

Chapter: 6

Findings of the study

The study reveals that the *Bodos* had their traditional distinctive cultural identities and these distinctive identities are changing. A few traditional customs and rites are eliminating and modernity is growing.

In the study, an attempt has been made to know the material culture of the *Bodos* and their changes. The *Bodo* housing is followed by the tradition of plot chosen, site chosen and construction. They constructed the houses to the different sites of their main yard with the help of raw materials available from the nature and used those houses for different purposes. The house of the north side, i.e. *nomano* was very essential. At present some of them do not construct *nomano* and use of houses are also irrespective. The factors, like ecological, education, development of mass media, change in religious faith, growth of population, architectural development and science and technology have led to the change in the tradition of housing.

In the case of the dresses and cloths, in earlier they produced themselves. The raw materials needed for weaving and warping are produced by them. They produced *khun khundung* and *endi khundung*. They spanned *endi khundung* with the help of *thaokhri*. This tradition is not found due to the change in their occupational life. They weaved cloths, like the *dokhona*, *gamsa*, *phali*, *phasra*, etc. in their family. Each family had a loom. Today only a few families weave cloths and sell in the market for their economic activities. They regarded expertise in weaving as an important eligibility to get married with a boy. This eligibility is not considered in modern time. A few *Bodos* living in cities are using the common dresses as used by other communities. The ornaments used by

them are also changing and they use different codes of designs available in the market.

The food habit of the *Bodos* is rice. They prepared different curries collecting the vegetables, both from jungle and from family *bari*. In these foods they did not use spices, like the *jeera*, *masla*, *dalsini*, etc. The method of cooking is boiling and did not use oil. If oil is used, it is very less. For aroma they put *nwrsing*, *onthaibajab*, *tejpat*, ginger leaf etc. In the process, such culinary change is found. Due to ecological factors, the vegetables those are available in the jungles are not found. People are moving from one place to another experiencing the taste of different places' foods.

The *magi*, *noodles*, *chow chow*, *momo*, *roti*, *puri*, *paratha*, *biryany*, etc. are not their traditional food. Today, maximum numbers of children take these foods and *wngkham eonai*, *wngkham maidi*, are not available. Internet and electronic media, provide lots of information on the art of cooking. Besides, the TV series the master chef is available. A few educated *Bodos* residing in town and cities are following the master chef manuals, which have led to the transformation in food habits.

Hunting and fishing are common phenomena of their festivals and ceremonies. The community hunting and fishing are made in jungle, forest, river and stream which are carried out by the women and man folk of the *Bodos*. Earlier, females are not sent for schooling. These women are stuck to the family's chore and went for fishing. Nowadays, ecological and educational changes have led to change and relegation of their custom.

In one hand, due to the heavy growth of population the demand for land is increasing. This increase in demand for land has led to the deforestation in many areas.

The livelihood of the *Bodos* is based on agriculture. Since time immemorial they cultivated different crops adopting different methods. They have different techniques and ideas regarding the forecasting, like the types of soil and the crops to be cultivated in their plots of land. They also adopted shifting cultivation for *rabi* crop for which they adopted the method of *phamu*

janai or *hadan*. This method is not adopted today because of decreasing forest land.

In the process of water diversion method, *naodra* and *bhur jabnai* are mentionable. They cultivated with the help of the buffalo and ox. They adopted the rites, in beginning of plantation, plantation starting, plantation stop, plantation finishing. These traditions are not followed other than *Bathouarians* and *Brahma* religious *Bodos*. Today, many concreted drainages, sluice gates and box culverts are constructed. The processes of *naodra*, *bhur jabnai*, *goi hasung* and traditional methods of water siphon or conversion are least frequently in use.

In connection with cultivation they celebrate different festivals and ceremonies. Out of these ceremonies, some are relegating from the society. The religious reformation and conversion into different religions are the main causes behind the changes. As, for example, the Christianise *Bodos* do not celebrate the *Mainao dikhangnai*, *gosa lanai*, *khathigasa*, *bijou lainai* and *amthisua*.

The woman folk in animal husbandry and cocoon rearing traditions are minimized. The *Bodos* residing in town areas are giving up this custom. The women are educated today, which have led to change this part of the *Bodo* culture. In the household items also change is observed. They used wooden *khamphlai*, wooden bench, wooden chair, wooden table, bamboo bed and many other wooden or bamboo materials needed for their day-to-day life. Today, they have used the items which are available in the market.

It is noticed that in the life cycle, the changes have crept. The *Bodos* of Udalguri district followed different rites and customs related to it. In regard to birth, they followed, like the pregnancy prediction, attending delivery, woman charge, forcing, naval cut, bathing, spade playing, child welcome, offering at water, feast providing, naming, feeding, ear perforation, hair cutting and offer for sale. In case of pregnancy prediction, if menstruation discontinues, a woman is considered pregnant. Such detection is minimized, today; they use pregnancy detection kits and blood test.

They followed strict virginity and if someone has an illicit sexual relation, the issue of child becomes difficulty. They believe it is a profane and

falls under the *agor bad*. It should be consecrated by religious rites. They have given up the tradition of attending and *sebnai*. If anyone faces difficulties in issue, they take medical help and go for caesarean section. The factors responsible for changes in this regard are due to the medical improvement, education and conversion of the people into different sects. The processes of the *utumwi hanai*, *bwlwhwhwnai*, *thukhwinai* have changed. If a woman is supposed to issue a child, she is allowed to have rest. The naval cut is also made with the help of a blade and scissor. The *thukhwinai* is also made as per the suggestion of the doctor and nurse.

The *khodal damnai* and *phanphlanai* have eliminated from their custom. If, the child's heart beat is not detected by them after birth, to awaken the child, they play spade. Today, they take help from the doctor to ascertain regarding the heart beat. The *phanphlanai* is also not made due to the development of education and changes of attitudes of the people. However, the *dwiao baonai* and *borainai* is made by the *Bathouarians* and the Hindu religious *Bodos*.

These days, after seven to nine months of a child's birth, nothing is given to the child and only mother's milk is given and later a ceremony is celebrated for feeding the child. This tradition is known as *wngkham downai*. In case of naming the child, the grandfather and grandmother possessed right. If somebody had frequent child mortality, they also named bad names to the children of those parents. Nowadays this rite is not available.

In case of marriage, they followed *asan thebnai*, *jou jora*, *hinjao swngnai* and other rites. As because of the development of education, they do not accept *asan thebnai*, *jou jora*, *hinjao swngnai* which are lengthy processes. The process of date settlement is still found in the *Bodo* society, but it is performed as per the rites of their religion.

However, earlier marriage is settled intra-caste only. Inter caste marriage system is not acceptable. If somebody somehow gets married, inter caste, such families are boycotted by the *samaj* or society. Today, if somebody gets, inter caste marriage such families are no longer boycotted by the society.

In decoration also they did not use tent and tarpaulin. Whatever the items are available from the nature, with those items, they constructed *sainasali* (*pandal*). There were certain rituals regarding the use of bamboo poles, post, splits and fire place at the yard. If there are changes in those items, up to Rs, 51/- was fined from the groom's family and vice versa. Today, this tradition is not observed; they construct the *sainasali* with the help of tent house.

The traditional marriage is followed by different rituals. A pair of *bwirathi*, *biban*, *banrlangpha*, *swsonnai*, bathing, pig pointed, merry making and *nirig bosonai* are indispensable part of it. In setting marriage, the *bwirathis* welcome the bride and groom to the *Bathou* or *jogya* altar and stay until the marriage is settled. The *biban* and *barlangpha* are essential part of the Hindu and *Bathouarians Bodo* marriage. As soon as the bride is brought from her family, she is allowed to rest along with her friends inside *nomano* and the rest in other houses are restricted. In modern time, the *swsonnai* in *nomano* is not hard and fast.

The bathing in groom's family is very essential earlier. Just a few minutes eve of setting marriage, the couple is taken to the river to have a bath. After bathing they are dressed up and sat at *Bathou* or *jogya* altar. Today, the bride comes to the groom's family vice-versa with well dressed.

The *Mainao dikhangnai* is not made earlier in the marriage. Today, it is observed among the *Phwsabnai Bathouarians*. It is because of the reformation of *Gudi Bathou*. Earlier, in marriage, the *oja* recited at the *Bathou*, the *hathas* are used. The rice and *onla* curry are served with the help of *hathas* and at the *Bathou* chicken sacrifices is also a part of it.

The girl's parents have right to select their son-in-law as per their choice. Hence, for a bride the groom's family has to pay whatever, they demanded. If, they fail to pay money, they offer a pig. There will be four to five pigs, out of these, parents have to point anyone which they seek. There is tradition of sharing a pig between two families or two villagers, which is also not available, among them.

The bride and groom are suggested after the end of a marriage by the *douri* or *oja* inside the *nomano*. A knot of bride and groom is unknotted by the *oja*. In the *Phwsabnai Bathouarians* the suggestion is made in front of the *gombus* and the knot is unknotted by the sister-in-law or by anyone, but not by an *oja*. In *nirig bosnai*, the parents of couple shared two cups of wine; today two cups of tea are shared.

Earlier the marriage is settled only at *Bathou* altar or at *jogyahuti*. Today, the settlement of marriage is made in different places. The Christianise *Bodos* settle at Church, the Brahma religious *Bodos* settle marriage with the help of *jogyahuti* at family or in *Mandir*, the *Vaishnav* religious *Bodos* settle in front of the idol of *Krishna-Parboti*, the *phwsabnai Bathouarians Bodos* settle making a *gambus*.

The *alasi jania* tradition is not hard and fast today. In case of types of marriage, the *gwrja* and *dongkha* system are abolishing. In the rituals of disposal of dead body, changes are observed. In the old tradition, the dead body was disposed in an open field so that some cannibals can have it. There is a folk believe- if the dead body is eaten by cannibals the dead person is set free from his or her sin. Nowadays such custom is not followed. The *gwri dannai owa* is not used in domestic purpose earlier. At present, after a long gap, the use of this *owa subha* is also observed.

Today, in case of the thread use, the snapped is not made. The use of thread in crossing of water is not available. The Christianise *Bodos* do not feed food for a dead person, but the *Phwsabnai Bathou*, *Gudi Bathou* or other religious *Bodos* cook food for dead person.

The *Gudi Bathouarians* did not condole, while the dead body was displaced. Today, all the *Bodos* of different religions condole for the departed soul. If someone dies in a family, the family is regarded profaned by religion. So, a consecration is made in the family. The *Gudi Bathouarians* offer *salami*, offering chicken with the help of an *oja*. The Christianise *Bodos* take prayer in the family for the dead person. The *Phwsabnai Bathouarians* take prayer for five or seven days, respective of the male and female.

The *phosla wngkhri* and *narji* are most essential curry of the *phandra*, today the *phosla* is not cooked. The *giyathi phojonai* is not a custom of disposal of the dead body. Today, it is an indispensable part of *Phwsabnai Bathouarians*.

Earlier, a *dan* is accepted at a *don* in the name of dead person. The donated money is first flung in the air by the eldest son in case of father's parent, but by father in case of their ward. A rupee coin is first flung to the east, then west, then north and to south and then the entire donated money is flung in the air. Such donated money flung in the air is not seen these days. The *phaphli hukhlainai* was not observed in earlier, the *Phwsabnai Bathouarians* observe it.

The *Bodos* celebrate different festivals and ceremonies in a befitting manner. They enjoy in *bwisagu*, *domasi*, *kherai*, *wngkhamgwrlwi janai* and other celebrations. The *amthisua* was earlier regarded as a profane day by the *Bodos*. They abstained from working on that day. Today, in the *Phwsabnai Bathou*, they consider pregnancy of the nature. They collect different fruits of the year and offer at family and community *Bathou thansali* and sing different prayers for the well being of the family and community, in the days to come.

Today, in *khathi phwrbw* and *Mainao phwrbw*, they set fire on earthen lamps at their paddy fields and a *Mainao borainai* is made at the community *Bathou thansali*, from *thansali* to *douri's bakhri* as well as to the family of each *Bathouarians* of the village.

The *wngkham gwrlwi janai* is a ceremony observed by the *Bodos* during the month of *Aghan*. The *salami* offering at the family *Bathou* is an essential part of it. But since the reformation of *Gudi Bathou* into the *Phwsabnai Bathou* changes have been occurring. The *Phwsabnai Bathouarians* have accepted the *wngkham gwrlwi janai* as a festival and celebrate on 9th *Aghan*. The community *wngkham gwrlwi janai* is also made on this day at the *Bathou thansali*, with the pre-arranged colourful programme.

Like the *bwisagu*, the *domasi* was celebrated earlier and the women did not take part in it. Today, the *Phwsabnai Bathouarians* celebrate it in a befitting manner where women also take part. The *belagur* is also arranged and set fire.

The community *Bathou thansali* is cleaned and singing and praying with the rhythm and tune of *kham, serja, jotha, siphung*, harmonium and *jabsring* go on.

However, in case of social stratification, changes and avoidances are found. The *Gudi Bathouarians* observe, it by offering animals as well as adopting social laws. If someone falls, somehow within anyone of such social stratification, he or she has to be consecrated which was very rigid. Today, this rite has become very flexible.

The social system is also changing. In the family system maximum numbers of joint family are available. Today, the joint family system is minimized, maximum numbers are extended family. It is because of better understanding of small family among them and development of the education. The disputes were settled by the head of family. The disputes remain unnoticed without being settled is also found. The separation from family is invogue these days and due permission is not needed from the head of family.

In the village council, as well as administration system, earlier, the administration was run by *gami bengiri* with the help of *halmaji* and villagers. Today, the *gami bengiri* system is minimized and president, secretary, cashier and *halmaji* system have developed.

The dispute and punishment is settled in the village or *samaj*. The *gami bengiri* or *hadungwra* and villagers take the lead role in solving the matter. Nowadays, some disputes which fail to be settled in village are settled in the court. The people who act frequently, beyond the social law or norms, such a person is punished by the way of *oma sunai* or boycott. The *oma sunai* tradition has abolished from the society and boycott system has become flexible.

In case of property inheritance, only the sons have the right to inherit, if a couple does not have sons, the sons of father's relatives have right to inherit. Nowadays, the daughters also possess the right to inherit parents' property. Earlier, the divorce of a couple was settled in *samaj*, today it is settled in court too. In case of fees and fines, it is fined as per the demand of the victim and expenditure spent related to crime.

From the above, it is found that the *Bodo* culture is changing and crept to modernity. There are,

- The structure and type of their houses were very simple. Today, they build the houses as built by the people of other communities.
- In case of dress, they not only use their earlier ones, but also the modern dresses available in the market. The traditional design and flowers are eliminating from the society. In case of the ornaments they use modern style and code of design.
- The cooking style was boiling and not adding the spices. Today, they add spices, like the *masala*, *meat masala*, *jeera* and many other items to make tasty.
- The community fishing and hunting has become obsolete from the society. Only a few people whose livelihood is based on fishing are following it.
- Earlier they ploughed the soil using cattle, today it is minimized and maximum people use power tillers and tractors. The tradition of *dahwna-ruwathi* is minimized and they run on the basis of the daily wage system.
- The marriage was settled only at the *Bathou*. As per religious conversion and reformation, changes are observed. The *Gudi Bathouarians* settle at the *Bathou*, the *Phwsabnai Bathouarians* at the *gombus*, the Brahma religious *Bodos* at the *jogya* and *Mandir*, the Christianise *Bodos* settle at the Church. The household items given to the daughter is not a tradition, today most of them give, those items to their daughter.
- The majorities of them believe in God and follow different rites and rituals regarding the birth. Today, such system is minimized and they take frequent medical checkups.
- The *Bodos* observe different kinds of festivals, like the *bwisagu*, *domasi*, *wngkham gwrlwi janai*, *kherai*. Today, a section of the *Bodos* does not observe such festivals and ceremonies. The

Phwsabnai Bathouarians is restricting the visiting of their followers in *Durga, Laxmi, Sivaratri* and other Aryan *pujas*.

- The traditional administration system of *gami bengiri* and *halmaji* has minimized. Most of the villages in Udalguri have converted into the president and secretary system. The settlement of disputes, village council, punishment to the culprit, non blood related kinship formation, etc are relegating.
- The male children of the family possess the right to inherit the parents' property, but not female. If parents do not have male children, then his younger or elder brother's male children rightful owner to inherit the uncle's property. Today, irrespective of male and female, everyone possesses the right to inherit parents' property.

At last but not least, it is observed that the *Bodo* culture is leading towards the modernity in every aspect. In the case of the religion, the nature of animism is relegating from the *Bodo* society. Nowadays, most of them have converted into different religions. They have also reformed, the *Bathou* into different forms. In case of religion, it is observed many new rites and traditions springing up. The rites and rituals, customs, traditions related to the materials culture, life cycles, and social systems are changing among the *Bodos*.