

CHAPTER – IV

SOCIAL CUSTOMS REFLECTED IN BODO FOLK SONGS

4.1 SOCIAL CUSTOMS

Social custom and traditions play a very important role in the cultural life of any ethnic group. There are customs and traditions with core values which a tradition-bound society can hardly afford to do away with even under the most adverse situations. But the customs and traditions with superficial or periphery values are always subject to change since they can hardly stand the rapid changes specially brought about by modern scientific advancement. In insight knowledge of the social customs and traditions having core values of an ethnic group is a must for administrations as well as development personal working in the Goalpara district areas.

4.2 RELIGIOUS CUSTOMS

The worshipping of Bathou the supreme God of Bodo community is one of the main customs of the Bodo community. Because the religion of Bodo community is the only Bathou since time immemorial. So, they belief that worships the other God and Goddesses apart from Bathou is assumed to be a great offence for which the supreme God Bathou is may be frustrated. So, here in this folk song no. 2.17.1 (khobodar gona - gotha) warned every Bodo people to be careful in worshipping their God without any confusion.

In the folk song no. 2.1.8 as Bathou religion has five thought, everything that related with five elements are believed to be the creation of supreme God Bathou Barai or Bathou Burai. Here in this folk song “thaigri khongya khongba” is clearly explained that the customary rituals of Bodo Kachari people are only five. “The laws to purify and punishment to any guilty persons has done through five laws only. These are (i) Agorbad, (ii) Fongslodbad, (iii) Daokhibad, (iv) Khawalibad and (v) Khoulubwdbad. Any offenses of the society are come under these five laws. This is a great example of Bathouism to maintain the society in a discipline manner.”¹ Sekhar Brahma in his book “*Religion of the Bodos and their Socio-Cultural Transition*” says that - “Sijou plant has five spines and Bathou has five ties (i.e. Bathou is surrounded by circular fence

of split bamboo strips which has five levels). Bathou always believes in five principles. Though Bathou the creator is not visible it can be only realised by his five elements or virtue, those are- soil, air, water, fire and sky. These five elements of earth and sky have been tied in to five bonds union or principle.”²

Bodo Kachari people are the follower of Bathou principle and worshiper of the supreme God Bathou Brai. They are follows the Bathou philosophy in every respect. Here in this folk song no. 2.1.10 Bagurumba ward is indicate this folk song ba - means five, gurum - means jumping with joint leg and another ba - means carrying on back. So, as per the word meaning of the song bagurumba means jumping in the sea of society carrying the five matured work organ and five matured sense organs of the human body. So, far the mythology about the creation or origin of this song it is says that, this song is particularly sung or performed by the matured unmarried girls who are fit for taking part in the social bindings viz. as the coupled life as described by Ostad Kamini Kumar Narzary.³

In the folk song no. 2.1.9 “Boroni maday ose” the God Bathou is considered to be the principal God of Bathouism. Along with Bathou there are many more God and Goddesses worshiped by Bodo Kachari people of Goalpara district. Among other God and Goddesses the names of the God and Goddesses along with their place of worshiping are clearly mentioned in this folk song. Because, through this very folk song everybody know the Gods and Goddesses that Bodo people worship in their society as well as in their domestic purposes. The specific God or Goddesses are given their place in right direction which is clearly mentioned in this folk song as their customs, for example Bathou Brai along with Ailong, Agrang, Khoila Khungguri and Burliburi are given the place in east direction, the death soul of fore fathers are given the place in the north direction as there is a big river namely the Brahmaputra in the north of Goalpara district, Baghraj and Bagheswari are given the place in the south direction (*Boroni Asar Bikhanthi*).

4.3 CUSTOMS RELATED TO FESTIVALS

Boisagu the spring festival is the main festival of Bodo Kachari people of Goalpara district among other festivals. In this season nature take the new form. The Bodo Kachari people of Goalpara are also become very joyful with the natural beauties. There is a tradition that the Boisagu or spring festival starts from the last day of Choitra month in system in relation to this boisagu or spring festival starting from last day of Choitra month of Bengali calander which we call Rongjali Boisagu. During this time, in the first week of the month of Bohag of Bengali calander all age group (male or female) make groups of their own and visited to each and every house, for begging the elder one. They also beg rice or money and even eggs or chicken as the symbol of bless. During their visit they use to sing the folk song no. 2.2.1 Oroi oroi oroi with joy and danced. After completing the visit to every house, they arranged a feast with the collected materials. Singing this very song the village people respect the elder person and begged bless for maintaining good life in the year. Respect to elder by younger is a traditional system of Bodo kachari people of Goalpara district which is prevalent still today. The domasi (Maghi Bihu) such as the Khathi (Khathri) domasi, Magu domasi and Boisagu domasi are celebrated gorgeously in Goalpara district by Bodo Kachari people. The Magu domasi and Boisagu domasi are more special where merry making and feasting are also the custom of Bodo Kachari people in the Goalpara district area. During thsesse domasi there is a tradition of preparing Fitha, Laru, Sauray and rice-beer in the district. The village people get together at the Hadenggara's house and visited each and every household singing this very folk song no. 2.2.2 "Bothorni domasi Boisagu gahay." The house owner provides the Fitha, Laru, Souray and wine to them. The villages sing this folk song playing the traditional musical instruments that is Kham, Sifung, Serja, Jotha, Thorkha, Gonggona and danced when they visited door to door.

4.4 CUSTOMS RELATED TO AGRICULTURE

As Bodo Kachari people are related and dependent on agriculture for their livelihood since time immemorial. They have got some traditional system of folk customs in relation to cultivation. In Bodo society there is a tradition of collective work with extending free labour service to the neighbouring people. There is also the system of division of labour among the male and female people in the society. The women are given the responsibility of cultivation such as pulling out the seedling and planting it to paddy field. On the other hand, carrying the

seedling from one paddy field to another is the responsibility of male people only. The act of ploughing is the only duty of male people and female are strictly prohibited from ploughing. It is supposed to be a great offence in Goalpara district area. One of the peculiar system prevailing in the Bodo Kachari people of Goalpara district are the extending free service in exchange which they called it as “saori.” This system can be learnt from the cultivation related folk song no. 2.3.1 (Ayo doi jlang bothorni).

4.5 MARRIAGE CUSTOMS

Among the various kinds of marriage system the social marriage system is considered to be the best and popular system of marriage in the society of Goalpara district areas. There is lots of folk customs on marriage in folk song no. 2.4.1 (Goy la fathi la) when the groom party reached the bride house, they have to distribute betel-nut to each and every person attended in the bride house. The serving of betel-nut is done by “Boirathi”, she takes to serve the betel-nut by semidance in the tune of Sifung (flute) and Kham the traditional musical instruments of Bodos. After serving the betel-nut the female group of groom party is permitted to enter the ‘Nomano’(main house) and handed over the bride to female group of groom party to decorate the bride that is to dress or combing. After having betel-nut the discussion about the marriage is started between two parties (bride party and groom party). Therefore the betel-nut is considered as the indispensable part of the marriage in Bodo Kachari society in Goalpara district.

There is a folk custom relating to the social marriage among Bodo Kachari people of Goalpara district. The bride groom party have to provide materials to bride party then only they are allowed to leave for their home. The materials compulsory to produce are (i) khurundi, a bamboo made utensil used to serve betel-nut, (ii) moilam-jotha, (iii) goy khandi-khandi (split betel-nut) as mentioned in folk song no. 2.4.1 The important items have produced in bride house by groom party are (i) alari bathi, (ii) goy ban (a hanging pair of basket carried on shauldier to carry betel nut by Barlampha). In some folk songs the important ornaments used by Bodo Kachari people in Goalpara district are mentioned in folk song no. 2.4.3 The ornaments mentioned are (i) khamani khona (gold wore on ear), (ii) nakharkhalay (ornament wore on nose), (iii) shakhi mala, (iv) nagbali, (v) mol-kharu and (vi) asan finjab are mentioned.

Joking between both bride party and groom party is a tradition among the Bodo Kachari people of Goalpara district. This type of context is found in the folk song no. 2.4.4 (Dhini logoni haba).

In folk song no. 2.4.12 (Jhungni Boroni nioma) regarding a folk custom has been mentioned. Here in this song it is mentioned that the breaking of athimongla in eight days of marriage, this is a compulsory function of Bodo Kachari marriage system. In this system groom and bride visited the bride house for the first time after marriage along with brides-man. During this visit they have to bring with some item compulsorily that is Kharang fitha (rice cake prepared in vapour only) which love to carry on back by bride is explained in folk song no. 2.4.12 (Jungni Boroni). Another important custom of Bodo Kachari people of Goalpara district is the using of betel-nut. The very important thing for Bodo Kachari marriage system is the betel-nut. The betel-nut is not used in a single quantity but it is used in pairs only and even some times it is used in jokhay the unit of four. Here in this folk song no. 2.4.17 (Dagab fisa dagab) the same thing is reflected.

4.6 HEREDITARY CUSTOMS

Bodo Kachari people of Goalpara district were following the partriarchal system of society from ancient times. So, girl child have not enjoyed the equal right and status as male child in father's house. Although the systems are not followed rigidly in present time yet it was very rigid in ancient time. It is found in the folk song no. 2.4.18 (thudohai boini thudo thu) that is sending the girl child to groom's house as a bride was also assumed as selling only in unit of four betel-nut.

4.7 CUSTOMARY LAWS

There was a system of selecting the Hadenggara the village head man among the village people democratically to control and run their village very smoothly in the Bodo Kachari people of Goalpara district. Hadenggara is the only sole authority to declare and announce any kind of judgement for any kinds of offences and guilty made by the own village people. This very customary system is mentioned in the folk song no. 2.17.12 (Guruni asar Boroni bisar)

Bodo Kachari society of Goalpara district has a very rigid traditional society. To maintain the very traditional system they nominate a Hadenggara among themselves who is supposed to be the head of the village in any purposes. The Hadenggara is the sole authority of giving any judgement on any matter arises in the village. Any order announced by Hadenggara becomes laws for that village. The people of that village should abide by these laws compulsorily. Disobeying the order of a Hadenggara is supposed to be a great offence in previous days. But in present day such system is something changed and disagreed to follow this traditional system. To express such context there also originated the Bodo folk songs. Such Songs is given in folk song no. 2.17.12 “Guruni Asar Boroni Bisar.” Here in this folk song the real pictures and arts of village, whose are dwelling as indegenious and traditionally rich culture have been reflected of Bodo Kachari people of Goalpara district in modern age too.

End notes

1. Brahma, Kameswar; *A Study in Cultural Heritage of the Boros*, published with the financial assistance of Assam Institute of Research for Tribal and Scheduled Castes Guwahati-22, 1998, pp. 40 - 43
2. Brahma, Sekhar; *Religion of the Boros and their Socio-cultural Transition*, published by DVS Publishers, H. B. Road, Panbazar, 2006, p.16
3. Khakhalary, Kunjalata; Age - 58, Sex - Female, Village - Sialmari, P.O. Dudhnoi, Dist. Goalpara, Assam, Occupation : Service, Folk Dancer, Date of Interview - 12-12-2014 (Informant)