

## CHAPTER 2

### ETHNICITY IN SELECTED BODO NOVELS

#### 2.1 Connotation of Ethnicity

The study of ethnicity is a complex phenomenon. In the recent times, the topic of ethnicity has been widely discussed in every sphere of life. The meaning of ethnicity depends upon several other concepts like those such as ethnic group and ethnic identity. The study of ethnicity has become an important and an integral part of Anthropology, Sociology, Political Science, Social Science and Humanities. Hence, anthropologists and sociologists has been paying more importance upon this subject matter. In the present age of globalization a huge diversity is seen among people of the same country. They share distinct origin, language, customs and traditions. To understand this diversity it is important to know what ethnicity is.

“Ethnicity is not a simple, isolable social phenomenon, as it is directly related to various social issues.”<sup>1</sup> The study of ethnicity requires a lot of aspects and perspectives because it is related to social life and its various characters. Ethnicity means a group of people who identify themselves in terms of their social cultural, language, religion or national experience. And other word ethnicity gives an identity to a group of people on the basis of common language, culture, ancestral and tradition. Ethnicity is a social and cultural concept having similar cultural practices. Unlike most the social groups, ethnicity is primarily an inherited status. Membership of an ethnic group tends to be defined by a shared cultural heritage, ancestor, origin, history, homeland, language or dialect, symbolic systems such as religion, mythology and ritual, cuisine, dressing style, art and physical appearance. Many scholars have given different concepts regarding ethnicity and these concepts have widened and deepened their meaning and ideas with the passage of time

The concept of ethnicity relates with ethnic group, ethnic identity and aspects of culture. As ethnicity shows the ethnic identity of every culture the study of ethnicity and ethnic identity

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<sup>1</sup> Sengupta, Sarthak, *Ethnicity in North East India*.

has become very important in the present times. To understand ethnicity it is necessary to know the concept of ethnic identity. The ethnic identity is related to the ethnic group. Thus ethnicity can be understood only with relationship to the ethnic group. Ethnic identity of a group of people is the determination of the feelings of a sense of belongingness to a particular ethnic group. Ethnic identity takes its shape in correlation to somebody else. There are different ways of determination of an individual's or people's ethnic group. One simple way is to directly ask the individual about his/her identity with the majority group and the individuals or peoples ethnic group. Ethnic identity is often formed with the availability of certain well maintained characteristics like a common descent, a closely connected (certain) cultural or physical features along with a set of beliefs and habits and practices. Cultural aspects like distinguishing beliefs, religion, language and practices have often been the foundation of ethnic identity of a group of people. In some instances physical attributes also play an important role in forming any ethnic identity.

S. Jones defined Ethnic identity, Ethnic group and Ethnicity in his book *The Archaeology of Ethnicity Constructing identities in the Past and Present* as:-

**Ethnic Identity:** that aspect of a person's self-conceptualization which results from identification with a broader group in opposition to others on the basis of perceived cultural differentiation and/or common descent.

**Ethnic group:** any group of people who set themselves apart and/or are set apart by others with whom they interact or co-exist on the basis of their perceptions of cultural differentiation and/or common descent.

**Ethnicity:** all those social and psychological phenomena associated with a culturally constructed group identity as defined above. The concept of ethnicity focuses on the ways in which social and cultural processes intersect with.<sup>2</sup>

From the above definitions in order to study ethnicity it is very necessary to understand the in-depth concept of both ethnic identity and ethnic group equally. "An ethnic group is a self-perceived group of people who hold common set of culture and tradition which are not shared by others with whom they are in contact. It denotes a particular group expressed in terms of a

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<sup>2</sup> S. Jones. *The Archaeology of Ethnicity: Constructing Identities in the past and present.*

sense of continuity in belonging.”<sup>3</sup> An ethnic group is a collection of individuals or a group of people in the society, the members of which lead a distinguished tradition, language and way of life, customs, food habits, distinguished dressing attire, religion and rituals. These distinguished features or characteristics of this group of people make them different from other group of people in the society. In other words, when a group of people has a unique language, a distinct religion, a distinguished culture as compared to other group of people in the society, then it becomes an Ethnic group. An ethnic group is a distinct community who identify with each other based upon similarities such as common ancestry, language, history, culture or nation and an ethnicity is usually an inherited status based upon the society in which one lives and have been considered to share characteristics such as culture, language, religion and traditions, that contribute to a person or group identity.

A society consists of different groups of people having language, culture, tradition, norms and values of their own. A particular group regards their language, culture, norms and values as a reference frame from which they judge the qualities of other groups in the society. Such culture, tradition, norms and values by which characteristics of a particular group are identified are known together as ‘ethnicity’ and the group itself an ‘ethnic group. Ethnicity is a sense of ethnic identity, which has been defined by De Vos as consisting of the “subjective, symbolic or emblematic use” by “a group of people... of any aspect of culture, in order to differentiate themselves from other groups.”<sup>4</sup>

“The term ‘ethnic’ is derived from Greek word ‘ethnos’ which means nation, people, caste, tribe, and such others. Ethnic relates to the gentiles or nations not converted to Christianity; community of physical and mental traits possessed by the members of a group as a product of their common heredity and cultural tradition, or indicates the racial, linguistic, and cultural ties of people with specific group or exotic primitive culture. Ethnic quality or affiliation of a group bearing different meanings in varied situational contexts.”<sup>5</sup> Certain common physical - cultural characteristics are chosen by members of ethnic group to distinguish themselves from other ethnic group. The member of any group always considers the members of another group to be different from them. The in-group members have to recognize themselves as something different from other. The recognition by the insiders and outsiders is very

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<sup>3</sup> Vivelo, Frank Robert. *Cultural Anthropology Hand Book*.

<sup>4</sup> De Vos George, *Ethnic Identity, Cultural Continuity and Change*. p-16

<sup>5</sup> Danda, Ajit K. *Ethnicity in India*. p-51

important for developing the sense of ethnicity. According to Barth, ethnic groups are categories of ascription, the identification of which is made by the actors themselves, and thus have the characteristics of organizing interaction between people.<sup>6</sup> Fredrik Barth has defined an ethnic group based upon the characteristics as denoted by Raoul Naroll in his publications *Ethnic unit classification*, *Current Anthropology* (1964). These characteristics can be identified as -

1. Is largely biologically self-perpetuating
2. Shares fundamental cultural values, realized in overt unity in cultural forms
3. Makes up a field of communication and interaction
4. Has a membership which identifies itself, and is identified by others, as constituting a category distinguishable from other categories of the same order.<sup>7</sup>

Ethnicity seems to be a new term in the sense of community level consciousness and harmony. The ideology of ethnicity has grown in the American by the huge influx of migrants from different culture and from different region of the continent. The term ethnicity as used by historians to mean 'the character or quality of an ethnic group.' The noun form ethnicity is does not appear in the 1933 edition of the *Oxford English Dictionary*, but it makes its appearance in the 1972 supplement, where the first usage recorded is that of David Riesman in 1953. It is included in Webster's *Third New International*, 1961, but did find its way into the *Random house Dictionary of English Language* 1966, nor the *American Heritage Dictionary of the English language*, 1969. It did, however, make the 1973 edition of the *American Heritage Dictionary*, where it is defined as the condition of belonging to a particular ethnic group and ethnic pride.<sup>8</sup>

Ethnicity is an organized category whose essential qualities and thresholds or parameters have been reconsidered and rearranged to fit in different subjects and purposes. It is a self-proclaimed or a projected identity because it reflects to certain self-defined collective identity of ethnic groups like Bodo, Gorkha and Adivasi. It can be observed under two situation- one is where the collective people identify themselves to be similar and of common descent; the other one is where others attributes them to be different among others. This view of the people also signifies as ethnicity.

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<sup>6</sup> Barth, Fredrik, *Ethnic groups and Boundaries*. p-10

<sup>7</sup> Ibid. p-51

<sup>8</sup> Glazer, N, Moynihan Daniel P. *Ethnicity theory and experience*. p-1

Ethnic identity is situational too. For example, when an Indian citizen travels abroad in foreign countries he/she gives his/her identity as an Indian, then later on he/ she gives his ethnic identity from his larger group as to whether he is Punjabi, Tamil, Assamese, Manipuri, or whatever part of the country he belongs or resides.

The following types of groups can be identified depending on the sources by which the identities of groups are valued to define membership of groups -

- I. Ethno linguistics- emphasizing shared language, dialect or script.
- II. Ethno national- emphasizing a shared polity or sense of national identity.
- III. Ethno racial- emphasizing shared physical appearance based on genetic origin.
- IV. Ethno regional- emphasizing a distinct local sense belonging stemming from relative geographical isolation.
- V. Ethno religious- emphasizing shared affiliation with a particular religion denomination.

Ethnicity is an acceptable category of the human race. It is a general way by which people express themselves about who they are and who they are not. Ethnicity refers to the sense of people hood or we- feeling shared by members of the group: the group whose members share this feeling is an ethnic group.<sup>9</sup> People living in the same territory are trying to separate themselves from each other. The indigenous people are carrying out the movement for the assertion of ethnic identity. Generally three basic causes are given for ethnicity - Nationalism, Colonialism, immigration. Among this the last is the major factor for developing the ideology of ethnicity in America. In India economics, political situation, migration and geographical location are the basic factor for ethnicity.

Ethnic groups are generally certain specified attributes the entitles of which are made by the group members themselves, but the identities of these groups or members of the groups, in accordance to the acceptance by the socio- cultural contexts may or may not change at times. In the contemporary times many elements of traditional cultures of different groups with different identities are very quickly diminishing. The reason is that there is a direct relationship between population growth, migration, modernization, demise of language and social change. Hence, ethnicity may change in accordance to time and situation. Different

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<sup>9</sup> Punecker, V.B. *Assimilation: a study of North Indians in Bangaluru*. p-2

situations like shifting of language, acculturation, adoption and religious conversion may also pave the way for members of an ethnic group to leave his original ethnic group and accept another ethnic group as his own.

In contemporary time, due to the ever increasing inter- relationships and inter- dependence between different ethnic groups, the boundaries between these groups can be seen to be expanding. The process of globalization has affected the ethnic groups to sustain their cultural identity and ethnicity. Every ethnic group has its own identity. In present times, every ethnic group are truly conscious about protecting their ethnic identity or ethnicity. In this situation, ethnic groups are facing a serious challenge in protecting their identity and they had to come across different ethnic movements and revolutions during different times. In order to conserve their ethnicity quite a number of writers use their creative literature as an instrument. In the selected novels too the ethnicity of the Bodos are precisely highlighted. To study ethnicity the selected Bodo novels are taken – *Sanmwkhangari Lamajwng (2002) and Khwmsinifrai Swrangthing (2002) by Katindra Swargiary, Alaisri (2003) and Dainee?(2005) by Monoranjan Lahary, Thwisam (2014) and Swmaosarnaini Orgeng (2020) by Rita Boro.*

## 2.2 Folk Culture as code of Ethnicity:

Folk Culture is a sub unit of culture. It is the source of human society. Folk culture makes reference to the cultural and traditional practises that are transmitted or transferred from one generation to the next orally or by actions. Folk culture includes social customs, tradition, religious and superstitious beliefs, food habits, costume and ornaments, festival, rites and rituals, folk literature, language and dialect. In other words, the feelings, expressions, experiences, knowledge of a society reflects through its folk culture. These traditional cultural practices are transferred or make its way from one generation to the next orally or by example since time immemorial.

The term “Folk Culture” has been formed from two words – Folk and Culture. During the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the term ‘Folk’ was referred to as ‘an illiterate man in a literate society’ by some and ‘peasant or rural people’ by others. But with the passage of time its meaning began to develop and change. The famous folklorist Alan Dundes termed the word ‘folk’ as – “any group of people whatsoever who shared at least one common factor. It does not matter what the linking factor is it could be a common occupation, language or religion but what is

important is that a group formed for whatever reason will have some tradition which it calls its own.”<sup>10</sup>

Therefore, it can be said that even though the word Folk has been used to refer to the illiterate, rural peasants during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the modern folklorists use the idea of this word in a wider reference and used to refer to any social group.

On the other hand, the daily activities of a man to strive as a rational social being are termed as culture. The word ‘Culture’ is derived from the Latin word ‘Cultura’ which means ‘cultivate.’ According to the book ‘Introducing Social – Cultural Anthropology’, the word ‘Cultura’ means ‘to improve’ or ‘to educate’. In this way various sociologists and anthropologists has given various meanings and definitions of the word ‘Culture’. The American anthropologist EB Tylor defines culture as – “Culture is that complex whole which includes knowledge, beliefs, art, morals, law, costumes and other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of the society.”<sup>11</sup> The New Penguin Encyclopaedia defines Culture as – “Culture is the way of life of a group of people, consisting of learned patterns of behaviour and thought passed on from one generation to the next. The notion includes the group’s beliefs, values, language, political organization and economic activity as well as its equipment, techniques and art forms.”<sup>12</sup>

Thus, analysing the various definitions by the anthropologists and sociologists it can be said that the activities that a man does in order to strive as an important rational social being like cultivation, food habits, animal rearing, social rites and rituals, festivals, social customs, costumes, religious beliefs, knowledge, feelings and expression is termed as culture. In other words it can be said that culture is an art, where these art or traditional practices are transmitted or passed down from one generation to the next one orally or by action.

Now, by analysing both Folk and Culture it can be said that Folk Culture indicates the traditional practices, costumes, way of life of a community or a social group which usually makes way through generation orally or by example or knowledge and by learning. It includes the experiences, skill, values of a group which are usually collective and often

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<sup>10</sup> Dundes, Alan. *Essays in Folklorist, Folklore Institute*. p – 7

<sup>11</sup> Tylor, E.B. *Primitive Culture, Vol – I*. New York. p - 1

<sup>12</sup> Crystal, Devid (Ed). *The New Penguin Encyclopaedia*, Penguin Books.

organized by their history, geography and social context. Folk culture suffices as an important part of a community's identity giving a sense of unity, continuity and relating to their past. This will highlight their ethnicity or ethnic identity.

### 2.2.1 Family Life:

Family life is the most important primary group in a society. Family life generally means to get married and lead a life with his wife and having children; along with his parents, brothers, sisters and in-laws. According to the comprehensive Dictionary of terms in Anthropology, Sociology and Allied Discipline a family is – “A basic kinship unit, in its minimal form consisting of a husband, wife and children.”<sup>13</sup>

According to the Burges and Locke, “Family is a group of persons united by ties of marriage, blood or adoption constituting a single household intersecting and inter-communicating with each other in their respective social roles of husband and wife, father and mother, son and daughter, brother and sister, creating a common culture.”<sup>14</sup>

From this definition it can be thus said that family life is created by the respect, love and bonding among the members of a family. Likewise, in a traditional Bodo family who mostly depends upon agriculture for its survival, works according to the instructions and advises of the father or the mother who is also the head of the family like building and household management, following common religious traditions, weaving clothes and food habits. Without their instructions and advises no activities takes place in the family. This is the example of a family life in a Bodo family where they lead their life together by obeying the head of the family.

Anthropologists have identified two basic types of families, i.e., nuclear family and the extended or joint family. A small family consisting of husband, wife and their children is termed as a nuclear family. It is also the smallest social group. On the other hand, a family which is based in the same blood relation for over three or more generation usually consisting of husband – wife, father – mother, brother – sister, their married or unmarried children or

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<sup>13</sup> Sharma, Dr. Lokesh. *A Comprehensive Dictionary of terms in Anthropology, Sociology and Allied Disciplines*. p-119

<sup>14</sup> Burgess, Earnest W and Locke, Harvey J. *The Family, From Institution to Companionship*. New York. The American Book Company.

grandchildren is known as undivided family and in some instances as extended family. Both kinds of families can also be seen in a traditional Bodo family.

In Katindra Swargiary's novel *San mwkhangari Lamajwng*, the characteristics of a Nuclear family can be seen in the families of the protagonist Gwmsar and Saikhong. The same characteristics can also be seen in the families of Baleng, Somaishri, Mainao and many others in the novel. The novelist have described Gwmsar's family as –

“बिलाइस्त्रिनि नखरआ सुखु गोजोननि उन्दै नखर । फिसाइ दाब्ला, फिसाला सानै फारियै गोमसार आरो बिरिन्दाउ, सेंग्रा बिबोनां जोंसार । गासै थामजि बिघासो माइ गायग्रा हा, बिघाबासो जखानि नबोथि, हालेवग्रा मोसौ हालिनै, मोसौ गाय मानैजों गमाथैनो बिलायस्त्रि दाब्लानि संसारआ सुखु आरो गोजोननि गेजेरजोंनो सोलिबोगासिनो ।”<sup>15</sup>

English rendering –

Bilaisri's family is a small, happy and a nuclear family. Bilaisri has been living happily with her family which consists of her husband Dabla and two sons namely Gwmsar and Birindao, young brother-in-law Jwngsar. Their property consists of altogether 30 bighas of agricultural land, around 5 bighas of household land, two pairs of bull for ploughing land, two cows by which they have been living a peaceful family life.

From this description it is found that Gwmsar's family is abundant with cultivable land, domestic animals, a family garden which reflects a typical Nuclear Bodo family where love, respect, bonding and happiness among the members of the family is clearly seen. This clearly reflects the ethnicity of the Bodos.

The picture of a joint family can also be seen in the novel through the family of the sub character Dersung. This family consists of the mother Khomsri, elder brother Orkhang, elder brother Orga, and their wives and children. They manage their family peacefully by cultivating in their fields but due to the behaviour of drunkard Dersung their happy joint family is shattered.

In his other novel *Khwsinifrai Swrangthing*, the families of Rakheb, Hafang, Rwndao and Beldang Gambra reflects what a nuclear family is. He describes Beldang Gambra's family as

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<sup>15</sup> Swargiary, Katindra. *Sanmwkhangari Lamajng*. p-6

“बेलदां गामब्रानि नखरआ गोजोननि नखर । गावनि गामि थाइजौगुरि लाटनिनो लाट गामब्रा बियो । मैराथिआ बेलदांनि बिसि । बेलदां-मैराथिहा साब्रैल’ फिसा । गिबि फिसाया फिसाला । मुंआ बिलिफां । बिलिफांहा सानै बिनानाव । फैसालि आरो जौलारि । बिसोरनि आनजाइआ हौवासा । मुडा रिंदाउ ।”<sup>16</sup>

English rendering –

Beldang Gambra has a peaceful family. He is the village head of the village Thajouguri. Mwirathi is his wife. Beldang and Mwirathi have four children. The first one is son named Bilifang. Bilifang has two sisters namely Fwisali and Jwnglari. The youngest is a boy named as Rindao.

From the above expression by the author it can be found that Beldang Gambra, with his wife, his four children and the house lads and house maids leads a peaceful family life. This is the Ethnicity of the Bodos.

The terms of a Nuclear family is also be depicted in Monoranjan Lahary’s novel *Alaishri*. In the novel the protagonist *Alaishri* lives a peaceful life with her family of four members which includes her father, mother and her sister *Reboti*. Again, the image of a Nuclear family is also depicted through the antagonist *Molen*’s family who lives a peaceful life with his father, elder brother, sister-in-law and the house helpers.

In his other novel, *Dainee?*, the characteristics of a Nuclear family is also seen through the families of the protagonist *Durmao*, the antagonists *Bilasu*, *Sandrwb*, *Dilsrwn*, *Joysrwn* where their family members consists of their wife and children. The author describes the family of *Durmao* as –

“गाव फिसाज्ला आरो फिसाजो साथाम सोद्रोमाजो दुर्मावनि नखर । बोसोरबा सिगां दुर्मावनि फिसाइ रानखेंआ रुंसारि जादो ।”<sup>17</sup>

English renderring –

*Durmao*’s family has three members consisting of her son and daughter. Her husband *Ramsrem* passed away five years ago.

<sup>16</sup> Swargiary, Katindra. *Sanmwkhangari Lamajng*. p-7

<sup>17</sup> Lahary, Monoranjan. *Dainee?*. p-7

The characteristics of a Nuclear family can be seen in Rita Boro's novel *Thwisam*. In the novel *Theleb*, Naphathi and Thulungsi's family is a small family consisting of only husband, wife and children.

In her other novel *Swmaosarnaini Orgeng* also, the characteristics of a nuclear family is also depicted through the family of the protagonist Anita. Her family consists of altogether six members who include her father, mother, older brother, sister and younger brother. The livelihood of their family is solely depended upon cultivation and other domestic activities.

### 2.2.2 Cultivation / Agricultural Practices:

Agriculture and cultivation is the backbone of livelihood of the Bodos. The Bodos have been cultivating and ploughing cattle since the time of their livelihood by building families. Rice cultivation is the main agricultural activity of the Bodos. They cultivate two types of rice namely – Aashu and Maishali and besides these pulses like lentils, radish, mustard, sesame, spinach and jute are mainly cultivated by the Bodos. Many festivals related to their cultivation of rice are celebrated by the Bodos.

The novel *Sanmwkhangari Lamajwng* clearly depicts the traditional methods of cultivation by the Bodos. Each of the families described in the novel is depended upon agriculture for their livelihood. Gwmsar's father in the novel is a farmer. He owns thirty bighas of paddy field and two pairs of cattle for ploughing his fields. Rice cultivation is done twice in Gwmsar's family and it can be known through Bilaisri's words in the novel –

“नै आफा गोमसार, दिनै नों गेलेनो थांनालिया । नोंफा आरो नोंथैजों दुबलियाव माइ हाहैदों । बालेंमोननि आवजार बिफां सेरनी हायाव दहाय फुआव नोंफाया खोथिया फोनानै दोनबोदों । नों सखा होनो थांफै फिसा । नडाबला सखाफोरा खोथिया फोनाय माइफोरखौ जालांजोबगोन ।”<sup>18</sup>

English rendering –

Look son Gwmsar, don't go to play today. Your father and uncle are in the paddy field for harvesting crops. Your father has already sown the rice in the field near Baleng's Aojar tree in the morning. Go and scare away the birds otherwise they will all eat away the already sown rice.

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<sup>18</sup> Swargiary, Katindra. *Sanmwkhangari Lamajwng*. p-28

Through the conversation mentioned above, the harvesting of Ashu rice and sowing of seeds for Maishali rice is clearly evident. However, it does not mean that only Gwmsar's family cultivates Ashu and Maishali rice, but that the entire village practices this type of cultivation pattern is clearly evident, besides this cultivation of other crops like lentils and sesame is also seen. In the novel, Gwmsar is shown as a farmer's child and since childhood he is seen to be often helping his father and uncle in the paddy fields while farming and even after completing his MBBS degree he is often seen to be working in the paddy fields like planting and harvesting rice. His childhood friends Gwmbwr, Swmkhang, Ramwnda and Mwdaokha could not complete their studies but they are seen to play an important role in farming along with the other members of their family. At the same time, the novel also features ploughing the fields with cattle, sowing of seeds, harvesting of rice and the celebration of different festivals associated with farming. All these activities is done together where one farmer is seen helping the other which is traditionally called Saori janai (Community work). As a matter of fact, a vivid picture of the agrarian life of the Bodos can be seen through this novel. This is in fact the true ethnicity of the Bodos.

In the novel Khwmsinifrai Swrangthing also, making a livelihood by cultivating crops traditionally with the help of oxen is seen. This indicates the ethnicity of the Bodos. The families in the Bodo society often employs house maids and servants called as Ruwathi and Dahwna to help with the household works and also to help in cultivating crops in the paddy fields during the monsoon season. In the novel too, Bilifang's father Beldang Gambra also employed two servants to help with rice cultivation in the paddy fields since the beginning of the Bwisagu season until Maishali rice has been planted. The use of Nangwl Jungal (plough and yok) and oxen by Beldang Gambra's two servants Bugdao and Jwngblao indicates the traditional practices of the Bodo society to plough the paddy fields and cultivate rice to make their livelihood. This is described in the novel as –

“बुगदाउ आरो जॉब्लाउआ गावबा गावनि फाफ्लियाव नांगोल जुंगाल बाननानै मोसौ हालिनै उन उन थांफानानै उदां दुबलियाव ओंखार हैनायसै । दानिया दुबलियाव नांगोल-जुंगाल, मै जेबोखौनो दोनलानो हालिया । गुबुनफोरा लांखोमायो । गोदोबा नांगोल-जुंगाल, नै बेफोर गसैबो दुबलियावनो लांखां-फांखां औरैनो थायोमोन ।”<sup>19</sup>

English rendering –

Bugdao and Jwngblao carried their respective Nangwl Jungal in their shoulders and led their oxen one behind the other and went to the open paddy fields. Nowadays both

<sup>19</sup> Swargiary, Katindra. *Khwmsinifrai Swrangthing*. p-10

Nangwl Jungal and oxen cannot be left back in the paddy fields as someone steals it away. In the earlier days Nangwl Jungal, oxen and everything could be left back in the paddy field without any worry.

But one early morning they had to return back home without doing any work in the field because when they were on the way to the paddy field they saw a dead body lying on the ground.

In the novel *Thwisam* too, picture of traditional livelihood by the Bodo people through cultivation is seen. In the novel rice cultivation is seen when Thulunsi goes to Batakhusi, in other words, Theleb's village where a number of women are planting rice plants in the paddy field and also in Thulunsi's uncle's family belonging to Batabari village. It is expressed in the novel as follows –

“थुलुनसियाबो बागसा जिलानि सिडाव थानाय थाइगिर गुरि गामियाव बिमायं मोननियाव थांब्ला दुब्लियाव माइ गाइनो थाडो । थुलुनसि बिफानि बिदा देबेना फिसाज्ला बिहामजोखौ लानानै गामियाव थायो । बिसोरनि नख'रा आबादारि । गाइनाइ हा गोबां दड । बेखौनो गायना जायो ।”<sup>20</sup>

English rendering –

Whenever Thulunsi goes to her uncle's house who resides in Thaigirguri village of Baksa district she also goes to plant rice in the field. Thulunsi's father's elder brother Deben resides in the village along with his son and daughter-in-law. Their family depends upon agriculture. They have large cultivable land and make their livelihood with it.

From the above lines it becomes clear that Thulunsi's uncle is a farmer. He makes his livelihood together with his son and daughter-in-law. This is a characteristic of village life of the Bodos. This indicates the Ethnicity of the Bodos.

In the novel *Swmaosarnaini Orgeng* also the pictures of traditional agricultural practices by the Bodo people is clearly highlighted. Mwnbaru who is Anita's father is a farmer and the picture of cultivation in the novel is depicted through his character. His prime source of making a livelihood is agriculture and with the help of his wife and children he cultivates mainly paddy and makes his ends meet to run a happy family. He has altogether fifteen

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<sup>20</sup> Boro, Rita. *Thwisam*. p-57

bighas of agricultural land and besides this he cultivates ten bighas of land belonging to others in his village on Aadi. That is why he has to employ a servant (Dahwna) to help him in his work. The monsoon is a very busy season for the farmers. They ignore the heat and rain and their hunger and thirst and put their heart and soul in cultivation. It is described in the novel as such –

“दैज्लां बोथोर । भाद्र दान । गायनाय फुनायनि बिहिर । गामिनि सोरहाबा सोरहाबा हाल उग्रिदोंसै । साउलि मोनहाबो फैगौ सपथाफोराव हाल उग्रिहैनो हागौ । साउलि फिसाइ मोनबारुआ बेखायनो बे सानब्रैसो गांनाय उखैनाय निथियाजासे दाहोना सासेखौ लाना दुब्लियाव नांथाब गसिनो ।”<sup>21</sup>

English rendering –

It is the monsoon season the time for cultivation. Some of the villagers have already finished cultivation for the season. Saoli’s family might also finish cultivation by next week. That is why Saoli’s husband during these few days along with the servant has put his heart and soul into cultivation ignoring his thirst and hunger.

In the Bodo society, along with the men folk the women folk also play a very important role in cultivation. When the men folk are busy in ploughing the fields the women folks too takes up equally important tasks in the household like providing food, water and snacks in the fields; leading the servants and maids, searching for maids to plant rice and as such. In the novel too, Saoli is portrayed as a woman belonging to a farmer’s family. When her husband and the servant are busy ploughing the field she prepares and provides them with food, water and snacks, in other times when she is busy with other works she instructs her daughter or the maid to do the same. These are the traditional agricultural practices of the Bodos which reflects their Ethnicity. The novelist has expressed this as such –

“रुवाथि लुख्रिखौ बाथोन इसे देनानै फुंजा-खाजानो ओंखाम गोजां लानो बाथायनायसै साउलिया । लुख्रिया इसिं मुद्राथिंजाइ आलाइना दोननाय खबायनि ना गोरानखौ हाननानै बानलु मुथासेजों बाथोन देनयसै गोथावनो । बिनि उनावनो गोख्रैनो ओंखाम गोजांखौ दुब्लियाव लानायसै । लोगोआव बियो जेखाइ-ख्बाइखौ लांफानायसै ।”<sup>22</sup>

English rendering –

Saoli instructs the maid Lukhri to prepare some chutney for breakfast. Lukhri took some dry fish that has been hung in the Khobai in the corner of the kitchen and along with fresh chilly prepares some tasty chutney. Then she hurriedly takes the food in the paddy field for them along with Jekhai and Khobai to catch fish.

<sup>21</sup> Boro, Rita. *Swmaosarnaini Orgeng*. p-9

<sup>22</sup> Ibid. p-9

Similarly, Saoli's active role in cultivation is seen as searching for maids to plant rice in the field and this is reflected through her conversation as such –

: आयु जावाइसो माथो । दासो ना जावाइसो ।

; औ, दसो आयै ।

: आं, हनै माइ गायनो रुवाथि लिनो थांदोमोन । जावाइसोमोना गायखांबाय आसु माइआ ?

: औ, आयै गायखांबाय खायनो इसे आइ मोननियाव दिनै थाबायनो कैदोमोन र' ।<sup>23</sup>

English rendering –

: Oh ! It's you son-in-law. Have you come just now?

: Yes, mother-in-law, I've arrived just now.

: I went to call some maids to plant rice. Have you finished planting Ashu rice?

: Yes, mother-in-law, we have finished and so I have come to visit my mother-in-law's house.

One important event of agricultural practice worth mentioning is Haljangkhra. It is celebrated on the last day of rice cultivation of the season. On this particular occasion all the servants and maids involved in rice plantation enjoy a feast. It is an Ethnicity of the Bodos and is highlighted in the novel as such –

“1988 मायथाइ । सेप्टेम्बर दान । गामिनि मांसिफोरा बयबो माइ दै गायखांबाय गामिनि आबादारिफोरनि गोसोआव रंजानाय । बयबो गामिनि हालजांखाखौ ग्रोम-ग्रोमै जाबाय । हाथरै आबादारिफोराबो हांसो मासेजो खबसे ओंखामखौ जाहोबाय ।”<sup>24</sup>

English rendering –

It is the year 1988 and the month of September. Everyone in the village has finished cultivating rice for the season. There is joy and happiness in the mind and hearts of the farmers and everyone is enjoying whole heartedly. Even the poor farmers dined contentedly with a home grown goose.

In the earlier days, the people in the Bodo society ploughed their paddy fields together turn by turn. In other words, if today they plough in one villager's field the next day they will plough in another one's field. In the novel it is reflected when Biren's servant Benga came to call Mwnbaru to plough in their field as it is their turn. It is also an Ethnicity of the Bodos.

<sup>23</sup> Boro, Rita. *Swmaosarnaini Orgeng*. p-76

<sup>24</sup> Ibid. p-96

“माबालै आमाइ, गाबोन माइ बाडाइ थानायखौ गायजोबनो सानदोमोन । एखाइनो नोसा जोहानो बदल मारिनो गोनां हालखौसो लांथ’दो होनना खिथानो फैदों आं ।”<sup>25</sup>

English rendering –

Uncle, we have decided to complete planting rice in the little land left to cultivate. So I have come to call your turn to plough our land.

One important activity of agricultural practice of the Bodos is Maai Sounai (removing rice husk). In the earlier times, the people in the Bodo society woke up early in the morning and starts cleaning rice (maai sounai) by removing husk with the help of Dingkhi and Uwal. It is an Ethnicity. In the novel too, removing rice husk with the help of Dingkhi is seen. It is reflected through Anita and the old lady Ebaos process of rice cleaning. The old lady Ebaos woke up earlier than Anita and begun removing rice husk (maai sounai) with the help of Dingkhi in the traditional rice mill (Dingkhisali) and it became a huge pile and so she called out Anita –

“दे माबार जाव आबै, माइ गोमोना हाजो महर लाबाय ।”<sup>26</sup>

English rendering –

Come on grand-daughter, clean the husk fast, it has become a huge pile.

After which Aguli alias Anita tries hard and began to clean the rice husk in a hurry and to clear away the rice pile and soon empties the entire rice mill (dingkhisali).

In other words, the author has tried to portray a raw picture of the traditional agricultural practices of the Bodos which highlights their Ethnic identity and ethnicity.

### 2.2.3 Hunting and Fishing:

Hunting and Fishing is an integral and inseparable part of the Bodo folk culture. They usually like to lead their livelihood near forest areas and on river banks. Since time immemorial the Bodos have been making their livelihood by catching fish in the nearby water bodies, collecting different fruits and vegetables from the forest and by hunting different wild animals. They have a very close relationship with the nature as they procured all their requirements from Mother Nature. Besides consuming they have been catching fish and

<sup>25</sup> Boro, Rita. *Swmaosarnaini Orgeng*. p-108

<sup>26</sup> Ibid. p-41

hunting different wild animals and selling their meats to make a living since time immemorial. It is an economical or financial source to fulfil the needs of their families.

They catch fish by various traditionally hand-made instruments means like Jekhai, fishing net, fishing traps, fishing hooks and many more. These different fishing instruments are used in different time and situation as per requirement.

Hunting and fishing by the Bodo people is seen in the selected novels. In the novel *Sanmwkhangari Lamajwng*, fishing by the different characters is clearly represented. Toward the south of Simligudi village there is the Dhems Lake where different species of fish is found abundantly. The villagers often catch fish, crabs, pick snails and make their living from this lake. As a matter of fact, the Dhems Lake has become a lifeline for many poor families living around this lake. Weather it is during the monsoon or winter season during the day fishing is done using fishing nets in areas like Laodonga, Kharbhanga and many more and during the night by using Hesak (kerosene lamp) and different fishing hooks. During the winter season in this lake different kinds of fish can be caught by cutting and clearing water plants like Dwl Hagra (water grass) and Methenga (hyacinth). In the same lake many people from the north of Salbari village comes to catch fish.

In the novel, pictures of catching fish by net are reflected through the characters of Laoda, Merga and Saikhong's uncle Hobga. During heavy rain when the water overflows the lake and to drain away the excess water they create an artificial stream and along with the water different fishes like magur, singi, Fithikhri, khaowi and many more that swim away are caught. The author has describes as –

“सानजौफु दैदेननाय समहालागै दैमा महर लानानै बोहेनाय लामा जावफलनानै दै थांनो खाबु खालामनानै होनाय दै फारसे धेमसि बिलोआव ना दावबोदों मागुर, सिंगि, खावै, फिथिख्रि, सिंग्रा बायदि बायदि ना । बिबथै हबगाया जे सारदों आरो जेयाव नानाय नाफोरखौ बोरिआव लामा सायाव लाबोनानै जेनिफ्राय बखनानै खबायाव सोदों । जेनिफ्राय नाफोरखौ बखनानै खबाइआव सोनायाव बिबथै हबगाखौ सायखंआ मदद खालामनानै होनायसै ।”<sup>27</sup>

English rendering –

By afternoon the water began to overflow and took the shape of a river and when the dam has been properly cleared for freely passing of water the fishes like Magur, Singi, Fithikhri, Singra, Khowai and many more began to swim away from Dhems lake. His

<sup>27</sup> Swargiary, Katindra. *Sanmwkhangari Lamajwng*. p-17

uncle Hobga who was catching fish with fishing net carries the net full of fish to a higher place on the side of the road to collect the fish from the net and put it all in his Khobai. Saikhong excitedly helps him put the fish in his Khobai.

The Bodo people have been using the technique of fishing rod to catch since a long time. They fasten a hook on one end of a long nylon thread which is also fastened to one end of a long bamboo stick; using earthworms, spiders, grasshoppers and red ant's egg as bait on the hook they catch fish. They also use short and dried jute stem instead of long bamboo rod which is then placed in different places in between the rice plants in the fields having shallow water. The hungry fish looking for food get stuck in these baits. The author has highlighted this through Gwmsar, Saikhong, Ramwnda, Gwmbwr, Swmkhang and Mwdaokha the young lads of Simligudi village. They often use dried jute stem as fishing rod; then they tie nylon threads with hooks tied to one end of it and then use earthworms, grasshopper, baby frog and red ant's egg as bait. They then place these fishing rods in between rice plants in the paddy field and in the shallow waters of the lake. The hungry fishes looking for food eat this bait and get stuck to the hook. After a while these young lads come and collect the fishing rods loaded with fish like Seng, Gwri, Singi, Magur etc. They unhook these fishes from the hooks and collect them in their Khobai. Those who do not own Khobai use Halinga made from Thwri (wild grass) to take their fish home. This is clearly seen in the novel when Gwmsar hands over a Halinga of fish to his mother saying –

“नै आयै, हालिंगासे ना मोनदों आं ।”<sup>28</sup>

English rendering –

Look mother, I have caught a Halinga of fish today.

The author portrays these children to highlight the traditional ways by which the Bodo people catch fish. This is an Ethnicity of the Bodos.

Besides this they also use other methods like fish trap (Sen) to catch fish. This can be known through the narratives in the novel as –

“आसिन दानाव जेब्ला खारभाडानि दैआ दद्रयै बोहैयो अब्ला गोमसारमोननि गामिनि हिनजाव हौवा सुबुंफोरा खारभाडानि खोलाथिं आरो साहा-सोनाबथिं लडायाव ना गोप्रोमो । खायफा खायफाया खोलाथिं लडायाव जान होनानै सेन-खखा सायो । खांखाय, नासाय, गोरि, सिंगि, बामि आरो बाइदि बाइदि मोनो खारभाडानि लडायाव ।”<sup>29</sup>

<sup>28</sup> Swargiary, Katindra. *Sanmwkhangari Lamajwng*. p-38

English rendering –

In the month of September when the waters of Kharbhanga begin to flow gently, on the north and north-western streams of the Sarbhanga all the men and women folks of Gwmsar's village come and catch fish together. Some of them put up small embankments and set fishing traps to catch fish. Different varieties of fish like Seng, Gwri, Singi, Crab, Eel and Fithikhri are found abundantly here.

The people make a living by catching and selling fishes from this lake. In the novel *Thekha's* father Laoda is a poor peasant. He has no sufficient agricultural land to cultivate and provide support for his family so he has to solely upon fishing to make his ends meet and run his family. It can be known from his conversation with Gwmsar and his friends as –

“नोइ, नोसोर दाबो माथो बेआवनो दंअ लायनो । थांदो थां, गावबा गाव नआव थानानै फरायहैदो । नडाब्ला देनां आंबादि हर हराव ना सुनानै आरो सान सानाव ना सारनानै जानांगोनलै नोसोर । थां बयबो थांदो ।”<sup>30</sup>

English rendering –

Look you are all still here. Go to your homes and start studying otherwise you will end up like me who has to catch fish day and night to fulfil your needs. Kindly go home now.

Besides this the author also highlights a raw picture of various fun activities of the village children like catching grasshopper, hunting curlew bird and coot's egg the author has clearly highlighted the socio cultural heritage of the Bodo society where they make their livelihood by catching fish and hunting and also that these activities are still prevalent at large among the Bodo people.

Fishing as a source of livelihood is also picturized in the novel *Khwmsinifrai Swrangthing*. It comes to light through the narratives in the meeting held after a cow's head was found in the well belonging to Nabla when he says –

“बिसोरनि थाखायनो जोनि हारिनि सिख्ला-हिनजावफोरा बिसोरनि गामिनि खाथि खाला थानाय लडा एबा दैसाफोराव ना गुरनो थानो हालिया । सामु खननो थानो हालिया, थास' आथि, थास' बिबार, थास' बिथ'राइ, दिखिया, दोस्रोम खानो थानो हालिया ।”<sup>31</sup>

<sup>29</sup> Swargiary, Katindra. *Sanmwkhangari Lamajwng*. p-4

<sup>30</sup> Ibid. p-13

<sup>31</sup> Swargiary, Katindra. *Khwmsinifrai Swrangthing*. p-45

English rendering –

It is because of them that the women folk of our society cannot go anymore for fishing, picking snails, picking taro flowers, leaves and roots, picking ferns and curry leaves near their villages.

In this novel even though catching fish is not portrayed the tradition of catching fishes among the Bodos in the nearby water bodies is known through their conversations. Thus through this conversation it becomes clear that the women folk of Thajouguri village cannot go any more for fishing because of the atrocities of the Muslims in the nearby village; by which the fishing culture of the people in the Bodo society is clearly depicted.

Hunting is another traditional culture or folk culture of the Bodos. It is also seen in the novel *Dainee?*. Since the earliest times they have been residing near forest areas and making a living by hunting wild animals, birds and insects for selling and for food. They curve their own weapons made up of stones and wood which they use for hunting. This is seen in the novel when Arangbir hunted and brought home a wild bird and also when he went for hunting deer. Since he grew up in a village, whenever he comes back home from Shillong he takes the gun and go for hunting in the nearby forest. In one instance he shoots down two wild birds and brings them home. The novelist describes this as –

“बे समावनो अरंआ सिलाइखौ फाफलियाव बाननानै आगदा आखाइजों जरासे दावमासार लानानै हाग्रा सिंनिफ्राय ओंखारबोगौ साल बिलाइ गोरान, हाग्रा गोरान खेब खेब गानानै । अरंनि गोसोआ दिनै जोबोद खुसि, जोबोद सोरां सोरां । मानोना बियो दावमासार गावनानै लाबोनो हाबाय । मासेखौ निजिरानो सारफाइस गिफ होगोन आरो गुबुन मासेखौ न’आव लांगोन ।”<sup>32</sup>

English rendering –

At that time Arang came out of the forest stepping upon the dried Saal tree leaves and grass hanging his gun on his shoulder and carrying two wild birds on this right hand. He is very happy and delighted today as he could hunt two wild birds. He decided to surprise Nijira by gifting her one and taking the other home.

As decided he gifts one wild bird to Nijira. After some time he again goes for hunting but this time he targets to hunt a deer for which he takes a two barrel rifle instead of a short gun. But he is not successful that day.

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<sup>32</sup> Lahary, Monoranjan. *Dainee?*. p-12

With the passage of time the rich Bodo people in the society instead of hunting with their handmade traditional weapons began to use proper rifles in the same way by which Arangbir uses rifles to hunt instead of a traditional weapon as depicted in the novel. In other words, even though there have been changes in the usage of weapons, the culture of hunting has been clearly highlighted in the novel. This is the Ethnicity of the Bodos.

In the novel *Thwisam* too, pictures of fishing culture is depicted through the characters of Theleb, Nafathi, Angsi, Rangi, Khwisib, Laaogi and Jwmna. After occasional flood and erosion from the Khulsi river flowing near Theleb's village a large pond or a lake filled with Nwlw Hagra has have been formed which everyone in that area calls it Boro Thwi Bilw. A large amount of fish can be found in that lake and so Nafathi, Angsi, Rangi, Khwisib and quite many other women come and catch fish together and catch quite a variety of fish like Seng, Gwri, Singi, Magur, Gangjema and Angkhaori. The novelist has described it as –

“सानदुडा गोसानिफ्राय गोसा दुंदो । बिसोरनि ना गुरनायाबो जरदार जादो । सोरनिबा जाखायाव गाखोदो गांजेमा,  
सोरनावबा जाखायाव एंखावरि, ना मागुर, फिथिखि ना ।”<sup>33</sup>

English rendering –

The sun is shining more and more brightly so is their intensity of catching fish. In somebody's Jekhai she is able to catch Gangjema, while the others they are catching Angkhaori, Magur and Fithikhri.

Theleb's son runs away from home and being in deep sorrow she is not willing to do anything or go anywhere, but due to constant persuasion of Nafathi she has to go with her to catch fish. Theleb who is usually expert in catching fish is able to catch only three Gangjema and two Fithikhri fish that day and as she is absorbed in deep thoughts and worried about her son she stumbles down while catching fish. An important culture of the Bodos is catching fish and this is clearly reflected here where a large number of women from the village catch fish together.

Fishing culture of the Bodo community is also clearly reflected in the novel *Swmaosarnaini Orgeng*. In the novel fishing culture is depicted when young Anita in her childhood goes to paddy fields with her father carrying her little Jekhai and Khobai which is gifted to her by her father and also when Lukhri goes to paddy field to give breakfast and takes along her Jekhai

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<sup>33</sup> Boro, Rita. *Thwisam*. p-62

and Khobai. Similarly, during the winter season when it is time to harvest their crop, the embankment of the stream named Nwl is opened and when the water on the other side dries up, the villagers catch various fishes like Magur, Singi, Gwri and Seng. This picture of catching fish using different methods that has been depicted in the novel indicates the traditional fishing culture of the people in the Bodo community.

#### 2. 2. 4 Weaving and Costume:

The Bodos are known for its weaving and costume which is a cultural symbol for the community. The Bodo women are adept in weaving. Since time immemorial, they rear silkworm and extract fibres which are used in making clothes for themselves and even sell for their livelihood. Apart from that, they are also skilled in making beautiful pattern on their clothes. As they live surrounded by nature, they draw inspiration from nature such as bird flying in the sky, leaves of plants and trees etc. and crafts the design beautifully on their clothes. It is to be noted that Bodos have a traditional weaving machine called “Hisan” in every household.

In the novel too, weaving and costume has been described in brief. The story lines comes across women of the village named Simliguri who weaves clothes. The characters of the novel include Romaisri, Somaisri, Mithinga and the mother of Mwdaokha who were adept in weaving traditional clothes. Bodo women make different kinds of clothes at home which are used in their daily lives like Dokhona, Gamsa, Fasra and Aronai. At the time of weaving, neighbours help each other in the process. In the novel the characters help each other in the process of making clothes. The author mentions that Ramwnda’s mother Thaisri, Hailu, Gwmbwr’s mother and Laogi along with Fansari help Mwdaokha’s mother in weaving the clothes. The author also mentions the beautiful motifs made on the clothes by Saikhong’s aunt Romaisri in the novel. The novelist describes as –

“अखानायै बेलासि सम । गोमसार, गोम्बोर, रामोन्दा आरो सोमखांआ गेलेनो फैयो सायखंखौ लोगो लानो थानानै सायखंमोननि ननि सिथ्ला सेराव सहैनायसै । मोसौ गलि सेरावनो खानानै लानाय हिसान सालिआव गंसे बालेबजों हिआव आगर एखांबाय दंमोन रमायसिआ । बेखायनो हि दानायनि सोदोब खोनायाखैमोन सोमसारमोनआ ।”<sup>34</sup>

English rendering –

Gwmsar, Gwmbwr, Ramwnda and Swmkhang go to play with Saikhong in his lawn

<sup>34</sup> Swargiary, Katindra. *Sanmwkhangari Lamajwng*. p-55

in the evening the next day. At the same time Romaisri is making design on the cloth nearby the cowshed. Gwmsar and his friends are aware of Romaisri weaving even though they do not hear the sound of the weaving machine.

Making patterns on clothes is an art. The Bodos makes different kinds of pattern such as – Fareo megon, Daorai Mwkhebb, design of hills, Dingkhia bilai, Mufur agan and many more. It is an ethnic identity of Bodos. It is imminent that Bodo women are good in hard work. Weaving traditional motifs is seen as Somaishri too weaves the Fareo Megon motif on the shawl. She challenges herself to make shawl as it is harder than Dokhona. So she gets the necessary fibres and weaving machine ready. Somaishri’s interest in weaving is known from the words of Mainao who teasingly says –

“बा: बाजैआ एफाग्राब गोसो होनानै हिसान दादो । हि : हि : हि :...।”<sup>35</sup>

English rendering –

How keen you are in weaving. He...! He...! Dear sister-in-law.

From the storylines it comes to be known how skilfully the Bodos can weave clothes. One of the most important parts of weaving is pre-handloom (Sudam) training for small girls. It is an important part of folk culture when their mothers weave clothes; they train their children besides them. They take bamboo and make a small traditional weaving kit which helps them to weave small clothes. This process is called pre-handloom training. Through this it is known whether those girls are interested in handloom and weaving. The pre-handloom training is showcased in the novel through the character of Minisri, the first daughter of Goithi and Narkhw. In the novel it says that Minisri has a weaving kit beside her lawn near a mango tree. She trains herself so that she excels in it.

Since time immemorial, young girls observe their mother’s weaving tactics carefully and make bamboo weaving kits and practice by themselves. This ethnic tradition has been shown in the novel.

From the beginning of the novel till the end weaving practices have been found. Women use to rear pigs and chicken to buy fibres and weave their essential clothes. The novel tells the story of a poor girl named Hafang who sells rice-wine to lead her family. She again sells

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<sup>35</sup> Swargiary, Katindra. *Sanmwkhangari Lamajwng*. p-153

chicken to weave clothes for herself. This has been known from the conversation with Rakheb who desperately wants to eat her chicken as –

: हाफां नॉनि दाउखौनो मासे जादोनि दे जॉहा ।

: जाया मा ! फाननानै आंहा दखना दानो खुन्दुं बायनांगौ ।

: इस ! दखना दानायनो खुन्दुंखौ आं नॉनो बायनानै होगोन नडाना ।<sup>36</sup>

English rendering –

: Hafang! Let's have your chicken for lunch today.

: No! I have to sell it to buy fibres and weave Dokhona.

: Oh! Don't worry, I will give you the money to buy fibre for weaving dokhona.

From the above conversation it is imminent that weaving is a part of life for Bodos. In the novel *Dainee?*, weaving has been shown through the character Nijira. Nijira lives in the village Ramfolbil in her uncle's house for her studies. She weaves Aronai, a special traditional scarf which she gifts to Arongbir. According to the story, she carefully wraps the gift which includes an Aronai and a scarf with an old newspaper.

The above narratives highlight the picture of culture and tradition. It also showcases the skills of women who can weave clothes in different styles. It is a traditional practice that gives the Bodo community an ethnic identity.

The novel *Thwisam* elaborately describes weaving and costume. It highlights the weaving of clothes in the village as well as in the industries. The main protagonist of the novel, whose name is Theleb is a widow. After the death of her husband she decides to sell clothes in order to lead her life and make her ends meet.

As she is poor, she sometimes has to wait for a few days to get fibre for weaving. Her expenses increase as her son grows up. So she works as a weaver in Alaishri Daimary's Handloom industry. The conversation goes –

“जायखियानो जाया मानो, थेलेबा दिनै 10 बोसोर जाबाय बे इन्दास्त्रियाव हि दानानै जानाया । बिनि सिगां बियो गावबो न'आव गांफा गांनै दाना फानोमोन । नाथाय खुन्दुं बायनो हायैनि थाखाय गेजेर गेजेर जनानै थानो गोनां जायोमोन ।”<sup>37</sup>

<sup>36</sup> Swargiary, Katindra. *Khwm sinifrai Swrangthing*. p-63

<sup>37</sup> Boro, Rita. *Thwisam*. p-6

English rendering –

Theleb has been working in this industry for the last ten years. Before, she used to weave clothes in her house and sell it. Sometimes she couldn't buy herself fibres and have to stay idle.

Along with Theleb, other women namely Dipali, Romai, Gabsuli and many others works in the industry and are busy weaving clothes. Theleb is hard working and honest for which she has gets the responsibility of selling the clothes also. In the novel, weaving is shown as part of culture and tradition and it has upheld the tradition of the Bodos.

Silk clothes represent an ethnic symbol for Bodos. The fibre is extracted from silk by a tool called "Thaokri". The silk clothes are highly priced in the market. The weaving of silk cloth has been described through Theleb's conversation –

“थेलेबा साइखेलखौ सानफ्रोमबो दोनग्रा जायगा बारान्दानि खना मोनसेयाव दोननानै आद्रा जाना थानाय इन्दि जियाव आगर एरनो जिरायनायसै ।”<sup>38</sup>

English rendering –

Theleb, keeps the cycle in the usual corner of veranda and try to finish making pattern on the silk clothes.

The novel also comes across certain theme such as Globalisation and its impact. The appreciation of different clothes apart from traditional the Bodo dress has been shown. On the other hand it is also aware of the fact that western thoughts and ideas are harmful for an ethnic group. It tells how globalization would lead to extinction of tradition practices and beliefs. It would be difficult to hold the beliefs and traditional practices of Bodo which would ultimately result in ethnic crisis. The awareness of western influence has been shown through Theleb where they are afraid whether Globalisation would lead to ethnic crisis as –

“थारैनो सिरि सिरि सानो आं बर’ आइजोफोरा सानसे आगर एरनो, थावखिल लुनो, जि दानो बावगार मारसिगोन...। नाइबाय था नोसोर बे थेलेब बुंनाय बाथ्राखौ ....।”<sup>39</sup>

English rendering –

Truly I believe that one day the Bodo women would forget skills of extracting fibres from silk, designing patterns on clothes, remember Theleb's words.

<sup>38</sup> Boro, Rita. *Thwisam*. p-7

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid*. p-10

From this narrative it becomes clear that weaving clothes, extracting fibres from silk, designing patterns and motifs on clothes is regarded as indispensable part of the Bodo community. The future will tell whether it is going to be true. Through this monologue the novelist wanted to bring consciousness and awareness among Bodos so that Bodos uphold their ethnicity through traditional practices.

In the novel *Swmaosarnaini Orgeng* the depiction of weaving has been shown through the characters Anita alias Agoli. She weaves her essential clothes in her house. If she does not have weaving kit she orders the clothes from the neighbours. She buys fibres and tells others to weave clothes. The condition of weavers are such that if they order to weave four pieces of clothes the weavers would take two pieces and two other would be delivered to the one who orders. This is known from the storyline between when Donda their servant orders Gamsa from Anita as –

“गामिनि सेंग्रा दन्दाया अनितामोननियाव दाहोना थाफैदों । गोजां बोथोरनि माइ देखानाय समनि दाहोना । गावहा गाननो गामसानि गोनांथि जानायलाइ अनितानो गांब्रे गामसा आदि दानो होदोंमोन । दानो होग्राया गांनै आरो दाग्राया गांनै । बे गामसाखौनो ऐदिनखालि अनिताया सो&दोंमोन । बेनो अनितानि गिबि जि आदि दानो सोल्लोंनायमोन ।”<sup>40</sup>

English rendering –

Donda, a villager works as servant in Anita’s house who specially comes during the harvest season. He orders four Gamsa from Anita which was much needed for him. The weaver gets two and the servant gets two. This is Anita’s first order.

This custom has been going on since time immemorial and is a part of tradition in the Bodo community. One of the important parts of weaving is Kobj, which is known as Aronai. This cloth is prepared and weaved within a night so that the warriors win their battle. The weavers have to perform a ritual before weaving Kobj. One has to bathe and cleanse herself before weaving and cover the weaving place so that no one sees her. Then she has to offer betel nut and betel leaves, a traditional towel called Bihu Fali to their Almighty God “Bwrai Bathou”. She has to complete the weaving within a night and it should not be known to others for whom she weaves. This weaving is described beautifully in the novel. It has been known through conversation of the characters such as Anita, Fulmoti, Dharatri. During the Bodoland movement, central women wing ordered Aronai for which they had to weave for them. For which they bought fibres and weaves at night as per custom. She prepares her weaving kit

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<sup>40</sup> Boro, Rita. *Swmaodarnaini Orgeng*. p-93

and weaves Aronai and makes designs on it. She does the work quickly as per novel says. After weaving a couple of Aronai she chants “No Bodoland No Rest. Long Live Bodos.”

With her dimmed hand lamp she weaves patterns on the clothes beautifully. She was happy weaving Kobj for a good cause. The warriors would go for the movement wearing her clothes to protect their motherland. The sad part is that they couldn't complete weaving the clothes as it is huge in number for which become sad she cries hard. They could complete it later after two nights and hands it over to the president and secretary of District Women Association.

The Kobj clothes are considered to be scared for which rituals have to be performed before weaving. It is highly valued as a part of the Bodo tradition and culture. The novelist says that a legendary hero of the Bodo community named as Bashiram Jwhlao, a folk hero wore the Aronai and defeated Simsas, The Bhutanese in a battle.

### 2.2.5 Food Habits:

The Bodo community have their own food habits which is quite different from the other communities. Since time immemorial the Bodos have been depending upon cultivation, the forest, fishing and hunting for their food supply and making a living out of it which is a part of folk culture. According to Yutika Narzary, Ethnic food has an integral connection to the culture, customs and practises of ethnic communities and it stands out as a region's identity and heritage.<sup>41</sup> The staple food of the Bodo community is rice. Besides this different other foods like Ondla, sobai, roselle leaves, Narji and laai-lafa are consumed by the people in the Bodo society and also pork, chicken, mutton, duck, snails, crabs, crickets, grasshopper, rats, rabbit, mongoose, ganjema, angkhaori and nafam are the favourites of the Bodos. The Bodo community uses their own natural alkaline soda called as Kharwi/Khardwi for cooking various ethnic dishes. Regarding the food habits of the Bodos Endle said – “As regard to the food habits of the Kacharis as a rule by no means limited and restricted, like his Hindu and Musalman neighbours. On the contrary he enjoys and practises a freedom in this respect which no doubt goes for to account for his often magnificent physique.”<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Narzary, Yutika. *Traditional Knowledge System of the Bodos*. p-43

<sup>42</sup> Endle, Rev. Sidney. *The Kacharis*. p-14

The Bodo women folk are expert in cooking various ethnic and delicacy dishes. They know precisely as how to combine the various vegetables and food items and cook a delicious dish out of it.

The novel *Sanmwkhangari Lamajwng* clearly highlights the food habits of the people in the Bodo community where they cultivate and consume rice by gathering and cooking different varieties of vegetables as their food source.

Rice has become a staple food of the Bodo community. They cultivate and gather rice necessary for their own consumption. They consume rice three times a day mainly for breakfast, lunch and dinner. In the novel the author uses the characters Gwmsar and Saikhong in their childhood to highlight the consumption of rice by the Bodo people. When Gwmsar comes back from school his mother tells him to freshen up while she prepares rice for him. She prepares and brings a plate of rice along with a Lotha of water, puts it down near a Khamflai and calls out to him as –

“नोइ आफा गोमसार, खामसालिआवनो जाफैदो ओंखामा । न’ सिंआव खोमसिथार ।”<sup>43</sup>

English rendering –

Come son Gwmsar, come and eat your food in the kitchen itself, it is quite dark in the living room.

From this conversation it becomes evident that the Bodo people consume rice as their staple food. It also becomes evident when Gwmsar and other friends go to call Saikhong to play but he is eating cold watery rice (*Wngkham gwjang*). Cold watery rice is a traditional way of eating rice by the Bodo people. It is usually prepared by submersing cooked rice overnight and eating it the next day. The Bodo people usually prepare this with the left over rice and eat it the next morning.

Again they consume other vegetables as their traditional food item such as *Khardwi Kharwi*, gourd curry, gourd with fish etc. it becomes clear through the conversation of *Bilaisri* and *Baleng* when one evening *Baleng* comes to *Gwmsar*’s house to study then *Bilaisri* was cutting a gourd after which she says –

“ए मादैलांहाबो दिनै खुमन्ना ओंख्रै जागोन खोमा ।”

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<sup>43</sup> Swargiary, Katindra. *Sanmwkhangari Lamajwng*. p-26

English rendering –

‘ Oh, today aunty’s family will have gourd curry it seems.

Then Bilaisri asks Baleng –

“नोंसोरहालाय माथो ओंख्रे सहांदो बालें?”

English rendering –

‘ What curry is being cooked in your home then?

“माबाहाय मादै, नाजों खारदैखरै ।”<sup>44</sup>

English rendering –

Oh aunty, it is fish with Khardwi Kharwi.

Khardwi Kharwi is a green leafy vegetable curry cooked with traditional alkali soda, a traditionally prepared ethnic dish of the Bodo community. Besides this various food items like fish, crabs, snails, grasshoppers, crickets and silkworms are consumed by the Bodo community gets highlighted in the novel. Among all these food items another important item worth mentioning is the Fitha Sourai (home baked rice cake). The Bodo people prepare quite a variety of Fitha Sourai during the month of January like Laodumfitha, anasifitha, asifitha, hasung fitha, anthab fitha, thao fitha and laru. To cook these delicacy traditional food items they first of all grind rice grains into fine powder to make rice flour with the help of their traditional Uwal-gahen and Dingkhi and use this rice flour according to their purpose. Further, to highlight the fact that the Bodo people consume these kind of food items the author depicts this in the novel when the young children like Gwmsar, Saikhong, Swmkhang goes to Baleng’s house to eat different rice cakes like onthab fitha, thaofitha, maibra fitha and huguma fitha. And to further make it more evident that the Bodo community consumes these food items during the month of January the novelist has expressed as –

“अखानायै मागो दमासिनि सिगांनि सान । बे सानआवनो मोनाबिलिनि समाव लाउखार थुबुर जायो । फुं समनिफ्राइनो सिमलिगुदि गामिनि नखरफ्रोमआवनो दिंखि, उवाल-गाहेन गाबनायनि सोदोब । फिथा सिथावनि थाखै अन गुन्दै थियारि खालामदों ।”<sup>45</sup>

English rendering –

The next day is the first day of Magw Domasi. On this day the shepherds gather and come together. Since morning the entire Simligudi village echoes with the sound of

<sup>44</sup> Swargiary, Katindra. *Sanmwkhangari Lamajwng*. p-47

<sup>45</sup> Ibid. p-66

Uwal-Gahen and Dingkhi as they are all preparing rice flour for cooking varieties of rice cakes.

In other words during Magw Domasi which falls in the month of January the villages of the Bodo community echoes with sounds of Uwal-Gahen and Dingkhi as the entire community is busy preparing rice flour to bake rice cakes to celebrate and enjoy their good harvest. Again having rice cakes with tea in the morning as breakfast is one of the food habits of the Bodos. This is an ethnicity of the Bodo community.

A majority of the food items of the Bodos are non-vegetarian. They keep domestic animals and birds like goat, pig, duck, chicken and pigeon and during any religious festivities they sacrifice these domestic pet animals and birds to their Gods; whenever any relative comes to their houses they feast on these pets. Sacrificing domestic pets is a religious practice of the Bodos. In the novel the author makes it evident when the people in the Simligudi village sacrifice domestic animals and birds like goat, pigeon, duck and chicken during festive occasions and later on the villagers feast on it.

A particular delicacy of the Bodo community is the Dry fish. Whenever they catch large amount of fish, they consume some of it when fresh and dry the rest under sun, store them and during later periods of time consume it as chutney. Dried fish chutney is a particular delicacy of the Bodo households that is regularly consumed by them. The author has makes it clear in the novel when Gwmsar's aunt tells him to have some food with dry fish chutney before going to Baleng's house to do some community work (saori janai). She says –

“आं ना गोरान बाथोन देहांदों । ओंखाम इसे जानानै थांखा ।”<sup>46</sup>

English rendering –

I am preparing some dry fish chutney. Have some food with it before you go.

One of the important drinks which fall under the food habits of the Bodos is the traditionally prepared rice wine (Jou). It has an important role in the Bodo community. Besides drinking at home, drinking during community works (Saori Janai), offering to any guests, the people in the Bodo society also use this drink for religious purposes. In the novel the use of rice wine becomes apparent through the conversation of Baleng's father Merga and Gwmsar.

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<sup>46</sup> Swargiary, Katindra. *Sanmwkhangari Lamajwng*. p-180

The use betel nut and betel leaf in the Bodo society is a cultural tradition. It carries a prominent value in the Bodo community. They plant betel nut and betel leaf in the surrounding of their homes and make it available whenever necessary. Besides consuming it after having meals, they also offer it to their guests, to give honour, religious offerings etc. In the novel different narratives indicates the prominent use of betel nut and betel leaf.

When Mainao goes to Somaishri's house to bring gourd seeds she offers betel nut and betel leaf to her.

“: गय जानो माइनाव ?

: बाजैनि आखाइनिफ्राय मोनजाब्ला जालाया जाबाय ।

: र' जथ' । आं लानानै फैनि गयखौ ।”<sup>47</sup>

English rendering –

: Will you have betel nut Mainao?

: Why will I not have from your hands Sister-in-law.

: Wait then, let me bring some.

Further, when Saikhong comes to Somaisri's house he sees betel nut. She tears the betel leaf and applies a small pinch of lime on it and offers it to Saikhong saying –

“गयखौनो जालांभावदो खानदिनै ।”<sup>48</sup>

English rendering –

Have some more betel nut and betel leaf.

It further becomes visible when his mother Bilaisri tells her son to take some betel nut and betel leaves for everybody in the paddy field in the ongoing community work of planting rice in the paddy field Gwmsar's family as –

“बहा सिरि सिरि थाहांदों बियो । गय-फाथैनि थफलाखौ नोंफाया बावगारलांदों । लाफै फै ।”<sup>49</sup>

English rendering –

Where are you silently trying to go son, your father has forgotten the betel nut and betel leaf packet, come take it and go.

<sup>47</sup> Swargiary, Katindra. *Sanmwkhangari Lamajwng*. p-154

<sup>48</sup> Ibid. p-161

<sup>49</sup> Ibid. p-167

Through these conversations and narratives it becomes clear that betel nut and betel leaf has a significant value in the Bodo community and has quite a remarkable place in the Bodo culture.

The novel *Khwmnisifrai Swrangthing* also put a spotlight on the food habits of the Bodo community. Even though there isn't much narratives of the food items in the novel the consumption of pork, chicken and drinking traditional rice wine is seen in it. It has been already mentioned earlier that drinking traditional rice wine is a part of food habits of the people in the Bodo society and have it with pork, chicken and different chutneys. As pork is a favourite delicacy dish of the Bodo people Endle says – “His great delicacy is pork; and a Kachari village usually swarms with pigs in almost every possible stage of growth.”<sup>50</sup>

The author shows in the novel when Rwndao, Nabla, Burkhang, Rakheb and others as having pork and rice wine when they were playing cards.

“: ओइ लाउडा, खोनाबायनो ! नै राखेबनोबो अमा बेदर आरो जौआ होफैलै ।”<sup>51</sup>

English rendering –

Hey Laoda, do serve some pork and rice wine to Rakheb also.

Furthermore, the use of betel nut and betel leaf by the Bodo people becomes noticeable through Beldang Gamba's family members when after having meal they all sit together and have betel nut and betel leaf in the courtyard and discuss daily happenings. It is an Ethnicity of the Bodos.

In the novel *Alaishri* too, the food habits of the Bodos is visible. Besides having rice and meat the images of having lusi, sabji, Rasgullas, Bundia-Bhujia during breakfast and drinking foreign wine is emphasized by the author. It can be thus said that western modernisation has influenced this novel where instead of traditional breakfast food items like rice cakes and tea and cold watery rice, modern western food items like lusi, sabji and bundia-bhujia are eaten. In the earlier days the Bodo people sits in wooden planks (Khamflai) in the veranda or courtyard while having food but now they prefer to sit on a dining table inside their house for having food.

<sup>50</sup> Endle, Rev. Sidney. *The Kacharis*.

<sup>51</sup> Swargiary, Katindra. *Khwmnisifrai Swrangthing*. p-17

In the novel *Dainee?* too besides hunting and eating wild meat from the forest consumption of pork is also picturized by the author. It has been already mentioned earlier that the people in the Bodo society likes to keep domestic animals and birds and hunt wild animals for meat as food. It becomes clear when Arangbir hunts a wild bird and Nijira cooks it. It is depicted in the novel through Durmao and Nijira's conversation –

: मा गोदादो आइ ?

: दावमासार आइ ।<sup>52</sup>

English rendering –

: What are you butchering mother?

: A wild bird daughter.

Whenever any guests and relatives arrives in any of their family, if they are not able to feed them properly with chicken, duck or pork the people in the Bodo society do not feel contented and happy enough. It is a traditional practice or a habit of the Bodo people. In the novel when Bilasu brings Jakhor Oja in her house to perform some witchcraft she also feeds him with traditional rice wine and pork. In the same way when invites Joyraj his sister he butchers a chicken and cooks for her. After the meal he offers her betel nut and betel leaf.

In the novel *Thwisam to*, the images of the Bodo people having Ondla wngkhri, night jasmine flower (shefali bibar), fish, pork, dry fish chutney, ganjema and drinking traditional rice wine is visible clearly.

Ondla Wngkhri (rice flour curry) is a traditional and a highly favourite delicacy dish of the Bodo people. It is often cooked with meat, edible flowers, leafy vegetables and bamboo shoots. Night Jasmine flower (Shefali bibar) is an edible flower and is another favourite of the Bodo people. They often consume it when fresh and even dry it under the sun and consume it whenever they want. So they grow the Night Jasmine plant nearby their house or in their courtyard near the Bathou and during the winter season when it blooms and falls to the ground they collect it and use as per their wish. In the novel the author shows this kind of food habit when Theleb's neighbour Nafathi comes to her house to collect Night jasmine flowers from Theleb's courtyard. The novelist has described this as –

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<sup>52</sup> Lahary, Monoranjan. *Dainee?*. p-14

“आ! बिनि बाथौ गुदियाव थानाय सेफालि बिफानि गुदिया दिनै बाराद्राय फुद्रुन जानानै दड । दा दसेबा न’सेरनि नाफथिया अनला ओखि जानो खन्ना लाफैगोन । बेसेदि मोजां मोनो बियो सेफालि बिबारनि अनला ओखि जानो । ओखि जासे जानानै आद्राखौ बोसोरसेनि थाखाय फोराननानै थिनानै दोनो नाफथिया ।”<sup>53</sup>

English rendering –

Oh! The place under the Night jasmine tree near her Bathou is full of white flowers, after sometime Nafathi will come to pick them to have it with Ondla wngkhri. She likes Ondla wngkhri very much cooked with night jasmine flowers. She will cook some and dry the rest and preserve it for the whole year.

From the above narratives it becomes clear that apart from this particular food item the Bodo women folk are expert in picking and collecting varieties of edible flowers and leafy vegetables and preserving them for use throughout the year. In other words this indicates the presence of wide traditional knowledge of the Bodo people.

Yet another food habit of the Bodo community is having fried sticky rice with tea in the morning. In the novel it is highlighted through the conversation of Theleb and her son Ansai when she prepares sticky rice for her son before going to the industry to weave cloths. They converse in this way –

: साहाजों बेयो मा आयै?

: मायब्रा माइरनि सौराय एवनाय ।

: मायब्रा माइरनि सौराय ? आं जोबोद बायोलै बिखौ जानो । ओखाम दड ना गैया ? बेखौ जास्ताय स्लाय आं ओखमखौनो इसे साहाजों सोमजानि ।<sup>54</sup>

English rendering –

: What is this with tea mother?

Ansai asks his mother while sitting on the table.

: Oh! It is fried sticky rice.

: Fried sticky rice? I don’t like it much mother. Is there any rice? Instead of eating this I would rather have some rice with tea.

<sup>53</sup> Boro, Rita. *Thwisam*. p-2

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid*. p-4

Apart from this, drinking rice wine together is also seen in the novel through the characters Khonga, Likhu and others. These are all the folk culture of the Bodo community which emphasizes the Ethnicity of the Bodo community.

As a part of their food habit the people in the Bodo society takes cold watery rice during the summer season. The monsoon season is a very busy season for the people in the Bodo society as they remain busy cultivating rice in the paddy fields. In this season along with members of the family the servants and maids also consume cold watery rice with fish, crab chutney, ganjema chutney and dry fish chutney. The Bodo people have been following this kind of traditional food habit since time immemorial. The novel *Swmaosarnaini Orgeng* reveals this kind of food habit by the Bodo people and is seen when Lukhri the maid of Anita's family prepares cold watery rice and some dry fish chutney to take in the paddy field. The novelist expresses as –

“दाहोना राखेबा दा रागा जोगोन ओखाम गुदुंखौ नुनानै । दुबलियाव ओखाम गोजां, खांखाइ बाथोन, ना गोरान बाथोन नडाब्ला जाथारा राखेबहा ।”<sup>55</sup>

English rendering –

Our servant Rakheb will be very angry when he sees the warm rice. When working in the paddy field if he does not get cold watery rice, crab chutney, dry fish chutney he does not eat at all.

Snails or river snails is another traditional delicacy food item of the Bodo people worth mentioning. They cook snails with lentils and pulses. In the novel this image becomes clear when Saoli cleans the snails. On that day it is Janmastami. The Bodo people believe that consumption of snails on this auspicious day brings good fortune. Saoli's family has been following this tradition since time immemorial for which Saoli is cleaning the little amount of snails she has managed to obtain. This indicates how different traditions are preserved and followed by the different generations of a family or the society.

After a beautiful celebration of the auspicious Bwisagu having a feast together is a traditional habit of the Bodo people. The author emphasizes this in the novel when Anita and her friends after enjoying in the Bwisagu season gathers and decides to have a party together but Anita later falls sick and becomes unable to eat and drink anything.

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<sup>55</sup> Boro, Rita. *Swmaosarnaini Orgeng*. p-102

Inviting the villagers for doing community work (Saori janai) and later offering a feast to them is a traditional habit of the Bodo people. In the novel this is visible when Anita's family invites some villagers for community work to repair and build a roof in their house and later when the work is complete her family offers and feeds them with wine, meat and rice.

After their weddings and on the occasion of Hathasuni having Ondla wngkhri and black lentil is yet another traditional habit and is a traditional custom followed by everyone in the Bodo society. In the novel the author emphasizes and depicts it through Biren Das' son Bimal Das' Hatahsuni where Agoli alias Anita also takes part. The author expresses this as –

“आगलिया जियानो जा अमा बेदरनि भाजा आरो सबाइ अनलाजो ओंखामखौ थेब्रे जानायसै ।”<sup>56</sup>

English rendering –

Whatever it is Agoli had a nice dinner contentedly with pork fry and black lentil and Ondla wngkhri.

To emphasize the image that traditional food items like Anthab fitha, laodum fitha and thao fitha are offered whenever any guests comes becomes clear when the three intellectuals comes to Anita's village to analyse the situation and find solutions to the problems pertaining to the ongoing Bodo movement are offered the traditional food items. This is the Ethnicity of the Bodos.

Ondla wngkhri cooked with papaya leaves is also an Ethnic food the Bodo people. It becomes visible when Anita has her meal with the already cooked Ondla wngkhri with papaya leaves by her mother.

### 2.2.6 Live Stock and Poultry Farming:

Right from the olden days the Bodo people has been keeping hens and cocks, pigs, ducks, pigeons, goats, cows and bulls etc. for food or for earning purposes to feed their families. By selling these birds and animals they have been fulfilling the needs of their families. It is a tradition among the Bodos.

Among all domestic animals the Bodo families keeps cattle mostly as farm animals. They consider the cows as goddess and worship it. Breeding cattle is very important for the Bodo

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<sup>56</sup> Boro, Rita. *Swmaosarnaini Orgeng*. p-105

farmers because they use the cattle for ploughing the paddy field to cultivate rice and other food crops. That is why the people in the Bodo society worship the cattle and celebrate the first day of the Bwisagu season as Mwsou Bwisagu.

Breeding cattle is portrayed in the novel *Sanmwkhangari Lamajwng*. The inhabitants of the Simligudi village depend solely upon cultivation as their main source of livelihood. That is why each and every family breed and keep cattle and uses them for ploughing the paddy fields and cultivates different crops necessary for them. As they are mostly farmers usually two or three pairs of bulls are found in each and every family of the Bodo society. This picture is portrayed clearly in the novel through Gwmsar's family who had two pairs of bulls and a pair of cow. Along with this Saikhong's family also presents the picture of breeding cattle is found through Orga, Arkhang and Gwmbwr. All these comes to light through the discussion of Gwmsar and Saikhong as –

“जोहा आदैया मोसौ दोन्दाल दोस्लायनो थंदोलै गोमसार । थु जोंहा सिफुं दाननो औवा थरे दानहैनि ।”<sup>57</sup>

English rendering –

Our Uncle has gone for replacing the cattle in the grazing place. So let us go to cut bamboo for making flute.

A clear portrait of worshipping cattle among the Bodos is seen in the novel through the characters of Gwmsar's parents along with the entire village people celebrating the Sankranti or the beginning of the Bwisagu season by performing traditional rituals of applying ash mixed with mustard oil on their body, spreading on them seasonal vegetables like gourd, brinjal, turmeric and certain medicinal leaves and bathing the cattle in the nearby ponds, streams, lakes or rivers; and by evening cleaning the cattle shed and offering new ropes to tie them and lighting an earthen lamp and offering prayer. This is the Ethnicity of the Bodos and has been followed as their tradition since a long time.

Breeding of hens and cocks has been followed among the Bodos since ancient days. The Bodo villagers keep hens and cocks for meat use them to offer sacrifice to God during religious prayers. They also breed them to sell them and fulfil their requirements financially. Breeding chicken is seen through Gwmsar's mother when Gwmsar takes some rice to eat his

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<sup>57</sup> Swargiary, Katindra. *Sanmwkhangari Lamajwng*. p-33

meal and the chicken come running near him. He then takes some from his plate and feeds them by throwing it on the ground. Seeing this act of Gwmsar his mother says –

“सि : आफा, जाबाय थानायनि गेजेराव बेबादियै दाउफोरनो ओखाम गारसावनानै हरनो हामा । लाइ मोनथारो बिसोर । हरनांलिया । दायो आं एंखुर होगोन बिसोरनो ।”<sup>58</sup>

English rendering –

Oh son, don't feed rice from your plate to the poultry while eating, they take opportunity. Stop feeding them, I will offer them Angkur (small pieces of broken rice while pounding) later on.

Other than that the breeding of ducks, pigeons and goats is also seen in the novel through the picture of sacrificing them in the Garja festival. It is a tradition of Bathou religion where certain birds and animals like duck, cock, goat and pigeon are sacrificed along with prayers as part of its ritual.

In the novel Khwmsinifrai Swrangthing the picture of breeding cattle and poultry farming is depicted. Here cattle rearing are seen through the family of Beldang Gambra where he employs male servant for cultivation. In the second part of the novel when Beldang Gambra's wife and their maid were looking at something that fell down into the well, the servant Bugdao returns from the field after replacing the cattle. From this it is learned about the Bodo people that they rear cattle in their household which carries great value to them.

Generally in the Bodo society slaughtering of cattle is considered a sin and a unholy act. For which the people have to purify themselves as a part of their ritual. The people in the Bodo society usually takes good care of their cattle and never harms them and always consider them to be holy. It is highlighted through the incident when some miscreant threw a cow's head inside the well that belongs to Beldang Gambra. When the situation becomes worse a meeting had to be called with the Muslims from the nearby village where the Maulabi Rofiq Ahmed says –

“दायाथ' जॉनि सोरबा सासेनि जानांगौ । मानोना रावबो बर' सुबुंआ गाव-हारिनि दोहोरोम बेरेखा खामानि मावनो हाया । बाश्राया जाबाय, गोथां एबा गोथै जियानो जायामानो बर'आ मोसौनि खर'दानस'नो हाया ।”<sup>59</sup>

<sup>58</sup> Swargiary, Katindra. *Sanmwkhangari Lamajwng*. p-27

<sup>59</sup> Swargiary, Katindra. *Khwmsinifrai Swrangthing*. p-37

English rendering –

The offender must be one amongst us because no person from the Bodo society can offend their own religion. The thing is that whether dead or alive the Bodo people cannot slaughter any cattle.

Along with that poultry farming is seen through the character Hafang where it is found that Hafang rears chicken for meat and also to sell them to earn money and make her ends meet.

The novel *Dainee?* also illustrates poultry farming among the people in the Bodo society. It is presented in the novel through the family of Joyraj where he kills a chicken and feed his sister a meal when she comes to visit them.

Cattle rearing are also seen in the novel *Swmaosarnaini Orgeng* where Anita's father is a cultivator and to help in their farming they keep a servant and later asks his son to learn how to plough with their own bull.

The pig plays a vital role in the social rituals, feasts among the Bodo people. The families in the Bodo society have been rearing pigs from the ancient times. They build a small shelter for the pigs in any corner of their household surroundings. Different villages binds a fixed rule for keeping pigs in their houses like they cannot let the pigs go free and if in any chance a loose pig is somehow killed the killer must not be blamed. This rule has been fixed because the pigs destroys and dirties the surrounding places. In the novel pig farming is illustrated through Anita's family where she names their pig as Khanda. Anita often feeds it in its shelter and her family keeps it securely tied to a pole and never let loose because the rule mentioned above is followed strictly in her village also. If in any chance a loose pig is found the villagers kills it and distributes its meat among themselves. It becomes distinct where the village secretary Lukhur and others have already killed about five pigs and enjoyed the pork. This gives the picture of a proper discipline which the villagers follow. Other than that if anyone from the village is unable to buy and rear their own pig they often hires from other in the village with an agreement. This scene is again highlighted in the novel when Anita's family brings a pig from Lukhur's house to rear.

### 2.2.7 Hospitality:

The people in the Bodo community are expert in welcoming guests and hospitality. They feel

delighted to have guests in their house. They do not feel satisfied until they are able to attend and feed their guests with appropriate and proper foods and drinks and provide homely hospitality. It is a part of folk culture and to treat their guests as representatives of Gods or the Gods themselves.

In the novel *Sanmwkhangari Lamajwng* it becomes evident when Mwdaokha's family provides homely hospitality by offering and feeding food and drinks to Salbari village's Mongla. Mongla is a mentally retarded person so asking for food whenever he feels hungry is his habit. After serving him food and drink Mwdaokha's mother finally offers him betel nut saying –

“नोइ गेदेरफोर, गय गोरलैखौनो जासाबदो ।”<sup>60</sup>

English rendering –

Here big brother, have some baby betel nut.

This way of offering food and drink and finally offering betel nut indicates hospitality of the Bodo people. It is an Ethnicity of the Bodos.

One of the good sign of hospitality by the Bodo people is by joining hands and bowing down and offering honours to their guests which is of tremendous value in the Bodo community. In the novel *Alaishri* it becomes evident when Alaishri's brother comes to visit her and she bows down and falls to his feet showering him her honour and proper hospitality as her guest. Furthermore in order to stress that they remain dissatisfied when they are not able to properly offer food and drinks to their guests it becomes apparent through Alaishri's words –

“हाबानि उनाव दिनैसो ननि सासे फैदों । जेबो लोंहोहरनो, जाहोहरनो मोनाब्ला आंनो गाञ्जि मोनबाय थागोन ।”<sup>61</sup>

English rendering –

Since marriage today is the first time someone has come from home. If I am not able to properly offer food and drinks I will feel very bad about myself.

In the novel *Dainee?* hospitality of the Bodo people to their guests again becomes distinct when Bilasu invites Jakhor Oja to his house and is offers him rice wine, food and also a place to stay. Again when Arangbir comes looking for Nijira in her uncle's house, she introduces him to her aunt. She then offers him with water, tea and snacks and finally betel nut. Further,

<sup>60</sup> Swargiary, Katindra. *Sanmwkhangari Lamajwng*. p-89

<sup>61</sup> Lahary, Monoranjan. *Alaishri*. p-214

Joyraj provides proper hospitality to his sister Durmao by feeding her a chicken. This is the hospitality culture of the Bodos.

In the novel *Thwisam*, Nafathi decides to stop selling wine and start a new business. When she is in need of money she decides to sell the nose ring to Theleb. The hospitality of the Bodos is then identified when Nafathi comes to Theleb's house and she offers her tea, snacks and betel nut. Again, when Theleb's son runs away from home by taking all her money and she is in great despair, Thulunsi comes to visit her. She sets aside her sorrow for some time and begins preparing tea and snacks for Thulunsi. This shows that the Bodo people truly care for their guests and provide great hospitality even though they are in despair.

In the novel *Swmaosarnaini Orgeng* also pictures of offering great hospitality by requesting them to sit in wooden planks (Khamflai) or chair and offering tea, snacks and betel nut is stressed whenever any guests or villagers comes to visit. It becomes evident when a village woman Dubri comes to Saoli's house and she is offers her tea and betel nut after requesting her to sit down as expressed by the author –

“साउलिनि उन उन दुब्रिया बिसोरनि सिथलायाव हाबहैनायसै । दुब्रिनो साउलिया जिरायनो सिथ्लानि खनाथिं खामप्लाय गंसे बोश्रोदना होनायसै । बिखौ जिरायनो होना गाव इसिं नवाव साहा फुंदु हैआयसै । दसे उनाव साहा खुरैने लाना साउलिया दुब्रिनि सेराव खामप्लाय गंसे लाना जिरायफानायसै । सानैबो साहाखौ लोनो लानायसै ।”<sup>62</sup>

English rendering –

Dubri followed Saolir into her courtyard. She offered a wooden plank to sit in one corner of the courtyard. She then went inside her kitchen to prepare tea. After sometime she came out with two bowls of tea and sat beside Dubri on a wooden plank and together they drank the tea.

Similarly, when any guests comes offering the traditional rice wine as a gesture of offering good hospitality is depicted when Jasulabari village's son-in-law Gunaram comes to Saoli's house, she offers him the traditionally prepared rice wine that she has preserved in the corner of her kitchen. It becomes more distinct through Saoli and Gunaram's conversation –

: नै जावाइ, गाहाम ना हामाथाइ । सिरना नायलाय ।

: ए, नालामोन दे आयै, आइमोननियाव थाइने लोबो खादों ।

<sup>62</sup> Boro, Rita. *Swmaosarnaini Orgeng*. p-12

: दे, जॉनियाव फैबाबो मोनबो मोनलों लाडा।<sup>63</sup>

English rendering –

: Take son-in-law, check whether it is good or bad.

: Oh mother-in-law, it was not at all necessary. I already had some in my mother-in-law's house.

: It's OK, you never get anything to drink whenever you come to our house.

Whenever any guests from any other place or other communities come to visit the Bodo community the people in the Bodo community welcomes and honours them with the traditional Aronai and Indi cloth and at the same time offer them with traditional food. It is a Folk Culture of the Bodos. In the novel too when the three intellectuals came to analyse and provide solutions to the ongoing Bodo movement, the villagers of Anita's village welcomes them with the above mentioned traditional gestures of honouring a guest. These are the identities and Ethnicity of the Bodos which are reflected through the novel.

### 2.2.8 Community Work:

Involving oneself voluntarily in the village community work is a part of Folk culture of the Bodos. Community work or traditionally called Saori Janai is where the all people in a village help each other together in their household works like building and repairing house, ploughing paddy field, cultivation and harvesting where no fees is charged but instead the volunteers are fed with food and drinks. The Bodo society has been following this habit since time immemorial and has become a part and parcel of their daily lives. Community work is done in various village activities like cleaning and repairing house, building house, ploughing paddy field, planting rice and harvesting.

In the novel *Sanmwkhangari Lamajwng*, villagers doing community works like ploughing paddy field, planting rice and harvesting is clearly represented, where to plough the paddy field Gwmsar's family invites Gwmbwr and others and to plant rice they invite Baleng, Somaishri and other women of the village. It becomes through Bilaisri's words to her son Gwmsar as –

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<sup>63</sup> Boro, Rita. *Swmaosarnaini Orgeng*. p-76

“एफा गोबावयै सिखारो मानसि गाहामा ! चाह लोंखानानै दुबलियाव दसे नुजाहै । बालेंमोननि आवजार बिफां सेरनि हायाव दिनै माइ गायनाय आरो हालेवनायनि साउरि लिनदों । माइ गायग्राफोरनो खोथिया राननानै हैथां ।”<sup>64</sup>

English rendering –

Does anyone wake up so late! Quick have some tea and go to the paddy field. Some people have been called for community work to plough and plant rice in the plot of land near Baleng’s aojar tree. Go and distribute the rice saplings in the field.

Similarly, community works of harvesting is also picturized through Baleng’s family where Gwmbwr, Swmkhang, Ramwnda, Rwndao and Gwmsar also take part as Gwmsar’s father Dabla, his uncle Jwngsar and his brother Birindao have gone to do their own duties. The author has described this as –

“लासै लासै थानानै गोमसार आरो सोमखांआ बालें मोननि माइ हानायनि साउनिरि माइथिलिआव सहैनायसै । अब्लासिम माइ हानायनि साउरिआव गोमबोर, मोदावखा, रोनादाव, रामोन्दायाबो सहैबायमोन ।”<sup>65</sup>

English rendering –

Both Gwmsar and Swmkhang slowly reached Baleng’s rice harvesting community work field. By that time Gwmbwr, Mwdaokha, Rwndao, Ramwnda also reached the field.

In the novel *Alaishri*, even though images of community work are not clearly depicted, pictures of people helping each other are represented. In times of any crisis and occasional events like marriage, deaths and religious activities the people in the Bodo society often come together in support and help each other. It is a nature of the Bodo people. In the novel the author clearly depicts this during *Alaishri*’s marriage party where the villagers came together in support, distributes among themselves the different activities to run the marriage program smoothly.

Similarly, at the time of the death of *Alaishri*’s mother too, the villagers came together in support to share their sorrow, conducted the different rituals together and cremate the corpse together. The narratives of the author make it more distinct –

<sup>64</sup> Swargiary, Katindra. *Sanmwkhangari Lamajwng*. p-166

<sup>65</sup> Ibid. p-184

“अरुनआ रबि, बिरु, सागुमोनखौ लानानै सहखौ माननालांनो औवानि साडि खालामनो हमबाय । जिगाब बुन्थ सावबाय । धुपबाति सावबाय, सालधुना, आलारि सावबाय । गामिनि बुरैदब सानैया गोथैनो गोदान दखना, गोदान ब्लाउस, गोदान सादोर गानहोबाय-जोमहोबाय ।”<sup>66</sup>

English rendering –

Along with Rabi, Biru, Sagu and others Anaru prepares the bamboo stretcher, lights a bundle of hay/straw, burns incense sticks, lights the earthen lamp. Two old women of the village dress the corpse with a new dokhona, new blouse and new wrapping cloth.

In the novel *Swmaosarnaini Orgeng* also images of villagers involving themselves in community work by repairing the roof of Anita’s house is illustrated. They are then fed properly with rice wine, meat and rice at night for dinner. This becomes clear in the novel when Anita’s mother remains busy in cooking and preparing food. The author expresses this through his narratives –

“औ, ऐदिनखालि आगलिमोनहा नखराव साउरि दंमोन उखुम उलाबनायनि । हराव उखुम उलाबनायफोरखौ ओखाम जाहोदोमोन । ओखाम जानायनि सिगां सिथलायाव बयबो सिरिबां जिरायना जुमाइ लोदोमोन । आगलि बिमाहा गोबां खामानि । बेलासिनिफ्रायनो बियो संदो, खुरदो ।”<sup>67</sup>

English rendering –

On that particular day there was community work in Agoli’s house for repairing their roof. The volunteers were invited for dinner. Before dinner everyone was served with rice wine in the courtyard. Agoli’s mother remained busy since evening in cooking and preparing dinner for everyone.

### 2.2.9 Traditional games:

Since the earliest times the Bodo people has been playing a variety of games and sports for entertainment and also to be physically fit for which they have quite a number of traditional games like wrestling, running, jumping, hide and seek, batha gelenai, gila gelenai, siu gelenai, daobo aithing and many more.

In the novel *Sanmwkhangari Lamajwng* the author beautifully picturizes various games played the children in the Bodo villages like running, catching grasshopper, making banana plant raft, catching coot, water game, marble balls, jumping, hide n seek, Sudam danai, Haao

<sup>66</sup> Lahary, Monoranjan. *Alaishri*. p-259

<sup>67</sup> Boro, Rita. *Swmaosarnaini Orgeng*. p-43

gudu gudu and many more games played by Gwmsar, Saikhong, Gwmbwr, Swmkhang, Ramwnda, Rwndao, Baleng, Somaishri and others. The following conversations of Gwmbwr, Swmkhang, Ramwnda, Rwndao in the novel makes it more obvious that they play running race –

: आं फास्ट जादों ।

: I came first.

Says Gwmsar in between long and quick breaths. Then Ramwnda says –

: खनसे सौदावामोनब्ला आं नोखौ दाननो हागौमोनलै गोमसार । दाबो आं सेकेन । सायखंआ लेंथारलै ।<sup>68</sup>

: If I wouldn't have stumbled I would have crossed you. But still I came second.

Saikhong comes at last position.

Traditional games that the Bodo youngsters play are also observed in the novel Swmaosarnaini Orgeng. It becomes clear when the protagonist of the novel Agoli alias Anita along with her friends like Dharitri, Joymati, Thomeswari and many others play games like Kut –Kut, Siu and many other in the field. The novelist has describes it as –

“फरायसालिनि फ्राय गखांनानै सानसेबो बिसोर माने खिंखिमोना बेलासियाव नवाव थाया । ओंखाम जाखांनानैखि गासैबो बिसोर ज'लोगो जाज्जायनानै फरायसालिनि फोथाराव कुट-कुट, सिउ एबा रे दि खेला गेलैफैयो । थाइजौ, खान्थाल, खेजुर मोन्नाय बोथोरब्लाथाय लामा-सामा एबा मालाइनि बारि बागान बागान दानदा गोलाव लाना हाननानै जाबायथिडो ।”<sup>69</sup>

English rendering –

As soon as the school closes them, i.e Khingkhri and others do not remain at home. Soon after having their meal they come together in their school play ground and play various games like kut-kut and siu. When fruits like mango, jackfruit and dates ripen they take long bamboo rods and go around the village and eat them.

From the above narrative traditional games played by the village children becomes clear where some games are played alone and others are played as a team. In other words it is the Ethnicity of the Bodos.

<sup>68</sup> Swargiary, Katindra. *Sanmwkhangari Lamajwng*. p-11

<sup>69</sup> Boro, Rita. *Swmaosarnaini Orgeng*. p-28

### 2.3 Religious tradition and Rituals:

The oldest traditional religion of the Bodos is Bathouism. They have been following this religion since time immemorial and at the same time they also worship different Gods. In the earlier times they used to sacrifice different animals and birds like pig, goat, cock, duck and pigeon and offers traditional rice wine when they worship their Gods. This is their ritual to worship their Gods. In this regard Endle expresses – “The religion of the Kacharis race is distinctly of the type commonly known as ‘animistic’ and its underlying principle is characteristically one of fear and dread.”<sup>70</sup>

In this way the people in the Bodo community has been following Bathou as their religion. But with the passage of time and the entry and spread of Christian Missionaries in all the regions and directions of India, the people in the Bodo society began to welcome and convert themselves into this religion. So to create awareness, bring consciousness among the masses and cleanse the Bodo society Kalicharan Brahma emerged as a great social worker. And in this way he gives origin to Brahma Dharma in the Bodo society so that the people are able to protect its culture, religion and bring unity among them. In the selected Bodo novels too images of the Bodo people following their age old religion Bathou is clearly seen. Further other religions like Brahma, Christian and Vaishnav that are being followed by the Bodo people is also seen.

The novel *Sanmwkhangari Lamajwng* has clearly portrayed the worshipping of the Bodo’s age old religion Bathou. The novel clearly mentions that all the characters and families in it follow Bathou religion. It becomes evident when Gwmsar’s mother Bilaisri lights the scared earthen lamp in the Bathousali in the evening located towards the north-eastern side of their courtyard. The novelist has described it as –

“ओजोहाय बिमा बिलाइस्रिआ खानाइ खेबुरसारनानै सानजाहा बाख्रि मोखां सेरनि बाथौसालियाव गंसे आलारिबाथि फोजोना लानानै हानथु खेराइनानै बाथौ खुलुमबाय दं । इसे गोजौ फांसे जाखुमा सिजौ बिफांजो लो गोसे फांथाम-फांभ्रैसो थुलुंसि बिफां आरो जाश्रासि बिफांबो दं । फुं-मोनाबिलि समाव बाथौसालिखौ गोथार दैजो लिरस्रानानै गोमसारनि बिमा बिलाइस्रिआ आलारिबाथि गंसे फोजोडो, हानथु खेरायनानै खुलुमो आरो आरज मेथाइ रोजाबो ।”<sup>71</sup>

<sup>70</sup> Endle, Rev. Sidney. *The Kacharis*.

<sup>71</sup> Swargiary, Katindra. *Sanmwkhangari Lamajwng*. p-37

English rendering –

Here Bilaisri opened her hair and on the eastern side in front of the rice godown (Bakhri) in the Bathousali she lights an earthen lamp and is praying by kneeling down. There is a little grown sacred cactus tree (Sijou) along with three or four Holy Basil plants and some Jathrasi plants. Every morning and evening after cleaning the Bathousali with clean and holy water Gwmsar's mother Bilaisri lights an earthen lamp, kneels down, joins her hands and sings prayer songs.

Through this narrative the traditional rituals become clear as how the Bodo people worship their Bathou religion and that the Sijou is the religious symbol of Bathou. This is an Ethnicity of the Bodo community which has been followed by different generations since time immemorial.

In another instance worshipping Bathou religion is seen when Baleng's family celebrates the harvesting season by offering the season's new rice and curry along with a pair of betel nut and betel leaves in the Bathousali where every member of the family kneels and prays here for a good harvest. Besides this during different religious and seasonal festivals like Kherai, Khathigasa and Bwisagu, worshipping Bathou or also called as Bwrai Bathou is seen in the Bodo society. This is a religious ritual of the Bodos.

Khwmsinifrai Swrangthing novel also illustrates pictures of the Bodo people worshipping Bathou religion through Hafang's character. In the earlier days the people in the Bodo villages goes to encroach the illegally settled Muslim societies nearby their villages where Rakheb also takes part and Hafang for his goodwill and that he is not harmed she lights an earthen lamp and starts to pray in their Bathousali after cleaning it. The author narrates this as

—  
 “हे आफा बाथौ, आनि आरजखौ खोनासं । आफा आनि जोबथि आलारिनि फारसे नों अननाइनि मेगनजों नायहरदो ।  
 खैफोर-आफोरनिफ्राय नों आफाया बिखौ रैखा खालामदो । बे दुखुथिया, खाफाल हावरिया हाफानि आरजखौ  
 आजावदो आफा बाथौ, आजावदो ।”<sup>72</sup>

English rendering –

Hey almighty Father Bathou, listen to my prayers. My almighty Father, in presence of the precious earthen lamp shower me with your love and blessing. Kindly protect

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<sup>72</sup> Swargiary, Katindra. *Khwmsinifrai Swrangthing*. p-115

him against any harm that may come. Listen to this helpless and worried soul my almighty Father Bathou, accept my prayers.

In the Bodo society before lighting of the pious earthen lamp the women folk first of all bathes properly with clean water and cleans the Bathousali with clean water to make it pure, pious and holy. This traditional ritual of the Bodo society is illustrated in the novel through Hafang's character.

The novel *Alaishri* also portrays the worshipping of Bathou and Brahma religion by the Bodos. In the novel images of Brahma religion being followed in the Bodo society becomes clear during *Alaishri's* marriage ceremony is conducted by burning a sacred fire or Jogya. Worshipping of Bathou religion also becomes clear when *Alaishri* after her marriage with Molen she lights aromatic incense sticks and prays to the almighty. The author has describes this as –

“बियो नागिरदों मोनसे जिरातखौ । जायखौ बियो नागिरदों बिखौ बियो नुनो मोनबायबो । सिथ्लानि सानजाथिडै पाकानि मोनसे थान दं । थाननि सेजेराव दं सिजौ गरेमसा आरो थुलसि । आलेआ गोथार दैजों थानखौ सुनानै धुपकाथि सावनानै अबंलावरिनाव आरज गाबनानै गुगुरुप खुलुमबाय ।”<sup>73</sup>

English rendering –

He is looking for something. Whatever he is looking he has found it. On the eastern corner of the courtyard there is a small concrete compartment and near it there is a Sijou tree and some Holy Basil plants. *Alaishri* cleans the Bathou after bathing with clean water and burns some aromatic incense sticks and prays to the almighty.

In the novel *Dainee?* too worshipping the pious Bathou along with different Gods and Goddesses becomes clear through *Durmao's* character. When *Bilasu's* son dies he puts all the blame on *Durmao* as he thinks that she is a witch and practises witchcraft for which he becomes her enemy. So in order to protect her two children *Durmao* prays to the pious *Bwrai Bathou, Bathou Burwi* along with different Gods and Goddesses.

At the same time in this novel the author clearly portrays the people of converting from Bathou religion and adopting Christian religion through the character *Sandrwb, Bilasu* and *Johan Basumatary*. The author has describes this as –

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<sup>73</sup> Lahary, Monoranjan. *Alaishri*. p-178

“बियो गार्जा फुजा होग्रा दौरि बोराइनि न’आव थांबाय । बिनि मुडा खृष्टान धोरोम लानायनि उनाव दौरि बोराइनि बदलै जहाँ बसुमतारि जायो । बियो जोबोर गरामि बाथौ सिबियारि थारमोन । दा बियो गरा खृष्टान ।”<sup>74</sup>

English rendering –

He was a priest conducting Garja festival. After conversion to Christianity his name becomes Johan Basumatary. Earlier he was a strong devotee of Bathou religion, now has become a strong devotee of Christian religion.

The novel *Thwisam* also portrays worshipping of Bathou religion through the protagonist Theleb. The Bodo people have considers Tuesdays as the day of Bathou religion that is why they do not forget to pray their pious Bathou on any Tuesdays even if they are busy with other work. In the novel Theleb prepares to light sacred earthen lamp and pray the pious Bathou by cleansing and purifying the sacred Bathousali with clean water. The novelist expresses this as –

“थेलेबा बाथौ गुदिखौ लिस्नानै आलारि बाथि सावनो थाख थियारि खालामनायसै । दिनै मंगलबार । गुबुन बारफोराव आलारि बाथि सावनो हास्लाबाब्लाबो बियो जेबो साना, एबा गोसोखौ जेबो मोना । नाथाय दिनैनि सानखौ हले बियो नागारथारा ।”<sup>75</sup>

English rendering –

Theleb prepares to pray by lighting the sacred earthen lamp by cleansing the Bathousali as today is Tuesday. If she forgets or could not pray on other days she does not think or feel anything. But she does not forget Tuesdays at all.

Through this narrative by the author it becomes clear that the Bodo women are the true devotees of their pious Bathou religion.

## 2.4 Social Folk Customs:

Folk culture is a part of social rituals. The rules followed by the people to lead their life among the society are social ritual. Every region has their own custom and these keeps changing era after era and generation to generation. The Bodos too have their own customs with by which the society runs smoothly. A society is build up through the social rituals. The Religious beliefs, offering pujas, enjoyment, wedding, working, purifying the sins and punishment are the creations of society.

<sup>74</sup> Lahary, Monoranjan. *Alaishri*. p-38

<sup>75</sup> Boro, Rita. *Thwisam*. p-3

### 2.4.1 Village Court:

Village court is one where the problems or happenings of crime in the society are solved. Through the village court's judgement if anybody is found to be guilty of committing any crime are judged and punished. This judgement is done by the village head (Gaubura) where a Gaubura or the head of the village he takes up all the responsibilities of the village court.

In the novel *Sanmwkhangari Lamajwng* a scene of village court is depicted clearly. When someone complains against some other person or if anyone is found to be disobeying the village rules then the village head calls for the village court. The village court is arranged either at the culprit's house or under the common village tree with the support and help of the village people, or sometimes the village secretary leads the village court. In the novel the picture comes to light when the drunkard Dersung complains against Saikhong and Mainao and the village president and secretary leads the village court. A person called "Halmaji" is selected to inform and call the people of the village to the hearing. Saikhong and Mainao are brother and sister. Mainao doesn't have her own brother that's why she accepts Saikhong as her brother. Both Saikhong and Mainao love the Bodo tradition and culture. That's why they love to attend different cultural and social meetings and gatherings. On the other hand Dersung wants to marry Mainao but Mainao ignores him and in order to take revenge Dersung spread a rumour on the relationship of Saikhong and Mainao and complains against them to the village secretary. As per the complaint the village president and secretary arranges a village court to do a judgement. According to Dersung's complains, in the name of going to attend a meeting at Dudhnoi they stayed at a hotel like husband and wife. Dersung disclose this fact at the village court in front of the entire village in this way –

“बाश्राया मा बेखौनोथ’ बुंहांदोलै आं आफादगिरि नोथां । खोनासं ओइ राइजोफोर खोनासं । दुधनैयाव जथुमलानाय जथुम्मायाव थानो थाखाय ओंखारलानाय सायखं आरो माइनावआ नाथाय जथुम्मासिम थाडाखैमोन । बिसोर बडायगाव टाउननि गंसे हटेलआव बिसि-फिसायबादियै थालायनानैसो फैदोमोन ।”<sup>76</sup>

English rendering –

I am going to speak out the fact, listen hey people listen. Mainao and Saikhong who headed for the meeting at Dudhnoi, did not reach the meeting. Instead, they spent a night at a hotel in Bongaigaon like a husband and wife.

But the people decides not to believe Dersung's word, also Dersung's words annoys few

<sup>76</sup> Swargiary, Katindra. *Sanmwkhangari Lamajwng*. p-141

others in the gathering. As per the rules of judgement, Saikhong and Mainao were also put a few questions. But later Dersung's complaint is proved to be wrong as per witness.

In the Bodo society, if a person beats an elderly people then a case is filed against the person. The picture comes to light through the scene that took place in the novel while judging the case of Saikhong, Daophudla slaps a person who is elder to him and regarding this a village court was arranged for the judgement. Daophudla accepts his mistake and begs pardon bowing down in front of the villagers. All these are the traditions of the Bodo people by which they run the society in a disciplined manner.

It's not that only judgement of mistakes and crimes is made in the village court but the problems of village are also discussed and solved in accordance with the opinion of the village masses. Khwmsinifrai Swrangthing novel also portrays the picture through the incident of Beldang Gambra of Thajouguri where a cow's head is found in his well which goes against the religion and forces people to think over the matter. A cow's head cannot be cut off in Bodo community, that's why a doubt grew against the Muslim community and a rivalry begins. To end up the situation the Bodo youth calls a meeting and plans to discuss this issue with the Muslims. As per the discussions and resolutions taken, the Muslims gives Rs 5000/- to Beldang Gambra to dig a new well and pays Rs 10000/- as fine to the Bodo society. Paying a fine after committing a mistake is also a tradition of the Bodo community.

The novel Alaishri too illustrates a clear picture of village court. Touching or harassing a women or having an intimacy without the consent is a crime in the Bodo society which is called rape or physical abuse. Rape is a heinous crime. A rapist is not given a good sight in a society. If a person rapes someone or found to be keeping physical relationship with anyone then either the person is purified by following the traditional ritual or given punishment. Alaishri is a college going young girl. One day while returning from college Molen rapes her. Molen leaves much evidence at the place of rape which helps Alaishri's family to collect information against Molen and make a complaint to the village head of Titaguri. As per the complaint the village head issues a notice of village court arrangement. According to novelist

—  
 “बादलआ नटिसखौ फरायजोबनो गोहो मोनाखैसै । नाथाय बियो दौनैसो बाश्रा फरायबाय । बेनिफ्राय बियो मिथिनो मोनबायदि गाबोन बाद होनानै सफोर फुनि 11 बाजियाव गावनि न'यावनो मलेननि पाब्लिक द्रायेल जागोन । बेवहाय

मलेनआथ' हाजिर थाथार नांगोन, बिनि अनगायैबो बादल, बिनि फिसाज्ला गिबि, बिहामजो, बिहामजोनि बिनानाव, थेफेन – माने नखरनि गसिबो सोद्रोमाफोर मुजुद थानांगोन ।”<sup>77</sup>

English rendering –

Badol had no courage to read the notice completely. He read only a few lines and came to know that the next day at 11 o'clock there will be public trial at his house. Molen have to be present at the gathering by any means. Other then this Badol, his first son, daughter-in-law, daughter-in-law's sister, Thephen all members of family must be present at the gathering.

So those people against whom the complaint made must be present in the meeting. The judgement was made at Molen's house. In the meeting both the culprit and the victim can give their opinion and based on that the decision is taken. This is a rule of the village court. So in the novel Molen and Alaishri were also given the opportunity to speak out their opinion. After this discussion Molen is declared as culprit.

In Bodo society the punishment is given by considering the nature of the crime, like sometimes by forgiving, by imposing a fine or sometimes suspending the culprit from the village. In the novel too it is found that after judging Molen as culprit the village people were discussing what punishment should be given, where people give different opinion. The narratives in the novel is given as –

“आंनि मते मलेन गुन्दाखौ थाम लाख रां खौलोबोत फोनांसे फोनांनानै बिनि गोदोनायाव जुतानि माला गानहोनानै गावसोरनि ट्राक सायाव दिखांनानै कक्राझार टाउनयाव प्रसेसन हैनांगौ ।”

English rendering –

According to me the culprit Molen should be fined 3 lakhs and must be hung with shoes on his neck and a procession should be taken up carrying him on their own truck around the Kokrajhar town.

Another says –

“आं सानो मलेन गुन्दाया आलेनाव, बिनि आथिं दांनानै खेमा बिनांगोन आरो इज्जत हानि आरो मानहानिनि बिनो, माने बिनि बिफानो से लाख रां होनांगौ ।”<sup>78</sup>

<sup>77</sup> Lahary, Monoranjan. *Alaishri*. p-55

<sup>78</sup> Ibid. p-103

English rendering –

I feel the culprit Molen should beg pardon to Alaishri touching her feet and pay a fine of 1 lakh to her father for disrespecting her.

But Alaishri is not at all satisfied with any of the discussions and ultimately decides to marry Molen as a form of his punishment.

Similarly, a village court is also depicted in the novel *Dainee?*. This is seen when Bilasu, Joysrwn and Dilsrwn complains against Durmao to the village court. The Halmazi comes to Durmao's house with a notice announcing as –

“दोनै मोनाबिनिआव दुर्मावनि बिसार जागोन । दुर्मावनि न'आवनो । जेरावबो थांनो मोन्नाय नडा । फिसाज्ला आरो फिसाजो सानैखौबो जेरावबो दाथांहो ।”<sup>79</sup>

English rendering –

There will be judgement on Durmao today evening at her house so you cannot go anywhere. Don't let your children go out anywhere too.

In this novel as per the judgement Durmao is declared as a witch and killed by cutting off both her hands and legs.

In the novel *Swmaosarnaini Orgeng* also the author highlights a clear picture of a village court. The scene is portrayed through Khogen, the male servant of Joymoti and Hambu, the Biren's daughter-in-law. According to the story –

“ऐदिखालि राइजोनि हालमाजिया हरखाब नखर नखर गिदिना बिरेन दासआ गावनि बिहामजो आरो जयमटिनि दाहोना खगेननि थाखाय मेल लिंनायनि रादाब होबायदोमोन ।”<sup>80</sup>

English rendering –

On that day the village Halmazi was announcing house to house about the meeting called upon Khogen, the male servant of Biren Das's and his daughter-in-law Joymoti.

<sup>79</sup> Lahary, Monoranjan. *Dainee?*. p-74

<sup>80</sup> Boro, Rita. *Swmaosarnaini Orgeng*. p -74

## 2.5 Rites de Passage:

The life of every individual in the society progresses through a sequence of events. The different sequential transfigurations of their life starts from being birth to teenage, adulthood, marriage, parenthood, transition in their occupations and finally death. Rites of passage is an event, a social ritual or relating to experience that indicates or comprises a major landmark or changes in an individual's life. It celebrates the change of an individual where they transform into leaving their former habits and roles and transform into taking newer habits and roles through social ceremonial celebrations. These celebrations are usually socially well defined positions and their transitions happen to equally well defines positions. Right from the birth of an individual until his death he/she witnesses many rites throughout their whole life. As everyone has a similar goal the ways of attaining or fulfilling it should be at least corresponding even if its details are not identical.

In the selected novels rituals about Marriage ceremony and Death ceremony is clearly seen but regarding Birth ceremony no clear picture is observed.

### 2.5.1 Marriage:

Marriage is one of the rites of passage of human life. Marriage is a social custom of the human society who becomes a much social being than earlier. It is a very important phase of an individual. It helps in establishing a new kind of relationship between the male and female members of the society and enters into a new stage of the growth of the society by creating a new family. According to U S Misra and Nadeem Hasnain – “The term ‘Marriage’ refers to the various customs and rules concerning special relationship between two members of opposite sex which also create a set of obligation and roles for them as well as their kingroup.”<sup>81</sup> Archaeologists and Anthropologists have categorised social marriage in two types. One of them is Paternalistic custom marriage and the other is Maternalistic custom marriage. In Indian society both these types of marriage customs prevail. Just like the other communities marriage in the Bodo community too is also a very important social ritual of life cycle. Under the influence of the Arya culture the Bodo Kacharis community have adopted both Paternal as well as Maternal customs of marriage.<sup>82</sup> The Bodo people conduct marriage ceremony in six different systems. They are mentioned as under –

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<sup>81</sup> Misra, U S & Hasnain, Nadeem. *Intriducing Social Cultural Anthropology*. P-161

<sup>82</sup> Narji, Bhaben. *Boro-Kacharini Somaj arw Harimu*. p-61

- i. Somajni Nem kxanthi/Swngnanwi lanai haba.
- ii. Ghwrjia lakhinai haba
- iii. Kharsonnai haba
- iv. Dongkha haba
- v. Bwnanwi langnai haba
- vi. Dwnkharlangnai haba

These type marriages in the Bodo society are conducted with different rites and rituals which identifies the Bodo community as having a distinct culture and Ethnicity. Besides these another marriage system prevalent in the Bodo society is the ‘Hathasuni Khurnai.’ It is an old and a very simple form of marriage system of the Bodo society. In this marriage the bride usually cooks Ondla Wngkhri and seeks blessings from the Bwrai Bathou and then serves and feeds the cooked food to her groom.

The novel *Sanmwknangari Lamajwng* novels clearly portray Swngnanwi lanai haba ritual of the Bodo society through the marriage ceremony of Gwmsar and Haina. Gwmsar falls in love with Haina and when he was pursuing MBBS degree in Guwahati. When both the families come to know about their relationship they conduct their marriage ceremony according to the marriage customs and rituals of their society. The picture of the whole village accepting their relation and helps in conducting this marriage ceremony is depicted in this novel. The author describes this as –

“दिनै गोमसार आरो हायनानि जुलिनिसम । फागुन दाननि दुंलोब दुंलोब बारजों गोमसारनि जुलि सानआव दामनाय  
बेन्दपार्ति आरो माइकआव गोमसारनायजों सिमलिगुदि गामिआ गोगोम गोम गोम जादों ।”<sup>83</sup>

English rendering –

Today is Gwmsar and Haina’s marriage ceremony. The sounds of the band party and sound of the mike played during Gwmsar’s marriage has echoed and filled with the warm breeze of the entire Simligudi village.

But on that auspicious day Gwmsar is now where to be found for which Haina feels betrayed and drinks poison and kills herself.

In the novel *Hathasuni Haba* of the Bodo society is also depicted. It is seen in the chapter six

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<sup>83</sup> Swargiary, Katindra. *Sanmwkhangari Lamajwng*. p-191

when the author describes Saikhong's uncle Hobga's marriage ceremony is conducted by the villagers through Hathasuni marriage ritual with Romaishri of Daoraibari village. The author describes this as –

“हबगानि बिसिआ गोदान । थानाय बोसोरावसो लाबोदो । हाबा गेदेर खुनाय जायाखैमोन । लाबोनानै हाथासुनि हाबा खुनानै न'होनाय जादोमोन ।”<sup>84</sup>

English rendering –

Hobga's wife is new and they were married last year only. A big marriage ceremony was not conducted. She was welcomed in her in-laws' house with a Hathasuni haba.

In other words the author has tried to illustrate the tradition of Hathasuni haba that is prevalent in the Bodo society through his narratives. Similarly, Gwmsar's uncle Jwngsar and Bidangsri's marriage ceremony illustrates the prevalence of Hathasuni haba in the Bodo society.

In the Bodo community widow remarriage is seen and such is also portrayed in the novel. Dersung, the youngest son of Laodab Gamba from Simligudi village is an alcoholic and is often drunk. He falls in love with Mainao and with the help of a widow she decides to marry her. But the family of the girl does not accept him and their relationship, for which Dersung has to marry the widow as he already has physical relation with her.

The novel Khwmsinifrai Swrangthing also highlights the presence of Hathasuni haba in the Bodo society. The author describes this in the novel when Rakheb's mother Theleb is married to Jwgdao with Hathasuni haba ritual. When Theleb was working as a maid in Neola's house of Ouwabari village she falls in love with Jwgdao and both gets married with Hathasuni haba ritual. Similarly, other images of Hathasuni haba ritual is seen when Rakheb and Hafang decides to get married through Hathasuni haba ritual for which Rakheb is in need of some money. This becomes clear through Kasen Ali and Rakheb's conversation –

: हाबायालाय बेसेथो खरसा जागोन ?

: खरसा जानायाथ' खरसा खालामनायजोसो खोथा । हाथासुनि हाबासो खुनायथ' बारा खरस जाया । हमनानै ला रोजाब्रै

एबा रोजाबा रां ।<sup>85</sup>

<sup>84</sup> Swargiary, Katindra. *Sanmwkhangari Lamajwng*. p-53

<sup>85</sup> Swargiary, Katindra. *Khwmsinifrai Swrangthing*. p-54

English rendering –

: How much will be the expense in the marriage?

: Expense depends how much you are willing to spend. As it is Hathasuni haba, around forty thousand to fifty thousand may be required.

In the novel *Alaishri* marriage rituals and customs of the Bodo society has been clearly and beautifully portrayed. After she has been sexually violated by Molen and in the court of hearing by the villagers she decides to marry him. According to the final proceedings of the village head of whatever has happened it is ordered that the marriage has to be conducted within a week. In the Bodo society there is a ritual of consulting the Panjika to fix the marriage date. In the novel it is seen when Anda comes home and reads the Panjika to find the appropriate date and time and finally fixes it on Thursday. As soon as the marriage day has been fixed Sayaram requests the villagers to make preparations for the marriage ceremony. It is a tradition of the Bodo society where in times of any household festivities like marriage, funeral, religious festivals etc. the villagers help each other.

There is a custom amongst the Bodo society of inviting the bride for a meal before her marriage ceremony. It is seen in the novel when *Alaishri's* aunty Sewali invites her for a meal in their house –

“आं नोखौ बोथिसे ओखाम जाहोहैनोसो लिनो फैदो । दा हराव जोंनाब बोथिसे ओखाम जाहैदो ।”<sup>86</sup>

English rendering –

I have come to invite you for a meal. Come to our house in the evening today for a dinner.

But *Alaishri* politely declines her invitation.

Biban Langnai/Khobira is an inseparable custom during marriage ceremonies in the Bodo society. In the Khobira biban there has to be compulsorily specific items like a pair of earthen pots (Thinghli), betel nut and betel leaves, sugar, milk, lime, bidi and match box and it is seen in the novel when Amal tells Thefen to fetch the goods for Khobari Biban from the town. These goods are highly important as a part of traditional ritual and customs of the Bodo community.

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<sup>86</sup> Lahary, Monoranjan. *Alaishri*. p-147

In the marriages of the Bodo society the groom should gift traditional costumes like new dokhona, blouse, scarf, sandal, jewellery and other makeup items to the bride as part of their custom. In the novel it is depicted when Molen's family buys these items for Alaishri as per the recommendation of Amal, who is Molen's uncle.

The Bodo society also conducts marriage ceremonies as per the ritual and traditions of Bathou and Brahma religion too. In the novel conducting marriage ceremony as per Brahma religion is seen distinctly. In this religion as per ritual the Bwirathis welcomes and brings both the bride and groom near the sacred fire place. After completing all the traditional rituals both the bride and groom are made to walk round the sacred fire three times with a pious knot tied to each other's dress. It is seen in the novel during Alaisri and Molen's marriage ceremony when both are also made to walk around the sacred fire place three times, but Molen quietly unties the pious knot from their dress. In this way Alaisri and Molen's marriage ceremony concludes with many adversities.

The novel Swmaosarnaini Orgeng also highlights Hathasuni Haba of the Bodo society when Biren Das conducts his middle child Bimal Das' marriage with Hathasuni Haba ritual.

### 2.5.2 Death:

Death is inseparable rites of passage of a human being just like marriage. If a man is born he has to die one day. When a human being dies a lot of traditional rituals are performed for the peaceful departure of his soul into eternity. In other words, there consists of many rituals after the death of a person which are followed by one generation to the next in the Bodo society.

The people in the Bodo society either cremate or bury the bodies of the dead people and have been followed by the people since the ancient times. If any one dies in the Bodo villages all the villagers comes to their house and by performing all the customary rituals they bury or cremate the dead body. They bring the body out of the house in the courtyard and place it with the head in the southern direction, feed some food and the finally carry it to the crematory or the burial ground on the bamboo stretcher along with some of his clothes, rice, young cock and earthen pot. This is the traditions of the Bodo community.

The novel Sanmwkhangari Lamajwng the death rituals is depicted when Goithi's son dies due to prolonged illness and his death ceremony is performed with all the customary death rituals.

In the novel *Alaishri* also different death rituals are of the society illustrated. *Alaishri's* mother Sarala is suffering from heart disease. After the marriage of *Alaishri* with Molen, Sarala's heart disease worsens and finally one day she demises. Her dead body is then brought out in the courtyard and is placed with her head facing in the south direction covered with a cloth. After performing all the customary death rituals as followed by the society her body is finally carried to the crematory ground for cremation.

Jute leaf has a very close connection to the death rituals of the Bodo community. In other words after the cremation or burial ritual of the dead body is completed the people chew some dried jute leaves which is known as *Narjwi Orgarnai* traditionally in the Bodo community. The author describes this as –

“सासेया लाबाय नारजै आरो माइं । आरो बादबाकि जा जा गोथैबारियाव लानानै, गोथैनो हरफा नांगौ गसिबो लाबाय ।”<sup>87</sup>

English rendering –

One person took Jute leaves and rice and the other took the other materials required for customary death rituals.

One of the important rites of death in the Bodo community is holding a funeral in memory of the dead person and is held on the 13<sup>th</sup> day after death. The novelist has also depicted it in the novel.

## 2.6 Folk Festivals:

The Bodos have been celebrating different festivals since time immemorial. Since they primarily depend upon agriculture as their prime source of livelihood most of their festival celebrations centres on agriculture. Besides this they also celebrate different religious festivals. In this regard their celebrations can be divided into two categories of Religious and Agricultural festivals. According to Kameswar Brahma the festivals and ceremonies of the Bodos can be classified as –

- i. Religious
- ii. Seasonal
- iii. Agricultural.<sup>88</sup>

<sup>87</sup> Lahary, Monoranjan. *Alaishri*. p-137

<sup>88</sup> Brahma, Kameswar. *A study in Cultural heritage of the Boros*. p-110

Indramalati Narzary has also divided the celebrations into two categories as –

- i. Religious merry makings.
- ii. Agricultural merry makings.<sup>89</sup>

The different festivals and celebrations that are highlighted in the selected novels are categorised into two types.

### 2.6.1 Religious Festivals:

The oldest religion of the Bodos is Bathou religion. It is the supreme power above all for the Bodos and different traditional festivals are celebrated based upon this supreme Bwrai Bathou like Kherai and Garja. Kherai is the most significant and biggest Religious festival of the Bodo community and at the same time Garja festival is also takes a very important place as a religious festival in the Bodo society. This Garja festival is celebrated by the whole village in a sacred place called Garjashali.

#### 2.6.1.1 Garja festival:

Garja festival is illustrated in the novel *Sanmwkhangari Lamajwng*. The people of Simligudi village celebrate Garja festival before the starting of Bwisagu season. They believe that if they do not celebrate this festival it will bring them bad luck and sorrow in their lives so they sacrifice domestic birds and animals like cock, pigeon, duck and goat to the Gods and in the end they build small raft out of banana plant stem, put a pair of pigeon on it and flow it away in the water in the name of offerings to their Gods. This is the customs of the Garja festival that have been followed and passed on from one generation to the next since the ancient times that have been formed as their traditional habit.

The people make this sacrifice to Bwrai Bathou by offering prayers so as to bring good luck and remove their sadness and difficulties from their lives. They then consume the remains of the sacrificed animals and birds together considering it as a form of blessing from their almighty Bwrai Bathou. The novelist describes it as –

“बे सानखालि सिमलिगुदि गामिनि रावहाबो नखरनि अरदाबाव अर जोडा । सौराय थालिरनि लारुनि अनगायैबो थानसालियाव मोदाइ बाउनाय बोलि होनाय बोरमा, दाउ, फारौ, हांसोनि बेदरफोरजों संफाजाबनाय गोबां ओखाम मोनजायो ।”<sup>90</sup>

<sup>89</sup> Narzary, Indramalati. *Boro Harimu arw Thunlai Bijirnai*. p-11

English rendering –

On that auspicious day no family in Simligudi village cooks food in their kitchen. Besides sticky rice and bananas the whole village cooks mixed food with the remains of sacrificed animals like cock, pigeon, duck, and goat and eat together.

## 2.6.2 Agricultural Festival:

Agricultural festivals are also called as seasonal festivals. The Bodo people depend upon agriculture for survival and leading their lives that is why the people who depend upon agriculture their festivals have a very close connection with agriculture and these festivals are related to the cultivating seasons. In this way the Bodo people celebrates their festivals which have a close connection with agriculture and season like Bwisagu, Magw, Katigasa, Haljangkhra, Mainao lanay and many more.

### 2.6.2.1 Bwisagu:

Bwisagu is the most and dearest of festivals of the Bodo community. It is related to both agricultural and seasonal festival and is a big part of their lives. Every year it is celebrated starting from the last day of Swithw month (mid April) until the seventh day of forthcoming Bwisagu month in their traditional calendar. The boys and girls of the Bodo community enjoy and celebrate this season by expressing their thoughts to each other.

The author clearly illustrates the celebration of Bwisagu festival in the novel *Sanmwkhangari Lamajwng*. The cattle are a very important animal for the Bodos as they use it for their agricultural purposes. They put great value to it. On the last day of Swithw month (mid April) they bathe their cattle in the nearby water bodies like pond, river, stream and lake with traditional ritual. This day is called the Mwsou Bwisagu. In the evening the cattle are rubbed with oil and after offering prayers they are tied with new ropes (fagha). In the novel the author depicts it through Gwmsar's family as well as the entire village. They collect the items required for bathing the cattle like gourd, brinjal, raw turmeric, dighiliti plant branches and tharai on the previous day. The author narrates this as –

मोसौ थुखोयनायनि सानसे सिगांनो सिमलिगुदि गामिनि बयबो दिग्लिलिथि बिफानि दालाइफोर, गोथां हालदि बेदर, लाउ, फान्थावफोर बुथुमनानै थियारि खालामना दिनखायो ।<sup>91</sup>

<sup>90</sup> Swargiary, Katindra, *Sanmwkhangari Lamajwng*. p-84

<sup>91</sup> Ibid. p-85

English rendering –

On the previous day before Mwsou Bwisagu for bathing their cattle all the people in the village Simligudi collect the traditional items required like gourd, brinjal, raw turmeric, digilithi branches and tharai.

The next morning, they smear mustard oil on the horns of the cattle, smear them with ash mixed with mustard oil, slice these items and make garlands from some of it and take their cattle to the nearby water bodies like ponds, streams, lakes and rivers, smear the sliced items on their cattle along with water and sing their traditional folk songs of bathing cattle. After bathing the cattle they are let loose for grazing in the fields. Dabla, Jwngsar and Gwmsar also take their cattle to the nearby waters of the Laodonga stream and bathe their cattle and later let them loose for grazing. They bring back the left over bathing items and throw them on the roofs of their kitchen house, main living house, cowshed roof and other parts of their house and stack the garlands on different corners of their house. It is a customary ritual of the Bodo society which the author illustrates distinctly through Dabla's character. These rituals have always created a distinct identity for the Bodo community and have been transferred from one generation to the next since the ancient times from our forefathers. This is the Ethnicity of the Bodo community.

In the evening Bilaisri cleans the cowshed and mops the floor with water, she takes banana leaves on the eastern corner, then lights the sacred earthen lamp on it and offers prayers. When the cattle arrive she ties them with new ropes called Faga traditionally. From this it is known that the cultivator Bodo people put great value to their cattle.

Another important activity worth mentioning is that before the arrival of Bwisagu season the people of the Bodo society practise their traditional dance forms for dancing in their villages during the Bwisagu season as a part of their celebration. They form into different groups and continue dancing for almost a month throughout the different nearby villages. It is seen in the novel through the youth activities of Thwribari village during this season where Gwmsar, Saikhong, Gwmbwr as well as Baleng, Somaishri and other goes to see it. In this way celebration of Bwisagu festival is seen in the novel Swmaosarnaini Orgeng.

The Bodo people celebrate and welcome the Bwisagu season whole heartedly and with full enthusiasm. They celebrate this season by going around the villages by dancing their

traditional dance forms and receive gifts like money and rice from every family. When they finish dancing after several days they have a grand feast together in their village with the gifts they have received. This has become clear in the novel when Alaishri and her friends celebrates and dances in the Bwisagu season in about fifteen nearby villages. The author describes this as –

“एरै आगलि मोनाबो मोजाडै मोजां बैसागु मागिबायबो । मागिबायबो मागिबाय थारला गंजिबासो गामि मागिबाय । थाखा-फैसा, माइरं-दैरं थोजासे मोनबायबो । दा बैसागुनि गु अक्टखालि अमा बायनानै खाना जानाय जायो ।”<sup>92</sup>

English rendering –

Here Agoli and her friends have danced around different in about fifteen villages. Money, rice have been received as gifts in abundance. On the ninth night of Bwisagu season they bring pork and have a grand feast.

#### 2.6.2.2 Magw Domasi:

The celebration of Magw Domasi is highlighted in the novel *Sanmwkhangarini Lamajwng*. The main activity of Magw Domasi is burning Belagur which is prepared by the young boys of the village or a group of cowboys, in an open field. Belagur is constructed with dry straw or hay of paddy. A small house is also build beside the Belagur with the dry straw or hay of paddy. So just before a day of burning Belagur the young boys and the village cowboys organize a feast together, and by the dawn they have a bath and burn the Belagur. Taking bath before burning the Belagur is also a kind of ritual. The Bodos believes that if a person does not take bath before burning of the Belagur then the fire sparks will come over the person and burn him. The same scene is presented in the novel through the young children of Simbligudi village like Gwmsar, Saikhong, Gwmbwr, Rwndao, Ramwnda, Baleng, Somaishri while burning a Belagur.

Gwmsar and all the others burn the Belagur in Magw Domasi that's why they all start collecting the dry straw or hay a week in advance and dumps it together at an open field which belongs to Baleng's family. Bamboo is also required in building the Belagur. So the boys take the wooden cart from Saikhong and visit each house to collect bamboo. In this way they build the Belagur of different size and also build two thatch houses to spend the night. After that they go to Salbari market and bring cooking oil, salt, turmeric, potato, brinjal and

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<sup>92</sup> Boro, Rita. *Swmaosarnaini Orgeng*. p-51

three cocks. After building the house they cover the roof with banana leaves to protect from fog. After completing all the work they leave for their own home.

A day before the auspicious Magw Domasi, the cowboys get together in the evening and the women folk of the village pound rice powder to prepare varieties of snacks, rice cake. For which the sound of pounding mortar (uwal and dingkhi) echoes the entire village. Fwisali, Baleng and Somaishri were helping each other to cook meal because Gwmsar and the other boys don't know how to cook. As the darkness approaches Baleng and the other girls starts to cook, at the same time Gwmbwr and Ramwnda helps in cleaning the cock for cooking. On the other hand while the girls were cooking, the boys finding not any work to be done goes to Gwmbwr's house. As soon as they reach Gwmbwr's sister Swmshri offers them rice cake and return to the place of the feast. After the feast they all spent night together at the thatch house they built with the dry hay and straw. The next day as it dawns they all wakes up and takes bath and burns the Belagur with a loud shout out – "Dhoom Belagur." In this way they burn three Belagurs and people comes to sit by the fire near the Belagur.

During Magw Domasi no matter what whether rich or poor there is no shortage of edible things in the Bodo families. So if any one visits during those days none can return in vain, the visitors will be treated with tea and some traditional dishes. The scene is portrayed through the sight of how the boys were offered a treat by Gwmbwr's sister Swmsri and Baleng's family.

### 2.6.2.3 Khathri Gasa:

Khathri Gasa is one of the Agricultural festivals of the Bodos. This is observed on the last day of Ashin month. In this festival with the hope of good harvest the Bodo people offers prayer to Lord Bwrai Bathou and Mainao Burwi by lightning an earthen lamp at the paddy field, on road and at home grainary. According to Mangal Singh Hazowary, "During that season the paddy takes its fruits in the paddy field. The cultivators try to welcome the Mainao deity lighting 'Alari Bathi.'" <sup>93</sup> Observing the eve of Khathri Gasa is also displayed in the novel *Sanmwkangari Lamajwng*. In the evening of Khathri Gasa the village Simligudi is brightens with the lights of the earthen lamp in every household where people lights an earthen lamp at their Bathou and prays to the Goddess Mainao. They pray to God to give them a good harvest. After that they light a lamp in the slice of elephant apple fruit on a

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<sup>93</sup> Hazowary, Mangal Singh. *The traditional Boro festivals- a critical Study*. p-159

bamboo pole. The young children Gwmsar, Saikhong were making hue and laugh and play around here and there. In this way they celebrate the Khathri Gasa with joy.

#### 2.6.2.4 Haljangkhra (celebration of the last day of paddy cultivation):

Haljangkhra is a festival related to cultivation. This day is observed on the last day of paddy cultivation. Haljangkhra is a very joyful day for the farmers because the farmers get rest from that day. That's why in the name of all the difficulties and hard labour they enjoy a grand meal. According to Mongol Singh Hazowari, "In Boro terms Nangal means plough and Zangkhra means the concluding ceremony of paddy plantation."<sup>94</sup>

A picture of Nangwl Jangkhra is illustrated in the novel *Swmaousarnaini Organg* where the farmers of Batabari enjoy the Haljangkhra in a very grand way.

#### 2.6.2.5 Mainao Lainai (welcoming the Goddess of wealth):

A festival related with agriculture is Mainao lainai or welcoming the Goddess of wealth. The farmers observe this festival at the time of harvesting paddy when the paddy ripens. On the day of Mainao lainai the Bodo people cleans and mops the houses and then takes bath. The head women of the family moves towards the paddy field letting her hair loose, carrying a sickle, banana leaf, basil leaf and water in a pot, all on her head. After reaching the paddy field the women sprinkles the water from the pot with basil leaf and then cuts a handful of paddy plant and wraps it with the banana leaf and putting it on her head and returns home. There is a ritual while bringing Mainao that whoever brings the Mainao cannot talk to anyone on the way. There is a belief that if the person who is bringing Mainao happens to talk with anyone on the way then the Goddess of wealth doesn't come home.

The ritual of bringing Mainao is depicted in the novel *Sanmwkhangari Lamajwng*. The picture is drawn through Saikhong's aunt Romaishri who is seen carrying a basket of Mainao on her head. Gwmsar knows that one cannot talk or laugh while bringing Mainao but still in order to make Romaishri laugh and look towards them they tried to joke her. Gwmsar and his friends says –

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<sup>94</sup> Hazowary, Mangal Singh. *The traditional Boro festivals- a critical Study*. p-235

“ओइ मादै, मादै; नॉनि उन उन सैमा फाग्ला मासे थांदो । अरगोनलै मादै, खारदो, ओइ बाजै, बाजै लै, हनै धेमसि बिलोआव अर जोंदों । ओइ बाजै, हनै लावदंगाथिं दावराय मासे बिरदों ।”<sup>95</sup>

English rendering –

Hello Aunty, A mad dog is following you. The dog might bite you. Run! Hello Sister-in-law, there is a fire at Dhemshi beel. Hello Sister-in-law, A peacock is flying at Loudanga.

#### 2.6.2.6 Wngkham Gwrlwi jannai (A feast of new rice):

Wngkham Gwrlwi is also a ritual related to Agriculture. This ritual is observed in the month of Aghwn (in the months of November and December) and is observed after the ripening of Maisali rice. At this festival a feast of new rice along with meat and wine is served. But before the feast celebration the new rice is offered to the almighty and the ancestors. At the celebration all the relatives and the village people are invited and served the food. The picture of eating new rice is seen in the novel *Sanmwkhangari Lamajwng*. Baleng’s father is seen shopping vegetables at Salbari Market. Baleng’s mother Thokli is also seen coming to help them in cooking food along with the villagers and the other family members. On the other side, Hobga and Jwngsar have also cut down a banana plant to make plate to serve food. So as the food are cooked the host along with the family member offers it to the Bathou by placing some rice and curry on the banana leaf and together kneels down and prays to God and also offering a pair of betel nut and betel leaf. After that the food is served to the invited guest. In this way the festival is celebrated peacefully.

#### 2.7 Folk belief and Superstitious:

Folk Belief is another genre of Folk Culture. Folk belief is a matter of common belief to larger extends in certain communities at a certain period of time.<sup>96</sup> Different Folk Beliefs that have been followed and passed on to the next generation in the society by their ancestors are seen till today in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The people in the Bodo society have prosperously led their families and their society with these beliefs. They have protected and preserved their religion, heritage and traditions through these beliefs. In other words, right from the birth till death of an individual a lot of social folk beliefs are interconnected. Through their beliefs they try to build their society in a disciplined manner by which the identity of a community is

<sup>95</sup> Swargiary, Katindra. *Sanmwkhangari Lamajwng*. p-54

<sup>96</sup> Dutta, Juri. *Ethnic Worlds in Selected Indian Fiction*. P-93

established. The people in the Bodo society have a lot of beliefs ranging from house, courtyard, agricultural practices, birds and animals, weaving and clothing, dreams and the human life cycle. Different advices and knowledge of their ancestors becomes clear through these beliefs some of which bears scientific logic while some do not.

On the other hand Superstitious Belief is a part of Folk Belief which is often frightening and dangerous to common life. According to the 'Comprehensive Dictionary of Terms in Anthropology, Sociology of Allied Discipline' Superstitious Belief is – A belief about natural phenomena that depends upon a magical or occult interpretation of events and that is widely held to be true in spite of objective demonstrable facts to the contrary. <sup>97</sup>

“जाय फोथायनायाव मानिनानै लानो हाथाव बान एबा जुगथि गैया बेनो खाना फोथायनाय ।”<sup>98</sup>

English Rendering –

Those beliefs which do not have any scientific reasoning are known as Superstitious beliefs.

According to Indira Boro –

“खोमसि फोथायनाय होननानै बुडोबला सरासनसायै गोमोखोआरि नोजोरनि आंखाल आरो बिथा गैयालासे मानिना सोलिनायखौनो खोमसि फोथायनाय होननानै बुंनय जायो ।”<sup>99</sup>

English rendering –

Superstitious beliefs are those which generally do not have any scientific base and reasoning.

Rita Boro says –

“जाय फोथायनायनि गेजेरजो मोनसे हारि एबा सासे सुबुंनि जौगासारनाय गैया एबा जाय फोथायनायाव सुबुं माहारिनि एबा मानसिनि जौगासारनायाव हेंथा हैयो बेफोरनो खोमसि फोथायनाय एब खाना फोथायनाय ।”<sup>100</sup>

English rendering –

Superstitious beliefs or blind beliefs are those beliefs that hinders the prosperity of a community or an individual or that hinders the progress of mankind or human beings.

In other words from the above quotations it can be summarised that superstitious or blind beliefs are those which hinder the prosperity and growth of an individual or the community

<sup>97</sup> Sharma, Dr. Lokesh. *A Comprehensive Dictionary o Term in Anthropology, Sociology of Allied Disciplines*

<sup>98</sup> Brahma, Brajendra Kumar. *Subung Mahariyao Khama Fwthainai*, Suju Bijab, p-35

<sup>99</sup> Boro, Indira. *Raithai Hala. Vol – 1. p-78*

<sup>100</sup> Boro, Rita. *Swbkhonnai arw Daai. p-75*

and which are quite harmful to them. The people in the Bodo community are not free from such superstitious beliefs and are engulfed with it. The strong superstitious belief in exorcism and witchcraft is still prevalent among them which is quite dangerous for the human society.

The novels also contain expressions of popular folk beliefs in quite many ways through which many superstitious or blind beliefs prevalent in the Bodo society comes to light.

The novel *Sanmwkhangari Lamajwng* highlights the rise of folk belief regarding clothing. The Bodo people weave their own clothing and when the fabric is laid during weaving and if anyone crosses it they believe that the fibre will be tangled and becomes complicated and they will fall short of it. When Mwdaokha's mother Theleb prepares fabric for weaving Dokhona Gwmsar and his friends are playing marble balls nearby. After some time when Ramwnda jumps across the fabric to fetch a marble ball Theleb grabs a twig and chases away the boys angrily saying –

“दहायनो बुंदों आं हथ'सिरा फोरखौ, हिसान सौनायखौ बारनाडा होननानै । हिसानआ खाना नाडो ।”<sup>101</sup>

English rendering –

I have already warned you earlier, do not cross the fibre otherwise the fabric will be tangled and become complicated.

From these words of Theleb the folk beliefs of the Bodo people regarding weaving and clothing becomes evident. There is no scientific proof whether or not the fabric becomes complicated but there is advice and knowledge in the words ‘do not cross the fabric’ that the feet might touch the fibre and get tangled with it when crossing and the person might fall and get hurt.

Rice is the staple food crop of the people in the Bodo community and they have a lot of folk beliefs regarding cultivation of rice. Mainao lainai is a common folk belief among them which is related to cultivation of rice. During this process of Mainao lainai the person carrying it is not allowed to stop, talk, laugh, look back, look around on the way otherwise they believe that the God of wealth or Mainao will not come to their house and will stay back in the paddy fields. In the novel it becomes evident when Saikhong's aunty Romaishri carries

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<sup>101</sup> Swargiary, Katindra. *Sanmwkhangari Lamajwng*. p-52

the Mainao from their paddy fields and Gwmsar and his friends tries to interrupt her and make her laugh and look back at them by joking her.

Other than this, the novel also evokes the popular beliefs in the worship of Garja puja. Garja is a religious festival. The people in the Bodo society believe that if they do not worship and conduct the Garja puja their village will loom in despair and sorrow. So the whole village worship the Garja puja together. In this novel this belief is expressed through the people of the village Simligudi. The people in this village believe that if they do not worship Garja then trouble will loom in their village and their domestic birds and animals will start dying and this belief has been passed on from one generation to the next since the ancient times by their forefathers. So they gather in the village temple about three prior to the arrival of Rongjali Bwisagu festival and perform the Garja puja to save and protect their village from forthcoming danger.

Along with these there is also folk beliefs regarding Dreams among the Bodo people. Whenever they gets shocked seeing something or if they gets frightened by seeing any bad dreams and to get relief from fear they spit lightly on their chest. They believe that if they do this their fear will subside and will get relief from shock. In the novel it becomes evident through the expression of the author when Somaishri spits lightly after a fearful dream –

“थुइ-थुइ होननानै गावनो गावनि बिखायाव जुमुदै मुजुरनानै लानायसै । बेबादि खालामब्ला मानिबाफोर जाहोनआव बागदावनानै गिनाया गिगायोनो, बागदावगायोनो ।”<sup>102</sup>

English rendering –

She spits lightly on her chest to subside her fear and shock in order to subside the fear accumulated due to sudden shock.

In the Bodo society the relation of brother-in-law (husband’s elder brother called Beowai) is a very pious relation. It is believed that in this relation if the people exchange any good hand to hand they become slugs. In the novel it becomes evident when one fine evening in the spring season when Dabla, Bilaisri, Jwngsar and Bidangsri were having betel nut in their courtyard. When Bidangsri offers her Beowai Dabla betel nut he takes the betel nut from her hands from a distance then Jwngsar sees this and jokes on Bidangsri saying –

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<sup>102</sup> Swargiary, Katindra. *Sanmwkhangari Lamajwng*. p-151

“गय होनायावनो आदानि आखाइआव आखाइ फोनांमारबाय नामालै ? आदाया देनां गानलेद जाहैनांसिगोनलै फैगौ जोनोमाव ।”<sup>103</sup>

English rendering –

Have your hands really touched his while giving the betel nut? If so then brother will end up becoming a slug in your next birth.

In other words, the respect and adherence that the younger ones have towards their elders appears to be hiding through this belief.

In the novel *Khwmsinifrai Swrangthing* too, spitting lightly in ones chest to subside ones fear and shock is portrayed by author through Rakheb when she goes to discard the cow’s head one night in Beldang Gambra’s well she feels sudden shock by the sound that comes from a nearby thicket of bamboo plants and she spits lightly on herself which is known from her expression –

“थुइ थुइ थुइ...!!

सोरबा गुबुनफोरा खोनाहैसै खोनाहैसै लासै लासै गावनि बिखायाव गाव जुमुदै मुजुदलाना लानानै राखेबआ बागदावनाय आरो हरखाब सोमजिनाय गोसो सिंनि एसे गिनायखौ गावनि खाथिनिफ्राय गोजानाव होखांहरनो नाजानायसै ।”<sup>104</sup>

English rendering –

Thui Thui Thui...!!

Fearing someone might hear her she silently spits lightly on her chest to subside her shock and the fear that has arisen in her heart.

In other words the belief that spitting lightly on oneself relieves ones sudden fear and shock comes to light through the above assertion of the novel.

Among the people in the Bodo society there is a belief that they are not supposed to laugh in the evening during the sunset time, and if anyone does so then bad omen will prevail upon that individual. The author portrays this in the novel through Naleb’s advice to her daughter when she laughs loudly on evening as –

“फाग्लि जाबाय बियो । खालखुन्दिया नांनाय बे बिलिफां समावनो बेबादि मिनिबायोना मानसिआ ।”<sup>105</sup>

<sup>103</sup> Swargiary, Katindra. *Sanmwkhangari Lamajwng*. p-189

<sup>104</sup> Swargiary, Katindra. *Khwmsinifrai Swrangthing*. p-9

<sup>105</sup> Ibid. p-51

English rendering –

She has gone mad. Evil spirit has possessed her. Does anyone laugh like this in the evening?

In other words even though no direct assertion is made that something bad will happen to the person but an indirection assertion is made that the people believe that it is not proper to laugh loudly in the evening when darkness starts after sunset.

There is a folk belief among the Bodo people in the diverse sounds made by the various birds and animals. They believe that the howling of the dogs and the hooting of the owl at night indicates that something bad or evil is about to happen. This popular folk belief is highlighted through the novel *Alaishri*. One evening when *Alaishri* becomes late when returning from college her mother Sarala becomes engrossed in deep thoughts fearing something bad might happen to her on the way. At that time she was waiting eagerly for her daughter to return from college and to make things worse for her a dog nearby her house began to howl loudly: an owl from the nearby tree also began to hoot in a low tone as if to express deep sorrow: a black cat comes out from a nearby house and begins to meow for about five minutes in the middle of the road and goes to another house. After hearing these sounds she becomes more concerned for her daughter because such crying of birds and animals in the evening or at nights sends a message of forthcoming danger. In the words of the novelist –

“बियो दावसि गाबनाइखौ खोनाबाय, दाव द’ददर’ गाबनाइखौ खोनाबाय, काल फेसा गाबनाइखौ खोनाबाय आरो खोनाबाय मावजि मेउ-मेउ गाबनायखौ । खोनानानै बिहा बांसिन जिंगा फैबाय । हराव बिदि गाबनाया माबा खैदां-खैफोदनि रादाब होयो ।”<sup>106</sup>

English rendering –

She hears the cry of the Mainah and Dodoro bird, the hoot of the owl and the meow of the black cat. After hearing these sounds her anxiety grows more. When they cry at night it sends a message of forthcoming danger.

Such kinds of beliefs are still prevalent at the present times among the people in the Bodo society.

There is another belief among the Bodos that if anyone keeps sharp objects like knife under

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<sup>106</sup> Lahary, Monoranjan. *Alaishri*. p-11

their pillow or their mattress or near their beds then they will not have any bad dreams: and when they have to cross any river or lake when they go to visit their relatives and if they carry a knife or other such sharp objects they will not be attacked by any ghost, exorcism or affected by any witchcraft. It becomes evident in the novel *Alaishri* through the conversation between *Alaishri*'s parents *Mihir* and *Sarala* when she screams in the midnight after having a bad dream as –

: नों आइ आलेनि गान्दु सिडाव सिखा एबा दाबा दोनाखै नामा ?

: ए ! फाग्लि गोसोसै बिलाइ ? दोनाखैथ' । थाल्ला बावथारदों । थां थां दानो लाइथां सिखा दाबा गनैखौबो लाबो ।

ओंखाइनोथ' सिमां नुदों जोंनि गथ'या ।<sup>107</sup>

English rendering –

: Did you not keep any knife under our daughter *Ale*'s pillow?

: Oh! Oh! How forgetful I am. Truly, i have not kept any knife. Go and get the knives, both big and small. That is why she is having bad dreams.

Such kinds of beliefs have dominated the Bodo society even present times to a large extend where people today keeps knife and sharp objects under their pillows when sleeping, place knives in their children's bed, takes knives along with them when they travel with their children.

Beliefs relating to the meowing of cats also become evident through the novel *Alaishri* where she thinks that something bad may happen to her when the cat snuggles to her feet and meows repeatedly. The novelist depicts this as –

“दुर्जाडा खैफोदसो लाबोनो नागिरदो नामा आंनि सायावलाय ? दहाय मावजि बुन्दियाबो आंनि आथिडाव उप्ले उप्ले

मेउ मेउ गाबदोंमोन । गामाखालि बिदि गाबा, दिनै मानो गाबखो मावजि बुन्दियालाइ ?”<sup>108</sup>

English rendering –

Is *Durjang* trying to some harm me? Sometime ago the female cat was snuggling in my feet and meowing loudly. She usually does not act like this. Why is she crying like this today?

Folk beliefs regarding the sounds and cries of birds and animals is also seen in the novels

<sup>107</sup> Lahary, Monoranjan. *Alaishri*. p-76

<sup>108</sup> Ibid. p-226

Dainee?. In the novel it becomes evident after Bilasu becomes alert and feels that something bad is going to happen when she hears the foxes start howling near her house, a big black crow caws loudly by sitting on the roof of her house and an owl also starts hooting like a cat. In the words of the novelist –

“बिलासुनि न’आव सियाल हान्जाआ हौआ हौआ गाबफैबाय । बिलासुआ हरसेमानि उन्दुलांनो हायाखैसै । लावथि लानानै होख्रां हरब्लानो सियालफ्रा दले-बले फैफिन्नानै हौआ हौआ गाबफैयो । दफा थद’ थद’ सियालाआ हौआ हौआ फिथा औहा गाबै – गाबैनो हरनि 12 बाजिलाइदों । बिलासुआ सानबाय नखराव माबा निदान जासिगोन ।”<sup>109</sup>

English rendering –

A pack of fox howled the whole night near Bilasu’s house. Bilasu could not sleep the entire night. Even after scaring them away with a long stick the fox comes back after some time and again start howling. They continued howling till 12:00 AM in the midnight pausing for a short time in between. Bilasu feels that it is a bad omen and something bad is going happen to their family.

Similarly, such kind of belief also becomes clear through Durmao’s character in the novel. Bilasu, Joysrwn and Dilsrwn complain and accuse Durmao of practising exorcism and witchcraft and accordingly they issue a notice and send it to her house in the evening. At that time an old black crow which was sitting on the bamboo shredded old roof top of her house cries loudly and flies away, and old owl hoots like a cat and flies away across her courtyard, an old black dog of their village sits in one corner of her courtyard and howls loudly as if in deep grief looking at the sky, a pack of fox also began to howl loudly nearby and hearing which Durmao feels that these are nothing but a message that something bad is about to happen to her family.

In addition to Folk beliefs in this novel a Superstitious beliefs is also highlighted. It is belief in witchcraft or exorcism called Daini. The belief in this superstitious has dominated the Bodo society to a large extend. In every village of the Bodo community there is a person who cures small illness and diseases with medicines using a mixture of leaves, roots, bark and stems of different plants and herbs, medicinal and herbal oil, water mixed with certain medicines, wearable beads with laced with medicines etc. These people are usually called Oja or Daina/Daini by the people in the society. Many small illness and diseases are often cured but certain disease remain incurable and the sometimes the patients die from it and during

<sup>109</sup> Lahary, Monoranjan. *Dainee?*. p-29

this situation the people in the society accuse that they practice witchcraft and exorcism. Similarly, in the novel Durmao is also an Oja. She can treat and cure many small illnesses and diseases. She can also cure snake bites through her dedication and experiments and can also help in conceiving to childless mothers for which many people in the village thinks that she practices exorcism and black magic. One day Dilsrwn's son dies and he puts the blame upon Durmao as he thinks her to be a Daini practicing exorcism and black magic and killing people and spreads this in the village. But in reality when Dilsrwn calls Durmao to cure his son he was already in coma. It is due to superstitious beliefs of the people that she has to lose her life cruelly.

Another superstitious belief quite prevalent among the Bodo people is Hainamuli (Love Dose). It is a kind of medicine which is used by someone who has a strong desire to marry another. Here the latter usually has no desire to marry the former. Such belief is highlighted in the novel when Bilasu accuses Durmao of giving Hainamuli to his son Arongbir so that he falls in love with her daughter Nijira. In the words of the novelist –

“खोनानो मोनबाय दि बिलासुआ दुर्मावखौ दसिदों । मानोना मुहिनि बान होनानै अरंखौ गोसो थोहोदों ।”<sup>110</sup>

English rendering –

It has come to notice that Bilasu has accused Durmao. She has done some magic and made her fall in love with Arong.

Along with this using of Hainamuli to make Arongbir and Nijira fall in love with each other becomes evident when Arongbir's father Sandrwb also believes the same. The author establishes this as –

“दुर्मावआ दि हायनामुलि एबा मुहिनि होनानै अरंखौ निजिराखौ मोजां मोनहोदों – बे बाश्राखौ सान्द्रोबआ फोथायाखै नडा, फोथायदों । बेनिखायनो फिसाज्लाखौ बियो हुसोयारि खालामदों । नाथाय, अरंआ सानआ दि बियो दुर्मावजों मुहिनि होजादों ।”<sup>111</sup>

English rendering –

It is not that Sandrwb does not believe in the faith that Durmao has made Arong and Nijira fall in love with the help of love dose or by some magical charm, but he does. So he warns his son against this. But Arong does not believe that Durmao has done any magical charm with some love dose.

<sup>110</sup> Lahary, Monoranjan. *Dainee?*. p-29

<sup>111</sup> Ibid. p-46

Folk Beliefs is also highlighted in the novel *Swmaosarnaini Orgeng*. There is a popular folk belief among the people in the Bodo society that is to consume snails on the occasion of Janmastami. They believe that consumption of snails on this pious occasion brings them good luck. In the novel this belief comes to light through the faith of Anita's mother and the villagers where Anita's mother cleans snails for consumption with meal even though there's only a few. The author expresses this in the novel as –

“भाद्र दान, बेखायनो दिनै जन्मष्टमि । बे दिनाव साम’ ओखि जाब्ला मोजानो । गोदोनिफ्राय बे दोरोडा बे नखराव सोलिबोदों । बे नखरावल’ नडा, गामि नाडैनो सोमिबोदों ।”<sup>112</sup>

English rendering –

It is the month of Bhadra and the occasion of Janmastami. Consumption of snails on this day is considered pious. This tradition has been in this family since the ancient times, not only this family but the entire village.

In addition to this there is a faith among the people in the Bodo society that is being followed since the ancient times till date is that on the day of purnima or full moon they do not touch their plough and spade. In fact on this day they do not work in their fields. In the novel it becomes evident through the villagers from Anita's village where they pause their works on that they and cleans their households during the day and by sunset in the evening they light the sacred earthen lamp in the pious Bathou. The novelist expresses this in his words as –

“दिनै साउन दाननि पुर्निमा हर । गामिनि नखरफोरा रावबो हाल एवाखै । राइजो नाडै दिनैनि सानखौ बन्द फालियो । मारें मोनफ्रोम दाननि पुर्निमा सानखौ गामिनि मानसिफोरा हाल खदाल एवनायनिफ्राय गोजानाव थायो । बयबो न’बां लिरना आरिस्रां मोनाबिलियाव बाथौ गुदियाव आलारि बाथि सावओ ।”<sup>113</sup>

English rendering –

Today is the day of purnima of the Shaun month. No family in the village is working in the fields today. They are all observing bandh today which is that on every day of purnima the villagers do not take to their ploughs and spades to work and stay away from it. Everybody cleans their houses and surroundings in the day and by evening they light the holy earthen lamp in the pious Bathou.

Again, there is a social belief among the Bodos in the weaving of Aronai or Kobj. They have to prepare the fabric and weave the cloth within one night. In other words they have to

<sup>112</sup> Boro, Rita. *Swmaosarnaini Orgeng*. p-10

<sup>113</sup> Ibid. p-54

complete the entire task of weaving the sacred cloth before the sun rises. The person who weaves this precious cloth is not supposed to have any food while weaving. As per the ritual when the members of the family and the villagers sleep after having dinner they bath properly and purify themselves and work on the loom, prepare the fibre, weave it and have to complete it before sun rises. In other words, the person has to be religious and nobody is supposed to see him/her weaving the precious Aronai or the Kobj in any way. If anyone happens to see the weaving of the cloth it is believed that the purpose and the preciousness of the cloth will not be attained. In the novel it is seen when Anita, Fulmoti and Dharitri prepares to weave Aronao and Kobj where even though after following all the traditional beliefs and rules of weaving the cloth they are not able to complete it. In fact, Dharitri falls sick and has to take rest while they were weaving: some mischief disturbs Fulmoti and throws a stone at her and the Weaving Comb in Anita's loom often snaps and breaks making it difficult to weave. She thinks that the reason of the breaking of the Weaving Comb might be because her parents come to see her as to what she is doing silently at night.

In the traditional Bodo society there is a superstitious belief regarding the use of vaccines. In other words in the ancient times the Bodo people feared taking vaccines and believed that after taking vaccines they will suffer from different diseases. In the novel it is seen when Agoli tells her mother about receiving vaccine in her school and her mother thrashes her and scolds saying –

“मानो लानांगौ नों टिका बिजिखौ । मालाइखौ थुखान्दा बिजिजों थुजाना बेमार जाजानो नागिर्दों नों ?”<sup>114</sup>

English rendering –

Why did you take the vaccine? Do you want to suffer from diseases by taking vaccine from a used syringe?

Not only this, but there was also an uproar in the different families in the whole village regarding the receiving of vaccines and Biren Das goes to the village school and allegedly thrashes the teacher. Thus, this kind of attitude by Anita's mother Saoli and the other villagers suggest a sense of superstitious belief prevalent among them.

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<sup>114</sup> Boro, Rita. *Swmaosarnaini Orgeng*.

## 2.8 Folk Medicines:

Folk medicine is related derivatively to the academic medicine of earlier generation. Certain ideas that were once circulating in academic medical circles and now discarded have become part and parcel of the Folk Medical viewpoint.<sup>115</sup> Since the ancient times the rural Bodo people have cured different diseases and illness with the help of traditional medicinal plants, homemade medicines and medicines procured from village Ojas. That is they have collected various edible medicinal plants from the forest, cooked and consumed them; sometimes they have mixed the roots, leaves and stems of different plants to make a paste and consumed and used them as per requirement for different purposes; with the help of Ojas they procured specially prepared varieties of medicinal beads, blessed water and oil and in this way they healed themselves of different diseases and illnesses. This is an Ethnicity of the Bodos and this traditional knowledge system is still prevalent to a large extent in the Bodo society even in the present times. The selected novels also depict the use of traditional knowledge system and folk medicines which are sometimes homemade or sometimes procured with the help of the Oja.

The novel *Alaishri* documents the use of folk medicines which are usually collected from the village or from the Oja. Here Andaa is an Oja. He possesses a little knowledge about folk medicines and exorcism. He chants some charm and gives traditional medicines when any sick person comes to him. When *Alaishri* is allegedly raped and loses consciousness and everyone thinks her to be dead, he then checks her pulse and informs her father that she is alive. He then proceeds to massage her palm and feet with oil after bringing her home. After sometime when her body warms up she gains consciousness and starts talking about her ordeal. Thus with the help of Andaa Oja's traditional knowledge *Alaishri* gains consciousness. This is a Folk Medicine which is the Ethnicity of the Bodos where these traditional knowledge systems which is prevalent in the present times and has been passed on to the next generations since the ancient times by their forefathers.

The use of folk medicines is documented precisely in the novel *Dainee?*. In the novel *Ransrem*, *Gabda*, *Jakhor* are all ojas just like *Durmao*. They collect roots, leaves and stems of different medicinal plants and trees, grind them to make a paste and make medicines using different combinations to cure different diseases and illness. Sometimes they also chant

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<sup>115</sup> Dorson, RM. *Folklore and Folklife: An introduction*, London, The University of Chicago.

charm and uses Khaori (small sea snails shell) in accordance to their requirement to cure certain illness. The different plants and trees in the forest have significant medicinal values and can be used to cure different diseases. The protagonist of the novel Durmao also cures various diseases and illnesses using this type of traditional knowledge system. She has acquired this traditional knowledge from her late husband and learnt the art to use different medicines in accordance to the illness. The author narrates this as –

“दुर्मावआ फिसाइनिफ्राय बेज बेजालि, झारफुका, तन्ट्र-मोनथोरनि सोमोन्दै मिथिना लाखादों आरो सोल्लोखादों । मा मा बेरामखौ मा मा मुलिजों फाहामनांगौ बेनिबो गियान लाखादों । मा बिफां-लाइफां, बिगुर आरो रोदा ज खालामनानै मा मा रग’ बियादिनि थाखाय उनग्लिनानै मुलि खालामनानै रुगिनो होनांगौ बेखौनो दुर्मावा आबुडै मिथिनानै लाबाय ।”<sup>116</sup>

English rendering –

Durmao has already acquired and learned the knowledge like casting a spell or charm, exorcism, making medicines from plants from her late husband. She has also properly learned how to cure certain diseases by using the exact medicines; how to combine leaves, roots and stems of certain trees and plants and make medicines out of them and use them in proper portions and methods to cure different diseases and illness.

Further the author documents –

“जलंगायाव मा मा मुलि दं बिल’ मिथियो । फिसा फिसौ रुगिनि मुलि । गिदित गिदित रग बियादिनि मुलिदो दंसै । झरिनाय मुलि, टन्ट्र-मोनथोरनि मुलि, लोनाय मुलि, बहरम, थाबिस । खावरि, खुन्दुं आवा, दंफां रोदा, दंफां-लाइफां बिलाइ, दालाइ, बेन्दों-बेनला, खासिनि आरो बायदिसिना मुलिफोरखौ दुर्मावआ जलंगायाव सोनानै लायो ।”<sup>117</sup>

English rendering –

Only she knows what she carries in her carry bag. Inside it are medicines for small illness as well as for bigger diseases. Sedatives, medicines for charm, drinkable medicines, pastes and beads are usually found. Durmao also carries Khaori, Awa threads, roots, leaves, barks and branches, beads and garlands and different types of medicines in her carry bag.

In this way everyone recognizes Durmao as a popular Oja in that area. She has cured various diseases and illnesses far and wide and saved quite many lives. In this way the Bodo people have often cured themselves and saved their lives with the help of folk medicines and

<sup>116</sup> Lahary, Monoranjan. *Dainee?*. p-8

<sup>117</sup> Ibid. p-14

traditional knowledge systems in the absence of proper transport and medical facilities pertaining to them. It is the Ethnicity of the Bodos and the novelist clearly depicts this picture in the novel.

The novel *Swmaosarnaini Orgeng* also clearly highlights the use of folk medicines with its different characters. The novel, however, deals with the prevention of illnesses and diseases by using folk medicines and but not with the help of any Oja. The novel highlights this through the character Agoli and her father Mwnbaru. When Agoli alias Anita is not able to eat any food and drink water after dancing during the Bwisagu festival her father Mwnbaru prepares some blessed water and a garland made from Awa thread and gives it to her. He says – “नै दै जारिनाया लोंफे । नै बे बोन्दोंखौबो आखान्थियाव खाना ला ।”<sup>118</sup>

English rendering –

Come and have some blessed water and tie this garland around your waist.

This is also a kind of folk medicine which the people in the Bodo society have been following since time immemorial.

## 2.9 Folk Element:

Folk elements like myths, legends, folk tales, folk songs, riddles and so on are followed by the folk society in different times as per requirement. In this way different folk elements are used by different authors in different novels sometimes through the novelists' own narrations and at times through the conversations of the different characters of the novels.

The novel *Sanmwkhangari Lamajwng* highlights of Myths, Legends and Folk songs are seen. The novel mentions the history of Rajdhagmal as Legend and how the place is named. There is a road straight west from Saudur Bhitha. If one travels through this road he/she reaches Ananda Bazar, Khusrabari, Nimua and Gobardhana. On the straight South of Khusrabari there is a village named Rajdhagmal. The name of this village bears a history. The novelist says that this name is coined after Raja Daimal. Through this myth the history of the Bodo community becomes clear.

The novelist further mentions how the name Beki has been coined. Bwrsi dwima is also

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<sup>118</sup> Boro, Rita. *Swmaosarnaini Orgeng*. p-52

popularly known as Beki river and its name bears a history. This river frequently changes its direction of flow and for which the people and the villages residing on its banks have to face a lot of hardships. Once an individual from the Bodo community was sitting on the banks of the river watching the flow of water and engrossed in deep thoughts and a British man goes near the person and asks him something. The person engrossed in deep thoughts of sorrow replies as ‘*bengakhwi*’ (not alive/awake). He meant that he is not happy.

The British man was in fact asking about the name of the river. But the Bodo man fails to understand the question and the British man thinks that he is saying the name of the river and writes down the name of the river as ‘*bengakhwi*’ and later on the name gets spelled as ‘Beki’ as the author emphasises in the novel.

Along with this, presentation of how the name Koliabor has been coined is also found in the novel. Long ago a Boro man bearing the name as Kolia Boro lived in a place now known as Koliabor. In the later periods of time this name Kolia Boro gets its transition in different languages and changes and now becomes Koliabor.

Other than this the novel also highlights pictures of Folk Songs. Magw Domasi is one of the seasonal festivals of the Bodo community. They burn the traditionally prepared hay stack (Belagur) in the midst of January month (last day of Push month in the Hindu calendar) and sing folk songs when congregating it. In the novel it is seen when Swmkhang, Mwdaokha and the other young lads of Simligudi village have a cowboy party and build a traditional hay stack and sing a song when the bamboo frame bursts while burning it as –

“दुम बेलागुर मोसानि बिगुर  
बोराइनि खावसे बुरैनि खावसे ..... ।”<sup>119</sup>

The Bwisagu is a very dear festival of the Bodo community. In this festival the young boys and girls of the community express their feelings of love to each other by joking each other through folk songs. This is seen in the novel and the author beautifully highlights this picture when the young boys and girls rehearse songs and dances before the arrival of Bwisagu season as reflected in the novel as –

“बैसो थानायावनो खारसनफैखा आरो

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<sup>119</sup> Swargiary, Katindra. *Sanmwkhangari Lamajwng*. p-68

देनां बुरैबोला  
आं नोखो लानाय नडा ।”<sup>120</sup>

English rendering –

Come elope with me when you are young  
If you grow older  
I’ll not accept you.

In the same way Mwsou Bwisagu is another important part of Bwisagu festival. In the midst of April month (last day of Chaith month) the Bodo community bathe their domestic animals like cows, oxen and buffaloes with water gourd, brinjal and raw turmeric by smearing them with a mixture of oil and ashes. During this process of bathing these domestic animals the Bodo people they sing folk songs. In the novel this becomes relevant when Dabla, Jwngsar and Gwmsar bathe the cows and oxen in the nearby lake Laodanga by singing their traditional folk songs as –

“लाउ जा, फान्थाव जा ।  
बोसोर बोसोर एर हान्जा हान्जा ॥  
बिमा गायदेबादि दा जा ।  
बिफा बलदबादि जा ॥”<sup>121</sup>

English rendering –

Eat gourd, eat brinjal  
Grow up year to year  
Don’t be short statured like your mother  
Be strong and big like your father.

Besides this representation of folk songs is seen when Mongla sings as –

“सेलआ गाबो हखे हखे  
बर’जो बर’ एखे  
लाइ दुदुरु लाफा दुदुरु ॥  
गंगार, मेफाल, हासा, बांगाल  
जालांबाय फारसे थार्ला,

<sup>120</sup> Swargiary, Katindra. *Sanmwkhangari Lamajwng..* p-83

<sup>121</sup> Ibid. p-86

बर'आ जाबाय आला – गाला

जेरावबो जेथिबो महाजाला ॥<sup>122</sup>

In the novel *Alaishri* also the use of proverbs in conversations is seen like सुखौ सुजो खायख'नांगौ, which means that evil has to be overcome by evil means. In the novel the protagonist *Alaishri* uses these types of idioms and phrases to express the situation in the village court when Molen rapes *Alaishri*. In this village court many village folks express different punishments to be sentenced upon the culprit Molen. But *Alaishri* feels that sentencing harsh punishments upon Molen will not help him mend his evil ways so *Alaishri* decides to punish him by marrying him. Now that he has eroded her purity he has to marry her. *Alaishri* thinks that Molen has raped and eroded her purity today and thus can further destroy the purity of many other young girls in the area and destroy their lives, so one way to maintain his character is to marry him. In the words of the novelist –

“बे साजाफ्रा आनि थाखाय मोनसेबो आजावथाव नडा । बेफोर साजाजो आनि एफा गिदित गाराइया गानाय नडा, आनि एफा गिदित खहाया सुफुनाय नडा, आनि मान, इज्जत आरो जौमोनखौ मोनफिननाय नडा, आनाव फुन्नानै होनाय कलख'नि गोसोम दागखौ हुखुमतनो हानाय नडा, आनि सोलेरा जेब्लाबो गोजोननाय नडा । मोदोमनि ब'बेबा जायगायाव मैना खान्थासि सु हाबोब्ला बे सुखौ मैआ खान्थासि औजोनो खायख'नांगौ, बिजिजो नडा । सुवा बायस'नानै थाबोयोब्ला सु हाबनाय जायगायाव गाराय जागोन, सेफतिक जागोन, सान हर खें खें साबाय थागोन । गुन्दाखौ गुन्दा लगाइनानै, दुइनाम्बारिखौ दुइनाम्बारि लगाइनानै, बदमाइसखौ बदमाइस लगाइनानै जेब्लाबो कन्टूलयाव लाबोनो हाया । बिसोरखौ गुबुन राहाजो सदब नांगौ ।<sup>123</sup>

English rendering –

All these punishments are not acceptable to me. These punishments will not heal my painful wound; it will not fulfil my losses; I will not get back my honour, pride and purity; I can't erase the black mark painted upon me by the culprit: my soul will never be happy. If you get picked by a thorn, it has to be removed properly with another one otherwise if it remains in the body then it will form a wound be forever painful. No situation can be controlled by matching the evil with another evil, the villain with another one and the fake with another fake, one has to find another way to control it.

Similarly, in the novel *Thwisam* folk prayers when praying in the holy Bathou is picturized

<sup>122</sup> Swargiary, Katindra. *Sanmwkhangari Lamajwng*. p-90

<sup>123</sup> Lahary, Monoranjan. *Alaishri*. P -110

through Theleb's character. Theleb has faith and prays in the holy Bathou and on every Tuesday she cleans the Bathou and lights the holy earthen lamp and sings the holy hymns. The hymns are –

“ओं हिं ख्लिं फोत से  
 ओं हिं ख्लिं फोत से  
 ओं हिं ख्लिं फोत से  
 नै आनान गसाइ बोराइ बाथौ  
 खुलुम हरदों जों नोंखौ  
 दहाय आफा दहाय ।  
 नोंनो जाबाय जोनोमगिरि  
 नोंनो जाबाय फोथैगिरि  
 नोंनो जाबाय राहानिगिरि  
 नोंनो जाबाय निमाहागिरि  
 जोंनो जाबाय दायनिगिरि ”<sup>124</sup>

English rendering –

Owng Hring Khling Fhwdtse  
 Owng Hring Khling Fhwdtse  
 Owng Hring Khling Fhwdtse  
 Oh Almighty Bwrai Bathou  
 We bow down in front of You  
 Have mercy upon us.  
 You are the creator  
 You are the destroyer  
 You are the provider  
 We are the sinners.

Besides this, the Myths of Kukurakata is also found to be highlighted in the novel. According to the myth the king of Asruas named Narakasura seeks to marry the Goddess Kamakhya after falling in love with her beauty. In order to get rid of him Goddess Kamakhya sets an impossible task of building stairs towards her temple up the hills before a rooster crows in the early dawn, only then she will get married to Narakasura. Thus with an urge to get her

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<sup>124</sup> Boro, Rita. *Thwisam*. p-3

Narakasura strictly instructs all his ministers and servants to get to work on building the stairs. The work was about to be completed but unfortunately a rooster crows out of nowhere and shatters his desire to marry the Goddess Kamakhya. This angers the king Narakasura so much that he chases the rooster and slays it near Tangla. That place later comes to be known as Kukurakata. In the words of the novelist –

“नंगौ सार्थपरखायनो नरकासुराबो बिमा कामाख्याखौ हाबा खालामनायनि थांखियावसो लुदोमोन बे हाजोआव गाखोनाय लामाखौ । सिबाय दावला दावआ मदद खालामामोनब्ला नरकासुरनि बिसि जाथारनांसिगौमोन कामाख्या मोदाइजोआ । आरो बे मददगिरि दावला दावआ नरकासुरजो होसो होसो दानथारजादोमोन टंलानि दाबसे जायगायाव जाइनि मुडा दिनै कुरकटा जानानै थालांबाय ।”<sup>125</sup>

English rendering –

Truly, because of his selfish desire Narakasura wants to marry Mother Kamakhya for which he builds the stairs in the hills. If the rooster would not have crowed at that time Goddess Kamakhya would have been the wife of king Narakasura. This angers him so much that he chases the rooster and slays it in a place near Tangla which is today known as Kukurakata.

Similarly, the recitation of holy mantras is seen in the novel *Swmaosarnaini Orgeng*. When Agoli alias Anita prepares to weave the Kobj after bathing and purifying herself, she encircles the handloom with a cloth, faces towards the east and takes the already collected materials like banana leaf, sacred earthen lamp and a coin to pray to the Almighty Bwrai Bathou by lighting the earthen lamp and recites holy rhymes –

“हे आफा बोराइ बाथौ  
अखाडाव दं अखाडाव खोनासं  
फाथालाव दं फाथालाव खोनासं  
हादामाव दं हादामाव खोनासं  
दिनै बर’ हारिनि रेखाथिनि थाखाय  
नैबि आनि आरनाइ जि दानाय  
मोजाडै मोजां जाफुंलांथो  
दहाइ आफा बोराइ बाथौ दहाइ ।”<sup>126</sup>

<sup>125</sup> Boro, Rita. *Thwisam*. P-71

<sup>126</sup> Boro, Rita. *Swmaosarnaini Orgeng*. P-112

English rendering –

Oh Almighty Bwrai Bathou  
 You are in heaven listen from heaven  
 You are in hell listen from hell  
 You are on land listen from land  
 Today for the sake of Bodo community  
 This is my Aronai weaving  
 Help me successfully complete it  
 Have mercy father have mercy.

Along with this singing of folk songs sung by the leader of the women organization Rinu is highlighted like –

“बैसागु बोथोरा सफैलायबाय  
 आदा सफैलायबाय  
 रोजाबनाय बोथोरा सौफैलायबाय ।”<sup>127</sup>

English rendering –

Bwisagu season has arrived  
 Brother it has finally arrived  
 Singing season has arrived.

Further it is found –

जिराय लांदों अ' नावरिया  
 आंनि देरायाव ....  
 दिनैनि बे मोनाबिलियाव  
 सुखु-दुखुनि दसे रायज्जायनि  
 संसार बिलोनि ...।<sup>128</sup>

English rendering –

Come and rest hey sailor  
 In my home...  
 In today's dusk  
 Let's talk our happiness and sorrows  
 Of our life...

<sup>127</sup> Boro, Rita. *Swmaosarnaini Orgeng*. P-200

<sup>128</sup> Ibid. P-199

### Summing up:

Folk culture always reinforces and consolidates the idea of ethnicity. It is a source of inspiration to strengthen the idea of ethnicity. To know the Ethnicity of a community it is important to understand the folk culture of that community. The use of folk culture is extensive for a group identity from historic past. The region witnesses a great reservoir of folk culture because folk culture is a part of day to day expression of the people. Having a distinct folk culture is a matter of group unity and it accelerates the sense of ethnicity. Ethnicity is the culture, religion, custom, tradition etc. which identifies the distinctiveness of a community to another. In the selected novels taken for study the ethnicity of the Bodos is seen. The prime source of livelihood of the Bodos is agriculture that is why they celebrate various festivals which are closely related to agriculture. Hunting and fishing is a habit of the people of the Bodo community and love to hunt and catch fish. In this way they have always collected fish and meat required for their food. The women folk in the Bodo community are adept in weaving and drawing design. Thus, besides weaving clothes required for their household they sell these cloth items like dokhona, gamsa, Aronai and jwmgra in the market and help in fulfilling the financial requirements of their family. Their food habits are also worth mentioning and their culinary art is quite different from other communities. They always consume vegetables which are hygienic and have medicinal benefits. Livestock and poultry farming is also a tradition of the Bodos. Besides rearing them for food they also sell them in the market and fulfil their financial needs. The oldest religion of the Bodo community is Bathou and they celebrate different festivals that have very close relation to it. With the passage of time and the entrance of other religion in their community they discard their ancient religion and convert and adapt to new religious beliefs like Christianity and Vaishnav. The village council system of the Bodo community is very strong and strict. They build their society beautifully and smoothly through this council. In the Bodo society if any individual commits any kind of crime or offence especially relating to immoral social ethics he is then considered as culprit and has to pay a penalty in accordance to social customs. The marriage custom of the Bodos is quite different from the other communities. Hathasuni Khurnai is one of its kinds. In this Hathasuni haba Ondla wngkhri has a pivotal place. Bwisagu is the agricultural or seasonal festival of the Bodo people. In this festival they bathe their cattle during Mwsou Bwisagu and puts new rope (faga) on them. They celebrate this festival with great pride and vigour. Besides this other festivals like Magw Domasi, Khathri Gasa, Haljankhra, Mainao lainai etc. has a close relation to their agricultural life. Every

community in the world has their own particular folk and superstitious beliefs. The Bodo community is also not free from it. They have different folk beliefs and practices relating to various birds and animals and their courtyard. Through these different practices the traditional and cultural knowledge systems of the Bodo community is known. These traditional knowledge systems make them distinct from other communities in the world. It is worth mentioning that due to the tremendous impact of globalisation and modernization, assimilation and acculturation in their ways of living is seen. Still they cling on to certain inseparable ethnic traits.