

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.

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