumed that all the Bodo women had a good knowledge of child birth in the past. Such knowledge was procured from their elderly women or mother during unmarried time or after marriage which have been handed down from generation to generation. From this angle the statement of B. H. Hudgson may be regarded as true.

Only aged women who are married but not widow are allowed to participate during the time of child birth. Generally, the presence of male person in the labor room is restricted during the time of child birth. But sometimes when required or delivery

become complicated elderly male person specially *Dwori* or *Oja* are also invited to join or took part in the process of child birth¹⁸⁴.

To ensure for safety of expected mother and smooth delivery of baby, all required arrangement are made as perfectly as possible immediately after pregnant woman starts feeling labour pain. *Uwal* (wooden mortar), *Owa Katimal* (sharp-edged slip of green bamboo skin), *Dhara* (bamboo mat), *Songrai* (winnowing fan) etc. are main required materials or articles for delivery. Some metal objects like a piece of iron, a knife and a sickle are also required which are kept below the bed or anywhere inside the delivery room to prevent from the interference of evil spirit during the time of delivery¹⁸⁵.

In early days, delivery normally took place on the floor where a *Dhara* (bamboo mat) was spread which covered by a cloth on it. At the time of delivery, to push herself, the expectant mother took help of *Uwal* (wooden mortar) by positioning on her knees and holding the wooden mortar with her hands. Sometimes, expectant mother was required to swallow some hair to generate vomiting tendency so that she could produce maximum force for pushing the baby from her womb¹⁸⁶. The traditional past practices of delivery are growing rare day by day at present due to availability of medical facilities. However, old practices are also still adopted at the places where medical facilities are absent.

If the expectant parents violated the taboo condition, it may cause problem or complicacy during the time of child birth. When the delivery is delayed or labour pain goes on for a long time without any outcome, it came to be noticed that the expectant parents seems to be violated the taboo conditions. As and when, the birth related problems emerged or detected, the midwife or attendant or elderly women usually asked for confession to expectant parents for their wrong doing so as to enable delivery of baby without any further troubles. When husband or wife confessed their wrong doing, then the wrong doer is required to do penance by confessing the nature of breaching of taboo in front of *Bathou* alter to *Batou Bwrai* with the help of *Dwori* or *Oja*. In case of confession of the expected mother, the rituals for confession is mainly done by the concerned husband on behalf of wife as she is not in a position to do the penance because she is in the complicated condition of delivery. It is also believed that if the expectant mother and father have pre-marital sexual relation with others, they may face problem at the time of delivery. In such situation, he or she is required to confess their act of pre-

marital sexual relation otherwise complicacy would be continued till the confession is made¹⁸⁷.

In early days, as and when birth took place, the newly born baby failed to cry, a person move around the labour house five times in case of male sex and seven times in case of female sex by ringing spade believing that the child would response to the spade ringing and immediately would start crying. If the child was not crying while doing so it was declared as still-born¹⁸⁸. The person who was supposed to execute this job should be married, having child but not to be a widow or widower. The following words were to be chant by a person who was entrusted to the task by taking the name of father and mother of the newly born child:

Amuka-Amuki ni Gwdansa, (Amuka=Name of father and Amuki= Name of mother of the child)

Sikardw Gwdan Pisa,

Sirimwndw Angw Pisa;

Naidw Gwdan Songsar,

*Nwma-Nwmpa Boraibat*¹⁸⁹.

Free English translation goes on:

Amuka-Amuki's new child

Awake new child,

Awake own child;

See the new world,

Father-mother welcomes you.

In past days presence of father at home was must at the time of delievery as he had to do all the birth related activities i.e. burial of placenta, sacrifice of fowl, etc. Nowadays, the old age practices are seldom followed by the Bodo.

v. *Jaajha Ujinai* (Twins-birth):

Twins-birth is rare. The occurrence of such is unusual in Bodo society. In case of twin-birth, the baby born in first is considered as younger to that of second as the second is regarded as the eldest¹⁹⁰. In Rongmei society, mother gave breast feeding one after another, not in simultaneously to the twins. Mother also slept in between the two. When dead occurred to one of the twins, they hide another one who is alive inside the plunge of basket at the house of neighbor till funeral ceremony is completed. This is done to

prevent from taking away the surviving one by the deceased twin¹⁹¹. However, among the Bodo neither such practices are prevalent nor traditional customary rules supplies such information.

vi. *Utumwi Hanai* (Cutting of Umbilical cord):

After birth, the navel-cord was cut with sharp-edged slip of bamboo called *Owa Katimal* specially made ready for the purpose. It is reported that the bamboo blade should be made from green bamboo¹⁹². Midini Chudhury¹⁹³ stated that navel cord was cut off by a sliver in the form of blade which was cut from a bamboo post of the labour house.

Before cutting the umbilical cord it was required to tie the navel string with thread of unboiled cotton or *muga-silk* thread at a suitable place five times for baby boy and six or seven times for baby girl. An experience elderly lady or midwife cut the cord¹⁹⁴. Sidney Endle¹⁹⁵ supplied the information that no scissors, knife and implement made of steel was used while cutting the umbilical cord as it was done by sharp bamboo blade. He further stated that the cutting of cord was not at one stroke but in a consecutive slender cuts five times for boy with five different bamboo blades and seven times for girl by seven different bamboo blades. B. H. Hudgson¹⁹⁶ narrated that mother herself cut the navel string. Such case was seems to be possibility in the remote past time when there was very few people and when there was no availability of midwife or in the absence of anyone expert to gave assistance to her. It is also indicated that every mother had acquainted the knowledge of the delivery.

The person who supposed to perform the duty for cutting umbilical cord should not be widow or widower believing that the child might not have a long life if the cord was cut by such person. The Bodo believed that there were three types of hand namely sweet, bitter and sour. It was believed that if the umbilical cord was cut by a person having sweet hand, it took time to dry the wound; if it was cut by bitter hand, the wound dried soon and the wound could not be dried soon and the baby might have fractious disposition afterward if it was cut by sour handed person. For this reason bitter hand person always prepared to sever the umbilical cord with the aim to heal and dry the wound immediately without any infection¹⁹⁷. However, in course of time due to modernization and availability of modern facilities, the Bodo nowadays started to abandon the processes of old age practice of *Utumwi Hanai*.

vii. *Jwr Pobnai*:

Placenta is called *Jwr* in Bodo. *Jwr Pobnai* denotes burial of placenta. *Jwr* means placenta and *Pobnai* connotes buried. The buried of placenta was done normally in front of *Noma No*. A burial pit about one and half foot depth was dug by father of newly born baby near verandah of *Noma No* avoiding the footsteps of entrance and also avoiding the dropping place of water from the roof of the house. The belief behind this tradition was to free the child from all kinds of water born diseases like cough, sneezing etc. Special care was taken at the time of burial of placenta. It should be placed gently inside the pit. It was believed that the placenta was buried hurriedly would cause occasional convulsions to newly born child in future¹⁹⁸. The part of the cord which remained with the child after cutting of the placenta fall off when it get dried and then put in an empty *Empwo Pitwb* (cocoon of silk worm) and sealed it. The sealed *Empwo Pitwb* was then tied as a talisman at the neck of baby believing that it would protect the baby from all kinds of diseases as well as it would help the baby to avoid startled or sudden fear¹⁹⁹. The same was also tied on the right hand of the child if the baby was boy and left hand in case of girl with *Kundung Aoa* (a kind of white tread)²⁰⁰. The burial of placenta at the prescribe place and tying of talisman are still following by the Bodo in certain areas however, it also seen that some of the Bodo have discontinued these practices. Discontinuation of past practices is the outcome of advanced knowledge.

viii. Taboo condition and Introduction of the child to family and society:

The newly born child is considered as impure. So, purification ceremony known as *Gotosa Pwtarnai* is observed. For the purification ceremony, the child is first given bath with tepid water by mother. If mother is not in good condition, she would start the bathing and completion would be done by midwife or any women who is free from any kind of restriction, taboos etc. Due to delivery mother also became polluted so she is required to clean and change new dress. All these activities are done inside the labour room. After the bath, newly born baby is laid on a *Songrai* (winnowing fan) which is covered with a soft cloth and kept in front of *Noma No* or at the veranda of the residing place of parents. A *Dwi Gwtar* (holy water) is prepared with nine pieces of conch grasses, one branch of basil leaves and a ring of gold. If gold is not available, the branch of conch grass is temporarily made as ring and it is presumed as real gold ring. In early

days, the water was collected from *Dwihu* which was the vessel for storing water but the water should be fresh. If fresh water was not available, it should be collected from nearby river or canal or stream²⁰¹. The baby is purified by sprinkling with holy water by *Dwori* or person from *Narzari* group (*Narzari* group is regarded as priestly class) or by elderly person of the village who should not be a widow or widower and whose child is alive till the date. While sprinkling *Dwi Gwtar* the person have to utter the following words²⁰²:

*Oi Gwdansa goto,
Nwngba gwdw mamwn,
Bangal na Jungal,
Garo na Gongar, Harsha na Mephal mon?
Dinwiniprai Bodo Jabai.*

Free English translation:

Oh new child,
Whatever you before,
Be a *Bangal* or a *Jungal*,
A *Garo* or a *Gangar*, a *Harsa* or a *Mephal*?
From this day you have become a Bodo.

After the commemoration of purification, the child is regarded as pure and free from taboo condition and introduced into family as well as to the society as a new member. Besides, mother is also purified with the same holy water and with this she is regarded as pure.

The ritual *Duari Hanai* is also performed to introduce the new baby to the Supreme God i.e. *Bathou Bwrai* and *Bathou Buri* and also to *Miainao* and *Songraja* who are also known as *Duari Buri* and *Duari Bwrai*. In this ritual, a chicken is sacrificed in front of the door of *Noma No*²⁰³. While sacrificing the fowl, the father or a person but generally the father if the father is available has to recite the following words:

*Nwi Manni Agduari,
Nwngtangni Onnaijwng
Hwoasa/Hinjaosa Goto Mwnbai.
Nwngtangnw Bini Takai
Dao Tekra Hwbai,
Hw Giri Nwng, Kangnw Hwdw.*

Free English translation:

Hi respected *Agduari* (*Agduari* means god and goddesses of house)

With your kind and blessing

We have got boy/girl child.

Thou for this

We have sacrificed a small chicken,

As you are the giver, please be allowed us to be the parents of the child.

In case of baby boy, the victim of sacrifice should be a cock whereas in case of female, a hen is sacrificed. The main purpose of this ritual is to introduce the new baby to household god and goddesses and for the protection from evil spirit. The sacrificed chicken is cooked and consumed by the mother. All these are done on the day of birth. As soon as *Gotosa Pwtarnai* and *Duari Hanai* rituals are over, the mother started breast feeding to her newly born child. Before feeding the mother's milk, mother has to squeeze her breast and take out some breast milk. This practice is done by the mother concerned to make free from any kind of infection as well as to make the breast canal free from any kind of dirt. In the past, the baby boy was first feeded from the right side breast and the girl child from the left side breast²⁰⁴. At present also this tradition is continuing to some extent.

After the completion of rituals and ceremonies relating to birth, a small party is arranged by family concern for midwives, *Dwori* or *Oja* including to those who are coming to greet the newly born baby. In this party only *Jumai* or *Jwo* offered to them. Generally on this occasion mother served rice-beer if she is in good health condition after child birth.

ix. *Mung Dwnnai* (Name Giving):

Mung Dwnnai is another important ceremony in the life cycle of the Bodo. *Mung Dwnnai* means giving of name to a newly born baby. *Mung* denotes name and *Dwnnai* indicates giving. *Mung Dwnnai* ceremony is generally done immediately after the delivery of child or four or five days from the birth of baby. It is said that *Mung Dwnnai* is performed with or without any rites and rituals as it is wholly a family affair. There is no special day for naming of a newly born baby. In this regard there is no any hard and fast rule. In the early days, just after the birth, midwife or attendant or old woman who was present at the time of delivery used to give the name at once or at the time of

severing the umbilical cord²⁰⁵ according to the sex of baby. Nowadays, the custom of giving name by midwife or woman attendant is seems to be practiced rarely. It is also reported that an infant was given name in *Dwi Sarnai* ceremony²⁰⁶. This tradition is still continuing.

x. *Dwi Sarnai*:

Dwi Sarnai ceremony is performed within two or three months or any convenient day within a year from the date of birth. In past days, it was compulsory to invite midwife as well as attendant who were officiated during the time of delivery where they were given due place of honour recognizing their good services during the time of delivery without any remuneration. Nowadays, delivery is mainly done at hospitals where doctor and nurse executed the duty of midwife and attendant. However, *Dwi Sarnai* ceremony is organized by concerned family without midwife or attendant as they are not a part in the process of delivery at hospital. Because of delivery at hospital, the importance of midwife and attendant has been reducing in society. However, it is also fact that all the delivery cannot be done at hospital due to many reasons. If the delivery is done at home with the help of midwife and attendant, then they are invited in the ceremony where they received due respect and honour. Not only the midwife but also women of the village are also requested to join *Dwi Sarnai* ceremony. In this ceremony, abundance of rice-beer, pork, chicken and meal are served to them. The main purpose of *Dwi Sarnai* ceremony is to entertain the midwife and attendant who discharged their duty during the time of child birth and to save the family from a grave sin. Not only midwife and attendant but also village elderly women are also made amuse. Another reason of this grand feast is to take blessing from the village elderly women. In dawn period, if the child failed to survive, only chicken and *Jumai* or *Jwo* were served to them without meal²⁰⁷ but at present it seems to be discontinued.

xi. Protective rite and ritual after childbirth:

If the parents lost their children frequently at infant stages, a peculiar tradition was practiced by them. In such case vending of own child, giving obnoxious name, feeding with unclean food left over by an unclean man and lastly travesty of marriage between parent and child (baby girl with father and baby boy with mother) were commonly executed to avert the death of child²⁰⁸. However, nowadays these custom are became very rare and almost absent.

xii. *Wmgkhan Dwojennai* (First Feeding):

Awngkham Dwojennai is Bodo word which means feeding of solid food to the child for the first time. It is observed on any convenient day of the family concerned when baby attained at the age of five or six months. In this rite, cooked rice is offered to gods and goddesses with the help of *Dwori* or *Oja*. After offering to household deities, mother used to start feeding to her child²⁰⁹. That moment is consuming of solid food by the baby for the first time. However, R. N. Mushahary²¹⁰ urged that there is no practice of first feeding of child among the Bodo. It is fact that feeding of solid food to child becomes very important when child attained at the age of five or six months as child is not satisfied with mother's milk. So, the child is required food other than the mother milk. For this reason first feeding of solid food to the baby is necessary.

xiii. *Khwma Tuplongnai* (Ear Perforation):

The perforation of ear is called *Khwma Tuplongnai* in Bodo. On the occasion of piercing earlobes, no big ceremony is performed. It is general tradition among the Bodo that each and every girl should get their ear-perforation. The ear perforation is mainly done by an experience elderly woman. There is no hard and fast rule or any specific date and times for the ear perforation²¹¹. Boys are not done ear-perforation in Bodo society.

xiv. Puberty:

There is no ceremony connected with attaining of puberty. A girl who attains puberty required to change her dress code by putting on a garment meant for a grownup female, known as *Dokihna* in Bodo, which covers her body from chest to ankle which signified her attaining of puberty²¹².

xv. *Haba* (Marriage):

Establishment of the institution of marriage is a unique advent in human history. In the remote past man lived more or less like any other animal and sex life was absolutely free. So, only maternity alone could be judged and paternity could not be identified. The only way to know the paternity of children would be exclusive union of man and woman. In men's aim to understand the paternity of children lie the seed of marriage institution. Marriage is an institution which permits man and woman to family life and to have children by involving the right of sexual relation²¹³.

Marriage is defined by D. N. Majumdar and T.N. Madan²¹⁴ "every kind of human grouping comes into being, and is maintained, through a process of recruitment by which

various persons become its members. In every human family the majority of its members are recruited into it by being born into it. But before child are born, some women in patrilocal societies; man in matrilocal societies must recruited into it. A family comes into being through such a communication of spouses. Marriage is the socially recognized form of such recruitment through communication". Marriage can be defined as an assurance of biological fulfillment (that of sex) and a psychological contentment (that of having children) on the individual plane²¹⁵. We may agree with L. H. Morgan²¹⁶ who stated that in the beginning there was no marriage institution among human beings. "From promiscuity, human society evolved group marriages. At that stage all the brothers of a family used to marry all sister of another family so that every male was equally the husband of every female and vice-versa. Another stage in the evolution of marriage was monogamy with sufficient freedom to establish extra marital relationships particularly with the female members of the bride's family. In the last stage of the evolution of marriage man could marry more than one women and the stage of monogamy preceded polygamy"²¹⁷. The historical process was a prolonged one as mankind procured the knowledge of cattle breeding, agriculture, art and industry and learnt the use natural resources to the best of its advantage. Agriculture was the threshold of civilization. This was also the threshold of regulated sex life²¹⁸. The institution of marriage evolved through several stages. At different places and various stages of human civilization and development marriage came into materialize in different forms. It is stated that marriage and family were supposed to have evolved from primitive promiscuity through various forms of plural marriage to monogamy²¹⁹.

So far, the practiced of polyandry among the Bodo from ancient days to till now has not been seen to have been practiced. The oral sources or available literary evidences also totally silent and do not furnish any information about the practice of polyandry. Rev. Sidney Endle²²⁰, Sekhar Brahma²²¹ and Premalata Devi²²² also pointed out that polyandry would seems to be absolutely absent in the Bodo society.

In the social milieu of the Bodo, polygamy is very rare and not allowed. It is revealed that the social custom of the Bodo did not permit polygamy in the early days however, it was very common among the rich or who had the capacity to do. Even today, some Bodo are used to practice polygamy but the Bodo are not polygamous. In some exceptional cases, a Bodo can have more than one wife if his first wife is issueless or childless. It is stated that the custom of the Bodo permitted a man to marry second wife

with the aim to beget offspring to inherit the property and handed down the father's name to posterity. In early days, the practiced of polygamy were found among the high class people, wealthy man such as Mauzadars, Mandals etc²²³.

Among the three forms of marriage i.e. polyandry, polygamy and monogamy, monogamy is the highest and noblest form of marriage which has been practiced by the Bodo since ancient days. It is socially accepted and approved form of betrothal²²⁴.

Haba means marriage in Bodo. It is the combination of two words- *Ha* (means Soil/Earth) + *Ba* (means to bear something on the back). So, *Haba* signifies to bear soil or responsibility of the earth on the back. The Bodo regarded marriage is one of the indispensable and unavoidable parts in social life. The following are the means to acquire a mate which have been practiced since ancient days²²⁵.

1. *Swngnanwi Lainai Haba* (Arranged marriage)
2. *Hinjao Bwnai Haba* (Marriage by capture)
3. *Kharsonai Haba* (The girls flee away to the boy's house)
4. *Dwnkharnai Haba* (Marriage by elopement)
5. *Gwrjia Haba* (Matrilocal Marriage where bridegroom used to stay at the house of bride) and
6. *Dongkha Habnai Haba* (Widow re-marriage).

Dongkha Habnai Haba and *Gwrjia Haba* are considered as matriarchal system of marriage and rest are patriarchal one. The Bodo society does not encourage *Hinjao Bwnai Haba*, *Kharsonnai Haba* and *Dwankharnai Haba* since ancient days though these are also seen to be carried out but not in frequent. Dr. K. Brahma²²⁶, Rev. Sidney Endle²²⁷, Sekhar Brahma²²⁸ and Bhaben Narji²²⁹ also kept these marriages under the category of irregular or illegal.

1. *Swngnanwi Lainai Haba*:

The most approved form of marriage among the Bodo right from ancient days to present day is *Swngnanwi Lainai Haba*. It is arranged marriage or marriage by engagement. The Bodo considered this type of marriage is the best and highest form to compare with other types of marriage. *Swngnanwi Lainai Haba* is done through the parents of both boy and girl with or without the consent of the concerned boy and girl. Here, the consent of both parent are extremely important. However, assent of parents of

the girl is considered to be the most essential than the parents of the boy as request comes first from the side of boy's parents²³⁰. The question of selection in marriage may be considered from three angles- i) the field of selection ii) the party to selection and iii) the criteria of selection. In the society of some tribes and communities there is a preferential code, enjoining marriage with a particular relative as more desirable or at times even obligatory. There are likewise certain restrictions prohibiting marriage with certain relatives or between certain groups as they are considered incestuous or undesirable. There are further restrictions of endogamous character enjoining marital union within the bounds of a certain group. Exogamous restrictions in India are defined in terms of sib, totem, territorial group, gotra or sapinda relationships²³¹.

Six processes are observed in *Swngnanwi Lainai Haba*. They are:

- a. *Asan Suri Tebnai* or *Asan Suri Langnai*
- b. *Gongkhon Hwnai*
- c. *Goi Khaonai*
- d. *Biban Langnai*
- e. *Kobira Tangnai* and
- f. *Hinjao Gwdan Lainai*.

The first step of *Swngnanwi Lainai Haba* is known as *Asan Suri Tebnai* or *Asan Suri Langnai*. Parents of a boy in consultation with their relatives and friends started searching for a suitable bride. An emissary party consisting of either three or five including *Barwikhitao* or *Gathokdar*²³², lead either by boy's parents or *Barwikhaito* or *Gathokdar* along with a pair of *Asan Suri Jorase* (a pair of silver bracelets), *Goi Jora* (areca nuts), *Patwi Jora* (betel leaves), *Jwo Bedwi Dingrinwi* (two bottle of rice beer) and *Rang Jora* (a pair of silver one rupees coins) walk off to the residence of girl's parents without informing to them in order to make a proposal for marriage where they will request the hand of the expected bride. The intention of sudden visit of the representative of boy's parent side is to examine the nature, character, behavior, etc. of the girl and her house under normal condition²³³. Afterward, *Barwikhitao* or *Gathokdar* conveyed to the parents of the girl's with following maxim:

“*Jerao thuri nuyw beyaonw bati garw*”

The meaning of the above maxim is- where there will be damsel, there will be proposal of marriage. After that both the parties discussed the proposal. Before leaving the house of the girl, the party of boy's side used to keep *Assan Suri Topla* under the roof

of verandah of *Noma No* to realize the consent of girl's parents. If the girl's parents do not return *Asan Suri Topla* within one week, it is presumed that the girl's parent agreed to the proposal of marriage²³⁴. When a preliminary settlement of marriage has brought, a pre-marriage ceremony called *Gongkhon Hwnai* is executed. *Gongkhon Hwnai* ceremony is performed before final settlement of actual marriage, in which boy's parents used to go to the residence of girl with a pair of silver bracelets and two bottle of rice beer. These carried items are left at the house of girl. This is a sign for desiring the girl by the parents of boy. *Gongkhon* is the combination of two words *Gong*=bow and *khon*=pickup. And *Hwnai* means consent²³⁵. Thus, *Gongkhon Hwnai* indicates receiving the gifts presented by parents of the boy's with acceptance of marriage proposal by the parents of girl with due honour and respect by bowing head. In the past days *Gongkhon Hwnai* was followed by *Goi Khaonai* (ceremony for cutting betel-nut). In this ceremony, parents of the boy along with friends and relatives proceeded with betel nuts to the house of girl's where they had to cut betel nuts and distributed to the members present. In certain areas, the bride price as well as date of marriage was also fixed on the day of *Goi Khonai* ceremony²³⁶. This *Goi Khaonai* ceremony seems to be disappeared in the process of marriage at present.

Biban Langnai ceremony takes place after *Goi Khaonai*. The important items which to be included in *Biban Langnai* ceremony by the parents of boy are two small earthen pots (on one pot which filled with tea leaves painted sun's picture and another which contained sugar painted the picture of moon), areca-nuts, betel-leafs, rice beer and pork. These items are collectively called *Biban*²³⁷. *Barlangpha*, a male person who should not be a widower used to carry the two earthen pitchers, and areca-nuts and betel-leafs are carried by two female members known as *Bwirathi* who also should not be widows. When reaching the house of bride, *Barlangpha* placed all the items which are carried for the purpose in front of the door of *Noma No*. Areca-nuts, betel-leafs are cut and distributed by *Bwirathi* among the member present. *Biban Langnai* ceremony is conducted along with articles brought by boy's parents at the residence of bride. The roles of *Barlangpha* and two *Bwirathi* are very essential and could not be ignored by the family of the expected groom in the process of marriage. *Barlangpha* and *Bwirathi* are amused the persons who attend in the ceremony. On the day of celebration of *Biban Langnai* in early days, a pig was brought by bridegroom's family which was to be cut into two parts in equal portion. One part of the pig was offered to the parents of bride and

another part was kept for bridegroom family. The cutting of pork into two equal parts and divided that equal parts between the families of expected bride and bridegroom was known as *Omakhoptang*²³⁸. But this ceremony is rarely practiced at present days.

At the end of *Biban Langnai* ceremony, the pot which is painted with the picture of *Okhapwr* (moon) is brought back by bridegroom party leaving other earthen pot on which the picture of sun is painted at the residence of bride. Marriage is almost settled when *Biban Langnai* ceremony has performed. It is asserted that on the day of final settlement of marriage, bridegroom family entertained the villagers of bride by offering areca-nuts, betel-leaves and pork. After the ceremony, the skins of areca-nuts were thrown over the roof of *Noma No* considering that by doing so it would bring good fortune to them (bride and bridegroom), which came to be known as *Goi Khithou Garkwnai*²³⁹. But *Goi Khithou Garkwnai* is scarcely practiced nowadays.

The final negotiation and settlement or fixation of marriage date as well as other terms and conditions related to marriage is called *Kobira Tangnai*. *Kobira Tangnai* is done at the residence of bride. On the day of marriage ceremony bridegroom's parents accompany with *Barlangpha*, *Bwirathi*, relatives, friends, etc., carrying *Biban* which included areca-nuts, betel-leaves and two jars of rice-beer travel to bride's residence to bring the bride for marriage. On the same day, the traditional marriage sacrament known as *Hatasuni Khurnai* is performed²⁴⁰. In case, the residence of bride is far away from the house of bridegroom and may not complete to and fro journey in a day or on the same day of marriage then the bridegroom parent's party should make the trip in advanced in accordance with their convenience and suitable in order to accomplish the task on schedule for the marriage ceremony. Nowadays, *Biban Langnai* is done on the day of marriage however, in the past it was done on or before the actual marriage.

2. *Hinjao Bwnai Haba*:

It is the form of marriage which is almost parallel with Raksasa marriage of Hindus in which a girl is abducted without her consent and forcibly marriage take place. *Hinjao Bwnai Haba* was also very common in earlier days. It is found in every community even today but not universally accepted. Rev. Sidney Endle²⁴¹ says that such form of marriage was prevalent among the Bodo in ancient past. Now, this technique is growing rare with social advancement in Bodo society but it seldom practice even then as one of the ways of acquiring a mate.

3. *Kharsonai Haba*:

It is the form of marriage which is regarded as irregular but is seen sporadically in Bodo society. When a girl flees away from her house and lived with her lover due to the objection of her parents about the love affair, it falls under *Kharsonai Haba*. In such case, parents of the boy notify to the girl's parents about the act within three days counting from the date of girl's departure from her house. If the girl's parent has no option except marriage, for social reorganization a formal marriage is taken place after the settlement of bride price²⁴². *Kharsonai Haba* becomes exceptional among the Bodo at present. A question is posed that, while a boy refused to marry a girl willingly or unwillingly after having physical relations then she may walk off to the boy's house with or without the consent of the boy in such a juncture whether it will come under the category of *Kharsonai Haba* or not? Most probably in our opinion it would be under *Kharsonai Haba*.

4. *Dwnkharnai Haba*:

An interesting and commonly practiced way of securing a bride from early days to present day in most of the societies is marriage by elopement or love marriage which is equivalent to Gandharva in ancient Hindu scriptures²⁴³. The Bodo called it under the name of *Dwnkharnai Haba*. This type of marriage occurs mainly because of the consequence of love affairs of boy and girl. It is stated that in this form of marriage both the lovers run away to distant place and live conjugal lives but society does not approve this system of marriage. Even though, it takes place frequently²⁴⁴. Kautilya remarked that Brahma, Prajapatya, Arsa and Daiva depend upon the authority of father of a girl. Gandharva, Asura, Raksasa and Paisaca depend upon the authority of both parents and they, or one of them in the absence of the other, received the Sulka for their daughter²⁴⁵. The mutual understanding between the boy and girl is enough for this type of marriage. The consent of parents is not taken into consideration²⁴⁶. In case of love marriage, consent of both lovers is essential and neither the parents of the lovers nor kinsman desired have a hand.

5. *Gwrjia Haba*:

This form of marriage is assumed to have originated from the practice of matrilineal residence among the Bodo. The motive behind for keeping a boy as son-in-law in the house of parents of a girl is to look after the parents of the girl as they are not

having male issue. Apart from that, in ancient days when a boy and his parents were not in a position to fulfill the bride price demanded by girl's parents, parents of expected groom ready to sent their son to the house of expected bride for rendering service in-lieu of bride price²⁴⁷. In the traditional system of *Gwrjia Haba*, the boy who came for such purpose had to serve one year free service in the house of girl's parents. This period was known as *Samdang Jagarnai* in which boy and girl could not have the right of cohabitation. During this stipulated time if he was found satisfactory by the girl's family, sooner or later marriage ceremony was executed. On the other hand, if he failed to do to the best satisfaction of the parents of girl, the period of *Samdang Jagarnai* sometimes also was extended and if he failed repeatedly, he was sent back and previous agreement had stand revoked²⁴⁸. However, *Samdang Jagarnai* seems to be disappeared in the present society. A man who is married under *Gwrjia Haba* is required to reside for his life time in the house of father-in-law as a member of family with the right of property.

6. *Dongkha Habnai Haba:*

Dongkha Habnai Haba means widow re-marriage. It is socially approved and recognized form of marriage among the Bodo. In the Bodo society widows has right to re-enter into marital life. It clearly indicates that society permit re-marriage of widow. In the traditional *Dongkha Habnai Haba*, a man who might be widower or bachelor may approach to any widow whom he falls in love or wants to have a family life with her by presenting a silver coin. This custom is known as *Gongkhon Hwnai*. If the widow accepted the silver coin, it denotes that she agree to the proposal for re-marriage. Anyone who has undergone such type of marriage, he has to abandon his parental home and has to change his original surname by adopting a new surname of the widow's family. Adopting of new surname by a man under *Dongkha Habnai Haba* is also evident from the following line:

*Dongkha Habnai Hwoyaya hinjaoni kulao habgwn*²⁴⁹

Free English translation: Any person who enters into *Dongkha Habnai Haba* should adopt the title of his wife.

Before actual practice, as a symbol of abandonment of his lineage and parental property, he is required to perform *Narji-Orgarnai* (chewing of jute-leafs) ritual in front of *Bathou* alter by chewing jute-leafs. Marriage has to be solemnized just after the sunset in evening where there is no so dark and no so sun light i.e. transitional time between day

light and dark at the house of widow in presence of relatives, villagers and well wishers. In this marriage bridegroom has to move around *Noma No* seven times wearing an earthen pot (utensil for cooking rice) on his head like a cat. At the same time, bride (widow) remains at the entrance of house as a guard holding a *Khadwo* (bamboo stick which used during the time of rice cooking). A plate of cooked meat either pork or chicken and a glass of rice-beer are also kept ready in front of the door of *Noma No*. When groom walking around the house, he should produce mew (the cry of a cat) sound in his mouth. At the completion of every round he always tries to enter *Noma No*. Each attempt of his entering into *Noma No* cannot be successful as widow remained as guard threatening and scolding him not to enter. After the completion of seven times walking around *Noma No*, widow questioned as- who is that? or who are you? or are you the father of my son or daughter (name of her deceased husband's children)? When he answered yes, I am. After answering yes, he is provided meat and rice-beer in front of the door and allowed him to enter into *Noma No*²⁵⁰. *Hathasuni* marriage is performed on that very night to get social sanction. When parents of the deceased husband oppose and obstruct to re-marriage of the widow who desires to get re-married then she has no alternative then to leave her deceased husband's house. After leaving her deceased husband's family, she is free to re-enter into marital life. It is also stated that sometimes the parent of deceased husband encourage the widow to enter re-marriage by selecting or arranging a person as her new husband with the view of safe and security of the widow²⁵¹. This type of marriage is also becoming rare in the present Bodo society.

Hathasuni Haba or *Hathasuni Kurnai* is the earliest traditional form of marriage among the Bodo which performed at the residence of bridegroom. Herein, to solemnize the marriage ceremony, betel nuts, betel leafs and uncooked rice are offered to *Bathao Bwrai* and other deities. Afterward a pair of chicken (cock and hen) are offered in the name of supreme god, *Bathao Bwrai* in front of *Bathao* alter. In presence of new couple along with parents and villagers, *Oja* or *Dwori* chant mantras relating to marriage and sacrifice the pair of chicken. A traditional curry *Onla Wngkri* (*Onla Bugob*) is prepared by bride with rice powder and meat of the sacrificed pair of chicken without applying spice and turmeric. The bride has to serve the meal to bridegroom first before eating by other members who are present in marriage ceremony. As and when bridegroom finished the marriage meal, marriage is considered to be over. Before bridegroom party departs from the house of groom a ceremony called *Nirik Bosonai* is performed in which bride's

parents formally hand over the right of custodian of their daughter to the bridegroom parents. Mother of the bride is not allowed to present in marriage ceremony. Next day, a grand feast which continued for three or even more days is arranged in the house of groom where rice-beer, pork, meal, areca nuts and betel leafs are served in abundance²⁵². Thus, *Hathasuni* is made compulsory to get social sanction to remain as couple (husband and wife). Even a boy and girl lived together as husband and wife without performing marriage ritual, a formal social recognition is required to obtain by solemnizing *Hathasuni*. Only then they will receive formal social endorsement to be couple (husband and wife).

Phon Rang or *Phon Takha* means bride price but *Takha* is not Bodo word. The custom of giving bride price was vogue in the Bodo society. The value of *Phon Rang* was fixed by concerned parties on mutual understanding or agreement on the basis of their capacity²⁵³. Nowadays, bride price is taken for namesake only. So far, we do not find any hard and fast rule to deal with dowry among the Bodo. This system seems to be considered not as an essential part of marriage in Bodo society. Probably it is given voluntarily and no compulsion is exercised even in past days also. If given, the quantum of dowry obviously varied in accordance with financial position and ability of bride's family. It is pointed out that *Malsa* is compulsory which has to be paid to the village headman or his authorized person. *Masla* is the price which paid by groom parents to village treasury of bride for leaving her original birth place²⁵⁴. In ancient days where there was no currency system most probably *Malsa* might be paid in kind only.

Child marriage is not practiced and marriage generally takes place when girl attained at the age of puberty. Remarriage of widow or widower has been sanctioned by the society since ancient days. The Bodo society also permits re-marriage of widow with any one of younger brothers of her deceased husband. As for example, the last Bodo-Kachari king Govinda Chandra married his brother Krishnachandra's widow, Indraprabha²⁵⁵. Likewise, a widower can re-marry any one of younger sisters of his deceased wife but not with elder sister of his deceased wife. In Bodo society, as compared with other societies widows enjoy a lot of social privileges. Divorce which is known as *Fathwilai Bisinai* is very rare. When a couple decided for divorce, they are liberty to approach to the village authority for divorce. It is the duty of village authority to examine the matter. If the authority found the matter to be reasonable and justifiable then they are allowed to divorce by asking them to tear betel leaf jointly as a symbol of

divorce or separation. For tearing betel leaf one side of leaf is held by wife with her right hand and other half by husband with his left hand and torn²⁵⁶.

Marriage is regarded as very important social institution. As a result of which no society permit a couple quietly to pair off and start living as husband and wife. Every society has, therefore developed pattern for guiding marriage. Since ancient days, there are certain rules and regulations in connection with the institution of marriage in every society. There are different advantages and disadvantages of these taboos. The most important among these are exogamy and endogamy. All people prohibit marriage between individuals sharing certain degrees of blood relationship which is known exogamy. Exogamy means marriage outside the group. A person should not try to acquire a wife out of his own clan but also must avoid the clans of all grandparents. Certain relations are there who are not to be married but the degree of nearness differs from community to community. A well established fact is that the marriage of parents with their children is universally forbidden and regarded as illegal. On another hand, marriage within the class is call endogamy in which marriage with outside group is prohibited. Even today inter-caste marriage is not encouraged in the communities however, endogamous attitudes have somewhat untighten and soften²⁵⁷. Rev. Sidney Endle²⁵⁸ says that in the early days the Bodo were strickly endogamous. The Bodo were prohibited to marry any one from their own sub-tribe. It is also asserted that the Bodo society has been found to be strictly following the rule of clan exogamy in their marital relationship till recent past. In fact, the Bodo are patrilineal group which comprised number of exogamous clans. As a rule, marriage within clan is forbidden but it was found in the village of Dolpara, a man from *Basumatary* clan married with a woman of *Basumatary* clan. This case was not happened in early days²⁵⁹ though nowadays it becomes very regular. The prevalence of exogamous form of marriage among the Bodo can be proved from the fact that king Krishnachandra married a Manipuri princess name Indraprabha²⁶⁰. However, at present a *Basumatary* can marry a *Basumatary* if they are not fall within the degree of prohibited relation. Prohibitive degree of relation is confined to the nearest kin- fifth degree from father side and fourth degree from mother side²⁶¹.

Marriage ceremony which is prevalent among the Bodo can perhaps hardly be looked upon as a religious character, but must be regarded as more of the nature of a social and festive gathering²⁶². But in true sense of term, traditional marriage of the Bodo deem to be a union of male and female not only to satisfy biological needs but also

contained religious nature and element which can be evident from *Hathasuni* marriage of the Bodo in which ritualistic ceremonies like worshipping Almighty god, the *Bathao Bwrai* and deities, offering of oblation etc. are associated. It is appropriate to mention that if we considered the marriage of the Bodo is only to get social sanction for becoming husband and wife, for satisfaction of biological needs, to beget children, to struggle together or if we think marriage is nothing more than a social contract and most of male under go marriage to fulfill the desire for children and sex satisfaction, it will be inappropriate and may lead to wrong notion. Thus marriage of the Bodo becomes an institution having religious character attached there to.

xvi. *Twinaï* (Death):

Since man is not mortal, one day he should die. Death is regarded as total cessation and last crisis of human beings. It is occurred not only to human being but also to all living being in the world. Soul has to leave the body when life came to an end as it is the usual theory²⁶³. Human being is only creature who buried or cremated their dead body.

Bodo term *Twinaï* signify death of a man. When a man is found to be death or declared to be death, the bereaved family is brought the matter to the notice of relatives, villagers, his or her friends etc. to carry out the last rites and rituals of the deceased person. In Bodo custom, not only the family members but also all the villagers, friends and well wishers are take part in funeral ceremony except women and children²⁶⁴. After making formal notice of the death, villagers and others who are closed to deceased during his or her life time are assembled at the house of deceased to help the bereaved family to complete the task of final obsequies. When a man died in the night fall, volunteers of village are usually stayed at the house of deceased till coming of deceased nearest and dearest persons or kins by keeping the dead body inside the house.

Gwtwi Garnai:

Gwtwi Garnai means disposal of dead body. *Gwtwi Garnai* is immediately done after the death of man. It is associated with numbers of formal procedures including rites and rituals. The three main functions which involved in the last rites of death and mourning custom are as follows:

- i. To dispose of physical body of deceased.
- ii. To allow the soul of deceased person to start its passageway from the land of living to the abode of resting.
- iii. To gather of social relationships between deceased and those of surviving who are disrupted on account of death should be reordered.

Mode of disposal:

It seems that in ancient days the Bodo were not have been developed fully the concept of graveyard as they did not have any fixed place for the disposal of dead body. It might be one of the reasons for their habit of frequent migration from one region to another²⁶⁵. In general, dead body was left for wild animals mainly in the forest which should be outside the village. If the dead body was not consumed by wild animals, it was believed that the deceased might have committed many sins during life time. Another belief was that the body was not eaten up by wild animals because it was left in the common junction of three boundaries which came to be known as *Sima Mwntam*. If it was happened so, the deceased family went to the place and made a little change of the position of deceased. Another belief was that the dead body was not eaten up by wild animal due to keeping more than three *Gwrjiya Bijamadwi* (matrilocal residence) in his or her previous life²⁶⁶. But the mode of disposal practiced by the Bodo in ancient days is discarded long time back. Later on, the concept of buried came into existence and dead bodies were buried. It is also said that the practice of buried of dead body was prevalent but cremation was unknown. It is also further reported that in case of unnatural death, the dead body was buried²⁶⁷. If the deceased is minor, the dead body is buried but not cremated even after introduction of cremation. Nowadays, because of advancement of knowledge and influence of other religions they thrust aside the earlier practice of disposing the deceased to jungle. Cremation and burial have been practiced instead of olden mode of disposal of dead. Cremation and graveyard or burial grounds are commonly found today.

Items required for disposal of death:

For the disposal of dead body for both sexes the following items are required:

- i. *Awoa* (a mature bamboo)

- ii. *Bati* (bamboo bier)
- iii. *Dharha* (bamboo mate)
- iv. *Tingkli* (Small Earthen pot)
- v. *Talir Bipang* (Banana tree)
- vi. *Narzi Gwran* (Dried Jute leaves)
- vii. *Mairong* (Rice)
- viii. *Raidwng* (Cane)
- ix. *Owoa Theowal* (Splited bamboo rope)
- x. *Pakri Bilai* (Peepal tree leaves)
- xi. *Owoa Hasung* (bamboo pipe)
- xii. *Kundung Aowa* (White cotton thread)
- xiii. *Dwi Gwtar* (holy water)
- xiv. *Songrai* (Winnowing fan)
- xv. *Bunta* (paddy straws twisted (braided) into a long stick and used for preserving fire)
- xvi. Food Stuff for the deceased
- xvii. Coins
- xviii. *Gupur Ji* (White sheet cloth)

In respect to white cloth which used for covering dead body, Rev. Sidney Endle²⁶⁸ did not mention about the colour of that cloth. He informed that corpse was covered by a new cloth. It clearly indicated that cloth of any colour could be used for covering dead body in early days. All the items mentioned above have been part of funeral procession right from ancient days. These items are forbidden to leave at home except *Songrai* even today.

Dead body is carried on a bamboo bier or trellis called *Gwtwi Bathi*. It is made of a fresh single mature bamboo called *Woa Gubwi*²⁶⁹ according to the size of deceased body. As and when family members or kins are arrived and required materials or items for the funeral rites are made ready, the corpse is given bathe inside the house. The deceased is made dress with new cloth or already washed cloth. Oil is smeared or applied on whole body along with hair and hair is combed. Bathing and dressing of the deceased are done by person who belonged to same sex of the deceased. After completion of bathing and dressing of the corpse, the corpse is carried to courtyard and placed the body

facing the head towards south on *Gwtwi Bathi* on which a *Dharha* is already spread by covering on it with new cloth or unused cloth. A special food for deceased is prepared for final feeding. The cooked food items, drinking water including rice-beer are kept near the head of deceased. Offering of foods to deceased is done by family members first than followed by relatives, friends and well wishers with their left hand. Offering of foods to the deceased is done by left hand but not by right hand. While offering they used *Pakri Bilai* (Peepal tree leaves) to carry the food stuff as well as water²⁷⁰.

After performing all the required rites and rituals at the house of deceased, dead body is covered by a cloth which is arranged for the purpose and tied with *Owoa Theowal*. In certain area it is tied with cane rope. *Gwtwi Bathi* is carried by four persons including sons on their shoulder to the place of disposal. If the deceased do not have four sons or any son, four male members of the family or relatives or villagers may render the service of carrying *Gwtwi Bathi*. It is important to be noted that the bearer of *Gwtwi Bathi* should not start carrying *Gwtwi Bathi* on their shoulder at courtyard of the deceased. They are required to bring *Gwtwi Bathi* by their hands up to the gate of the deceased house. After crossing the gate they are allowed to lift *Gwtwi Bathi* on their shoulder. As soon as dead body is carried to graveyard for disposal, walls of the house in which deceased breathed last are removed to enable the soul of deceased to depart the house²⁷¹. After that all the houses are fenced with white thread. It is totally prohibited to place *Gwtwi Bathi* on the ground on the way to graveyard. If the bearers of *Gwtwi Bathi* are not able to complete the task of carrying due to long distance of graveyard, other persons are to be replaced the earlier *Gwtwi Bathi* bearer. But at any cost they should not drop *Gwtwi Bathi* on ground till reaching to graveyard.

During funeral procession white threads are spread by tornding into small pieces by a man of *Narzari* starting from the house of deceased up to graveyard. Meanwhile, *Bunta* is also smouldered. Both white thread and *Bunta* bearers should walk in front of the bearer of *Gwtwi Bathi* because they are regarded as guide of departed soul. They are considered as the men who show the departed soul, the way leading to resting place. If funeral party pass through a river or water canal, it is mandatory for the party to interlink between two banks with white thread as a bridge to enable the soul to cross the river²⁷². As and when they reached the place of disposal of dead body, some coins or cowries are thrown to that particular place which symbolized the acquisition of land on purchase. If

the deceased belong to *Basumatari* group, no purchase of land is required considering them as legendary owner of land²⁷³. After purchasing land *Gwtwi Bathi* is laid on ground, facing the head of deceased towards south. In case of burial of dead body, a grave is made by digging in north-south direction. As and when all the works related to disposal of death body is over, all the members of funeral party offered a little amount of water to dead body with the help of *Pakri Bilai* and utter the following words²⁷⁴:

No Longdo Amokha,

Dinwiniprai Nwngba Nwng,

Jwngba Jwngswi.

Free English translation:

Take this water which I offer,

You will be yourself from this day,

We will be ourselves.

These words used in both cremation and buried which indicated that their relationship with deceased person is detached and departed soul is not a part of their social life. Before placing the corpse in to graveyard, relatives and friends who are participated in funeral ceremony are made a solemn procession around graveyard by carrying the corpse in anti-clock wise direction. In case of man five times round are made whereas, seven times for female²⁷⁵. While placing the dead body in graveyard, the head of deceased is kept towards the south direction. However, the head of corpse is placed towards north ward direction by the Bodo of south Goalpara district²⁷⁶. When buried the dead body, the sons start filling the grave with soil first and then followed by nearest family members and other who participated in funeral rites. A stalk of jungle grass is kept at the nose of deceased perpendicularly up to ground level during filling up the grave. After completion of filling up of grave, the grass stalk is removed and made a hole believing that through the hole deceased could breath. While removing the stalk, the remover utters following words:

*Nwng be gudungjwngnw hang lanw arw hogarnw hagwn*²⁷⁷

The words signified that through this hole the deceased could be breathing. Some stones are also placed at the grave to protect the corpse from jackals, rats etc.²⁷⁸ Coins or cowries are left with the deceased with the belief that the departed soul required to pay *Ghat Barnai* charge (boat or ferry) for crossing river on the journey to resting place.

At the place of disposal, rice is cooked in the earthen pot and left the cooked rice along with the earthen pot which contained full fresh water for the deceased believing that the departed soul will begin the journey to the abode of dead after consuming and drinking that cooked rice and water²⁷⁹.

Pwtarnai:

Pwtarnai denotes purification. All the members who are participated in funeral ceremony are considered as unclean, sinful and undesirable situations. They are required for purification. A man of *Narzari* group is acted as *Oja* or *Dwori* for purification ceremony who is guiding participants in course of purification. After bathing, the participants sprinkled holy water upon them for purification. It is mandatory for each and every member who participated in funeral ceremony to do *Narzi Orgarnai*²⁸⁰ in which they chew and throw away dried jute leaves. It signified their separation from the dead person as well as their final farewell to departed soul. *Buntani Or Dangnai*²⁸¹ and *Ontai Dangnai arw Denai*²⁸² are also required to do by the all participants. When they reached at the gate of their respective houses, they are also needed to purify themselves again by sprinkling holy water. Sometimes, one of the family members also sprinkled on them. After praying to *Bathou* they are allowed to enter inside the house. It is believed that the family of deceased is not clean for three days. After three days, a priest or elder sprinkled holy water on the members of deceased family for purification²⁸³. In the evening of funeral day, members of funeral party assembled at the house of deceased where they are offered *Zumai* or *Jwo*.

Daha Garnai:

Daha means sorrow or mourn and *Garnai* denotes give up which marked the end of mourning period. In this ceremony, dresses, foods, wine and other articles which were very fond and like by deceased person during the life time are offered to the departed soul by family. The offering is known as *Gwtwinw Baonai*. *Gwtwinw Baonai* ceremony

is done in the southern side of courtyard by *Dwori* or *Oja*. *Dwori* or *Oja* is faced towards south in the position of half sitting and chanted the mantras. Members of the family are knee down on ground during the ceremony and offered prayer to departed soul with offering²⁸⁴. It is also said that the in early days *Gwtwinw Baonai* ceremony was performed on the river bank instead of the courtyard of deceased house²⁸⁵. At present after completion of prayer, the offering are taken to the river bank or beels and left there. In the next day, a grand feast is arranged by the family inviting all the relatives, villagers, friends and well wishers. It is also said that if the feast is not able to organize in the next day of *Gwtwinw Baonai* ceremony, the family may arrange it within one year on any day according to the convenience of deceased family²⁸⁶. In such case, family has to inform about the postponement of feast to their respective family gods and goddesses and departed soul by performing a *Puja*. After that on any day as per their convenience they may arrange the grand feast. In the grand feast, generally abundance of rice-beer, meat, rice etc. are served to those who are invited. The quantum of grand feast is depending on the capacity and ability of deceased family. When they prepare pork meat, it is mainly cooked along with tender peels of banana tree by adding a little quantity of dried jute leaves and rice²⁸⁷. The left out foods items are thrown out by family members to outside. Nobody is allowed to take the thrown out foods. If somebody is caught while taking the thrown out foods, he or she is liable to do penance called *Kaoalibad*²⁸⁸.

Death related taboos and beliefs:

- i. The remaining bamboos in the bamboo grove from where a bamboo is cut down for the purpose of making *Gwtwi Bathi* cannot be used for one year for normal purpose except death.
- ii. The banana tree which to be used for the purpose of death should cut at one stroke.
- iii. The deceased family is debarred from taking the curry made of *Narzi Gwran* (dried jute leave) for one year and all the preserved dried jute leaves of the house has to be thrown out.
- iv. To know the transmigration of departed soul, a portion at the courtyard where *Gwtawi Bathi* is placed is plaster and covered on it by a *Songrai* immediately after taking out the dead body to graveyard. The family

members who returned to the home after completion of funeral rites removed the *Songrai* and examined whether any foot print of man or animal are found or not. It is believed that if the foot print of human being is shown departed soul may take rebirth as human being. If foot print of any animal is found on it, it is believed that the departed soul may be reborn as animal. If nothing is found, it is believed that the departed soul may not take rebirth.

- v. If the death is occurred on attaining the age of marriage but not married, a banana or plantain tree is planted near the head of dead body at the place of disposal of dead believing that by doing so, the deceased may be in married life in next birth.
- vi. A branch of peepul tree is also planted near the head of dead body for both sexes believing that it may gives shady and cool to the departed soul till accommodating it by god in the abode of resting place of dead. In case of girl, it is believed that she may be reborn with lavish hairs²⁸⁹.
- vii. If a man died without paying his debt to creditor, it is believed that the departed soul of debtor may be reborn as dog to repay the debt by serving the creditor as a slave.

Concept of Rebirth:

The concept of rebirth or transmigration of soul existed among the Bodo which can be evident in both birth and death ceremonies. When a newly baby is born, a purification ceremony called *Gotosa Pwtarnai* is performed by reciting the following words:

Oi Gwdansa goto, Nwngba gwdw mamwn, Bangal na Jungal, Garo na Gongar, Harsha na Mephal mon? Dinwiniprai Bodo Jabai

Free English translation: Oh newly born baby, whatsoever you may be before, May be a *Bangal* or a *Jungal*, May be a *Garo* or a *Gongar*, May be a *Harsha* or a *Mephal*? From today you be a Bodo²⁹⁰.

From the above mentioned rite, it comes to notice that the baby is purified to welcome in the Bodo society believing that the child might be born in other community in previous life.

During death ceremony to assess the transmigration of soul, the Bodo plastered a place in which the bier is placed and covered on it by *Songrai*. When the family members came back to house after the completion of funeral ceremony, they examined the place by removing *Songrai* whether any foot print of human or animal is shown or not. It is the traditional belief that if the foot print of human being is found, he or she may be reborn as human being in next life. If the foot print of animal is there, he or she may be reborn as animal in next life. If nothing is found, it is believed that the departed soul may not take rebirth. No doubt, theory of rebirth or transmigration of soul is present in the mind of Bodo even today however, no clear cut concept is existed when and how the departed soul takes rebirth.

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55. Interview with Gala Mushahary, Age-72, Occupation- Farmer, Vill. Batabari, P.O.- Aflagaon, Dist. Kokrajhar, pin- 783346 on 06/11/2015 & BKSAH, p. 93.
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60. Interview with Gobinda Narzary, Occupation- Writer and Sahitya Academy Award winner, Age- 60, Vill.- Huzuwa New Colony, P.O. Koklabari (Simla Bazar), Dist.- Baska, Assam on 09/09/2016.
61. Dr. Oinam Ranjit Singh & Nushar Bargayary, “Kinships of the Bodo: An Empirical Study”, in *Researches in North East India*, Edited by Oinam Ranjit Singh and Sougrakpam Dharmen Singh, Global Publishing House, India, 2017, pp. 94-95.
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74. Interview with Jibnath Narzari, Age- 73, Vill.- Dinkyadoba P.O.- Balimari Dist.- Kokrajhar, BTC, Assam, 783360 on 19/09/2016 & Interview with Gobinda Narzary, Age- 60, Occupation- Writer and Sahitya Academy Award winner, Vill.- Huzuwa New Colony, P.O. Koklabari (Simla Bazar), Dist.- Baska, Assam dated: 09/09/2016.
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76. *Ibid.*, p. 91.
77. RNEI, p. 103.
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79. SHBA, p. 116.
80. RNEI, p. 104.
81. Interview with Vivekananda Narzary, Age- 72, Occupation- Ex. Head Master, Simbargaon High School, Vill.- Jainary, P.O.- Simbargaon, Dist.- Kokrajhar, BTC, Assam, Pin- 783370, date- 09/01/2016.
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86. TK, p. 32.
87. Interview with Ajoy Wary, Age- 70, Occupation- Ex. Village Headman, Vill.- Samsingkhela Santipur, P.O.- Karigaon, Dist.- Kokrajhar, BTC, Assam on 19/02/2016 & ASSRB, p. 33 & RBSCT, p. 19.
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95. Interview with Gujreng Wary, Age- 68, Occupation- Housewife, Vill.- Samsingkhela Santipur, P.O.- Karigaon, Dist.- Kokrajhar, BTC, Assam on 14/03/2015 & ASSRB, p. 33.
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99. Interview with Dimsi Basumatary, Age- 85, Vill.-Malaguri, P.O.-Balimari, Dist.- Kokrajhar, BTC, Assam, Pin- 783360 on 07/02/2016 & BKSAH, p. 23.
100. Interview with Dr. Sekhar Brahma, Age- 58, Noted Bodo Historian and Writer of *Religion of the Boros and their Socio-Cultural Transition*, DVS Publishers, Guwahati, 2006 on 25/03/2015.

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102. Interview with Pomeswar Brahma, Age-59, Occupation- Ex. President, Kokrajhar District Bodo Sahitya Sabha, Vill.- Harigaon, P.O.- Khalipukhuri, Dist.- Kokrajhar, BTC, Assam on 15/01/2016.
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106. Interview with Pomeswar Brahma, Age-59, Ex. President, Kokrajhar District Bodo Sahitya Sabha, Vill.- Harigaon, P.O.- Khalipukhuri, Dist.- Kokrajhar, BTC, Assam on 15/01/2016 & Interview with Karde Dwimary, Age-67, Occupation- Housewife, Vill.- Murabari, P.O.- Karigaon, Dist.- Kokrajhar, BTC, Assam on 16/11/2014.
107. Interview with Vivekananda Narzary, Age- 72, Occupation- Ex. Head Master, Simbargaon High School, Vill.- Jainary, P.O.- Simbargaon, Dist.- Kokrajhar, BTC, Assam, Pin- 783370, date- 09/01/2016.
108. RBSCT, p. 19.
109. SPLB, p. 95.
110. RBSCT, p. 19 & ASSRB, p. 71 & ASCB, pp. 8-9 & HCB, p. 180.
111. ASSRB, p. 71 & ASCB, pp. 8-9.
112. S. L. Alun Vaiphei, *The Vaiphei: An Ethno Historical Study*, Unpublished PhD thesis, submitted to Manipur University, 2008, p. 98.
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114. *Ibid.*, pp. 48-49.
115. TVEHS, pp. 91-92.
116. SHBA, p. 237.
117. Brain A. Nummer, *Historical Origin of Food Preservation, National Centre for Home Food Preservation*, University of Illinois Extension, May, 2002 & <http://www.msue.msu.edu> (Michigan State University).
118. RNEI, p. 47.
119. SPLB, p. 158.
120. RNEI, p. 48.
121. TK, p. 15.

122. BKSAH, p. 127 & SPLB, p. 158.
123. Binay Kumar Brahma, *Boroni Subung Harimu*, N.L. Publication, Kokrajhar, 2012, p. 137.
124. Interview with Sailendranath Brahma, Age-69, Occupation Ex. School Teacher and Social worker, C/O Late Lalmohan Brahma, vill. Turibari, P.O.- Aflagaon, Dist. Kokrajhar, pin- 783346.
125. *Napam Hasung* was the bamboo pipe for preserving the mixed pounded fish to make *Napam*. This bamboo pipe generally made of the mature bamboo having one natural *Ganti* (knot) and one *Ganti* should be removed to make as mouth of the pipe to enable to fill in the mixed pounded fish into the pipe. Proper care was taken in selecting *Napam Hasung* that there should not be any crack or hole from where the air or any germs can be entered into the pipe. If the air or germs enter inside the pipe which *Napam* was being preserved, *Napam* may get spoil by infection caused by bacteria, fungus etc.
126. BKSAH, p. 127 & ASSRB, p. 18.
127. RNEI, pp. 50-51.
128. Interview with Gobinda Narzary, Age- 60, Occupation- Writer and Sahitya Academy Award winner, Vill.- Huzuwa New Colony, P.O. Koklabari (Simla Bazar), Dist.- Baska, Assam dated: 09/09/2016.
129. Pratibha Brahma, “Traditional Science as Resources for Development”, in *Bibungthi The Opinion*, Vol. 1, No. 2, February, Burlungbuthur Publication Board, Kokrajhar, 2012, p. 28.
130. RNEI, p. 51.
131. BTO, pp. 28-29.
132. *Kardwi Kolong* is a handmade filtering object with one small hole at the bottom so that the ashes or powder cake could be filtered. It may be earthen pot or made of wood or bamboo or *Narengkol Kolta* (half of endocarp).
133. In case of the preserved cake, that should be crushed to make powder and placed over *Sal Daokumwi* (a kind of fern leaves), *Turi Jigab* (straw) which were in *Kardwi Kolong*.
134. BSNK, p. 55.
135. *Emao* is the traditionally prepared ingredient. For the preparation of *Emao* certain amount of uncooked rice were mixed up with *Lwkna Bilai*

(*Clerodendron infortunatum*), *Kantal Bilai* (leaves of jack fruit), *Rwimali Bilai* (pineapple plant), *Bongpang Rakeb* (*Pulmbago zeylanica* Linn) and *Talir Bilai* (Banana leaves) in the proportionate way by means of pounding in *Uwal* (wooden mortar) with the help of *Gaihen* (pestle). And small cakes were made from that pounded stuff with required water and dried in the sun light. Sidney Endle (Rev. Sidney Endle, *The Kachari (Bodo)*, Low Price Publications, Delhi, 2010 (Rept.), pp. 17-18) while discussing about *Emao* described that it was mixed with required amount of water to transform it into a cake form and from that cake several small cakes which were about three inches in diameter, and one inch thick in centre, with thin edges were made.

136. Interview Sona Narzari, Age- 65, Occupation-Village elderly woman, Village-Jainary, Dist.- Kokrajhar, Assam, 783370 on 12/10/2015.
137. BSH, p. 139.
138. TK, p. 19.
139. ASSRB, p. 17.
140. ASCHB, p. 19.
141. Binay Kumar Brahma, *Boroni Fwrbw*, N. L. Publications, Kokrajhar, 2011, p. 1ff.
142. Birendra Giri Basumatary, *Boro Harimuni Mahar Mushree*, N.L. Publication, Guwahati, 2009, p. 54.
143. PNEIHA, 2014, pp. 176-177.
144. Interview with Mahiram Mushahary, Age- 75, Village Headman, Vill.-Khaspur, P.O.- Kakormari, District- Kokrajhar, Pin-783370 on 09/03/2015.
145. Interview with Mahiram Mushahary, Age- 75, Village Headman, Vill.-Khaspur, P.O.- Kakormari, District- Kokrajhar, Pin-783370 on 25/03/2015 & PNEIHA, pp. 176-177.
146. BKSAH, pp. 23-24.
147. *Ibid.*, p. 24.
148. TBDA, p. 45.
149. BKSAH, p. 25 & ASSRB, p. 47.
150. BSH, p. 89.
151. BKSAH, p. 24.
152. ASSRB, p. 46.

153. BSH, p. 89.
154. FLB, p. 11.
155. SRIB, p. 81.
156. TBDA, pp. 45-46.
157. PNEIHA, 2014, p. 180.
158. Interview with Mahiram Mushahary, Age- 75, Village Headman, Vill.- Khaspur, P.O.- Kakormari, District- Kokrajhar, Pin-783370 on 25/05/2015 & Bhaben Narzi, *Boro-Kacharini Samaj arw Harimu*, Chirang Publication Board, Kajalgaon, 1st Ed. 2003 & 5th Ed. 2011, p. 25.
159. Measurement of length was done by hand. One hand =one *Akai*.
160. Bamboo beam of the roof *Noma No*.
161. The bamboo frame of a thatch house on which thatch grass were placed.
162. It helps *Farai* and *Ruali* to remain in the same position as it was made.
163. Interview with Atul Bargayary, Age- 58, Occupation- School Teacher, Vill.- Batabari P.O.- Simbargaon Dist.- Kokrajhar, BTC, Assam, 783370 on 12/10/15.
164. Interview with Ratini Wary, Age-75, Occupation- Farmer, Vill.- New Samsingkela P.O.- Karigaon Dist.- Kokrajhar, BTC, Assam on 10/06/2015 & BSH, p. 89 & TBDA, p. 46.
165. ETF, p. 147.
166. A kind of soil which give white colour.
167. Interview with Santosh Bathou Narzari, Age- 72, Occupation- Oja, Vill.- Shyamtaibari P.O.-Serfanguri, Dist.- Kokrajhar, Assam on 03/05/2015.
168. Interview with Mahiram Mushahary, Age- 75, Village Headman, Vill.- Khaspur, P.O.- Kakormari, District- Kokrajhar, Pin-783370 on 25/05/2015.
169. Interview with Haita Bargayary, Age-50, Occupation- *Oja*, Vill.- Gwjwnpuri, P.O- Jaharbari, Dist.- Kokrajhar, Assam on 08/10/2015.
170. Arnold Van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage*, 1908, English Translation, 1960 by M. B. Vizedom and G.L. Caffee, London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, p. 189.
171. Interview with Bisari Mushahary, Age- 69, Occupation- Housewife Vill.- Jajiri, P.O.- Kalipukhuri, District- Kokrajhar on 21/10/2015.

172. Halfdan Siiger, *The Bodo Revisiting a Classical Study from 1950 of Assam*, Edited by Peter B. Anderson and Santosh K. Soren, Nordic Institute of Asian Studies, Copenhagen K, Denmark, 2015, p. 41.
173. Interview with Gonger Basumatary, Age- 65, Occupation- Ex. Village Headman, Vill.- Batabari, P.O.- Bishmuri, Dist.- Kokrajhar, BTC, Assam, 783370 on 21/11/2016.
174. Interview with Bisari Mushahary, Age- 69, Occupation- Housewife Vill.- Jiajiri, P.O.- Kalipukhuri, District- Kokrajhar on 21/10/2015 & TBRCS, p. 41.
175. BSNK, p. 1.
176. Interview with Santiram Brahma, Age- 79, Occupation- Village elder, Vill.- Aluabari P.O.- Bashbari (Tipkai) Dist.- Kokrajhar 783337 on 30/07/2016.
177. Interview with Bisari Mushahary, Age- 69, Occupation- Housewife Vill.- Jiajiri, P.O.- Kalipukhuri, District- Kokrajhar on 21/10/2015 & TBRCS, p. 45.
178. Interview with Atul Bargayary, Age- 58, Occupation- School Teacher, Batabari P.O.- Simbargaon Dist.- Kokrajhar, BTC, Assam, 783370 on 12/10/15.
179. ETF, p. 177.
180. Interview with Gopinath Borgayary, Ex. Vice-President, Age-59, Bodo Sahitya Sabha, Vill.-Batabari, P.O.- Simbargaon, Dist.- Kokrajhar, BTC, Assam, Pin- 783370 on 02/02/2016.
181. BSNK, p. 1.
182. Interview with Magen Basumatary, Age- 70, Vill.- South Maoriagaon P.O.- Simbargaon Dist.- Kokrajhar, BTC, Assam 783370 on 20/10/2016 & TK, p. 41.
183. ETF, p. 177.
184. Interview with Santosh Bathou Narzari, Age- 72, Occupation- Oja, Vill.- Shyamtaibari P.O.-Serfanguri, Dist.- Kokrajhar, Assam on 03/05/2015.
185. Interview with Bubli Boro, Age- 78, Occupation- Elderly Woman, Vill.- & P.O.- Pub Rehabari, District- Barpeta, Pin- 781329 on 20/05/2016 & ASSRB, p. 66.
186. Interview with Lambray Narzari, Age- 74, Occupation- Elderly Woman, Vill.- Daranga Axiguri (Bijni), P.O.- Chariali, Dist.- Chirang on 22/10/2015.
187. Interview with Santiram Brahma, Age- 79, Occupation- Village elder, Vill.- Aluabari P.O.- Bashbari (Tipkai) Dist.- Kokrajhar 783337 On 30/07/2016 & BSNK, p. 2 & SHBA, pp. 229-230.

188. SHBA, p. 229-230.
189. Interview with Bugla Basumatary, Age- 82, Occupation- Village Elder & Ex. Village Headman, Vill.- Shyamtaibari P.O.-Serfanguri, Dist.- Kokrajhar, Assam on 03/05/2015 & BSNK, p. 2.
190. Interview with Premnath Basumatary, Age- 60, Occupation- *Oja*, Vill.- South Baraghor P.O.- Charaikhala Dist.- Kokrajhar, BTC, Assam on 29/09/2015 & SHBA, p. 230.
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193. TBDA, p. 14.
194. BF, p. 35 & ASCB, p. 4 & SRIB, p. 94 & BSNK, p. 3.
195. TK, p. 41.
196. ETF, p. 177.
197. BF, p. 35 & BKSAH, p. 95 & TBDA, p. 14 & ASSRB, p. 67 & HCB, p. 181 & SRIB, p. 94.
198. Interview with Bisari Mushahary, Age- 69, Occupation- Housewife Vill.- Jiajiri, P.O.- Kalipukhuri, District- Kokrajhar on 21/10/2015.
199. BKSAH, p. 96 & TBDA, p. 15 & ASSRB, p. 67 & SRIB, p. 94 & HCB, p. 181.
200. BSNK, p. 6.
201. Interview with Lambray Narzari, Age- 74, Occupation Elderly Woman, Vill.- Daranga Axiguri (Bijni), Dist.- Chirang on 22/10/2015 & BKSAH, p. 96 & ASSRB, p. 67 & HCB, p. 181.
202. Interview with Sarajoni Narzari Age- 69, Occupation- Housewife, Vill.- Silpur P.O.- Satyapur Dist.- Kokrajhar, BTC, Assam, 783360 on 11/06/2015.
203. Interview with Engeener Mushahary, Age- 82, Occupation- *Oja*, Vill.- Talitbari P.O.- Simbargaon Dist.- Kokrajhar, BTC, Assam, 783370 on 17/07/2015.
204. Interview with Lambray Narzari, Age- 74, Occupation Elderly Woman, Vill.- Daranga Axiguri (Bijni), Dist.- Chirang on 22/10/2015 & BSNK, p. 4.
205. ETF, p. 177 & TK, p. 42 & SHBA, p. 231 & ASSRB, p. 6 & HCB, p. 184.
206. Interview Sona Narzari, Age- 65, Occupation-Village elderly woman, Village-Jainary, Dist.- Kokrajhar, Assam, 783370 on 12/10/2015.

207. TK, pp. 41-42 & BKSAH, p. 96 & BF, p. 35.
208. BKSAH, p. 79 & SHBA, p. 231 & ASSRB, p. 68.
209. ASCB, p. 8 & BSNK, p. 7.
210. SHBA, p. 7.
211. ASCB, p. 7.
212. Interview with Dokor Basumatary, Age- 75, Occupation- Village Elder Vill.- Shyamtaibari P.O.- Serfanguri, Dist.- Kokrajhar, Assam on 04/05/2015.
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214. AISA, p. 6.
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227. TK, p. 43.
228. RBSCT, p. 22.

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231. K. M. Kapadia, *Marriage and Family in India*, Oxford University Press, Calcutta, 1972, p. 117.
232. The word *Barwikhitao* is used in Bengal whereas in Assam it is called as *Gathokdar*.
233. SPLB, p. 107.
234. BKSAH, p. 63.
235. Interview with Gobinda Narzary, Age- 60, Occupation- Writer and Sahitya Academy Award winner, Vill.- Huzuwa New Colony, P.O. Koklabari (Simla Bazar), Dist.- Baska, Assam on 09/09/2016.
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237. IRJHRSS, *Vol. 2 Issue 6*, June 2015, pp. 21-22.
238. ASCB, p. 17.
239. *Ibid.*
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248. Interview with Mahiram Mushahary, Age- 75, Village Headman, Vill.- Khaspur, P.O.- Kakormari, District- Kokrajhar, Pin-783370 on 09/02/2015.
249. BSSN, p. 7.
250. Interview with Gophinath Bargary, Age-59, Occupation- Ex. Vice-President, Bodo Sahitya Sabha, Vill.- Batabary, P.O.- Simbargaon, District- Kokrajhar, Pin- 783370 on 15/01/2015 and BKSAH, pp. 80-81.

251. Interview with Dokor Basumatary, Age- 70, Occupation- Farmer, Vill.- Dekadamra P.O.- Bishmuri Dist.- Kokrajhar, BTC, Assam 783370 on 19/10/2015.
252. Interview with Jiten Basumatary, Age-80, Vill- 16 No. Mazabary, P.O.- Haltugaon, District- Kokrajhar, Pin-783370 on 21/12/2014 & BSH, p. 48.
253. Interview with Ranjit Basumatary, Age-60, Vill- 16 No. Mazabary, P.O.- Haltugaon, District- Kokrajhar, Pin-783370 on 29/12/2014.
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259. Kishore Kumar Sarma, *Marutal and Pre-Marital Sex Relationship of the Boro-Kacharis in the context of Sanskritization in Dolpara*, Vol.- III, Number 3-14, Bulletin of the Cultural Research Institute, Govt. of West Bengal, 1979, pp. 79-80.
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261. BSSN, p. 1.
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264. Birendra Giri Basumatary, *Boro Harmuni Mahar Mushree*, N. L. Publication, Kokrajhar, 2012, p. 84 & TK, p. 47 & ASSRB, p. 71.
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266. BKSAH, pp. 97-98 & SHBA, p. 233.
267. SHBA, p. 233.
268. TK, p. 47.
269. A kind of bamboo generally used by the Bodo in their religious as well as social functions.
270. Interview with Pran Nath Basumatary, Age- 85, Occupation- Ex. Village Headman, Vill.- Basugaon, P.O.- Basugaon, Dist.- Chirang, 783372 on

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272. TK, p. 47.
273. CIN, p. 236 & SHBA, p. 234.
274. Interview with Sajen Basumatary, Age- 58, Occupation- Farmer, Vill.- 16 No. Mazabari (Amguri), P.O.- Haltugaon, Dist.- Kokrajhar, BTC, Assam, 783370 on 11/03/2015 & BF, p. 53.
275. TK, p. 47.
276. TBDA, pp. 34-35.
277. Interview with Anirudha Brahma, Age- 70, Occupation- Farmer, Vill.- Kersuabari P.O.- Patakhata Dist.- Kokrajhar Assam, 783360 on 11/04/2015 & ASSRB, p. 72 & HCB, p. 182
278. ETF, p. 181.
279. Interview with Pran Nath Basumatary, Age- 85, Occupation- Ex. Village Headman, Vill.- Basugaon, P.O.- Basugaon, Dist.- Chirang, 783372 on 22/06/2015.
280. BHMM, p. 84
281. Slightly contact with fire or the touching of fire by all the members of funeral ceremony is necessary to enable them to set free from the evil spirits.
282. Members of the funeral party are also required to touch and hit the stone with another stone making known to the departed soul about his or her separation from them.
283. ETF, p. 181.
284. Interview with Sandan Narzari, Age- 75, Occupation-Ex-Village Headman, Vill.- Batabari, P.O.- Simbatgaon, Dist.- Kokrajhar, BTC, Assam, 783370 on 09/09/2015.
285. BSNK, p. 34.
286. Interview with Swarbeswar Brahma Age- 70, Occupation- Retire School teacher, Vill.- Harigaon, P.O.- Khalipukhuri, Dist.- Kokrajhar, BTC, Assam on 18/01/2016.

287. Interview with Arga Basumatary, Age- 75, Ex. Village Headman, Vill.- 16 No. Mazabari (Amguri), P.O.- Haltugaon, Dist.- Kokrajhar, BTC, Assam, 783370 on 11/03/2015.
288. BKSAH, p. 100 & BSSN, p. 45 & BSN, p. 15.
289. Interview with Arga Basumatary, Age- 75, Ex. Village Headman, Vill.- 16 No. Mazabari (Amguri), P.O.- Haltugaon, Dist.- Kokrajhar, BTC, Assam, 783370 on 11/03/2015 & SHBA, pp. 235-236 & BKSAH, p. 99.
290. Interview with Sarajoni Narzari Age- 69, Occupation- Housewife, Vill.- Silpur P.O.- Satyapur Dist.- Kokrajhar, BTC, Assam, 783360 on 11/06/2015.