**CHAPTER - IV**

**Traditional knowledge of the Bodos Folk song**

The Bodos folk songs of Chirang District picturing through the traditional knowledge will be the objective of discussion in this chapter. Traditional knowledge means the flowing down of the culture by the people through oral transfer handing down from one generation to next generation. The traditional knowledge of culture is the fountain of the Bodos culture. Traditional knowledge is in existence since ancient times, this cannot be broken. The meaning of the word tradition has gone through different phase with dynamic phenomenon. The root tradition is derived from the Latin word ‘tradere’ which means knowledge or handing down of knowledge. In the year 1605 Francis Bacon had first used the word ‘tradere’ in English. Robert Roodfield had said about tradition- “The word tradition connotes the act of handing down and what is handed down from one generation to another.”[[1]](#footnote-1) According to Lori Hangk- “Traditional is a store which includes parts which are in use and parts which are waiting in memory or gradually vanishing.”[[2]](#footnote-2) In his view traditional knowledge is one which shows a cultures quality, closely related identity and image, traditional knowledge is always about the social happenings. It is not about one day, two days or a week. Again in the opinion of Edward Chill tradition is- “Having been created through human action, through thought and imagination, it is handed down from one generation to the next.”[[3]](#footnote-3) The human thought process and imagination gave birth to the tradition and it has been passing on from one generation to the next.

Now another discussion here is that the influence of Chirang districts on traditional knowledge in Bodos folk songs. The traditional knowledge of the Bodos society has been seen through the folk songs, which have been passing on like the flow of water since ancient times from one generation to the next. Through the folk songs the traditional knowledge of the Bodos can be known. Many Bodos folk songs having traditional knowledge can be seen in the Bodos Society. Usage of traditional knowledge in material world, skill and knowledge, use of tools in working, making of tools from bamboo, weaving of clothes, making beautiful designs in the clothe, cooking and cultivation of crops, social customs and rituals practices, religious beliefs and Pujas, celebrating and game. The customs and rituals of the Bodos is inseparable part of the social life of the Bodos. The traditional knowledge preserves the cultural identity of the Bodos. Passing on orally from the ancient times traditional knowledge can be considered as the wealth of literature, the Bodos language, literature and culture have been preserved and still it is alive. Amongst the Bodos many traditional based folk songs can be found.

The Bodos have practiced religion since time immemorial. Religion is one of the traditional knowledge. The Bodos basically worship the Bathou God. The meaning of Bathou is that philosophical aspect with five depth of ritual. ‘Ba’ means five; ‘Thwo’ means deep philosophical thought. Through the folk song the traditional knowledge of worship of Bathou God is deeply rooted. The Bathou god is considered as the greatest of all gods and revered by the Bodos.

In Bodo- “Bathouni bandwya bandwba

Sijwuni siriya siriba

Thaigirni khongya khongba

Siphungni gudungya gudunba

Boro bwraini rauya phongba.”

In English- “The barrier of the Bathou is five

The stem of cactus plant is five

The layers of Elephant apple is five

The hole of flute is five

The words of Bodos old man are also five.”

Since the ancient times, the Bodos worshipped the Bathou God whole- heartedly and prayed for the welfare of the children and the family. The Bathou is a place of worship build with mud and other materials. A cactus is planted in the middle of the Bathou, the bamboo stick is bended like the heart of a dove and the earthen lamp is light. The elephant apple is personified with the phases of human life. The cover layer of the elephant apple is like phases of human life. The different cover layer of the fruit is like the different parts of human organs such as legs, heads, hands, etc. with their different respective functions. The flute is also the symbol of melody or tune of human life. The tune of a flute is not solitary. The different and varied tune of the flute is like the different parts of human organs like nose, eyes, and ears. The chants like Wng, Hring, Kling, Pwd, Se are the root Bathou words meaning Land, Water, Wind, Fire and Sky respectively.

The practice and belief of Bathou God Co - Exsted together. The Bathou religion and Bodo culture have survived on the customs Bathou practice and underwent farther changer and development with the passage of time. In Bodos society, the new born child is brought near the Bathou and the hymn is sung.

In Bodo- “Nwi gotho nwngba gwdw mamwn

Bangalna jongalmwn

Nepal na gongarmwn

De phisa, nwng dinwiniprai

Bodoni nokhorao uji phwibai

Dinwiniprai bodos phisa jabai”

In English- “Oh child who were you in last birth

Muslim or Jongal

Nepali or Bhuthanese

Oh dear child, from today onwards

You are born to Bodos family

Today onwards you are a Bodos child.”

It is seen through this song that the new born baby and the mother both are given bath in the courtyard and they are taken near the Bathou to seek the blessings of the Bathou God. At that time the song is being chanted by the ojha. In this way the traditional knowledge is projected.

In Bodo- “Goi dodere pathwi sinari

Daobokhi badi sunwi

Dauthu khoro daba

Khau regang khaubai

Ja regang jabai

Sonamuhki khuga

Mwina mukhi rau”

In English- “Smallest Areca nut and Betel leaf

Lime like a herons dung

Knife like a doves head

Snithed beautifully

Have eaten red

Golden mouth and

Sweetest voice.”

Through this song the Bodos Society’s traditional knowledge of marriage system is depicted. In the ancient times the small Areca nut and Alone betel leaf were used in the Bodos marriages, but now the usage of it is seen no more. The Bodos marriage lasted for a week in ancient times following al the rituals. However in the present times the marriage likely takes place for one or two days. In the olden days in the Bodos marriage, fixing the date, making of lime container, water cups, was made through the traditional skill and knowledge. This knowledge has come down from one generation to the next generation.

In Bodo- “Kham siphung dam ada

Jotha dam

Jad bejad dam

Riuya riu siphung su

Khama mwjang gwmsar hw

Rauya mwjang hom.”[[4]](#footnote-4)

In English- “Play the Dhol and the flute oh brother

Play the clinging bell

Play different tunes

Riuya riu play the flute

Make the sound of dhol vibrate

Touch the knot beautifully.”

In this song the traditional musical instruments are projected. In the Kherai Puja of the Bodos without the traditional instruments dhol Kham (dhol), Flute (Siphung), Jotha, the Puja could not be conducted. Along with the Kham (dhol), the Siphung (flute) has to be played. It has been in practised as so since the orgin of the Kherai puja. The knowledge of playing the Kham (dhol) and Flute (Siphung) is there since the time of the Bodos forefathers. The Kham (Dhol) is made out of rope making tree (Odal), mango tree, may flower tree (aojhar), Gambari tree stem and Jackfruit trees. A hollow is made in through the middle of the tree and both the ends are covered with skin of cows or deer. The opening face of the Kham (dhol) is wider at one side and smaller at the other side. The wider side has to be beaten by the right hand and the smaller side has to be beaten by the left hand. The Kham has a deep relationship with the religion. The coloring of the Kham has a traditional customs and rituals among the people.

There is a belief in the playing of the Kham, making of the Kham, coloring of the Kham. In the ancient days the people were not allowed to have food while making and coloring of the Kham. The person who makes was not allowed to wear clothes, and it was supposed to be made in the forest, these traditional knowledge is believed and in practice through ages. It can be said that in the present times such beliefs are no longer into existence. However the kham (dhol) has a direct relation with the Kherai Puja. Flute (Siphung) is a musical instrument made out of Bamboo. In the Bodo festivals along with the Kham (Dhol) there supposed to be a flute. There are two different types of flute. Long flute and Short flute or cow boy flute. The Short flute is played by the cow boys while they are tending their herd of cows. The Long flute is used in the Kherai Puja. To make a flute, Bamboo Gubwi, Bamboo Bijli are needed and to make it firm and look beautiful; and also to make it usable for longer period of time it is kept in the kitchen exposing to smoke and heat. The usage of kham and flute in the Bodos society is very traditional and it has been in practice since generation to down the ages.

In English- “De hai lwgw bima burwini Danai lunai

Agor arnaikhau swlwngdini

Sikhiri bidwi swbnai hai lwgw

akhrangyaodau birnai

Agor arwi arwi

Bainibw sigangao khinthani”[[5]](#footnote-5)

In English- “Come on dear friend, aged mothers

Weaving and designs

Making of designs let us learn

The butterflies nourishing nectar from the flowers

The birds flight in the sky

By making beautiful embroideries

Let’s showcase to everyone.”

Weaving has a close relationship with the life of the Bodos women. The traditional knowledge of weaving has been in practice since ancient times. The Bodos woman acquires the knowledge of weaving since the very childhood age. At first weaving is done by folding the thread with the spinning wheel (jenther), and ther applying of Starch in the tread, traditional and indigenous process like Ji Swngnai and Nw Khonnai also take place. Traditional and indigenous tools like makhu, Sal Gandwi, Thar, Baodangi, Gonsi. Have been used in weaving since the ancient times. The natural landscape of woods, hills and mountains, trees and plants, birds and animals, flowers and leaves, butterflies, flight of birds, with different colors such as red, white, green, blue, yellow, purple, pink, black etc. interweave as designs in the clothes beautifully. The different colors are traditionally extracted from the wild plants, flowers, leaves. This traditional and indigenous practice has passed from one generation to next generation and this transformation can be found in the song given.

In Bodo- “Gahen Ualjwng

Din thangbaihai ayo

Habab gosai

Ma suni khapal

Angni raijw janaiya”

In English- “With Pestle and Grinder

The day has gone by

Oh God!

What a fate

Is in my life.”[[6]](#footnote-6)

Through the above song the traditional knowledge of using the grinding tools Gahen and Ual in the Bodos families can be seen. In the Bodos villages at the ancient times if there was no sound of the Gahen and Ual it did not actually looked beautiful. In the present times it can be said that the Gahen and Ual cannot be seen any more. During the ancient period the Bodos used the Gahen and Ual for grinding of paddy in their families. And the traditional knowledge to use Gahen and Ual has been adopted from the ancient period. Other than that citing the Ual to be traditional knowledge it was used by the Bodos mothers while they were in lab our of giving birth.

In Bodo- “Haluya subung halwogwn jwng

akha naiblanw nangwl jungaljwng

Haluya hinjao gaigwn mai jwng

Gamini mungkhau lakhigwn jwng”.

In English- “As farmers, we will plough the land

At the dawn with Plough and Yoke

As farmer’s woman, we will plant the paddy

We will safeguard our villages name and fame.”

The song is a reflection of the Bodos community dependence on agriculture and cultivation of crops. The use of traditional tools in the process of cultivation is also projected in the song. The Bodos people are agrarian in nature and cultivation is the source of livelihood. The traditional knowledge of cultivation unconsciously crept in the lives of the Bodos people. In the process of cultivation of traditional knowledge of tolling the land with Plough and yoke can be seen. The knowledge of typing up the oxen with the plough and the yoke has passed down from generation to generation. They also had clear cut knowledge to make the Plough and the yoke. The making of a plough is not a new still amongst the Bodos people. Since the time of fore father the use of traditional tools plough and yoke was present. In the present day, the use of Plough and yoke (Ploughing tools) can no longer be seen in many villages. However it still prevails in since of the remake Bodos village. But it is still there and alive in the Bodos folk songs. The uprooting and planting of paddy is also one of the traditional knowledge of the Bodos women. The Bodos women had the traditional knowledge of planting paddy since ancient times.

In Bodo- “Thu hai lwgw

Phwi hai lwgw

Dubli khonayao

Jekhai jwng jugurup jugurup

Na gurnw thangnw.”

In English- “Let’s go oh friend

Come oh friend

At the corner of the paddy field

With the Jekai jugurup jururup

Let us go for fishing.”

In the song the traditional knowledge of fishing is depicted. The Bodos woman has the knowledge of fishing with the Jekhai (Traditional equipment for catching fish). In the paddy field positioning the Jekhai and shaking the leg at the right place the fishes are caught. The Jekhai is made at home. In order to make a Jekhai there is a need of Bamboo tree, the Bamboo is cut by measuring as per the need and it is again cut into smaller pieces. This traditional method of making the Jekhai is known by the Bodos since the ancient times.

In Bodo- “Wi bwirathi loliya

Nwngni laji bangsin

Goi khaonaikhau

Jwnglai jaliya .”[[7]](#footnote-7)

In English- “Wi Bwirati Loliya

Your shy full

Snitching of areca nut

We are not going to eat.”

With this song the traditional knowledge of marriage system of the Bodos society is depicted. In the marriage system of the Bodos, two types of Bwirathi is necessary they may be-two damsel and two married woman. The Bwirathi takes a large sieve made out of bamboo tree (Sandri) and above that a Banana stem; inside that keeps a set of areca nut and betel leaves, are kept and earthen lamp with the help of handmade Bamboo fan wind is blown over it in ritualistic manner to greet the Bride and the Groom. In this way the new Bride and the Groom is greeted and welcome by the Bwirathi. This traditional knowledge of the marriage ritual is present in the Bodos society from the ancient times.

In Bodo- “Bagurumba hai bagurumba

Jad nongyabwla khul nongyabwla

Thabwrwm homnanwi bamnananwi lagwomwn kha

Hai lagwomwn kha.”[[8]](#footnote-8)

In English- “Bagurumba hai Bagurumba

If it was not for caste and khul

Holding abruptly would have take you

Would have taken you.”

In this song the traditional knowledge of dancing can be seen in the Bodos society. The Bagurumba dance is the oldest dance form in the Bodos society. In this dance the real duty and the aspects of love of the Bodos women is depicted. The dance steps are made to the tunes and melody of the Kham (Dhol), Flute (Siphung), Clinging bell (Jotha), Violin (Serja) along with the song. The dance is performed by wearing the traditional attire of the Bodos (Dokhona) and traditional scarf (Aronai). The Bagurumba dance is the shaking of the body parts, hands, legs, hip, thighs, shoulders, and the movement of five parts. The Bodos had this traditional knowledge of dance form from the very beginning. There is a deep rooted meaning in the word Bagurumba. Like the meaning of the syllable ‘Ba’ means taking up (responsibility), ‘Gu’ means high place or staying of Rup god, ‘Ba’ means five gods or god the father coming from high place and peace. The Bodo society’s most high gods are the Rangrasi, Mwitha Haji, and Bari Gongtham, which means life giver, care taker and life taker. To please god the most high, the Bagurumba dance form was being composed.

In Bodo- “Deralu, deralu apha phajalu

Dai nang pwdw nang apha sujinang.”

In English- “Deralu, deralu father phajalu

Forgive the crime god the creator.”[[9]](#footnote-9)

In the Bodos society, there is a five traditional customs to judge a person of crime or the culprit. This tradition has come down from one generation to the next generation in the Bodos society. Amongst the Bodos if anyone commits a serious crime then, the ritual of Agor Bad, Phongslod Bad, Daokhi Bad, Khaoyali Bad, Khwulwbwd Bad, are execute accordingly in relation to the crime and the culprit is purified and fined as such. Through the folk songs the traditional knowledge has flowed down amongst the Bodos people.

1. Boro, Anil. Serja Siphung. Kolkata: G.B.D. October, 2014 page no. 184 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. IBID. page. 185 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Boro, Anil. Serja Siphung. Kolkata: G.B.D. October, 2014 page no. 185 [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Muchahari, Goutom. Vill- bathabari, year- 50, Male. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Brahma, Goyary, Malashri. Vill- Boripara, year-63, Female. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Brahma, Giri. Vill- Borobazar, year-45, Female. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Basumatary, Guli. Vill- Galapara, year- 61, Female. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Brahma, Goyary, Malashri. Vill- Boripara, year-63, Female. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Basumatary, Dapen. Vill- Dangthol, year-55, Male. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)