

A STUDY ON THE ROLE OF GOALPARA JILA BORO BARODAL

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE BODOLAND UNIVERSITY,
KOKRAJHAR FOR THE AWARD OF DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN THE DEPARTMENT OF BODO
UNDER THE FACULTY OF LANGUAGES



PURNA CHANDRA KHAKHALARY

ENROLLMENT NO: PHDBDO19001

PH.D. REGISTRATION NO: BOD00319 OF 2019 – 2020

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GUIDED BY

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2026

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the thesis entitled '*A Study on the Role of Goalpara Jila Boro Barodal*' submitted by Purna Chandra Khakhalary for the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Department of Bodo, Bodoland University is his own work carried out under my supervision. He has successfully completed the Pre-submission seminar and fulfilled all the criteria and conditions necessary for the Ph.D. Degree of Bodoland University. This thesis has neither been submitted to any universities or institutions nor published in part or full for any degree or diploma thereof.

I am delighted to recommend the thesis to be submitted to Bodoland University for necessary evaluation by the examiners.

Date: 06/05/2026

Place: Kokrajhar



(Prof. Indira Boro)

Supervisor

DECLARATION

I, Purna Chandra Khakhalary hereby declared that this thesis is the original record of my record of research work done by me and the contents of this thesis has not been submitted in any other form or substance to the best of my knowledge for the award of any other degree to any institution or university.

This thesis is being submitted to the Bodoland University for the award of degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the department of Bodo under the faculty of Languages.

Date: 06/05/2026

Place: Bodoland University, Kokrajhar



(Purna Chandra Khakhalary)

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Place: Bodoland University, Kokrajhar



(Purna Chandra Khakhalary)

PREFACE

The indigenous communities of Assam possess rich socio-cultural institutions that have played a decisive role in preserving their identity, traditions, and collective values over generations. Among these institutions, community-based organizations have functioned not only as cultural custodians but also as mechanisms of social regulation, leadership, and unity. The *Goalpara Jila Boro Baro Dal* stands as one such significant traditional organization of the Bodo community in Goalpara district, Assam. This research study attempts to explore and analyze the role of the *Goalpara Jila Boro Baro Dal* in shaping social, cultural, religious, and moral life within the Bodo society of Goalpara district of Assam, India.

The Bodo community, being one of the largest indigenous groups of Assam, has a long history of self-governance through customary laws, rituals, and community councils. In Goalpara district, where the Bodo population exists alongside diverse ethnic and religious communities, the *Goalpara Jila Boro Baro Dal* has emerged as a central institution for maintaining internal cohesion on religious aspects, cultural continuity, social discipline, and women empowerment. The organization functions through a structured system involving religious committee, cultural committee, and women council, where each committee has been contributing to the overall regulation and welfare of the community. This study is undertaken with the intention of documenting and understanding how such a traditional institution continues to operate in a rapidly changing social environment for the development of the Bodo community of entire Bodo dominated areas of Goalpara district.

The motivation behind selecting this topic lies in the growing concern that many indigenous institutions are facing challenges due to modernization, urbanization, formal legal systems, and the influence of global culture. While development has brought positive changes, it has also led to the gradual weakening of traditional social structures. In this context, a systematic study of the *Goalpara Jila Boro Baro Dal* becomes essential to highlight its relevance, adaptability, and contribution to the preservation of indigenous identity of the Bodo community

dwelling at the Goalpara district. This research seeks to examine how the *Goalpara Jila Boro Baro Dal* balances tradition with contemporary demands while continuing to serve as a pillar of social control and cultural guidance.

The present study focuses on the historical background, organizational structure, objectives, and functions of the *Goalpara Jila Boro Baro Dal*. Special attention is given to its role in regulating social behaviour, conducting life-cycle ceremonies such as birth, marriage, and death, customary laws, resolving internal disputes, promoting moral values, and safeguarding traditional religious practices. By examining these aspects, the research aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of how the *Goalpara Jila Boro Baro Dal* influences everyday life within the Boro community and contributes to social harmony. Another important aspect addressed in this study is the role of the *Goalpara Jila Boro Baro Dal* in fostering unity and collective responsibility among community members. Through its customary laws, social sanctions, and communal activities, the organization encourages cooperation, mutual respect, and adherence to shared norms. This form of informal social control, based on consensus rather than coercion, has been instrumental in maintaining order and minimizing conflicts within the Bodo community. The research also highlights how such traditional mechanisms complement formal administrative and legal systems at the local level.

This study adopts a descriptive approach, drawing upon both primary and secondary sources. Field observations, interactions with community elders, and existing literature on Bodo society have been utilized to ensure authenticity and depth in analysis. The researcher has made sincere efforts to present the facts objectively, respecting the cultural sensitivity and lived experiences of the community. Any limitations encountered during the research process, such as restricted access to written records or reliance on oral traditions, have been acknowledged with due consideration. The significance of this research lies in its contribution to the academic understanding of indigenous governance and social institutions. By documenting the role of the *Goalpara Jila Boro Baro Dal*, the study not only preserves valuable cultural knowledge but also provides insights for policymakers, social workers, and scholars interested in community-based development and cultural sustainability. It

emphasizes the importance of recognizing and strengthening traditional institutions as partners in social progress rather than viewing them as obsolete structures.

This research work is a humble attempt to shed light on the enduring relevance of the *Goalpara Jila Boro Baro Dal* in Bodo society within the Bodo dominated areas of Goalpara district. It seeks to bridge the gap between tradition and modern scholarship by presenting an in-depth analysis of an indigenous institution that continues to shape social life in meaningful ways. It is hoped that this study will inspire further research on similar community organizations and contribute to the broader discourse on indigenous identity, social control, and cultural resilience in Goalpara district of Assam.

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ABSTRACT

The present study examines the multifaceted role of the *Goalpara Jila Boro Baro Dal*, a traditional social organization of the Bodo community of Goalpara district of Assam, with a particular emphasis on its function in social ceremonies, institutional committees, and indigenous control system. Rooted in customary law and collective decision making, the *Goalpara Jila Boro Baro Dal* has historically served as a central authority regulating social life, preserving cultural values, and ensuring social cohesion within the community. This study adopts an ethnographic and descriptive approach to explore how the organization continues to operate and adapt in the contemporary religious, and socio-cultural landscape.

The first section of the study focuses on the role of the *Goalpara Jila Boro Baro Dal* in regulating and organizing major life ceremonies such as birth, marriage, and death. These social ceremonies are not merely personal or familial events but are deeply embedded within the collective social framework of the Bodo society. The *Goalpara Jila Boro Baro Dal* plays a crucial role in guiding ritual practices, ensuring adherence to customary norms, mediating disputes arising during ceremonial arrangements, and maintaining uniformity in traditional observances. Through its involvement, the organization reinforces social solidarity and transmits cultural knowledge across generations.

The study further explores the activities undertaken by various functional committees operating under the *Goalpara Jila Boro Baro Dal*, namely the Religious Committee, Cultural Committee, and women Council. The Religious Committee is instrumental in supervising religious practices, organizing community prayers and festivals, and safeguarding indigenous beliefs alongside evolving religious influences. The Cultural Committee works towards the preservation and promotion of Bodo language, folk traditions, festivals, music, dance, and traditional attire, thereby strengthening cultural identity in the face of modernization and cultural homogenization. Meanwhile, the Women Council plays a significant role in empowering women, addressing gender-specific issues, facilitating participation of

women in decision-making processes, and promoting social awareness related to education, health, and family welfare.

A significant portion of the study is devoted to analyzing the indigenous social control mechanism employed by the *Goalpara Jila Boro Baro Dal*. These include the *BAD* system, i.e. the traditional adjudication and disciplinary mechanisms, customary practices of property allocation, and the use of social sanctions such as ostracism. The *BAD* system functions as a community-based justice mechanism aimed at resolving conflicts, maintaining moral order, and restoring social harmony without resorting to formal legal institutions. Property allocation practices reflect collective ownership principles and customary inheritance norms, ensuring equitable distribution and preventing internal conflicts. Ostracism, though rarely employed, serves as a powerful social corrective measure against serious violations of community norms, emphasizing reform and reintegration rather than punishment.

Overall, this study highlights the enduring relevance of the *Goalpara Jila Boro Baro dal* as a vital institution of social regulation, religious awareness, cultural preservation, women empowerment, and community governance among the Bodo people of Goalpara district. Despite the influences of modernization, state legal system, and socio-economic changes, the organization continues to play a pivotal role in maintaining social order, resolving conflicts, and reinforcing collective identity. The findings of this study contribute to a deeper understanding of indigenous governance systems and underscore the importance of preserving traditional institutions as complementary frameworks to modern administrative structures.

Purna Chandra Khakhalary

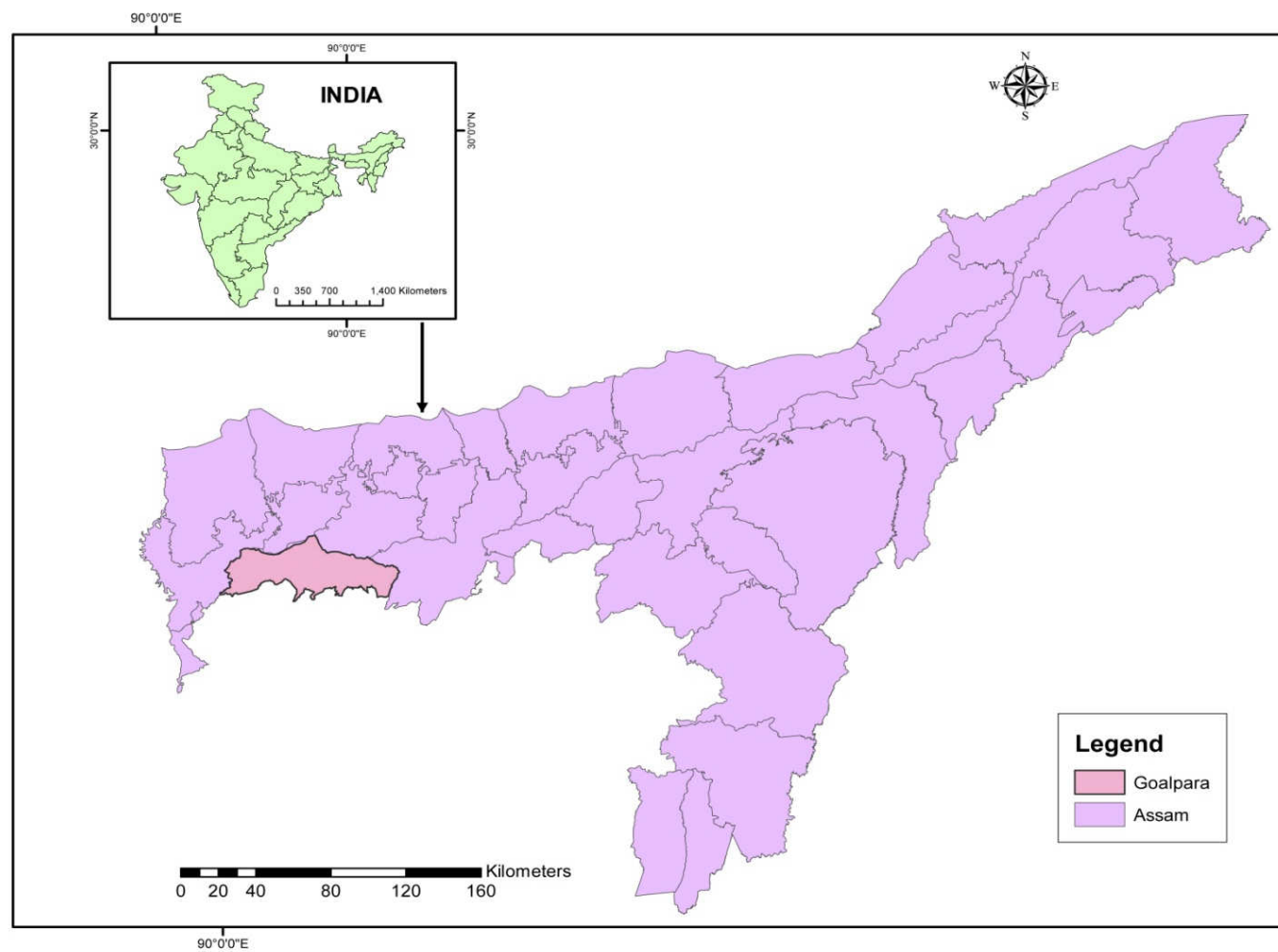
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ABBREVIATION

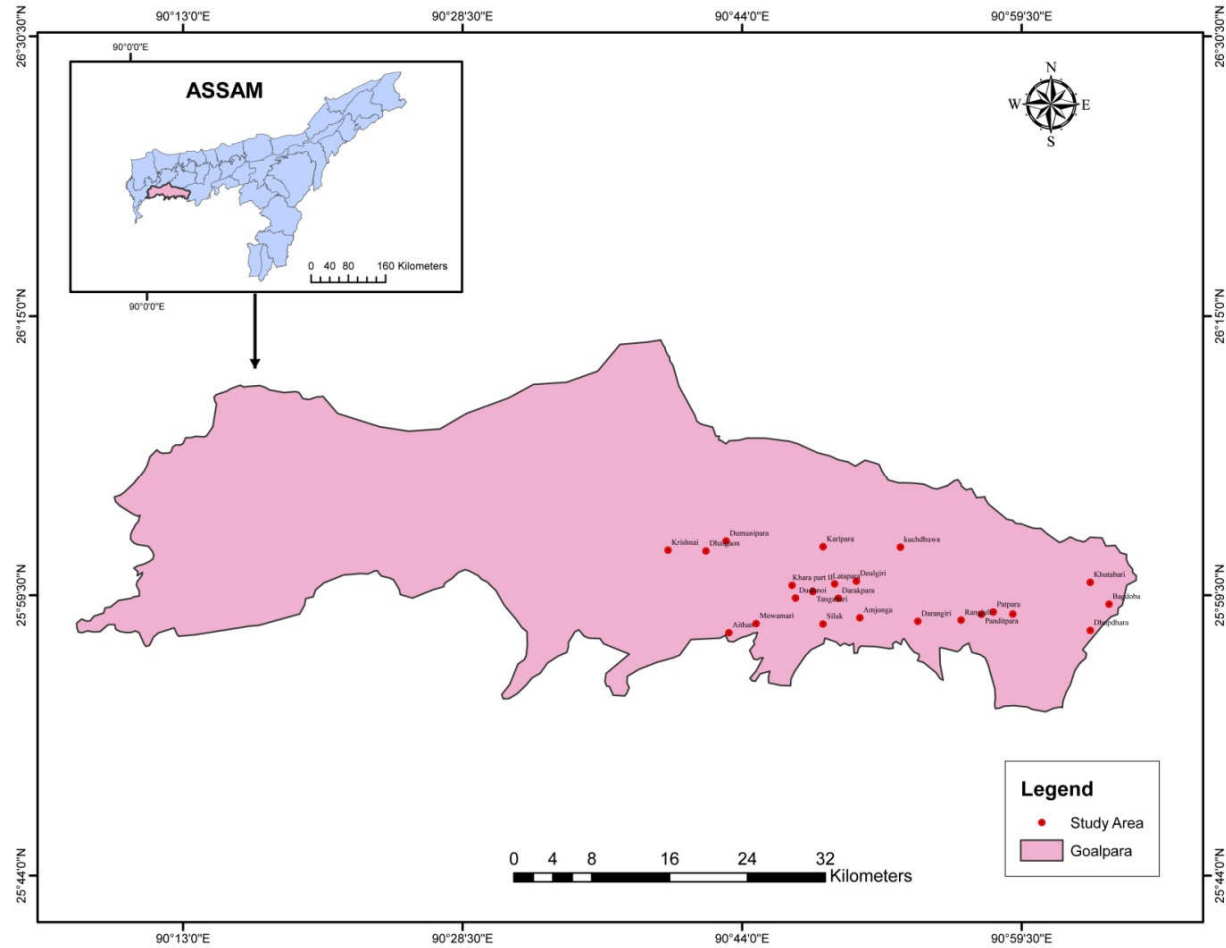
i.e.	That is
MLA	Modern Language Association
BTAD	Bodoland Territorial Areas District
BTC	Bodoland Territorial Council
BTR	Bodoland Territorial Region
ABSU	All Bodo Students' Union
BSS	Bodo Sahitya Sabha
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
SHG	Self Help Group
ASHA	Accredited Social Health Activist
ISBN	International Standard Book Number

AREA OF THE STUDY



Source collected from Department of Geography, Dudhnoi College, Dudhnoi, Goalpara, Assam.

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