

**A STUDY OF THE SOCIO-CULTURAL ASPECTS REFLECTED IN
BODO FOLK SONGS**

**A THESIS SUBMITTED TO BODOLAND UNIVERSITY FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN THE DEPARTMENT OF BODO UNDER THE
FACULTY OF LANGUAGE**



**SUBMITTED BY
BINA BASUMATARY**

Ph.D REGISTRATION NO.: FINAL/02BOD0016 OF 2013-14

**SUPERVISOR
DR. ISMAIL HUSSAIN**

**DEPARTMENT OF BODO
BODOLAND UNIVERSITY
KOKRAJHAR-783370, ASSAM**

2021

CHAPTER-6

CONCLUSION

This chapter includes the outcome of whole thing which are analyzed the previous chapters. An attempt has been made an entitled- A Study of the Socio-Cultural Aspects Reflected in Bodo Folk Songs. Where the Socio-cultural aspects as reflected in Bodo folk songs. Like as- Religious songs, Seasonal festival songs, Marriage ceremony songs, Social folk customs, Folk beliefs, Oral history like- Ballad, Myths, Legends and Work songs, Cowboy songs, Lullabies and Nursery Rhymes, Proverbs, Riddles, Rasas, Chandas and Alankaras are discussed. Cultivation is the principle way of livelihood of the Bodo villagers. Their main source of living is paddy cultivation; also they dependent on the nature. Therefore implications of natural things may be observed in the text of songs. Songs are used to get refreshment as well as for recreation. Songs are reflected the folk philosophy, psyche and sorrow, happiness, rituals and other related customs of the society.

The first chapter is introductory chapter. In this chapter it is mentioned that the identity of Bodos, Area of concentration and Bodo population. How Bodo people are extent among Assam and some neighbouring states. To identify the Bodo folk literature and review of previous research work done about the folk literature. The Bodos are rich in folk literature. It is a part and parcel of Indo-Mongoloid culture. They are belonging to the greater Mongoloid Race. The Bodos have finely intricate music, colourful dance, dresses and ornaments and traditional musical instruments and songs. They have the rich store of folk culture and literature still in the society. But still now sufficient numbers of books were not get. So, it is going to lost due to lack of recorded or preserved. In the present situation it is important to preserve with scientific way and book publication. Because, the folk literature were included the history of human society. Area of the study, aims and objectives of the study, significance of the study, hypothesis, methodology and review of literature respectively has been discussed in this introductory chapter.

In the second chapter it is discussed about the socio-cultural aspects as reflected in religious worship, seasonal festival and marriage ceremony of the Bodo society. Identify and the way of living and social philosophy which is reflected in the Bodo folk songs. In these songs to highlight the social behaviour, folk-life and traditional social customs, how

are they reflected. In religious worship the *Kherai*, *Garza*, *Bathwu* worship and *Phuthuli haba* were discussed.

The religion of Bodo is *Bathwuism* and it has five philosophies. The word 'Ba' means 'five' i.e *ha* (earth), *dwi* (water), *bar* (air), *or* (fire) and *okhrang* (sky) and 'thou' means deep philosophical thought. With these five philosophies it's known as *Bathwu Bwrai* or *Si-Bwrai*. The *Bathwu Bwrai* is the main deity i.e. the supreme God of the Bodos. So, the meaning of the *Bathwu* is complete with five deep philosophies and magnificent. The philosophy of *Bathwu* is not easy to appreciate. The five great truth of this religion related with birth, childhood, marriage, old age and death.

The Bodos used 'sijwu' (euphorbia plant) as a symbol of *Bathwu*. So, the Bodo people planted a *sijwu* tree in the north-east corner of threshold and them worshipping *Bathwu Bwrai*. At present the *Bathwu* religion being worship with two philosophical ways. The one philosophical way of worship is with sacrificing bird or animal and another way of worship is by offering Prasad and flowers. With this way they worship one or two times in a year. From ancient time the *Bathwu* worshippers worship by sacrificing birds or animal. They sacrifice chicken for the *Bwrai Bathwu*, for mother God (Goddess of wealth) they offer egg and for the deity of garden corner (*barini mwdai*) they sacrifice goat or pigeon. For the well being of a family, to protect from hindrance, to keep wealth and live happily of kids and kin they worship *Bathwu*. The modified *Bathwu* worshippers also worship by offering prasad and flowers and by singing hymns. In the present time the old worshipper of *Bathwu* them also singing hymns.

The *Bathwu* worshipper worship with different religious festival like- *Kherai*, *Garza* and *Phuthuli haba*. The *Kherai* worship is the largest religious festival of Bodos. From ancient times they worship *Kherai* for the peace of villagers or surrounding areas. There are five kinds of *Kherai* worship, but among these *Lakshmi* or *Mainao Kherai* was mainly worshipping by the Bodos. This festival is mainly related with agriculture. For the well being of the seasonal agricultural work and to protect from diseases, hindrance etc. this festival were still celebrated. In the *Kherai* along with *Bathwu Bwrai* and 16 kinds of God and Goddesses are also worshiped with the symbol of *Khangkhla* (a kind of reed plant) plant. *Dwudini* has the main role in the *Kherai* festival from the ancient time. The *Kherai* festival is also worship in two ways in present time like as *Bathwu* worship. The one way of *Kherai* worship is by sacrificing bird/ animal which started from ancient time

and another way of *Kherai* worship is by offering prasad or flowers. At present the two way of *Kherai* worship extant in the society. The *Dularai Bathwu Dhwrwmari Afad* is trying to introduce the way of singing song and playing music's during the worship of *Kherai*. In the *Kherai* festival traditional musical instruments like – *Kham, siphung, serja, jotha* etc. are given important role. From this music the '*Bodo Kristi*' dance are started. Through this *kherai* worship, *phathali* dances and *mantras* the Social customs, beliefs and socio-cultural aspects of the Bodos are reflected.

Like the *Kherai* worship, the *Garza* worship is also worship by the Bodos from ancient time. This festival is also having relations with agriculture and second largest religious festival. The Bodos are belongs to agrarian society. They sustain their life through agriculture and for this the primarily depend on the nature. So, they worship for good crops, for well rain fall during paddy cultivation, for well being of domestic animal and for the protection from various ailments in the village. They worship *Garza* with the hope to live in peace and prosperity and they also worship some evils God and Goddesses to protect from evil spirits. The village women folk have the tradition of going for collecting vegetables and the men folk goes for hunting. These are social and traditional cultural hobby of Bodos. The village people pray to the deity to protect from any misfortune whenever they go for such hunting or vegetable collecting activities. Thus the *Bathwu* worshipper Bodos worship twice in a year and sometimes trice. In *Garza* worship there are 18 kinds of *Garza*, but among them the *Mainao/Lakhi Garza, Bohor Garza* and *Lagamara Garza* were mainly worship. Like the *Kherai* worship the worship of *Garza* is also worship in two ways. The one kind of worship is *Bwlli* which is worshiped by sacrificing bird/animal and another kind of worship is *Bibar* which is worshiped by offering Prasad and flowers.

The *Phuthuli haba* (Doll Marriage) is also one of the socio-religious festivals which have close relation with agriculture. The *Bathwu* worshippers worship this Doll Marriage from ancient time and till now. Just before the sowing of '*Asu*' paddy or plantation of '*Sali*' paddy, they observe this festival. During *Phuthuli Haba* (doll marriage) is also being celebrated by singing song and by dancing step by step like *Kherai* worship. Along with it the practices of teasing each other through dancing and singing is also seen here. That is why Doll marriage is an important part of the Bodo folk culture and tradition. Here, we find the cultural traditions, practices, beliefs, way of living and creative values etc. The ancient story creation of earth can be realized through this Doll's marriage songs.

According to the folk beliefs of the Bodos, if childless people welcome *Deba-Debi* and pray so as to beget child. By taking a '*lotha gwlaol*' (a kind of water pot) in his/her back if someone prays for a baby boy child and if someone prays for a girl child then taking a '*khamphlai*' (a low wooden seat) or '*thwrsi*' (dish) in his/her back he or she get it. Thus at the end of the Doll marriage if people dance by pouring water with a pitcher people get enough rain to lively breezy the paddy field. It is also believed that if the *Deba-Debi* goes floating well, the good fortune comes to the village. If not then fate may be shadow upon them. Floating of peacefully brings peace and harmony, good crops to the village. Hence, it is found that *Kherai* worship and *Phuthuli Haba* both are close related.

The *Phuthuli Haba* is also worshiped in two ways. The one way of worship is old tradition i.e. the *Bwlli* system and another one is *Bibar*, Prasad and by offering a pair of rice-beer only. They worship *Deba-Debi* (Raona-Raoni) by offering a pair of rice-beer and by sacrificing a pair of *Daomasar* (birds). The intestines of *Daomasar* were taken out and its being measure of its length again its intestines an *oma gondra* (a shed for pig) is also being to web one into another. The traditional *Bwlli* system, its belief and traditional marriage system were reflected in the socio-cultural of the Bodos.

The *Bwisagu* is the greatest seasonal and agricultural festival. The *Magw/Domasi* and *Katigasa* are also another important agricultural festival. During *Bwisagu* festival it brings happiness and encourage in the society. *Bwisagu* is a merry-making and enjoyable festival. Singing song and dancing is a major part of *Bwisagu*. Hence, various kinds of songs are singing and dancing in this festival. Social and agrarian life, fishing and hunting, spinning and weaving, social customs, dress and ornaments, love and affection these kind of social pictures are play a major role in *Bwisagu* songs. Among the joking songs, a song singing with joking by mother-in-laws with son-in-laws and sister-in-laws with brother-in-laws are found. These types of songs take a major place in *Bwisagu* songs. The Bodos are rich in traditional musical instruments. Along with singing and dancing some important traditional musical instruments are also used in this festival. The Bodos have a many traditional instruments such as- *kham* (drum), *siphung* (flute), *serja* (violin), *jotha* (cymbal), *gongwna*, *thorkha* etc. are use in *Bwisagu* song and dancing. In this *Bwisagu* festival the Bodos in the first day of festival in "*Sankranti*" collected different kinds of bitter and sour taste of vegetables, cook with *omabedor* (pork) and eat.

Here, it is mentioned that *omabedor* (pork) and *jwu/jumai* (rice-beer) are special food in this *Bwisagu* festival.

The granary and cowshed are important in Bodo society. In the agricultural festival *Magw/Domasi* there is no singing, dancing and no use of music and heavy enjoyment like *Bwisagu* festival. Mainly in this festival there is only enjoyment with food, the food items like- *phitha*, *swurai*, *laru*, *sithao*, *enthap* etc. In this festival the cow boys use to go for begging house to house some food items like- rice, vegetables etc. with these food items the cow boys use to go for picnic. Only a few joking songs are found during this festival because here mainly celebrate with food items.

Another agricultural festival is *Katigasa*. Here, in this festival there is no enjoyment of singing songs, joking, merry-making and also no pomp and glory. Not much eating and drinking is entertained in this festival. During this festival the people were face with crisis of foods. This festival is being worshiped in the paddy field to protect their crops from insects or other pests. During this festival the Bodo cultivators light the *Gasa* (earthen lamp). And pray to Goddess *lakshmi* (*Mainao*). In the time of burning *Gasa* the cultivators or cow boys make jokes and sing among each other. In this festival a few joking songs were found.

Bwirathi, *Jumai* (rice-beer) and *Goi-Phathwi* (betel-nut and betel-leaf) are important in Bodo social marriage. In Bodo marriage the *phwn thakha* (bride price) system is also an important. The *Barlampha* have a major role in ancient Bodo marriage. This *Barlampha* use to carry 'omakhoro' (head of pig) or 'ha' (soil) on his back and by dancing he advice the bride and bridegroom for near future. At present in Bodo marriage the *Barlampha* and his carrying of 'omakhoro'/'ha' are not seen. It is mentioned that the Bodo social marriage is a patriarchal system but from the tradition of Bodo marriage system and songs here we see that the matriarchal system is influential. The Bodo marriage songs are part and parcel of Bodo folk songs and it is created by the substantial folk philosophy. Entertainment and joking songs are mainly taking a major role in Bodo marriage. Traditional musical instruments are use in singing songs. At present these songs were not singing in the marriage. By the changing of time and situations the traditional Bodo marriage system are also changing day by day. Now a day's difference types of marriage ceremony are seen. Presently, mentioned may be made here of the followers of recent

modified “*Bibar Bathou*” worshippers, who use prayer hymns during marriage ceremonies and marriage rites among the Bodos.

In the third chapter discussed about how the social folk customs are reflected in Bodo folk songs. And also mention about the folk belief and traditional knowledge. In Bodo marriage the use of betel-nut and betel-leaf, taking a pair of *Bwirathi* (women attendant), custom of *mamai mara janai/khonnai*, *phwn thakha lanai* (taking bride price) are social custom of Bodos. So, in Bodo marriage there is a social system of betel-nut and betel-leaf’s carried on the shoulder with a pole and taking a pair of *Bwirathi* are play a major role in the *Bwisagu* festival songs. In the marriage if the bride’s family demands more *phwn/gaojwn thakha* (bride price) then during the *Bwisagu* celebration the son-in-law takes advantage of the situation and to father-in-law ironically sing songs. The pork and rice-beer are important traditional foods of Bodo marriage which is found in folk songs. In Bodo marriage some ornaments are given to the bride like- jewellery, perfumes etc. and *dokhona thaosi*. During wedding ceremony the bride’s to be adorned with *dokhona thaosi* because it is a customary law of Bodos. It is a system of Bodo marriage the bride is necessary to wear new *dokhona thaosi*. These traditions are also reflected in the folk songs. Besides this there is a custom of *phathwi lai bisinai* (divorce). After marriage when a couple cannot live a happy life then with the help of society they can goes to *phathwi lai bisinai* or divorce. These customary laws are also reflected in *Bwisagu* songs. Now a days this customs are gradually not practice but some still exist in the Bodo society.

There are rich stocks of folk beliefs in Bodos. The traditional folk customs, religion and culture are reflected in folk beliefs. These folk beliefs, social customs and customary laws keep the society and the people bounded within the social boundary of Bodo society. So, from ancient time even the uneducated people are given advice, suggestion and knowledge with folk beliefs to their young generations. Now a days with the changing of time and situation this kind of believing folk beliefs is decreasing day by day.

In the fourth chapter study was made on the society and oral history in Bodo folk literature. Human beings are social animal. So, they are always dependent on society. Society is a best platform that gives a shape to the people’s livings, demands aspirations, needs and all kinds of growths. Ballad is most important genres of Bodo folk literature. There are no sufficient ballads of the Bodo society. Only a few fragments of ballads are found. Among these fragments of Ballads the Legendary or Historical ballads are mostly

popular. In Mythical ballads the charms or *mantras* of *Kherai* worship and *Phuthuli haba* are mainly found. Dr. Anil Boro, in his article “*Boro Loko-Sahitya*” discussed about Amla Ram Boro and Siba Ram Boro’s ballads were historical or realistic. And *Baobuli Raja*’s (king of wind) ballad was also found as Imaginary or Legendary ballad.

Although the Bodos had a rich tradition of Myths, Legends and Ballad singing in the past, but now a days this tradition is almost dead. A few Myths, in *Kherai* worship and *Phuthuli haba* are narrated. During *Kherai* worship if not narrating a Myth the *Dwudini* do not started the *Kherai*. As for example of Myths, *Magur-Maguri*’s Myth, *Jara Phagla* and *Alari Damra*’s Myths are recounting the origin of *Kherai* worship and dance. The mythical tale of musical instrument *Serja* and *Siphung* are recount myth about musical instruments. The mythical tale of *Raona Raoni* reveals how the primitive Bodo people tried to explain the phenomena of nature. Through these myths are explain the cosmological and supernatural traditions of the Bodos, their gods, heroes, cultural traits, ritual and religious beliefs. These myths play a very important role in validating their culture.

The legends extant among the Bodo society are generally historical as soon as legend about person and place legend. The legend of *Gambari Sikhla*, the legend of *Birgwsri Sikhla*, the legend of *Zaolia Dewan*, the legend of *Daori Sikhla*, the legend of the origin of the place of *Zam Duar*, the legend of the origin of *Birjora*, the legend of *Sikhna Zahar* are such legends. These legends current in Bodo society are as authentic as regional oral history. These are regarded as true by the narrator and the audience and are set in a period considered less remote. These may be regarded as the “verbal equivalent of history”.¹

Work song is an integral part of Bodo folk songs. Cultivation, vegetable collection, wood collection, fishing and hunting, weaving and spinning, rice husking are important social pictures of the Bodo society. Though such songs are sung mainly during the time of work, it reflects the various socio-cultural and traditional customs of the Bodo people. These songs require no musical instrument that sung during the time of working. The lyrics of these songs are full of melody and rhythmic.

Cowboy songs and Lullaby and Nursery Rhymes are also important part of the Bodo folk literature. The cowboy songs mainly sung by cowboys in the field of tending of

¹ Quoted from Boro, Anil. Folk Literature of Bodos. P-251

cows and at the evening when taking their cattle to the cowherd from the grazing field. Sometimes they sing the songs when they feel extreme hot and bore at afternoon during tending time just to make pleasure their mind. Hence, it is to say the cowboy songs also created for the children.

The Bodos had a rich stock of lullaby and nursery rhymes. Mainly lullaby and nursery rhymes are created by imaginary thought and expectation. In these lullaby and nursery rhymes there is only to lull a baby or child but it has no meaningful explanation. These lullaby and nursery rhymes just create rejoicing, encourage of mind and advices norms. In this folk songs sometimes a single words are repeated again and again to make the songs melodious. Now a days this tradition of singing work song, cowboy song, lullaby and nursery rhymes are decrease of the Bodo human society.

On the other hand proverbs are important part of the folk literature. It is found that there are maximum numbers of proverbs of the Bodos are directly related to social system. The Bodos had a rich tradition of proverbs. The proverbs reflected the advice, manner, marriage, religious and deep philosophy, the luck of a person etc. Besides there are many social proverbs also exist in the society.

Riddles are also important genres of the Bodo folk literature. These riddles are short epigrammatic questions asked in a playful contest situation. It is question intended to amuse and puzzle. There are lots of riddles in Bodo society which are prevailing day to day life. These riddles the Bodo traditional socio-cultural pictures are reflecting.

In the chapter fifth study was made on the *Rasas*, *Chandas* and *Alankaras* which are reflecting of the Bodo folk songs. It is mentioned that this chapter is a supporting chapter of this study. In literature there are nine kinds of *Rasas* (passion). But all these *Rasas* are not reflecting in Bodo folk songs. So, in this chapter discussed mainly which reflected in Bodo folk songs. In Bodo folk song the reflecting *Rasas* are- Love, Heroic, Pathetic, Quietistic and Comic passion. The Love passion is broadly taking place in the Bodo folk songs. Some songs which is singing in Bwisagu festival, in paddy field, weaving and spinning, cleaning threshold etc. the Love passion were reflect. In the ballad of *Basiram Zwhwlao* and *Daoharam Zwhwlao* the Heroic passion are reflected. Sometimes when a person feels unsuccessful in his/her mind in the time of Bwisagu festival he or she began to sing a tragedy song to remove his/her sadness. In this kind of song pathetic passion are reflected. Some songs are created with motherland or nature in Bodo folk songs and in this

songs Quietistic passions are reflected. The songs which sing in *Bwisagu* and *Magw* festival the Comic passion are reflected in Bodo folk songs. For example in joking songs like- a song between a young boy and girl, mother-in-laws and son-in-laws, brother-in-laws and sister-in-laws etc.

The *Chandas* (Rhythm) are used in the Bodo folk songs like the poetry or literature. It is mentioned that all kinds of *chandas* are not reflecting in the Bodo folk songs. So, here discussed only about which are *chandas* reflecting in the Bodo folk songs. i.e. *poyar/pod chanda*, *dulori chanda*, *jhuna chanda*, *jhumuri chanda* and *kusummala chanda*. Therefore in every Bodo folk songs the last letter of stanzas is to assimilate. This *Chandas* assimilation is making the songs hearing melodious and beautiful. In Bodo folk songs this assimilation is the worth mentioning genre. It is noticeable that in Bodo folk songs, sometimes going to be assimilate the *Chandas* some different dissimilar objects or words are also assimilate in the Bodo folk songs. The songs like- *Bwisagu* festival, marriage, work song, cowboy songs, lullaby and nursery rhymes, joking songs etc. the *Chandas* assimilation occurs. Sometimes the *Chandas* are assimilations the two lines or a stanzas. So, this *Chandas* or Rhythmic assimilation is the special character of the Bodo folk songs.

On the other hand the *Alankaras* are also used in the Bodo folk songs like the literature. The *Alankaras* can be divided into two types and these two types have also some branches. But there is difference between literature *Alankaras* and folk songs *Alankaras*. There are a lot of *Alankaras* in literature but in the Bodo folk songs all types of *Alankaras* are not used. So, in this study discussed about only a few *Alankaras* which are reflected in Bodo folk songs. The *Gwrwb hangkhw gohena* (Adjustable letter), *Bikhonle gohena* (Pun), *Rijainai gohena* (Comparisim) are mainly reflected in the Bodo folk songs. This *Alankaras* are sometimes used in first stanza of a song, sometimes in middle stanza and in the last stanza of a song.

The sixth or final chapter is the concluding remarks and summary of the whole study. In this chapter an attempt has been made to include the findings of the study and along with the observations. It is to say that the Bodo folk literature is very important part of Bodo society. It has been seen that a few documents of preservation and records of the Bodo folk literature and some extant among the society. It is difficult to find out the origin of Bodo folk literature. The Bodo folk songs mainly depend on socio-cultures, festivals,

religious worship, customs, traditional beliefs, agricultural fields etc. The Bodos are rich in folk literature. But the Bodo human society is delayed to preserve the Bodo folk literature.