

## CHAPTER: II

### RITES AND RITUALS IN THE LIFE CYCLE OF THE BODOS

The life cycle of human being is considered as the series of stages that man passes through starting with birth and ending with death. The rites of passages of man have been harmonized by a number of rites, rituals and ceremonies since long time. It signifies that the rites and ceremonies marked the transition in the life cycle of a man in different stages like pregnancy, birth, childhood, marriage, death etc. Arnold Van Gennep asserted that separation, alteration and return (separation, inclusion-transformation and come back) to the society are three steps of the ceremonies, the form of which repeatedly be different however, their function is same. The individual life cycle of the Bodos is control through their own traditional customs which connected various rites, rituals and ceremonies.<sup>1</sup> The life cycle of the Bodos can be discussed under the following heads:

#### **1. *Gwrbwao Thanai*:**

*Gwrbwao Thanai* is called pregnancy in Bodo. It is a combination of two words i.e. *Gwrbw* and *Thanai*. *Gwrbw* means womb and *Thanai* indicates conception. Normally, life cycle begins with conception but in general it starts with birth. Earlier, there was no modern hospital and doctor to detect the conception of pregnancy of a woman. They practiced the traditional method for confirming pregnancy of a woman such as the stoppage of menstrual cycle after the two or three months in her marital life, tendency of vomiting, avoiding of food, growth and changes of breasts and abdomen.<sup>2</sup>

When such symptoms are found by a married woman, she is immediately brought to the notice of her husband as well as her mother-in-law or any elder female members of the family or nearest relatives or her own mother.<sup>3</sup> To confirm the pregnancy of a woman, elder female members of the family who possessed the knowledge on it, observed carefully the stoppage of menstrual cycle, vomiting tendency and other changes in her body. If the expert female member is absent in the family, any female member of the village who possessed full knowledge of detecting pregnancy is consulted for the confirmation of the conception.<sup>4</sup> During the time of pregnancy, the Bodos performed the following rituals:

### **1.1. *Bathou Kulumnai*:**

*Bathou Kulumnai* means the worship of *Bathou*. It is performed when the pregnancy is confirmed. The required items for *Bathou Kulumnai* are as follows:

- (a) *Thalir Bilai* (banana leaf)
- (b) *Alari Bathi* (earthen lamp)
- (c) *Goi Phithai* (areca nut)
- (d) *Phathwi* (betel leaf)
- (e) *Dwi Gwthar* (holy water)
- (f) *Thulsi* (basil)
- (g) *Thao Gubwi* (mustard oil)
- (h) *Dhup* (incense stick)
- (i) *Gaiker* (milk)

In this ritual, the pregnant woman has to worship the Supreme God and goddess i.e. *Bathou Bwrai* and *Bathou Buri* as well as *Noaoni Mwdai* (other household gods and goddesses) by offering the above mentioned items in which she informed about her conception and seeking their blessings for her child with the following words:<sup>5</sup>

*Hey Bathou Bwrai,*

*Ang sase bima janw nagirnai hinjao,*

*Angni gotokao jwnwm jajasim rwikha kalam,*

*Gajri barhaoya danangtwng, angni gotoya bengura-benguri dajatwng,*

*Nwngni onnaiyaonw gahamwi-gaham ujifwiyw,*

*Bekaonw ang nwng Anan Gossainao aroj gabw.*

*Hey apha Bwrai Bathou,*

*Apa Iswr, nwng angni aroj gabnaikao onnanwi najaoyw.*

Free English translation:

Oh Supreme god *Bwrai Bathou*,

I am going to become a mother,

Save my child till its birth,

Keep away from the evil spirit, not to be a handicap,

In your kindness its birth comes smoothly.

So that I pray to you,

Oh father, *Bwrai Bathou*

Hey supreme god, kindly accepts my prayer.

## **1.2. *Hagrani Mwdai Gwjnhwnai:***

*Hagrani Mwdai* is considered as evil spirit. The Bodo word *Hagra* means jungle and *Mwdai* denotes devil or evil spirit. *Gwjnhwnai* indicates propitiation. So *Hagrani Mwdai Gwjnhwnai* is the act of appeasing the evil spirit. It is believed that *Hagrani Mwdai* gives harmful or worst to pregnant woman as well as the child who is in the womb. So, the Bodos tried to keep away the expected mother and the child from *Hagrani Mwdai*. If the pregnant woman faces such problem i.e. the influence of *Hagrani Mwdai*, a *Dwori* or *Oja* is consulted by the family members for the purpose of propitiation by

way of offering and sacrifice with the aim not to cause further trouble or harm to the pregnant woman. The following items are arranged for offering:<sup>6</sup>

- (a) *Thalir Bilai* (banana leaf)
- (b) *Alari Bathi* (an earthen pot for illumination)
- (c) *Goi Phithai* (areca nut)
- (d) *Phathwi* (betel leaf)
- (e) *Dwi Gwthar* (holy water)
- (f) *Thulsi* (basil)
- (g) *Thao Gubwi* (mustard oil)
- (h) *Dhup* (insane stick)
- (i) *Gaiker* (milk)

In the initial stage of pregnancy, the pregnant woman is advised not to work hard labour or any kind of forceful work. It is believed that if such kind of work is done by pregnant woman her fetus may get trouble and it might be cause miscarriage. She is allowed to do any kind of work which may not cause danger to her as physical exercise. When her fetus is strong enough to be stay in her womb and fully developed, the expectant mother is permitted to conduct all kind of household activities but should be stay away from the hard work which may cause hazard to her and her baby.<sup>7</sup>

### **1.3. *Gwrbwao Thanai Arw Sangrangthi Lakinai:***

*Gwrbwao Thanai Arw Sangrangthi Lakinai* is the restrictions of food of the pregnancy. An expectant mother is continuously advised strictly by her grandmother, mother-in-law, own mother as well as by elderly women to observe taboos and restrictions relating to pregnancy in order to avoid any kind of complicacy. Not only the pregnant woman but also her husband is required to follow certain social rules and regulation relating to the pregnancy. In Bodo word the prohibition is called as *Hama*. Following are the taboos which the concern couple should be maintained strictly:

### 1.3.1. Restriction of food:

- (a) Eating of twin banana or any kind of double fruits is prohibited for expectant mother. It is believed that if the pregnant woman consumed such fruits she will give the birth twin.
- (b) The expectant mother is not allowed to eat of bitter things; sour food, hot chili, etc.
- (c) Egg is also not permitted to eat considering that expectant mother might be born dumb child.
- (d) The expectant mother is completely banned from cutting any fruit in two pieces. It is believed that the womb of pregnant woman would be crush or missed the child.<sup>8</sup>

### 1.3.2. Social Restrictions:

- (a) Killing of any animal or living being is disallowed for both expectant father and mother.
- (b) The pregnant woman is restricted from looking and touching corpse.
- (c) Visiting to the place of disposal of dead body or graveyard or cremation ground is also not allowed to expectant mother.
- (d) The expectant mother is permitted to see and touch the dead body if her own husband or her own mother, father, mother-in-law, father-in-law or nearest blood relatives died. In this case, purification should be done in front of the *Bathou* with the help of *Dwori* or *Oja* to purify herself for breaking the taboo.<sup>9</sup>
- (e) Sitting on double tools is forbidden to expectant mother believing that if she seat on such tools, twin child may be born.
- (f) The pregnant woman is also advised not to talk on the subject matters like evil spirits and devils believing that the evil spirits or devils may create harmful to fetus as well as may generate problems during delivery.
- (g) Talking and thinking of blind, handicap, psychopathic, dead etc. are completely barred to expectant mother believing that such negative words and thoughts would effect to fetus which may lead to be born blind,

handicap or psychopathic baby or death or may cause hitch at the time of delivery to both mother and child.

It is believed that if the expected mother as well as father has violated the taboos and restrictions, they may face some serious consequences or troubles during the time of delivery or may affect to the fetus also. The death of either mother or newly born baby or both at the time of child birth is called *Sor Nangnai*<sup>10</sup> among the Bodos. B. H. Hudgson reported that deliveries are almost always very easy and death in childbirth is known hardly.<sup>11</sup> However, *Sor Nangnai* became very common in past days. Even today also such incidents are occurred but become very rare as a result of modern medical facilities.

According to the tradition of Bodos, when expectant mother is about to give birth, a drink called *Jwo* or *Jumai* (rice-beer) is prepared by the family for offering to the midwives and other old women of the village who are associated during the delivery. The tradition for offering *Jwo* or *Jumai* to the midwife and other village women is mainly conducted in the evening. However, nowadays, such old age tradition has been discarded by some of the Bodos because of the influence of the other cultures and modernization.<sup>12</sup>

#### **1.4. *Gothoni Athwn Thi Kalamnai*:**

*Gothoni Athwn Thi Kalamnai* is the determination of sex of unborn baby. Before the delivery, the Bodos observed the following signs and symptoms for the determination of sex of unborn baby. They are as follows:

- (a) When the expectant mother gets labour pain in normal condition, the unborn child may be expected as female.
- (b) The unborn baby may be a boy if the expectant mother gets labour pain beyond normal condition.
- (c) The unborn child may be expected as a girl if the expectant mother and father have dreamed like husking rice, weaving or doing activities of female.<sup>13</sup>

## 2. *Ujinai*:

The Bodo word *Ujinai* denotes child birth. In Bodo, child birth is also known as *Gotho Jaginai* or *Phisa Jaginai*.<sup>14</sup> *Jwnwm* or *Jormo* is considered as the word of other community and not an original word of Bodos. This word is probably come from the other neighbouring communities like Assamese, Bengali etc. When the expectant mother feels labour pain, first she informs to her husband about her condition. Just after getting the information from her wife, the expectant father goes to the old women folks of the village for seeking their help and co-operation during the delivery. When he is seeking the help of the elderly women, he used to say the following words:<sup>15</sup>

*Ai fwi afa fwi*

*Khoroni jengsikhou bwkharfivi.*

Free English Translation:

Come, oh! Mother, oh! Father,

Remove the load from my head.

For the delivery of the child, an elderly woman of the village performs the duties of midwife who possessed good knowledge and experience of child birth. Other elderly women of the village also gathered and helped each other during delivery. B. H. Hodgson stated that at the time of delivery, any midwife was not required as mother did everything without the help of anyone.<sup>16</sup> However, the statement given by B. H. Hodgson may be in some exceptional cases. It cannot be considered as general practice as we noticed that at the time of delivery, midwife or elderly woman who possessed good knowledge of delivery is always present. Besides midwife, other village women are also co-operated in the delivery.

### 2.1. *Jaajha Ujinai*:

Twin birth is known as *Jaajha Ujinhai*. *Jaajha* means twin and the *Ujinai* signify birth. The occurrence of twin birth is very rare in Bodo society. When twin-birth take

place, the first born baby is considered as younger and the second born baby is considered as eldest.<sup>17</sup> In Rongmei society, mother gave breast feeding one after another to the twin baby. When one of twin is dead, another one is kept inside the sink of basket at the house of neighbor till funeral ceremony is completed. This is done to prevent from taking away the survive one by the deceased.<sup>18</sup> However, such tradition is not seen among the Bodos.

Generally, delivery or child birth took place on a *Dhara* (bamboo mat) which was covered by a cloth on it in the early days. *Uwal* was used to take position of expectant mother to push herself strongly. After the delivery, the following rituals have been executed by the Bodos since the ancient days.

## **2.2. Gothosa Phwtharnai:**

*Gothosa Phwtharnai* means purification of newly born baby. The Bodos considered newly born baby as impure so purification ritual is performed when child is born. For the purpose of purification ceremony, the baby is given bath with warm water by the mother. If the mother's health is not good and unable to give bath her baby, in such case the bathing of the baby is started first by the mother and the rest of the bathing by midwife or any women but they should not be widow. It is believed that a mother is impure when she give birth her child as a result of which she needs clean and change her dress. After bathing, newly born baby is laid on a *Songrai* (winnowing fan) which is covered with a soft cloth on it and kept it in front of *Noma No* (main house). A glass of *Dwi Gwthar* (holy water) is made ready with some pieces of conch grasses, one branch of basil leaves and a ring of gold. If gold is not available, conch grass is used as a ring. Then the new baby is purified by sprinkling with holy water by a female member of the *Narzari* clan as *Narzari* group is regarded as priestly class or any female member but not a widow with the following words:<sup>19</sup>

*Oi gwdansa goto,*

*Nwngba gwdw mamwn,*



*Bangal na Jungal,*

*Garo na Gongar,*

*Harsha na Mephal mwn?*

*Dinwiniprai Bodo jabai.*

Free English translation:

Oh new child,

Whatever you before,

Be a *Bangal* or a *fungal*,

A *Garo* or a *Gongar*,

A *Harsa* or a *Mephal*?

From this day you have become a Bodo.

To introduce the newly born baby to the *Bathou Bwrai* and *Bathou Buri*, a ritual which is known *Duari Hwnai* is performed. In this ritual, a chicken is sacrificed in front of *Noma No* (main house). At the time of sacrificed the father of the new baby has to recite the following word:<sup>20</sup>

*Nwi manni Agduari,*

*Nwngtangni onnaijwng*

*Hwoasa/hinjaosa goto mwnbai.*

*Nwngtangnw bini takai*

*Dao tekra hwbai,*

*Hw giri nwnng, kangnw hwdw.*

Free English Translation:

Oh! Respected *Agduari* (God),  
 With your kind and blessing  
 We have got a boy/girl child.  
 Thou for this  
 We have sacrificed a small chicken,  
 As you are the giver, let us adopt the child.

### **2.3. *Uthumwi Hanai*:**

A ritual for the cutting of umbilical cord is performed by the Bodos which is known as *Uthumwi Hanai*. The navel-cord is cut with *Owa Theol* (sharp-edged slip of bamboo) after birth. It is stated that the green bamboo should be used to make the blade.<sup>21</sup> Medini Chudhury viewed that cutting of navel cord is done by a bamboo blade which made from the bamboo post of the labour house.<sup>22</sup>

Before cutting the umbilical cord, the cord is tied with cotton or muga-silk thread at suitable place and then cutting of the cord is done. For male baby, the cord is tied five times whereas six or seven times for female baby.<sup>23</sup> Rev. Sindy Endle asserted that without using iron and steel, only bamboo blade was used for cord cutting by the Bodos.<sup>24</sup> He further stated that different blades were used during the cord cutting as five different bamboo blades for male baby and seven different bamboo blades for female baby.<sup>25</sup>

The duty for cutting umbilical cord should be acted by a woman who is not a widow. It is believed that if the cord is cut by the widow, the child may have short life. In the beliefs of Bodos, there are three types of hands i.e. sweet, bitter and sour in cutting the umbilical cord. Bitter hand is considered as the best for cutting the cord with the belief that if the umbilical cord is cut by this type of hand, there will be no infections, no longer wounded, etc. and will dry soon the cut area.<sup>26</sup> The practice of *Uthumwi Hanai* is

becoming rare due to the modern medical facilities but in some area the practice of cutting of umbilical cord with the traditional method is still found.

#### **2.4. *Jwr Phobnai:***

The Bodo word *Jwr Phobnai* is known as burial of placenta. *Jwr* means placenta and *Phobnai* indicates buried. The burial place of placenta is in front of *Noma No* (main house). Before burying the placenta, a place is dug in front of *Noma No* with the depth of about half feet or more. After the completion of digging, the father of child buried the placenta. The buried of placenta is done gently but not hurriedly. Otherwise, the child may cause frequent seizures in future.<sup>27</sup> When remaining cord of the child is dried and falls off, it is put in an empty *Empwo Phithwb* (cocoon of silk worm) and sealed it. Later on, sealed *Empwo Phithwb* is wearing on the neck of the baby with the belief that by doing so the baby will be protected from all kind of diseases and unexpected dread.<sup>28</sup>

#### **2.5. *Mung Dwnnai:***

*Mung Dwnnai* is the name giving ceremony of the Bodos. It is an important ceremony in the life cycle of the Bodos which is done just after the delivery of child or after few days of the birth. Earlier, the parents of the baby gave the name of their child. *Mung Dwnnai* ceremony is done without any rites and rituals by the family concern on any day as per their wish. Sometimes the grandfather or grandmother or relatives of the family choose the child's name.<sup>29</sup> The child's name is chosen on the basis of the physical appearance of the baby, day of birth etc. In the Bodo society, a child whose nose is big, the names like *Hongla, Thopsa, Nagra*, etc. is given. in case of male child and names like *Hongle, Thopsi, Nable* etc. in the case of female. The name *Jarau, Gaodang, Rani, Rupa* etc. are given to the white and ruddy complexion female child and *Raja, Babu, Sona* etc. for male child.<sup>30</sup> Nowadays, many parents have started consultation with astrologer for naming their children.

## 2.6. *Dwi Sarnai*:

The Bodo word *Dwi Sarnai* connotes sprinkle of holy water to a newly born baby. This ritual is performed after two or three month from the day of child birth or any convenient day within a year. In this ceremony, the family of the child organized a feast for those persons who have rendered their service during the child birth. The grant-father and grant-mother of the child are also invited in this ceremony. On that day, a large quantity of *Jwo-Bidwi* (rice-beer), *Oma Bedor* (pork), *Dao-Bedor* (chicken), *Na* (fish), rice etc. are offered those who are attended in that ceremony. The motive for the performance of the *Dwi Sarnai* is to get blessing from those people who are attended in grant feast for the long life of the child. The invitees give blessing to the child with the following words:<sup>31</sup>

*Anan Gossaia nwngkhao gidir-gwlao khalamthwng,*

*Somaina khalamthwng, jiw gwlaow jathwng,*

*Leka-pora gwrwng jeraobw akha-pakha khalamthwng.*

*Hey bhogoban, jwngni gothoya boynikhruibw sabsin jathwng.*

Free English translation:

The god makes you a good one.

Handsome, long life,

Learned and smart in everywhere.

Hey god, our child be the best among all.

## 2.7. *Khwma Thuplongnai*:

*Khwma Thuplongnai* means ear perforation. *Khwma* stand for ear and *Thuplongnai* indicates perforation. This ceremony is performed simply with a needle at the very early age to use the ornaments by any elder woman or mother of the girl. An

elderly woman or mother perforates the ear of female baby with the help of a needle at the tender age for the use of ornament in future.<sup>32</sup> After perforation, a broom stick made of straw which is called *Hashib Gonsi* in Bodo is fix on the hole of the ear till the wound become dry. The Bodo girls or female child wears ornaments of gold or silver on their ear. They also wear the ornaments on neck, ear, nose, hands and fingers. In the early days, male child did not use ornaments as the girl did.

### **2.8. *Wngkham Dwonai*:**

Feeding ceremony is called *Wngkham Dwonai* by the Bodos. It is observed when the baby attains seven months. For this, a ceremony called *Besad Dangnai*<sup>33</sup> (touching things) is performed in the house of the child. First the cooked rice is offered to the household deities with the help of *Oja* and after that the mother of the baby started feeding solid food to her child for first time. The first feeding ceremony is not compulsory but it can be performed by anyone who desire to do so. But it is the fact that first feeding of the solid food to the child is required when the baby attain at age of six or seven months because the child is not satisfied with the mother's milk which is supported by R. N. Mushahary.<sup>34</sup> For the *Wngkham Dwonai* ceremony the parent of the child invited relatives and offer food to them. In the performance of this ceremony a priest recites mantras and things such as books, clothes, foods, coins, etc. are kept at the courtyard for touching by the baby with the belief that if the baby touches any one of the item he or she may go on that way what the baby touched.<sup>35</sup>

### **2.9. *Kanai Sinnai*:**

The Bodo word *Kanai Sinnai* is known as hair cutting. This ceremony is observed rarely by the Bodos. The first born male child is allowed to keep long hair for one or two years and the maternal uncle is invited on a fix date by the parents of the child for cutting the long hair of child in the presence of the relatives and villagers. Sometimes, the maternal uncle of the baby simply starts the cutting of hair and the rest is completed by barber. *Kanai Sinnai* is performed with the offering of food which includes a large

amount of *Jwo Gisi* (rice-bear), *Oma Bedor* (fork), rice, etc. to the invitees and relatives.<sup>36</sup>

### **3. *Haba*:**

Marriage is known as *Haba* in Bodo. It is a combination of two words i.e. *Ha* and *Ba*. *Ha* is equal to soil or Earth and *Ba* means to bear something on the back. So *Haba* specifies to bear soil or responsibility of the earth on the back.<sup>37</sup> *Haba* is one of the essential and unavoidable part in social life of the Bodos. It is also known as one of the most important institutions which permit man and woman to family life and to have children by involving the right of sexual relationship. Dr. Oinam Ranjit Singh says that in human society the establishment of the institution of marriage is a unique. In earlier period, human being survived more or less like any other animal and sex life was absolutely free. Therefore, only the maternity could be experimented alone and paternity could not be recognized. The only way to know the paternity of children would be exclusive union of man and woman. The only aim to understand the fatherhood of children lay in the seed of marriage institution.<sup>38</sup> D. N. Majumdar and T. N. Madan reported that every kind of human grouping comes into being, and is maintained, through a process of conscription by which various persons become its members. In every human family, the majority of its members are recruited into it by being born into it. But before child is born, some women in patrilocal societies; man in matrilocal societies are employed into it. A family comes into being through such a communication of spouses. Marriage is the socially recognized form of such recruitment through communication.<sup>39</sup> From the view of L. H. Morgan we can also understand that in the beginning there was no marriage institution among the human beings. From promiscuity, human society grew into group marriages. At that stage, all the brothers of a family used to marry all sisters of another family so that every male family was equally the husband of every female and vice-versa. In the last stage of marriage man could marry more than one women and the stage of monogamy preceded polygamy.<sup>40</sup> The marriage institution evolved through various stages at different places of human civilization which came into materializes in different forms of marriage.<sup>41</sup>

About the polyandry practiced there is no evidence of practiced of polyandry among the Bodos. Even there are no available sources of oral and literary which can furnish the information of polyandry practice. The renowned scholars like Sekhar Brahma<sup>42</sup> and Premalata Devi<sup>43</sup> commented that the polyandry system was absolutely absent in the Bodo society.

It may be concluded that the Bodos rarely practice the polygamy. The Bodo society does not encourage having of more than one wife. However, it is seen that some of the Bodos married more than one wife because of some reasons or condition but in general the Bodos are not polygamous. No doubt, a Bodo may marry more than one wife if his first wife has no son. The custom of the Bodos permits to marry more than one wife when there is absence of male child to the first wife. It is because the son will succeed to the property of the parents. It is also said that polygamy is found among the high class and wealthy people like Zamindars, Mandals, Mauzadars etc.<sup>44</sup>

In the words of B. N. Bordoloi, G. C. Sarma Thakur and M. C. Saikia monogamy is the highest and noblest among the three forms of marriage i.e. polyandry, polygamy and monogamy. Thus, monogamy is socially accepted and approved form of betrothal among the Bodos.<sup>45</sup>

The following are the form of marriage of the Bodos which have been practiced since ancient days:<sup>46</sup>

- (a) *Swngnanwi Lainai Haha* (arranged marriage)
- (b) *Hinjao Bwnai Haba* (marriage by capture)
- (c) *Kharsonai Haba* (the girls flee away to the boy's house)
- (d) *Dwnkharnai Haba* (marriage by elopement)
- (e) *Gwrjia Haba* (matrilocal Marriage where bridegroom used to stay at the house of bride) and
- (f) *Dongkha Habnai Haba* (widow re-marriage).

*Dongkha Habnai Haba* and *Gwrjia Haba* are considered as matriarchal system of marriage and rest are patriarchal one. The Bodo society does not encourage *Hinjao*

*Bwnai Haba*, *Kharsonnai Haba* and *Dwankharnai Haba* though these are also performed but not in regular. Dr. K. Brahma<sup>47</sup>, Rev. Sidney Endle<sup>48</sup>, Bhaben Narzi<sup>49</sup> and Binoy Kumar Brahma<sup>50</sup> are also stated that these marriages system are irregular or illegal in the Bodo society.

**(a). *Swngnanwi Lainai Haba*:**

*Swngnanwi Lainai Haba* is the Bodo word which denotes arrange marriage. This type of marriage is the most approved form of marriage among the Bodos right from the ancient days. In this form of the marriage, the mutual agreement of both the parents of boy and girl are required in which the consent of the boy and girl is not taken into account as an important. However, opinion of girl's parents is considered the most essential than the consent of parents of the boy because request comes first from the side of boy's parents.<sup>51</sup> The processes of *Swngnanwi Lainai Haba* are as follows:

- (i) *Asan Suri Thebnai* or *Asan Suri Langnai* (carrying of bracelets)
- (ii) *Gongkhon Hwnai* (giving bracelets)
- (iii) *Goi Khaonai* (cutting of betel nut)
- (iv) *Biban Langnai* (carrying of earthen pitcher)
- (v) *Kobira Tangnai* (fixing of marriage date)and
- (vi) *Hinjao Gwdan Lainai* (bringing of bridegroom).

*Asan Suri Thebnai* or *Asan Suri Langnai* is the first step of *Swngnanwi Lainai Haba*. For the proposal of the marriage, a party of boy's parent's numbering three or five along with *Gothokdhar*<sup>52</sup> will proceed to the house of the bride without giving any information to the bride's family member.<sup>53</sup> The party used to carry a pair of *Asan Suri Jorase* (a pair of silver bracelets), *Goi* (areca nuts), *Phathwi* (betel leaves), *Jwo Bidwi Gongnwi* (two bottle of rice beer) and *Rang Jora* (a pair of silver one rupees coins) in order to make a proposal for marriage where they make a request the hand of the expected bride. They also further observed whether the bride house is under normal condition or not.<sup>54</sup> After that, the *Gothokdhar* is conveyed to the parents of the girl with following words:<sup>55</sup>



*Jerao thuri nuyw beyaonw bati garw,*

*Jerao jwn nuyw beonw goi kithwo garw.*

Free English translation:

Where there is thatch, a piece of stick dropped,

Where there is a girl, top portion of areca nuts are placed.

After listening the proverb cited by the *Gothokdhar*, girl's parents asked the boy's party to enter the house to discuss the matter. Before leaving the house of the girl, the party of boy's side used to keep *Assan Suri Jora* (a pair of bracelet) under the roof of verandah of *Noma No* (main house) to understand the consent of girl's parents. When the *Assan Suri Jora* is not return within a week from the date of approach of the boy's party, it is assumed that the parent of the girl agreed the marriage proposal.<sup>56</sup> A pre-marriage ceremony called *Gongkhon Hwnai* is organized before final settlement of marriage in which parents of the bridegroom go to the house of the bride along with a pair of silver bracelets and two bottle of rice beer. Carried items are left to the house of bride.

A ceremony called *Goi Khaonai* (cutting betel-nut) is organized after the final settlement of marriage. Here, parents of the boy along with friends and relatives proceeded with betel nuts to the house of bride where they have to cut betel nuts and distributed to the members present. In some areas, the bride price as well as date of marriage is also fixed on the day of *Goi Khaonai* ceremony.<sup>57</sup> Nowadays, *Goi Khaonai* ceremony seems to be disappeared in the Bodo society.

After *Goi Khaonai*, *Biban Langnai* ceremony is performed by the bridegroom's party. In this ceremony, two earthen pitchers are carried by a person known as *Barlangpha* who should not be widower. In one of the earthen pitcher sun's picture is painted and in another one the picture of moon is painted. The pot with the sun picture is filled the tea leaves and another pot with the moon picture is filled sugar. In *Biban Langnai* ceremony, rice beer, areca nuts, betel leaves and pork are also brought to the house of the bride by the bridegroom's party. The items carried by them are collectively

known as *Biban*.<sup>58</sup> The *Biban* (two earthen pitchers) is carried by *Barlangpha*. Areca-nuts and betel-leaves are carried by two female members known as *Bwirathi*. The *Bwirathies* should not be widows. After reaching bride's house, *Barlangpha* placed all the items carried for the purpose in front of the door of *Noma No*. Two *Bwirathi* started cutting areca-nuts, betel-leaves and distributed among the member presented in the bride's house. This ceremony is conducted along with articles brought by boy's parents. In the marriage system of Bodos, the roles of *Barlangpha* and two *Bwirathi* are very essential and not ignorable. Attended persons are assumed by *Barlangpha* and *Bwirathi* in the ceremony. In early days, on the occasion of *Biban Langnai*, a pig was equally cut into two parts. One part was given to the parents of bride and another part was kept for bridegroom family. The cutting of pork into equal parts is known as *Omakhopthang*.<sup>59</sup> But nowadays this practice is rarely seen in the society.

The pot which is painted with of moon is brought back by bridegroom party and the painted of the picture of sun is left at the residence of bride at the end of *Biban Langnai* ceremony. When *Biban Langnai* ceremony has performed, it is assumed that the marriage is almost settled. The villagers of the bride are entertained by offering areca-nuts, betel leaves and pork and the final settlement of the marriage is also done. At the same time, *Goi Khithou Garkwnai*<sup>60</sup> i.e. throwing of areca nut on the roof of main house ceremony is also conducted. But this practice is rarely seen in the Bodo society as many of the Bodos have been stopped this old age tradition.

The *Biban Langnay* is followed by *Khobira Langnay*.<sup>61</sup> In the *Khobira Langnai* ceremony, date of the marriage, the items required in the marriage and conditions relating to the marriage have been fixed. Areca nuts, betel leaves and rice beer will bring by the parent's party to the house of the bride. They never solemnize the marriage ceremony in the month of *Chaitra*. There is a folk song about the selection of the time for the marriage ceremony. The Bodo ladies dance together and sing the following song:<sup>62</sup>

*Haba junglab, junglab, Sanba gwlaoni dinao. Ukum mudani silimala,wi hwoyua gwdan nwngni jouyalai melema, melema. Enjur goblongni gwmwting, wi hwoya gwdan, wi hwoya gwdan nwngni habani bedora oma buroni.*

Free English translation:

Your marriage has taken place in the season of long days. The centipede of roof, oh! Bridegroom your wine is inadequate. The cockroach of wall hole of the hut, oh! Bridegroom your pork of marriage is of old age female pig.

The Bodos considered Sunday as the best day for the marriage ceremony. No marriage is fixed on Saturday and Tuesday. After the fixation of the marriage date, a pre-marriage ceremony which is known *Swmwndw Phirainai*<sup>63</sup> (establishment of new matrimonial relationship) is held. This ceremony is conducted at the residence of the bride with the help of *Dwori* or *Oja*. The bride arranged the following items for *Swmwndw Phirainai*:

- (i) *Jorase Thalir Bilai* (a pair of banana leaf)
- (ii) *Alari Bathi Gongnwi* (two nos. earthen pot for illumination)
- (iii) *Joranwi Goi Phithai* (two pair of areca nut)
- (iv) *Joranwi Phathwi* (two pair of betel leaf)
- (v) *Dwi Gwthar* (holy water)
- (vi) *Thulsi Denta Mwnse* (a branch of basil)
- (vii) *Thamani Lotha Gongse* (a bronze glass)
- (viii) *Bibar Joramwi* (two pair of flower)
- (ix) *Gwdan Solai Kobse* (an unused match box)
- (x) *Dhup* (insane stick)
- (xi) *Gangnwi Sima* (a pair of cloth)
- (xii) *Gangnwi Bostha* (a pair of thread mat)

For the purpose of the ceremony, a place in the middle of the courtyard is plastered with water and the items mention above except the *Gangnwi Bostha* (a pair of thread mat) are kept on the two banana leafs and placed on the plastered area of the

courtyard. The parents of the expected bride and bridegroom sit on the *Bosthas* which covered with *Sima* (homemade cloth) face to face i.e. the parent of the expected groom sit facing to west whereas bride's parent used to sit facing to the east.<sup>64</sup> If father of the bride or bridegroom is absent, any male member of the concern family is allowed to perform the duties of the father in the ritual.

The offering is made to the *Bathou* with lightening two *Alari Bathi. Dwori* or *Oja* sprinkled holy water on both parents reciting the following words:<sup>65</sup>

*Dohai apha Bwrai Bathou,*

*Dinwini gwtar sanao,*

*Amuk (name of the village) gamini manao geder*

*Amwkhani (name of the groom's father) dersin phisajla*

*Mushri amuk (name of the groom) arw*

*Amuk (name of the bride village)*

*Gamini manao geder amwkhani*

*(name of the bride father) duisin*

*Phisajwni gwthar julikhou nwnng*

*Habani octokwo tik kalamnai jabai.*

*Da bininw swmwndw pirainai*

*Habaparikwo lanai jabai*

*He apha Bwrai bathou,*

*Dinwi nwngekwo saki lananwi*

*Nwnngi katiyao aroj gabnanwi*

*Gwdwni swmwndwkwo garnanwi*

*Gwdan swmwndw kalamnw labia*

*Nwngkwonw saki lananwi*

*Hwoyani bipha arw hinjaoni biphakwo*

*Biyai bibiyai swmwndw hwnai jabai.*

*Nwng apha iswra jahate*

*Biswrni swmwndw pirainaikwo najaoyw*

*Arw bwr sarsrihori.*

*Gole gole kulumw nwngkwo*

*Apha Bwrai Bathou.*

The ritual signified the establishment of a new matrimonial relationship between the two families of the expected bride and bridegroom. After recitation the mantras, the *Dwori* or *Oja* hands over the offering items to the fathers of both bride and bridegroom. The offering items are exchanged seven times repeatedly and both the parents of expected bride and bridegroom cuddle each other. All the member present in this ritual are offered *Oma Bedor* (pork) or *Dao Bedor* (chicken), *Jwo Gisi* (rice beer), *Engkham* (rice) etc. by the father of the expectant bridegroom. The new relationship between the parents of the two families is known as *Bibiyai* and *Bijwmai*.<sup>66</sup>

**(b). *Hinjao Bwnai Haba*:**

*Hinjao Bwnai Haba* is marriage by capture. In this form of marriage, a man capture a girl without the consent of the girl or her family and get marry. This kind of marriage is equivalent with the *Raksasa* form of Hindu marriage. In earlier days, this type of marriage was very common in every community. Rev. Sidney Endle says that such form

of marriage was prevalent among the Bodos in ancient time.<sup>67</sup> But with the social advancement in the Bodo society, it has now almost become unseen.

**(c). *Kharsonai Haba*:**

*Kharsonai Haba* is also another form of marriage of the Bodos which is considered as irregular. When there is objection of the parents of a girl about her love affair with a boy, then she runs away with her boyfriend for becoming husband and wife which falls under the category of *Kharsonai Haba*. In this form of marriage, the parents of the concerned boy inform to the girl's family about the action of their respective daughter and son within the three days counting from the day of the departure of the girl from her house. When there is no option except marriage, a formal marriage is performed for receiving social sanction to become husband and wife.<sup>68</sup>

**(d). *Dwnkharnai Haba*:**

*Dwnkharnai Haba* is the love marriage which is identical with the Gandharva marriage of Hindu in which the consent of both the party i.e. lovers is counted more important than the assent of the parents of the boys and girl.<sup>69</sup> This form of the marriage was not so common but practiced in the Bodo society. It is also a fact that nowadays, many of the younger generation are more and more inclined towards the *Dwnkharnai Haba* but it does not mean that arranged marriage is totally discarded. Still *Swngnanwi Lainai Haba* i.e. arranged marriage occupied a very important place in Bodo society.

**(e). *Gwrjia Haba*:**

*Gwrjia Haba* is the form of the marriage which is assumed to have originated from the practice of matrilocal residence. In this form of marriage, the bridegroom used to stay at the residence of the bride permanently or as long as with the view to look after the bride's parents. It is generally practiced among the parents who do not have male issue. In ancient days, if the parents of the bridegroom fail to pay the bride price, the groom used to stay at the residence of the bride and rendered his service to the bride family in lieu of the bride price.<sup>70</sup> The period of one year free service of the groom to the

family of the bride is known as *Samdang Jagarnai* and during this period the couple i.e. the boy and girl who are undergoing *Gwrjia Haba* cannot have marriage relation.<sup>71</sup> When the service of the groom is satisfied by the family of the bride, then marriage ceremony is executed. The male who married a girl under the *Gwrjia Haba* lived at the residence of his wife. He also enjoyed the property right of the family of his wife. But the *Gwrjia Haba* is seldom appearing in the Bodo society.

**(f). *Dongkha Habnai Haba*:**

Widow re-marriage is known as *Dongkha Habnai Haba* in Bodo. This form of the marriage is approved by the society. In the social system of the Bodos re-marriage of the widow or widower is permitted. In the *Dongkha Habnai Haba*, a man who is either widower or bachelor presented a silver coin to a widow with the proposal of the marriage. If the widow accepts the silver coin, it is considered that the proposal for re-marriage is accepted by her. The person who is undergoing *Dongkha Habnai Haba* abandoned his family members and used to adopt the surname of the widow's family. The adopting of new surname can be proved from the following line:<sup>72</sup>

*Dongkha habnai hwoyaya hinjaoni kulao habgwn.*

Free English translation:

A male who undergoes *Dongkha Habnai Haba* takes the title of his wife's family.

*Narzi Gwran Orgarnai* is the ritual of chewing dried jute leaf. This is required to perform by the person who is undergoing *Dongkha Habnai Haba* in front of the *Bathou* altar in which he has to chew dried jute leaf declaring the desertion of his clan and the property of his parents. A grant feast also arranged where plenty of *Jwo Gisi*, (rice beer), *Oma Bedor* (pork), *Wngkham* (rice) etc. are offered to the villagers and relatives. The concern person offered the items like *Daosa Jorase* (a pair of chicken), *Jwo Gisi Dabkha Jorase* (a pair of earthen pot rice beer), *Dhup* (incense stick), *Goi Jora* (pair of betel nut and *Phathwi Jora* (a pair of betel leave) etc. to the *Bathou Bwrai* with the following words:<sup>73</sup>

*Aham, moha Prabhu Mohadev,*  
*Arw Ai Kamakhya, Mainao Maotansripwr,*  
*Kwnasong Aipwr-Apapwr,*  
*Switwni Mwdaiya switwyao ta,*  
*Dhwrwmni Mwdaiya dhwrwmao ta*  
*Dinwi amwkaya amwkikao Dongkha thanai jabai.*  
*Da beninw pao-puja hwnai jadwng najaodw nwnswr,*  
*Mini kusiywi bikwo hogardw.*  
*Ma kalambaonw Aipwr-Apaowr;*  
*Amwkani jwnwmao bikwonw lirdwng kwma*  
*Bikwo nwngtangmwnhasw mithisigwo.*

Free English Translation:

*Aham, Prabhu Mohadev,*  
 Mother *Kamakhya* and *Mainao*,  
 Listen mother-father,  
 Holly deity should be in truth,  
 Religious deity should be in religion,  
 Today (name of groom) is going married the widow.  
 For that *Puja* is offering to you,  
 Leave him happily.  
 What to do? Mother-father;



Luck favoured in his life

You know all these.

In this traditional form of the marriage, marriage ceremony is performed at the residence of the widow in presence of the guardians, relatives, villagers and friends. The time for the performance of the marriage is in the late afternoon i.e. transitional timing between the afternoon and evening. The bridegroom put an earthen pot on his head and moved around *Noma No* (main house) seven times with producing the sound of *mew, mew* (crying of cat). The bride stands at the entrance of *Noma No* as a guard by holding a bamboo spoon which is used for rice cooking. This bamboo spoon is called *Khadhwo* in Bodo. The bridegroom attempts to get entry into the *Noma No* in each round but unsuccessful because of obstruction given by the bride. When the bridegroom completed seven round the bride asked the following word:<sup>74</sup>

*Biyw swr jakw?* (Who is over there?)

*Nwng swr?* (Who are you?)

*Amwkani bipasw nama?* (Are you my son's or daughter's father). Here, the father means the bride's deceased husband.

When questioning the above, the bridegroom gives the answer yes I am. After that he is allowed to enter into the *Noma No* where he was offered meat and rice beer which are kept ready for the purpose.<sup>75</sup> But in the present Bodo society, this type of marriage is also becoming rare.

*Hathasuni Kurnai*<sup>76</sup> is the traditional marriage ceremony of the Bodos. The marriage of the Bodos is performed at the residence of the bridegroom with offering the following items to *Bathou Bwrai* and other deities:

- (i) *Thalir Bilai* (banana leaf)
- (ii) *Goi Phithai* (betel nuts)
- (iii) *Alari Bathi* (an earthen pot for illumination)

- (iv) *Phathwi* (betel leaves)
- (v) *Dwi Gwthar* (holy water)
- (vi) *Thulsi* (basil leaf)
- (vii) *Gaiker* (milk)
- (viii) *Dhup* (incense stick)
- (ix) *Mairong* (uncooked rice)
- (x) *Onla Wngkri* (traditional curry)
- (xi) *Dao* (chicken) etc.

The offering is made in front of the *Bathou* altar in presence of the bride and bridegroom and other members of the family as well as the villager. *Dwori* or *Oja* sacrificed a pair of chicken in the name of the *Bathou Bwrai*. A curry called *Onla Wngkri*<sup>77</sup> (traditional curry of Bodos specially cooked with rice powder) is cooked with the powder of rice and the sacrificed chicken without spice and turmeric. After that *Hathasuni Khurnai* is conducted by a *Dwori* or *Oja* in front of the *Bathou* altar. The bride and bridegroom are also seated in front of the *Bathou* altar in kneel down position and the *Dwori* or *Oja* introduced bride and bridegroom to the *Bwrai Bathou* and other household deities with the following mantras:<sup>78</sup>

*Dohai Apha Ishwr Bwrai Bathou,*

*Khwnasong khwnasong lamadothani mugasong,*

*Khwijwma thwbw khoudwijwng*

*Mansia thayw giathijwng.*

*Bathoua bandwba Sijoua chiriba*

*Boro bwraini acharabw fongba.*

*Heh, Aiphwr Aphaphwr,*

*Daokhayalai phurakhwi*

*Daoboyalai swmakwi*

*Chagorni onthaya chayao gwjaoakhwi*

*Lwithwa dabwnw thol thangakhwi*

*Swithwabw swlaiakhwi.*

*Nwngswrnw swithwni giri*

*Nwngswrnw swrgigiri*

*Nwngswrnw basaigiri*

*Heh, Aiphwr Aphaphwr,*

*Nwngswrni bwswnkhon lananwi*

*Nwngswrkhon sakhi dwnnanwi,*

*Bathou mwkhangao jirainanwi,*

*Dinwi amuk (name of the village) gamini manao geder*

*Amwkhani (name of the groom's father) dersin phisajla*

*Musri amuk (name of the groom) arw*

*Amuk (name of the bride village)*

*Gamini manao geder amwkhani*

*(name of the bride father)duisin*

*Phisajwni gwthar julikhon nwnw*

*Bifani Bathou gudiyao hwnai jabai.*

*Apa nwnwtanga mini kusi najaonanwi*

*Bwr-asirbad hwdw.*

*Jwnghalai swr dongbaoyw*

*Nailo-jalo nwnng bipa Gurulo*

*Gole-gole kulumw jwng.*

Free English Translation:

Oh, father Supreme God *Bwrai Bathou*,

Listen, the *Mugasong* tree of the way,

The red ants make their nests with their saliva

Human beings live with relatives.

*Bathou* has five knots

*Sijou* has five ridges

Bodo old man has five moral words.

Oh, mothers-fathers,

Crows do not turn white

Cranes do not turn black

The stone of sea do not come up

The sea has not gone underground.

Truths have not changed.

You are the light of truth

You are the creator

You are the saver

Oh, mothers-fathers,

With your moral words

Keeping you all witness,

Sitting in front of the *Bathou* altar

Today, the wedding ceremony of (name of the groom)

Eldest son of (name of father) of (name of village)

And of (name of bride) the youngest daughter of

(Name of bride's father) of (name of village) have been solemnized

In front of *Bathou*

Father accept our prayer happily

Bless them forever.

Only you *Bwrai Bathou*

We bow you forever.

After the completion of the recitation of mantras by *Dowri* or *Oja*, the bride offered *Onla Wngkri* to bridegroom. Then, other members who are present in marriage ceremony also consumed *Onla Wngkri*. When the bridegroom finished his offer meal, the marriage is considered as over and *Dowri* or *Oja* declared the bride and bridegroom as husband and wife. With this the society recognized them as husband and wife.

A ceremony called *Nirik Bosonai*<sup>79</sup> (handover of bride to the groom's family by bride's father) is performed before the departure of bride party from the house of groom in which bride's parents formally hand over the right of custodian of their daughter to the parents of bridegroom. Bride's mother is not allowed to present in marriage ceremony according to traditional custom. A grand feast is arranged on the next day of marriage ceremony in the house of groom which contains rice-beer, chicken, pork, fish, meal, areca nuts betel leaves etc. in abundance.<sup>80</sup>

So, marriage is regarded as very important social institution for which society do not permit human being as husband and wife quietly and start living.

#### **4. *Thwinai*:**

The Bodo term *Thwinai* signifies death of man which is the final journey of living being. Man is the only creature who have either buried or cremated the body of the deceased person.<sup>81</sup> In Bodo society when a person is death, the concern family inform to all the relatives, villagers, friends for performing the funeral rites of the deceased person.<sup>82</sup>

##### **4.1. *Gwthwi Garnai*:**

Disposal of dead body is known as *Gwthwi Garnai* in Bodo. In early days, the Bodos did not keep a fixed area for the disposal of death. The nonexistence of the fixed place of the disposal of death indicates their habit of frequent migration.<sup>83</sup> It is fact that they had migratory habit as a result of which no fixed place for the disposal of death was kept by them. During those days, dead body was left to the forest or place which was outside the village for consuming by wild animals. There is a belief among the Bodos that if the dead body had not been eaten up by the wild animals, the deceased had done many sin or wrong things during life time. It is also believed that dead body was not consumed by wild animals as it kept in the common point of three boundaries i.e. *Sima Mwntham* in Bodo.<sup>84</sup> In another belief, it is said that the deceased had *Gwrjia Bijamadwi* means matrilocal residence during the life time or previous life.<sup>85</sup> The Bodos buried their dead body in the ancient days.<sup>86</sup> But nowadays, the Bodos practiced burial or cremation according to their convenience and religious faith. However, if the deceased is minor, the body is not cremated but buried. In present days, the Bodos maintained a proper place for the disposal of death i.e. cremation ground or graveyard for burial ground. They totally stopped the old mode of the disposal of death i.e. throwing to the forest for the wild animals. The following items are required for the disposal of death:<sup>87</sup>

- (a) *Owa* (bamboo)
- (b) *Bathi* (bamboo bier)

- (c) *Dahra* (mat)
- (d) *Thingkli* (small earthen pot)
- (e) *Thalir Bipang* (banana tree)
- (f) *Narzi Gwran* (dried jute leaves)
- (g) *Mairong* (rice)
- (h) *Raidwng* (cane)
- (i) *Owa Theol* (slit bamboo rope)
- (j) *Pakri Bilai* (pipal tree leaves)
- (k) *Owa Hasung* (bamboo pipe)
- (l) *Kundung Aowa* (white cotton thread)
- (m) *Dwi Gwthar* (holy water)
- (n) *Songrai* (winnowing fan)
- (o) *Buntha* (paddy straw)
- (p) *Cowri* (coins)
- (q) *Guphur Ji* (white sheet cloth) etc.

The items mentioned above are made compulsory for the funeral rites but *Songrai* is kept at home. Rev. Sidney Endle is silent about the colour of the cloth for covering the body of deceased person which testified that the cloth of any colour could be used for covering the dead body but nowadays white cloth is largely used to cover the dead body.<sup>88</sup>

*Gwthwi Bathi* is made from an *Owa Gubwi*, a fresh raw bamboo.<sup>89</sup> A *Dhara* (bamboo mat) is made ready by covering a new cloth and placed on the *Gwthwi Bathi*. A place in the courtyard is clean to keep the *Gwthwi Bathi*. Dead body is given bath, smeared oil on the body, combed the hair and dressed with the new clothes by a male person of the deceased family for the final journey. Then, the body is brought to the courtyard and kept on the *Gwthwi Bathi*. When placing the dead body on the *Gwthwi Bathi*, the head of the deceased is placed toward the south direction. For the purpose of the last feeding, a food is prepared which consisted of boiled chicken curry without applying oil, turmeric and salt, a small quantity of rice, water for drinking and rice-beer.

The prepared food items are placed near the head of the deceased and feeding is started by family members followed by relatives and friends with their left hands. *Pakri Bilai*<sup>90</sup> (pipal tree leaf) is used for feeding and giving water to the deceased. On the lip of the deceased a piece of red thread is placed with the belief that by doing so he or she will be reborn with red lip.

After that, all the members present gather near the *Gwthwi Bathi*. An elderly male person of the village or village headman delivers a speech about the deceased with the following words:<sup>91</sup>

*Nwi amwkha nwngni horkabwi jiu gwmanaya jwng jwbwd dukhu mwnbai.*

*Da nwngni deha swlerkwo jwng noniprai bidai hwnawi nwngni jaigayao langnw sanbai.*

*Nwngni jiumaya jahate swrgwyao alw gwjwnwi jaiga mwnhwiyw bini takai iswrnao aroj gbnai jabai.*

Free English Translation:

Oh dear, we are very sad for your sudden demise.

Now, we are going to bid you farewell and take your body to your own place.

We pray to God so that your soul may rest in peace in heaven.

No *Oja* or *Dwori* is required for this ritual. After this ritual a period of one minute is observed where all the members present take part.

After that, the dead body is covered with cloth or white cloth and tied with *Owa Theol* (bamboo slit). Then *Gwthwi Bathi* is carried by four men including the deceased son on their shoulder into the graveyard. As and when the deceased body has been taken from the house for disposal, the walls of the house of the last breath of the deceased are removed with the belief that by doing so the soul of the deceased will be able to depart and with white thread the house is fenced.<sup>92</sup> It is the tradition of the Bodos that the *Gwthwi Bathi*



should not place on the ground till it reached to the place of disposal. It is also the custom of the Bodos, to spread the pieces of white thread by a man when carrying the deceased body which started from the house till the reaching of the graveyard. The person who carried the white thread and *Bunta* (paddy straw) is walking in front of the *Gwthwi Bathi* as an indicator of the departed soul.

In the custom of the Bodos for disposal of the dead body, a piece of land is purchased by way of throwing coins or cowries in the graveyard. With the completion of the purchase of the land, *Gwthwi Bathi* is placed on the ground. Here, the head of the deceased is to the south direction. All the formalities for the disposal of death are made ready, the person who are participated for the last rite ceremony of the dead body offer water to the dead body by using the leaves of pipal tree with the following words:<sup>93</sup>

*No lwngdw amwka,*

*Dinwiniprai nwnng ba nwnng,*

*Jwnng ba jwnngswi.*

Free English Translation:

O, drink the water.

From today onward you will be yourself

And we will be ourselves.

For the final ritual of the deceased, the *Gwthwi Bathi* is made five times or seven times round in anti-clockwise direction by the relatives according to the sex. In case of the male five times whereas seven times for female.<sup>94</sup> In case of buried, the son of the deceased is started filling the graveyard with the soil which followed by relatives and others. Some coins are offer to the deceased with the belief that with those coins the soul of the deceased will be able to cross the river on the journey. This is known as *Ghath Barnai*<sup>95</sup> in Bodo. It is also to be noted that in course of the buried of the dead body, a jungle grass is put perpendicularly at the nose of the dead body up to the ground level

and that grass is removed to make a hole through which the deceased could breathe. The remover of the grass recites the following words while removing the grass:<sup>96</sup>

*Nwng be gudungjwngnw hanglanw arw hogarnw hagwn.*

Free English Translation:

You can inhale and exhale through this hole.

At the time of cremation of a dead body, the person who lit the fire utters the following words:<sup>97</sup>

*Nwi saobai, nwi jwng saobai.*

Free English Translation:

We lit it, we have lit it.

*Narzi Orgarnai* is a very important part in the process of disposal of death. After the completion of cremation or buried of the deceased body, *Narzi Orgarnai* is done by the member who take part in the funeral ceremony in which the members chew a little amount of dry jute leaves and throw it away as a mark of breach of all kind of relationship with the deceased. When the members of the funeral party reach at their respective home *Phwtharnai* is performed. *Phwtharnai* is a ritual for purification after the funeral rite is over. Those who come back from the graveyard or cremation ground are purified by sprinkling holy water on them in which basil leaves must be there. After this *Phwtharnai* they are allowed to enter their respective houses.

#### **4.2. *Gwthwinw Baonai*:**

*Gwthwinw Baonai* means offering to deceased. It is another ceremony in which dresses, foods, rice-beer and other articles are made offer to the departed soul. This offering is known as *Gwthwinw Baonai* (offering to deceased). This ceremony is performed by the *Oja* or *Dwori* in the southern side of the courtyard. The *Oja* or *Dwori*

is in the position of half sitting position facing toward the south and recited the following mantras in presence of the family members who are also kneel down on the ground:<sup>98</sup>

*Nwi amwka, dinwi nwnkwo nwngninw nokhorni gaswi bai-bahagi, jati-kurma gamini raijw raja jo jananwi nwnkwo bidai hwnw nagirdwng. Ma kalamnw? Iswrni maya gelehwnai, nwngba bobao dong, ma jadwng, ma kalamdwng; na daoka sila jananwi dong na bhut-peta jananwi dong jwng jebw mitiya. Da dinwi nwnkwo bidai hwnai somao nwngnw nangwo janai gasibw gannai-jwmnai, tao-sabwn, aina-kanjong, na-bedor, wngkham-engkri, dwi-saha, gwdwi-gwbab gaswikwobw nwngnw baonai jabai. Nwi amwkha nwnng jeraoki taya jahate nwngni mungywi hwhai besadfwrkwo pwinanwi alw gwjwnwi jananwi tangyw. Dohai de, nwnng jahate nwngni nokorni bida-pongбай, bai-bahagi, jati-kurma, nwngni lwgw-digifwrkwo sigo-sogo kalampwiya.*

Free English Translation:

Oh dear, your family is performing this ritual inviting the villagers, relatives as well as friends for performance of farewell you. What to do? It is the act of God! What are you doing? Where are you? Whatever you may be! A cow or an eagle or a devil! We do not know. Today, offering is made with the items like fruits, clothes, oil, soap, meat, water, tea, sweets etc. wherever you are, you come and taste all the items. Oh dear, do not do any harmful activities to your own family members, relatives, friends.

In early days, *Gwthwinw Buonai* ceremony was performed on the river bank. But nowadays, it is performed at the courtyard of deceased house. After completion of offering, the items are taken to the river banks or beels and left there which is known as *Sua Garnai* (removing of impurity) in Bodo. The *Sua Garnai* is performed one day ahead of *Saradhu* (sradha) or on the day of *Saradhu*. The offering items thrown out by family members to outside are not allowed to consume. If somebody is caught taking the thrown items, he or she is bound to do a penance called *Kaoalibad*.<sup>99</sup>

## Endnotes

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- <sup>1</sup> Gennep A. V., *The Rites of Passage*, The University of Chicago Press, USA, Reprint, 1977, pp. 2-4.
- <sup>2</sup> Interview with Labainya Basumatary, Age- 62, Occupation- Housewife, Vill- Chatbil, P.O.- Bhaoraguri, Dist- Kokrajhar, BTC, Assam on 11/08/2014.
- <sup>3</sup> Siiger Halfdan, *The Bodo Revisiting a Classical Study from 1950 of Assam*, Edited by Piter B. Anderson and Santosh K. Soren, Nordic Institute of Asian Studies, Copenhagen K, Denmark, 2015, p. 41.
- <sup>4</sup> Interview with Kanuram Brahma, Age- 59, Occupation-Retired Serviceman, Vill- Baganshali, P.O.- Kokrajhar, Dist- Kokrajhar, BTC, Assam on 21/09/2015.
- <sup>5</sup> Interview with Smt. Dangshi Brahma, Age- 78, Occupation- Priest, Village- Boragari, P.O.- Dotma, Dist- Kokrajhar, BTC, Assam on 25/07/2014.
- <sup>6</sup> Interview with Parbati Brahma, age- 66, Occupation- Housewife, Vill- Boragari, P.O.- Dotma, Dist- Kokrajhar, BTC, Assam on 27/02/2015.
- <sup>7</sup> Siiger Halfdan, *op. cit.*, p. 45.
- <sup>8</sup> *Ibid.* p. 41.
- <sup>9</sup> Brahma Basanta Kumar, *Bodo Somajari Nem Kanthi Arw Fwthaithi*, Words and Words, Kokrajhar, 2017, p. 1.
- <sup>10</sup> Interview with Sane Brahma, Age- 57, Occupation- Housewife, Vill- Hatimata, P.O.- Kokrajhar, Dist- Kokrajhar, BTC, Assam on 05/02/2015.
- <sup>11</sup> Hodgson B. H., *Essay the First; on the Kooch, Bodo and Dhimal Tribes, In Three Parts, Part III.-Location, Numbers, Creed, Customs, Condition and Physical and Moral Characteristics of the People*, Baptist Mission Press, Calcutta, 1847, p. 177.

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- <sup>12</sup> Interview with Santola Basumatary, Age- 67, Occupation- Retired Principal, Vill- Fakiragram, P.O.- Fakiragram, Dist- Kokrajhar, BTC, Assam on 15/07/2016.
- <sup>13</sup> Brahma Basanta Kumar, *op. cit.*, p. 1.
- <sup>14</sup> Interview with Girendra Goyari, Age- 55, Occupation- Head Master, Vill- Teacher Colony, P.O.- Rowta, Dist- Udalguri, BTC, Assam on 18/03/2015.
- <sup>15</sup> Interview with Chidey Basumatary, Age- 75, Occupation- Housewife, Vill- Chandana Borigaon, P.O.- Udalguri, Dist- Udalguri, BTC, Assam on 23/02/2015.
- <sup>16</sup> Hodgson B. H., *op. cit.*, p. 177.
- <sup>17</sup> Moshahary R. N., *Social History of the Bodos of Assam: A study of Oral History*, Unpublished PhD Thesis, Submitted to NEHU, Shillong, 1986, p. 230.
- <sup>18</sup> Kamei Budha Kabui, *Historical Traditions, Religious Beliefs and Practices of the Rongmei Tribe*, Unpublished PhD Thesis submitted to Manipur University, 2008, pp. 218-219.
- <sup>19</sup> Narzi Bhaben, *Boro Kocharini Somaj Arw Harimu*, Chirang Publication Board, Kajalgaon, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed. 2006, pp. 95-96.
- <sup>20</sup> Bargayary Nushar, *Ethno History of the Bodo*, Unpublished PhD Thesis, Bodoland University, Kokrajhar, 2017, p. 121.
- <sup>21</sup> Devi Premlata, *Social and Religious Institutions of Bodos*, Geophil Publishing House, Guwahati, 2007, p. 94.
- <sup>22</sup> Choudhury Medini, *The Boro-Dimasa of Assam*, Tribal Research Institute of Assam, Guwahati, 1988, p. 14.
- <sup>23</sup> Brahma K., *Aspect of Social Customs of the Bodos*, Bina Library Guwahati, Assam, 2008, p. 4.
- <sup>24</sup> Endle Rev. Sydney. *The Kacharis*, Low Price Publications, Delhi, 1911, p. 41.
- <sup>25</sup> *Ibid.* p. 41.

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- <sup>26</sup> Narzi Bhaben, *op. cit.*, p. 95.
- <sup>27</sup> Interview with Bisari Mushahary, Age- 67, Occupation- Housewife, Vill- Angtihara, P.O.- Tetliguri, Dist- Kokrajhar, BTC, Assam on 16/11/2015.
- <sup>28</sup> Interview with Gopal Narzary, Age- 56, Occupation- Cultivator, Vill- Gosaigami, P.O.- Ronsaidam, Dist- Chirang, BTC, Assam on 11/09/2016.
- <sup>29</sup> Interview with Smt. Minati Narzary, Age- 57, Occupation- Housewife, Vill- Kunguri, P.O.- Serfanguri, Dist- Kokrajhar, BTC, Assam on 12/10/2014.
- <sup>30</sup> Endle Rev. Sydney, *op. cit.*, p. 42.
- <sup>31</sup> Interview with Smt. Bibiswari Brahma, Age- 64, Occupation- Housewife, Vill- Boragari, P.O.- Dotma, Dist- Kokrajhar, BTC, Assam on 14/02/2016.
- <sup>32</sup> Interview with Smt. Ramba Brahma, Age- 68, Occupation- Housewife, Vill- Boragari, P.O.- Dotma, Dist- Kokrajhar, BTC, Assam on 17/12/ 2014.
- <sup>33</sup> Brahma Basanta Kumar, *op. cit.*, p. 7.
- <sup>34</sup> Moshahary R. N., *op. cit.*, p. 7.
- <sup>35</sup> Interview with Ashini Kr. Brahma, Age- 65, Occupation- Ex. Headmaster, Vill- Dangarkhuti, P.O. Dotma, Dist- Kokrajhar, BTC, Assam on 27/04/2016.
- <sup>36</sup> Brahma K, *op. cit.*, p. 68.
- <sup>37</sup> *Ibid.* p. 76.
- <sup>38</sup> Singh Dr. Oinam Ranjit, *Marriage of the Meiteis in Ancient Times*, in the Orient Vision, Vol.-IV, Issue-2, Oct.-Dec., 2007, p. 38.
- <sup>39</sup> Majumdar D. N. and Madan T. N., *An Introduction to Social Anthropology*, National Publishing House, 1986, p. 6.
- <sup>40</sup> Roy Ashok Kr. and Chakraborty Satyabatra, *Society Politics and Development in North East India*, Ed. Concept Publishing Company, 2007, p. 76.

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- <sup>41</sup> Bottomore T. B., *Sociology, A Guide to Problems and Literature*, London, 1972 & 1986, p. 180.
- <sup>42</sup> Brahma Sekhar, *op. cit.*, p. 21.
- <sup>43</sup> Devi Premalata, *op. cit.*, p. 80.
- <sup>44</sup> Endle Rev. Sydney, *op. cit.*, p. 30.
- <sup>45</sup> Bordoloi B. N., Thakur G. C. Sarma and Saikia M. C., *Tribes of Assam, Part-I*, Tribal Research Institute of Assam, Guwahati, 1987, p. 13.
- <sup>46</sup> Brahma Sekhar, *op. cit.*, p. 21.
- <sup>47</sup> Brahma Dr. Kameswar, *op. cit.*, pp. 76-77.
- <sup>48</sup> Endle Rev. Sydney, *op. cit.*, p. 29.
- <sup>49</sup> Narzi Bhaben, *op. cit.*, p. 61.
- <sup>50</sup> Brahma Binoy Kr., *Boroni Subung Harimu*, N. L. Publications, Kokrajhar, BTC, 2009, p. 40.
- <sup>51</sup> Brahma Dr. Kameswar, *A study in Cultural Heritage of the Boros*, Bina Library, Guwahati, Assam, 1998, p. 65.
- <sup>52</sup> Interview with Rojen Brahma, Age- 64, Occupation- Ex- Teacher, Vill-Shyamdharpara, P.O.- Dotma, Dist- Kokrajhar, BTC, Assam on 26/ 07/2015.
- <sup>53</sup> International Research Journal of Human Resources and Social Sciences, *Vol. 2 Issue 6*, June 2015, p. 21.
- <sup>54</sup> Kapadia K. M., *Marriage and Family in India*, Oxford University Press, Calcutta, 1972, p. 117.
- <sup>55</sup> Narzi Bhaben, *op. cit.*, p. 63.
- <sup>56</sup> Mushahary Dr. Premnath, *Socio-Political Life of the Boros in Karbi Anglong District*, Karbi Anglong, 2004, p. 107.

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- <sup>57</sup> Mondal Satyendra Nath, *History and Culture of the Bodos*, Edited by Bonny Narzary, West Bengal, Jalpaiguri, 2011, p. 177.
- <sup>58</sup> Devi Premlata, *op. cit.*, p. 97.
- <sup>59</sup> Brahma Dr. Kameswar, *op. cit.*, p. 17.
- <sup>60</sup> *Ibid.* p. 17.
- <sup>61</sup> Interview with Jyotish Chandra Narzary, Age- 59, Occupation- Teacher, Vill- Kunguri, P.O.- Serfanguri, Dist- Kokrajhar, BTC, Assam on 16/03/2016.
- <sup>62</sup> Hazowary Mangal Singh, *The Traditional Boro Festivals: A Critical Study*, Unpublished PhD Thesis, Gauhati University, Guwahati, 1997, p. 248.
- <sup>63</sup> Interview with Puren Brahma, Age- 67, Occupation- Ex- Headman, Vill- Boragari, P.O.- Dotma, Dist- Kokrajhar, BTC, Assam on 29/11/2015.
- <sup>64</sup> Interview with Maniram Brahma, Age- 57, Occupation- Teacher, Vill- Goramari, P.O.- Dotma, Dist- Kokrajhar, BTC, Assam on 12/08/2016.
- <sup>65</sup> Interview with Bolo Basumatary, Age- 64, Occupation- Dwori, Vill- Baganshali, W/N- 7, P.O.- Kokrajhar, Dist- Kokrajhar, BTC, Assam on 21/03/2015.
- <sup>66</sup> Hazowary Mangal Singh, *op. cit.*, p. 244.
- <sup>67</sup> Endle Rev. Sydney, *op. cit.*, p. 43.
- <sup>68</sup> *Boro Samajni Songbijid Arw Nemkhanti*, Kokrajhar, 2004, p. 5.
- <sup>69</sup> Ray Ashok Kumar and Chakraborty Sytyabrata, *Society Politics and Development in North East India*, Concept Publishing Company, New Delhi, 2008, pp. 82-83.
- <sup>70</sup> Hodgson B. H., *op. cit.*, p.178.
- <sup>71</sup> Interview with Anil Basumatary, Age- 67, Occupation- Cultivator, Vill- Baganshali, P.O.- Kokrajhar, Dist- Kokrajhar BTC, Assam on 31/03/ 20016.



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- <sup>72</sup> *Boro Samajni Songbijid Arw Nemkhanti, op. cit.*, p. 7.
- <sup>73</sup> Narzi Bhaben, *op. cit.*, p. 79.
- <sup>74</sup> Interview with Gopinath Brahma, Age- 67, Occupation- Ex. Headmaster, Vill- Laodonga, P.O.- Hogmabil, Dist-Kokrajhar, BTC, Assam on 15/03/2016.
- <sup>75</sup> Interview with Dakhwr Basumatary, Age- 68, Occupation- Farmaer, Vill- Dekadamra, P.O.- Bishmuri, Dist- Kokrajhar, BTC, Assam on 17/08/ 2015.
- <sup>76</sup> Brahma Sekhar, *op cit.* p. 21.
- <sup>77</sup> Traditional curry of Bodos specially cooked with rice powder.
- <sup>78</sup> Brahma Dr. Kameswar, *op. cit.*, pp. 223-224.
- <sup>79</sup> Interview with Laithi Brahma Age- 57, Occupation- Housewife, Vill- Aowabari, P.O. - Kokrajhar, Dist- Kokrajhar, BTC, Assam on 12/11/ 1015.
- <sup>80</sup> Interview with Dharani Kanta Narzary, Age- 67, Occupation- Priest, Vill- Laokriguri, P.O.- Serfanguri, Dist- Kokrajhar, BTC, Assam on 22/07/2015.
- <sup>81</sup> Endle Rev. Sydney, *op. cit.*, p. 24.
- <sup>82</sup> Sarma Kishore Kumar, *Marutal and Pre-Marital Sex Relationship of the Boro-Kacharis in the context of Sanskritisation in Dolpara*, Vol.-III, Number 3-14, Bulletin of Cultural Research Institute, Govt. of West Bengal, 1979, pp. 79-80.
- <sup>83</sup> Gowsami Priyam, *op. cit.*, p. 104.
- <sup>84</sup> Interview with Ashok Kr. Brahma, Age- 54, Occupation- Farmer, Vill- Simlaguri, P.O.- Dotma, Dist- Kokrajhar, BTC, Assam on 23/08/2015.
- <sup>85</sup> Endle Rev. Sydney, *op. cit.*, p. 45.
- <sup>86</sup> Hastings James (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics, Vol.-IV*, Charles Scribener's Sons, New York, p. 415.
- <sup>87</sup> Basumatary Giri Birendra, *Boro Harimuni Mohor Mushree*, N. L. Publication, Kokrajhar, 2012, p. 84.

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<sup>88</sup> Endle Rev. Sydney, *op cit.*, p. 47.

<sup>89</sup> Bargayary Nushar, *op cit.*, p. 137.

<sup>90</sup> Interview with Pran Nath Basumatary, Age- 85, Occupation- Ex. Village Headman, Vill- Basugaon, Dist- Chirang, BTC, Assam on 24/09/2016.

<sup>91</sup> Interview with Mwidar Brahma, Age- 57, Occupation- Village Headman, Vill- Boragari, P.O.- Dotma, Dist- Kokrajhar, BTC, Assam on 17/03/2015.

<sup>92</sup> Interview with Anirudra Brahma, Age- 70, Occupation- Farmer, Vill- Kersuabari, P.O.- Patakhata, Dist- Kokrajhar, BTC, Assam on 25/11/2015.

<sup>93</sup> Narzi Bhaben, *op cit.*, p. 99.

<sup>94</sup> Interview with Dina Basumatary, Age- 60, Occupation- Cultivator, Vill- Ulubari, Dist- Baksa, BTC, Assam on 18/01/2016.

<sup>95</sup> Hutton J. H., *op cit.*, p. 236.

<sup>96</sup> Interview with Subhod Brahma, Age- 71, Occupation- Cultivator, Vill- Dotma Chariali, P.O.- Dotma, Dist- Kokrajhar, BTC, Assam on 23/05/2015.

<sup>97</sup> Interview with Sarbeswar Basumatary, Age- 64, Occupation- Priest, Vill- Boragari, P.O.- Dotma, Dist- Kokrajhar, BTC, Assam on 09/02/2016.

<sup>98</sup> Interview with Bena Brahma, Age- 60, Occupation- Priest, Vill- Santinagar, P.O.- Dotma, Dist- Kokrajhar, BTC, Assam on 05/06/2016.

<sup>99</sup> *Boro Somajni Namkhanti*, Dotma Dokora Boro Somaj, Kokrajhar, p. 15.