

## CHAPTER: III

### rites and rituals in agrarian society

The Bodos are agriculturist. They cultivate different kinds of crops like *Bawa*, *Ashu*, *Sali* etc. during the time of summer season.<sup>1</sup> No doubt, the Bodos are good cultivator and they are self dependent. In this regard Rev. Sydney Endle says that the Bodos are especially skillful in the construction of irrigation canals and earth-work embankments for diverting water from river banks into their rice fields and their efforts in this direction are very largely aided by their closely ethnic organization.<sup>2</sup> It is stated that when they proceeded and settled in the valley of Assam and some parts of North East India, they had crossed their earlier stages of life and became nomadic farmer.<sup>3</sup> In earlier time, when they practiced *Jhum* or shifting cultivation they always tried to find out virgin land which could provide more productivity. With the passage of time, they gave up *Jhum* or shifting cultivation and started settled agriculture with ploughshare and other allied agricultural implements. However, concrete evidence has not been found so far when the practice of pre-agricultural activities and *Jhum* cultivation had been abandoned by the Bodos and when they have started agriculture with ploughshare and other agricultural implements. Even today majorities of the Bodos are cultivators and live in the village. Whenever the rainfall threatens to be below the average, the cultivators with their elders go to the field to bring the water to the paddy field from the nearest river.<sup>4</sup>

## 1. Selection of land:

For the cultivation of rice, the Bodos used to select *Hama Ha*<sup>5</sup> which is alluvial land. This type of land requires sufficient water from the rain or irrigation or any other sources. For the storage of rain water or water from any other source, embankments are made by the Bodos in their paddy field. They consider only the plain or table-land is fit for the purpose of agriculture. The land where the plant called *Dingdinga* grows abundantly is called the *Khandina Ha*<sup>6</sup> (unstable land) which is regarded as the unfertile. *Khandina Ha* land is generally not selected by the Bodos for cultivation. The land which is situated near the bank of a river or stream is called *Hashrao Ha*<sup>7</sup> (a loose soil). *Hashrao Ha* land is also regarded as not suitable for the paddy cultivation because it is unable to retain water for a long time as the water flows down to the river or the stream.

*Sharab Daria Ha*<sup>8</sup> is another type of land in which paddy is cultivated with the help of water. There are certain lands in which cultivation is done by means of rain or irrigation facilities. This type of the land is known as *Jamphai Daria Ha*<sup>9</sup> (a kind of land where the paddy cultivation is done with the help of irrigation). *Jamphai Daria Ha* land is suitable for the paddy cultivation if there is proper irrigation facility from the canals which is called *Jamphai* by the Bodos. They construct canals or embankment to preserve water for the cultivation and divert the water to the plots of land where they plant the paddy.

## 2. Pre-Agricultural Ritual:

Before starting the actual ploughing, the Bodos used to go to their own paddy field and select a suitable site for the performance of the certain pre-agricultural rites and rituals. The selected site is plastered with water and placed a banana leaf on it with the following items towards the north-south direction for the purpose of the offering to *Mainao* (goddess of wealth):

- (a) *Thalir Bilai* (banana leaf)

- (b) *Thulsi Bilai* (basil leaf)
- (c) *Thalir Phithai* (banana fruit)
- (d) *Alari Bathi* (an earthen pot for illumination)
- (e) *Mairong* (uncooked rice)
- (f) *Gaiker* (milk)
- (g) *Goi* (areca nuts)
- (h) *Phathwi* (betel leaves)
- (i) *Dhup* (incense stick)
- (j) *Kundung Aowa* (white cotton thread)
- (k) *Thao Gubwi* (mustard oil)

No *Dwori* or *Oja* is required for this rites and rituals as it is performed by head of the family or concern farmer.<sup>10</sup> While offering is made the concern persons kneel down facing to the east and recited the following words:<sup>11</sup>

*Dohai Ai Mainao*

*Angni khulumnaikhou najao Ai Mainao-*

*Dinwini be gwthar sanao*

*Jwngha hal yeojennw nagirdwng*

*He bima Mainao nwnwnw ma hwnw ma thinw*

*Gwiya jwngha mua daise,*

*Gasibw mua mani Ai nwngninw*

*Oblabw gsww gwrbwkhrou baoswmnanwi*

*Nwngni khathiao aroj gabdwng-*

*Jahathe jwngni be nokhora gainw lanai*

*Mai-dwikhou mwjangwi mwjang*

*Gaifungjwbnw hayw.*

*Beni thakhai nwnng Bimani*

*Khathiao khoro gongglainanwi*

*Aroj gabdwng.*

*Dwl dwl jatwng jwngni Maia bakri bungjase*

*Jababw jakonw haywi.*

*De, Bima Mainao*

*Gole gole kulumw.*

Free English Translation:

Oh mother goddess of wealth,

Oh mother accepts our prayer.

Today on this holy day,

On such an occasion our family would like to start ploughing.

Oh mother goddess of wealth we have nothing

To offer you;

The things that we enjoyed are created by you

Yet, giving our heart and soul

We pray to you

Which our family has to be plant

The paddy would be

Plant successfully.

For that in your kindness our proposed of cultivation be a successful.

By offering prayer

Oh mother goddess of wealth.

Salute you again and again.

In this ritual both man and woman are allowed to take part and the propitiation of other gods and goddesses are also made. This ritual is performed not to harm to the crops to bring more productivity. As and when the offering is over, the farmer or any male member of the family used to start ploughing. In the early days, ploughing was done with a pair of oxen or bullocks by many communities including the Bodos. However, nowadays the Bodos began to employ modern equipments such as tractors, power tillers etc. and modern techniques of the cultivation are also adopted which lead to produce more crops. Verities of rice are cultivated by the Bodos in a year which can be discussed under the following heads:<sup>12</sup>

### **2.1. *Bawa Mai*:**

*Bawa Mai* (*Bawa* rice) is cultivated in the *Chaitra* month of Bangla Calendar. For the cultivation of *Bawa* rice, first the land is to be tilled to make the land soft. The growing grasses in that agricultural field have to be uprooted properly. After the completion of the tilling the land and uprooting the grasses, the seeds are sown and covered with the help of harrow. Generally, it grows up to four (4) or five (5) feet high over the water level.<sup>13</sup> Therefore, the cultivation *Bawa* rice is convenient and suitable in the lower land where water remains constantly deep or surplus. It is also stated that in case of the *Bawa* rice, no proper care is required if once seedling is completed.<sup>14</sup> Before sowing seeds, the head of the family or concern cultivator offer a pair of areca nuts, betel leaves, incense stick etc. for the buffer harvest of rice to goddess *Mainao*. Nowadays, many of the Bodo cultivators are rarely cultivate *Bawa* rice as it gives lesser crops to compare to that of other rice. So, many of the Bodos have diverted from this cultivation of rice as they turned to the other rice which yield more crops.

## 2.2. *Ashu Mai*:

The cultivation of *Ashu Mai* (*Ashu* rice) is done in the month of *Pagun* and *Chaitra* of Bangla Calendar with the following methods of cultivation:<sup>15</sup>

- (a) *Hadriao Phwnai* (sowing seeds in dusty soil)
- (b) *Habruao Phwnai* (sowing seeds in muddy) and
- (c) *Habruao Gainai* (plantation in muddy)

**(a). *Hadriao Phwnai*:** In this method the land is tilled to make it soft and dusty. All the grasses present in the fields are uprooted and make it clean. After properly tilled and the uprooting the grasses the seeds are sown. A harrow is used to cover the seeds with the loose soil. When the height of rice is reaching upto six or seven inches, cleaning of the grasses and loosening of the soil in the paddy field is done with the help of *Beda* (a tool made of wood for removing weeds and loosening soil used by the Bodos). This cleaning and loosening is called as *Ashu Beda Hwnai*. The purpose for conducting *Ashu Beda Hwnai* is to remove unwanted grasses which disturb to the growth of the rice and to slack or to make loose the soil of the field for the health of the rice.<sup>16</sup>

**(b). *Habruao Pwnai*:** In the method of *Habruao Phwnai* the land is tilled to make muddy or grimy one. The seeds are put into an air tied bag and put into water about two days till the seeds are sprouted. The germinated seeds are sown in the tilling muddy field. As and when *Beda Hwnai* is necessary, it required to be done in the field to produce more crops.

**(c). *Habruao Gainai*:** In this method the agricultural land is made muddy by tilling and properly leveled it. Firstly, the required rice seeds are put into bag and tied it. After that the bag is put into water till the seeds are sprouted. When seeds are perfectly sprouted, they are sown in the field. When saplings are enough mature for final transplantation, they are pulled out and transplanted in the paddy field.

Harvesting of the *Ashu* rice is normally done after two and half or three months from the date of sowing the seeds or plantation.<sup>17</sup> However, at present day, cultivation of

*Ashu Mai* is almost discarded by the Bodos as it produces lees crops. So, the Bodos of today started cultivations varieties of the rice which are high yielding crops.

### **2.3. Maisali Mai:**

The Bodos grow mainly *Maisali Mai* (*Maisali* rice) rather than that of *Bawa Mai* and *Ashu Mai*. The cultivation of these varieties of rice is done in between the *Bwisag* and *Badra* months of Bangla Calendar. During this period the required rain used to get for the cultivation of *Maisali* rice.<sup>18</sup> To plant *Maisali* rice, the Bodos plough the land four times to destroy the grasses and make the soil soft i.e. *Karainai*, *Samwr hwnai*, *Boro Hwnai* and *Pwmwnnai*.<sup>19</sup> The following two methods are adopted for the cultivations of the *Maisali* rice:

**(a). Leosia:** Under *Leosia* method land is tilled and made muddy as well as properly leveled it. For the purpose of the germinating seeds, it is put into the air tied bag for two or three days in the water. When the seeds are properly sprouted, they are sown in the field for final transplantation. This is called *Khwthia Phwnai* (sowing seeds of paddy) by the Bodos.

Before the sowing seeds, the Bodos used to perform certain agricultural rituals in their own home in the name of *Mainao*. This ritual is executed in the *Bathou* altar placing a banana leaf on it with the following items towards the north-south direction:

- (i) *Thalir Bilai* (banana leaf)
- (ii) *Thulsi Bilai* (basil leaf)
- (iii) *Thalir Phithai* (banana fruit)
- (iv) *Alari Bari* (an earthen pot for illumination)
- (v) *Mairong* (uncooked rice)
- (vi) *Gaiker* (milk)
- (vii) *Goi* (areca nuts)
- (viii) *Phathwi* (betel leaves)
- (ix) *Dhup* (incense stick)
- (x) *Kundung Aowa* (white cotton thread)

(xi) *Thao Gubwi* (mustard oil)

This ritual is performed by head of the family or concern farmer without taking the assistance of *Dowri* or *Oja*. The concern person is facing his face towards the east direction and sitting in kneel down position. He utters the following words at the time of offering:<sup>20</sup>

*He, Ai Mainao,*

*Nwng jahate jwngni mai pwnaikwo*

*Jebw kwipwd-apwd jahwya.*

*Daoma-daosa habnanwi gajri kalama,*

*Mitingayari jataijwng gajri jaya.*

*Bikainw nwng Ai bimani katiyao*

*Aroj gabnai jabai.*

Free English Translation:

Oh; mother goddess of wealth,

In your kind our seedling,

Should not face incident,

Insects, fowls etc. could not bring harmful,

Not to harm by natural disaster,

For that aside you prayer is given.

We pray before you that.



**i. *Khwthia Phunai*:**

*Khwthia Phunai* is called uprooting the seedling in Bodo. Under this method the nurseries are uprooted after twenty (20) or twenty one (21) days from the date of sowing the seeds. When the sapling becomes mature, the elderly female member of the family offers a pair of areca nut and betel leaves with lighting the incense sticks in *Bathou* altar in the name of *Mainao* (goddess of wealth) and starts uprooting the seedling. The pulled out nurseries are transplanted in the agricultural field.<sup>21</sup>

**(b). *Kasia*:** In the *Kasia* method, the saplings are transplanted temporarily in the paddy field for twenty (20) to twenty five (25) days. After that, they are pulled out and the upper part of the foliage has been cut off for the re-transplantation. It is believed that by doing re-plantation in such a way more crops will be produced. So, *Kasia* method is generally practiced with the aim to produce more crops. The work of the cultivation of the rice is normally started in the month of April. The month of November or December is the period for harvesting.<sup>22</sup>

**i. *Mai Gaijenai*:**

The first plantation of the paddy is called *Mai Gaijenai* in Bodo. The followers of *Bathouism*, the traditional religion of the Bodos, have been observing certain rites and rituals for the commencement of the work of plantation till today on the basis their custom and tradition. For the purpose, the head of the family is selected an auspicious day. On the selected day, an elderly woman of the family is lighted an *Alari Bathi* (an earthen pot for illumination) at the *Bathou* altar and offered the items like *Thalir Bilai* (banana leaf) *Thulsi Bilai* (basil leaf), *Thalir Phithai* (banana fruit), *Mairong* (uncooked rice), *Gaiker* (milk), *Goi* (areca nuts), *Phathwi* (betel leaves), *Dhup* (incense stick), etc. in the name of the *Mainao* with the following prayer words:<sup>23</sup>

*Dohai Afa*

*Noni giri bangni giri nwnng afa*

*Bwrai Bathounao Alari saonanwi*

*Maikhou dinwi akhai lajennai jabai*

*Jababw-lwngbabw jwbnw mwnnai nonga,*

*Muthasea sni mutha janangwn afa*

*Nwng bifani bwrao*

*Jamnw mwnnai nonga*

*Semnw mwnnai nonga*

*Song Bwrai -Song Burini*

*Bwrao Noni giri bangni giri*

*Jeblabw- Janayao lwngnaiyao*

*Mwjangwi mwjang lakhinangwn*

*Alari bathi jwngnai baidi*

*Fisafwrni khafalao jwnghw nanggwn*

*De, dohai afa Bwrai Bathou.*

Free English Translation:

Oh! Father,

You are the owner of home and others

Lightening *Alari* lamp in front of Lord *Bwrai Bathou*

Today we have started plantation.

There should be no end by eating and drinking

A bundle should be seven bundles

In your blessing,

There should be no decrease

There should be no reduced.

Blessing of Song *Bwrai* and Song *Buri*

The owner of home and others

During the time of eating and drinking

Should be keep in smooth

Like the *Alari* lamp

You should led the child like shine

Oh! Father Lord *Bwrai Bathou*.

When the ritual for starting agricultural work is over, women members of the family along with the other female members of the village are going to the paddy field. After reaching the agricultural field, the woman of the concern family lighted an *Alari Bathi* (an earthen pot for illumination which is made of mud and put some oil on it and thread is there for lighting) at the corner of the field which had already been done ploughing. With the completion of the offering of *Alari Bathi* in the paddy field, all the women who came to the field used to start plantation with the saplings which kept ready for the purpose.<sup>24</sup>

## **ii. *Nangwl Jangkhra*:**

As and when the activities of cultivation including plantation of the paddy in a season is completed, each family of the farmer is organized a feast known as *Nangwl Jangkra* for those villagers or persons who were involved and co-operated in the agricultural work. On that day, they have enjoyed by smearing and throwing mud with each other. Abundance of *Jwo* (rice beer), *Oma Bedor* (pork), *Dao Bedor* (chicken), *Hangsw* (duck), *Na* (fish) etc. are offered to those people who had undertook in the cultivation work.<sup>25</sup>

### iii. *Mainao Lainay*:

A ritual which is performed in the pre-harvesting of the paddy is called *Mainao Lainai*. *Mainao Lainai* denotes to bring the goddess of wealth to the house.<sup>26</sup> This ritual is carried out to keep the grain of paddy at the granary. In this ritual an elderly woman or a woman of the family arranged an offering to *Mainao* by placing the following items at the *Bathou* altar on a banana leaf. The items are:

- (a) *Thalir Bilai* (banana leaf)
- (b) *Thulsi Bilai* (Basil leaf)
- (c) *Thalir Phithai* (Banana fruit)
- (d) *Alari Bathi* (an earthen pot for illumination)
- (e) *Mairong* (uncooked rice)
- (f) *Gaiker* (milk)
- (g) *Goi* (areca nuts)
- (h) *Phathwi* (betel leaves)
- (i) *Dhup* (incense stick)
- (j) *Kundung Aowa* (white cotton thread)
- (k) *Thao Gubwi* (mustard oil)

When offering is made, the elderly woman or woman of the family utters the following words:<sup>27</sup>

*Oh, Apha Anan Gosai*

*Ojwngha swrbadongbla*

*Nwngni swrzinay,*

*Asu Mainao, Sali Mainao*

*Bahandari Khumari*

*Jiu rahanigiri.*

*Nwngnw jadwng bima Mainao*

*Nwi ai bima Mainao,*

*Jwngkhou nagarna*

*Ranhwna ukhwihwna*

*Mwnnwgwiyi khalamna*

*Da hogar, da gwma*

*Jwngkhou nwnng ai baosri jana.Jwngni gabjrinayao*

*Thadw nwnng ai*

*Jwngni Maihendw Mai bakhriyao.*

*Oraibw onthaibaidi*

*Gilir mohorwi jwngkhou onnanwi*

*Nwnng ai bima Mainao*

*Khulumw jwng nwnng bimakhou.*

*Nwi ai bima Mainao,*

*Athingjwng jothrodphlangbay,*

*Hasibjwng sibphlangbay*

*Orao phanse, dwiao phanse*

*Khalamphlangon*

*Bi daini thakhai*

*Nimaha hwnangwn*

*Orai nong bimaya*

*Gorseya gornwi*

*Jananwi thanangwn*

*Ai bima Mainao*

*Jwngni Maihendw Mai bakhriyao*

*Buhumni jib-jibi, raijw-raja*

*Boikhoubw sukhu gwjwn*

*Raha hwna lakhinangwn*

*Oh, ai bima Mainao*

*Dohai Apha Bwrai Bathou.*

*Ahamde swithwni mwdai*

*Swrgwao dong Bwrai Bathou*

*Hayao dong sijou biphang*

*Thulunsi gwthar*

*Beniphrai raobw gwithara*

*Raokhoubw nuhura khwnaya*

*Raokhoubw mithi mwnlia.*

*Bungdw aiphwr aphaphwr*

*Ojwngha dongbaoyw swr swr*

*Jwngni aiphwr aphaphwr*

*Boibw nujaphwidw nwnngswr*

*Mainao Garja, Asu Garja*

*GaoGarja, Songe songe Garja*

*Phuji jagra sibsini Garja*

*Dibsin Garja, Moian Garja*

*Maoria Garja, Dawang Garja*

*Saoria Garja, Thia Garja*

*Dosemali Garja, Gogo Garja*

*Dong aro kholadani Garja*

*Mithizagra Niladani Garja*

*Gwthar sem semali Garja*

*Nwngswrnw jidain Garja.*

*Arw dongbaoyw swr swr*

*Gaswikhoubw baonswi danw*

*Gothar khum bwrainanwi*

*Baidi baothai hwnanwi.*

*Phorwaphwr, Jekhaibwrai*

*Asu Mainao khobai bwrai*

*Jwmwnbwrai Jwmwnburi*

*Nujaphwidw Apha nwnng merubwrai.*

*Maorbwrai, Maor-buri*

*Mwnsri Dwisri Budaru bwrai,*

*Dongswi Swinasi sikhla, Gambari*

*Akhaisri Maothansri*

*Dohai ai apha nwnngswr*

*Dani mwdai nonga nwnngswr*

*Saithoni mwdai nwnngswr*

*Phao phuja jabwdwng nwnngswr*

*Houa hinjao gotho gothai*

*Sukhunai sukhaywi lakhidw srai.*

*Lwmja sajayao naidw*

*Khwiphwdao onnanwi lakhidw.*

*Houaphwra hagrayero thangwn*

*Hinjaophwra dwiao thangwn*

*Khwiphwd najahwnw beonw*

*Mwnnai nonga dukhu jahwnw.*

*Daoboalai swmakhwi.*

*Daokhayalai phurakhwi*

*Daima daisani daiya*

*Ulthaywi bwhwiakhwi*

*Lwithwni onthaiya gwjaoakhwi*

*Nwi dinwi Apha bwrai Bathouni swrji*

*Laijam sreng sreng bonanwi*

*Gwthar baothai hwnanwi*



*Baidi khum bwrainanwi*

*Nwnngswrnw baonwswi jwng nwi*

*Be gwdan bwswr*

*Bwisagu bwthwrao.*

*Sahani lwmja sajaphwr*

*Saha hogarhor nwnngswr*

*Sanjani lwmja sajaphwr*

*Sanjaha hogar hor nwnngswr*

*Swnabni lwmja sajaphwr*

*Swnabha hogarhor nwnngswr*

*Jwngni aiphwr aphaphwr*

*Dohai Apha gedemaraja Bwrai Bathou.*

Free English Translation:

Oh Father, *Anan Gosai*

You are here and there

All are your creations

*Asu Mainao, Sali Mainao*

*Bahandari, Khumari*

The creator of lives

You are the Mother *Mainao*

Oh Mother *Mainao*

Keeping us in a side

Keeping us in hunger

Keeping us far behind

Do not throw away and give up

Mother, being an absent minded

We call you

You stay with us

Stay in *Maihendw* and granary

Stay you as rock *Alw*

We bow down to you

Oh Mother *Mainao*

Forgive me if I committed any

If I would throw away

To the water and fire

Forgive me Mother *Mainao*

Keep all of us with joy and happiness

Oh Mother *Mainao Buri*

Oh Father *Bwrai Bathou*

*Ahamde*, God and Goddesses of truth

*Bwrai Bathou* is in heaven

*Sijou* plant and *Thulsi* on the earth

There is nothing

We cannot see

We know to none

Oh mother and father

Who are here and there?

Come one, Come all

*Mainao Garja, Asu Garja,*

*Gao Garja, Songe-songe Garja*

Respected *Sibsin Garja*

*Dibsin Garja, Dawang Garja*

*Saoria Garja, Thia Garja*

*Dosemali Garja, Gogo Garja*

Again, there is *Kholadani Garja*

Holy *semsemali Garja*

You are eighteen *Garja*

And, who are there?

We call all of you

By praying and offerings

Of various kinds of things,

Oh *Fwrjaphwr, Jekhai Bwrai*

*Asu Mainao, Khobai Bwrai*

*Jwomwn Bwrai Jwomwn-Buri*

Come on Father you *Meru Bwrai*

*Maor-Bwrai Maor-Buri*

*Mwmsri Dwisri, Budaru-Bwrai*

There is *Soinasi sikhla, Gambari*

*Akhaisri, Maothansri*

Oh mother and father you of all

You are not god and goddesses of two day

You are the real deities

You lead us to the light

Accepting our offerings

With prosperous and happiness

Look after in our distress

Look after during our illness

The males go to the hunting

The females go their fishing

We pray you, do not disturb them

The cranes have not yet turned black

Nor turned white the crows

Not yet melted down the hills

Nor did ice rocks of sea flow

Yet survives the truth

Oh Mothers! Oh Fathers!

Religion exists still

Oh Father *Bwrai Bathou*

We arrange with the sheath of banana plant

Offering one after another

Pure offerings for you

For this occasion, the new year's *Boisagu*

You protect the ailments of the north

You protect the ailments of the north

You protect the ailments of the south

You protect the ailments of the east

You protect the ailments of the west

Oh Father, *Bwrai Bathou*.

In the next day of the offering, an elderly female member of the family goes to the paddy field early in the morning after taking bath. This is mainly done before the sun rise. While she is going to the paddy field, she is required to carry the following items:

- (a) *Dwi Gwthar* (holy water)
- (b) *Dhup* (incense stick)
- (c) *Thulsi* (basil leaves)
- (d) *Thalir Bilai* (banana leave)
- (e) *Jorase Goi Phithai* (a pair of areca nut)
- (f) *Phathwi* (betel leaves)

- (g) *Khasi* (sickle)
- (h) *Alari Bathi* (an earthen pot for illumination)

When she reached the paddy field, she sprinkles the holy water on the paddy which is to be brought to the home to keep in the granary. After the completion of sprinkling of the holy water on the particular paddy, she placed all the items mention above on a banana leaf and offering is made to the *Mainao*. With this offering she started cutting some of the matured paddy and put them in the banana leaf. Then, she will carry that binding paddy on her head and proceed to her house in the silent mode. The paddy which she brought to the home is kept in the granary with the belief that goddess *Mainao* has brought and a place is given for her in the granary to make the family rich and wealthy.<sup>28</sup>

#### **iv. *Mai Hanai*:**

*Mai Hanai* denotes cutting of rice plant. Before the harvesting of the paddy, a ritual is performed in which offering is made to the goddess *Mainao* with the items like-areca nuts, betel leaves, *Dhup* etc. in a selected site of the paddy field. After this ritual is over, the actual work of the harvesting i.e. cutting of the mature paddy is started and carried them to the house directly by making bundles. Sometimes, the cuttings of the paddy are kept in the paddy field for two or three days for more exposing to the sunlight to become more dry. In earlier days, the women carried the sheaves on their hand whereas the men carried with the help of *Sulabari*<sup>29</sup> on their shoulder. Sometimes bullock cart also used to carry the sheaves.

#### **v. *Mara Hwnai*:**

Spreading of sheaves is called *Mara Hwnai* in Bodo. No ritual has been found in the *Mara Hwnai*. To spread the sheaves on the ground from shell, the Bodos used two or more bullocks by tiding side by side and made them to move round. When the rice is separated, the grains are stored in the *Bakri* (granary) or *Duli* (rice container made of bamboo).

**vi. *Wngkham Gwrlwi Jahwnai*:**

*Wngkham Gwrlwi Jahwnai* is known as eating of new rice in Bodo. *Wngkham Gwrlwi Jahwnai* is organized in the month of *Magh* of Bangla Calendar. For eating the new rice, the grains which had stored in the granary will take out and expose in the sunlight by placing on a bamboo mat or on the ground which is already plastered at the courtyard. When the grains are dried up, they are dash in wooden mortar which is called *Uwal*<sup>30</sup> with the help of pestle, the *Gaihen*<sup>31</sup> in Bodo. Then a *Songrai* (winnowing fan) and *Sandri*<sup>32</sup> (sieve) are used to separate the grain from the husk. Before eating the new rice, the concern family offer prayer not only the *Bathou Bwrai* and *Mainao* but also other gods and goddesses with the help of *Dwori* or *Oja*. Until and unless this offering is not completed, nothing can be cooked or consume by any member of the family.<sup>33</sup> The following items are arranged for of the offering:

- (a) *Thalir Bilai* (banana leaf)
- (b) *Thulsi Bilai* (basil leaf)
- (c) *Thalir Phithai* (banana fruit)
- (d) *Alari Bathi* (an earthen pot for illumination)
- (e) *Mairong* (uncooked rice)
- (f) *Gaiker* (milk)
- (g) *Goi* (areca nuts)
- (h) *Phathwi* (betel leaves)
- (i) *Dhup* (incense stick)
- (j) *Kundung Aowa* (white cotton thread)
- (k) *Thao Gubwi* (mustard oil)
- (l) *On* (grain rice)

When offering is made, the following words are recited by the family members along with *Dwori* or *Oja*:<sup>34</sup>

*Nwi apha Bwrai Bathou,*

*Swrjigiri, apha Obonglaori,*

*Bathounigiri apha, nwnngnw dwhwrwmni bipha,*

*Gwhwnigiri apha, nwnngnw mulugni bipha.*

*Nwnngnw Anangosai, Obonggosai, Swrjigiri apha Obonglaori,*

*Nwng derhasargra, mithisargra, nuwathari apha raikhagiri,*

*Nwnngnw rangrasi, mitha, hasing, barigongtham,*

*Nwng phanseyno phana phantham apha harsingoi Satham.*

*Nwnngnw swrzidwng, nwnngnw khangdwng badwng, nwnngnw dwidendwng,*

*Nwnngnw gelehwdwng, nwjwr hordwng, boikhwobw phwjwbsrangdwng,*

*Dinwini be gwthar sansri gwthar bubliyao,*

*Angni gwswmwdwm jiu baobay nwng aphanao.*

*Nwnngni onnai, nwnngni bwrsarsrinay, nwnngni phwrwngnay,*

*Gwrwbjwng ajaonw ang nwnngni sigangao soMai labay.*

Free English Translation:

Oh Father, *Bwrai Bathou,*

*Swrjigiri, Father Obonglaori,*

You are the Lord of *Bathou*, You are the Lord of religion,

You are the Lord of courage; you are the Lord of Universe.

You are *Anan Gosai, Obong Gosai, Swrjigiri,* and Father *Obonglaori*

You are the conqueror, omniscient, unseen, Father Protector,

You are *Rangrasi, Mitha, Hasing, Barigongtham*

You are one in three, Father three in one.



You are the creator, preserver and Director,

We play games according to you, you are destroyer.

To-days on the holy day and holy moment,

I offer my heart and soul to you Father.

Your affection, your blessing, your teaching

I accept with my heart and promise for learning.

When the prayer is over, the concern family members cook the new rice and *Onla Wngkri*<sup>35</sup>, the traditional curry of the Bodos specially prepared with rice powder with chicken. It is compulsory for every family of the Bodos to prepared *Onla Wngkri* during the *Wngkam Gwrlwi Janai*. Other items such as *Oma Bedor* (pork), *Hangsw* (duck), *Bwrma* (mutton), *Na* (fish), vegetables etc. are also cooked. *Jwo* or *Jumai* (rice-beer) is also offered in abundance. Cooked items are firstly offered to deceases of the concern family and gods and goddesses, mainly to the *Bwrai Bathou* and *Mainao Buri* and started consuming.<sup>36</sup>

### **3. Economic Life:**

Agriculture is the main economy of the Bodos. Verities of rice are cultivated. Besides rice, several crops are also grown by them. The major crops are mustard, jute, cotton, tobacco etc. and vegetables like potato, cabbage, cauliflower, radish, cucumber, gourd, green leaves, pulse, beans, small-beans, sweet potato, turmeric, pumpkin, melon, brinjal etc. including verities of spices like chili, onion, garlic, coriander, ginger etc. Another important fruit tree which brings more economy to them is the *Goi Biphang*<sup>37</sup> (areca tree). The areca nuts are most essential for them in day to day life including the religious functions. Without areca nuts and betel leaves no social function or ritual can be performed in their society.<sup>38</sup>

The Bodos used different kinds of agricultural utensils specially made of bamboo and wood at agricultural activities. The agricultural tools of the Bodos are as follow:<sup>39</sup>

- (a) *Nangal* (ploughshare)
- (b) *Jungal* (yoke)
- (c) *Suken* (a kind of straw separator made of bamboo)
- (d) *Mwi* (harrow)
- (e) *Mwi Dangur* (a kind of land equalizer made of bamboo)
- (f) *Beda* (made of bamboo and wood with spikes to remove the grass)
- (g) *Hasini* (rake)
- (h) *Royna* (made of bamboo and wood to make collectively the rice)
- (i) *Khasi* (sickle)
- (j) *Khodal* (hoe)
- (k) *Hulabari* (a kind of bamboo stick for the collection of bundle rice on shoulder)

Apart from the agriculture, the Bodos have been reliant on other economic activities such as hunting-gathering, animal husbandry, handicrafts, etc. In early days, the economic life of Bodos was very much impacted by their habit of frequent migration. They gave maximum importance to the foods of day to day life. In those days, they were self sufficient with some degree of necessities and led to a simple rural life without much knowledge of earning and accumulating wealth and property. As a result of struggle for livelihood in later stages, the economic life of the Bodos can be study under the following heads:<sup>40</sup>

### **3.1. *Junar Phisinai*:**

The Bodo word *Junar Phisinai* indicates domestication of animals. The animals which the Bodos domesticated are pig, chicken, goat, cow, duck etc. Domestication of buffalo is very rare among the Bodos. Sometimes, these domesticate animals such as goat, chicken; duck, etc. are sacrificed in the religious festival of the Bodos. So, they played a vital role in the religious life of the Bodos.<sup>41</sup> No such groups as herdsman, shepherd etc. is found in the Bodo society.<sup>42</sup> All kinds of livestock are domesticated in each and every household for the purpose of consumption and socio-religious practices.<sup>43</sup> The female members are regarded as the owner of all kinds of livestock.

In Bodo society impurity broom plays a vital role in the domestication of fowls. When the household knows the symptom of giving eggs, they make *Kho* (nest) with the paddy straw either in *Khada* (basked) or *Jekhai*. When the nests for those fowls which are to be laid eggs is ready, the owner of the livestock beating the nest with impure broom with the belief that by doing so snakes, insects etc. might not be able to attacked or harm or eat the eggs. And the owner of the livestock who prepared the nest to lay eggs recites the following words:<sup>44</sup>

*Jibwo-jibad, anjor-anla,*

*Ampwo-anla habnanwi dajapwitwng.*

*Baihrani megon nwjwr dagwglwitwng.*

*Jesebang dwiyw asebang mwjanywinw*

*Tajwbtwng fisha wngkartwng.*

Free English Translation:

It should not let free to be eaten up by snakes, rats, insects, etc. all will remain good till its birth.

After the completion of reciting the above word she spitted three times with producing sound *thu, thu, thu*.

### **3.2. *Mwihur Kalamnai:***

The term *Mwihur Kalamnai* denotes hunting. From the ancient time, Bodos are fond of hunting. The hunter is called *Pholan*<sup>45</sup> in Bodo. Hunting can be done both group and individual. The tools used in the hunting are *Bwrla* (bow), *Thir* (arrow), *Thop* (made of bamboo), *Jong* (spear), *Je* (net), *Rua* (axe), *Sikha* (dao) etc.

The number of people engaged in hunting with the help of nets varies from 15 to 25 which mainly base on the nets that to be used. If the used of the nets are very few, less people will involve. It indicated that more nets will be more people or less nets means

less people. There might be two or three leaders in a hunting party to trace the animals. The presence of animals in a particular area is detected by examining the foot prints and stools of the animals. There is a proverb in Bodo in connection with hunting which goes as follows:<sup>46</sup>

*Maiya thwiyw aganao*

*Naya thwiyw thophinayao*

*Sesaya thwiyw khiao*

*Mansiya thwiyw khugayao.*

Free English Translation:

Deer dies for its footprint

Fish dies for stirring water

Hare dies for its stool

Man dies for his tongue.

Rev. Sydney Endle says that deer and wild pigs are very often caught in hunting. Sometimes, they also used net for hunting wild animal and regular hunting parties are organized for hunting purpose. The practice of offering right leg of the trap animal to the owner of net is prevalent among the Bodos. Rest portion of meat are distributed among the villagers. Equal share of meat are entitled to get by the members who joined in hunting and half or less share of meat is received by the villagers who do not participate in hunting because of his engagement to village work. Widow and sick person are also apportioned a little share of hunted meat.<sup>47</sup> But, now a days, the practice of distribution of meat among the villagers who are not participated in hunting is very rare or discontinued.

### **3.3. *Na Lainai:***

The Bodo word *Na Lainai* means fishing. No doubt, fishing is not considered as an occupation but sometimes we see that in the rural areas at least 5% families run their family by fishing. Fishing is regarded as a hobby from the ancient period and it is done by both man and woman. The female used an implement called *Jekhai*<sup>48</sup> which is a triangular basket made of bamboo with open at one end and three triangular sides are closing with each other to the point and having a handle which is fixed to the whole body. Mostly, the fishing devices are made of bamboo. The fishing implements used by the Bodos are- *Jekhai* (a fishing scoop), *Khobai* (a scoop for keeping fish), *Sen* (a kind of fish trap), *Khoka* (a kind of fish trap), *Pholo* (a kind of fishing trap), *Je* (fishing net) and *Mushari*<sup>49</sup> (a kind of fishing trap). When the fishers go to the water, they bow to the goddess of water and utter the following rites:<sup>50</sup>

*Hey, Ai dwini bima, jwng dinwi na lainw wngkardwng. Jahate nwnng bimaya jwngkwo kwipwd-apwd yeba olokodao kwkwiya. Bini takainw nwnng Ai bima Gangakwo kulumnai jabai.*

Free English Translation:

Oh, Goddess of water, we are going for fishing in water. Kindly save us from troubles.

After the completion of uttering the above words, then they have started fishing.

### **3.4. *Akaijwng Danai-Lunai:***

The Bodo word *Akaijwng Danai Lunai* means handicraft. No doubt, the Bodos are very expert and skillful in the field of handicraft since the ancient days. All male members are talented craftsman. They collected raw materials from the forest and produced different kinds of handicrafts to meet the needs of their day to day life. The whole work of handicraft is confined to male members only. So, it can be understand that all the required things of the family are made by male but not by the female.<sup>51</sup> The household utensils used by the Bodos which are made of clay, bamboo, wood, cane etc.

are *Abwi Dangi, Kamplai, Don, Duli, Sandanga, Dahra, Kada, Songrai, Sandri, Sagong, Uwal, Gaihen, Kadwo, Jantha, Laothai, Dwihu, Maldang, Dabka, Mwkra Koro, Kopri, Goi-Batha, Baoka, Suken, Mwi, Mwi-Dangur* etc.<sup>52</sup>

### **3.5. *Si Danai*:**

*Si Danai* is the Bodo word which means weaving. The Bodos have their own traditional dresses which produced by themselves. They have got the knowledge of art of weaving from the nature. Their artistic skill is evident from their traditional dresses like *Dokhna, Jwmgra, Aronai, Phali, Indi* etc.<sup>53</sup> Spinning and weaving are only reserved for the women not for the men because all Bodo female acquire the knowledge of art of weaving. The Bodo rears silk-worm. They produce various clothes from the cocoon of silk-worm for personal use and later on for the commercial purpose. *Muga* rearing is very common among the Bodos which is considered one of the most important economic activities for them.<sup>54</sup> The women produce the clothes for the use of the family members. This indicated that the women contributed a lot in the society as well as the family to save extra expenditure. In fact, Assam was famous for the production of varieties of silk clothes like the China and silk trade was very profitable.<sup>55</sup> A device called *Thaokri* is used by the women for the spinning of yarn both from raw cocoon and cotton.

### **3.6. *Falangi Kalamnai*:**

The Bodo *Falangi Kalamnai* denotes trade and commerce. The source materials for trade and commerce as well as money economy for the Bodos are very limited. The economic condition of the Bodos was self-sufficient and self-defendant. They produced only for consumption purpose of their own family. Like other ancient societies, the Bodos produced to meet their needs only. But, later on, they also began to produce more food grains and other commodities required by them. Surplus products were made exchange which lead to the emergence of trade. Exchange of goods for goods was a common practice in the early days of the Bodos. Trade and commerce was not encouraged by the Bodos society in early days because it was a general belief among the Bodos that trade or business involved telling untruth. Speaking of lie was regarded as a

sin by the Bodos. So, trade and business were not done by them.<sup>56</sup> As a result of which the selling of a cow for making profit within unpermitted period or earning of profit by means of business was not allowed.<sup>57</sup> However, today, many changes have been noticed in the economic life of Bodos to compare to that of the early days. To a great extent, the Bodo people have already been started to carry out trade and business and standard of living also has changed. All these changes may be attributed to the impact of modernization.

### Endnotes

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- <sup>1</sup> Brahma Basanta Kumar, *Bodo Somajari Nem Kanthi Arw Fwthaiithi*, Words and Words, Kokrajhar, 2017, p. 53.
- <sup>2</sup> Endle Rev. Sidney, *The Kacharis*, Low Price Publication, Delhi, 1911, p. 13.
- <sup>3</sup> Moshahary R. N., *Social History of the Bodos of Assam: A study of Oral History*, PhD Unpublished Thesis, NEHU, Shillong, 1986, p. 116.
- <sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* p. 76.
- <sup>5</sup> Interview with Wangchu Basumatary, Age- 56, Occupation- Supervisor Soil Conservation, Vill- Baganshali, W/N- 7, P.O.- Kokrajhar, Dist- Kokrajhar, BTC, Assam on 18/07/2015.
- <sup>6</sup> Interview with Boro Bipen Chandra, Age- 68, Occupation- Ex. Village Headman, Vill- Pub Rehabari, P.O.- Pub Rehabari, Dist- Barpeta, Assam on 06/09/2016.
- <sup>7</sup> Interview with Satiram Wary, Age- 55, Occupation, Oja, Vill- Jalpaiguri, P.O.- Salakati, Dist- Kokrajhar, BTC, Assam on 14/03/2015.
- <sup>8</sup> Interview with Sombaru Narzary, Age- 68, Occupation- Farmer, Vill- Nasraibil, P.O.- Soraibil, Dist- Kokrajhar, BTC, Assam on 25/02/2015.

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- <sup>9</sup> Interview with Sajen Basumatary, Age- 58, Occupation- Farmer, Vill- 16 No. Mazabari Amguri, P.O.- Haltugaon, Dist- Kokrajhar, BTC, Assam on 16/07/2016.
- <sup>10</sup> Interview with Switram Brahma, Age- 56, Occupation- Priest, Vill- Dalanguri, P.O.- Dotma, Dist- Kokrajhar, BTC, Assam on 17/08/2016.
- <sup>11</sup> Interview with Smt. Sambari Basumatary, Age- 55, Vill- Rangidara, Dist- Baksa, BTC, Assam on 26/10/2014.
- <sup>12</sup> Narzi Bhaben, *Boro Kocharini Somaj Arw Harimu*, Chirang Publication Board, Kajalgaon, 2006, p. 51.
- <sup>13</sup> *Ibid.* p. 51.
- <sup>14</sup> Interview with Arjun Brahma, Age- 55, Occupation- Cultivator, Vill- Kagrabari, P.O.- Banargaon, Dist- Kokrajhar, BTC, Assam on 03/06/2016.
- <sup>15</sup> Interview with Dwiba Prasad Brahma, Age- 58, Occupation- Teacher, Vill- Boragari, P.O.- Dotma, Dist- Kokrajhar, BTC, Assam on 21/04/2015.
- <sup>16</sup> Interview with Hadang Basumatary, Age- 70, Occupation- Farmer, Vill- Batabari, P.O.- Simbwrgaon, Dist- Kokrajhar, BTC, Assam on 27/09/2015.
- <sup>17</sup> Brahma Basanta Kumar, *op. cit.*, p. 53.
- <sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>19</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 53-54.
- <sup>20</sup> Interview with Hongla Mushahary, Age- 60, Occupation- Oja, Vill- Awoguri, P.O.- Jaharbari, Dist-Kokrajhar, BTC, Assam on 21/05/2015.
- <sup>21</sup> Interview with Pulsri Brahma, Age- 54, Occupation- Housewife, Vill- Boragari, P.O.- Dotma, Dist- Kokrajhar, BTC, Assam on 25/04/2016.
- <sup>22</sup> Interview with Smt. Chidey Bala Basumatary, Age- 75, Occupation- Housewife, Vill- Chandana Borigaon, Dist- Udalguri, BTC, Assam on 02/10/2014.



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- <sup>23</sup> Interview with Rajen Basumatary, Age-58, Occupation- Farmer, Vill- Shymdharphra, P.O.- Dotma, Dist- Kokrajhar, BTC, Assam on 20/01/2014.
- <sup>24</sup> Interview with Himadri Narzary, Age- 57, Occupation- Housewife, Vill- Kashokotra, P.O.- Kashokotra, Dist- Chirang, BTC, Assam on 12/08/2016.
- <sup>25</sup> Interview with Pitambar Basumatary, Age- 65, Occupation- Retired Serviceman, Vill-Barama, P.O.- BArama, Dist- Baksa, BTC, Assam on 14/09/2016.
- <sup>26</sup> Interview with Bole Brahma, Age- 54, Occupation- Housewife, Vill- Habrubari, P.O.- Kokrajhar, Dist- Kokrajhar, BTC, Assam on 22/02/2015.
- <sup>27</sup> *Gwthar Mwikhun* (Ed.), Vol.1, 3<sup>rd</sup> Ed. 1992, p. 187.
- <sup>28</sup> Hazowary Mangal Singh, *op. cit.*, p. 324.
- <sup>29</sup> Interview with Tetrem Brahma, Age- 56, Occupation- Farmer, Vill- Boragari, P.O.- Dotma, Dist- Kokrajahr, BTC, Assam on 13/04/2015.
- <sup>30</sup> A tool used during time of dashing of rice.
- <sup>31</sup> A kind of tool used to broke the rice sheaves.
- <sup>32</sup> A kind of tool used to separate the broken grain rice.
- <sup>33</sup> Hazowary Mangal Singh, *op. cit.*, pp. 227-228.
- <sup>34</sup> *Ibid.* p. 325.
- <sup>35</sup> Traditional curry of Bodos specially cooked with rice powder.
- <sup>36</sup> Brahma Binoy Kumar, *Boroni Subung Harimu*, N. L. Publications, Kokrajhar, BTC, 2009, p. 8.
- <sup>37</sup> Mondal Satyendra Nath, *History and Culture of the Bodos*, Edited by Bonny Narzary, Jalpaiguri, West Bengal, 2011, p. 199.
- <sup>38</sup> Hazowary Mangal Singh, *op. cit.*, p. 30.

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- <sup>39</sup> B. C. Allen, E. A. Gait, C. G. H. Allen and H. F. Howard, *Gazetteer of Bengal and North East India*: Delhi, Reprint, 1979, p. 63.
- <sup>40</sup> Interview with Janabhir Brahma, Age- 62, Occupation- Priest, Vill- Santinagar, P.O.- Dotma, Dist- Kokrajhar, BTC, Assam on 17/02/2017.
- <sup>41</sup> Mondal Satyendra Nath, *op. cit.*, p. 199.
- <sup>42</sup> *Ibid.* p. 199.
- <sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>44</sup> Interview with Baliram Narzary, Age- 62, Occupation- Retired Teacher, Vill- Simlaguri, P.O.- Dotma, Dist- Kokrajhar, BTC, Assam on 31/05/ 2015.
- <sup>45</sup> Brahma Binoy Kumar, *op. cit.*, p. 8.
- <sup>46</sup> Narzi Bhaben, *op. cit.*, p. 105.
- <sup>47</sup> Endle, Rev. Sydney, *op. cit.*, p. 16.
- <sup>48</sup> A triangular basket made of bamboo with open at one end and three triangular sides are closing with each other to the point and having a handle which is fixed to the whole body.
- <sup>49</sup> A kind of fishing trap.
- <sup>50</sup> Interview with Smt. Marjina Brahma, Age- 58, Occupation- Housewife, Vill- Dotma Chariali, P.O.- Dotma, Dist- Kokrajhar, Assam on 23/05/2015.
- <sup>51</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. 119.
- <sup>52</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 120-121.
- <sup>53</sup> Interview with Gunabati Brahma, Age- 54, Occupation- Housewife, Vill- Kwdwmthola, P.O.- Dotma, Dist- Kokrajhar, BTC, Assam on 21/10/2016.
- <sup>54</sup> Hodgson B. H., *op. cit.*, p. 121.

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- <sup>55</sup> Brahma Binoy Kumar, *op. cit.*, p. 86.
- <sup>56</sup> Brahma Sekhar, *Religion of the Boro and their Socio-Cultural Transition*, DVS Publishers Guwahati, 2006, p. 37.
- <sup>57</sup> Choudhury P. C., *The History of Civilization of the People of Assam to the Twenty Century AD.*, Department of Historical and Antiquarian Studies in Assam, Gauhati, 1959, p. 365.