

CHAPTER-3

RITUALISTIC ASPECTS OF THE BATHOU RELIGION

3.1. Introduction

A ritual is a sequence of activities connecting with sign, words and objects. It is performed in a secret place according to the situations. Rituals may be prescribed by the traditions of a community. Rituals are aspect of all knows human society. All rites and rituals are performed traditionally by a community.

The Bodos are observed various festivals and ceremonies in related with agricultural activities, birth, wedding and death. The festival of the Bodo is classified in two types. These are religious festivals and agricultural festivals. In religious festivals Kherai, Garza, Bhag Rajanw hwnai, bario hwnai, salami hwnai, narashinga are observed among the Bodo community. The agricultural festivals are bwisagu, domasi, khati gasa, hal jurinai, bakhri gaikhonnai, nangal jangkhra, mainao lainai, wngkham gwrlwi janai or newon hwnai and bakhri dangjennai are observed as the agricultural festivals of the Bodo. There is a traditionally dress uniform among the Bodo, in every rites and ritualistics the male person tucked a piece of gamsha to the waist and the women also wear their traditional Bidon dokhona.

3.2. The Religious Rituals

3.2.1 Kherai

The Kherai festival is the biggest enjoyable religious festivals of the Bodo community. Bhaben Narzi said “Kherai festival is the national festivals of the Bodo”.¹

3.2.1.1 Preparation of Kherai

The Bodo have no any fixe temple or place to worship religious festivals or kherai festival. Generally they selected their suitable place to worship. They mostly prepare the grazing field for worship. First of all they made a Bathou Altar at their suitable place. It is not different from the general Altar which is worship at the household. But the Bathou Altar of the Kherai festival should be eighteen pairs of bamboo post. The Sijou plant is planted at the newly posted Bathou Altar and the Zatrashi plant, Tulunshi plant are also planted there.

At the Kherai festival the plot of the Bathou Altar is made long one and divided into three sizes as suitable worship. It started from the south towards the ends of northern. In front of Bathou a piece of white cloth is hung up above the ground to indicate about the peace of formless appearance of the God. A lighted alari bathi (earthen lamp) is kept near the Sijou plant. The green banana and other sacred things are kept on the plantain leaf near the Sijou plant. Five pieces of betel nuts and betel leaves are kept on the 'phathali'. Phathali is a Bodo word. Phathali means a sharing of offer given to God and Goddesses. One top branch of Tulunshi, Zatrashi and nine pieces of dubrihagra are bind tightly with the white rayon (aoa khundung) for the sprinkle of sacred water which is call 'dwishanthi' in Bodo terms.

Besides of these, rice powder, khungkhla plant (a kind of sacred plant), mwkhwna plant, jati bamboo, a ring of gold (made by traditionally) betel nuts and betel leaves, banana, sindur, dhup sticks, dhuna (a kind of resin), aoa khundung (white rayou), muster oil, jewari (earthen lamp), rice, rice-beer, a pair of lotha (a small water vessel made of metal), one khurwi (a cup made of metal), khun (cotton), one stick of cane, a piece of gambari khamplai are needed during the kherai worship.

Gambari khamplai is a traditional tool which is very important material in every religious and social ritual of the Bodos. An egg also kept as a symbol of creation and a stone kept as a symbol of truth near the Sijou plant. From the middle part of the Bathou to the northern section some rows of khangkhla are planted where Mainao (Goddess of wealth) is placed. The Kherai festivals continue for three days and nights at present, but in the earlier the kherai festival lasted for seven days and nights.

3.2.1.2. Important of Weapons

The following weapons are important during kherai festival. These are Thungri (sword) one pair and one Shied (Dahal or dhal).

3.2.1.3. Use of Musical Instruments during the Kherai

The following are the important musical instruments which are use during the kherai festival. These are Kham (drum) one pair, Zotha (cymbal) one pair and Siphung (flute) one pair. These instruments are must while celebrating the Kherai festival.

3.2.1.4. Role of Doudini

Doudini (female exorcist/female shaman) take very important roles during the Kherai festivals. She is the central figure of Kherai worship. Doudini is a sanctified medium of divinity. She is the essence of the Kherai worship. Doudini is the main dancer during the kherai festivals. She is the central media between the villagers and the Gods and Goddesses. She speaks prophecies and advice the villagers to live in righteous path.

All the items are performed by the Duodini during the Kherai with the help of Oza and Douri. When the Oza chant the charm the Doudini convert into a spiritual being like the deities. The Doudini rising into three stages, these are gwrsikhangnai, wlngikhangnai and doudini jakhangnai. At the first stage it is called gwrsikhangnai. It starts when the Oza chanted the charm. The second stage is called wlngikhangnai, it is started when the doudini falls into a trance and in the third stage she converts into the spirituals beings. It is call jakhangnai. In this third stage she can tell us about the tales of the gods and goddesses and fortune of villagers.

She moves around the Bathou and sprinkling the holly water from the pot which is already kept at the Bathou. She dances with the beating of the kham, siphung and zotha. At that time other worshipers or villagers and other religious person also join into the dances. But all worshipers have to be very careful for dance because when the body of worshipers touches doudini's body, the doudini fail to perform the kherai festivals.

The dances of the doudini also divide into three types. The initial dance is called 'mwsaglangnai' in Bodo terms. Secondly she assimilates her with the gods and goddesses. In third stage, she imitates the nature of the gods and goddesses. She dances into three forms which are fully dances, worship and conclusion forms. While she dances she holds a thungri (sword) and a dahal (shield).

After the end of the dances she tells about the fortune of the villagers, about the seasonal crops and responsibilities of the villagers for their safeguard from any untoward danger in future. She dances whole night of that day. It started in the evening at six or seven and end up in the early morning of the next day.

3.2.1.4.1. Different Types of Dance of the Doudini

During the kherai worship 'Doudini' dances in different dance forms of the gods and goddesses. Generally she dances in eighteen different dance forms. Some philosophical thoughts and devotional incantation are there with all these kind of dances. Some of the dances are directly related to the religious and some of them are related with the mythological thought.

3.2.1.4.1.1. Bathou Gidingnai

First of all, the doudini moves around the Bathou for several times and dance slowly with the beating of Kham, Siphung and Zotha. She dances around the Bathou. So, it is called 'Bathou Gidingnai' dance.

3.2.1.4.1.2. Ailong Bwrai (khopri shibnai)

Ailong Bwrai dance is the 'khopri shipnai'. He is the bodyguard of the Bwrai-Bathou. Represents the 'dove's heart' is the Ailong post at the Bathou Altar. He is the protector how a person can save him from the enemies and adviser of the peoples how to worship. Doudini demonstrates all the characters of the Ailong during the Kherai worship. It is call 'khopri shibnai' dance. When Doudini dances 'khopri shipnai' she takes a sword and a shield.

3.2.1.4.1.3. Agrang Bwrai (Chothrali)

Agrang Bwrai is the chief solder of the Bwrai-Bathou. He dances in 'Chothrali' form. Doudini demonstrate the Chothrali dance by holding a sword at right side and a shield at left side. It is a war dance. He is blesses for the unity and integrity for the human beings.

3.2.1.4.1.4. Khwila Bwrai (Mwshakhaori Mwshanai):

He is the messenger of the Bwrai Bathou.

3.2.1.4.1.5. Khaji Bwrai (Khwijima Phonai)

Khaji Bwrai is the minister of the Bwrai-Bathou. Doudini demonstrates this dance form like very grave and solitary form. It is called 'Khwijima Phonai' dance.

3.2.1.4.1.6. Abla-Khungur (Shagwlaio Mwsanai)

Abla-khungur is also another name of Bwrai Bathou. He is very strong God. Doudini demonstrates the 'samudra Manthan' form. It is called 'Shagwlaio Mwsanai'.

3.2.1.4.1.7. Rajkhandra (Khamao Barkhwnai)

Rajkhandra is the grandson of the Bwrai-Bathou. During kherai worship, Doudini shows the dance of climbing up the Kham and dance on it. Rajkhandra tell us about how to safeguard our culture and traditional instruments.

3.2.1.4.1.8. Rajphuthur

He is the son of the Bwrai-Bathou. He also tells about the protection of traditional culture. Doudini demonstrates 'khamao barkhwnai' dance in the Kherai festival.

3.2.1.4.1.9. Ali Bhwrali (Badali Hwnai)

Ali Bhwrali advises how to cultivate the agricultures. Doudini demonstrates the 'Badali Hwnai' dance in the Kherai festival.

3.2.1.4.1.10. Sanja Bwrali (Gandola Bwnnai)

Sanja Bwrali is also known as 'Manasw Bwrai'. Doudini demonstrates the 'Gandola Bwnnai'.

3.2.1.4.1.11. Bwli or Bwrli Burwi: She is the goddesses of incantation and folk medicine. She is also known as 'Khasuli Burwi'.

3.2.1.4.1.12. Bwrai Shig Raja (Muphur Gelenai): This dance is performed by the Doudini in the nature of bear. The Bwrai Shig Raja has a nature of bear. It is believe by the followers of Bathou in the Bodo society.

3.2.1.4.1.13. Bwrai Bagraja (Mwsha Gelenai): He advises to control the anger of person. Doudini demonstrates as 'Mwsha Gelenai' dance in the Kherai.

3.2.1.4.1.14. Bwrai Shwodri or Basumuthi Shwodri (Gorai Dabrainai): Doudini demonstrate the 'Gorai Dabrainai' dance. With this dance form it tells us about the mortal of human beings.

3.2.1.4.1.15. Rwnswndri (Daothwi Lwngnai): Daothwi lwngnai means drinking of chicken's blood. It is performed by a women oracle in Kherai worship. She is the goddesses of winner of the war. While a chicken is sacrificed in the name of God, Doudini takes the blood in a bowl and dances of the tune of music. later, she drinks the blood of the bowl by standing in front of the Bathou. It is also called 'Chothraboli' dance.

3.2.1.4.1.16. Laokhar Goshai (Naojaonai)

Laokhar goshai is the represent of the deity of the cowherds. This dance is demonstrated by the doudini showing the greatness of the god.

Besides of these, there is a dance which is known as 'Maoji mengbrang gelenai'. This dance is exhibited by the Doudini when the kherai worship is performed by a family for the recovery of a patient of the family. The main dances of the Doudini are almost finishing after the dances of 'Naojaonai Gelenai'.

Song Raja and Song Rani are also known as Duary Raja and Duari Rani. Mainao goddess is the goddess of wealth. Besides of these, dances mentioned above, some dances are also demonstrated by the Doudini, like Jaraphagla, Thentamali, etc. Actually these are the spiritual dances.

3.2.1.5. Role of Oza (a medicine man)

He is the priest of Bodo religious performance. Oza guides the hall performance of the religious rites. The role of the Oza is very important during the Kherai festivals. He instructs the worshipers in the performance of not only Kherai but also in every religious performance in the Bodo society. The worshiper of the villagers also follows his advices. Oza is the person to utter the charms during the Kherai worship.

There is a belief that the oza can able to understand the motives of the Gods and Goddesses during the religious events. He urges to appear the Gods and Goddesses by the charms. At the time of Kherai worship Oza takes very important roles. Doudini performs only after the chants of the Oza because without the chants of the Oza the Doudini also cannot perform. During the Kherai all prayers are offered by the Oza to the Gods and Goddesses through the 'Doudini'. At the time of chant the

charms the Oza is found at the half sitting position. He cannot use any tools or mate during the charms. By the chant of the Oza, the body of the Doudini becomes shaken and started to say 'ehew-ehew-ehew'.

3.2.1.6. Role of Douri (priest)

Douri has also very important role to play during the Kherai worship. He is another holy person of the Kherai festivals. He helps Oza at the time of worship by offering the important materials during the Kherai worship. Ramdas Basumatary said in his '*Swrji Arw Santhou*' (2002) the 'Douri and Doudini' are very specimen words. "The grammatical meaning of 'dou' is 'to feed with hand'. Douri is a male person. So, from whom, for the Gods and Goddesses are sacrificing in the worship, it is call Dou+ari=Douri and 'Di' means 'a women worship from core of the heart'. So, Dou+Di+Ni= Doudini."² They are both two chaste person.

3.2.1.7. Sacrifice of the Kherai Worship

Sacrifice was the most common feature among the primitive societies of the world. The traditionally Bathou followers are generally sacrifices birds and animals in the name of Gods and Goddesses. During the Kherai festivals they sacrifice one pair of pigeons, one chick, one cock, one pig, one pair of eggs, goats etc.

3.2.1.8. Purpose of the Kherai

Kameswar Brahma said that Kherai festival is the national religious festivals of the Bodos. It is a festival which is observed by the seasonally and annually. In this festival all the people of the areas are involved. There may be more than two villages except Noaoni Kherai. The purpose of the Kherai worship is very important for them. The worship of Kherai is a religious festival but also related with cultivation, because Bodos are generally depends on the agriculture.

The Kherai is performed for the welfare of the human being and crops. Therefore they performed the Kherai before and later of the crops. Doudini foretells the untowards situation to be occurred and to come. During the Kherai with the help of Doudini they also come to know about their fortune of the future. Generally the main purpose of the worship of the Kherai festival is the wellbeing of the human being and the seasonal crops. The purpose of the 'Noaoni Kherai' is the welfare of the each family of the village.

3.2.1.9. Names of the Gods and Goddesses Worshiping during the Kherai

There are so many Gods and Goddesses which are worshiped during the Kherai festivals of the Bodo. These are Bwrai-Bathou. These are also known as Khoria Bwrai and Khoria Burwi. Ailong Bwrai, Agrang Bwrai, Khwila, Khaji, Abla Khungur, Rajphuthur, Rajkhandra, Song Raja, Song Rani, Mainao goddess, (mainao Burwi also known as Bulli Burwi, Si-Burwi, Ai-khamaikha), Mwnasu Bwrai, Alai khungri, Bilai khungri, (both are daughters of Bwrai-Bathou), Bhandari Burwi, she is the Goddess of water, owner of fishes, Kumary goddess, she is also known as Jongkhini goddess, if a person meet him, he or she may be diarrhea, Basamuthi Swodhri, Rwnswndri or Rwnpagli, Buli Burwi, Laokhar Gosai, Zaraphagla, Tenthamali, Nobab Badsha. Nobab Badsha is an influence from Islamic religion.

3.2.1.10. Kinds of Kherai

Traditionally they worship four kinds of Kherai which are observed in different seasons of the year. These are given at the bellow.

3.2.1.10.1 Darshwn Kherai

This kind of kherai is performed during the first week of the month of kathi (September to October). It is also known as the Lakhi kherai or Sali kherai. This kherai is connected with the winter crops or maisali or sali crops.

3.2.1.10.2 Umrao Kherai

This kherai is held during the month of Ashar (June to July) after the end of Amthisua (Ambubashi). They observed this kind of kherai for the purpose of well being of the villagers and summer crops. It is also called 'Ashu kherai'. Ashu is a name of one kind of paddy which is cultivated during rainy session.

3.2.1.10.3 Phalo kherai

This is also a very important festival of the Bodo. This kherai is held during the month of Magh (January) especially at the Maghi purnima that is full moon of the magh month. It is also called danshrang kherai.

3.2.1.10.4 Nowaoni Kherai

This type of kherai is performed by each individual household for the well being of the family members. When an individual or a person will become illness or big problems for a long period than this type of kherai is performed.

3.2.2. Garza

The Garza festival is very important and significant festival of the Bodo. It is a religious festival. It is also a community festival of the Bodo before the Kherai performance. Garza festival is smaller than the Kherai festivals. Kherai festival is an annual festival. Garza festival is celebrated each and in every village separately.

3.2.2.1 Kinds of Garza

Generally Garza festival is performed in two times in a year. These are 'Lwkhi or Mainao garza and Hambai'. During the year they first observed the Hambai Garza in the month of Jeth and Ashar. Hambai is performed in the beginning of a year for welfare. This Garza is also known as Phwjaonai Garza and Bhasani Garza. 'Bhashani' is influenced of other language. In this festival the materials of sacrifices are kept in the 'bhela' which is made from the plantain tree and then let it floating in the streams of water. That is why it is called 'Phwjaonai' Garza. The purpose of this Garza is to drive out the diseases of the evil spirit from the village as belief by the worshipers of the Bathouari Bodo society.

Mainao Garza is observed during the month of Kathi and Aghan. It is also called 'Mainao dwikhangnai' (lifting of the wealth). The purpose of the Laksi Garza is to welcome the Goddesses of wealth to the village. They worship the Mainao goddess for their prosperity.

There are many names of Garza. These are Lwkhi Garza, Asu Garza, Gaon Garza, Song besong Garza, Garza sibshin, Garza dibsin, Maoria Garza, Saoria Garza, Semsemali Garza, Dosomali Garza, Sam ram Garza, Khal dhan Garza, Neldhan Garza, Daoang Garza, Molan Garza, Thia Garza, Gu gu Garza etc.

3.2.2.2. Gods and Goddesses of Garza

There are many Gods and Goddesses taking place at the Garza worship. Some name of them are given here like, Lwkhi garza (maothanshri garza), Bwrai Raja, Akhaishri, Jwmwn Jwla, Bormali, Sainashi, Budaru, Jekhai Bwrai, Khobai Bwrai, Gambari, Dwhwnshri, Mwnshri, Maowd Bwrai, Maowd Burwi, Ai thakhurani (Ai khamaikha).

There are also some influences of other religious Gods and Goddesses in Garza worship. These are Bar Gophal, Bar Gophini, Thakhurani, Laokhar Gosai, Langthia Gosai, Bormali, Mohadev Bwrai, Sollash Gophal, and Sollosh Gophini, Jogoth Guru, Mohamaya, and other influence of Islamic religion.

3.2.2.3. Preparation for Garza

The Bodo people observed the Garza festivals in every year. Every village has their own place to worship Garza festivals. It is called 'Garza Sali' in Bodo terms. Generally they select the grassing and solitary place. They observed the Garza festivals after celebrating the seasonal festival Bwisagu. 'Bwisagu' is a famous seasonal festival of the Assam. There is a belief that at the time of celebrating Bwisagu festivals they mixed up with the other peoples at the time of drinking rice beer, dancing and singing. That is why they should purify themselves. So, we can say this kind of Garza is a purification system of the people.

There is a system in the Bodo society that, before going to celebrate the Garza festivals the villager's sacrifices a chicken to the Bwrai Bathou with the help of Oza and Douri. At the time of sacrifices, the Oza make a holy water to sprinkle it to every house hold of the villagers for purifying the families. It is called 'Salami'. It is a kind of preliminary worship before going to Garza festivals.

There is another system of observing Garza among the Bodo before going to celebrate Garza. They furify themselves with holy water so villagers could be free from impure. Because they believe that the worship becomes meaningless if adulterated person keep silent in the village.

So, at the evening after cleansing the Garza Sali the observers take a top of plantain leaves, a pair of the holy basil plant's leaves, nine grains of rice are placed together on the plantain leaf and cover it with the bamboo basket for whole night.

Next day, early in the morning, the villagers open the bamboo basket and see that all worship materials are good in position or not. If the materials are towards different directions, they believe that in the village somebody is involved with offensive. Then they detect the offensive person and make purify the responsible person with purifying rituals before going to observe. After that the villagers are observe the Garza festivals.

The worshipers made special small house at the Garza Sali for the Bwrai Bathou which is called Bwrai Raja. Small ladders are given there. For the other Gods and Goddesses other small houses are also built for them. They arrange seat separately for the Bwrai Raja and other seats are arranged towards the left side from the Bwrai Raja for other Gods and Goddesses. Pair of areca nuts and betel leaves smear with sindur, lighten earthen pot, dhup sticks are placed inside in every small house differently.

Like Kherai festival, in Garza festival also influences of some neighboring religions are seen. Because in Garza worship some another small house also is built for the other gods and goddesses which is placed at right side from the Bwrai Raja.

Before going to worship the Garza, every house hold of the villagers cleans their houses and other materials also.

3.2.2.3.1. Place of Garza Sali

Generally they have no any fixed place but they select a grassing and solitary place preferably near the rivulet place for the Hambai Garza. They select this place as suitable for them because in this Hambai Garza they float away a 'Bhela' all the sacrifices and materials on the stream. There is a belief that by floatings 'Bhela' (small boat made of banana tree) in the rivulet all the evil spirits and disease will driven out to the other place.

Mainao Garza is performed in the village. There is a place for Mainao Garza. This is called Garza Sali in Bodo terms where Garza worship is performed. It is the worship of prosperity. It is celebrated near village.

3.2.2.4. Sacrifice of the Garza Worship

Sacrifices are traditional features of indigenous people. A cock is sacrificed for Bwrai Raja. For Maothanshri ripe banana and a cock is offered, for Maowd Bwrai and Burwi a cock is cut and the head and blood are offered, for Sainashi Thakur a pair of pigeon is offered. Goat is sacrifice for Chikhna Raja and Ai Khamaikha, for the Bar Gwphal and Gwphini a pair of pigeon is freed in the open air, pair of areca nuts and betel leaves, banana, rice beer are also essential. In the name of gods and goddesses of other community, a pair of pigeon is offered.

3.2.2.5. Role of the Oza and Douri during the Garza Worship

Oza and Douri is very important person during the Garza worship. During the Garza worship all the works are assigned by the Douri guided by the Oza. In this worship two Douri are required, one is Boro Douri and another one is Harsa Douri. Harsa Douri means for non Bodo gods and goddesses. Boro Douri offers the Bodo gods and goddesses. All the worships are performed by the Oza and Douri from starting to the end. The Oza chant the charms and the Douri offers all the articles to the gods and goddesses. After chanting is over, the Douri move towards sacrifices and other things to gods and goddesses. At the time of worship a pot of holy water also made with the nine pieces of dubri grass, a small branch of Tulunshi plant and ring of gold. Gold ring is made by the dubri grass. Another holy pot is made for non Bodo gods and goddesses.

3.2.2.6. Purpose of the Garza Festivals

The Bodo perform the Garza festivals to purify themselves and the village. Generally they perform the Garza after celebrating the seasonal festivals Bwisagu and Domasi. They believe that after celebrating the seasonal festivals all the villagers and participants are become impure due to mixed up with each other at the time of drinking rice beer, dancing and singing etc. So, in order to purify themselves they perform the Garza festival as a whole.

If some epidemic appears in the village then the villagers also observe the Garza festivals for the wellbeing of the villagers. The meaning of Phwjaonai Garza also tells about the floating away of bhela which drives out the diseases and evil spirits from the villages to another side. So, the festival helps them to maintain the purity among themselves.

3.2.2.7. Role of the Villagers during Garza

Traditionally every villager follows the Garza festivals very systematically and in a disciplined manner. They perform the worship by collecting money from individual families and some money from the village fund. The women also do their duties, the act of cleaning the rooms and other materials of the house. It is to be said that the Bodos are keep themselves purity.

3.2.2.8. Difference between Garza and Kherai

There is some difference between the Garza and Kherai festivals. Garza is a festival of village which is performed in each and every village separately. But the Kherai is a national festival of the Bodo, which is observed collectively. The purpose of the Garza and Kherai is wellbeing of the people of village and their seasonal crops. The worship of the Garza is performed in suitable date of the villagers especially during the selected month. There is a fixed day for the Kherai festivals, which is performed in the second Tuesday of the Magh month in the year. In the Kherai, Doudini has important role but in Garza there is no role of Doudini.

3.2.3 Narashingha Festivals

This religious festival also related with the Bathou religion. This festival is observed at the month of Magh after gathering their paddy crops. In Narashingha festival they worship Jwmwn Bwrai and Jwmwn Burwi. This festival is performed at the Garza Sali and sometime at the paddy field.

3.2.4 Salami

There is another religious festival of the Bathou followers which is called 'Salami hwnai' in Bodo terms. This festival is performed in each and every family of the village separately during the month of Bwisagu. This salami is not similar with the salami of Garza. But belief is the same. They believe that at the time of celebrating of

Bwisagu they become impure during mixing up with other people in drinking rice beer, dancing and singing etc. That is why they perform the Salami for the purpose of purifying themselves and for the safe family. Besides of these, they also believe that there may be some mistake during the year. So, they observe this worship.

During this festival Oza also take very important role. With the help of the oza the family members offers their sacrifices to the Bwrai Bathou, Song Bwrai and Song Burwi and Ai Mainao. Bishohori also worship at the time of Salami. Before going to worship the Salami, the family makes clean their house and other materials also.

3.2.4.1 Materials Need during the Worship

A cock for Bwrai Bathou, a hen for Song Raja and Song Rani, an egg for Mainao goddess, one chicken for purity and betel nuts and betel leaves, banana, rice, milk for Bishohori, one pot of holy water, Tulunshi leaves, dubri grass and plantain leaves etc. are used during worship.

3.3 The Domestic Ritualistic Function

The social structure of the Bodo is primarily patriarchal with a few matriarchal characteristics. There are definite regulations of their house building and maintenance of their homestead. Bwrai-Bathou and other Gods and Goddesses are included in every rites and rituals of the Bodo, whatever festival that is regional or agricultural. There are many domestic ritualistic functions among the Bodo. This entire ritualistic functioning is coming from generation to generation in the society. Some ritualistic functions are discussed in the following.

3.3.1 Birth Ceremonies

Every community has their special rituals when a new baby in born. There is rich ritual of birth in the Bodo society. Every rites and ritual is connected with the religion in direct or indirect.

3.3.1.1 Woman Charged

At the time of delivery, if the mother becomes very trouble then the women are charged the pregnan woman. It is called woman charged. There is a belief that if the parent acts any guilty in their day to day life then the pregnan woman cannot give

delivery their baby easily. First of all, they have to purify for the offence they did if any. So, they are always aware about that.

3.3.1.2 Navel Cutting Ceremony

When a baby is born in local area in Bodo families, traditionally they cut the umbilical cord with the strip of bamboo. It is called 'owa themal or owa nisli' in Bodo. The detached cord is tied around by white rayon (aowa khundung) thread. There are some rites and rituals when tied the detached cord with thread.

The male baby's cord is tied five times while female baby's cord is tied seven times. All these rites are done by a woman of 'bitter hand' and they believe that when a widow cut the cord of baby then the child's life become short.

3.3.1.3 Buried of Placenta (Phul Pobnai or Jwrwbshrangnai)

The placenta is buried at the front of main house. When male baby born placenta is buried right side of the door and for the female baby it is buried at the left side of the door. All these are the social believe of them. The placenta is buried by baby's father.

3.3.1.4 Bathing Ceremony

After the cutting of the baby's cord the mother and baby take bath with the warm water. After bathing mother wear a clean dress and sit a small bundle of paddy straw (jigab). The new baby also wraps with clean piece of cloths and let him sleep at the new sieve and sprinkle with holy water.

3.3.1.5 Khulao Swnai

When baby will birth there is a traditional system among the Bodo to doorway in their clan. The women pronoun this charm and sprinkle the holy water.

"Wi! Gotho

Gwdwaoba nwnng mamwn

Dinwi Boro bimanao mwnbai jwnwm

Gwdwao bangal, nephalbabw

Dinwi jabai nwnng Boro subung

Boroni udwiao jwnwm nwngha

Boroni khamani maonangwn”³

English Rendering

Oh! Baby

Who ever you were?

Today you birth from Bodo mother

If you Muslim or Nepal in the earlier

From today, you would be a Bodo child

You take birth from Bodo mother

So, you have to do for Bodo community”

From this charm, we can understand that Bodo have also believed about the rebirth. They welcome the new born baby and declare it to their own.

3.3.1.6 Duari Hanai

There is a religious rite which is known as ‘Duari hanai’ in Bodo terms. After bathing the child and his mother, when they will entry into their main room, for the name of baby a chicken is sacrifice for the Song Bwrai and Song Burwi. They sacrifice a small cock for the male baby and small hen for the female baby. At the main door of the mother room, on a plantain leave, pair of betel nut and betel leave is offer and offered the blood of the sacrifice chicken and sprinkle with holy water.

3.3.1.7 Khalai Sunai (Cloth Washing of Mother)

There is a system among them that, the cloths of the mother are wash at the stream which is used during the delivery time. Before washing the cloths they worship with the pair of betel nut and betel leave, pair of incense stick and pair of coins.

3.3.1.8 Name Giving Ceremony

The name giving ceremony is very simple of the Bodo. Generally names are chosen by the physical appearance of baby, the birth day of the baby and of the affection of the parents or by the grandmother and grandfather.

3.3.1.9 Feast Providing (Uthumai Sarnai)

After becoming good position of the mother and new born baby there is a feast providing ceremony among the Bodo. The parent calls the women who were involved at the delivery time and having delicious lunch for the name of child. It is called feast providing ceremony.

If a pregnant woman give delivery in some other family or village then there is a custom which to be obey. That family should give the penalty of rupees five and purify themselves for the adulterated. All the expenditure incurred in purifying act and penalties are born by the new baby's parent.

3.3.1.10 Offer for Sale

If the parents have been lost their baby at the time of delivering in every time, there is a tradition of selling new born baby with a minimum price for changing their fortune. It is a unique of the Bodo society. By doing so, they believe that evil spirit will not attack the baby and baby can survive. Father of the baby takes away the baby with a bamboo basket head and goes for sale around the village. One family will buy the baby with minimum price. After that again the father will bring back own home. The parents have to offer the rice beer to the villagers.

3.3.1.11 Adoption Custom

If a couple have no any child then the couple can adopt other's son or daughter. The adopted children are treated as full of their child. After the dead of the parent the whole property become the property of adopted children.

3.3.2. Marriage Ceremonies

Marriage system is a social custom of the human beings. Every community has their own custom for marriage. Marriage system made the human being different from the animals. This is the important transition of the life. Marriage is the

reproduction and diplomatic of combination of life. With the marriage human being become more responsibility of life.

There is a meaningful word among the Bodo 'Haba'. This word is combined with two words. These are 'Ha' and 'Ba'. 'Ha' means 'soil or earth' and 'Ba' means 'to bear something on the back'. That means a great responsibility on the earth. There are so many rites and rituals of the Bodo for the marriage. It is an enjoyable festival of them. From this social system two unknown family become closer with each other.

There is no astrological custom in Bodo society while they fix a day for wedding ceremony. A good time and date for engagement of wedding ceremony is chosen. Observing the natural behavior and activities of the birds and animals, they assume future fortune of the couple their fortune will be good or bad. Usually they prefer the day of Sunday as favorable day.

3.3.2.1 Kinds of Marriage System

Bodo traditionally follows the six kinds of marriage system. These are given at bellow.

3.3.2.1.1 Swngnanwi Lainai Haba (Social Marriage)

This is the standard marriage system of the Bodo. In this system of marriage the bride and bridegroom can select his life partner and then the family member settled the date of marriage. The bride groom and bride are welcome at that time very joyfully.

3.3.2.1.2 Gwrjia Lakhinai Haba

If somebody has no any son for taking care of the guardian, there is a social system among the Bodo. This kind of marriage is solemnized at the house of the bride. According to this marriage system the bridegroom give services of his whole life before and after the marriage.

3.3.2.1.3 Kharsonai Haba

This is also a traditional marriage system of the Bodo. A girl go to a man's house for marriage before the settlement of the marriage, it is called kharsonnai marriage. If the

parents do not allow both of them then the bride run away with her bridegroom with the mutual understanding.

3.3.2.1.4 Bwnanwi Lainai Haba

The bride is forcefully taken out from her house by the bridegroom to his house in this marriage. This kind of marriage is very rare. It was happened in earlier times. But after the marriage it is become as normal marriage system.

3.3.2.1.5 Dwnkharnai Haba

This kind of marriage is to elopement of a girl by a boy for the purpose of marriage. The mutual understanding is the sufficient for this type of marriage. We can see this kind of marriage still today.

3.3.2.1.6 Dongkha Habnai Haba

If a man lives in the widow's house as her husband then they are recognized as the husband and wife. They are arranged for marriage. This kind of marriage is happening traditionally from the earlier. The marriage of this type does not harm the status of the girl in the society. The position of the woman in the society is almost equal to that man. There is a provision of widow marriage in the society.

3.3.2.2 Stages of the Marriage

There are many rites and ritualistic including marriage. This can be classified into tree stages. These are

3.3.2.2.1 Pre-Marriage

There are some mandatory rites which are to be done before the marriage. It is observed as the important ceremonies till the final statement of the bride.

3.3.2.2.1.1 Bride Asking Ceremony

There is a traditional believe at the time of selection of the bride. The bridegroom party should come along with three or five members. They carry a pair of bangle (ashan suri), a pair of coins of one rupee, a pair of areca nut and betel leaves and a pair of rice beer to the bride house. The bridegroom party has to explain the

purpose of their coming in front of the bride's parent, why they are coming here. They explain it by saying the proverbs extant in the society.

“Jerao thuri nuyw beyaonw bathi garw

Jerao siklha thayw beaonw goi khithu garw”⁴

English Rendering

‘Where there is thatch, in there a piece of stick is dropped

Where there is girl, on there top portion of betel-nuts are dropped’

With the above render the party of the bridegroom explains the central idea about why they are coming to their house. The thatches are required to build a house just like females are necessary for recreation.

3.3.2.2.1.2 Bangle Inserts and Returns Ceremony

After explaining their purpose in front of the parents of bride, the bridegroom party leave all the things like a pair of bangle (ashan suri), a pair of coins of one rupee, a pair of areca nut and betel leaves and a pair of rice beer at the bride house. It is called bangle insert ceremony, ‘ashan thebnai’ in Bodo terms.

If the parents are not agreeing to give marriage with their son then the parents of the female can return all things whatever they left. It is called returning of bangles (ashan phirainai). The parents of the bride should return the bangles within a week.

3.3.2.2.1.3 Visit to Bridegroom House

If the approach of bride's parents is accept from bridegroom than one day they visit the bridegroom house. The bridegroom's parent entertains the guests with some traditional items, such like rice beer, fork, chicken, areca nut and betel nut etc. it is also a traditional custom of the Bodo. This formal procedure is called ‘no nainai’ in Bodo.

3.3.2.2.1.4 Settlement of Date

After going to visit the bridegroom house the final settlement of the marriage depends on this ceremony. If the bridegroom condition is not good, than bride's parents may cancel the approach. Because every parent desires the good condition of economic. So, 'no nainai' ceremony depends on all of that.

3.3.2.2.1.5 Change of Relationship

After finalization of the marriage the parents of the bride and bridegroom alter the previous relationship into new relationship. From this day the alternative relationship is maintained as 'Bibai' for fathers and 'Bijwmaijw' for the mothers. It is called 'swmwndw phirainai' in Bodo.

3.3.2.2.1.6 Bridegroom Visit to Bride House

There is also a system of visiting to bride house by bridegroom along with friends. So to say it is a pre-marriage ceremony made in the society. It is called 'Houwa gw dan nainai'.

3.3.2.2.1.7 Cutting of Betel Nut Ceremony

After the settlement of the marriage the bridegroom proceed to the bride house for cutting the areca nut and betel nut. In this ceremony the villagers also take part and enjoy it. It is called 'goikhaonai' ceremony in Bodo. It is also called 'biban langnai'. In this ceremony some important materials should bring to the bride house. This are-

- a) One pair of earthen pitcher carries to the bride house. On the pitchers the sign of Sun and Moon are painted.
- b) In the sun painted pitcher carry sugar and leaves of tee (safaty), and in the moon painted pitcher took little quantity of milk. After the celebrating the ceremony again the moon painted pitcher should bring back to the bridegroom house.
- c) In this ceremony 'Bwirathi' (women attendant of bride and bridegroom in a marriage) and lighted earthen pot which is kept on the bamboo sieve is necessary. It is called 'alari sandri' in Bodo. The person who carries the painted pitchers, traditionally called him 'Barlampha'. The duties of the

Bwirathi's are cutting the areca nut and betel leaves and distribute to the villager and take care of the lighten pots. At the cutting ceremony of the areca nut and betel leave the `Bwirathi` are sung this folk song.

“Wi Bwirathi Lolia

Goy dedere, pathwi sinari

Daobokhi baidi sunwi,

Khao regang khao

Ja regang ja, agwi, ja”⁵

English Rendering

“Oh, Bwirathi Lolia

Betel nut and betel leaf

Lime, like stool of heron

Bairathi have cut it plenty

Eat all eat oh, dear”

‘Goy dedere and pathwi sinari’ means betel nut and betel leaf. It is a small size of betel nut and pathwi sinari is named of betel leaf which traditional having among Bodo society.

3.3.2.2.2 Proper Marriage

Proper marriage is performed on the next day. The parents of the bride and bridegroom are ready for wedding ceremony very pleasantly and joyfully. The parent of the bridegroom, villagers and other relatives go to bring the bride which is known as ‘hinjao gwdan lainai’. The bwirathi and barlangpha perform dances at the bride house and trying to satisfy the villager of the bride.

Before going to bring the bride, two people go to collect the information about the bride weather she is well or not from the side of bridegroom. This is known as ‘thandwi gajlong’ in Bodo.

There is a customary believe that when the bride arrive the bridegroom house the mother-in-law or sister-in-law rounded tree times of bride with an egg and throw it. It is called 'Neosinai' in Bodo. After this, foots of the bride is washed and let bride to look at the mirror at the standing on timber tool (gambari khamplai) and then proceed to the house. Before entry the main house the bride should worship the Bwrai-Bathou of the main house.

The Bodo traditional form of marriage is called 'Hathasuni Khurnai'. At this marriage ceremony the bride offers meal to the bridegroom which consists of rice and rice powder curry with chicken without applying turmeric. It is called 'Ondlakharwi'.

Before offering the meal to the bridegroom the bride and bridegroom offer a little amount of meal to the Bwrai-Bathou and other gods and goddesses. The meals are placed on the banana leaves. Both the bride and bridegroom kneel down and pray the Bwrai-Bathou for their better conjugal life. The Douri chant the charm at that time. This charm is given at the chapter five. The Douri and elder person advise the bride and bridegroom for their responsibility of the new life.

In the earlier, the bride has to serve the rice and ondla khari to the villagers, atleast one time. Before serving the villagers, bride serve to bridegroom first of all. After taking a little portion of the meal the bridegroom rises from the seat. Then the ceremony of the hathasuni khurnai is over. At the time of wedding ceremony the delicious traditional meals are offered to the villagers.

3.3.2.2.2.1 There are Some Nominal Price are given and Taken in the Name of Marriage

3.3.2.2.2.1.1 Phon Khonnai (Gaojwn)

In the earlier time, there is a system among the Bodo which is known as Bribe prices. The bride price is nominal. In this ceremony the parent of the bridegroom offers to the father of the bride a pair of areca nut and betel leaves and two coins of rupees on the plantain leave. Before giving all this things the bridegroom's father salute the father of bride. The father of the bride accepts it. From this custom it is known that the status of Bodo female is very high then other cast.

3.3.2.2.1.2 Barwi Ha Ganai (Barwi Haga)

This is another collection of rupees from the bridegroom. Before marriage the bride goes anywhere here and there around the village, that is why the head of the village take five rupees from the bridegroom in the name of earth and kept it at the fund of the village. But this ceremony is not celebrated at Dongkhahabnai marriage.

3.3.2.2.1.3 Malsha

There is another collection system of price from the bridegroom which is known as 'Malsa' in Bodo. The rate of Malsa is different from place to place. The rate is fixed with the discussion. In some village the rate of malsa are two rupees and fifty paisa and some where five rupees.

3.3.2.2.3 Post Marriage

There are some rituals in Bodo society which is performed after the proper marriage ceremony. These are given below.

3.3.2.2.3.1 Athmangal

Athmangal is the last ceremony of the marriage. This ceremony is observed at the bride house after the eight days later of the marriage ceremony. In this ceremony only few family members of the bride are invited. This is also a one day program. One day before the bride and bridegroom with some friends go to the bride house. After the completion of the program they come back to the bridegroom house. Generally they should go pair of group. Thus the traditional marriage system of the Bodo comes to an end.

3.3.2.2.3.2 Divorce System

There is a traditionally divorce system among the Bodo which is known as 'Phathwilai Bisinai'. If the husband and wife are not satisfied with their relationship than mutually they can divorce by tearing a betel leave among the gathering of the public. The villagers convened a public meeting for solution of their problems. In this function the headman (gaobura) performed this divorce. In the present of villagers the husband and wife is let tear the betel leaf into two pieces. The tear of leaf of betel leaf means they never be reunited between two and it is separated forever.

3.3.2.2.3.3 Kholar Gothainai

Apart from that there is also a rite happens in the society. This is called kholar gothainai and mamai mara.

If the husband is dead early after the marriage, the bride goes back to her parent's house. In this ceremony parent of bride return the amount of malsa to the parent of death husband. It is called 'kholar Gothainai'.

3.3.2.2.3.4 Mamai Mara

If the bride expired leaving a female child or if the parents of bridegroom are unable to pay the bride price (phon thaka) then she go to back her uncle at the time of her marriage. It is called 'Mamai mara'.

3.3.3 Death Rituals

Death is the last passage of the life. There are many rites including death ceremony. There is a graveyard where cremation is made in every village. It is called 'gwthwi shali'. The death body is taken out from the house and keeps at the middle of the courtyard. The place is cleaned with the cow dung mixed water. The head of the dead body is kept towards the south side. The dead body's face, hands and foot are washed with the water by the relatives and then apply oil on the head and comb the hair. After that the body covered with the new white cloth. The family members with relatives and villager offered some foods, rice and water with the leaf of peepul tree by the left hand. To carry the dead body for cremation a stretcher is made of bamboo, which is known as seren or sangra.

Son and the relatives carry the dead body. There is a rites when carry the dead body. Small pieces of the yarn leave behind the way from the dead person. There is believed that the soul of the dead person will see the yarn and go to the cremation. Oza or Douri of the village accompany in this funeral process. Before funeral, the entire person who are presented at the cremation ground offer a little water to the dead body with the leave of pupeel leave and say this sentences.

*"Nw lwngdw amwkha, dinwiniphrai nwngha nwngh angba angswil"*⁶

English Rendering

“O you take this water, from today you will remain as yourself and we will remain as ourselves”

After offering water a piece of red thread is placed on the lips of the dead body. It is believed that when he or she will rebirth the lips will be red. A branch of pupeel plant also posted towards the head of the dead body. It is also believed that if the dead person is female the hair will be huge at the time of rebirth. For the male, it is believed that the soul of the dead person will take rest under the pupeel branch until salvation.

Women and children are not allowed to go to the cremation ground. Earlier the Bodo preferred the both burial and cremation system for disposal the dead body. A few coins and cloths are buried along with the dead body. It is believed that these will be necessary for the soul to pay the fare to the boat man to cross the river and to buy some foods during the journey. A small hole also keeps in the earth over the nose of the dead body with the khasi (a kind of long grass) plant.

After the burial of dead body a plantain planted is plant if the death body is unmarried young boy as a symbol of female. It is believed that at the time of rebirth he could make a happy married life. If a female is dead before marriage then areca nut plant is planted as the symbol of male. It is also believed that at the rebirth she become a happy married life. After that a water full pitcher and a little cooked rice is placed on the spot of cremation ground.

After the cremation is over all the members who are presented in the ground of funeral takes bath in the stream and sprinkle with the holy water. After taking bath every takes a little quantity of dry jute leaves and utter this sentence. “Thu Thu Alai balai” In English it means “it is very deserted”. It is called ‘narzi orgarnai’.⁷ There is believed that by doing this the relationship between the dead person and the members of the funeral party are over from today.

All the funeral party come back to the house of dead person and gathers together after the cremation is over and have some rice beer.

3.3.3.1 Daha Garnai

One day before of the Shraddha ceremony, this ritual is observed by the family members and relatives. In this ceremony some favorite foods like chicken curry, pork curry, rice beer, areca nut and betel leaves and some cloths are given to the dead person by the members of family. It is called 'Gwthwinw baonai'. 'Daha' means 'sorrow' and 'garnai' means 'to give up'. So, it means 'to give up sorrow of the dead person'. All the rituals are conducted by the Oza.

3.3.3.2 Shraddha Ceremony

This ceremony is depended up the economic condition of the family. Generally within thirteen days from the dead the ceremony is celebrated. There are some traditional believe including the shraddha ceremony. In this ceremony, the family members and other relatives are prayed the Bathou. The villagers and relatives entertained with rice beer and meat of pork.

In this ceremony, the elder son has some special duties. After the feast is over, the elder son has to throw unclean leaf plates. This is a purified system. It is called 'sua garnai' in Bodo. Besides of these, a bullock is set free. It is called 'Mwswo sarwn hogarnai'. After that there is a traditional ritual as 'Dhwn Sarnai'. In this ceremony some coins and uncooked rice are mixed and then throw in a gathering of the children. This ceremony is called 'Dhwn sarnai' in Bodo.

There is a belief that after the celebrating this ceremony the family members of the dead person can attend all the other activities of villagers.

3.4 Rites and Rituals of House Construction

Traditionally the Bodos select a new plot for house construction. Still today they apply some methods. There is a system of observation among them that the selection of plot is good position or not for house construction.

3.4.1 The Traditional Selection System of House Plot

During the winter season, at the evening time by standing on the land they try to observe that the breezing wind is flowing or not. "If the breezing is blowing then they believe that the land is good for construction of house."⁸

After observing the land they again try to observe the side of land for construction of house building. After cleaning the some area of land placed a pair of basil leaves, nine grain of rice on the plantain leaves and covers it with the basket of bamboo (dhon) for whole night. Next day early in the morning observe open the basket. If the materials are in good position which they were left, then they believe that the plot of land is good for construction of house. If the materials are spread here and there or the grain rice is lost then they believe that the plot is not good for house building. “This worship is observed on the day of Saturday or Tuesday.”⁹

There is another system among them for selection of plot. They dug out the soil about two feets and test it. If the soil is salty or bitter taste, then they believe that this plot is medium for construction of house. If the soil is sour in taste then the plot is not suitable for house construction. But if the taste of plot is sweet in taste then they believe that the plot is suitable for house construction.

3.4.2 Custom of House Construction

Before construction of the main house they make a temporary house for stay in the western side. The granary is built in the east side of the homestead. They build the cowshed in the south side of the main house. Generally they are agricultural so, cows are very important in their day to day life for cultivation. The main house is built on the north side of the homestead. The main house is partitioned into three rooms. These are ishing, okhong and khopra.

Ishing room means kitchen room or inner room of the main house. In which room the Bathou followers place the Song Raja and Song Rani and the goddesses of wealth (mainao). This room is made in the east side of the main house. In the ishing room any outsiders are not allowed to enter. This room is sacred room for them.

Okhong is the middle room of the main house. This room is used as the dining room of the house. It is very easy to carry the food items from the ishing room, because they also used the ishing as kitchen room.

Another one is khopra room in which room they used to sleep for unmarried girls of the house. There is only one door at the main house. All the rooms are passage from one room to another room.

There is another custom for making of guest house. They are made another room for the sons of the family member and for the guest. This house is called 'shourano'.

3.4.3 Hapsa Hatharnai

This is a domestic ceremony which is performed by traditionally. While entering in the new house they observed this ceremony. The supreme god Bwrai-Bathou and other gods and goddesses are worship during this ceremony. In this ceremony they sacrifice a chicken in the name of new house and offer to the Bwrai Bathou. So, it is called 'Hapsa Hatharnai' in Bodo. The villagers and relatives are participated to the ceremony and take rice beer with pork meat.

3.4.3.1 Name of the Gods and Goddesses during the Worship of Hapsa Hatharna

The name of gods and goddesses are Bwrai-Bathou, Aileng Bwrai, Khaji Bwrai, Abla khungur, Raj khandra, Sali jwmwn, Mwsa Raja (bhag raja), Ai manas, Ai Baoli, Khubir Mao thanshri (Ai khamaikha), Song Raja and Song Rani, Buli Burwi.

3.4.3.2 Materials Need during the Hapsa Worship

Generally the need of materials is the same in all the worship. These are a small chicken for sacrifice to the Bwrai-Bathou, a pair of areca nut and betel leaves, pair of basil leave, plantain leave, a pot of holy water for sprinkle etc. During his ceremony the Oza chant the charms. A medicine man (Oza) is very important in the ceremony of the hapsa hatarnai.

3.5 Some Seasonal Rituals of the Bathou Religion

The people of Bodo observe many seasonal festivals, which are related with the Bathou religion and with the agriculture during the year. The festivals are divided into two main divisions. These are national festivals and social festivals.

3.5.1 National Festivals

National festivals are observed nationally. These festivals are celebrated jointly in the same time during the year as a whole. Every festival has full of rites and rituals. Some national festivals of the Bodo are given bellow.

3.5.1.1 Bwisagu

Bwisagu (Bihu) is the famous festival of Bodos. This festival is celebrated in the first Indian month corresponding to mid April to mid May. All the seasonal festivals are related with the harvesting and planting seeds. The Bwisagu is the greatest seasonal festivals of the Bodo. This festival is celebrated during the spring time for the purpose of welcome New Year.

The Bodo word Bwisagu is combined in two words. These are the word 'Bwisw' means 'Age or Year' and 'Agu' means 'start'.¹⁰ It is said by Kamini Narzary. Lakheswar Brahma's opinion is Bwisagu + Hu = Bwisagu. The meaning of 'Hu' means 'worship for god'. Because during celebration of Bwisagu the observers are worship Bwrai-Bathou and other gods and goddesses.

Kameswar Brahma also said in his '*A study of socio religious beliefs practices and ceremonies of the Bodos*' (1992), the Bwisagu is combined in two words. These are 'Bwisw' and 'Agu'. Bwisw means 'age or year' and the word 'Agu' means 'start'. That means this spring time festival is started at the Assamese month Bohag which they call Baisakh. It is observed at the very early part of the first month of the year, it is called as Bwisag+Agu= 'Bwisagu'.¹¹

From the opinions of the above, it is clear that the word Bwisagu means the traditional celebration of New Yea. Bwisagu is celebrated by singing, dancing, feasting, merry making, drinking rice beer etc. They played the traditional musical instruments of the Bodo like drum (kham), flute (shipung), cymbal (zotha), thorkha which is made by bamboo, jabshring, gangana bingi, etc. There are many folk songs including Bwisagu festival in Bodo. They believe that with the satrabhali tune of flute the eggs of snakes become unproductive.

Some important rites and rituals are observed during the festival of Bwisagu. They worship the Bwrai-Bathou and gods and goddesses, devotion of the ancestors of the family members, merry making for the New Year. Before of this rituals one day before of the Bohag or the last day of the month of Chaitra they celebrate the cattle festival. It is called 'Sankranthi' in Bodo. In this festival some rituals also observed in this day. The cattle are decorated by the owner which is called 'Mwswo thukhwinai'. At the time of Sankranthi there is a ritual of eating bitter and sour tested vegetables on

that day. It is called ‘Khungkha Janai’ in Bodo. The purpose of eating bitter and sour vegetable is to stop the diseases, illness and infections of viruses which are believed by the Bodo society.

All the cattle are decorated with garland and dotted black spots and taken to the nearest of the stream for bathing on the last day of the Chaitra month. The cowherds throw the pieces of gourd, brinjal, turmeric and fried rice (sworai gwran) towards the cattle. On that day the cowherds use the branch of dighalati as the stick. In this festival the cowherds and villagers sing the famous folk songs of the Bodo. Here it is.

“Lao za panthao za

Gidir gwlaao za

Bima baidi thipri pri daza

Gidir gwlaao za”¹²

English Rendering

“Eat gourd, eat brinjal

To be a big size

Do not be short like mother

To be a big size”

There is another folk song also sing including dudali plant during the bathing time of the cattle, when the cowherds beat on the back of their cattle. Dudali is a kind of arum. They believed that when the cows will eat the dudali the cows yield more milk. After taking away the cattle from the cowshed the women of the family clean the cowshed and change the old ropes.

In the earlier time, Bwisagu was observed for the seven days. In the first day of the Bwisakh they clean their house and prayer to the Bwrai-Bathou for the celebrating of the New Year. The young children respect the elders.

3.5.1.2 Domasi

Domasi is another seasonal or agricultural festival of the Bodo. This festival is observed during the month of Maghw. This festival is performed after harvesting of the crops. There is a ritual for making pitha, sithao and laru during the Maghw festival. The fruit trees are tied up with the cord of straw during the Domasi festival. They believe that there will be more fruits in the next year. The granary also cleaned around with the cow dung. In the previous the observers of Domasi festival are sung this song.

“Mag masi masi domasi habbai

Zwngkhwo nunanwilai dalazi

Dalazi lwi habab

Dazanwng omasi

Zwngkhwo nunanwilai zingadasi

Mag masi masi domasi bwthwrao

Nwngni onnai mwnnwsw magidwng zwng habab

Sithao pitha gwiabla daodwi hordw

Daodwi gwiabla sithao phithakhwonwhordw”¹³

English rendering

“Month of domashi is entry

Do not be shy looking of us

Oh, do not be shy

You do not be gloomy

Do not be feel shy looking of us

In this month

We are come here to find your adore

If you have not pitha, give us egg

If not have egg, give us again pitha”

3.5.1.3 Amthisua

During the month of Ashara, this festival is observed. This festival is observed by the purpose of holiness of the earth or soil. The people do not plough land and do not cut the useful trees. They do not dig out the land with the spade. During this festival, the people eat fruit like, mango, jackfruit, coconut, fine apple etc.

3.5.1.4 Kathi Gasa Saonai

Khathi Gasa saonai is a seasonal festival of the Bodo. It is the festival of the lightening. This festival is observed in the last day of the Ashin or first day of the Khathi month. The goddess of the wealth (mainao) is worship in this festival.

There are some rituals in this festival. In the evening the members of the family go to the paddy field and burnt the ‘gasa’ earthen lamps, at the cowshed, granary and at the Altar of Bathou. They use the covers of elephant apple fruit as the earthen lamps. The unmarried girls of the family go to the paddy field with a long stick used sewari and polished with the master oil and touch with the stick. With these rituals they believed that the paddy plants will bear more paddies.

3.5.2 Social Festivals

Social festivals are observed by individually or each family. All this festivals are smaller as regarded the Bwisagu and Maghw festivals. During the paddy periods they observe some minors festivals with some rites and ritualistic. These are given bellow.

3.5.2.1 Hal Jurinai

Bodos are start every agricultural activities with some ritualistic. After observing the Hambai Garza or Phwjao nai Garza during the month of Jeth they start to plough the paddy land. It is called the ‘hal jurinai’ festival of the Bodo. In a good date and day the cultivators go to the paddy field to plough the land. First of all they salute the soil, plough, yoke and other agricultural implements towards the east.

3.5.2.2 Gosa Thujennai

This is the first step for sowing paddy in the paddy field. The festival is observed with some rites. The female person of the family offers a pair of areca nut and betel leaves on the plantain leaf, applied a little master oil on the small quantity of seedlings and sprinkle with the holy water and then salute the elder person of the family towards the east. In this festival they worship the crops god and goddess Jwmwn Bwrai and Burwi.

Then other members of the family start plantation all saluting the east. The plantation is started with their suitable day and date. In the last day of the plantation of the paddy there is a rite of plantation granary in the paddy field. It is called 'bakhri gaikhonnai'. During this festival they enjoy with the spreading mud for each other in the last plantations of the paddy.

3.5.2.3 Hal Zangkhra

This festival is observed in their suitable day in the last plantation of the paddy. They enjoy with the mud spreading with each other. The elders of the family salute towards the east and finish the paddy plantation. They eat chicken, pork and rice beer on that day with neighbours.

3.5.2.4 Khuga Phwrnai

There is a preface ritual after the plantation of the paddy. It is called 'Khugaphwdnai' in Bodo. During the month of Ashin this festival is observed by the purpose of well beings of the paddy.

3.5.2.5 Ag-lainai

This festival is called bringing goddess of wealth (Mainao) from the paddy field. In a good day, when the paddy becomes ripe the female person of the family brings a small quantity of paddy with a sickle before the sunrise. After sprinkling with the holy water a bundle of ripe paddy plants kept inside of granary. During this day they also worship the Bwrai-Bathou. There is a ritual when Mainao goddess will bring by female person she do not converse with other, if she talk, the goddess will not come with her as they believed. In this rituals they offer a pair of areca nut and betel leaves, an egg, a pair of incense sticks and with a symbol of purity a piece of cotton at

the paddy plants. After worship the goddess of wealth they pick up the egg on the bamboo basket (dhon) and then cut a bundle of ripe paddy plants. They bring it by carrying on the head.

3.5.2.6 New Rice Eating (Newn or Wngkham Gwrlwi Janai)

This festival is mostly related with agriculture but the worship system is directly related with the Bathou religion. This festival is held during the month of December (Aghon and Phush). After collection of the maisali crops this festival is celebrated. This is the festivals of family, but in this festival the family member invites the neighbours to eat the new rice. Before eating the rice they worship the Bwrai-Bathou and other Gods and Goddesses. The Bodo people believe that before having the new rice, they should offer the entire things to the Bwrai-Bathou and other Gods and Goddesses. Then the next year they can collect the crop better. Moreover, they also offer to all forefather and akin those who had already passed away from the family so, that they do not harm the family.

There is a special traditional curry for the new rice eating. Pork, fish, arum, thaganda (a kind of cultivated creeping plant and its large edible tuber), rice beer are took in this festivals, like fish with arum, and fish with thadanda etc.

3.5.2.7 Bakhri Dangnai

There is also a ritual among the Bodo at the time of first enter in the granary. This is also a minor festival of them. In a good day, during the month of Magh and Phagun they open the door of granary by worshipping Bwrai-Bathou and other gods and goddesses. They offer a pair of areca nut and betel leaves, an egg on the plantain leave which is placed in the granary and then bring a basket of paddy. Someone sacrifice a small chicken at that ceremony in the name of Jwmwn Bwrai and Jwmwn Burwi.

There are many rites and ritualistic among the Bodo including the Bathou religion. Not only Bodo but every society of the world observed their different rites and rituals. They have unique features of their culture are inseparably connected with their religious activities. The Bodo have full of rites and rituals from birth to death. The religion is man's faith in a power by which he or she expresses in acts of worship and ceremonies. From this acts the rituals are performed in the form of worship and

ceremonies. Thus the rituals are the form of formal acting of ceremony, which repeated in just the same way on particular occasions.

3.6 Summing Up

In this chapter, the aspect of the religious rituals, the domestic ritualistic, rites and rituals of house construction and some seasonal rituals aspects of the Bathou religion are discussed. Besides of these, the national festivals of the Bodo, name of gods and goddesses and materials needs during the worship are also systematic arranged and analyzed. Important of Doudini, Oza and Douri also mention in this chapter. In this chapter, discussions have been done all rites and rituals of Bodo society which is related with the Bathou religion. Bodo people are performing all the rituals from traditionally generation to generation. All rituals are different from each other. There are many ritualistic aspects of the Bathou religion like birth rituals, marriage rituals, death rituals and religious rituals etc.

Kherai is the biggest enjoyable festival of Bodo. During the worship of kherai festival 'Doudini' take important roles. Oza and Douri are also important roles during the performance of kherai. One pair of sword, one shield is the most important weapons in the kherai festival. The Doudini dance eighteen different types of dance form with the traditional musical instruments like kham, siphung and jotha. Garza is also a religious festival of Bodo which is performed by the villagers. The purpose of the kherai and Garza festivals is the wellbeing of the villagers and their seasonal crops. Beside of these, Narashingha and Salami are also the religious festivals of the Bathou followers.

There are many ceremonies that are birth ceremonies, marriage ceremonies and death ceremonies which are discussions as the domestic ritualistic function. Bodo community has rich in rituals of birth, marriage and death functions. Every rites and rituals are connected with the religion in directly or indirectly.

There are another rites and rituals of house construction. Bodo traditionally select a new plot for house construction. They observe still today some traditional methods during the selection of plot for house construction. While entering in the new house they observed the 'Hapsa Hatharnai' ceremonies. Sacrifices of cock are also a custom of entering new house.

Besides of these, in this chapter some seasonal rituals of the Bathou religion are also discussed. The festivals are divided in to some divisions like national festival and social festival. In national festival Bwisagu, Domasi, Amthisua and Kathi Gasa are discussed. In social festival Hal Jurinai, Goso Thujennai, Hal Zangkhra, Khuga Phwrnai, Aglainai, Wngkham Gwrlwi Jani and Bakhri Dangnai are discussed. From the above discussions it is known that Bathou religion is internally related with Bodos.

Endnotes

1. Narzee, Bhaben, 2003, *Boro Kacharini Somaj Arw Harimu*, Second Edition, Chirang Publication Board, Kajalgaon, p.172.
2. Basumatary, Ramdas, 2002, *Swrzi Arw Santhou*, Board of Mushalpur Primary BSS, Mushalpur, p.97.
3. Narzee, Bhaben, 2003, *Boro Kacharini Somaj Arw Harimu*, Second Edition, Chirang Publication Board, kajalgaon, p.96.
4. Ibid, p.63.
5. Ibid, p.65.
6. Ibid, p.99
7. Ibid, p.100.
8. Ibid, p.23.
9. Ibid, p.25.
10. Brahma, Kameswar, 1992, *A Study of Socio Religious Beliefs Practices and Ceremonies of the Bodos*, Bina Library, Panbazar, guwahati, p. 104.
11. Ibid, p. 104
12. Mushahary, Nilcharan, 2011, *Guthar Bathou Bikhanthi*, vol-1, Kokrajhar, p. 101.
13. Ibid, p. 97.
14. Ibid, p.179.