

## CHAPTER-3

### THE FESTIVALS OF THE BODOS: PAST AND PRESENT

#### 3.1. Festival:

The festival is an organized or unorganized series of acts or events and performances by a group of people or community inherited or recently originated. It is ordinarily staged by a community centering their traditions, cultures, rites and rituals, religious, etc. with some unique and specific purposes along with celebration and entertainment.

In India the festival is known as Utsava. 'The Uthsava or Utsava or Utsav is derived from the Sanskrit word, *Utsava*. *Utsava* generally means a festival or celebration or any joyous occasion. It is also the meaning of delight, merriment and pleasure. The Sanskrit word Utsava comes from the word "ut" meaning "removal" and "sava" which means "wordly sorrows" or "grief".<sup>1</sup> Hence, the meaning of the word Utsava or utsav means removal of all wordly sorrows or grief.

The festival is joyful, enthusiastic activities, entertainment, merrymaking, feasting, worship and offerings to deities, fasting, feasting, rituals, fairs and any other event in our day to day activities. It is a day or time period for feasting and celebration of all kind.

#### 3.2. Kinds of Bodo Festivals:

##### **The brief survey reports on the Bodo Festivals:**

The Bodos observe various festivals throughout the year. After brief survey the Bodo festivals and ceremonies can be categorized into three viz. 1. **The festivals and ceremonies related to the life cycle** like - i. the door opening ceremony, ii. the Blessing to New Born baby, iii. the Marriage, iv. the Death Rites, etc., 2. **The Seasonal and Agricultural Festivals** like – i. the *Bwisagu*, ii. the *Domasi*, iii. the *Khathrigasa*, etc. and 3. **The Religious Festivals** like - i. the *Salami*, ii. the *Kherai*, iii. the *Garza puja*, iv. the *Dinga Puja*, etc.

The festivals and ceremonies related to the life cycle have already been discussed in Chapter - 2. The remaining festivals have been elaborately discussed below:

### **3.2.1. The Seasonal and Agricultural festivals:**

The festivals which are directly or indirectly related with the agriculture in different season are called the Seasonal and Agricultural festivals. The *Bwisagu*, the *Domasi*, the *Khathri Gasa Saonai*, etc. are the seasonal and agricultural festivals of the Bodos.

#### **1. The *Bwisagu* festival:**

The *Bwisagu* is one of the most popular seasonal festivals of the Boros.<sup>2</sup> The *Bwisagu* is one of the most popular seasonal, agricultural, spring time as well as a kind of religious festival of the Bodos celebrated in various parts of Kokrajhar, Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC), Assam, India and even abroad.

#### **Origin of the *Bwisagu*:**

It is said that the *Bwisagu* festival was the celebration on the occasion of the marriage ceremony of *Barolampha Terolampha* with *Bwisagw Sikhla*. The *Barolampha Terolampha* was the son of old weather *Bwrai* and *Burwi* and *Bwisagw Sikhla* was the daughter of *Sizou Bwrai* and *Hazou Burwi*. It is based on folk song:

*Bwthwr bwrai bwthwr burwini phisala*  
*Barolampha Terolampha zwhwlaozwng*  
*Sizou bwrai hazou burwini phisazw*  
*Gang gwrlwi bwisagw sikhilani haba barai*<sup>3</sup>

Another folk tale relating to the origin of the *Bwisagu* festival by Basudev Basumatary, run as – in ancient time there were two sisters named Asagi and Bwisagi. They were skilled in weaving in their looms. One day they were busy in their looms. At the moment one huge *Gila* come from the air and destroyed their looms. They were surprised. They found a huge *Gila*. One of them picks up the *Gila* and took it in her *Doba* (a place made in the upper portion on the breast area with *Dokhona*). At the moment *Gilasrwn Zwhwla* the owner of the *Gila* arrived and asked both of them to return his *Gila*. Both the sisters refused to return it and

ran away towards the *Dwima Gathwn* (river bank where the Bodos do all the works related with water in day to day life). *Gilasrwn Zwhwlao* followed and repeatedly requested both of them but did not materialized, so; he was very worried. He then set with his flute and began to play. Both the sisters and their friends began to dance and sing with the tune of flute by *Gilasrwn Zwhwlao* forgetting everything. These days were the days of the advent of the New Year symbolizing in the nature with new look and form. From this day of singing, dancing, by *Asagi-Bwisagi* and their another friends along with *Gilasrwn Zwhwlao* and young boy friend's in the spring season, at the advent of the new year, with sweet songs of the cuckoos in the new branches to the trees, in the advent of the *Bar-dwi-sikhla* in the air was the beginning of the *Bwisagu* festival in the time of immemorial period.<sup>4</sup> One of the folk tale say that the *Bwisagi Sikhla* come to her parents house from the western world where she was married with, one time in a year. She also accompanied with her friends - the *bar* (wind), *dwi* (water) and *sikhla* (girl). It is believed that the *Bwisagu* comes to her parent's house as a guest signaling the advent of the New Year with *Bar-dwi-sikhla*.

### **Origin of the word *Bwisagu*:**

According to Kameswr Brahma, the Bodos of Kokrajhar area called their most popular seasonal festival as the *Bwisagu* which means the start of the New Year.<sup>5</sup> The *Bwisagu* festival is observed at the starting of the Assamese month *Bwisakh* as pronounced by the Bodos which is *Bohag* by the Assamese. It may be stated that as it is observed at the very early part of the first month of the year, it is called as *Bwisakh + Agu = Bwisagu*. In Boro 'Hu'- means to pray to God or Goddess or prayer. So, Pray or prayer to cattle in *Bwisagu*, *Prayer in the Bwisakh < Bwisag + Hu > Bwisagu or Bwisagu* has come.<sup>6</sup>

The Bodos of the Kamrup and other districts of Assam called the *Bwisagu* as *Bihu*. The *Bihu* of Assamese is not alike as the *Bihu* of the Bodos. The *Bihu* in Bodo is only the festival celebrated from *Chaitra sankranthi* and up to 6<sup>th</sup> days of *Bohag* only. So, B.N. Dutta correctly comments that Kati Bihu and Mag Bihu don't constitute one cycle with *Bwisagu* in Boro society.<sup>7</sup> 'The word *Bihu*—*Newar* (puja) or prayer in every household by welcoming New Year: prayer to *Siv-bwrai*

(Siva) and *Siv-burwi* (*parbati*): *sacrifice, pigeon, swine, goats, etc.* The Prayer to *Siv-bwrai* and *Siv-burwi* for the welfare of forth-coming year. Take blessing by bowing down to the people after prayer to God. Prayer to *Bathou* and *Garza* for welfare and power along with merry-making is seen. This kind of prayer is *Bihu*.<sup>8</sup>

The traditional naming of the Bodos is made by observing physical features, behaviours, days, festivals, etc. from the time immemorial. It is universal. The origin of the word *Bwisagu* is Bodo and belonging to the *Kokrajhar, Chirang, Bagsha, Udalguri* and other districts of Assam. The word itself has evaluation from long ago. The '*Bwisw*'— means year or age '*Agu*'— means first or start. Thus *Bwisw + Agu = Bwisagu*.

The word *Bihu* may be the Bodo origin. The word *Bihu* may have derived from '*Bi*' + '*Hu*' = *Bihu*. Here the '*Bi*'— means '*He*' or *God* whom the Bodo people think Supreme, abode of all almighty *Bwrai Bathou, Maharaza, Mohadeva, God, Sib-bwrai, Iswr, Creator, etc.* '*Hu*'— means to pray, to give with pure mind to get eternal peace and progress in all aspect. In short we can say that to pray to God to get peace and progress in all aspect. *Bi + Hw or Hu = Bihw = Bihu*. For instance during the *Bwisagu* we pray to cattle, pray to God or *Bathou*, pray to deities or ancestors, etc. for welfare of the coming year and good productivity of our agriculture. On the other hand, the word *Bihu* may come from *Bi + Hu = Bihu*, where *Bi* -- means to beg like alms and *Hu* — means to give or donate whatever is begged. In *Bwisagu* or *Bihu* the Bodo people of all age groups beg something like alms in every household and bring the begged one. The word comes from to give or donate whatever is begged or bring by begging. The *Bwsagu* or *Bwisagw* or *Bihu* whatever it is called at present, it may be modified in latter generations.

### **Characteristics of the *Bwisagu*:**

Some characteristics of the *Bwisagu* are:

1. *Gwkha-Gwkhwi Zanai* (eating of bitter and sour taste): There is a tradition of eating bitter and sour tasted wild vegetables on *Chaitra Sankhranthi*. Farewell is given by eating bitter and sour tasted vegetables collected from nearby jungles or at the market at present with various meats.
2. *Mwsou Thukhwinai* (bathing of cattle).

3. Worshipping of God and Goddesses.
4. Worshipping ancestors and recently dead relatives.
5. Merry-making and enjoyment at the advent of the New Year.
6. Receiving guests and other relatives.

The *Bwisagu* festival starts on the last day of the month of *Chaitra* and continue for seven days. ‘Among the Darrang Kacharis, this festival lasts for seven days, during which no work is done, the whole period being given up to merry-making, dancing, feasting, &c.’<sup>9</sup> The *Bwisagu* which is most popular among the Bodo people of the Kokrajhar district, BTC areas along with other parts of Assam is observed with the following ways:

### **Types of *Bwisagu*:**

The *Bwisagu* festival is celebrated with the following ways:

#### **The *Mwsouni Bwisagu*:**

Cultivation is main livelihood to most of the Bodos till today. They cultivate the soil with cattle. So, they respect cattle as their *Mainao or Lakhi* (God of wealth) since they could know the art of cultivation with cattle. The Bodo people don’t plough with the cow due to the belief that anyone who ploughs with the cow become poorer than the poor by the curse (*sao sarnai*) given to him by the cow. To respect the cattle which are God to them in form of *Lakhi, Mainao*, they pray to the cattle and the cowboy God (*Laokhar Gossai*) for the well being of the cattle in the last day of the *Chaitra*.

In the early morning of *Chaitra Sankhranthi* day, all cattle are taken out of the cattle sheds. The horns are smeared with oil. All the bodies of the cattle are spotted with black marking with a mixture prepared from black ashes and master oil using the stem of the castor (*eri*) stem as the marker or with the piece of bamboo pipe. The cattle are also garlanded with the garlands made of the pieces of gourd, brinjal, turmeric, etc. Then all the cattle are taken to the nearest river or stream and formally bathed sprinkling with a preparation compounded brinjal, gourd and turmeric. This duty discharge the people abandon themselves to sheer merriment, the younger folks especially giving themselves up to dancing and

singing, etc. The verses sing at these festivals seem for the most part of the little better than mere meaningless Jingle-jingle rhythm, made up on the spun of the moment, though occasionally some of them give on insight into the peculiar humor of the Kachari character and temperament. The cowherds and young ones sing songs like;

*Lao za phanthao za*  
*Bwswr bwswr er hanza hanza*  
*Bimani khithir phiphani khithir*  
*Nwngswr zagwn halua gidir.*  
*Bima gaide badi daza.*  
*Phipha balad badi za.*  
*Bibadi za gidir zangila.*<sup>10</sup>

i.e. Eat gourd, eat brinjal grow up year to year. To spite your mother and your father, you will be large bullocks; don't be short stature like your mother, be large like your bull father. Like the frog in the corner of the garden, May you be sleek and long.

The cowherds strike the backs of the cattle with *Digholoty* plants and sing:

*Digolothi mwsouni muli*  
*Dudali zagwn zay khukhili*  
*Digolothi laothi khrikhri ganthi*  
*Zwngni mwsoua zagwn bolor zathi,*  
*Zanai noga gayde thepra.*  
*Markha zagwn phalwani behra.*<sup>11</sup>

i.e. The whip of the *Digholothi* is a great medicine for cows, it's strikes make cow Yield more milk, every he-calf will grow to be a mighty bull and no cow will be small; All cow will be big and tall.

The cattle are left free in the razing field after formal bathing. On that day cattle can't be bitten by sticks. So, they use special sticks in the form of branches of *Digholothi*, *Mwkhwna* or *Khatri* (herbs similar to turmeric), etc.

The entrance of the cowshed, the house, roofs, etc. are decorated with the bundles having branches of *cane leaves*, *khathri bibar*, *mwkhwna bibar* and the garlands

made of gourd, brinjal, turmeric, *daoya bibar*, etc. The old ropes of the cattle have to be taken along with the cattle. After bathing the cattle, the old ropes is kept towards the south along with the garlands designed for the purpose in old stick, the meaning of which is respect to the *Laokhar Gossai*. It is believed that the previous disease of the cattle get cure if such work is done. Some people donate rice, vegetables, salt, chili, etc. to the cowboy on that day. The cowboys take all these and eat by cooking in the open field with merry-making.

After taking away the cattle, the cattle shed are cleaned. The all *phaga* (ropes) are replaced by new ones. The Bodos belief that if the cowshed is not properly clean, the belly of cattle can't fill-up. On that day a cow-dung full old basket is thrown in the nearby street along with old *hasib* (broom) for cleaning the unholy things. The Bodos who reside near the forest areas go to deep forest for hunting and for collecting forest vegetables on the *Sankhranthi* day. The youths go to claim the hill with groups. A special curry known as '*Khazi*' prepare with meats and wild vegetables of different tastes which the Bodos call '*Gwkha- Gwkhwi Mwigong Zanai*' (taste of bitter and sour vegetable) is arranged in every household at that evening. It is served to all and signifies that the old year is bad and thus farewell.

In the evening, the guardian of the family purified the new ropes by sprinkling holy water taking it on the banana leaf on the *Songrai* lighting earthen lamp on it. The cattle are tied with new ropes in the cowshed after washing the foreleg of the cattle, giving them air with bamboo or other made fan; bowing down to cattle. On that day, after performing the above works; with the supervision and leading of the *Oza* some villages perform '*Lama Danthenai*' (side tracking the way) puja. This work is done after the end of the *Bwisagu* somewhere within the district of Kokrajhar. (See Pictures No: 1 to 4 and 7)

On the day of the *Mwsouni Bwisagu* people wear new dresses. On that day the juniors respect to the seniors to beg pardon for the mistake done in the outgoing old year and the seniors also forgive the mistake done by juniors and vice-versa. Taking rice-beer (*Zou*) is started from the day of *Sankhranthi* in every family now-a-days. Previously the drinking of *Zou* was not allowed on the *Mwsouni Bwisagu*.

### ***The Mansi Bwisagu:***

The second day of the *Bwisagu* is the first day of the New Year. The traditional believer Bodos throw away their old earthen utensils of cooking on the first day of the New Year and replace with new one. It is done in the *Mwsouni Bwisagu* in some places. On that day, every members of the family takes bath and offers prayer to the *Bathou* altar after cleaning house and the courtyard.

### **Offering to ancestors:**

After prayer to the *Bathou*, an altar is made towards the south of the courtyard and offer many thing to remember and respect the ancestors. Sometimes the edible and potable food items like - fruits, cakes, meats, fish, rice, wine, etc. are offered. Various clothes, ornaments, etc. are also offered. The prayer to the deceased ancestors is done with the help of the *Oza* or known person of the village in the altar designed for the purpose.

After the accomplishment of the worship of the *Bathou* and the ancestors, the villagers gathered in the '*Than or Bathousali*' (holy place of *Bathou*) or go to a particular house-hold as invited for the first time or as per the decision of the head of the village to entertain wine, for receiving for the blessing from the priest and others. There is also the ceremonial eating of fowl cooked with bitter herb known as *Khungkha* or other vegetables of different tastes (*Gwkha Gwkhwi Zanai*). This is done in the *Mwsouni Bwisagu* day in some places. Welcoming the New Year the *Bodos* exchanges their mutual love, affection with due respect and wish. The juniors offer *Aronai or Phali* to the elders and take blessings from them.

### ***The Bwisagu among the followers of other religious groups:***

The celebration of the *Bwisagu* festival by the *Brahma* religious follower is slightly different from that of the traditional Bodos. The *Mosouni Bwisagu* is done same as traditional Bodos. The *Brahma Dharma* followers Bodos offer prayer to God on the first day of the *Bwisagu* by performing '*Ahuthi*' or *Jyogyahati* (burn offering), jointly at their *Brahma Mandir*. They are allowed to drink *Zou* (rice beer) only after the *puja or Ahuthi*. On the other hand, the Christian Bodos worship neither *Bathou* nor perform *Ahuthi* during the *Bwisagu* festival. Sometime the



Christian Bodos are arranged services in their church for the *Bwisagu* festival. After *Ahuthi* the villagers sit together and discuss about the affairs of the village under the president ship of *Gaobura*. They also discuss about the annual accounts and liabilities of the village of the outgoing year and various problems faced by the villagers. Some planning is also made in this discussion. Sometimes a feast is also arranged in the village as a whole. They also perform the ritual to propitiate the spirits of the ancestors and relatives who have been died as traditional Bodos. After this rites are over, all the people of the village — men, women, boys, girls, exchange their mutual love, good wish for the New Year. They forgive each other's misdeeds and exchanges scarf.

### ***The Bwisagu for others:***

The 2<sup>nd</sup> day of the *Bwisagu* is the *Bihu* for *swima* (dog). Here the dogs are not respected as found in *Mansi* and *Mwsouni Bihu*. Actually, the festival is celebrated keeping the name of the dog only. After this the *Bihu* serially in the name of *Oma* (swine), *Dao* (fowl), *hangsw* (duck) and other birds and lastly the seven *Bihu* in the name of receiving relatives and friends are celebrated. The propitiation rituals for dogs, swine, fowls, ducks and other birds are rarely seen at present days. In the last seven day, the Bodo people have to clean the house ceremonially; take purifying bath and seek apology for doing omissions and commissions that may have done during the ongoing *Bwisagu* festival. Only three days *Bwisagu* festival celebration is seen at present in some places. Laksheswar Brahma said in his book *Bwisagu Arw Harimu*, (1993, second Edn, p.-16) that - the celebration of *Boromani Than Puja* is seen in the Kamrup district in the *Bwisagu*.

The *Bwisagu* festival may be regarded as the festivals of fertility magic. B.N. Bhattacharya said -- Festivals marking various agricultural operations almost are in variably marked by ceremonies involving sexual intercourse.<sup>12</sup>

The entertaining for wine and *Mairong maginai* or *Maginai* (rice begging or begging) along with singing, dancing and playing with musical instruments in groups is started after or along with exchanges of mutual love and affection from the day of *Mansi Bwisagu*. They make various separate groups as their choice and go to every household for rice beer and begging. The group is known as *Husory*

party. Singing songs and dancing becomes the regular features of ‘*Rongzanai Bazanai* (merry-making) in the *Bwisagu*. All the Bodo people who have given up drinking rice beer also enjoy by singing, dancing and merry-making with the friends in the *Bwisagu* festival. There is no restrictions of drinking, singing, dancing, merry-making, etc. among various religious Bodos. The house owner offer either cash or kinds as a mark of respect to the *Husouri* party. The *Husouri* party equally blesses the inmates of the house in return and wishes a prosperous new year. This is in one sense, merry-making festival where young and old, men and women, boys and girls, even children takes part in singing, dancing, merry-making. The entire atmosphere is changed with the beating of drums and a combination of melodious sounds of the flute, *thorkha*, *Zabkhring*, *Zotha*, etc. The group of *Husouri* party eats feasts with collected alms of the *Maginai* (begging) at the closing day of the *Bwisagu* festival. (See Pictures No: 8 to 13)

According to Duparam Basumatary quoted by Laksheswar Brahma in his Book *Bwisagu Arw Harimu* (1993, second Edn, p.-17) - in the seven day of the *Bwisagu* the villagers come together at *Gossai Than* (*Garzasali*) and *Phuthuli Haba* is celebrated. It is not seen in Kokrajhar district. In the last day of the *Bwisagu* festival or the seven day of the *Bwisagu*, which is means for receiving relatives and friends; songs and dances are also made. In this day feasting is arranged with rice, fowl, ducks, vegetables, etc. which were got as alms in the house to house begging during the previous days in the open field in the groups as they made earlier. After eating or feasting all the members of the groups go house to house for the purpose of begging pardon for the omissions and commissions that might had done during the *Bwisagu* festival and songs and dances are also offered again. The songs of that period are specially for begging apology. This means that the *Bwisagu* has come to an end. It is known in Bodo as ‘*Agan Gakhwmwrnai*’ (farewell). In this day the Bodos prepare a special curry of any seven vegetables of various bitter, sour, salty, etc. taste vegetables from the following --- (1) Master oil plants, (2) Bud of cane, (3) *Lapha saikho*, (4) *Kharokhandai bizou*, (5) *Kheradafini*, (6) *Tharaigazli*, (7) *Burwi thokhon*, (8) *Maisundri*, (9) *Sibru thara*, (10) *Dousrem*, (11) *Dingkhiya* (Fern), (12) *Khangsingsa*, (13) *Manimuni*, (14) *Dao penda*, etc. It is done keeping in view that the New Year will be progressive and beneficial to every member of

the family and carry good health, mind, disease and mishap free. This is for not only the households but also for the Bodo society as a whole.

### **Customary Belief and Faiths of the Bodos in the *Bwisagu* festival:**

The Bodos have some special customary belief and faiths in the *Bwisagu* festival. This belief and faith are customary, traditional one and not the sophisticated modern- scientific proof oriented one.

(1) There is a traditional belief among the Bodos that during the *Bwisagu* no quarrel should take place. They believed that those who indulge in quarrels during these days would take birth as cows or dogs in the next life. So, they try to avoid any sort of quarrel during the time of the *Bwisagu* festival.<sup>13</sup>

(2) To render unproductive the eggs of the snakes they produce 'Sathrali' tune on the flute (*siphung*). The snakes are believed by the Bodos to be the foe of the human being and all other creatures and annihilation of snakes is considered an act of general welfare. It is done on the first day or the 2<sup>nd</sup> day of the *Bwisagu*.<sup>14</sup>

(3) In the 2<sup>nd</sup> day of the *Bwisagu* they worship the *Bathou* and offer to ancestors with hope of more and more production and growth of cultivation and wellbeing in the New Year.

(4) The Bodos don't sit on the *Khamphlai* (four-legged-tool) during the *Bwisagu* festival, as they believe that to sit on the four-legged tool means to sit on the head of the parents.<sup>15</sup>

(5) The Bodos never use granary during *Bwisagu* festival. In the *Bwisagu* festival the Bodos except cooking, eating, singing, dancing, merry-making, etc., no work is done.

(6) The women folks of the Bodo family go to the house of the *Oza* or the medicine man with *Zou* (rice beer), cocks or money as the presentation on the first day of the New Year for replacing their *Thabiz* or *Khoboz* (amulet).

(7) From the second day of the *Bwisagu* till the ends of the *Bwisagu* all family becomes the centre of merry-making for all. The young boys play on *Flutes*, *Thorkha*, *Kham*, etc. while the young girls and old women folks play on the *Zabkhring*, *Gongona* or *Gogana*, *Zotha*, etc. and come out from their houses and gather together to dance and sing at the open field or from house to house.

(8) The mutual love, faith and unity amongst the Bodos are very strong. So, the *Bwisagu* festival is also celebrated during night time in some parts of the *Kazigaon* sub division and other parts of Kokrajhar district even today.

(9) There is the tradition of taking blessing for child by the childless couple and for successful in life by the individual, etc. from the celebrities of the *Bwisagu* festival in the Bodo society.

(10) In the first or last day of *Chaitra*, the learned man or the *Oza* bind 12<sup>th</sup> different packets giving 12<sup>th</sup> different names of the months of a year with the starch or *Khathri* leaves without tearing it from the main plants. On the first day of the New Year all packets are observed very carefully by opening. The quantity of water contains on the packets indicates the rainfall of that month. Today this process has almost diminished but it had significance during the ancient times. Somewhere this type of works is done in the *Sangkhranthi* of *Phus* month of the Assamese.<sup>16</sup>

(11) The Bodo people beg alms from door to door during the *Bwisagu* by singing, dancing and merry-making. It is believed that the begging should not be refused by any house hold.

(12) The receiving relatives and visiting to the relatives is also one of the important rituals among the Bodos during the *Bwisagu* festival.

(13) The vegetables like gourd and brinjal are totally destroyed on cattle *Bwisagu* day by the Bodos in ancient day. They believed that eating of gourd and brinjal, which are used in cattle *Bwisagu* means to becoming cattle or animal.

## **2. The *Domasi* Festival:**

Introduction: The *Domasi* is another agricultural and seasonal festival of the Bodos. It is called *Bhogali Bihu* in Assamese. It is seen that the *Domasi* festival is celebrated two or three days by the Bodos from 'Puh' to 'Magh' month every year. This festival is called *Domasi*, *Mag Bihu*, *Magw Domasi*, etc. in various places. But *Magw* word is mostly used by them.

### **The word and the meaning of *Magw*:**

This festival starts from the last day of the *Puh* month and continue up to two or three days of *Magh* month every year. The festival happens or celebrates in the

month of *Magh* is known as *Magw* festival. The serial no of the *Magh* month is *Dos* (ten) from the first month *Bohag* or *Bwisag* of the year. The festival that takes place in *Dos* (ten) and *Masi* (month) of the year, is  $Dos + Masi = Domasi$ . This festival is celebrated after harvesting of the *Maisali* (*Sali*) crops of the Bodos. Sometime some Bodo people cannot completely harvest their crops within *Domasi*, such people can be known as the richest of the rich in the Bodo society. So, the *Domasi* or the *Magw* festival is also known as harvest festival or festival in the harvest season. ‘*Domasi or Magw* is also a seasonal festival celebrated from the last but one day of the Assamese *Puh* month. The *Domasi* (*Domahi or magh bihu* in Assamese) festival is also known as harvest festival’.<sup>17</sup> “The festival celebrates in the month of *Magw* is called *Magw-Domasi*”.<sup>18</sup> ‘They (Boro Kacharis) celebrate two other Bihus known as *Domashi* (*Bhogali Bihu*), and *Kathrigacha* (*Kangali Bihu*) but none of them are so important from the point of view of merriment than the one that comes on the last day of the month of *Chaitra*.<sup>19</sup> S. Endle said – ‘the January Bihu is usually celebrated about the 12<sup>th</sup> of that month. For weeks previously the young people have been busy building “Bihu Huts” of jungle thatch; also in erecting tall bamboos, sometimes surmounted by ragged flags, &c., while straw thatch and other combustibles are piled up around these bamboos to the high of many feet. On the appointed Bihu night these sheds, & c., are all set fire to amid much rejoicing, dancing, singing, & c., and of course there is, as on all like occasions, a liberal consumption of the national rice beer. For a month or two previously to this festival, the village boys and young people have had to guard the growing and ripening rice crops night and day; and in all likelihood this merry-making, which is very much of the nature of a “Harvest home,” is largely an expression of their joy and gladness at being relieved from this hard and irksome duty.’<sup>20</sup> It is said that this festival belongs to Kacharis or Bodos. The Bodo people also live in the Eastern part of the Bengal. In ancient period the guarding of their crops from the jungle animals by building temporary sheds cannot be ruled out. Merry-making after relieved from the heavy duty of guarding of their crops was practicable.

### **The Burning of *Belagur* (Meji):**

The *Bilagur* or *Belagur* is the Bodo way of pronouncing *bhelaghar* in Assamese which in turn may be a corruption from *bheraghar* (*Meshanghar*) recalling the ancient practice of *Mesha daha*.<sup>21</sup> The *Meji* is called *belagur* or *Bilagur* in Bodo. There is the tradition of burning of *meji* from the immemorial period among the Bodo people in the *Magw*. For making the *meji*, the young boys of the village collect good quality remains of paddy straw known as *mainara* from the paddy field and store in a place. A good quality raw bamboo is tightly piled in the middle and some raw bamboos are piled in a circular size for preparation of a *meji*. The *mainara* collected for the purpose are surmounted in the bamboos in such way that no any green bamboo could be visible from outside. The *mejis* are made with *mainara* somewhere with the dried banana leaves. Sometime the *meji* becomes 20 or more feet high. The *meji* becomes big in the ground and slightly slopes towards the soaring. The same *mejis* are prepared in the name of the King, the Minister, the Queen, the Prince, the princess, the *Laokhar* (cowboy) in a line from North to South. The king's *meji* should be highest, strongest and little bamboo leaves visible on the top. The *meji* in the name of cowboy is located in the south part, a few distances from the other *mejis*. A *meji* means for bad deity known by them as *Daina* or *mwdai gazri* (bad deity) is in the opposite of the *meji* representing for cowboy towards west in few distances. In some places this *meji* is prepared on the pieces of banana trunk. There is no fixed number of *meji*. In some places only one *meji* is also seen. The *mejis* are prepared in the river bank or open field. A few distances from the *mejis* a hut is made and feasting known as picnic is arranged there at night in the last night of the *Puh* month. Almost all the young boys, children and cowboys of the village enjoy the picnic and stay whole the night in the hut. In the next day before dawn all the persons inside the hut takes bath and offers various cakes of rice and food items prepare for the *Domasi* festival and collected from the houses of the village along with betel nuts in altars to King, *Laokhar*, Minister, Queen, Prince, Princes, etc. They pray to all the gods' one after the other for forgiving any sins committed knowingly or unknowingly by the villagers in outgoing days and for blessing, giving more energy, bring peace, for good health, etc. among the villagers in forthcoming days. Later on the *mejis* are

burned one after another. At first the *meji* means for *Laokhar* is burned. At last the *meji* of king is burned which stand in a line. At last the *meji* of bad deity or *Daina* is burned and somewhere this burning *meji* is floated on the river or stream. In some places before burning the *meji* of bad deity or *Daina* some slogans are made for awakening the villager from bed so that they can take bath knowing that the bad deity *meji* has burned. The burning of *meji* is done either in the last day of *Puh* or in the first day of the *Magh*. In some places next day to the burning of the *Belagur* the *Narasiga* or *Narazonai* festival is celebrated.

### **Preparation of cakes and offering it to cattle:**

The characteristics of this festival are to enjoy with different types of rice cakes or *phithas* of varieties of new rice's, to entertain the friends and relatives with foods and drinks, and enjoy singing and dancing. In the first day of the *Magh* month before dawn, the Bodo ladies prepare various kinds of rice cakes known by them as *Anthao*, *laru*, *Sourai*, *phitha laodum*, *Sobai gwran*, cake of coconut - sesame, etc. 'After preparation they offered in the name of the cattle inside the north east corner of the cowshed keeping it in a banana leaf. The *Sobai gwran* is sprinkled in the body of all the cattle. It is the symbol of respect to the cattle in the *Magw*.<sup>22</sup> After preparation of varieties of cakes and offering to the cattle's the *bakhri* (granary) is tied somewhere kitchen also tied. Other members of the family gets up and take bath when tying of the kitchen and the granary is completed. There is the tradition of taking bath before the crow began to caw in this day. They belief that if the crow caws before taking bath then the person become impure known by them as *Badua*. "The Bodos belief that if the crow caws or see before taking bath then the person will born in the form of crow in next birth."<sup>23</sup> So everyone must take bath before dawn. The edible items of various cakes could be eaten after taking bath. Though varieties of cakes are prepared for the *Magw* in some places the *Laodum pitha* (a kind of rice cake) is not prepared for that day. If *Laodum pitha* is prepared in the *Magw* the cattle suffers with tumor disease in the lower part of their neck, they belief. But in present days such cakes are prepared and eat in the district of *Bagsha* and other parts of Assam.

### **Tying trees:**

In the last day of the *puh* month or first day of *Magh* in the morning or evening fruit bearer trees like Litchi, Mango, Areca nut, Jack fruits, etc. are tied with *Dengkha* (a kind of shrub plants use as rope for tying the bundle of the paddy bundles while carrying it in the courtyard) after coming from burning *meji*. In some places straw, thatch, etc. are also used as rope for tying the trees. It is known as tying of trees. The trees are tied for bearing more fruits. In some places bearing someone on his/her back during tying the trees is also seen. If such kinds of tying are made then the trees bears more and bigger fruits in the coming days, they belief. “The Bodos belief that the insects cannot bites if the trees are such tied.”<sup>24</sup> On the other hand, it is also found that the Bodos have tradition of keeping maid known by them *ruwathi* if young girl or lady, *bokhali* if she is bellow maturity and servants, *laokhar* for household as well as agricultural works. This kind of keeping maid, servant, etc. for helping in domestic and agricultural works is made yearly or half yearly or other basis by rich families. In these periods all the maids and servants are allowed free giving their remuneration or salary completely by their owner. The maids and servants in their free days go to their respective houses. They have the habits of visiting to their friends or relatives houses as guest. Along with the maids and servants, it is believed that the fruit bearer trees also accompanied with them. So, the trees must be tied so that they cannot go with them and bear more fruits. The tying of each tree is impossible in case of numerous trees. In such case they tie some trees and picking soils or rocks, they throws towards front to more distance as they can. Then it is supposed to be tied all.

### **Tying or marking Granary:**

The guardian lady of the family has to tie or mark around the external wall of granary with cow-dung from east to west in the first day of the *Magw*. ‘The meaning of the tying of the granary is keeping safe custody of the paddy full granary.’<sup>25</sup> It has another meaning also. The kitchen is the place of *Lakhi* (wealth) and the granary is the store house of *Lakhi*. The granary is tied so that the *Lakhi* or wealth cannot vanish itself. The Bodos generally do not bring out paddy from granary from the *Magw* to the *Bwisagu* month. The Bodos belief that if they do so,



the *Mainao* or *Lwkhi* or *Lakhi* courses with angry to owner. So generally the Bodo people keep require paddy for that period in other places. Few traditions has to be done while urgently need to bring out paddy from granary in these period. For this the guardian lady of the family has to offer prayer in the altar of the *Lakhi* by offering pair of incense sticks, lighted *Zewari*, one egg of the chicken, etc.

### **Offering to ancestors:**

After burning the *Belagur* in the field or river bank by the male members, the ladies of the villages at their respective homes plaster or sprinkle water with mixing cow-dung to all houses. The offering to ancestors is done as in the *Bwisagu*. Sometime it is found that in the name of ancestors the edible and potable varieties of rice cakes, wine, etc. are thrown towards the south of the house before eating. Then it is believed that the offering to the ancestors have done.

### **Eating of various types of rice cakes and marry making:**

After offering to the ancestors the house to house visit and eating of various rice cakes is started. The children bow down the seniors to whom they meet during their roaming to house to house in the *Domasi* festival searching for various cakes in groups. Drinking of rice bear also takes place. The edible items of the *Magw* are various kinds of rice cakes known by them like – *sithao*, *laru*, *sourai*, *pitha*, *wngkham sima*, *ladu* made of coconut and sesame, *sobai gwrn*, etc. In some places the rice cooked inside the bamboo pipe and boiled in the banana leaves known by them *wngkham sema* is also used. ‘Their more favourite *pitha* (cake) is the *pitha* prepare with the sesame in the *thingkhli*, *roina pitha*, frying *pitha* in the oil. This oil is the oil of filtering of fork’s fats. Another items in the *Magw-Domasi* is the preparation of *Adkhari* by frying of *Maibra* rice. Here the frying of *Sobai* and sesame is mixed for which it becomes very delicious and it is stored and eat upto ending of the *Domasi*’.<sup>26</sup> The elderly people sacrifice fowls to the *Bathou* and worship and the followers of the *Brahma Dharma* (Brahma religion) arrange *Ahuti* (burn offering) in the full moon of the *Magh*. (See picture No: 14-17)

The community fishing, hunting, etc also takes place in some of the areas in the *Magw* days. In *Domasi* days all the families at least have food items like *sithao*,

*laru, pitha*, etc. and have rice beer. This season is also favorable for easily accessible fish in the rivers, meats, etc. in the family and the society. The feasting and merry-making for the *Domasi* or *Magw* continue up to 3 days. The continuous singing dancing, merrymaking takes place after the burning of the *belagur* in the name of the *Domasi* in groups irrespective of age, religion and sex. In some of the places along with burning of *belagur* and eating of various rice cakes feasting picnic in groups are also arranged. At present time the readymade music along with songs are become part and parcel of every kinds of feasting to the youths, children and all age groups of Bodo people in the festivals with the appliances of electronic gadgets. The *Domasi* festival is such celebrated in abundantly merry-making, drinking of rice-beer, feasting, singing, dancing, etc. in almost every village of the Bodos.

### **3. The *Khathri-Gasa-Saonai* :**

It is another seasonal agricultural related festival of the Bodos. The *Khathri Gasa Saonai* festival though it has certain reservation by few writers of the Bodos as a festival is celebrated somewhere in the last day of *Asin* (18<sup>th</sup> Oct) or in the first day of *Kati* (19<sup>th</sup> Oct) month. It is called *Kangali Bihu* in Assamese which means the *Bihu* of the crisis, for the villagers who have nothing to eat during this festival. This festival is observed by the Bodos very simply by burning or lighting *Gasa* (lamp) with mustard oil made with the rinds of *thaigir* (wood-apple) fruits or the earthen lamp at the paddy field, at the altar of the *Bathou*, at the granary, in front of the entrance of the house, in front of the cowshed, in the *Sobaythili*, *Sibingthili* (Sesame field), etc. in the evening on 18<sup>th</sup> October or somewhere in the 19<sup>th</sup> October every year. The guardian lady or girl of the family go to the paddy field with a *Sewari* (a long bamboo scale use in weaving), ganteel it with the mustard oil and touch the paddy plants with the *Sewari* (scale). She should go in the paddy field after taking bath, with bare foot, without bending her hair, etc. They also perform the duty of lighting lamp in the *Bathou*, cowshed, granary, the paddy field, etc. Sometime the Bodo males are also seen doing the same work as the Bodo girls and the women do. (See Picture No: 18 &19)

On that time Bodos believe that the *Lakhi* or the *Mainao* remains in the paddy field. The proper honour to *Mainao* in the paddy field is necessary for the production of more and more crops through this festival. It is also said that during this period the plants of paddy and other crops are ready to bear fruits and utmost care is necessary for this period like the pregnant women. Another scientific reason for celebrating this festival is that at these stage lots of insects are trying to make damaged in the full grown plants. So when the light is given in the field at night, at least few insects will come and die with the light and the crops will save from insects. Not only the Bodos but the other communities are also celebrating this festival now-a-days. The children are seen very enthusiastic in helping the Bodo girls, women in accompanying with them in groups.

#### **4. The *Amthisua* Festival:**

The *Amthisua* is another seasonal festival of the Bodos. It is called *Ambuvasi* in Assamese. This festival falls in the month of *Ashar* or *Ahora* of the Assamese. It is celebrated from the seven days of *Ashar* month i.e June 22<sup>nd</sup> every year. This period is believed by the Bodos to be the period of menstruation of the Mother Earth. From 22<sup>nd</sup> June to one week period no digging of soil, tilling of soils, cutting of trees and prohibition of entering into the granary, etc. are done. The agriculturist Bodos do not work in the field for a week and remain at home. They also put down the paddy or seeds mean for using it in plantations which is known by them *Zwlwi* or *Maizli*. They believed that if it is kept at the top then it become unable to grow into plants. The community eating of various seasonal fruits like - jack fruits, mango, pine apple, etc. by young boys and girls are done which are kept ready for the purpose. On the seven day, the women folk thrown away their old broom, sticks and replace them by new ones. They plaster the floor and wall of the house by mixing cow dung with mud. Thus the *Amthisua* or *Ambuvasi* ends on the seventh day.

The Bodos believe that if any green tree is cut during this period then the trees can never grow more. So, they perform community cutting of useless jungles of the village. They arrange various kinds of competitions specially football, khabaddi, etc. among the villagers to make the festival more lively and participatory.

Specially this are arranged for passing the days because no works is done in this periods at all.

“It is observed that similar beliefs are found among the local non-Bodo Hindus. They also practice almost similar practices. A great *Ambuvasi Mela* is held at *Kamakhya* temple of Guwahati of Assam every year during the same period. It is believed by the Hindus of this region that the *Yani* symbol is said to be in a state of menstruation.<sup>27</sup>

### **5. The *Mohoho* Festival:**

This is the festival of “driving away of Mosquitoss.”<sup>28</sup> *Moho-ho* is another seasonal festival current among Boros of Erstwhile Kamrup and Darrang districts.<sup>29</sup> *Moho-ho* is celebrated to drive away mosquito. But another interpretation says that it is related to the driving away of the tiger. Young boys and cowboys form a group in the night of full moon in the month of *Aghan* and moved from door to door with long sticks or rods in their hands. This may typify the primitive act of chasing away the hostile animals like the tigers or bears. The young boys and cowboys sing *Moho-ho* at the top of their voice.

Most of the songs are of Assamese language. The Bodo youths neighbouring to the Assamese people are fluent in Assamese and they sings in fluent Assamese as *ho ho Mo-ho-ho moh khediba jang so*. It is said that the folklorists and the scholars have found lots of similarities between *Moho-ho* festival and the festival like *Sonaray* prevalent in undivided Goalpara. The *Maih kheda* festival current in Darrang district and *Bhallabhulla* festival current in East Bengal.<sup>30</sup>

### **6. The *Wri Hwnai* Festival:**

The *Wri Hwnai* Festival is celebrated by the youths of some villages in the full moon night of the *Bhadra* month. In this night young boys and the cowboys come out silently from the houses and make groups and go door to door and sing various songs like *Wri he Wri (Wri Oh Wri)* and beg house to house. It is the *Janmasthan* day also. The young boys and the cowboys not only sing and beg house to house but they also lift any edible fruits found in the garden silently. Some time they also make various naughty works in the adamant household of the village and the

paddy field also. It is said that along with the *Wri* festival it is the day of making *nostho* meaning harm. So it is also known as *Nostho Chandra* (harm moon night). Some time the edible or non-edible fruits are made harms by the participants of the festival. The festival begins and ends at night.

## **7. The Festivals or Ceremonies directly related to agriculture:**

### **a. *Hal Euzennai* (First Ploughing) festival:**

It is also known as *Hal Zurizennai* or *Hal Hurunzennai*. The main stuff of the plough is *Nangwl* (wooden plough or tiller), *Zungal* (neck yoke) and a pair of bullock. The agriculturist Bodos start their agricultural works looking in a good day. The Monday or Wednesday is selected for *Maisali* (*Sali*) crops. On that particular day he starts ploughing the land facing towards east after tying the bullock with yoke, *Nangwl* with praying to *Hal* (a pair of bullock, plough, yoke), etc. The ploughing starts in the direction of east to west. For the *Ashu* crops the ploughing is started with the same system in *Saturday* or *Tuesday*. Sometime it is seen that the stuffs for ploughing like - wooden plough, yoke, etc. are kept one day before the start of the ploughing in plot of land where the ploughing will be done saluting towards east and informing to the god about the purpose with great care. If he gets the materials all right in the next day, then it is believed that the ploughing in this year or period will be good otherwise do not expect good.

### **b. *Khwthia phwnai* (sowing seeds of paddy):**

After making the field ready by ploughing the owner of the house offer a pair of betel nuts to the goddess *Mainao* or *Lakhi* and salutes towards the east. After saluting towards east he starts the sowing the seeds of paddy facing towards east.

### **c. *Khwthia phunai* (uprooting the seedling):**

The mature seedlings are uprooted first by the female elderly member of the family after saluting towards east by offering pair of betel nuts to the *Mainao* or *Lakhi*. Then others follow her. The dust or the mud or soil of the uprooting seedlings are made clean and tied with thatch or the sheets of betel nut trees. Then it is moved to the place where it is to be sowed.

#### ***d. Mai Gaizennai or Gosa lazennai (beginning of plantation)***

##### **Festival:**

The elder guardian member of the family starts the first sowing of paddy seedlings. If top fingers *rekha* (marks) is like *don* (i.e. round marks), if there is no visible hole through fingers gaps, if the whole bottom of the feet touch the ground while walking, then it is believed that the first sowing of the seedlings by such woman carries very good result. Again if the lower part of the back head hairs is in the form of fish tail towards lower neck and the forehead is like the lifting of saliva by the cattle then it is said good signs.

The Bodos start sowing of paddy seedling looking any good holy day except Saturday or Tuesday. The elderly woman or the woman of the family goes with need and clean from the house with starch plant, jute plant, *mwitha* plant, banana leaf, earthen lamp, master oil, basil, holy water in a pot along with a pair of betel nuts, rice, etc. on hands. First at the corner of the north-east *band* or *Ali* where the plot of land is ready for sowing is well furnished with the mud facing towards east and the starch, *mwitha* and jute plants are planted. The rice, lighted earthen lamp and the lighted incense sticks are offered on the banana leaf pasted on the *Ali*. The holy water is sprinkled with the basil branch. The first seedling is sowed with left hand after prayer to Lakhi facing towards east. The others will follow her. It is said that the Bodos do not sow paddy facing towards south.

A simple feasting is arranged on that day. The tradition of eating starch curry is also there. They believed that if starch curry is eaten, the paddy also become immortal like starch and augmented very much. In this festival if the owner slept at day time they belief that the paddy plants will tumble on the ground. During this festival entering into the granary, giving things to others is not done. Though this festival is for only one day or little moment it carries important to the agriculturist Bodos.

#### ***e. Nangwl Zangkhra (Completion of seedling of paddy) Festival:***

The Bodos celebrate the last day of sowing the seedlings of the paddy as the *Nangwl Zangkhra* festival. It is also called *Saori zanai* (community feasting) in

Bodos. On that day rice beer is drunk in the paddy field. All are enjoyed with playing with mud. Lots of joking is made in the field. The wooden plough and the yoke are beaten by sticks like drum. When the sowing and other works is ended at the field then they come back at their respective houses. Then the feasting with the meats, fishes, drinking of rice beer and merry making are taken place at the owner's house. Sometimes it continues whole the day. In some places they have the tradition of eating bamboo shoot or the fishes with the starch. The owner also enjoys in this festival with the overcoming from hard works of summer cultivation.

It is said that the owner can cut their hairs, save their beard, cut their nails, and take bath, etc. on and from this day. The agriculturist Bodos take a long breathes on that day. The Bodos do not enter in the granary and give anything from the house on this day. After this festival is over the maids and the servants' means for the summer are released from the house of their employer.

**f. *Bakhri Gaikhonnai* (sowing granary in circle):**

The female guardian of the family in the day of *Nangwl Zangkhra* select a place in the north-west middle corner inside the paddy field and sows seedlings in very thickly in a circle. This is called the *Bakhri Gaikhonnai*. In this time the other women enjoys by joking the woman. The holy water is sprinkled after sowing it. With this the tradition or the festival ends for the year.

**g. *Mainao Lainai or Ag lainai* (bringing Mainao or Lwkhi) Festival:**

When the paddy of the field becomes ripe and suitable for reaping then the Bodo people celebrate *Mainao Lainai* or *Ag lainai* festival. It is said that *Mai* (paddy) is the wealth to the Bodos. So, bringing it from the paddy field is like bringing the wealth in the house. It is special to them. This festival is generally held in Monday or Thursday. All the houses of the family is cleaned or plastered with cow-dung on that day. The guardian elder female member of the family goes to the field with taking a sickle, banana leaf, holy water in a pot and basil branch in head after need and clean without bending or tying her hair at the early morning. She is selected a paddy grove of north-east corner, sprinkled holy water on it and salute and cut with the sickle without breathing after reaching in the paddy field, crammed with the

banana leaf and keeping on the pot of holy water bring it taking on head carefully. If she discuss with someone it is believed that the *Lwkhi* or *Mainao* will fled to somewhere else. So to test the person, the cowboys joke her saying jolly words in the way. Reaching to the house she washes her legs and hands keep the bundle hanging inside the *Ising* of *Nomano* or the granary after saluting. Nothing from the house is to be delivered to outside on that day.

‘In some places the *Bathou* religious Bodos celebrate *Ag Lainai* festival by offering puja to the *Mainao Buri*. This festival is celebrated in a family or with whole the villagers. For this puja outside the house or within the village a place is selected and cleaned in an open space. One hut is built in the north-east corner. After arrangements for the puja one paddy grove is implanted near the hut. South of the hut one *band* or *Ali* is made in north-south direction. This *Ali* is decorated with flowers. Offering is made for *Mainao buri* inside the hut. In the long *Ali* first of all the altar for the *Bathou Bwrai* and then altars serially to the *Songraza Songrani*, the *Sainasi Budaru*, the *Bormali*, the *Agrang*, the *Khwila*, the *Khazi*, the *Alai Khungri*, the *Bilai Khungri*, the *Abla Khungur*, other deities are offered. In the puja the *Oza* sprinkles holy water himself and to all and then chants mantras in front of the *Mainao buri*’.<sup>31</sup> After offering puja one woman of the village cut the grove of the paddy with a new sickle without breathe and is kept in a new basket. In the basket banana, flowers, lighted incense sticks and *dhuna* are offered. Then the woman takes this basket to her house taking on her head. The *Oza* goes on by sprinkling holy water from front to her. The villagers and women are paraded her by singing, dancing and music with the musical instruments. The woman with the basket on her head has to enter inside her *Nomano* and kept the basket in the altar of *Mainao*. The *Oza* ties the paddy and kept it hanging on the wall. At that moment the *Oza* finishes the festival by chanting the previous mantras regarding the hanging of the paddy bundle.

After that all go to puja place again and eat prosads. After eating prasads they drinks rice beer sing songs and dances together. This festival is for the happy and joy. The festival of the *Ag lainai* or *Mainao lainai* of the family or the village ends



with happily and peacefully in a day. The reaping of the ripe paddy takes places in the next later days after this festival.

#### ***h. Wngkham Gwrlwi Zanai (eating of new rice) ceremony:***

The eating of new rice is called the *Wngkham Gwrlwi Zanai*. This festival is held within the month of December during harvesting of their major *maisali (Sali)* crop of the year. It is celebrated by all sections of Bodos through their varied religious beliefs. The traditional Bodos offer to ancestors as done in the *Bwisagu* festival and then offer *Salami puja* with new rice. They believed that before consuming the new rice, it should be offered first to the god and goddesses who is the creator of all universes. After offering to the ancestors and the *Salami*, cattle, agricultural tools, etc. the family members along with invited neighbouring people in the occasion entertain with feasting with rice-beer, meats, fishes, new rice, etc. At this festival the previous servants, maids, cowboys and others are also invited for the feasting with new rice.

The followers of the *Brahma* religion perform an *Ahuthi* on the occasion of the festival and offer a little quantity of new rice to the fire of *Ahuthi* before they take anything. All the ingredients of the prasads of the *Ahuthi* should have the mixture of newly produces rice and the fruits. The *Ahuthi* is attended by the neighbouring persons both adults and children. They pray before the *Ahuthi* offering the prasads to the fire in the name of the god for the better crops in the next year. At the end of the *Ahuthi* all present at the ceremony are entertained with the new rice, pork, fish-curry, etc.

### **3.2.2. The Religious Festivals:**

The festivals which are related with the worship of the god and goddess or the matter of religion are called religious festivals. The Bodos has various religious festivals like – the *Salami*, the *Kherai*, the *Garza*, the *Marai*, the *Hambai*, etc.

#### **1. The *Salami Puja*:**

The *Salami puja* is one of the important festivals of the traditional Bodos. This festival is celebrated at least two times in a year. First the *Salami puja* is celebrated after the *Bwisagu* and second before the celebration of the *Garza* or the *wngkham*

*gwrlwi zanai*. The offering in the *Salami puja* is made either domestic animal sacrifices or flowers. This festival is celebrated to get rid of from any bad or good events that have taken place in the family. The *Salami puja* is also done before beginning of the *Kherai*, *the Garza puja*, *etc.* festivals in the traditional Bodo society.

**a) Works to be done before *Salami puja* at home:**

All the houses of the family have to make cleaned with soil mixing with cow-dung before the *Salami puja*. They throw away old brooms, cooking materials and others which are disposable and take new one. All members of the family must be present on the *Salami puja* day. No meal is allowed before puja in the family. However after the puja they are able to eat everything. The Puja is performed under the supervision of the *Oza* and the *Douri*. The *Oza* and the *Douri* have to take vegetarian food on that day. They are simply rewarded with little money after the end of the puja as a respect.

**b) Materials require for traditional *Salami puja*:**

**In terms of humans** -1. One *Oza* or *Zanaguru* or *Roza*. 2. One *Douri*. 3. Witness.  
**Materials-** 1. Betel nuts as much as require, 2. One male black goat, 3. Chicken 23/25 nos, 4. Pigeons 4 Nos, 5. Earthen pot as much as require and others, 6. *Laizam* as much as require, 7. Banana leaves as much as require, 8. Bamboo made sieve or *don*.

**c) The attendants of the *Salami Puja*:**

‘The attendants of the *Salami puja* are *Santhi Kungri* or *Santhi Santhi 18 Santhi*, the *Bathou* and the *Garza Garza 18 Garza* in the *Haphsa* or the entrance of the home. There are *Phab-Phwndwn* (spirits) and the *Santhi Khungri* in the courtyard. The *Bathou* and the *Aieleng*, *the Agrang*, the *Khwila*, the *Khazi*, the *Abla Khunggur*, the *Razfuthur*, the *Razkhandra*, the *Sanzaali*, the *Sanza Ali Bwrali*, the *Sari Zwmwn*, the *Basmuthi*, the *Mwnasu Dibaoli*, the *Bagraza*, the *Sikhraza*, the *Soudri* and the *Sikhna* in the *Sonani ali* in the courtyard. There are the *Aileng*, the *Songraza* and the *Lwkhi* inside the *Ising* room of *Nomano*. There are the *Mohadev*, the *Bisohori*, the *Dwn Khubir* and the *Laokhar Gossai* in the North-East corner of

garden or courtyard known as *Bisohori* altar. The offering to the spirits in the south of the *Bathou* is also made in present day.<sup>32</sup>

The attendance mention in the *mantras* in lifting of holy water to purify the family, their houses and the altars for the *Salami* to the gods and goddesses are the owners of the various rivers, streams, lakes, hills, etc. 'They are *khungri*, *khungri* 18 *khungri* like - *Is, bis, saya, maya, sona, rupha, swrgw, phathal, athal, thol, phol, bikhal, dwi, nizra, rwn*, etc. *Santhi santhi* 18 *santhi* like - *Is, bis, maya, saya, phathal, athal, dwini, mwkthang, simang, saya saikhlum, sona, rupha, swrgw, nizra-nizri, phungkha-phungkhi, hakhor-halaphwr*, etc. The *Garza Garza* 18 *Garza* like - *Lwkhi, Asu, Heo, Seou, Tholsing Molsing, Nara-khatha, Razasrang, Golakhatha, Daowang, Dano, Bura phath, Durai marai, Sem-semali, Thya, Gugu, Sindur, Belao, Luwad, Kaladhano, Dhaola, Hwlibwr-thwlibwr, Dhon*. The carrier of the *santhi santhi* 18 *santhi* with putting jewels goddesses are like - *Asagy, Bwisagy, Arathy, Bwirathy, Sonathi, Ruphathi, Sayashry, Mayashry, Zalsry Kolshry, Hamphe, Dumphe, Khwdwmshry, Gambari, Someswary*, etc. The rivers, streams, lakes, ponds, etc. near the owner - in this side are - *Kanipur, Duramari, Buha-langga, Khawa danggi, Purmary, lakes - podmo bilw, Nakhrang, dwisa, Khar, Sugreng, Sundary, Khuzia Roumari, Bima river*. In the western parts like - *Gonga, Zomuna, Longga stream, Sodia, Sonkoch bwrai, Sonkoch buri, Darangy-birangy, Khanthasy-Ranthasy, Harakhutha, Dwilonggopha, Raidag, Mazathi, Samokha, Dainamary*. Yet *Zakhathi, Zanali, Daobo lake Musa lake, lephathi, Thakham-thukham, Bwilyary, Malibhog, Mohamwi, Mohadam, Phagladiya Gongiya, Hel river, burwi stream, Gambari lake, Naodra lake, Narzi lake, Ziya longa, Moha lobha, Lotha manzi, Dalang dable, Mwisw danswm stream* are there. In this side there is *Sab-khatha, Khara-daora, Khalaishry, Bilaishry, Swrmangga, Thaso-lake, Gagra-lake, Labrabothe, Khasiguri Daoluth sara, Sal zora, Sol zora, Bhumkha, Somokha dwisa gwan*. Yet there are *Nagzola, Bakhla gobnai, Thaigir Lake, Khewa zora, Raizamphwi, Dekhadambra, Bismuri River, Nasrai Lake, Lake Gwswm, Sukhan sangra Gourang, Balazan, Somphathi, Sokphathi, Somphabothy*. Yet there is *Sizou Bwrai, Sizou Buri Thulusi raza, Bhandar Bwrai, Bhandar Buri, Samokha bhandar, Ulthapani stream, Laophani, Dhalphani Sonamuthi and Laimuthi in Sikhnajhar Nou-Nwgrw*. In this side there are *dwi gusu, Isphani,*

*Bishphani, Mayaphani, Sayaphani, Dwigwza, Dwi guphur, Dwi gwswm, Sikhri lake, Baonasa lake, Nareng lake, Gwrwi lake, Phithikhri lake, Magur lake, Phengkhuwa, Se khuwa, Lao lake, Sona bhandar lake.* There are *Singi-singrwb, Phathali sana, Zanala, Binala, Phon phone, Khanthasi, Nareng bilw, Alai khungri, Bilai khungri, Sal soliya, Onthai thaitham, Thaikha bhandar, Deokhura, Bhogkhura, Mithaphukhri, Thitha phukhri.* There are *Zinziram, Zinari, Dhudnwi, Krisnwi, Dhir, Diblai, Silai, Dangduphur Onthaiguphur, Burlungbuthur, Dakra, Suthi, Ramadhala, Hathisor, Bhumeswar, Bamyzora, Daokha raza* in the south side. In this side there are *Mainao Lake, Ganda Lake, Agor lake, Dula lake, Daothukhangkhrang, Mad gossai, Phulkhungri, Dodra bwrai, Dodra buri, lake Dable, Dendra lake.* There are hills - *Himaloy phorbot, Zomduar, Bhutan hill, Phatkai hill, Lemduar, Kwilas hill, Nunmathi, Kalamathi, Bogamathi, hazw agor, Hazw gaolab, Missing hill, Phatkhai hill, Sikhri-sikhla hill, Baonasad hill, Dangduphur onthai guphur, Baokhungri hill, Narzang Bwrai-narzang buri, Surzya hill, Nag hill, Bag hill, Gonesh hill, Sath dandali khanai lamnai hill, Lalbithi hill, Zathingra.* They believe that every rivers, streams, hills have owner in the form of God and goddesses. They worship those god and goddesses.<sup>33</sup>

**d) Haphsa Hwnai or Phwtharnai (penance or purification):**

This puja is the first step to purify the family from any wrong doing knowingly or unknowingly for *Salami* puja. The *Haphsa hwnai* or *Phwtharnai* is called as *Seren Hwnai* when the penance for a family is offered. When it is offered for the village society or larger society it is called *Haphsa Hwnai*. The *Haphsa* is offered before offering any puja like the *Salami, the Garza, the Kherai,* etc. Before the *Salami puja* they purify or penance near the entrance of the family. The *Haphsa Hwnai* is almost same as that of penance at present day as stated in chapter 2. It is done at the entrance of the house owner. After lifting the holy water the *Douri* has to sprinkle and allow drinking the holy water to all the members of the family and sprinkle in all the homes which are newly cleaned.

**e) The Phap Phwndwn/ Bwgarnai (Purification of Sin):**

After purification in the entrance of the family is over, one altar is set at the south side of the courtyard by the *Douri*. Two basil leaves are pasted and over it one

banana leaf or 1+3 *Laizams* is offered. One pair betel-nuts, one pair lighted insence sticks and prosads are offered on the banana leaf or the *laizams*. One chick is sacrificed here with the chanting of the mantras by the *Oza*. After few while the *Douri* has to clean the altar and everything is thrown towards the southern side of the family house after sprinkling holy water. The *Douri* is sprinkled with holy water when he comes back and he has to take bath with fresh water. The Bodo people who avoids sacrificing animals i.e. birds offers flowers.

**f) The Dwi Santhi Bwkhagnai (lifting of holy water):**

It is almost same with the lifting of *Dwi santhi* (holy water) at the entrance of the house owner. It is done in one altar only.

The *Oza* and the guardian of the family are sprinkled with holy water. Then the holy water is sprinkled in all the houses, compound, beds, utensils and other materials of the household and then allows drinking it to the other members of the family. If *sizou* is to be planted then holy water is also sprinkled in the *sizou* and splashed in the hole made for planting *sizou* three times.

**g) The Pounding of rice powder (On Denai) for the Salami Puja:**

The lady of the family after taking bath is cleaned a place with soil mixing with water in the courtyard facing towards east. Two leaves of basil are pasted. One banana leaf is placed over the basil leaves. At the top of the banana leaf one pair betel-nuts and one pair lighted incense sticks (*dub*) is offered. At least ½ Kg rice is taken in the *uwal* and pounded with single hand by bowing all the offering and sprinkling holy water three times. During this time she is not allowed to kick or push the *uwal* with her leg and talk. After that she has to roots out the rice powder from the *uwal* in a disc or utensil and is kept carefully in a place. Then the place is cleaned.

**h) The Main Salami Puja:**

The *Bathou* altar and altars in *Sonani Ali* is decorated with the rice powder (*On*). 1+5 *Laizams* or one *Laizou* is given in the *Bathou* altar. One *Laizam* is for offering one pair betel-nuts, one cluster of banana, one lighted *gasa* or earthen lamp, one pair lighted *dub* (insence sticks) and another five *Laizams* are for offering prasad,

*goi-phathwi khili* (betel nut pieces), etc. One red chicken is sacrificed for the *Bathou* deity through the hand of *Douri* in continuous chanting of mantras by the *Oza* in presence of witnesses. Before offering anything *raisonzennai* is made in the *Bathou*.

The *phathali* or *Laizam* is small plate prepare by cutting the banana or *Bonzara* or *Khusra* leaf or banana sheath having five angles. The offering of 1 + 5 *Phathali* or *Laizam* means 1 *Phathali* in upper and 5 *Phathalis* in lower pasted on earth. The upper *Phathali* is used for offering like banana, betel-nut, incense stick or *dub*, lighted lamp, red-white flags, etc. The lower *phathali* is used for offering Prasad by the traditional Bodos, *goi khili phathwi khili* or *goi-phathwi khili* (pieces of betel-nuts). After offering and sacrificing to the *Bathou*, the offering and sacrificing are made serially to the *Aieleng*, the *Agrang*, the *Khwila*, the *Khazi*, the *Abla Khunggur*, the *Razfutur*, the *Razkhandra*, the *Sanzaali*, the *Sanza Ali Bwrali*, the *Sari Zwmwn*, the *Basmuthi*, the *Mwnasu Dibaoli*, the *Bagraja*, the *Sick Raja*, the *Soudry* and the *Sikhna*. The sacrificing to the *Soudury* and the *Sikhna* are made in single time. The *Bathou* altar is informed after sacrificing in all the altars at the courtyard in the *Sonani Ali*. Then the offering and sacrificing in the *Ising* serially to the *Song Raja*, the *Lwkhi* and the *Aieleng* are made.

After offering and sacrificing in the *Ising* again the *Bathou* altar is informed. Then the offering and sacrificing in the *Bisohori* altars serially to the *Mohadev*, the *Bisohori*, the *Dwn Khubir* and the *Laokhar Gossai* are made at the north-east corner of the garden or courtyard. The vermilion is used in the offering of the *Mohadev*, the *Bisohori*, the *Dwn Khubir* and the *Laokhar Gossai*. After offering and sacrificing in the *Bisohori* altars again the *Bathou* is informed. Then *Oza* is requested to the *Bathou* and other deities to make the family happy, prosperity, mishap free and not to forget the offering and sacrificing of the house owner and promise to offer the *Salami puja* in next coming year again at the *Bathou* altar. (See Pictures No: 20)

The Deities, *Phathalis (Laizams)*, Offerings and Sacrifices in the *Salami Puja* in details are given in table:

The varieties in the *Salami Puja*:

Sl. No.	Name of Deity/God	Place	Phathali	Offering	Sacrifice	Remarks
<i>Haphsa Hwnai</i> or <i>Phwtharnai</i> (penance or purification) at the entrance of house:						
1	<i>Santhi khungri</i> or <i>Bathou Bwrai</i> or <i>Sibrai</i>	Middle	1+3	1 Banana cluster, betel-nuts, lighted incense sticks, red-white flags in upper and prasads, <i>goi-phathwi khili</i> in lower i.e. 3 <i>Phathali</i> .	Nil	The holy water is slowly flown and lifted at the end in <i>Dona</i> .
2	18 Mothers ( <i>Bimaphwr</i> )	Left side of 1	1+9	Same as above, vermillion marks is added.	2 pigeons	
3	18 <i>Garza</i>	Right side of 1	1+9	Same as 1.	2 chicks	
<i>Phap Phwndwn/ Bwgarnai</i> (Purification of Sin) or the offering of the death-alive:						
4	<i>Death-Alive</i>		1+3 or 1 <i>Laizou</i>	1 pair betel-nuts, 2 lighted <i>Dub</i> in upper and prasads, <i>goi-phathwi khili</i> in lower or 1 <i>Laizou</i> .	1chick	All should be thrown towards south and cleaned.
<i>Dwi Santhi Bwkhagnai</i> (lifting of holy water) for <i>Salami puja</i> :						
5		Altar is made next to <i>Bathou</i> facing east. offering is made.. <i>Dwi santhi</i> is lifted on a <i>Dona</i> and sprinkled everywhere and drunk.				The holy water is slowly flown to <i>Dona</i> during chanting.
Pounding of rice powder ( <i>On Denai</i> ) for the <i>Salami Puja</i> :						
6		An altar is made next to the <i>Bathou</i> and ½ kg rice is pounded in <i>uwal</i> with single hand dressing like <i>Bwirathi</i> .				<i>On</i> is taken in a pot.
The Main <i>Salami Puja</i> : All the <i>Bathou</i> altar and altars of <i>Sonani Ali</i> is decorated with <i>On</i> .						
7	<i>Bathou</i>	Original <i>Bathou</i> place of Courtyard	1 +5 or 1 <i>Laizou</i>	As per Sl. No.1 .	1 Red chicken.	
8	<i>Aieleng</i>	At North-west corner facing east in <i>Sonani Ali</i> from <i>Bathou</i>	1+1	Same as above. No <i>Laizou</i> is used.	1 cock	
9	<i>Agrang</i>	South of <i>Aieleng</i>	„	As above. 2 Bananas are used. No lamp is used.	1 chick	
10	<i>Khwila</i>	South of <i>Agrang</i>	„	Same as above.	1 chick	
11	<i>Khazi</i>	South of <i>Khwila</i>	„	Same as above.	1 chick	
12	<i>Abla</i>	South of <i>Khazi</i>	„	Same as above.	1 chick	

	<i>Khunggur</i>					
13	<i>Razfudur</i>	South of <i>Abla Khunggur</i>	„	Same as above.	1 chick	
14	<i>Razkhandra</i>	South of <i>Razfudur</i>	„	Same as above.	1 chick	
15	<i>Sanzaali</i>	South of <i>Razkhandra</i>	„	Same as above.	1 chick	
16	<i>Sanza Ali Bwrali</i>	South of <i>Sanzaali</i>	„	Same as above.	1 chick	
17	<i>Sari Zwmmwn</i>	South of <i>Sanza Ali Bwrali</i>	„	Same as above.	1 chick	
18	<i>Basmuthi</i>	South of <i>Sari Zwmmwn</i>	„	Same as above.	1 chick	
19	<i>Mwnasu Dibaoli</i>	South of <i>Basmuthi</i>	„	As of <i>Agrang</i> .	1 chick	
20	<i>Bagraza</i>	South of <i>Mwnasu Dibaoli</i>	„	As of <i>Basmuthi</i>	1 chick	
21	<i>Sick Raza</i>	South of <i>Bagraza</i>	„	„	1 chick	
23	<i>Choudry</i>	West to <i>Aieleng</i> facing north	„	„	1 chick	Sacrifice is made in single time but distributed it between the two.
24	<i>Sickna</i>	West to <i>Choudury</i> facing north	„	„	1 chick	
25	Information is to be given to <i>Bathou</i> about all offering then move to <i>Ising</i>					
26	<i>Song Raza</i>	South inside <i>Ising</i> facing east	1+5	As of <i>Bathou</i> .	1 cock	
27	<i>Lwkhi or Mainao</i>	North of <i>Songraza</i> facing east	1+3	Same as above. Sometime 2 Bananas are used.	1 Egg	
28	<i>Aieleng</i>	west of <i>Aieleng</i> facing north		Same as of <i>Song Raza</i>	1 Black chick	Sometime no altar is made for it because it has already in courtyard.
29	The <i>Bathou</i> is informed after offering and sacrificing is done in <i>Ising</i> . Then the <i>Oza</i> move to <i>Bisohori puja</i> which is set in the north-east corner of family garden or courtyard.					



30	<i>Mohadev</i>	South to <i>Bisohori</i> facing east.	1+9 or <i>Laizou</i>	Same as of <i>Bathou</i> . Vermillion is used.	2 pigeons.	<i>Zora gubung</i> meet to death during Chanting.
31	<i>Bisohori</i>	North of <i>Mohadev</i> facing east.	1 <i>Laizou</i>	Same as above	1 black goat	
32	<i>Dwn khubir</i>	South of <i>Mohadev</i>	1+5	Same as of <i>Bathou</i> .	1 chick	
33	<i>Laokhar Gossai</i>	South of <i>Dwnkhubir</i>	1 <i>Laizou</i>	prasads, 2 betel-nuts, 1 cluster banana, 2 lighted <i>dub</i> , etc.	--	Sometime 2 pigeons are set free by marking vermilion.

Collected- Vill. & P.O - Chechapani, Dist. - Kokrajhar, BTAD, Assam. *Oza*- Sikhiram Basumatary, 2017

**Table No: 3:1**

## **2. The *Hambai* or *Bhasani* or *Dinga Puja*:**

After *Bwisagu* festival the Bodos celebrate the *Hambai* festival for the purification, welfare, disease free, healthy and prosperity of village. The *Hambai* is generally celebrated before the summer cultivation in the months of *Jeth* and *Ahar*. It is also known as *Dinga puja* as two *Dinga* (raft) are made and floats in the stream or river in this festival. The non-Bodo neighbouring Hindu people call it as *Bhasani*, which means to let floating on the river. During this *puja* the materials of the sacrifices are kept on *Dinga* known as *bhel* or *bhela* (a kind of raft made with banana sheaths) and then let it floating in the nearby river or stream. By doing this the worshippers believe that the evil gods are being expelled from the village with their bad diseases.

### **a) The attendents of the *Dinga Puja*:**

The attendents of the *Dinga puja* are all the deities in the *Hapsa* in the first day known as *Zagainai*. The *Borosa* and the *Harisa* in the *Garzasali*, then in the *Dinga puja* Altars are 1. The *Mohadev*, 2. The *Laokhar Gossai*, 3. The *Iskhubir*, 4. The *Biskhubir*, 5. The *Zolkhubir*, 6. The *Bura Bogol*, 7. The *Bura Mohakhal*, 8. The *Bisohori*, 9. The *Sikhri-Sikhla* or the *Noi Boini*. These deities are known as the *Harisa* (sub) deities facing towards east-north and from north side of the middle altar, the *Mohadev*. From the *Mohadev* towards south-west are known as *Borosa* (main) deities' like - 1. The *Lwkhi*, 2. The *Bwrai Raja*, 3. The *Zwmwn Bwrai*, 4. The *Zwmwn Burwi*, 5. The *Aieleng*, 6. The *Razphutra*, 7. The *Razkhandra*, 8. The *San Raja*, 9. The *Soudri* or the *Choudri*. There are the *Mayagiri Sayagiri* (Devils)/ *Lwmzahwgra* (deity of disease)/ *Phisa abra-Phisou abra* (Adament child, grandchild) / *Gazri Mwdai* (bad deity) and the *Maothangsri* or *Makhali* in the two *Behela* (raft) facing towards south in the south west corner. The *Harisa* and the *Borosa* in the name of side tracking of the ways are also there across the road.<sup>34</sup> Those are the main deities. There are many more deities as mention in the mantras of the *Oza*, especially in lifting of holy water for the puja.

### **b) The Purification in the Village for *Dinga Puja* :**

This *Dinga puja* generally takes two consecutive days. In the first day the village and the two *Douries* are purified with the *Oza* in the nearby village. It is same as the purification in the entrance of the house in the *Salami Puja* of a family or penance at present in chapter-2. After purification is done the holy water is sprinkled in every household of the village by the *Douries* or family owner. The *Douries* from that beginning day have to sleep alone and without eating main food i.e. rice if possible. The *Oza* also follows the same rule as the *Douries*. In the next morning the *Douries* has to collect rice from the every house for *Magina Khuzina zagra* (eating by begging).

### **c) The Main *Dinga puja*:**

In the main *Dinga puja* day a simple puja by sacrificing one pair chicks for the *Bodosa* and a pair or one pigeon for the *Harisa* deities are offered in the two altars of the *Garzasali*. It is said that it is the invitation of bad deities to the *Dinga Puja* and then go direct to place for the *Dinga Puja*. For the *Dinga Puja* one U size facing towards North-East-South at about 25<sup>th</sup> feet in length and 4<sup>th</sup> feet width for the altars for the deities are made near the bank of a river or stream or field. In the middle of the altar facing east is the altar of the *Lakhi*. From *Lakhi* towards north are the altars of the *Mohadev*, the *Buramohakhal*, the *Burabogol*, the *Zalkhubir*, the *Biskhubir*, the *Iskhubir*, the *Laokhar Gossai*, the *Bisohori* and the *Sikhri-Sikhla* known as the *Harisa Deities* (sub deities). From the *Lakhi* towards south are the altars of the *Bwrai Raja*, the *Zwmwn Bwrai*, the *Zwmwn Burwi*, the *Aieleng*, the *Razputra*, the *Razkhandra*, the *San Raja*, the *Soudury* known as the *Bodosa* deities and the *Mayagiri Sayagiri* (Devils) or others and the *Maothangsri* or *Makhali* known as bad deities, The vermilion is used to all the *Harisa* deities and two rafts of *Mayagiri Sayagiri* / *Gazri Mwdai* (bad deity) and the *Maothangsri* or *Makhali*. The two rafts are floated to nearby stream or river after finishing offering and sacrifices by carrying 8 persons on the shoulders.

### **d) Side Tracking of the Way (*Lama Gathenai*) after the *Dinga Puja*:**

After the *Dinga Puja* the villagers come direct to already determined road place to perform the *Lama Gathenai*. The objective of this puja is to protect the bad deities

from re-entering into the village which has already been floated away through rafts. So side tracking of the probable road is arranged to keep them away forever from the village. For this purpose, they set altars by covering with raw thatch or straw across the road. There are three altars for this purpose all are in the line and in the same raw thatch or straw bed. The altar in the extreme left is made with 1+9 *Laizams*. The prasads, a cluster of banana, a pair of betel-nuts, one pair lighted *dub*, vermillion marks, white-red *nisan* and a pair of pigeon is sacrificed for the deity. The offering to right side is same to that of left side. Vermillion is not used here. A pair of chicken is sacrificed for this deity. The middle altar has 1+3 *Laizams* and same offerings as above, one artificial goat made with banana shoot is offered. In the two sides of the road two dolls are kept like in position of standing and guarding. (See Picture No: 21)

The offering for left side is made by the *Harisa Douri* and the other is made by the *Borosa Douri*. After finishing this, the two *Douries* beat farewell moving a fair of betel-nuts and an egg over the heads to all the participants in the *Dinga puja* and sprinkling the holy water to all. The traditional *Dinga Puja* or *Bhasani* or *Hambai* comes to an end formally and latter on the *Douries* could take the main food and the *Oza* is given its nominal remuneration for his help in performing the two day *Dinga Puja*. The side tracking of the way is celebrated in different places after doing any good works with slight variation with the same objectives i.e. for the protection from any external aggression by the bad deities.

The details of the deities, *phathalis*, offerings and sacrifices of *Dinga puja* in serial are given in table:

The varieties of *Dinga Puja*:

Sl. No.	Name of God	place	<i>Phathali</i>	Offerings	Sacrifice	Remarks
1	<i>Garza Offering</i>	Next to <i>Garza</i> altars facing east	1+9 each to <i>Harisa &amp; Bodoso</i> .	As per <i>Salami puja</i> offering	As per <i>Salami puja</i>	After offering to <i>Garza</i> all are moved to <i>Dinga puja</i> place.
2	<i>Mohadev</i>	North of <i>Lwkhi</i>	1+9 or <i>Laizou</i>	It is done at first time like in <i>Bisohori</i> in <i>Salami Puja</i>	2 Pigeons of same parents	Meet to dead during chanting.
3	<i>Bisohori</i>	North to <i>Mohadev</i> in the angle facing east.	1+9	As above.	1 pigeon	
4	<i>Buramohakhal</i>	South of <i>Bisohori</i> facing east	1+3	2 Banana, 2 lighted dub, 2 red-white flags and prasads, betel-nut pieces.	1 pigeon	
5	<i>Burabogol</i>	South	1+3	-- Do --	1 pigeon	
6	<i>Zalkhubir</i>	South	1+3	-- Do --	1 pigeon	
7	<i>Biskhubir</i>	South	1+3	-- Do --	1 pigeon	
8	<i>Iskhubir</i>	South	1+3	-- Do --	1 pigeon	
9	<i>Laokhar Gossai</i>	South	1+5	-- Do --	1 pigeon	
12	<i>Sikhri-Sikhla</i>	West of <i>Bisohori</i> facing north.	1+9	As per <i>Bisohori</i> given above.	2 Pigeons	Sometime 2 Pigeons is set free.
10	<i>Lwkkhi</i>	South of <i>Mohadev</i> facing east.	1+9	As per <i>Bisohori</i> given above..	1/2 chick(s)	
11	<i>Bwrai Raja</i>	South	1+5	As per <i>Buramohakhal</i>	Red chicken	
12	<i>Zwmwn Bwrai</i>	South	1+3	-- Do --	1 hen chicken	

13	<i>Zwmwn Burwi</i>	South	1+3	-- Do --	1 chick	
14	<i>Aieleng</i>	South	1+5	-- Do --	Black chick	
15	<i>Razputra</i>	South	1+3	-- Do --	1 chick	
16	<i>Razkhandra</i>	South	1+3	-- Do --	1 chick	
17	<i>San Raja</i>	South-west angle facing east	1+3	-- Do --	White cock	It is on the top of a bamboo piece.
18	<i>Choudury</i>	South facing south	1+3	-- Do --	A cock	
19	<i>Mayagiri Sayagiri (Devils) or others.</i>	South facing south west of <i>Choudury</i> .	1+9	As per <i>Lwkhi</i> . First altar on soil, latter it is introduced inside the raft along with life chick and pigeon.	1 chick and 1 pigeon life.	It is floated in the stream or river after finishing offering and sacrifices.
20	<i>Maothangsri Or Makhali</i>	South facing south west of <i>Mayagiri</i> .	1 <i>Laizou</i>	As of <i>Mohadev</i> . First altar on soil, latter it is introduced inside the raft.	1 black goat	It is also floated in the stream or river after finishing offering and sacrifices.
21	After offering and sacrificing the <i>Oza</i> informed to <i>Lwkhi</i> and <i>Mohadev</i> and then floats the two rafts in the stream or river. After floating the raft the participants entertain the meats already prepared as they like. After that they directly move to side tracking of the way place.					

Collected from Vill.- Nalajibari, P.O.- Salakati dist.- Kokrajhar, Oza - Sikiram Basumatary age 65years of Vill.- Shyamgaon, P.O. Rangalikhatha, Dist.- Kokrajhar, BTAD, Assam 6/05/ 2017

**Table No: 3:2**

### **3. The Kherai Festival:**

The *Kherai* festival is the greatest religious festival of the Bodos. At present two types of *Kherai* celebration are seen, one fold by sacrificing domestic animals and another by offering flowers.

#### **a) The Purpose of the *Kherai Puja*:**

The *Kherai* festival is performed for the welfare of the private and public life. It is also performed for the good harvest of crops, prosperity, good crops, diseases free health, etc. They perform the *Kherai* individually as well as in public once a year. At present some changes in the *Kherai* have been seen in compare with the previous *Kherai*.

#### **b) Story about the origin of the *Kherai Puja*:**

The myth related to the *Kherai puja*:

In ancient day, there was a pious old man in a village. He had five sons. (It is also known in somewhere that he had seven sons). In the due course all his sons have grown up and come to the marriageable age. The old man brought five daughter-in-laws in one year by seeing the growing up of his sons. The granary of the old man became empty in bringing five daughter-in-laws in a single year. For this reason one day the old man told about the matter to his five sons and asked them to go to *Phamu* (a system of camping for cultivation to another place for production of more crops). As per asked. The five sons of the old man left for the *Phamu* in another place.

The old man became the house keeper with his five daughter-in-laws. The name of the youngest daughter-in-law of the old man was *Mongli*. The old man took care of *Mongli* very much as his own daughter. He took excessive care of what she had done and what she had eaten. This type of behaviour on the part of old man created a misconception in the mind of daughter-in-law *Mongli* who was in her early age. She misinterpreted his intention and being fear, one day; before dawn she fled away from the house quietly. In the next morning the old man finding her missing searched for her and moved from place to place but could not find out her whereabouts. No one could say whereabouts of her. Later on seeing the food

marks on the *Dub* grasses after crossing his entrance he go on searching her. He is searching after her foot marks on the dub grasses and reaches up to the sandy places. At the sandy place the foot marks of the *Mongli* could not be identified, so the old man missed the way leading to *Mongli*. Here the heartfelt song of the old man “*Ei Bihamzw Mongli*” came into being.

The old man searched everywhere but could not trace her way. He went on searching without taking rest. He forgot to take care of his dress and health. So people called him *Phagla* (a mad man). He goes on singing and searching. In this way, one day drinking water in the river with tired he felt a deep sleep in the shadow of a tree. He also had a dreamt. One old man said to him in the dreamt:

“You give a big puja taking the musical instruments of the Bodos;  
Then you will find your daughter-in-law *Mongli*.  
Not in the form of your daughter-in-law;  
But in the form of *Doudini*.”

The old man woke up from deep sleep went home and arranged a puja where the *Kham-Siphung-Zotha* musical instruments were played in a full-moon period after bringing back all his sons from the *Phamu*. Really one woman came in hearing the tune of the *Kham-Siphung-Zotha* and dance in the whole night retrieved the *Mainao* from the heart of the ocean before dawn and go back somewhere else.

It is believed that this *puja* was the *Kherai* and the old man who arranged the puja was the *Mwnsing-Sing Bwrai* and the old man in the dreamt was the *Bathou Bwrai*.<sup>35</sup>

There is another mythical story in both recounting the origin of the *Kherai* worship and dance as recorded by late Modaram Brahma:

“Once there lived a pious old man with his pious old wife. Unfortunately they had no child. They would pray to God for making them blessed with a child. God was pleased and told his wife in a vision that she would get a male child within some months. God advised her that whenever she had to go out she was to put a ‘*don*’ or basket over her belly under her garment to pretend that she was pregnant. She told her husband of the advice of God. The old man also believed it and made a basket



for her, whenever she went out she would use the basket and at night she would put it aside. The village women folk did not believe that in such an old age she would be pregnant.

After the lapse of some months the old woman was again advised by God that some spiritual girls headed by *Nomaiti* would visit her hut. They would chew betel and spit on a pail. She would bath with their spit to become red to show that she was bleeding. Such an incident actually happened. The spiritual girls came to their hut at dead of night with a male baby called *Alai* or *Alai Damra*. In the morning the villagers came to know that the old woman got a male child. They came in large numbers to see whether it was true or not. All became surprised to find it true.

The child gradually grew older. He was reared with goat's milk and was named *Alai* or *Alari Dambra*. The word *Dambra* is used in Boro language to mean unparalleled qualities possessed by man in prowess, wisdom, strength, etc. *Alai* or *Alari* gradually possessed those qualities.

One day *Alai* was very thirsty and hungry in the forest. With fatigue, thirst and hunger and being tired for not getting water in the forest, he fell senseless in mid hot day. He saw a vision in that senseless state and heard indistinct words of somebody directing him to move a little distance towards the east where he would find water to quench his thirst. After regaining his senses he crawled with great difficulty towards the east and found water at the foot of the tree. He drank water and fell in deep sleep. He awoke and felt himself batter. Yet he could not move towards home. He drank water again. He fell asleep. At late hours he returned home with two bundles of firewood. The housewife piteously asked the reason of delay in returning home. *Alai* told her all.

At that very night, God appeared before him and told him to bring a branch of the tree where water accumulated and plant the same in the courtyard of a pious man and he would direct him again what to do.

*Alai* could know that there was a pious man in his village and then he told him all as directed by God. He brought a branch of the tree and planted it on an auspicious day.

God directed all from within *Alai*'s heart. Three musical instruments --- *Kham* (drum), *siphung* (flute) and *Zotha* (cymbal) were invented by *Alai* and tunes were also invented.

On an auspicious day and night *Bathou* worship was performed. Dancing and singing with the help of the Three musical instruments were performed. The worship, dancing and singing with concert of musical instrument was then called *Kherai*.<sup>36</sup>

### **c) The Origin of the word *Kherai*:**

Different scholars and writers are of different opinions as regards the origin of the word *Kherai*. According to Bihuram Boro "*Kherai* or *Kher-rai* is a religious cum cultural festival of the Bodos."<sup>37</sup> He added that the meaning of the *Kher* means to feel and understand the existence of a supreme power and *Rai* means to utter or pray loudly. So, *Kherai* of *Kher-rai* means to pray the supreme power. The supreme power is known to the Bodos as the *Bathou*. He is believed to be expressing himself through air, water, light, the earth and the sky. He is eternal and omnipresent. 'The *Kherai* of the Bodos has similarity with the *Ker* puja of the Tipras which appears to be a ritual in honour of the earth goddess and the creation'.<sup>38</sup> Kameswar Brahma said that - "*Kherai puja* is the greatest religious festival of the Bodos. It is a symbol of hope and desire, which has been prevailing among them since the time immemorial. About the origin of word *Kherai* he also find difficult to ascertain. He said the *Bathou Borai*, Chief of the Gods of the Bodos is also known as *Kharia Borai* or *Khuria Borai*, which means the latent old man. The Bodos believe *Khoria Borai* to be the latent entity endowed with all qualities. So, some believe that as the *Kherai* puja is performed in his name, the words *Kharia Borai* might have got combined and got transformed into *Kherai*, (*Kharia Borai* > *Khurai* > *Kherai*)"<sup>39</sup> Sekhar Brahma quoted - "Siva was called *Kharia*, when he assumed angry mood (Rudra Murthy) to destroy the world. So to protect themselves and their properties men worship *Kharia Brai* with meat, rice

and fruits for his propitiation. It was not improbable that the word Kharia Brai was shortened as Kharia, which was gradually corrupted to Kherai<sup>40</sup> - as quoted by Sekhar Brahma. As there is similarity between the *Kherai Puja* of the Bodos and the *Ker puja* of the Tipras of Tripura, the *Khernang* of the Dimasas of North Cachar and the *Kheraima* of the Meches of Nepal.<sup>41</sup> “The word Kherai originated from two parts of speeches *Khe* and *Rai*. *Khe* means *Khe-khe* meaning repeatedly or again and again and *Rai* means awakening or healing the sleeping soul of the human being with repeated chanting. In the *Kherai* the *Oza* awaken the soul of the *Doudini* and make it dance with the power of mantras. The *Kherai* is a religious festival of *Bathou* religious people.<sup>42</sup>

The Word *Kherai* is derived from the word “*Khe*” (*Khengkhainai*) prayer or begging something like alms on behalf of all human being by the *Oza* (A man who initiates and performs the religious institutional works and also perform as Medicine man) to god and “*Rai*” is *Raiphwdnanwi hwnai* (elaborately revelation or demonstration) through various dancing activities by the *Doudini* under the trance of the God and Goddesses whatever is begged by the *Oza* to the people. So *Khe* + *Rai* = *Kherai*. So it is said that the *Kherai* means elaborate revelation or demonstration by the *Doudini* under the trance of various Gods and Goddesses in response to the repeated begging or prayer by the *Oza* on behalf of the human being for peace and prosperity of entire living being.

The *Kherai* is the greatest and chief religious festival of the Bodos in which *Bathou Bwrai* is the Chief God and other Bodo deities are worshiped by the Bodos for the good harvesting, welfare of the private and public life and happy, prosperity, disease free health, profitable future life for all. It is seen that most of the *Kherai* worshipers has their own *Kheraisali* where the *Kherai* is worshiped every year and expenditure has also been reduced in comparison with previous one. The time of worship has also reduced.

#### **d) Kinds of the *Kherai Puja***

There are five kinds of *Kherai puja*:

##### **i) The *Darshan Kherai***

*The Darshan Kherai* is performed during the first week of *Kati* (September-October) month. This *Kherai Puja* is meant for *Mainao* who is identified with the *Lakshmi* or *Lakhi* (the goddess of wealth). So, it is also called as the *Lakhi Kherai*. It is also known as the *Maisali Kherai*. The latter term clearly shows the association of this ceremony with *Maisali* or winter crops.

### **ii) The *Umrao Kherai***

It is held during the month of *Ashar* (June-July), at the end of the *Amthi Sua* (the unclean period) for the welfare of the villagers as well as of the crops. This *Kherai puja* is also known as the *Ashu Kherai*, being connected with the *Asu* or a summer season crops.<sup>43</sup>

### **iii) The *Phalo Kherai* or *Dansrang Kherai***

The *Phalo Kherai* is held during the month of *Magha* (January-February). It is performed specially on the day of *Maghi Purnima* (full-moon night of *Magha*). This *Kherai* is also known as the *Dansrang Kherai*, as it is performed during the full-moon night of the *Magha*.

### **iv) The *Noaoni Kherai***

The 'No' means house or a family in English. So, if a *Kherai puja* is performed by a family, it is called the *Noaoni Kherai* (family *Kherai*). This kind of *Kherai* is performed by a family whenever it deems necessary to wash off evil or to ensure welfare. The Bodos who believe in the traditional practices depend on the *Kherai puja* or the *Garza puja* for their welfare at all times. So, whenever they face any trouble, they perform the *Kherai puja*.<sup>44</sup>

### **v) The *Zwi Zanai Kherai***

This type of *Kherai* is specially belonging to the *Noaoni Kherai*. A family promised to offer *Kherai* if a member or members of the family become ill or fall in illness for cure of his or her illness through the *Oza* then such *Kherai* is offered. This type of *Kherai* is called the *Zwi Zanai Kherai*.

### e) The attendants of the *Kherai puja*:

The main attendants of the *Kherai puja* are the *Aieleng*, the *Agrang*, the *Khazi*, the *Khoila*, the *Abla Khungur*, the *Raj-Khandra*, the *Raj-futhur*, the *Ali-Bwrali*, the *Sanza Bwrali*, the *Sari Zwmwn (Bwrlu Buri)*, the *Aie Mwnasu (Aie-Dibaolya)*, the *Bima Basumuthi*, the *Bwrai Sikh Raja*, the *Bag Raja*, the *Soudri* and the *Basumuthi* where the *Bathou Bwrai* is the supreme. The offering and sacrificing in the *Hapsa*, the *garzasali*, temples, rivers and streams, the *Salami* and purifying the *Kham*, the *Siphung*, the *Zotha*, etc. are also there. Offering in the name of dead and alive are also their along with spirits.<sup>45</sup>

The traditional Bodos have many gods and goddesses who are worshipped during the *Kherai* festival. The Bodos has two types of gods or deities. Household gods (*noaoni mwdai*), worship at least within the courtyard of the house and the village gods (*gamini mwdai*), worship collectively at the village *thansali* (the place of worship). The god and goddess of the Bodos possess different positions in the hierarchy of the Bodo pantheon and they are offered different kinds of sacrifices according to their positions in the *Kherai puja*. Through her dances, the *Doudini* demonstrates the functions of the *Bathou* and other deities. She performs eighteen items of dances to propitiate eighteen gods and goddesses. They are — 1. The *Aileng*, 2. The *Agrang*, 3. The *Khoila*, 4. The *Khazi*, 5. The *Abla Khungur*, 6. The *Raj-futur*, 7. The *Raj-Khandra*, 8. The *Sarijomon (Song-raja-songrani)*, 9. The *Manaso*, 10. The *Alaikhungri-Bilaikhungri*, 11. The *Bhandari*, 12. The *Khumari*, 13. The *Basmati*, 14. The *Choudri*, 15. The *Aidi-Baoliya*, 16. The *Borlibrui*, 17. The *Khoribrai-Khoribrui* and 18. The *Laokhar-Gossai*.<sup>46</sup> On the other hand, the *All Bathou Gouthum* indicates the presence of the deities in 18<sup>th</sup> items *Kherai* dances like - 1. The healing of *Doudini* after purification of *Bathou*, 2. The *Aielwng* - dance with wielding shield and beating cane, 3. The *Agrang* – dance with wielding and treading on two long swords, 4. The *Bwrai Khwila* - red ants removing dance, 5. The *Bwrai Khazi* – tug of war dance, 6. The *Abla Khungur* – Tug of war dance, 7. The *Razkhandra* – dance on *Kham*, 8. The *Razphuthur* – dance on *Kham*, 9. The *Ali Bwrali* – Bat beating dance, 10. The *Sanzabwrali* – dragon fly catching dance, 11. The *Buli Buri* - Blessing (First), 12. The *Aie Mwnasu/Dibaoli* – Blessing (Second), 13. The *Bwiswmuthi Mainao* – Blessing

(Third), 14. The *Bwrai Sikhraza* – Buffalo and bear playing dance, 15. The *Bagraza* – Tiger playing, 16. The *Bwrai Soudri* – boat rowing dance, 17. The Basumuthi - Horse riding dance 18. The *Sarwunnisla/* dead-alive healing dance.<sup>47</sup>

It is also noted that apart from the above attendants there are lots of deities that are mentioned in the mantras chanted by the *Oza*.

**f) Materials require for the *Kherai puja*:**

**Personals** -1. The *Oza* one, 2. One *Doudini*, 3. *Bwirathi* two or one pair, 4. Two *Douri*, 5. Instruments players and dancers, 6. Audiences.

**Materials**-1. The *Kham* one Pair, 2. The *Siphung* one Pair, 3. *Zotha* one pair, 4. *Dahal* one pair, 5. *Thungri* one pair, 6. Two *Gasa*, 7. One Gambari tool, 8. one Cane stick, 9. One *Bathwi*, 10. White Busy cloths, 11. One new bed cover or *Dhokhona*, 12. Red and white flags as much as require, 13. Earthen lamp pot as much as require, 14. Banana leaves as much as require 15. Vermillion packet as much as require, 16. *Laizam* as much as require, 17. Rice one *Don*, 18. Master oil as much as require, 19. Comb 2 Nos., 20. The *Khangkhla* 16/18 pair, 21. Cotton as much as require, 22. Banana sheaths as much as require, 23. White threads as much as require, 24. One copper pot, 25. One mango tree branch, 26. Banana fruits (manua) as much as require.

For holy water -1. Basil branches as much as require, 2. *Dub* grass branch as much as require, 3. *Zathrasi* branch as much as require, 4. Milk as much as require, 5. Rice as much as require.

For offering prasads - 1. Chicken as much as require, 2. Pegions as much as require, 3. Goat as much as require, 4. Pig as much as require.

**g). The *Kheraisali*:**

First of all the place is to be selected for the *Kherai puja*. Now-a-days there is a *Kheraisali* in every villages where the *Kherai puja* is performed.

#### **h). Erection of the *Bathou* altar for the *Kherai*:**

The erection of the *Kherai Bathou* is same that with the *Bathou* in the courtyard. In addition two upper parts of raw bamboo having green leaves are piled in front posts of the *Bathou* fencing. This is known as *Zatha* (a kind of flag). In each *zatha*, long yarn tied with five cotton and 5 *zathrasi* leaves are tied from the top. This is known as the golden way to heaven and vice-versa.

In rectangular path like altar '*ali*' (a path) to the north of the main circular *Bathou* altar which is slightly bend towards west facing north, a fence with small bamboo strips in the form of net (*Khathakho mohorni*) is made giving two long bamboo strips in the middle on the top. It is known as *Sagal Sathi* (goat fence). The top of the small bamboo strips is tied with other bamboo strips. It is tied with other strong bamboo posts. Sixteen pair of *Khangkhla* (A kind of bamboo like plants or sacred plants) is piled and it is tied with bamboo posts so that it can not fall down.

The *Bathou* altar is decorated with the rice powder (*On*) in such way that every bamboo strips use as posts are stood in a line making like a wheel. The other 16 altars are set in the line or *Sariali* are also decorated with the *On*. Each deities carries one *Laizam* in the above for one cluster/two banana, one pair betel-nuts, one lighted *Gasa* or the lighted earthen lamp. Below it another *laizam* for prasad, *goi-phathwi khili* is offered. 1+5 *Laizam* with prosads, etc. is offered for the *Bathou*.

#### **i). Plantation of the *Sizou* in the *Bathou* altar:**

It is same as above chapter-2.

#### **j). *The Bathou Borai or Kharia Borai***

He is the God-in-chief of the Bodos. He is given the highest position among the Gods. For him one *Laizou* or 1+5 *Laizams* are offered. In 1 *Laizam* of the above one pair betel nuts, one cluster of banana, one or two lighted *Gasa* is/are offered. In 5 *Laizams*, prasads, pieces betel nuts, etc. are offered. A pig was sacrificed in the altar of the *Bathou* in previous times. Now-a-days in spite of one pig one pair red cock-hen are sacrificed in the name of the *Bathou Bwrai* in the *Kherai puja*.

**k). Process of offering in the altar (*Phathali Baonai*):**

In the north of the *Ali* from the *Bathou* one altar is made at the angle of north east facing north-east corner at the position of fourteen from the *Bathou* altar. Here, 1+1 *laizam* is offered. In the top of the *laizam* facing north-east one pair betel nut, one cluster banana and above of it one lighted *Gasa* or earthen lamp is offered. In another *Laizam* Prasad, etc. is offered. From 1<sup>st</sup> altar to the south facing towards east here 1+1 *laizam* is offered. At the top of the *Laizam* one pair of banana, *Goi Khili-Phathwi khili* (pieces of betel nut) is offered and below of it prasad is offered. From the 2<sup>nd</sup> *Phathali* to 11<sup>th</sup> *Phathali* all offering are same. In the 12<sup>th</sup> *Phathali* the offering is same with 1<sup>st</sup> No *phathali*. The *Phathali* for the 13 to 16<sup>th</sup> are same as of 2<sup>nd</sup> *Phathali*. The 15 and 16<sup>th</sup> are facing towards north. The altar of the 16<sup>th</sup> *Phathali* is made by marking the lines from the 16<sup>th</sup> pair posts of *Khangkhla* with the rice powder.

**l). The Prayer or hymns (*Arzinai*):**

An altar is made west to the 16<sup>th</sup> *phathali* facing towards south. A basil leaf is pasted on it. One banana leaf with 9 vermilion marks, one cluster of banana, one pair betel nut, two coins of one rupee, one pair lighted *dub* are offered on the altar. The sword is marked with vermilion 9 times. The sword is piled tightly as standing position and its head is covered with one *busi* (white) cloth. One shield and cane stick known as *dahal-bat* is kept leaning on the sword. A bundle of straw for the *Doudini* is tied three times and kept towards north of altar.

The *Doudini* kneels and bow down in the altar. Then she moves over her head and the altar three times from right to left taking one pair betel nut in a banana leaf and throws it towards south. Then she kneels down and bows down in front of the altar and then sits on the bundle of straw, remain in meditation mood facing towards south. The *Oza* chants his incantations or mantras and the musician are prayed with playing with the *Kham*, the *Siphung* and the *Zotha*. This music or tune is known as *Hagra saonai dengkhw* (jungle burning tune). The breeze of air blows and touch in the soul of the *Doudini* and the entire world is awakening with the rhythm of this tune. The *Doudini* heals or motivates moving her head first slowly than speedy (*Wlwngikhangwn* or *Onsragwn*) and began to hiccup (*Gwrsigwn*) for performing in



the *Kherai* festival. Then the *Doudini* hold at the handle of the sword after healing or motivating (*onsragwn or wlvngikhanggwn*). It is called *Mwdai Borainai* (propitiation of deities). As soon as the *Doudini* hold in the head of the sword the *Douri* has also to catch the sword tightly in kneeling position from the south facing towards north first and then moves round three times in half sitting position along with the *Doudini*. It is said to be the struggled for birth of the human being in the universe. Then the musician plays the tune of *Mwsaglangnai* (normal dance). Then the *Doudini* gets up taking holy water pot. Later on the *Doudini* moves three times to all the *Kheraisali* by dancing and sprinkling holy water. It is called the *Kheraisali phwtharnai* (penance of the *Kherai* place). Later on the *Doudini* tread her legs on the gambari *khamplai* given by the *Douri* in front of the *Bathou* altar and throws the pot of the holy water towards her back over her head towards west. It is said to be the adoption of the *Bathouism* after birth.

**m). Moving round the *Bathou* or *Bathou Bisar*:**

The *Oza* narrates the tales about the deep philosophy of creation of universe through his chanting mantras. The *Doudini* moves around the *Kherai* altar touching in the *Khangkhla* and the *Bathou*. The dancer party are accompanied with her and one of them say yes to the *Oza* like --- *Swithw aywi Swithw, zanaguruni bungnai raoya gasibw swithw* (true oh mother true all the saying of the *zanaguru* (learned) are everything true). Here the tune is also accompanied with the chanting of the mantras. It is known as *Bathou Bisar solo* (tale of *Bathou* judgment). The *Bathou Bisar solo* narrates about the creation of the universe, earth, life, human being and ends in the adoption of *Bathouism* by the Bodos. It is also known as healing dance. The deep philosophy of creation is revealed through this healing dance of the *Doudini*. The deep, breeze and stable holy souls are indicated with it. With this *Bakhw* (item) the healing or awakening of souls entering in the living being having the body made with air, water, soil, light and fire in this universe is indicated. After that the *Doudini* dances with a sword on one hand and putting shield on the head around the *Kherai* altar. It is known as *phathali bekheonai* (*phathali* opening) and the welcoming of the male deities with *Mwsakhaori Mwsanai*.

**n). The Demonstration of the *Doudini*:**

The different kinds of demonstration or imitation of dances under the trance of different Gods and Goddesses by the *Doudini* in the *Kherai* festivals at present are seen as follows: Prediction by shells, Burning of Jungle, Welcoming the *Santhi* or penance of *Bathou*, *Doudini Onsrnai* (Healing), Penance of Instruments with Chicken bloods, Moving round the *Bathou* with long tune of flutes, *Mwsakhaori*, *Aileng* - shield wielding dance and cane stick beating (also known as *Khopri sibnai*) dance, *Mwsaglangnai*, *Agrang* - swords wielding also known as *Sotroli* dance, *Khazi*- Hunting or removing of red ants (*Khwezema Phonai*), *Khwila*- Tug of war Dance (*Sa Gwlo bwnai mwsanai*), *Abla Khunggur*- Tug of war (*Sa Gwlo bwnai*) dance *Razkhandra* - dance on a drum (*Khamao Barkhwnai or Kham Gwbanai*), *Razputra*- dance on a drum (*Khamao Barkhwnai or Kham Gwbanai*), *Rwnswndi* or Floating of Boat (*Rwnswndi or Nao phwzaonai*) dance, Bat flying (*Badali Birnai*) and insect or dragonfly capturing (*Gandola Bwnnai*) dance of *Ali Bwrali* and *Sanza Bwrali* respectively, *Burli Buri* - Acceptance of blessing (*Bwr Nazaonai*) dance, *Aie Mwnasu or Aie Dibaoli*- Acceptance of blessing (*Bwr Nazaonai*) dance, *Bima Basmuthi Mainao* - Acceptance of blessing (*Bwr Nazaonai Mwsanai*) dance, *Sikh Raza*- Playing of Buffalo-Bear (*Mwisw-Mufur Gelenai*) dance, Tiger king (*Bagraza*)- Tiger playing (*Mwsa Gelenai*) dance, Choudry- Boat rowing (*Nao Zaonai*) dance also known as sailing of life, *Basmuthi or Basmuria* - Riding of horse (*Gorai Dabrainai*) dance also known as the riding of life, Dead and Alive (*Gwthwi Gwthang*) dances and Extra dancing - Mongoose, *Maozi Mengbrang*, *Bagurumba*, *Zaraphagla* dances, etc. (See P. No.24).

**Table Sowing Varieties and Remarks of the *Kherai Festival*:**

Sl. No.	Deity	Dance Items	Types of dance	Meaning	Remarks
1		Offering at the street	It is same with the side tracking of the Ways after <i>Dinga puja</i> .	To avoid disturbances in the <i>Kherai</i> .	
2		Offering in <i>Garzasali</i> , etc.	It is same as done before <i>Dinga puja</i> in the <i>Garzasali</i> . Offering in the nearby stream or temple, etc. is also made for the success of the <i>Kherai</i> .	To avoid disturbances in the <i>Kherai</i> .	
3		Penance of the <i>Kherai</i> place	It is same as done in the <i>Salami</i> at the entrance of the <i>Kherai</i> place and the holy water is sprinkled.	Penance or purification of the <i>Kherai</i> altar.	
4		Penance of Instruments or <i>Kham Hogarnai</i>	In the courtyard of the <i>Bodo Douri</i> , an altar is made. All the instruments to be used in the <i>Kherai Khams</i> , flutes, <i>Zotha</i> , <i>Dokhna</i> , Swords, shields, <i>Gasa</i> , <i>Bathwi</i> , etc. are kept in altar. Next to it betel-nut, prasads, <i>dub</i> , etc. are offered in another altar and a chicken is sacrificed there. All tools are marked with chicken blood and all the members of the <i>Kherai</i> party prayed there for the success of the <i>Kherai</i> . After lifting from the altar, instruments of the <i>Kherai</i> are played for few while. Sometime it is done in front of the <i>Bathou</i> altar of the <i>Kheraisali</i> .	Penance of musical instruments, cloths, etc.	
5		Prediction by shell ( <i>Khaori naikhangnai</i> )	The <i>Oza</i> predicts about the <i>Kherai</i> festival in front of the <i>Kherai</i> altar with 9/7 shells in half sitting position.	The good or bad of the <i>Kherai</i> festival is predicted.	
6		Offering to	An altar is made in the <i>Kheraisali</i> . All the tools like - <i>Dokhona</i> , blouse,	This is done for avoiding any disturbances in	

		ancestors	<i>busi</i> clothes, etc. are offered keeping on the <i>gambari tool</i> . The <i>Oza</i> and the <i>Douri</i> pray for the success of the <i>Kherai</i> .	the <i>Kherai</i> .	
7		Prayer or hymns ( <i>Arzinai</i> ):	As given in Prayer or hymns ( <i>Arzinai</i> ) above.	The penance of the <i>Kherai</i> place.	
8		Prayer in the <i>Bathou</i> and prediction by <i>Doudini</i>	The <i>Doudini</i> rest sitting on the <i>gambari tool</i> in front of the <i>Bathou</i> altar. The <i>Oza</i> chants his mantras continuously. The <i>Douri</i> sacrifices one fair chicken in the <i>Bathou</i> altar. The <i>Doudini</i> inform about the arrival of various Gods and Goddess in the <i>Kherai</i> . The <i>Doudini</i> Predicts out-going and forthcoming events and threaten for wrong doing.	Predict the present and future of the public, express the crime-harms of the public and threaten for wrong doing.	
9		Moving round the <i>Bathou</i> or <i>Bathou Bisar</i>	The <i>Oza</i> tells story by chanting the mantras and <i>sastras</i> . The <i>Doudini</i> moves around the <i>Kherai</i> altar by touching and listening the <i>Sastras</i> slowly. The dancer's dances and the music of cymbal go on. As given above.	Judgment of the <i>Bathou</i> known by them <i>Bathou bisar Solo</i> . It is the story from the creation of world by God to adoption of the <i>Bathou</i> religion.	
10		<i>Mwsakhaori</i>	The <i>Douri</i> dance with taking swords in hand and putting shield on head	Opening of dance items and welcoming the gods.	
11	<i>Aieleng</i> or <i>Aielwng</i>	<i>Dahal Phangthenai</i> or <i>Sibnai</i> (Shield wielding) (also known as <i>Khopri sibnai</i> ) Dance.	The <i>Aieleng</i> is the body guard of <i>Bathou Borai</i> . The <i>Doudini</i> demonstrates the shield wielding dance moving three times around the <i>Kherai</i> altar with the tune of the <i>Kham</i> , <i>Siphung</i> and <i>Zotha</i> taking shield and cane stick in hand and crowned with <i>busi cloth</i> . The <i>Doudini</i> drink <i>Bathwi</i> (flesh blood of sacrifice chick) treading on tool in the <i>Aieleng altar</i> . The <i>Douri</i> has to sacrifice a chicken and kept the head of the chicken in the altar of <i>Aieleng</i> , lighted fire in the thread or ribbon keeping on the head of chicken after giving the blood containing pot ( <i>Bathwi</i> ) to the <i>Doudini</i> .	For peaceful living human being should be careful having the instincts like - healing ( <i>Mankhangnai</i> ), angry, lust, love and arrogance. This knowledge is taught to the Bodos with this item. The Bodos are taught to safe their own rites and rituals, language-culture and religions from the enemy and they are competent to	

			After <i>Bathwi</i> drinking the <i>Mwsaglangnai</i> dance is done by the <i>Doudini</i> three times around the <i>Kherai</i> altar. Then the <i>Doudini</i> moves the two <i>zathas</i> of the <i>Bathou</i> indicating the end of <i>Phathali</i> or item.	live peacefully with their own. The shield wielding dance of the <i>Aieleng</i> shows the ability to protect the human race from the enemy. The drinking of <i>Bathwi</i> indicates the acceptance of offering by the deity.	
12		<i>Mwsaglangnai</i>	The <i>Mwsaglangnai</i> dance is performed moving around the <i>Kherai</i> altar three times from right to left after main item ends.	This is done at the end of every item.	
13	<i>Agrang</i>	Swords wielding ( <i>Sotroli</i> ) Dance.	<i>The Agrang</i> is the general of the God-in-chief <i>Sivbwrai</i> . The <i>Doudini</i> demonstrates sword wielding dance moving around the <i>Kherai</i> altar taking two swords. When three rounds are completed the swords are given to <i>Douri</i> . The <i>Doudini</i> dances on the two sharp swords in front of the <i>Bathou</i> . Then She has come to the altar of the <i>Agrang</i> and drink <i>Bathwi</i> given by the <i>Douri</i> . The <i>Douri</i> sacrifices a cock and do as before. After that <i>Mwsaglangnai</i> is done.	The people should be alert in every spare of life by dominating the instincts. If we seal our life in true and real path we are capable enough to destroy the dangerous sharp swords like enemy with the blessing of God. It needs great faith and wholehearted worshipping of God.	
14	<i>Khazi</i>	Hunting or removing of red ants ( <i>Khwezema Phonai</i> ) Dance.	<i>The Khazi</i> is the follower of the <i>Bura Bathou</i> . The <i>Khazi</i> is the adviser of God <i>Sibrai</i> as per A. Boro in his <i>Folk Literature of the Boros, An Introduction</i> (2001, P.-66). <i>The Khazi</i> is the messenger or emissary of the god-in-chief. His diplomatic mission is shown by a dance called insect removing dance. The <i>Doudini</i> demonstrates the <i>Khwezema Phonai</i> dance with a sword and a scarf in hand, pipe on mouth and crowned with <i>busi</i> cloth moving around the artificial mango or other tree arranged by <i>Douri</i> towards west of the <i>Khazi</i> three times. The <i>Doudini</i> dance in the gestures	As the red ants of the tree jointly cuts if they get chances, the five instincts of human being like healing, angry, lust, love and arrogance damage the life. We have to control those things for good life. With the whistle blowing by the <i>Doudini</i> we must be alert.  The meaning of this dance indicates that the <i>Khazi</i> god gives the skill how to defeat the	

			of removing the red ants from the body with the scarf and cutting gestures of the tree. The tree is later on cut into pieces by <i>Doudini</i> . The <i>Douri</i> is sacrificed a cock and <i>Doudini</i> drink <i>Bathwi</i> . The <i>Mwsaglangnai</i> is done.	enemy by defeating the head of the enemy in the countless, unmanageable ferocious enemies.	
15	<i>Khwila</i>	Tug of war ( <i>Sa Gwlaobwnai</i> ) Dance.	The <i>Khwila</i> is the follower of the <i>Bura Bathou</i> . The <i>Doudini</i> performs <i>Sa-Gwlaobwnai</i> (tug of war) dance for <i>Khwila</i> god. The <i>Doudini</i> comes with dancing and moving around the <i>Kherai</i> altar three times for <i>Khwila</i> and dance on the cloth which is hold with sixth persons in two ends making it like a rope in south-north direction. The <i>Doudini</i> comes and dance with the tune of the <i>Kham</i> , <i>Siphung</i> and <i>Zotha</i> . Later on the <i>Doudini</i> tread on gambari <i>khamphlai</i> in front of the <i>Khwila</i> altar and drink <i>Bathwi</i> . A chicken is sacrificed by the <i>Douri</i> and do as above. Than <i>Mwsaglangnai</i> is performed.	The <i>Khwila</i> gives the skill for becoming physically fit and strong through Tug of war dance. It is also said that we have to faith on creator or God in living both happy and sorrow life. The holy soul is gifted by Him.	
16	<i>Abla Khunggur</i>	Tug of war ( <i>Sa Gwlaobwnai</i> ) Dance.	Same as of <i>Khwila</i> . The <i>Abla-Khunggur</i> is said to protect the human being from various diseases as per Daimary, G. B. (2011, pp. P.-63.) in his essay <i>Boroni Mwsanai Arw Harimu</i> in <i>Khanthai Raithai Bidang published</i> by Bodo Aieda Fwrwngiri Gouthum. Sometimes this dance is compared by <i>Sagar Manthan</i> of the <i>Mahabharata</i> , although there is no strong ground to believe it.	Same as <i>Khwila</i> .	
17	<i>Razkhandra</i>	A dance on drum ( <i>Khamao Gwbanai</i> or <i>Kham</i> )	<i>The Rajkhandra</i> is said to be the grandson of <i>Sib-bwrai</i> . The <i>Doudini</i> performs a dance on <i>Kham</i> to show the playful activities of <i>Rajkhandra</i> . The <i>Doudini</i> put a ring of cane into her neck. The two <i>Kham</i> is tightly hold keeping tool near it by the <i>Douri</i> and others. The <i>Doudini</i> holding the	This dance of offering to the <i>Kham</i> (symbol of Bodo culture) leads acquisition of knowledge; skill and instruments, ultimately leading to achievement of God i.e.	

		<i>Barkhwnai</i> )	ring of cane on her neck and taking a chicken come dancing from the altar of the <i>Rajkhandra</i> and moving around the <i>Kherai</i> altar and play on the <i>Kham</i> . The <i>Doudini</i> tears the neck of the chicken and drinks its blood moving upwards. The <i>Douri</i> do the needful as above. The <i>Mwsaglangnai</i> is done.	<i>Rajkhandra</i> .	
18	<i>Rajfuthur</i>	A dance on drum ( <i>Khamao Gwbanai</i> or <i>Kham Barkhwnai</i> )	The <i>Rajfuthur</i> is said to be the son of the <i>Sib-Bwrai</i> . Same as of <i>Razkhandra</i> . The <i>Doudini</i> performs <i>Khamao Barkhwnai</i> or <i>Kham Gwbanai</i> (A dance on a drum) to propitiate this god.	Same as <i>Razkhandra</i>	
19		<i>Rwnswndi</i> or Floating of Boat ( <i>Rwnswndi</i> or <i>Nao phwzaonai</i> ) Dance.	One altar is set towards south of the <i>Kherai</i> altar. Three sheaths of the banana are sewed together. In left and the right side 9 shares or pieces of betel-nut, banana piece, prasads inside the vermilion lines are offered. In the middle one cluster of banana, one pair betel-nuts, two coins of one rupee, two red-white flags, two lighted incense sticks and a black chicken is offered. The bamboo strips pasting its heads with jute dipping in kerosene oil are posted. An artificial banana shoot made goat is kept facing towards east.  The <i>Doudini</i> dances moving round the altar with the tune of <i>Kham</i> , <i>Siphung</i> and <i>Zotha</i> with one sword, whistle and crown. When three times moving is completed, she cut artificial banana shoot goat into pieces and fell down upwards. The <i>Douri</i> should follow, bring and help her to catch in the two <i>Zathas</i> of <i>Bathou</i> altar.	The meaning of this offering is to drive out the outside <i>Khithirs</i> (Spirits) or bad deities.	It is the middle of the <i>Kherai</i> festival.

			All the offering are thrown in the distance place or floats on river by two persons along with a black chicken. Two persons are returned touch and moved the two <i>Zathas</i> and shouted <i>Ehio</i> (A Kind of Sound) immediately. Then the life of the <i>Doudini</i> has re-entered into the body of the <i>Doudini</i> . (Informant- Sontosh Basumatary <i>Oza</i> age 55 years Vill.- Besorgaon, P.O.- Rangalikhatha, Dist.- Kokrajhar, BTC, Assam).		
20	<i>Ali Bwrali</i> or <i>Sanza Ali</i>	Bat flying ( <i>Badali Birnai</i> ) Dance.	It is said that it is the God of agriculture. The <i>Doudini</i> dances covering her head with <i>busi</i> cloth (Crown) moving around the altar of the <i>Kherai</i> three times. The <i>Doudini</i> drink <i>Bathwi</i> after moving three times around the <i>Kherai</i> altar. The <i>Douri</i> is sacrificed a chicken and do the needful as above. After that <i>Mwsaglangnai</i> is performed.	This dance teaches how to take care of the cultivated crops from the wild animals.	
21	<i>Sanza Bwrali</i>	Insect or dragonfly capturing ( <i>Gandola Bwnnai</i> ) Dance.	The <i>Doudini</i> comes to the altar of <i>Sanza Bwrali</i> take crown with busy cloth and give gestures of fishing or catching the insect with stick. Then all the activities are same with the <i>Sanza-Ali</i> .	If we fly like a dragonfly with the instinctive behavior we may fall into danger. This truth is revealed by this dance.	
22	<i>Burli Buri</i>	Acceptance of Blessing ( <i>Bwr Nazaonai</i> ) Dance.	The <i>Burli Buri</i> is also known as <i>Sari Zwmwn</i> . The <i>Sari Zwmwn</i> also known as <i>Song Raza</i> . The <i>Doudini</i> sits on a gamari tool in front of this altar and the <i>Douri</i> give her crown. The wife of the <i>Douri</i> is arrived dressing <i>Dokhna Thaosi/bidon</i> , putting a comb on the hair without banding it and annexing little cotton in her hair mixing with master oil. She has to bring holy water in <i>Lotha</i> and specially	This dance means the finding of blessing from the <i>Burli Buri</i> the god of wealth.	



			<p>design one basketful (<i>don</i>) rice. She has to hand over the <i>Don</i> to the <i>Doudini</i>.</p> <p>She has to smear with cotton and comb three times in the hair of the <i>Doudini</i>.</p> <p>The <i>Oza</i> chants mantras asking for blessing. At first the <i>Doudini</i> hesitate to give blessing. When the <i>Oza</i> request repeatedly and is supported by the public she gives the blessing. The <i>Doudini</i> give rice towards backward in the gestures of left and right hands. In this time the wife of the <i>Douri</i> has to accept the rice with her <i>sadri</i> and tied it in a corner.</p> <p>Later on the wife of the <i>Douri</i> has to accept the don and the <i>lotha</i> given to her by the <i>Doudini</i> and she has to put the holy water of the <i>lotha</i> drop by drop around the <i>Bathou</i> altar one time.</p> <p>The <i>Douri</i> has to give one chicken to the hand of <i>Doudini</i> over her head. The <i>Douri</i> has to kneel down back to the <i>Doudini</i>. The <i>Doudini</i> sacrifices the chicken and drinks the blood of the chicken and dance around the altar of the <i>Kherai</i> three times.</p> <p>After performing <i>Mwsaglangnai</i> dance she touch and moves the <i>Zathas</i>.</p>		
23	<i>Aie Mwnasu</i> or <i>Aie Dibaoli</i>	Acceptance of blessing ( <i>Bwr Nazaonai</i> ) Dance	The <i>Aie Mwnasu</i> is also known as <i>Aie-Dibaolya</i> . All the activities are same with <i>Burli Buri</i> .	The meaning of this dance is receiving the wealth of blessing from the god <i>Aie Mwnasu</i> or <i>Aie-Dibaolya</i>	
24	<i>Bima Bausma</i>		This is also same with the <i>Burli Buri</i> dance. The <i>Doudini</i> or the <i>Douri</i> has to collect a little prasads from all the altars and mixed with the prasad with	It is said that lifting of <i>Lakhi</i> in the form of collection of prasads and taking blessing from	

	<i>uthi Mainao</i>		the <i>Bima Basmuthi Mainao</i> altar and the <i>Don</i> is given back to the wife of the <i>Douri</i> along with collected <i>Lakhi</i> from all the altars or deities.	<i>Burli Buri, Aie Manasu</i> and the <i>Bima Basumathi Mainao</i> makes the people happy, prosperity and peaceful family and social life.
25	<i>Sikh Raza</i>	Buffalo-Bear Playing ( <i>Mwisw Mufur Gelenai</i> ) Dance.	The <i>Doudini</i> is crowned with <i>busi</i> cloth, cover her head with white cloth and move around the <i>Kherai</i> altar three times dancing, kneeling and clawing ( <i>manbainanwi</i> ) like bear and then buffalo. The <i>Douri</i> is sacrificed a chicken and do the needful as above after giving <i>Bathwi</i> to <i>Doudini</i> . The <i>Doudini</i> drink the <i>Bathwi</i> and <i>Mwsaglangnai</i> is done. The co-dancers show fighting of buffalo and the bear. The audience gets very interesting on the dances.	The buffalo and the bear are the symbol deities of power. By offering puja to buffalo and bear the people can get ride from danger. It is also said that the buffalo and the bear are powerful animals. But more powerful animals are also there. The greater should be respected and the younger should be kind. We have to be satisfied what we have.
26	<i>Bagraza (Tiger king)</i>	Tiger playing ( <i>Mwsa Gelenai</i> ) Dance	This dance is same with the Buffalo-Bear Playing Dance. The buffalo and the bear are replaced by tiger here. The activity of tiger is revealed here. The other dancers demonstrate various hunting activities of the tiger. The tiger hunts all kinds of wild animals. It gives lots of entertaining excitements to the audiences. One dancer pulls a chicken tying in its leg and another tries to catch it like a tiger.	The tiger is the symbol God of power. The offering to tiger is made when the people goes for hunting. This offering is done for getting the kindness of the Tiger as well as other wild animals. Every living being has their way of livelihood. It is indicated with this dance.
27	<i>Choudry or Soudry</i>	Boat rowing ( <i>Nao Zaonai</i> ) Dance	It is said the <i>Soudri</i> is the owner of the lakes and rivers and deity belonging to water communication. The <i>Doudini</i> performs <i>Nao Jaonai</i> (Boat rowing) dance to show the functions of the god <i>Soudry</i> with crown, shield and a sword in hands, scarf and hanging a bag on the shoulder, a whistle in the mouth and dance. In front of the <i>Doudini</i> a symbol of boat prepare with banana trunk has to pull slowly tying it with a long rope by a	The deity helps in the crossing of river, solving the problems in life. During the crossing of the river some problems arises, this is like the problems arise in the sailing of life. The problems can be shorted out by offering one pair of betel-nuts. To come out

			person indicating the rowing of boat. This should be demonstrated three times around the <i>Kherai</i> altar. Sometimes the way is protected. Then the way is cleared by offering one pair betel-nuts.	successfully in the problems of crossing the river or in the sailing of life the offering of the <i>Choudry</i> is made.	
28	<i>Basmuthi or Basmuriala or Mohakkhal</i>	Horse Riding ( <i>Gorai Dabrainai Dance.</i> )	The <i>Doudini</i> comes to the altar of the <i>Basomuthi</i> altar. The <i>Doudini</i> demonstrates horse riding dance with crown, scarf, whistle on mouth and a sword in hand three times moving around the <i>Kherai</i> altar. The <i>Douri</i> is sacrificed two chickens and offered the heads of the chicken in two altars - <i>Basmuthi</i> and <i>Choudry</i> . The gambari tool must be hold in the middle of these two altars. The <i>Mwsaglangnai</i> is done by the <i>Doudini</i> at the end.	The life is compared with the riding of horse from birth to dead. The owner of this is <i>Basmuthi or Mohakkhal or Basmuria</i> . The creation, preservation and destruction of life are on the hand of Almighty God. This deity is worshiped for complete and happy living. The sailing of soul through true path with the blessing of God is the meaning of it.	This item is the last item of main <i>Kherai</i> dance items.
29		Dead and Alive ( <i>Gwthwi Gwthang</i> ) Dances.	An altar is made by the <i>Douri</i> towards the southern side west from the <i>Kherai</i> altar. One pair betel-nuts, prasads, one pair lighted incense sticks are offered in a banana leaf. Bellow it one gambari tool is kept. The <i>Doudini</i> convert into a spiritual being in this stage and can tell and imitates the nature of different god and goddesses. The <i>Doudini</i> turn into spirits like - <i>Zaraphagla, Lantha Gurzi, Daoang Buthua, Thenthaimali, Maoria-Daoria</i> , etc one after another who were related specially with the <i>Kherai</i> and have already expired. The <i>Doudini</i> behave like that expired persons, can tell the tales of the gods and goddesses in their voices and asked various things like - betel-nuts, rice beer, Biri or Bidi, etc. and entertained songs and dances with the tune of <i>Kham, Siphung</i> and <i>Zotha</i> . Some spirits in the body of the <i>Doudini</i> express their various desired and	It is believed that the sinner never get the way to heaven after dead. It is reflected in these dances. It teaches us not to be sinner. On the other hand, it is also believed that the persons who could not complete his desired in his or her life time could be fulfilled through this.	

			<p>make advice to the Bodo society in various ways. Most of the spirits enjoy and take a few rests in coming in the <i>Kherai</i> festival as it is expressed by the mouth of the <i>Doudini</i>. Among them the arrival of Zaraphagla is seen in every <i>Kherai</i> with his interesting folk tale related dance.</p> <p>Side by side the <i>Doudini</i> tells the fortune of the people, good and bad days of the village or villagers, success and failure of the cultivation, regarding the duties and responsibilities of the villagers for their safety from any danger in future, necessary of celebrating the <i>Kherai</i> festival in the forthcoming days, etc.</p>		
30		Extra Dancing– Mongoose, <i>Maozi</i> <i>Mengbrang</i> <i>Dance</i> , etc.	The Dance of Mongoose is dance like the mongoose, and the Cat dance is dance making the gestures of <i>Maozi</i> (cat), etc. The <i>Bagurumba</i> , <i>Daosridelai</i> , <i>Kristi</i> , etc. of the modern dances are also danced here.	It has no specific meaning but to entertain the people after completion of the demonstration under the trance of the God and goddess by the <i>Doudini</i> .	The end of <i>Kherai</i> Festival.
31		Penance for the musical instruments:	At the end of the <i>Kherai festival</i> the musical instruments are to be purified. It may be in the courtyard of the Douri or in the <i>Kherai</i> altar. The penance is same as the penance made before the <i>Kherai puja</i> or <i>Kham Hogarnai</i> .	The penance of musical instruments means the instruments are freed from the <i>Kherai puja</i> .	

Sources: This table is prepared on the basis of the *Kherai Mwsamu*: Dularai Boro Harimu Affad, (2009, PP.-16-21 and self observation.

The deity-items may be slightly varied as per *Oza* and the village.

**Table No:3:3**

### **o) Significance of the Altar of the *Kherai Puja***

The whole lengthwise altar of the *Kherai puja* has its significance. It is believed that the altar symbolizes a holy road from the Heaven, down to the earth, or from the earth to the Heaven. The ideal of the philosophy here indicates a holy link between the God of the Heaven and the human being on the earth.

A piece of cotton yarn which is tied on the post of raw bamboo with green leaves is believed to signify the unending principle or the law of creation of the Creator. Thus the whole preparation of the altar of the *Kherai puja* is believed to bear great philosophical significance.

### **p) The Role of the *Doudini* during the *Kherai* festival:**

The *Doudini* is the virgin girl or woman or Shaman who feed or offered to the God and Goddesses on behalf of the human being for getting peace and prosperity for entire human being. “*Doudini*: A deitied she-man who invokes all the gods and goddesses in the *Kherai* worship. She is in commune with them during the period of worship.<sup>48</sup> *Doudini* is a sanctified medium of divinity, the paranature; she is the essence of the *kherai* worship.<sup>49</sup> ‘In the *Ric Veda* the meaning of the word ‘*Dou*’ is reverent deity. It will be Bodo word. In verb the meaning of the word is to feed or to offer. In noun its meaning is reverent deity. – The pious person through which the god is ‘*Dou*’ or prayed to God is *Dou + Ari = Douri*. In another way *Di* or *Dhi* means offering of soul or deep prayer. The pious female person through offering her soul or *Di* under the trance of the God in her body truthfully tell fortune of the humanity of present and future, she is *Dou+di+ni = Doudini*. The *Douri* and *Doudini* are two truthful pious representative forms of *Sibrai* and *Sibrwi*’.<sup>50</sup> ‘The Shaman plays various roles in different social and ritualistic as well as cultural contexts. These roles, commonly played by shaman may be classifies into the following heads, e.g. a) Shaman as Prophet. b) Shaman as Priest. C) Shaman as the medium of Divine Massages, d) Shaman as Fortune teller or Fore-teller. e) Shaman as Medicine man or Woman or Village Doctor, f) Shaman as Mgcician and g) Shaman as Deity and Religion’.<sup>51</sup> Observing his view, it is said that the *Doudini* is the female shaman who perform as Prophet, Priest, medium of Divine Massages,

Fortune teller or Fore-teller and as Deity and Religion in the *Kherai* festivals of the Bodos.

The *Doudini* is the key dancer during the *Kherai Puja*<sup>52</sup> ‘A *Kherai* festival is performed by a *Doudini* or a female priest. She is help by a *Douri* or a male priest. The *Doudini* makes offerings to *Bathou* and other deities. While in action she is supposed to understand what the *Bathou* and other deities want men and women to do for peace and prosperity. She conveys them to the *Douri* and he conveys them to the masses around him. Hence the *Doudini* acts as an agent interpreter between the *Bathou* and the *Douri*’.<sup>53</sup>

The *Doudini* under the guidance of the *Oza* perform the *Kherai Puja* with the help of the *Douri*, a pious and orthodox man with the overall responsibilities of the religious institution also known as *gidal* and the offering in the puja is either made by the *Douri* on behalf of *Doudini* or *Doudini* herself. She is a virgin priest and the nucleus of all the *Kherai* festival. She is the first *Wlwngikhangiri* (healer), the main demonstrator of various dance items, past, present and future fortune teller of individual and the society and retriever (lifter) of *Mainao* (god of wealth) in the *Kherai* festival. She is also the receiver of the offering on behalf of the deities and the link between the human and the gods and goddesses and the deities.

“Dress of the *Doudini* is minor difference in different places. They put dress as their own, but most of the time they put the *Bidon Dokhna* and red colour blouse”.<sup>54</sup> It is said that the *Dokhna Thaosi* was the original *Dokhna* of yesteryear’s *Doudini*. One white colour busi cloth about 9.5 feet is hung from both sides of the shoulder and tied in X shape in back and front side at the waist for making tight in dance, walking or the hiccup in the *Kherai* by the *Doudini*. It is also tied at the waist by another white busi cloth of about 4.5 feet. During some of the dances the *Doudini* crown or covered with white cloth about 6.5 feet long supplied by the *Douri*. Another about 1.5 feet white busi cloth is taken as handkerchief during some of the dances. The *Doudini* unknot her hair during the *Kherai*. The *Doudini* accept various materials like *Dub*, Shields, Sword, *Bathwi* betel nuts, etc. from the *Douri* and use in the offering.

The main point to be noted here is that during the offering and dances no one co-dancers or follower's limbs should be touch in any body part of the *Doudini*. If her body touches by someone except the *Douri* and the *Oza* she feels down and become senseless. This could be fortifying by the *Douri* and the *Oza* by sprinkling the holy water. The *Doudini* drinks the blood of the chicken sacrificed known as *Daothwilwngnai* (drinking of chicken blood) in the name of the Gods and Goddesses. When someone who is considered as sinner presents in the area of the *Kherai puja* he/she could be punished or driven out by the *Doudini*. The Bodo people perform this *Kherai* festival by purifying the entire unholy one and this gathering belongs to only the holy persons.

The *Doudini* is the epicenter of the *Kherai* festival of the Bodos. The works of the *Doudini* starts from the *Kham Hogarnai* (allowing *kham* for the *Kherai puja*) and ends to the *Kham phwtharnai* (penance of the *Kham*). The *Doudini* is the only virgin priest who assimilates her with gods and goddesses, imitates the nature of different gods and goddesses, demonstrated different dances, offered sacrifice, tells fortune for the bad and goods, retrieve the *Mainao* for peace and prosperous living of human being. She is considered as the path bearer of peace and prosperity of human being.

#### **q) The Role of the *Oza* and others in the *Kherai* festival:**

The *Oza* plays a great role during the *Kherai* festival. His main purpose is to narrates the mantras and instruct the *Douri* to help the *Doudini* in performing the *Kherai* festival smoothly. It is believed that the *Oza* is able to understand the motives of the gods all the time of the festival. He enchants the mantras or formulae in such a way that the gods and goddesses become please easily.

Along with the *Oza*, the *Doudini* and the *Douri*, two drums (*Kham*) beaters, two players of the bamboo flutes (*Siphung*), two players of the *Zotha* (Cymbals) and one pair *Bwirathi* is also essential to help the *Doudini* to perform the *Kherai* festival. The roles of the *Douri's* wife, the *Bwirathis*, the Co-dancers and lastly the audiences who are recognized as the representatives of the Bodo societies are not to be ignored in the *Kherai* festival. The large numbers of social acceptance is one of the important aspects of the *Kherai* festival itself.

#### 4. *The Garza Puja:*

The *Garza puja* is one of the important religious festivals of the Bodos. Though some changes have been seen in comparison with the previous periods, the celebration of *Garza puja* is going on in every village in traditional ways. This festival is dominant amongst the traditional *Bathou* religious believers.

“The *Garza puja* is another important religious ceremony of the Bodo. The real or proper meaning of the word ‘Garja’ is not yet found clearly.<sup>55</sup> He added “It may be probable that the *Garza* word itself bears the meaning of expulsion; (*Garja or Garjanai or garnai* means expulsion or discharging anything in Bodo) and during the *Garja puja*, where some evil gods are expelled or discharged from the area of the village. This system of *Garja puja*, where the evil gods are expelled is called *bhasani or bhasainai* (floating away in the river or stream). The word *bhasani* means to float away in the river or stream. It is also to be noted that all the gods and goddesses are not expelled publicly. Generally the harmful gods and goddesses who create disease are expelled from a certain village or area of performing the *Garja puja*<sup>56</sup>. Some of the Bodo scholars define the meaning of the word as a way of making one free from danger. ‘The harmful god and goddesses who may create deadly diseases are expelled publicly during the *Garza* worship. It is also the ritualistic ceremony to purify the people after the seasonal festival like *Bwisagu*.<sup>57</sup> ‘The real or proper meaning of the word is ‘Gao+Raza= GaoRaza i.e. self king that is the God<sup>58</sup>.

The word *Garza* today is not the expulsion of bad deities, the danger creator, *Garzanai, etc.* It may be derived from *Gamini + Raja = Garza*. In the *Garza* festival *Harisa* and the *Bodosa*, the homely, good or beneficial gods and goddesses are worshiped and requested to protect the village from external occupation of various evil or harmful gods and goddesses from outside. This festival is celebrated after completing their summer hard works cultivation for bearing good crops and good harvest. It is the *Bhasani or Dinga* festival where the harmful or evil gods and goddesses are expelled and floated to downstream or river. It is seen that the *Garza* and the *Bhasani* are the two different festivals. The *Garza* is not *Bhasani* and vice-versa.



### **i. Why the Bodos perform the *Garza Puja*:**

The Bodos perform the *Garza puja* to purify themselves and the village after any seasonal festival like *Bwisagu*, etc. In order to purify themselves and to bring peace, harmony, disease free, healthy and prosperity they perform the *Garza puja* at the village. The *Garza* is the formal ritualistic ceremony itself and gives confidence to the Bodo people to live happy, prosperity and wealthy family life.

If some epidemic appears in a family or in the village then the villagers performs the *Garza puja* to protect themselves from the evils. In case of wrong activity of some persons in the village, which they believe traditionally, the villagers are compelled the wrong doers to arrange the *Garza puja* to satisfy the gods and goddesses as well as to purify themselves in the village.

There is a procedure to examine the village as well as the villagers of their wrong doing. The procedure is very easy. In the evening ahead of the proposed *Garza puja*, one altar in the *Garzasali* (the place of *Garza* wordhip) is made. A piece of the plantain leaf is placed on the altar and on it a pair of holy basil leaves, nine or one full *Don* rice grains are placed and cover the articles with a bamboo basket (*don*). Next day early in the morning the articles are examined. If the articles are found alright, it is believed that the village or the villagers are alright and free from danger. But if the articles are not alright then it is believed that the village and the villagers are not alright. The villagers suspect some persons to be involved in some illegal or immoral activities. The guilty persons are compelled to apologies before the gods of the *Garza puja*. The process of masticating the rice is applied, if necessary.

### **ii. Kinds of the *Garza***

There are many *Garza* gods and goddesses who are regularly propitiated by the Bodos. Among them the important are - *Lakhi Garja*, *Asu Garja*, *Sew Garja*, *Tulsing Mulsing Garja*, *Dura Murai Garja*, *Dawang Garja*, *Sindur Garja*, *Thong-Thongali Garja*, *Thila Garja*, *Bathou Garja*, *Gu Garja*, *Borai Raja Garja*, *Dano Garja*, *Gala Katha Garja*, and *Atharo Santhi Garja*.<sup>59</sup> Identification of all the *Garza* is sometime impossible. The following *Garza* can be identified:

### **1) The *Lakhi Garza***

The *Lakhi Garza* festival is celebrated for the welfare of the village and the villagers and for the successful production of *Maisali* (Sali) crops. This is for the propitiation of the goddess of wealth *Mainao*. This *Garza* is sometime celebrated in the *Khathi-Aghan* before the *Wngkham Gwrlwi Zanai* (new rice eating), somewhere it is celebrated in the *Lakhi puja* of the Hinduism. The *Garza* worship taking the *Lakhi* as the Chief goddesses is called the *Lakhi Garza*.

### **2) The *Asu Garza***

The Bodos cultivate two types of paddy crops known by them the *Maisali* or *Sali* and the *Asu* in a year. For the success of the *Asu* crop they perform the *Asu Garza* before harvesting the crop. This *Garza* festival is celebrated in *Bwisakh-Jeth* month.

### **3) The *Dhan or Dwhwn Khubir Garza*:**

The *Dhan* or the *Dwhwn Khubur Garza* is the god of wealth. But this god is regarded as a benevolent god. Hence, the Bodos propitiate this god to keep *Dwhwn* (wealth) of the family or the village safe.

### **4) The *Borai Raja Garza***

Sometime the *Bathou Raja* is also known as *Borai Raja*. For the general welfare of the village or the family they propitiate the *Borai Raja Garza* also known as the god-in-chief, occasionally.

It is said that the God or Goddess which become the Chief in a particular *Garza* worship or puja takes the name of that *Garza*. Eventually all the gods and the goddess are almost the same in all kinds of *Garza puja*.

### **iii. Attendants of the *Lakhi Garza*:**

The following attendants are found during the field works and consultation with the *Oza* and the *Douries* in the *Garza Puja*.

‘The *Bathou* remain in the middle of the *Borosa* and the *Harisa* dieties. The deities get altars in the north west of the *Bathou* are the *Bhagoboti* also known by them *Durga Devi*, the *Mohadev* and opposite of the *Mohadev* facing towards west

is the *Ganesh* also known as the *Musolman* God, then altars stands serially to the *Laokhar Gossai*, the *Zalkhubir*, the *Iskhubir*, the *Biskhubir*, the *Burabogol*, the *Buramohakhal*, the *Bisohori* and the *Sikhri-Sikhla* also known as the *Noi-boini*. They are known as the *Harisa* (sub) *Deities*.

In the south side of the *Bathou* altar, there are altars for the deities like the *Lwkhi*, the *Bwrai Raja*, the *Phathal Rani*, the *Aileng*, the *Zwmwn Burwi & Zwmwn Bwrai*, the *Sari Zwmwn*, the *Razputra*, the *Razkhandra*, the *San Raja*, the *Soudry Sikhna* and the Devils or Spirits which are called by them the *Borosa* deities. The two altars of the *Dumbru Bwrai-Dumbru Burwi or Bungkha Bwrai-Bungkha Burwi*, are found a bit distance towards south-east of the main *Garzasali* and about 500/600 meter distance from the *Garzasali* there are another two altars in the name of the deities which cannot be remember distinctly but called them the *Seoura-Deoura or Oron Khaobla-Soron Khaobla/ Zara Phagla*.<sup>60</sup>

It is also noted that lot of gods and goddesses are mentioned in the incantations by the *Oza*. The name of the gods and goddess differs from village to village. But the major gods and goddesses are same. It is also true that during their chanting of incantations or mantras the *Oza* narrates various names of the deities in a single altar.

#### **iv. How the Bodos perform the *Garza Puja*:**

The Headman of the village calls a meeting before performing the *Garza puja* when the day is approaching. A puja sub committee is formed for doing and arrangements of all puja related works in the village council having one Secretary and one Assistant Secretary. They have to serve voluntarily without remuneration. They are responsible for all works relating to the *Garza Puja* including the budget estimate of the *Puja*. The budget estimate is approved by the villagers in general meeting for the *puja* with detail discussion. They could take necessary advice from the *Oza* and the village *Headman* and the Secretary of the village council while functioning or performing the works. Along with them at least one *Oza*, two *Douries* known as *Borosa Douri* and the *Harisa Douri* are selected for the puja by the village council if there are no permanent *Douries* in the village. It is seen that the *Douries* are selected for performing various pujas for the village in the

rotational basis. After the *puja*, the term of the *puja* sub committee has come to an end after submission of the audit report of the *puja*. The *Garza Puja* of the village is performed with the co-operation and the voluntary services by the villagers as a whole. In the *Garza Zagainai* and the main *Garza* day at least one male person of every household come out from the house and performs all the *Garza* related works voluntarily. If any household could not come out to do *Puja* related works then that particular house has to pay fine. It is seen that one male person come early in the morning at the *Garzasali* for the main *Garza Puja*. The entire household donates one pair chicken or one pair pigeon for the *puja* along with little monetary contribution for meeting the expenditure of the *puja*. In some villages the essential materials and domestic animals are purchased from the market with the fees collected from every family of the village.

#### **v. Preparation of the *Garza Puja (Lwkhi Garza)*:**

The *Lwkhi Garza puja* is performed during the month of *Kati* and *Aghana* (Oct-Nov.) as a community festival and is known as *Mainao Dwikhangnai* or lifting of the goddess of wealth. So, this *Garza* is also called as the *Lakhi or Lwkhi Garza*. With the help of the *Garza puja* the Bodos welcome the goddess of wealth, *Mainao* to the individual home, village and worship her for their prosperity. Some of them celebrate this *puja* during the *Lakhi Puja* of the Hindu. It is generally celebrated in two consecutive days— the *Garza Zagainai* and the *Main Garza*.

#### **a. The *Garza Zagainai*:**

It is generally known as the purification or penance and the *Dwi Santi Bwkhangnai* or the *Salami* for the *Garza Puja*. This work is done after taking lunch by the villagers. Somewhere before 12 noon. For this purpose one place is selected near the river bank or stream or in the open field.

It is absolutely same with the *Hapsa or phwtharnai* in the *Dinga puja*. The two *Douries* i.e. *Borosa* and *Harisa* are purified before the *Hapsa* as per the present penance system of the traditional Bodos stated above. The *Dwi Santhi* is to sprinkle in every household which have been newly cleaned with cow-dung and mud of the village either by one of the *Douri* or by the household owner.

## **b. Preparation of Altars:**

After purification at least one male member from a household come to the *Garzasali* for cleaning and preparing thatch hut called *Dera* by them for altars for the next day's *Garza Puja* with necessary materials in hands. The preparations of altars are supervised by the *Oza* and the *Douri*. After the completion of the huts or *dera*, the *Douri* sprinkles the holy water brought from the purification to all the huts and places. The *Oza* is invited and informed to all the deities related with the *Garza puja* about the tomorrows *Garza Puja* and request them to come and accept the offering and sacrifices in the *Garza puja* through the chanting of his mantras in the altars like the *Bathou Bwrai*, the *Lakhi*, the *Mohadev* and the *Bisohori* altars one after the others. At last in the *Lwkhi* altar, a *Laizou* (banana leaf) is kept by cleaning carefully. *Don* full rice cover with *Don* carefully is kept carefully on a *Laizou* and is left for the whole night. In the next morning this is examined by a *Douri* very carefully. If the rice is displaced than the villager belief that the deities are not happy with the happening and the *puja* may not go well. On the other hand, if it is not displaced then it is believed that everything is all right.

## **c. The Main Garza Puja:**

In the main *Garja Puja* day all the villagers come early in the morning at the *Garzasali* for the *Puja* with necessary materials in hand. In some village they do not take the day's meal at day time before the *Garza*.

The two *Douries* offered *dup*, betel-nut, banana, nissan, etc. on the upper single *Phathali* and *prasad*, *goi-phathwi khili*, etc. in lower *Phathalis* under the supervision of the *Oza* to gods and goddesses. The *Harisa Douri* is allowed to offer and sacrifice to the *Harisa* deities and the *Borosa Douri* to the *Borosa* deities only. The materials for offering are not mixed or are divided into two parts beforehand. While offering to the deities may be given in same time, but the sacrifices is made first to the *Harisa* deities along with the *Gonesh* and the *Bhagobothi*. All *Harisa* deities are marked with vermilion mixing with master oil as per the number of *Phathali(s)*. The *Harisa* and the *Borosa Deities* are divided into two parts from the altar of the *Bwrai Bathou* at the middle. Towards the north from the *Bwrai Bathou* they are the *Harisa Deities* facing towards east and north in

L shape. Towards the south from the *Bwrai Bathou* they are the *Borosa Deities* facing towards east and south in L shape. Altars for all the deities are established in a line in English letter U shape facing towards north-east and south excluding the *Gonesh* sometime the *Bhagobothi*. The lighted lamp, pair of betel-nut and banana cluster each in the upper *phathalis* of the *Bathou*, the *Mohadev*, the *Bisohori*, the *Laokhar Gossai*, the *Sikhri-Sikhla*, the *Gonesh*, the *Bhagoboti*, the *Lwkhi*, the *Bwrai Raja*, the *Zwmwn Bwrai* and the *Zwmwn Burwi* are given. The Gods and Goddess of the *Harisa* deities like – the *Mohadev*, the *Bisohori*, the *Buramohakhal*, the *Burabogol*, the *Bishkhubir*, the *Zalkhubir*, the *Iskhubir*, the *Laokhar Gossai*, the *Sikhri-Sikhla* and the *Bodosa deities* like – the *Lwkhi*, the *Bwrai Raja*, the *Phathal Rani*, the *Aileng*, the *Zwmwn Burwi & Zwmwn Bwrai*, the *Sari Zwmwn*, the *Razputra*, the *Razkhandra*, the *San Raja*, the *Soudry Sikhna*, its Positions, *Phathalis*, Offerings and Sacrifices in the *Garza puja* is same with the *Dinga puja*. In the *Garza puja* the *Bhagobothi* altar is in the middle of the *Bathou* and the *Mohadev* with  $9 \times 3 = 27$  *phathalis* and the *Gonesh* with  $1 + 5$  *phathalis* opposite to the *Mohadev* facing towards east. One black colour goat for the *Bhagobothi* and one chick for the *Gonesh* (i.e. *Jobo style*) are sacrificed. The altar of devils or spirit is set at the west of the *Soudry Sickna* or sometime a bit distance towards south of it with one *Laizou*. One chick is sacrificed in devils' altar and immediately aloof it. The *Dumbru Bwrai-Dumbru Burwi* or *Bungkha Bwrai-Burwi* with two altars with  $3 \times 2 = 6$  *phathalis* is made a bit distance towards south east of main *Garza* altars. The offering of prasads is same and two pigeons towards north marking with vermilion and two chickens towards south are sacrificed. Same offering and sacrifice is made for *Seora-Deora* or *Oron Khaobla-Soron Khaobla* or *Zaraphagla* which is at least 500/600 meter distance towards south of the main *Garza* altars. It has two huge red and white flags. It is said that the deities of *Seora-Deora* like ugly songs. The Special rice beer is offered to the *Lwkhi*, the *Zwmwn Bwrai-buri*, the *Dumbru Bwrai-Burwi* and the *Seora-Deora*. The offering and sacrifices of the *Seora-Deora* is the last and its sacrifices are mixed with that of the *Dumru Bwrai-Buri* and consume before coming back to the *Garza* altar by the publics.

The first sacrifice is made in the *Mohadev* after sacrificing to the *Bathou* altar as *Salami Puja*. Then the serial sacrifices are made to the *Bisohori*, the

*Buramohakhal*, the *Burabogol*, the *Biskhubir*, the *Iskhubir*, the *Zalkhubir*, the *Laokhar Gossai*, the *Sikhri-Sikhla*, the *Gonesh* and the *Bhagobothi*. Then the sacrifices are made to the *Lwkkhi*, the *Bwrai Raja*, the *Phathal Rani*, the *Aieleng*, the *Zwmwn Burwi*, the *Sari Zwmwn*, the *Razputra*, the *San Raja*, the *Soudri Sikhna* and the *Devils or Spirits*. The altars of the *Dumbru Bwrai-Dumbru Burwi or Bungkha Bwrai-Bungkha Burwi* and the *Seoura-Deoura or Oron Khaobla-Soron Khaobla/ Zara Phagla* have two altars each and the sacrifices are made in north by the *Harisa* and south by the *Borosa Douri*.

**i. The Egg Play (*Daodwi gelenai*):**

The two *Douries* are collected all the heads and other things by sprinkling the *Dwi Santhi* from all the altars of the deities after chanting and informing to the *Mohadev* by the *Oza*. Then the *pasa khela* (a kind of game) is arranged in between the *Harisa* and the *Borosa Douries*. A place is prepared in front of the *Lwkkhi* altar. The *Harisa Douri* and the *Borosa Douri* are allowed to sit on the ground in north-south direction facing face to face each other and given one egg each. The egg of the *Harisa Douri* is marked with vermillion. The game starts under the supervision of the *Oza* and the witness. The *Bodosa Douri* throws his egg first in the air and the *Harisa Douri* bids for breaking of the egg in Rs. like one Lakh, Crore, etc. When the egg does not crack then next is the turned to the *Harisa Douri* and the bidding is made by the *Borosa Douri*. Such game continues three times or breaking up of an egg by any one *Douri*. When two *Douries* cannot crack the eggs then the *Oza* declare that two *Douries* will earn same money or property in the forthcoming year.

**ii. Lifting of the *Lwkhii or Mainao (Lwkhii or Mainao Bwkhagnai)*:**

After the egg play is over then the welcoming of the *Lwkkhi* to the already determined house is begun. The *Oza*, two *Douries* and the other will come in front of the *Lwkhii* altar for the purpose of lifting the *Mainao or Lwkkhi*. In previous years no lady persons are allowed to come and accept the *Mainao* in the *Garzasali*. The women folk are also allowed to accept the *Mainao or Lwkkhi* from the *Garzasali* for their household individually at present. The retrieving the *Mainao* in the *Garzasali* is same as the *Kherai puja*.

### **iii. Introduction of the *Mainao or Lwkhi*:**

The family where the *Lwkhi* (wealth) will be introduced publicly that family has to make a gate at the entrance of the house. The *don* of the *Lwkhi* is taken from the *Garzasali* by the *Boro Douri* on head and paraded by the *Oza*, guardians and the public of the village with *band* or flute musical party. At the gate of the entrance the *Lwkhi* carrier's legs is washed with the fresh water and the *Lwkhi* is handed over to the guardian lady of the house owner. The guardian lady should be ready with two *Bwirathi* with their tools. The guardian lady is received the *Lwkhi* containing *don* by sprinkling holy water along with large gathering. The *Lwkhi* is first kept beside the *Bathou* altar which is already decorated with new *Dokhna* after moving around the *Bathou* altar three times with slogans like - *Lwkhi Labwnaini Zwi. Zwi, Zwi Bathou Bwraini*, (Glory for bringing the *Lwkhi*, Glory for the *Bathou Bwrai* Glory) etc. After sacrificing one chicken in the *Bathou* altar the *Lwkhi* is later on introduced in the *Ising* of the house owner with the chanting of the *Oza*. The house owner offers rice beer and meats of chicken, etc. to entertain the gathering of the villagers. The *Garza puja* thus end for the day. (See pictures No: 22)

### **d. Side Tracking after the *Garza Puja*:**

It is same with the side tracking of the way in the *Dinga Puja*. It is done in the next day of the main *Garza puja*.

## **5. The *Marai Puja*:**

The power and the philosophy of the *Marai puja* is the worship of *Monsa God Morul*. The *zibou* (snake) is called *Morul*. From this word *Morul* the word *Marai* has come into exist. The *morul* is the serphant cult, the symbol of destroyer. So to please the serphant God this *Morul* or the *Marai* festival is celebrated by the Bodos.

In ancient times the *Marai* Goddess is worshiped in the village with large number of gathering. This festival is occasionally worshiped in the *Bijni* sub Division of the Chirang district. This festival is at present found among the Bodo people of south Goalpara areas of Assam. It is also found among the Bodo people of Kamrup



and Darrang Districts. “It is said that Khamaikhya, Hazo porihoreswar, Biswanath, Dergaon, Routa, and other were the main Marai worshipping place in ancient time. The *Marai puja* or dance originated in the 9<sup>th</sup> century from the historical view point.<sup>61</sup>

**Objectives of celebrating this festival:**

This puja is offered with all the villagers or a family for the welfare of the village or the family. The main objective of celebrating this festival is to get ride from dangerous disease or diseases for human as well as domestic animals. This *puja* help in increasing power. It is also believed that the human being can be safe from the danger of the serphant Goddess by this festival.

*Marai* festival is celebrated within the *Bwisakh* to the Srawan month of the Assamese. In this festival along with sacrificing one buffalo, one pair grasshopper, one pair *magur* fish, one pair chicken, various fruits and seeds produce in the yearly cultivation, various kinds of rice cakes, puffed rice, beaten rice; *sourai* and areca nuts and betel leaves are offered. Some Bodo people in the north Kamrup offers goat, pigeons, ducks, chicken, sweets and edible things and is floated in the river or stream taking in raft in Marai Puja. “It is said that to please the Goddess human sacrificed was also made during ancient time. But at present in place of human, the sacrifices of one buffalo are seen at present<sup>62</sup>.

It is said that in ancient days this festival was celebrated up to 7 night and 7 days. One day and one night are celebrated at present day. Children cannot participate in this *Marai* festival of the Bodos. Three years or times consecutive celebration is necessary for this festival. It can be postponed by offering one pig or one black colour goat for next year or time for certain unavoidable ground.

The *Marai puja* is said to be similar to that of *Bisohori puja* perform in a family along with *Salami puja*. The *Oza* said that *Morul* and *Bisohori* is the same goddess. The one black colour male goat is sacrificed or flowers are offered in the name of *Bisohori puja*. This *puja* is offered in almost all the places of Kokrajhar.

## 6. The Narasiga Puja:

The agriculturist Bodos perform the *Narasiga puja* or *Narazonai* festival after accomplishment of harvesting of *Maisali* (Sali) crops. It is celebrated in the Magh month or next day of the *belagur* (meji) burning day.

The attendants of the *Narasiga puja* are ‘the *Bathou* in the middle the *Songraza*, the *Mainao*, the *Lakhi Garza* and the *Baro Gorokhiya* in the left; the *Bosumoti* and the *Atharo khungri* in the right<sup>63</sup>.

All the altars of the *Narasiga puja* are set in 10/15 feet length and 3/4 feet width U size English alphabet place. In the middle there is an altar for the *Bathou* with 3 *phathalis*. Towards north of the *Bathou* altar, serially the altars of the *Songraja* with 5 *phathalis*, the *Mainao* with 3 *phathalis*, the *Lwkhi garza* having 7 *phathalis* and the *Baro Gorokhiya* having 12 *phathalis* are set in line. In the south of the *Bathou* altar, altars in line are the *Bosumati* having 3 *phathalis* and the *Athoro Khungri* having 18 *phathalis*. Along with prasads, betel-nut, banana lighted dub, lighted lamp one chicken to each altar is sacrificed. The detail table is shown below:

The Varieties of *Narasiga puja* :

Sl. No.	Name of Deity	place	Number of <i>Phathali</i>	Sacrifice
1	<i>Bathou</i>	Middle facing towards east	3	One chicken
2	<i>Song raja</i>	North to <i>Bathou</i>	5	One chicken
3	<i>Mainao</i>	North to <i>Bathou</i>	3	One chicken
4	<i>Lakhi garza</i>	North to <i>Bathou</i>	7	One chicken
5	<i>Baro Gorokhiya</i>	North to <i>Bathou</i>	12	One chicken
6	<i>Bosumoti</i>	South of <i>Bathou</i>	3	One chicken
7	<i>Atharo khungri</i>	South of <i>Bathou</i>	18	One chicken
		Total	51 <i>Phathalis</i>	7 chicken

Source: Vill.-Bhadulipara, P.O.-Borobazar, Bijni, Dist.- Chirang, BTAD, Assam.

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**Table No:3:4**

It is said that this festival is celebrated once in a year. Here the villagers pray their gods and goddesses for keeping them and their domestic animals free from diseases and make them peace and happiness along with good harvesting.

### **7. The *Phuthli Haba* or *Phusli Haba* (Doll Marriage):**

The Bodo *Phusli* or *phuthli* or *Phuthula* means doll or toy and the *Haba* means marriage in English respectively. Therefore, *Phuthli Haba* or *Phuthula Haba* means doll marriage or toy marriage in English. It is said that it is the symbolic representation of first marriage between the Raona and the Raoni, the grandson and the granddaughter of the first human being the Mwnsingsing Bwrai on earth according to the mythology prevalent amongst the Bodos.

It is said and believed by the Bodos that if the heavenly deities Raona and Raoni is satisfied then the childless couple get child in due course after the worship of the deities.<sup>64</sup> “To be precise, it is the symbolic marriage between Raona and the Raoni—the first man and the first woman to be married on earth. This symbolic institution of marriage may be related to fertility and the procreation cult of the primitive forefathers. The creative imagination of the earliest forefathers of the Boros started solemnizing the symbolic ceremony which is splendidly musical affair like the real marriage in our society.<sup>65</sup> According to the traditional beliefs of the Bodo-Kacharis from ancient periods it is the first marriage ceremony of Raona and Raoni the grandson and the granddaughter of first man Mwnsingsing Bwrai on earth through the male – natural process in the human civilization. So to keep the symbol of it the Bodo-Kacharis celebrate this festival.<sup>66</sup> As per Phukan Basumatary for the *Phuthli Haba* festival two idols are prepared in the name of the Raona and the Raoni but according to Bhaben Narzi for the puja five idols one means for Mwnsingsing Bwrai another pair for Diva Bwrai and Diva Burwi and another pair for Raona and Raoni are prepared. As per Narzi ‘the Mwnsingsing Bwrai is put inside the raft of the banana tree by putting new male dress of the Bodos in the altar meant for him and right of it there will be the altars for Raona and Raoni with new bridal dress. The dress of Raona is in the form of groom while the Raoni is of bride. One *Alary* or the earthen lamp is set in the Mwnsingsing Bwrai along with pair of betel-nuts and one chicken is sacrificed for him. Another Idols means for Diva in the form of

male and Divi in the form of female are put on the two altars made in the right side of the Mwnsingsing Bwrai on the earth outside the raft and seven *phathalis* are offered, two lighted earthen lamps, pair of betel-nuts and two chicken are sacrificed for them. It is believed that the Diva and Devi deities are very cruel. The worshiper believe that if they do not get *puja* then they make people blind, limped, the belly diseases, etc.<sup>67</sup> This festival has no fixed date. Some time it is observed in the seven day of the *Bwisakh* month in some part of Kamrup District Bodos. It is generally held in the months of *Bohag*, *Jeth* and *Ahar* (May-June). The preparation and the celebration of the festival take two - three days. This festival is celebrated before or during the sowing period of *Ashu* paddy crops by the *Bathou* worshiper Bodos. Two dolls one for the bride - Raoni and another for the groom - Raona are made out of hay. The idols are made by the ladies with the thatch giving the form of human being. The idols are finely wrapped with yarns of red, black, white, yellow and green colours. Then the idols are decorated with pure cloth woven by the girls who have not attained the age of puberty. The white colour cloth is chosen for bride whereas red and white colours are chosen for the groom. Ornaments made of raw turmeric and garlands of flowers and leaves are wreathed on the bride and the groom. The bride and the groom are dressed in the bridal dress and then placed on a platform made on a raft of plantain tree. The front part of the raft is imprinted or decorated with vermilion marks. Jubilant villagers dance and sings melodious songs to marks the occasion. Though most part of the *puja* is prepared by the ladies the male members also take part as the *Oza*, the *Douri* and the *Phantol* or helper for the *puja*. The songs are sung to the accompaniment of musical instruments like the *kham* (drum), the *siphung* (flute) and the *Zotha* (cymbal). It is believed that the Raona and the Raoni pleased while they are married and give abundant rain falls on the earth and make the earth fresh, cultivable and fertile. It is also believed that when the idols are floated in the river or stream the village become free from all illness, diarrhea, dysentery, diseases, etc. It was also the tradition of the Bodo people that in the olden times the childless couple prays for getting the child to the deity of Raona and the Raoni. The *phuthli Haba* festival is the ritualistic festivals of the Bodos celebrated for the welfare of the village and hope for the abundant rain for cultivation.

This festival is still prevalent in the districts of Nalbari, Barpeta, Kamrup and Darrang. It is said that the village becomes free from all illness, diarrhea, dysentery, diseases, etc. when the dolls of Deva-Devi are floated in the river. The way of celebration of this festival is slightly different in place to place depending on the *Oza*.

### **8. The Mohaloya Puja:**

This festival is celebrated by the Brahma religious Bodos in the *Omabwisa* day of *Ashin* (October-November) month. In this festival the *Brahma* religious Bodos arrange *Jyogyahati* (burn offering) in the worshiping place of the village in the three storied *Brahma Kund* or altar of *Brahma*. This offering is made for departed souls of the families. The villagers pray for blessing for the well being of the family, village, etc. Here, *Moha* or great *Aloy* or *No* or world is mean for that. In this *Mahaloya*, the prayer to god for the departed souls of the *Richies-Munies* and forefather are made. “For this reasons it is also called *Bipha Fwrbw Saradu* (*Father Shradya Festival*).<sup>68</sup>

The *Omaboisya* (dark moon period) in the *Jeth* where the *Mohaloya* festival is celebrated is the darkest of the year. In this festival the *Brahma* religious Bodos pray to god for freeing the departed souls of *Richies-Munies*, fathers, mothers, etc. through the *Jyogyahati* (burn offering). In this day only prayer to god is made.

It is said that in this darkest night of the *Jeth Omaboisya*, the *Asura Mohisasura* took birth and destroyed the existence of the human being and the deities. The deities prayed to the God through the *Jyogyahati* repeatedly, accordingly the Goddesses *Durga* come into this world with the intention to destroy the *Mohisasura*. Altimately the *Durga* Goddesses destroyed the *Asura Mohisasura* who came in the form of *Moisa* a Sanskrit (buffalo). From this day the peace and religion spread again in the entire world. It is said that they get ride from evil danger praying the God through *Jyogyahati*.

### **9. The Saraswati Puja:**

The *Saraswati* is worshipped on *Vasant Panchami*, a *Hindu* festival celebrated every year on the 5th day in the *Hindu* calendar month of *Magha* (January-

February). It is the Hindu goddess of knowledge, music, arts, wisdom and learning. She is a part of the trinity of the *Saraswati*, the *Lakshmi* and the *Parvati*.

This festival or *puja* is celebrated in almost all the educational institutions, household, clubs, etc. in Kokrajhar district. Most of the *puja* is celebrated by burn offering *Jyogyahati*. Generally it is not a separate *puja* from their Hindu neighbours. The Bodos are seen celebrating this festival as per their own tradition. The *Saraswati* is known as the *Bwrli Buri* in traditional Bodos. The *Bwrli Buri* has another altar in the *Bwiswmuthini Ali* in the *Kherai* festival and worships her in the *Kherai* accordingly. It is celebrated sitting before the blazing fire of *Jyogyahati* uttering the mantras of the *Brahma Gaytri*. The formula or mantras of the *Brahma Gayatri* as per Mahinimahan Chattapadhyay quoted by Kameswar Brahma is as follows—

“Om aiahi barde devi trayakshare  
Brahma badini Gayatri Sandasung  
Matoh Brahmajani nomohastyute”<sup>69</sup>

i.e. Oh mother of earth, You will come and stay at my heart, you are the Brahma, you are the mother of the Earth, You have created this universe; I salute you.

Again another formula of the *Aowathi* runs as

“Om Varde devi paramajyotih  
Brahmane Svaha,”

“Om charachar Brahmane svaha

“Om purna Parabrahma jyotih Svarupaya Svaha”<sup>70</sup>

i.e. “I offer this corn to you, Who is the light of the lights and Who blesses us; To you, who is present Everywhere with both movable and immovable things, Who is the full Brahma And who is visible as the light.”

Presently the *Saraswati puja* is also celebrated by singing various songs related to the *Bathou* and the *Burliburi*, the Bodo God of learning at the *Bathou* altar. The altar of the *Burli buri* is set towards north of the *Bathou* altar by offering prasads, a pair of betel-nuts, flowers, incense sticks for fragrance, etc. The *puruhit* leads the

*puja* by singing various songs related to the *Bathou* and the *Burli buri* along with musics of the *kham*, the *zotha*, the *siphung* and the *Harmunium*, etc.

The main purpose of this *puja* is to acquire knowledge, wisdom in various fields and enlighten the people by offering and celebrating the Goddess of knowledge, music, arts and learning. In the present time most of the Bodos celebrate this festival by *Jyogyahati* (burn offering). (See pictures No: 25)

### **10. The *Umrao puja*:**

The *Umrao puja* is celebrated in place of the *Garza puja*.<sup>71</sup> This festival is celebrated in the month of *Jeth* (May) month. The *umrao puja* is also known as the *Boroma puja*.<sup>72</sup> This festival is celebrated for protection of the villagers from bad wind. It is believed that this bad wind brought bad deities and as a result of this the villagers could be suffered from various diseases like diarrhea, cholera, sicken fox, etc. So to protect the villagers from such sudden and dangerous diseases the *Umrao Puja* is celebrated. This festival is celebrated one time in a year. In this *puja* women are not allowed to participate.

### **The attendants of the *Umrao Puja*:**

The attendants of the *Umrao Puja* are – ‘the *Bathou* in the middle the *Songraza*, the *Lakhi or Mainao*, the *Boromani*, the *Thakhurani*, the *Bwrai Raja*, the *Siva Thakhur*, the *Gurukhia Gossai*, the *Domorguri*, the *Mohadeo*, the *Swrgwsri Bima*, the *Bamwn*, the *Sath Gao Raja* and the *Musolman* in the north and the *Dosimali Garza*, the *Lakhi Garza*, the *Atharo Garza*, the *Bosumoti*, the *Mao Mwnasi*, the *Bhogoboti Bima*, the *Zol Thol Khungri*, the *San*, the *Harai Harai*, the *Gonsa Gonsi*, the *Bag Raja*, the *Sokhor*, the *Khubir*, the *Dangthora Mathadora* and the *Behela* Gods in the south side of the *Bathou*.<sup>73</sup>

For this festival the wife of the *Douri* has to prepare special pure rice beer a week before the festival. The special pure rice beer is prepared with mixing the *Nasina maginai* rice and put in two small earthen jars. The mouth of the jars are closed with the banana leaves and tied with white threads. These two jars containing rice beer are kept very carefully inside the granary or the *Ising* of the *Nomano* of the

*Douri*. In the day of *Umrao puja* these two jars are decorated with flowers introduce in the *Bathou* and brought to *mwdaisali*.

The *Oza* along with the guardians of the village starts first *zagainai* of the *Umrao puja* by offering prosads, betel-nut and sacrificing one chicken on one *Laizou* or 5 *phathalis* in the *Bathou* altar of the *Douri*. The *mantras* narrates by the *Oza* in this time is the information to the *Bathou* about the *Umrao puja*, request to make the *puja* successful by accepting all the offering and introduction about the *Oza*, the *Douri* and the *phanthal* and materials for the *puja*. After *Zagainai* is over, all the materials are taken in two baskets and brought to the *puja* place.

In the *pujasali* or *mwdaisali* all the altars are set in 25/30 feet length and 3 /4 feet breadth English letter U shape place. In the middle is the *Bathou* altar with 5 *phathalis*. After setting all the altars and offering to all the Gods and Goddesses under supervision of the *Oza*, the *Oza* with the *Douri* and the *phanthol* along with the village guardians starts *Raisongnai* or *raisongzennai* (chanting or first chanting for the *puja*) in the altar of the *Bathou*. The *Oza* chants *mantras* regarding the gathering at the place inform about the *puja* and request the *Bathou Bwrai* to make the place holy with the sprinkling of holy water. Then the *Douri* performs the ritual of *Neosinai* taking rice, egg in banana leaf and sprinkle holy water in all altars. The materials use in the *neosinai* has to throw southern side of the *puja* place. It is called *phwtharnai* (penance).

The chanting and sacrificing of domestic animals in all the altars are started after penance is over. The altars in serial facing east and north, north to the *Bathou* altar are the *Songraza* with 5 *phathalis*, the *Lakhi* with 3 *phathalis*, the *Boromani* with 3 *phathalis*, the *Thakhurani* with 9 *phathalis*, the *Bwrai Raja* with 9 *phathalis*, the *Siva Thakhur* with 3 *phathalis*, the *Gurukhia Gossai* with 12 *phathalis*, the *Domorguri* with 7 *phathalis*, the *Mohadeo* with 5 *phathalis*, the *Swrgwsri Bima* with 7 *phathalis*, the *Bamwn* with 7 *phathalis*, the *Sath Gao Raja* with 7 *phathalis*. The altar of *Musolman* with 7 *phathalis* is towards west of the *Sath Gao Raja* facing north. The altars towards south of the *Bathou* facing east and south are serially the *Dosimali Garza* with 7 *phathalis*, the *Lakhi Garza* with 7 *phathalis*, the *Atharo Garza* with 18 *phathalis*, the *Bosumoti* with 3 *phathalis*, the *Mao Mwnasi*



with 9 *phathalis*, the *Bhogoboti Bima* with 18 *phathalis*, the *Zol Thol Khungri* with 9 *phathalis*, the *San* with 3 *phathalis*, the *Harai Harai* with 7 *phathalis*, the *Gonsa Gonsi* with 7 *phathalis*, the *Bag Raja* with 7 *phathalis*, the *Sokhor* with 3 *phathalis*, the *Khubir* with 9 *phathalis*, the *Dangthora Mathadora* with 3 *phathalis* and the *Behela* with 18 *phathalis*. The south facing gods are from the *Bagraja* to the *Behela*. All the *phathalis* are offered one pair betel nut in the middle and one packet betel-nut in sides (packet is made with *Khusra* leaf containing pieces of betel nuts), two bananas in middle and one banana in sides, prasads (mixed rice with basil and water), red-white flags, etc. Along with prasads and one egg to the *Songraza*, the *Mainao* and all the gods south to the *Bathou* altars are offered. The *Bathou* altar gets two jars of rice beer, two lighted lamp and two *singkai* and *baokha (Biban)* in two sides. One chicken to each is sacrificed to the *Bathou*, the *Songraja*, the *Mainao*, the *Musolman* and all the altars towards the south of the *Bathou* altar and a pair of pigeons is sacrificed to all the altars each towards the north of the *Bathou* altars. One big *Behela* or the raft is made for the *Behela* god. The front part of the raft is imprinted or decorated with vermilion marks and flower garlands. Inside the raft total 18 *phathalis* are offered like on the earth. The details are shown in table below:

The Varities in the *Umrao Puja*:

Sl. No.	Name of Deity/God	place	No. of <i>phathali</i>	Sacrifice	Remarks
	• <i>Bathou</i>	Middle facing east	5	1 Chicken Male red	
1	<i>Songraza</i>	North facing east	5	1 Chicken, 1 Egg	
2	<i>Mainao</i>	North facing east	3	1 Chicken, 1 Egg	
3	<i>Boromani</i>	North facing east	3	2 pigeons	
4	<i>Thakhurani</i>	North facing east	9	2 pigeons	
5	<i>Bwrai Raza</i>	North facing east	9	2 pigeons	
6	<i>Siva Thekhur</i>	North facing east	3	2 pigeons	
7	<i>Gurukhia Gossai</i>	North facing east	12	2 pigeons	
8	<i>Domorguri</i>	North facing east	7	2 pigeons	
9	<i>Mahadeo</i>	North facing east	7	2 pigeons	
10	<i>Swrgwsri Bima</i>	North facing east	7	2 pigeons	
11	<i>Bamun</i>	North facing east	7	2 pigeons	

12	<i>Sath Gaon Raja</i>	North facing east	7	2 pigeons	
13	<i>Musolman</i>	North facing North	7	1 chicken	
14	<i>Dosimali Garza</i>	South facing east	7	1 chicken, 1 Egg	
15	<i>Lakhi Garza</i>	South facing east	7	1 chicken, 1 Egg	
16	<i>Atharo Garza</i>	South facing east	18	1 chicken, 1 Egg	
17	<i>Bosumoti</i>	South facing east	3	1 chicken, 1 Egg	
18	<i>Mao Mwnasi</i>	South facing east	9	1 chicken, 1 Egg	
19	<i>Bhogoboti Bima</i>	South facing east	18	1 chicken, 1 Egg	
20	<i>Zol Thol Khungri</i>	South facing east	9	1 chicken, 1 Egg	
21	<i>San</i>	South facing east	3	1 chicken, 1 Egg	
22	<i>Harai Harai</i>	South facing east	7	1 chicken, 1 Egg	
23	<i>Gonsa Gonsi</i>	South facing east	7	1 chicken, 1 Egg	
24	<i>Bag raja</i>	South facing south	7	1 chicken, 1 Egg	
25	<i>Sokhor</i>	South facing south	3	1 chicken, 1 Egg	
26	<i>khubir</i>	South facing south	9	1 chicken, 1 Egg	
27	<i>Dangthora Mathadora</i>	South facing south	3	1 chicken, 1 Egg	
28	<i>Behela</i>	South facing south	18	1 chicken, 1 Egg	

Sources: Vill.- Bhadulipara , P.O.-Borobazar, Dist- Chirang, BTAD, Assam. *Oza* Barendra Basumatary age- 75 years Vill.- Bhadulipara, P.O.- Borobazar, P.S. Bijni, Dist- Chirang, BTAD, Assam. (13/06/2016, Monday)

### Table No:3:5

The *Oza*, the *Douri*, the *Phanthol* and the public are rested for few while after offering and sacrificing everything to all altars. Then the *Engao* (a kind of curry cooked without giving turmeric mixing water snail, crabs, *mwibrung* (a kind of grass grows inside water) and fern) is distributed to every middle *phathalis* by the *Douri*. Then *Khobdang* are given in every middle *phathalis* of the altars where the chicken were sacrificed. The *Khobdang* means offering of one *hip* of chicken by toasting it. The *swbdwi* (rice beer juice) along with *Ophri* (rice beer dust) are also offered to all the middle *phathalis* where the chickens were sacrificed. The *Swbdwi* (juice of pure rice beer) is kept in front of the *Bathou* altar. Then *Phog* (the mixer cooking of chicken meat, rice and banana stem (*phosla*) without turmeric) is offered to all the middle *phathalis* of different altars. It is said that a few rice collected from the *Nasina* begging also mixed in the *Phog*.

The *Behela* (raft) is then floated away taking it on the head in the nearby river or stream by a person. The raft has all the offering in the name of the *Behela* God along with one live chicken and one live pigeon inside it. It is said that if the rafts floats away without problem it is believed that all the villagers will be disease free in the coming days, the god has become happy, etc. otherwise not. The person who floats the raft is later sprinkled with holy water when he comes back.

The *Oza*, the *Douri*, the *phanthol* and the public all are returned in front of the *Bathou* altar bow down there. The *Oza* is chanted again which has the information about all the offering and sacrifices to all the deities. The *Oza* request for blessing all the villagers for peace, happiness, prosperity, accident free and make the villagers free from any diseases in the coming days, etc. wherever they lives. Then the feasting takes place. (See Pictures No: 23)

At last in the name of the *Salami* one red male chicken is sacrificed in the *Bathou* altar which signifies the ending of the *puja*. Then all the participants in the *puja* have to go back to their respective houses happily along with their articles of cooking, drinking, etc. After bidding good bye to all the public the *Oza* sacrifices one chicken in the street so that the bad deities cannot go along with the villagers. This is known by them as *Lama Gathenai* (side tracking of the way).

### **11. The Celebration of the Bathou Day (*Gwthar Bathou San Phalinai*):**

The *Bathou* worshipers of different places celebrate this fair with different programme. The similarity of this festival in all the places are that before celebration of this festival all the committees hoist flag of the *Bathou* in the name of the *Gwthar Bathou san* at the morning. Their flag has five colour i.e. from top to bottom red, sky blue, white, yellow (*Gwmw bwrai*) and green. The white colour is double in breadth to the entire colours and has the symbol of the *Bathou* and the size of full flag is 3:2. Since there is no definite time and date of celebration of the *Bathou* day, the All *Bathou* Religious Union has decided to celebrate the Teusday as the *Gwthar Barai* (holy day) and the second Tuesday of the *Magh* month as the *Gwthar Bathou San* (holy *Bathou* day)<sup>74</sup>. Accordingly the *Gwthar Bathou San* is

celebrating in the second Tuesday of the *Magh* month of the year with various colourful programmes in anchalik, district as well as central level by the *Bathou* religious Bodo people under All *Bathou* Religious Union. (See Picture No: 26)

The main purpose of the celebration of the *Gwthar Bathou San* is awakening the people towards the *Bathou* religion through discussing various philosophy of *Bathouism*, keeping memory towards *Bathouism* and finally to bring, unity, peace and prosperity of the human being with worshipping the *Bathou*.

Apart from that the Bodos also observe and participates in the festivals of Hindus, Christianity and other religious people as briefly discusses below:

### **The Christmas:**

The Christmas is an annual festival commemorating the birth of Jesus Christ, observed annually on 25 December by the Christian religious people of the world. It is a kind of religious and cultural celebration. It is a celebration of Gift-giving, family and social gatherings, symbolic decoration of Jesus Christ, feasting, etc. and observances by giving Church services in various Churches of Christianity. The Christian people believe that Jesus Christ is the savior of the world. Along with Christian people of the world the Christian religious Bodos also celebrate the Christmas very attractively amongst them and some of the Bodos of other religion also participates in the celebration.

### **The Vishwakarma Puja:**

The Vishwakarma is a Hindu god, the divine architect and creator of the world. The vishwakarma Puja is celebrated every year on 16 or 19 September, last day of the Bhado month, in Solar calendar for better future, safe working conditions, success and the smooth functioning of various machines. It is customary for craftsmen to worship their tools in the name of vishwakarma before using any tools. This festival or puja is observed primarily in factories and industries and engineering and architectural community as well as artisans, craftsmen, mechanics, smiths, carpenters, Masons, industrial and factory workers and others. Along with their Hindu neighbours, the Bodos are also celebrating this puja at present in large numbers who have own vehicles or machines as a family or social puja.

### **The Bol Bam:**

The Bol Bam is referred to pilgrimage and festivals glorifying Shiva. This is one of the religious rituals of the Hindus. The Shravan (July-August) month of every year is considered an auspicious period to worship Lord Shiva in the form of Pshupatinath. During this pilgrimage, devotees walk miles barefooted in saffron robes and dress before offering the water to the Lord Shiva. Most of the Bodo people who live in urban and semi urban areas are also celebrating this festival along with their neighbours.

### **The Durga Puja:**

It is said that the Durga puja is a Community as a socio-cultural and religious festival of the Hindus. This puja begins from Sixth/seventh (Bihar) day of Ashwin shukla paksha and ends on Tenth day of Ashwina shukla paksha (September-October) every year. It is a major festival in the tradition of Shaktism in Hinduism. It is the festival of Hindu goddess Durga. It is said to be the festival epitomises the victory of good over evil. The Bodos also participate in the Durga puja celebration of their Hindu neighbours in large numbers at present.

### **The Holi Festival:**

The Holi festival also known as Dol jathra in Assam is celebrated with enthusiasm and gaiety on the full moon day in the month of Phalgun (March) every year. It is celebrated in honour of Lord Krishna. People celebrate it with most joy. The Holi festival is also called festival of colour. The importance of Holi is that it brings all regions of people together. People play with colours and some people worship Radha and Krishna in the Holi festival. The traditional religious Bodo people celebrate and participate with different colour of *Abir*. It is very much attractive amongst the younger generation Bodos. In some Bodo village the Dol Jatra Mela is also performed.

### **The Lakshmi Puja:**

The Lakshmi puja is another Hindu religious festival celebrated every year on Ashvin Amavasya (new moon day) of Krishna Paksha (October). It is believed that Lakshmi is the Goddess of wealth. The devotees offer puja to Lakshmi with need

and clean and offer prosads to the visitors. Devotees believe that when Lakshmi blesses the family become happy, healthy and wealthy. It is family as well as social festival at present. The *Bathou* religious every Bodo family is seen celebrating this festival now-a day. In some village Lakhi Garza is celebrated on this festival.

### **The Kali Puja:**

The prayer, religious rituals Kali puja also known as Shyama Puja or Mahanisha Puja of Hindus celebrated annually on the new moon of the month of Kartik (October or November) on the Gregorian calendar in Indian States. This puja is celebrated for the honour of the Goddess Kali. The Kalimata is worshipped at night with Tantric rites and mantras. In some family it is observed daily. The Bodos do not celebrates this festival or puja directly but they participates in the celebration of Kali puja by their Hindu neighbours at present for offering prayer to the Kalimata.

### **The Shivratri:**

According to Hindus, a divine force that governs our universe is no other than Shiva. The Shivaratri is another important festival celebrated with full festive fervor, zeal and enthusiasm amongst Shiva devotees every year on the 13<sup>th</sup> night or the 14<sup>th</sup> day of '*Krishna Paksha*' of the '*Phalgun*' month (February-March). This festival is celebrated to Celebrate Lord Shiva's Marriage to Devi Parvati, honour the divine power and thank the almighty God for His supreme sacrifice for saving the World from extinction. Some Bodos also celebrate and participate in this festival.

### **Conclusion:**

The Bodos observe various festivals throughout the year. The Bodos observe and celebrate the Seasonal and Agricultural Festivals like – the *Bwisagu*, the *Domasi*, the *Khathrigasa*, the *Ag Laizennai*, the *Wngkham Gwrlwi zanai*, the *Dinga puja*, etc., the Religious Festivals like - the *Salami*, the *Kherai*, the *Garza puja*, the *Dinga Puja*, the *Umrao Puja*, the *Narajonai festival*, etc. The *Bathou* is the traditional religion of the Bodos and almost all the religious festivals of the Bodos are directly or indirectly related with the *Bathou*. Apart from that the Bodos have the rites and ceremonies related to the life cycle like – door opening ceremony of

the new born baby, the Marriage, the Death Rites, etc. The Bodos have some homely (*Noaoni*) and outside (*Hagrani*) deities. The Bodos also participates in the festivals of Hindus like – Durga Puja, Kali puja, Shivaratri, Holi, Bol Bam, etc. and they also observe and participates in the Hindu festivals like - Mohalaya, Lakshmi Puja, the Vishwakarma puja, etc. The Christian Bodos observe and traditional religious Bodos participate in the Christmas and other Christian religious festivals. Apart from that the Satsangi Bodos participate in various festivities relating to Satsangi, the Vysnavite Bodos in various festivities of Vaisnavism, etc. The festivals and ceremonies of the Bodos reflect their rites and rituals, customs, habits, social systems, the culture, traditions, etc. It is said that folk literature is the sources of modern literature; the festivals are the sources of the culture of the Bodos and the mirror of the Bodo society. The festivals of the Bodos are the unwritten manuscript of Bodo culture and society.

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