

CHAPTER-2

ARCHETYPE OF THE BATHOU

2.1. Introduction

Archetype is a term used in religious and mythic studies to indicate regularly occurring universal patterns witnessed across world religions and cultures. An external expression of an archetype might bear unique qualities of that specific culture, yet the underlying skeletal form of the motif will be the same in all tradition. “Arche is a Greek word which means primitive.”¹ That is the source of English words relating to ‘archaic’. Archaic means ‘old’ but also something more in Greek word. Arche is what was there in the beginning or from the beginning.

The archetype of Bathou Altar is exclusive from other religion. The followers are maintaining it is from generation to generation without any guidance.

2.2 Location of the Bathou Altar

Generally Bathou Altar is erected at the north east corner of the courtyard of the homestead. The courtyard of a Bodo family contains the Altar of Bathou who is the Supreme God of the Bodo religion. This courtyard not only serves as the place of Bwrai-Bathou but also serves as a place for other seasonal and religion ceremonies. The Sijou plant is planted in the north-eastern corner of the courtyard parallel to the easternmost portion of the main house. The Song Raja and Song Rani and goddess of wealth are placed inside the eastern most portion of the main house.

“The based of Bathou circle is called ‘Bumin’ or ‘Bindw’ in Bodo.”² It is like a circle with five rows of fence including eighteen pair of post. The circle of Bathou altar is around two feet at the bottom and at the top of the fence becomes three to four feet.

2.3 Important Plants of Bathou

Some important plants are needed for Bathou Altar. These are Tulunshi (Basil plant), Zatrashi (Justica Assamia Clarke), Sijou (Euphobia splenden) and Bamboo.

2.3.1 Use of Bamboo

One full well grown bamboo is most important for erecting the Bathou altar. They use only one bamboo for fencing the Bathou. Use of one bamboo is a symbol of representing only one god of the universe. They are belief that only one god is supreme of the universe and it is known as Bwrai-Bathou. The Bathou followers are cut the bamboo carefully from the cluster of bamboo. Then the stem part is cut into two pieces in size of three to four feet long. These two part of bamboo pieces are split into eighteen pieces. Remaining other pieces of the bamboo is prepared for fencing of five steps of Bathou altar. The five steps of the fence and eighteen pair of post and other required also collect from this one bamboo.

The structure of Bathou using of bamboo has different meaning and roles. At the below given these are.

2.3.1.1 Name of Different Pillars

At the Bathou altar followers are posted eighteen pair of post. The pair of post are symbolizes as male and female. These are the different name of pillars. Ailong-Bwrai, Agrang-Bwrai, Bwrai-Khaji, Bwrai-Khwila (Barmwdai), Abla-Khungur, Raj-Khandra, Raj-Phutor, Ali-Bwrai, Sanja-Bwrali, Sarini-Jwmwn (Salijomon), Ai-Mwnasu (Dibaboli), Basumathi Mainao, Bwrai-Sikh-Raja, Bwrai-Bag-Raja, Bwrai-Soudri, Basmuria, Song-Raja and Song-Rani and Mainao goddess.

2.3.1.2 Role of Different Gods and Goddesses

Every gods and goddesses have different roles. Ailong-Bwrai is the first god who teaches and advised the followers to worship Bwrai-Bathou. He protects his followers from the suffering evil deeds and ominous event. Agrang-Bwrai offers blessing to the Bathou followers for peace and truth. He advised the Bathou followers to keep purity and truth. Bwrai-Khwila and Bwrai-Khungar are the gods of wind. They are protecting from unknown danger in his followers life. Raj-Khandra is a god of culture. He teaches the followers to protect their culture. He also teaches about respect each other. Raj-Phutur advised about love begets love.

Ali-Bwrai is a god of cultivation. He teaches how to cultivate and take care of their crops. Sanja-Bwrali is the owner of animals. He teaches the followers to not kill

the animals and birds mercilessly. Sharini-Joumwn is a goddess of wisdom and she teaches how to earn knowledge and wisdom. Ai-Mwnasu is a goddess of natural power. The Bathou followers are belief that she is the distributor of seasonal crops.

Basumati Mainao goddess is a mother of earth and wealth. Bwrai-Shikh-rajaa is a god of wild animals. Bwrai-bag-Raja also teaches to be self-restraint while dealing with self esteem. Bwrai-Shoudri teaches the Bathou followers to worship the Bwrai-Bathou and obey the rites and rituals of the society. There are many rites and rituals among the Bodo society. It is also a ritual among the Bodo society when they cross over the rivers they offer pair of betel-nut and betel-leaves before going to cross the river. Basumuria is a god of carrier of soul of deed human beings.

Song-Raja and Song-Rani is also known as Duari Raja and Duari Rani. The Bathou followers are belief that Song-Raja and Song-Rani was the emperor of the Song Dainasthi. The place of worship of Song-Raja and Song-Rani is in the 'Ishing'. Mainao (Lwkhi) goddess is a goddess of wealth. It is also placed in the Ishing. Ishing is a Bodo word. It is related with main house of the Bodo which is placed at the north-east corner of the mainhouse.

From the above discussion, it is come to know that there is no any controversy in using of sixteenth or eighteen pair of post. Only different is that some bathou followers are placed Song-Raja and Song-Rani and Mainao goddess in the Ishing but some are placed at the Bathou altar along with Bwrai-Bathou. That is why some disciples is fence the bathou with eighteenpair of post and some are sixteen pair of post. These are the different roles of the gods and goddesses of the Bathou. But Bwrai-Bathou is the supreme god of all the gods and goddesses.

2.3.1.3 Meaning of Five Different Steps of Bathou Fence

First step of Bathou altar is rounded inside face with three pieces of bamboo split. The meaning of this first fence is that all the creatures' man, animals and plants have to undergo the natural laws of birth, growth and death. All creatures have to hug the mother land after the death. Nobody can escape from these laws of nature.

Second step is rounded upside face. The meaning of this step is that all the living beings animals, birds, plants, insects including human being are born on this earth with the advised of Bwrai-Bathou.

The third step is rounded inside face. From this step, the followers are beliefs that all creatures are become parents except human beings. But human beings are can parents of child only through the social marriage system. Nobody can leave with injustice and truthfulness etc.

Four step is rounded upside face. It is the meaning of related with life. Nobody can leave as wish. Someday end of life has come. But at the leaving time human beings engage themselves for betterment of their life.

Last step is rounded inside face. This step is related with the funeral feast. This ritual is performance after the death of a person. There is a belief that if the funeral feast is performed for the name of death then the soul of death person can rest peacefully in heaven or with Bwrai-Bathou.

2.3.1.4 Meaning of Rangtham or Sili-Mala symbol of pillars

Rangtham or Sili-Mala is fence at the top of Bathou altar after the completion of five steps of fences. Rangtham is webbed one into another at the top with three bamboo sticks. The eighteen pair of posts is tied together with this Rangtham. The meaning of this symbol is upholding all gods and goddesses, social customs, their beliefs and five principles of Bathou.

2.3.1.5 Meaning of Pherenga Lanjai

Every pair of posts have symbol of Pherenga Lanjai (black drongo bird tail) at the top part except Ailong post. It is called Pherenga Lanjai in Bodo. It is look like victory sign. The meaning of this symbol is to be conscious in day to day life of people. The Bathou followers are belief that this bird is to be savior of misfortune. They are belief that Pherenga bird can indicate any untoward incidence.

2.3.1.6 Meaning of Dhaothu Bikha Hebnai (Replica of Dove Hearth)

There is a symbol of 'Dhaothu Bikha' in front of Bathou circle. This symbol is made with Ailong post. This post is split into eighteen pieces and crossed bended down to each other. It is the symbol of powerful god who can control ones hideous lust and greed. He is the first worshiper of Bwrai-Bathou and asks to follow his followers to worship Bwrai-Basthou.

2.3.1.7 Meaning of Extra Post Placed with Agrong and Basumathi

There are extra two post are placed with Agrong post and Basumathi post. It is called 'Khaow' in Bodo. It is the symbol of goddess Asagi and Bwisagi.

2.3.1.8 Teowl khanai

The extra posts (khaoa) are bind with 'teowl'. Teowl is a Bodo word. Agrong post is bind two times and Basumathi post is tied up tries times.

2.3.1.9 Meaning of Cotton

The Bathou followers are placed pieces of cotton on 'Pherenga Lanjai'. It is the symbol of purity and marriage. In the past "the Bathou disciples used to put cotton on the married women's hooped hair as a symbol of marriage instead of putting Sindur as used by Hindu women"³. Bathou religion followers are follows the advice of Bwrai-Bathou and performed marriage ceremony as advices of supreme god. The Bodo women are used cotton on their hooped hair as a mark of married.

2.3.2 Tulunshi Plant

A Tulunshi plant is very important plant for Bathou religion. This plant is planted at the right side of the Sijou plant. The followers are believed that it is symbol of 'purity' and 'truth'. Pair of leaves and top branch of basil plant also use at the worship.

2.3.3 Zatrashi Plant

A Zatrashi plant is also planted at the left side of Sijou plant. It is the symbol of 'knowledge and 'wisdom'. Both the plants Tulunshi and Zatrashi are change during the time of 'Salami'. Salami is a religious worship during the month of 'Bwsagu'.

2.3.4 Sijou Plant

Sijou plant is planted at the centre of the circle of Bathou. It is the symbol of Bwrai-Bathou. Sijou plant has deep meaning. "The word 'Si' means 'Jiu' or 'Atma' and 'Jou' means the 'supreme' or 'paramatma'".⁴ Bathou followers are believed that Bwrai-Bathou is the supreme and paramatma. He is the ultimate ground of everything which is symbolized by Sijou plant. The five stripes of Sijou plant is

represent as the symbol of five elements of Bwrai-Bathou. These are air, earth, sky, fire and water. The pair of thorn also represent as the symbol of male and female. The Sijou plant is grows three or five branches in every year. There is a belief that if the branches of Sijou come more than tree or five branches, a misfortune may occur in the family. So, the followers always try to observe the structure of Sijou plant. The leaves of Sijou plant also represent of 'Baro-Birgwn'. Baro-Birgwn is a class of warriors. They are the protectors against bad elements. It is tale of mythology of the Bodo. It is also called 'Swima-Hengali' in Bodo. The taste of leaves is also change within a day. In the morning, it is taste as sour and a little bit bitter. Sour and watery at noon and it is become bitter in the evening. The different taste of Sijou leaves also represent with the human working habit a day.

2.3.4.1 Custom of Giving a Branch of Sijou Plant

There is a custom of taking away Sijou branch to another new Bathou for planting in the Bodo society. During the process of giving away a branch of Sijou to another, both the families are to be purified. The owner of the Sijou should follow the following few procedure- 1. First of all, he should take bath and overlap the Bathou with sacred mud and water. 2. He puts a banana leaf with one fair of Tulunshi leaf in front of Sijou Plant. 3. He offers prosad a mixer of Tulunshi and rice grain. Offering one fair of areca nut and betel leaf and illuminating a light he prayed to almighty for a Sijou branch. He then cut a branch from the main Sijou plant and after sprinkling with sacred water put it on the banana leaf over a winnowing fan. After that the owner of new Bathou takes away the winnowing fan over her head carefully illuminating an earthen pot over there.

The owner of new Bathou planted the Sijou branch after erecting a seren (an implement made of bamboo). It is noteworthy to say that erecting of full Bathou is not done after the completion of three years of worshipping in a seren.

2.4 Selection of Date, Day and Year for Erecting Bathou

Bathou is erected at the north-east corner of the courtyard of a home. Bathou is the supreme God of the Bodo. It is erected by selecting preparable day, time and season. Generally Bodos are prepare morning time of the month of April-May (Bwisag) for erecting Bathou.

2.5 Material Needs during the New Bathou Altar

Material needs during the worship of Bathou Altar is unique from others religion. There are several materials used during worship of Bathou. These are Jeuary (earthen pot), areca nut, betel leaf, basil plant leaf and top branch, a pot of sacred water for sprinkle, one stone, one coin of two rupees, five rice grains etc.

2.6 Role of Oza (medicine men) During the Bathou Worship

Oza (priest) has unique role in Bathou religion. Traditionally the Oza played essential role in safeguarding, spreading and performing worship and religious festivals. There is no any founder of Bathou religion and written records about on it. All the rites and rituals of Bodos are performance by the Oza from the time immemorial. Traditional customs of worshipping of Bathou had carried out by the Oza in their mouth. In every rites and rituals the role of Oza is noteworthy.

2.7 Traditional Religion

Traditional religion means indigenous religion of the people. It deals with their cosmology, rites and rituals and practices and so on. Religion is a way of life. Every religion is related with their traditional culture and social life. Every activities of society are binds with traditional religion. From which in a particular society or community have their own beliefs and principles are transferred from generation to generation. Tradition word is derived from the 'Latin' word 'tradere'. It is contain the all aspect of continuity. It is one of the passing of customs or beliefs of communities from generation to generation.

2.8 Religion Code

Every religion has its religious code. Religion code includes ethical and moral codes and taught by religious customs. It is seen that Christian has cannon law, Hindu has Hindu law, and Islamic has Islamic sharia etc. Bathou religion has no written religious code. But there is a code to reward for desirable behavior and punishment for undesirable behavior to the individual in Bathou religion. Bathou religion prescribes desirable conduct and undesirable conduct for Birth, Marriage, Property, Festival, Worship and Dead.

Bathou religion is one of the oldest religions. It played significant role in the socio cultural life of the Bodo community. Bathou religion has unique characteristics and people are dependent on its activities. Following all the activities as per the worshipping of Bathou is orally since time immemorial.

Among the Bodos Bathou is controlling the society from the time immemorial. Bathou is the backbone of the Bodo, reflecting of culture. All rites and rituals, customs and their beliefs are reflected with Bathou. They have no any fixed place for worship kherai festivals and Garza festivals. But every family have Bathou altar at their courtyards. Oza also plays important roles during worship.

2.9 Summing Up

In chapter two, it is discussed about the archetype of Bathou. In this chapter, discussions have been made on the use of bamboo for erecting Bathou, structure of Bathou, elements of Bathou are discussed. Besides of these, location of Bathou, materials needs during the new Bathou Altar, roles of Oza during the worship, traditional religion and religion code are discussed. The related custom of giving a branch of Sijou plant from one person to another also discussed. From this chapter it is known that one full grown of bamboo is important for erecting the Bathou Altar. One Sijou plant, one Zatrashi plant and one Tulunshi plant is essential for Bathou Altar. In Bathou religion there is a custom of giving a branch of Sijou which are mentioned at the above.

It is seen that there is no controversy about eighteen or sixteen pairs of posts of the Bathou erecting. Different pair of posts has different name and roles to control the society. It is also represent as marriage system of male and female. Every structure of Bathou altar has different meanings. The five rows of Bathou fencing have different meanings.

In this chapter, name and roles of eighteen posts are discussed. Sacrifices are a custom of traditional religion. For the worship of Bwrai-Bathou, pair of betel-nut and betel-leave and holy water is most important. In other sub-chapter, discussions have been made on about the religion code and their beliefs. Bathou religion has no any written religious code. But there is a religious code to reward for good behavior and punishment for bad behavior in Bathou religion.

The process of worship of Bathou has unique characteristics and Bodo people are dependent on its activities. Oza (medicine man) also played important role during the worship of Bathou. Bathou religion is the backbone of the culture of the society. From the over all discussion it is well known that archetype of Bathou Altar is very unique from other religion and they worship it traditionally still today.

Endnotes

1. Soanes, Catherine & Hawker, Sara, 2014, *Compact Oxford English*, Oxford University Press, Third reprint, p. 44.
2. Basumatary, Lashan, 2014, *Guthar Bathou Bikanthi*, Offset Press, Kashikotra, Chirang, p. 17.
3. Basumatary, Lashan, 2014, *Customary Law of Bodos*, Chirang District p. 28.
4. Basumatary, Ramdas, 2002, *Swrzi Arw Santhou*, Board of Mushalpur Primary BSS, p. 34.