

CHAPTER-3

VARIOUS COMMITTEES AND ACTIVITIES OF THE GOALPARA JILA BORO BARODAL

3.1 Role of Committees in the Society:

Role of committees is to manage and oversee the day to day social problems, such as religious issues, cultural issues, women folk issues, financial issues, and conflicts. Committee's members are responsible for representing the interests and belongings of all residents. The members of the committees are responsible for making decisions that impact the society, building consensus, and ensuring the members presenting in the process. Committees also play a crucial role in maintaining property, resolving conflicts, and promoting a sense of communal harmony. There are committees under *Goalpara Jila Boro Barodal* amongst the Bodos of Goalpara district. These committees are: (i) Religious Committee, (ii) Cultural Committee, and (iii) Women Council. These committees have been doing different activities to reform and upgrade the Bodo society of the Goalpara district. The Portfolio members of the committees are given in the below and activities done by the committees are described. Drawing on historical background, secondary literature, local reports, and organisational practices, especially those of Bodo cultural organisations such as the Bodo Sahitya Sabha (BSS), the study analyses how small, localised cultural bodies contribute to language preservation, cultural education,

3.1.1 Religious Committee:

Portfolio members of the Religious Committee of the year 2019 under *Goalpara Jila Boro Barodal* are shown in the below:

Sl. No.	Name of Portfolio Member	Portfolio	Name of Village	Name of Mad
1	Mushri Janmejy Machary	President	Simlapara	Damas Mad
2	Mushri Heramba Basumatary	Vice- President	Rwumari	Pragati Mad
3	Mushri Dinesh Basumatary	Gnl. Secretary	Deulguri	Dwar-Amjogga Mad
4	Mushri Ganapati Daimary	Asstt. Secretary	Simlapara	Damas Mad
5	Mushri Matilal Basumatary	Adviser	Udmari	Dwar-Rangjuli Mad
6	Mushri Laba Kumar Hachary	Adviser	Sanjapur	Sanjaha Bukali Mad
7	Mushri Dasarath Patgiri	Adviser	Bakharapara	Sanjaha Bikali Mad
8	Mushri Sonaram Boro	Adviser	Manupara	Dwar-Amjongga Mad
9	Mushri Manin Basumatary	Member	Gathiyapara	Kwtha-Kwthi Mad
10	Mushri Kunja Kachari	Member	Maurampur	Swnab Bikali Mad
11	Mushri Ajit Basumatary	Member	Garo Para	Patpara Mad
12	Mushri Pitambar Khakhlary	Member	Saraniyapara	Dwar-Rangjuli Mad
13	Mushri Aswini Basumatary	Member	Udmari	Dwar-Rwumari Mad
14	Mushri Kumar Basumatary	Member	Bogadoba	Dwar-Daranggiri Mad
15	Mushri Dinen Basumatary	Member	Majpara	Daranggiri Sanjwrang Mad

16	Mushri Amiya Kr. Khakhlary	Member	Hatimura Salpara	Dwar-Amjongga Mad
17	Mushri Amal Basumatary	Member	Siyalmari	Siyalmari Mad
18	Mushri Khudiram Basumatary	Member	Khara Lalpara	Pragati Mad
19	Mushri Pawan Daimary	Member	Siyalmari	Maj-Jakhili Dahela Mad
20	Mushri Gopal Daimary	Member	Amguri	Maj-Jakhili Amguri Mad
21	Mushri Mukil Khakhlary	Member	Amguri	Maj-Jakhili Mainw Mad
22	Mushri Krishna Boro	Member	Lela Baniyapara	Dwar-Damra Mad
23	Mushri Tiken Basumatary	Member	Barmatiya	Dwar-Dirma Mad
24	Mushri Prajen Daimary	Member	Tilapara	Iragdaw Mad
25	Mushri Binita Patgiri	Member	Hajirapara	Dwar-Rwumari Mad
26	Mushri Nirala Khakhlary	Member	Kushdhwuwa	Dwar-Amjongga Mad
27	Mushri Anju Daimary	Member	2 No. Tilapara	Dwar-Amjongga Mad

The Religious Committee under the *Goalpara Jila Boro Barodal* has been doing to convey awareness on religious aspects amongst the Bodos of the Goalpara district. The portfolio members of this committee preaches about the *Bathou* religion and organizes meetings in the rural areas of Goalpara district in the Bodo dominated areas. They have been establishing *Bathou Thansali*, i.e., Bathou Temple in the Bodo villages, discuss about the philosophies of Bathouism, and encourage the Bodo people to worship the *Bathou* to overcome the problems of daily life. This paper examines the

role of cultural committees in the socio-cultural and developmental processes of the Bodo community in Goalpara district of Assam.

3.1.1.1 Role of the Religious Committee in the Development of Bodo Society:

The Bodos are one of the largest indigenous ethnic groups of northeast India, primarily inhabiting in Assam. Their cultural identity is deeply rooted in spiritual traditions, rituals, folklore, and community-based values. Religion has always been a guiding force in their everyday life, shaping social norms, moral behaviour, festivals, and community unity. In traditional Bodo society, collective organisations and village councils play an important role in the preservation of their socio-cultural structure. Among these body structures, the Religious Committee plays a vital role. Religion has been a fundamental aspect of Bodo life for centuries.

The traditional *Bathou* religion, symbolised by the sacred 'Sijou', i.e. a kind of cactus plant, reflects the people's strong connection to nature. Traditional religious specialists such as *Douri*, i.e. priest, and *Doudini*, i.e. female performer during rituals maintain the spiritual lineage of the community. As the community grew and social organisations became more structured, many villages and Bodo organisations formed Religious Committees to manage religious and spiritual affairs collectively. Over time, their responsibilities expanded from performing rituals to acting as guardians of cultural identity and social wellbeing. Even with the rise of Christianity, Brahmaism, and other faiths in Bodo society, Religious Committees continue to function as important institutions protecting cultural traditions and unity. This committee functions as an organised body responsible for guiding religious affairs, maintaining cultural practices, promoting ethical values, and ensuring social harmony. As Bodo society goes through rapid transformation due to modernisation, education, migration, and cultural change, the Religious Committee remains a central institution preserving tradition while supporting community development. The Bodo society, one of the major indigenous communities of Assam, has a rich cultural and spiritual heritage. Religion plays a central role in shaping social values, community decisions, and cultural identity. To preserve these traditions and guide the community's moral development, many Bodo villages and organisations form Religious Committees. These committees act as

organised bodies responsible for managing religious practices, festivals, moral education, and harmony within the community.¹

3.1.1.1.1 Establishing *Bathou* Temples in every Bodo village of Goalpara:

Establishing a *Bathou* thansali in each Bodo village in Goalpara aims to safeguard intangible heritage, provide a focal place for festivals like *Bathou* festival and *Kherai* rites, and strengthen community identity. *Bathou* or Bathouism is the traditional faith of the Boro people, centered on the worship of *Bathou Bwrai* and the five elements. In recent decades there has been a cultural revival across Assam to restore and strengthen public places of *Bathou* worship so that religious and cultural practices remain visible and accessible to communities. The initiative has been led locally by Bodo cultural committees like village and district-level cultural sub-committees and organizations, with support from influential community leaders, cultural activists and in some cases state-level attention and funding for constructing prominent *Bathou* mandirs. The committee challenges encountered such as funding and maintenance, smaller villages sometimes struggle to fund durable structures or longer-term upkeep, standardization of the modern temple architecture with traditional ritual requirements and local diversity can cause debate, and institutional coordination as ensuring every village has an active committee and trained ritual leaders requires ongoing capacity of temple building.

3.1.1.1.2 Celebration of *Bathou* Festival Every Year in the Month of *Bwisagu* and *Magw*:

In Goalpara district, the Cultural Committee follows a well-defined traditional order for celebrating *Bathou* festival during the months of *Bwisagu*, i.e., in the month of April, and *Magw*, i.e., in the month of January to preserve Bodo religious customs and cultural values. The celebration begins with collective preparation, including cleaning of the *Bathou* altar and surrounding area, followed by the symbolic installation or worship of the *Sijou* plant, which represents *Bathou Bwrai*. During *Bwisagu*, the worship is conducted in a festive and community-oriented manner to welcome the New Year, emphasizing harmony, purification, and blessings for prosperity. In the month of

¹ Op-cit. Matilal Basumatary: (M.78) Bangal Para, Goalpara.

Magw, *Bathou* festival is observed with greater solemnity and discipline, focusing on prayer, offerings, and traditional rituals seeking protection, good harvest, and social well-being. The Cultural Committee of Goalpara district ensures that all rites are performed in proper sequence under the guidance of elders and *Douri*, i.e., the priests, encouraging collective participation and transmission of traditional knowledge to younger generations. Through this structured order of celebration, the Cultural Committee plays a vital role in sustaining the religious identity and cultural continuity of the Bodo community.

3.1.1.1.3 Awareness of *Bathou* Prayer Song:

The Religious Committee has been conducting programmes on the awareness on *Bathou* prayer songs which are sung in the celebration of marriage, death, and *Bathou* worship. The *Bathou* prayer songs used at marriage and death ceremonies are short, highly symbolic ritual hymns that invoke the *Bathou Bwrai*, the *Sijou* plant as sacred symbol, ancestors, and community well-being. In both life-cycle rituals, the songs serve as verbal bridges between the visible community and the spiritual world. They ask for blessing and protection at a wedding, and for safe passage, mercy, and remembrance at a death. The language is reverent, repetitive, and rich with images drawn from natures like rivers, fields, the *Sijou* plant, which helps participants enter a focused, communal frame of mind.

At marriages the *Bathou* prayer songs have been sung yet solemnly. Typical themes are blessing the couple with fertility, harmony, mutual respect, longevity, and prosperity for their household. The lyrics alternate between direct invocation of *Bathou Bwrai* and instructions to the couple and assembled kin to respect elders, keep family ties, and preserve ritual duties. Musically the wedding songs are often sung in a steady call-and-response pattern, sometimes accompanied by simple percussion or the hum of community voices, so the whole congregation participates in imparting the blessing. At funerals the *Bathou* songs shift tone: they are plaintive, reflective, and petitionary. The words emphasise release from suffering, guidance for the deceased's spirit to the ancestral realm, comfort for grieving relatives, and a reminder of the moral duties the living must uphold. Repetition in the verses serves both to comfort mourners and to ritually ensure the deceased's correct transition. Where weddings bind generations

forward, funeral songs bind the community to memory and ethical continuity stressing respect for elders, remembrance, and the social duties the departed leaves behind.²

3.1.1.1.4 Convention on *Bathou* Philosophy:

Meeting has been convened by the Religious Committee of *Goalpara Jila Boro BaroDal* with the objective of creating awareness among the general public about *Bathou* philosophy, which forms the spiritual and cultural foundation of Bodo community at the Goalpara district. The meeting emphasized the core principles of *Bathou*, including harmony with nature, moral discipline, social unity, and respect for ancestral tradition. Learned speakers or resource person and community leaders explained the philosophical significance of *Bathou* worship, the symbolism of *Sijou* plant, and the relevance of *Bathou* ideals in contemporary society. The programme also highlights the need to preserve indigenous religious practices and transmit traditional knowledge to younger generations. Through interactive discussion and deliberation, the meeting sought to promote religious consciousness, mutual heritage of the Bodo people in Goalpara district.³

3.1.1.1.5 Promotion of Traditional Religious Practices:

The Religious Committee has been preserving the traditional religious practices. They safeguard rituals connected to *Bathou* religion, *Bwisagu* festival and other traditional ceremonies. They ensure proper performance of religious rites and teach younger generations the importance of these practices. Maintain sacred spaces such as *Bathou* Thanshali. The committee has been doing for the promotion of cultural identity, spiritual festivals like *Bathou* festival and *Bwisagu* have cultural values. The committee helps to organise these events, keeping cultural pride strong among youth. They help to preserve traditional songs, dances, and folklore linked to religious ceremonies.

3.1.1.1.6 Strengthening Social Unity, Moral, and Ethical Guidance:

Religious events bring community members together, promoting social harmony. The committee acts as a mediator during conflicts, using traditional values to

² Op-cit. Matilal Basumatary: (M.78) Bangal Para, Goalpara.

³ Ibid.

promote peace, and they organise community feasts and gatherings that reinforce unity. Religious Committees spread moral teachings, promoting honesty, discipline, respect, and social responsibility. They guide youth away from harmful habits and towards community service. During times of disaster, illness, or grief, the committee organises prayers, spiritual support, and community help. They coordinate collective contributions to help affected families. One of the most significant contributions of the Religious Committee is its ability to create social harmony. In many villages, religious gatherings serve as platforms for bringing families together. The committee organises community feasts like *Mwsing Ising*, encourages participation in collective rituals, mediates minor disputes following traditional norms, and promotes cooperation among different families and clans. These activities help reduce conflict, strengthen social relations, and ensure peaceful coexistence.⁴

3.1.1.1.7 Promotion of Inter-Community Harmony:

The committee often interacts with other religious groups to maintain peaceful relations. They encourage mutual respect among Bathouism, Brahism, Christianity, and other faith groups within Bodo society.

3.1.1.1.8 Documentation and Transmission of Knowledge, and Contribution to Social Development:

The Religious Committee acts as a bridge between older and younger generations. Elders who possess knowledge of traditional rituals, songs, stories, and customs share their wisdom through training sessions for youth, workshops on ritual performance, teaching traditional music and chanting, storytelling during festivals. This process ensures the continuity of cultural wisdom and strengthens identity among younger generations. Bodo society values collective support. The Religious Committee plays an important role in offering prayers during natural disasters or community crises, organising communal help for sick or needy families, supporting families during marriage, bereavement, or spiritual challenges, and providing emotional support through religious gatherings. This support nurtures compassion, unity, and resilience.

⁴ Dinen Basumatary: (M. 81) Maj Para, Goalpara.

Many committees record traditional rituals, oral histories, and customs. They encourage elders to pass knowledge to the younger generation through workshops and training. Youth are included in religious events through dance, music, and volunteer activities. This builds confidence, leadership skills, and a sense of belonging. Through moral classes, discussions, and cultural workshops, youth learn discipline and social values. They help reduce social problems like addiction, violence, and disrespect for cultural norms. Women play important roles in rituals, organising events, and community decisions. This strengthens gender participation and empowers women socially.⁵

3.1.1.1.9 Preservation of Traditional Religious Practices:

The primary responsibility of the Religious Committee is to safeguard the *Bathou* religious traditions that are central to Bodo identity. These include: Bathou Puja, the most important traditional ritual like *Garja Puja*, *Domashi*, *Hapsa Mohor*, and other seasonal rituals, maintenance of *Bathou Thanshali*, i.e., *Bathou* temple, and supervision of offerings, prayers, and community-based religious events. By organising and regulating these events, the committee ensures that the essence of Bodo spirituality is not lost due to modern influences. The rituals also strengthen community bonds, as they require collective participation. Many religious ceremonies in Bodo society are inseparable from culture. Festivals like *Bwisagu*, *Kherai*, and *Domashi* include traditional dance, music, costumes, and folklore. The Religious Sub-Committee plays an active role by encouraging youth participation in dances like *Bagurumba*, i.e., a traditional dance supporting traditional musical instruments such as *Kham*, *Siphung*, *Jotha*, *Serja*, and *Tharkha* preserving traditional songs linked to rituals, and encouraging use of traditional dress during ceremonies. Through these activities, the committee acts as a cultural guardian helping maintain Bodo cultural pride.⁶

3.1.1.1.10 Encouraging Inter-Faith and Inter-Community Harmony:

Bodo society today includes followers of Bathouism, Hinduism, Brahmaism, and Christianity. The Religious Committee encourages peaceful relations through

⁵ Dinen Basumatary: (M. 81) Maj Para, Goalpara.

⁶ Op-cit. Matilal Basumatary: (M.78) Bangal Para, Goalpara.

respect for different religious groups, joint participation in cultural events, avoiding discrimination based on faith, and promoting tolerance and understanding. Such initiatives help maintain peace and prevent conflicts within the community.⁷

3.1.1.1.11 Administrative and Organisational Responsibilities:

Apart from religious functions, the committee also performs administrative duties like, managing finances for festivals, maintaining the *Bathou* altar and temple-like structures, coordinating community volunteers, planning events on important dates, and ensuring the smooth functioning of ceremonies. These responsibilities contribute to overall community organisation and development. Religious festivals often attract visitors from outside the community. The Religious Committee contributes to economic development by supporting local artisans who make traditional dresses, promoting folk music and dance groups, encouraging sale of cultural items during festivals, and inspiring cultural tourism that benefits local economy. Several villages known for *Bwisagu* festival celebrations attract tourists, researchers, and students, strengthening socio-cultural visibility.⁸

3.1.1.1.12 Role of Women in the Religious Sub-Committee:

Women play increasingly important roles in Bodo religious and cultural activities. Their involvement includes participation as musicians and dancers, organising event-related activities, managing decorations, offerings, and community feasts, and encouraging children to learn cultural practices. This inclusion strengthens gender equality and enhances women's leadership in community development. The Religious Committee indirectly influences major aspects of social development in Bodo society by promoting values such as discipline, respect, and cooperation, the committee contributes positively to the overall character development of students. Reduction of social problems like awareness programmes help minimise issues like addiction, conflict, and disrespect for traditions. The committee collaborates with village development bodies, student unions, youth clubs, and women's organisations. Through

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Dinen Basumatary: (M. 81) Maj Para, Goalpara.

spiritual teachings and collective work, members of the society become more responsible and community-oriented.

Religious festivals boost local trade items like flowers, food, traditional attire, instruments, and decorations. Committees raise funds for community welfare activities. Well-organised festivals attract visitors, helping outsiders understand Bodo culture. This builds cultural pride and supports local economy. The Religious Committee has been facing modernisation and shifting religious beliefs among youth, lack of documentation of old rituals, financial limitations in organising events, and decline in participation because of migration and work pressures.

The Religious Committee plays a crucial role in the development of Bodo society by preserving its spiritual traditions, promoting social harmony, guiding moral growth, and strengthening cultural identity. Despite challenges, its contributions are significant in maintaining unity, cultural pride, and community wellbeing. Strengthening these committees with youth involvement, proper documentation, and community support will ensure that Bodo cultural and spiritual heritage continues to grow for future generations. The Religious Committee has been following the objectives like preserve traditional rituals and heritage, organise spiritual ceremonies and festivals, maintain unity and peace within the community, educate younger generations about cultural values, promote moral, ethical, and social responsibilities, strengthen inter-community and inter-faith harmony, and document and protect traditional knowledge and practices.⁹

3.1.1.1.13 Challenges of Modernization Faced by the Religious Committee:

Despite its significant contributions, the committee faces several challenges like modernisation and western influences causing youth to lose interest in traditional practices, lack of documentation of old rituals and songs, leading to the risk of cultural loss, financial limitations in organising festivals, migration of youth for education or work, reducing participation, and religious diversification creating differences in belief systems. Addressing these challenges is essential for strengthening the role of committee in future.

⁹ Op-cit. Lalita Khakhalary. (F. 75). Mejeng Para, Goalpara.

3.1.1.1.14 Strategies to Strengthen the Religious Committee:

To ensure the long-term survival and growth of religious and cultural values, strategies can be helpful like encouraging youth clubs to participate actively, using digital platforms for documentation, organising inter-faith dialogue programmes, involving educational institutions to promote cultural awareness, providing training for ritual specialists and dancers, and establishing financial support systems through community fundraising. These measures can empower the committee to continue its role effectively.

The Religious Committee is one of the most influential institutions amongst the Bodo society at Goalpara district. Its contributions extend far beyond religious practices, shaping cultural identity, social harmony, moral values, and community development. By preserving rituals, promoting cultural heritage, educating youth, maintaining peace, and supporting individuals during crises, the committee plays a central role in maintaining the social fabric of the Bodo community. As modern pressures and changing lifestyles challenge traditional structures, the Religious Committee remains a powerful institution guiding the Bodo community with wisdom, unity, and cultural pride. Strengthening this committee through youth involvement, proper documentation, and community cooperation will ensure that the rich spiritual and cultural heritage of the Bodos continues to flourish for generations.¹⁰

3.1.2 Cultural Committee:

Portfolio members of the Cultural Committee of the year 2019 under *Goalpara Jila Boro Barodal* are shown in the below:

Sl. No.	Name of Portfolio Member	Portfolio	Name of Village	Name of Mad
1	Mushri Sarmananda Daimry	President	Purnapara	Maj-Jakhili Mad
2	Mushri Ajoy Kr. Boro	Vice- President	Choto Salpara	Dwar-Amjongga Mad

¹⁰ Dinen Basumatary: (M. 81) Maj Para, Goalpara.

3	Mushri Namonjoy Swargiary	Gnl. Secretary	Majpara	Doronggiri Sanjwrang Mad
4	Mushri Aranda Khakhlary	Asstt. Secretary	Simlapara	Damas Mad
5	Mushri Matilal Basumatary	Adviser	Udmari	Dwar-Rangjuli Mad
6	Mushri Laba Kumar Hachary	Adviser	Sanjapur	Sanjaha Bukali Mad
7	Mushri Dasarath Patgiri	Adviser	Bakharapara	Sanjaha Bikali Mad
8	Mushri Sonaram Boro	Adviser	Manupara	Dwar-Amjongga Mad
9	Mushri Manin Basumatary	Member	Gathiyapara	Kwtha-Kwthi Mad
10	Mushri Kunja Kachari	Member	Maurampur	Swnab Bikali Mad
11	Mushri Ajit Basumatary	Member	Garo Para	Patpara Mad
12	Mushri Pitambar Khakhlary	Member	Saraniyapara	Dwar-Rangjuli Mad
13	Mushri Aswini Basumatary	Member	Udmari	Dwar-Rwumari Mad
14	Mushri Kumar Basumatary	Member	Bogadoba	Dwar-Daranggiri Mad
15	Mushri Dinen Basumatary	Member	Majpara	Daranggiri Sanjwrang Mad
16	Mushri Amiya Kr. Khakhlary	Member	Hatimura Salpara	Dwar-Amjongga Mad
17	Mushri Amal Basumatary	Member	Siyalmari	Siyalmari Mad
18	Mushri Khudiram Basumatary	Member	Khara Lalpara	Pragati Mad

19	Mushri Pawan Daimary	Member	Siyalmari	Maj-Jakhili Dahela Mad
20	Mushri Gopal Daimary	Member	Amguri	Maj-Jakhili Amguri Mad
21	Mushri Mukil Khakhlary	Member	Amguri	Maj-Jakhili Mainw Mad
22	Mushri Krishna Boro	Member	Lela Baniyapara	Dwar-Damra Mad
23	Mushri Tiken Basumatary	Member	Barmatiya	Dwar-Dirma Mad
24	Mushri Prajen Daimary	Member	Tilapara	Iragdaw Mad
25	Mushri Binita Patgiri	Member	Hajirapara	Dwar-Rwumari Mad
26	Mushri Nirala Khakhlary	Member	Kushdhwuwa	Dwar-Amjongga Mad
27	Mushri Anju Daimary	Member	2 No. Tilapara	Dwar-Amjongga Mad

The Boro or Bodo people are among Assam's oldest ethnolinguistic groups with distinct language, customs and folk institutions. Historically, the Bodo socio-cultural movement has been driven by organisations like the Bodo Sahitya Sabha (BSS) and student groups that sought recognition of language, script and cultural rights, processes that influenced local structures and the formation of local cultural committees. Goalpara district has been a historically significant region for the Bodos and related Kachari groups; prominent Bodo reformers, e.g., Kalicharan Brahma and localized organisational activities trace back to Goalpara, making it an important site to study community cultural governance.

The Cultural Committee under the *Goalpara Jila Boro Barodol* has been playing a vital role in Goalpara district for the Bodo society by promoting cultural taboo, fostering unity, and encouraging holistic development through various initiatives like organizing cultural events, celebrating festivals, and promoting participation in performing and literary arts. This committee also aims to raise awareness about Bodo

culture and heritage which has been fostering a sense of community and mutual understanding. They have been ensuring that, cultural experiences help to build a sense of community and belonging amongst the Bodo people of the Goalpara district. They promote that cultural activities, such as dance, music, drama, and literary events strengthen creativity, self-expression, and confidence building. They invite experts to speak on cultural topics, organize workshop, arranging showcase traditional Bodo dance and music. The Cultural Committee under the *Goalpara Jila Boro Barodal* has been playing a multifaceted role in shaping a vibrant and inclusive Bodo society in Goalpara district by fostering cultural awareness, and promoting social unity. This paper examines the role of cultural sub-committees in the socio-cultural and developmental processes of the Bodo community in Goalpara district of Assam. Drawing on historical background, secondary literature, local reports, and organisational practices especially those of Bodo organisation such as the Bodo Sahitya Sabha, the study analyses how small, localised cultural bodies contribute to language preservation, cultural education, social cohesion, local leadership development, conflict mediation, and economic upliftment through cultural activities. It identifies successes, limitations and proposes recommendations to strengthen cultural sub-committees as agents of sustainable local development.

3.1.2.1 Role of the Cultural Committee in the Development of Bodo Society at Goalpara ndistrict:

Cultural institutions and grassroots committees play a crucial role in the maintenance and transmission of intangible cultural heritage. For the Bodo community, a Tibeto-Burman ethnolinguistic group concentrated in parts of Assam including Goalpara district, organised cultural efforts have historically supported language standardisation, literary growth, festival practice, e.g., *Bwisagu* festival, and socio-political mobilization. It focuses on the local committees often formed under broader organisations like village councils, school bodies, or units of bodies such as the Bodo Sahitya Sabha, and their contribution to community development in Bodo dominated areas at Goalpara district.

Culture is one of the strongest foundations upon which any society stands. For the Bodo people, one of the largest and oldest ethnolinguistic groups of northeast India

the preservation, promotion, and transmission of culture have always been essential for maintaining collective identity. Over the decades, as modernization, globalization, and socio-political transformations have influenced the region, the responsibility of protecting Bodo cultural heritage has become even more crucial. Within this context, the Cultural Committee plays an instrumental role in safeguarding, revitalizing, and strengthening Bodo culture across Bodo dominated area of Goalpara district.

The Cultural Committee typically functions within student bodies, community councils, village organizations, local clubs, Bodo socio-cultural groups, or larger umbrella organizations like the Bodo Sahitya Sabha (BSS), All Bodo Students' Union (ABSU), Bodo Women's Justice Forum, and various cultural trusts. Regardless of the institutional setting, the Committee's main purpose remains the same to preserve the roots of Bodo society while encouraging cultural growth in the modern world. It explores the multifaceted role of the Cultural Sub-Committee in the overall development of Bodo society, analyzing its contributions in areas such as cultural preservation, education, language promotion, festivals, heritage protection, youth empowerment, gender inclusion, community cohesion, economic growth, and socio-political awareness. It also highlights the Committee's contributions within different districts, especially regions like Goalpara, where Bodo cultural elements thrive with deep historical roots. Through this analysis, the essay demonstrates how cultural institutions shape a society's identity and drive transformative development.

Understanding the role of the Cultural Committee becomes meaningful only when we consider the rich cultural heritage of the Bodos. The Bodo community, belonging to the Tibeto-Burman linguistic group, has a long-established cultural history characterized by traditional festivals such as *Bwisagu*, *Kherai*, and *Domashi*. It is a unique linguistic structure under the Sino-Tibetan language family, and a distinct art and craft tradition including weaving, dance forms, music, and folklore, traditional social institutions and belief systems, and folk knowledge related to agriculture, herbal medicine, food habits, and customary laws. Historically, the Bodos practiced a deep connection with nature and community life, expressed through dance, song, ritual ceremonies, and collective celebrations. Over time, with the rise of education, Christianity, socio-political movements, and modernization, many aspects of Bodo traditional culture evolved or underwent transformation. This created the need for a

dedicated body to oversee cultural preservation and development thus giving rise to various Cultural Committees.

Cultural committees operate at the nexus of culture and development for the Bodo community in Goalpara. Though often informal and underfunded, their contributions to language preservation, social cohesion, youth leadership, the local cultural economy and historical memory are substantial. Strengthening these bodies through capacity building, financial support and formal recognition would amplify their positive impact on social and economic development while preserving Bodo cultural heritage for future generations. Continued research including primary fieldwork in Goalpara villages would enrich these findings and provide concrete baselines for policy interventions.¹¹

3.1.2.1.1 Preservation and Promotion of Traditional Culture:

The most important responsibility of the Cultural Committee is to protect traditional Bodo culture. Its work includes as documenting folk songs, dances, rituals, and oral narratives, encouraging traditional knowledge systems such as weaving, agriculture, and herbal medicine, identifying cultural elements that are disappearing or endangered, and preserving sacred ceremonies like *Bwisagu* festival and revitalizing youth participation. This active preservation ensures Bodo culture remains alive despite changing lifestyles.¹²

3.1.2.1.2 Organizing Cultural Festivals and Events:

The Committee organizes festivals such as *Bwisagu* festival to welcoming the new year with dance, music, and rituals, *Bathou* worship a religious ritual seeking blessings from deities, *Bwisagu* cultural programs, Inter-village cultural competitions. Such events not only bring communities together but also help younger generations learn traditional practices firsthand.¹³

¹¹ Op-cit. Matilal Basumatary: (M.78) Bangal Para, Goalpara.

¹² Dinen Basumatary: (M. 81) Maj Para, Goalpara.

¹³ Ibid.

3.1.2.1.3 Promoting Bodo Language:

Language is the backbone of culture. Key initiatives include like promoting the use of the Bodo language in schools and homes, encouraging students to participate in Bodo debate, poetry, and essay competitions, supporting the writing and publication of Bodo literature, organizing workshops on reading and writing in Bodo, especially for younger children, and motivating the use of Bodo language in digital media, social platforms, and local news. Through these efforts, the Cultural Committee fosters linguistic pride and keeps the language strong.¹⁴

3.1.2.1.4 Cultural Education for Youth:

Young people are the future custodians of culture. The Cultural Committee conducts workshops on Bodo dance like *Bagurumba*, music, and instruments like the *Kham*, *Sifung*, *Jotha*, *Serja*, *Thorkha*, and *Gonggwana* teaches traditional customs, rituals, and community discipline, arranges youth camps to promote teamwork, leadership, and cultural awareness, and encourages participation in state-level and national-level cultural festivals. This helps develop confidence, identity, and knowledge among young Bodo students.¹⁵

3.1.2.1.5 Documenting Folk Knowledge:

The Cultural Committee plays an essential role in preserving indigenous knowledge such as traditional foods and herbal medicines, folk beliefs and legends, traditional weaving patterns, and farming methods unique to Bodo villages. Documentation can be in forms like written records, video recordings, photographs, or community archives, protecting valuable knowledge for future generations.¹⁶

3.1.2.1.6 Strengthening Community Unity and Harmony:

Cultural activities bring people together. The Cultural Committee organizes community feasts, dances, and social gatherings, promotes cooperation among different Bodo villages, encourages elders and youth to share knowledge and work collectively,

¹⁴ Matilal Basumatary: (M.78) Bangal Para, Goalpara.

¹⁵ Dinen Basumatary: (M. 81) Maj Para, Goalpara.

¹⁶ Matilal Basumatary: (M.78) Bangal Para, Goalpara.

and helps reduce social conflicts by fostering a sense of belonging. Culture becomes a unifying force within the Bodo society.¹⁷

3.1.2.1.7 Supporting Women’s Cultural Participation:

Women play a central role in Bodo cultural heritage, especially in weaving, music, dance like *Bagurumba*, and rituals. The Cultural Committee ensures equal participation for women and girls in cultural events, promotes women's traditional skills such as weaving *Dokhona*, *Gamsa*, and *Aronai*, encourages leadership roles for women within cultural groups, and recognizes talented female artists at community events. This enhances gender equality while strengthening cultural continuity.¹⁸

3.1.2.1.8 Promoting Bodo Art, Craft, and Handloom:

Bodo weaving and handicrafts are internationally recognized for their beauty and symbolism. The Cultural Committee contributes to exhibitions of handloom products like *Dokhona*, *Gamsa*, and *Aronai*, traditional fabrics, training programs for youth to learn weaving, supporting local artisans, and women’s self-help groups, and connecting craft traditions to local economic development. Thus, culture becomes linked to livelihood and economic empowerment.¹⁹

3.1.2.1.9 Cultural Awareness and Identity Formation:

Through seminars, awareness programs, and cultural workshops, the Cultural Committee helps individuals especially students to understand in the topic such as Who the Bodo are, What their cultural symbols represent, Why protecting culture is important, How cultural identity strengthens emotional and social resilience. This identity awareness fosters confidence and pride among Bodo community members in the entire Bodo dominated areas at Goalpara district.²⁰

¹⁷ Dinen Basumatary: (M. 81) Maj Para, Goalpara.

¹⁸ Op-cit. Dinen Basumatary: (M. 81) Maj Para, Goalpara.

¹⁹ Matilal Basumatary: (M.78) Bangal Para, Goalpara.

²⁰ Ibid.

3.1.2.1.10 Collaboration with Schools and Educational Institutions:

The Cultural Committee has been collaborating cultural awareness programmes with school and other educational institutions. The Committee improves cultural education through organizing Annual Cultural Day in schools, inviting cultural performers to deliver demonstrations, running cultural clubs for students, and supporting Bodo medium schools with cultural materials. Education becomes culturally grounded, benefitting students academically and socially.²¹

3.1.2.1.11 Preservation of Music, Dance, and Folk Instruments, Encouraging Literary and Artistic Growth:

The Cultural Committee Committee is responsible for teaching Bagurumba, the signature dance of Bodo women, training youth in traditional instruments such as *Kham*, *Sifung*, *Jotha*, *Serja*, *Thorkha* and *Gonggwana*, and recording and archiving traditional tunes. These instruments connect the Bodo community to ancient musical traditions. The Cultural Committee supports storytelling sessions, poetry recitations, drama, and theatre based on Bodo folklore, essay competitions, and artistic exhibitions. Such activities nurture creativity among students and artists in the entire Bodo dominated areas of Goalpara district amongst the Bodo community.

3.1.2.1.12 Role in Modernization and Cultural Adaptation:

The Cultural Committee ensures that modernization strengthens, not weakens, culture. It encourages using digital platforms to promote Bodo songs and dance, recording cultural events, and sharing them online, creating digital archives of Bodo history, and integrating modern art forms with traditional elements. This helps culture stay relevant in the 21st century.

3.1.2.1.13 Protection of Tangible and Intangible Cultural Heritage:

The Cultural Committee works toward maintaining cultural centers and community halls, preserving old artifacts, jewellery, and traditional clothing, protecting

²¹ Dinen Basumatary: (M. 81) Maj Para, Goalpara.

sacred places associated with Bathouism, documenting intangible heritage such as values, ethics, and social customs, and both physical and spiritual elements of culture are preserved.

3.1.2.1.14 Strengthening Inter-Community Relations:

By organizing intercultural programs with neighboring communities like Assamese, Rabha, Garo, Koch, and Rajbongshi, the Cultural Committee promotes mutual respect, cultural exchange, social peace, regional unity, and cultural diplomacy becomes a tool for social harmony. Goalpara district holds a significant population of Bodo people particularly in Matia, Lakhipur, and Balijana regions. The Cultural Committee in Goalpara has contributed in the following ways revitalization of *Bwisagu* and *Bagurumba* performances. In many Goalpara villages, *Bagurumba* dance teams have become active, participating in district-level competitions. The Cultural Committee provides training, costumes, and platforms for youth. Through school-level Bodo language competitions, the Cultural Committee encourages children to speak and read Bodo confidently. Goalpara has rich oral histories. Elders share stories, myths, and folk songs through cultural sessions arranged by the Cultural Committee. Women in Goalpara villages produce beautiful dokhona and aronai. Exhibitions organized by the Cultural Committee help them gain recognition and income. *Bathou* rituals, traditional beliefs ceremonies are preserved with care, highlighting the spiritual roots of Bodo culture. The Cultural Committee organizes sports, drama, music, and cultural camps that keep youth connected to their heritage. The influence of cultural development spreads across various dimensions of life, and cultural festivals attract visitors from outside, boosting local tourism. Handloom products, cultural events, and traditional crafts create job opportunities. Youth learn skills such as dance, weaving, leadership, and public speaking. Cultural awareness reduces conflicts and promotes cooperation due to the role played by Cultural Committee in the entire Bodo dominated areas at he Goalpara district.

3.1.2.1.15 Preservation of Indigenous Knowledge:

The Culture Committee preserves herbal medicine, agriculture, and folk practices become valuable community resources. Planning and running cultural

programmes and festivals such as dance, music, drama, Bodo language recitations. They have been promoting mother-tongue education and literacy drives, documenting folktales, songs and oral histories, training youth in traditional crafts, instruments and performance arts, acting as mediators in local disputes where cultural norms are relevant, and coordinating with Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), government cultural departments and funding agencies for grants. These functions have been allowing the Cultural Committees to act as both cultural custodians and agents of social development in their locales.

3.1.2.1.16 Social Cohesion, Identity and Conflict Mitigation, Education, Leadership and Capacity Building:

The Cultural Committee organises festivals, e.g., *Bwisagu*, and cultural fairs that not only preserve ritual and performing arts, but also create micro-economic opportunities such as food stalls, craft sales, performances. These activities generate short-term local incomes, promote local artisans, and strengthen cultural tourism potential. In Goalpara and similar districts, festival organisation by community committees has been a longstanding practice. Through shared rituals, collaborative event planning and youth programmes, the Cultural Committee builds social capital and reduce potential for inter-group friction. Cultural gatherings create neutral spaces for elders, youth and women to interact across social lines. In contexts where political mobilisation has been intense, e.g., Bodoland movement phases, cultural bodies have sometimes provided non-political arenas for dialogue and community healing. The Cultural Committee often runs workshops such as song, drama, or literacy, empowering youth with organisational and performance skills. Serving on a Cultural Committee is a leadership incubator, students and young members gain experience in event planning, budgeting, fundraising and public speaking transferable skills that contribute to civic participation and local governance.

3.1.2.1.17 Documentation and Historical Memory:

Local committees are frequently instrumental in collecting oral histories, folk songs, and genealogies that larger institutions might overlook. In Goalpara, historically important figures and folk knowledge have been preserved in local accounts and reports

a resource for later scholarly work and for maintaining collective memory. While Goalpara's Bodo population is not geographically compact like in some northern districts, records and local histories show active cultural personalities and local committees contributing to cultural life: historical reformers figures such as Kalicharan Brahma, who was born in a locality now in Goalpara district led social reform and religious-cultural renewal that influenced local organising traditions. These reformist legacies inform how modern the Cultural Committee approaches education and social norms. District-level reports and repository entries indicate that Goalpara Bodo communities have submitted memoranda, formed action committees and engaged in literary initiatives all activities that depend heavily on local organising structures and sub-committees. These examples show how the Cultural Committee functions in dispersed Bodo populations as nodes linking families, schools and larger organisations.

3.1.2.2 Challenges Faced by the Cultural Committee:

Migration, media consumption in dominant languages, and changing aspirations among youth may reduce participation in traditional cultural practices unless committees adapt programming to modern formats. The absence of targeted district-level cultural policies or weak links to the government's cultural departments inhibits scaling of local initiatives from accessing grants. Recent debates about tribal recognition and policy changes across Assam further complicate institutional support environments. The Cultural Committee also faces obstacles such as lack of financial support, limited documentation of older cultural practices, urbanization leading to declining interest among youth, migration of young workers to cities, influence of western culture overshadowing indigenous traditions, and shortage of trained cultural instructors. Despite these challenges, the Cultural Committee continues its mission with dedication.

3.1.2.3 Practical Steps to Strengthen the Cultural Committee:

Regular workshops in event management, grant writing, documentation, and digital archiving to professionalise local committees. District cultural departments, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) should set up small rapid-response grants for festival organisation and archival projects. Institutionalise collaborations between

sub-committees and local schools for curricular and extracurricular mother-tongue activities. The Cultural Committee uses social media and simple multimedia such as audio and video to engage youth, document performances and reach diaspora audience and create district cultural networks to share resources, calendars and trainers reducing duplication and promoting best practices. Encourage systematic recording of events and oral histories; partner with academic repositories to preserve local materials. If implemented, these steps would increase the developmental impact of cultural sub-committees in Goalpara and similar districts. Recommendations for strengthening the Cultural Committee are more government and Non-Governmental Organization support, digital archiving of cultural materials, training programs for youth in music, dance, and weaving, establishment of cultural museums in districts, encouraging cultural entrepreneurship, stronger school-community partnerships, research-based documentation of Bodo heritage, and organizing cultural exchange programs. These steps can further strengthen cultural preservation and development. The Cultural Committee plays a foundational role in nurturing the identity, unity, and progress of Bodo society. Through its dedicated efforts in preserving traditions, promoting language, organizing festivals, supporting artisans, empowering youth, and fostering community harmony, the Cultural Committee ensures that Bodo culture remains vibrant, proud, and resilient. In a world where indigenous cultures often face the threat of erasure, the Cultural Committee becomes a powerful guardian of heritage protecting the soul of the Bodo community and guiding its future generations toward cultural pride and sustainable development. Whether in Goalpara or any other Bodo region, its contributions have shaped not only cultural life but also social, educational, and economic growth. By recognizing and strengthening the Cultural Committee, the Bodo society can continue to flourish while preserving the wisdom and beauty of its ancestral traditions.

3.1.3 Women Council:

Portfolio members of the Women Council of the year 2019 under *Goalpara Jila Boro Barodal* are shown in the below:

Sl. No.	Name of Portfolio Member	Portfolio	Name of Village	Name of Mad
1	Mushrima Ratna Machary	President	Simlapara	Damas Mad
2	Mushrima Mahima Basumatary	Vice- President	Rwumari	Pragati Mad
3	Mushrima Jytika Patgiri	Gnl. Secretary	Deulguri	Dwar-Amjogga Mad
4	Mushrima Mamata Daimary	Asstt. Secretary	Simlapara	Damas Mad
5	Mushrima Dalimi Basumatary	Adviser	Udmari	Dwar-Rangjuli Mad
6	Mushrima Dharmeswary Kachary	Adviser	Sanjapur	Sanjaha Bukali Mad
7	Mushrima Praneswary Patgiri	Adviser	Bakharapara	Sanjaha Bikali Mad
8	Mushrima Pakhila Boro	Adviser	Manupara	Dwar-Amjongga Mad
9	Mushrima Archana Basumatary	Member	Gathiyapara	Kwtha-Kwthi Mad
10	Mushrima Menoka Kachari	Member	Maurampur	Swnab Bikali Mad
11	Mushrima Pabaneswary Boro	Member	Garo Para	Patpara Mad
12	Mushrima Anima Basumatary	Member	Saraniyapara	Dwar-Rangjuli Mad
13	Mushrima Banalata Basumatary	Member	Udmari	Dwar-Rwumari Mad
14	Mushrima Binota Patgiri	Member	Bogadoba	Dwar-Daranggiri Mad
15	Mushrima Roma Boro	Member	Majpara	Daranggiri Sanjwrang Mad

The Women Council under the *Goalpara Jila Boro Barodal* has been playing a vital role for societal promotion by advocating for women empowerment by ensuring their representation in decision making, and fostering gender equality. This council works to address about the participation of women's of Goalpara district to focus on economic empowerment by providing women with access to education, training, and financial resources, which can help them to become more self-reliant and contribute to economy. The Women Council advocates for improved access to education and healthcare for girls and women, which is essential for their overall well-being and development. They have been doing to convey awareness on Bodo women's role as a mother to develop their family through maintaining domestic works. The portfolio members of this committee organize meetings in the village area and deliver lecture on the participation of women in the marriage ceremony, death funeral. In the societal ceremony the Bodo women of Goalpara district have been performing dance and songs teaches about the Bathwu religion and organizes meetings in the rural areas of Goalpara district in the Bodo dominated areas. Their have been established *Bathou Thansali*, i.e. *Bathou* Temple in the Bodo villages, they discuss about the philosophies of Bathouism, and encourage the Bodo people to worship the *Bathou* to overcome the problems of daily life.

3.1.3.1 Role of Women Council in the Development of Bodo Society:

The Bodo society, one of the major indigenous ethnolinguistic communities of Assam, has undergone remarkable socio-cultural, political, and economic transformations over the past decades. Within this journey of development, women have played an indispensable role. Traditionally positioned as custodians of culture, agriculture, and family welfare, Bodo women have steadily expanded their participation from household responsibilities to community leadership, political participation, and social reform. The institutionalization of women's participation through organizations such as the Women Council often affiliated with socio-political bodies like the All Bodo Students Union, Bodo Sahitya Sabha, or community-based organizations has been a key factor in shaping modern Bodo society.

The Women Council, whether functioning as *Mahila Samiti*, women's wings of socio-political organizations, or independent women's associations, acts as a platform

to mobilize, educate, and empower Bodo women. These councils contribute significantly to community development through their involvement in cultural preservation, socio-economic upliftment, political participation, conflict resolution, health awareness, and education. It highlights how organized women's participation is transforming the socio-cultural landscape and fostering inclusive and sustainable growth. Historically, Bodo women were highly respected within the community. They engaged in agriculture and household economy, handloom and weaving, preservation of customs, rituals, and festivals, childcare and education, and participation in community events. Although they did not hold significant public positions traditionally, their influence within the family and clan units remained strong. These bodies eventually evolved into structured the Women Councils at various levels such as village and district. Women Council has been involving in social development mactivities.²²

3.1.3.1.1 Social awareness and reform:

The Women Council has been instrumental in raising awareness about early marriage, dowry, and domestic violence, promoting gender equality and girl-child education, helping families adopt modern health and sanitation practices, and working against alcoholism and substance abuse. Their village-level meetings, awareness campaigns, and counselling sessions help to curb social issues and strengthen harmony.

3.1.3.1.2 Women's safety and protection:

The Women Council often provides support to women facing domestic abuse, mediates family disputes, ensures safe public spaces for women and children, and collaborates with police and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) to address severe cases. Its presence has helped reduce cases of exploitation and violence in many areas.

3.1.3.1.3 Strengthening family and community unity:

By organizing community meetings, cultural programs, and festivals, Women Councils help strengthen inter-family relationships, village solidarity, and collective decision-making processes. They play a constructive role in building social cohesion.

²² Op-cit. Lalita Khakhalary. (F. 61). Mejeng Para, Goalpara.

3.1.3.1.4 Contribution to Cultural Preservation:

Bodo women are traditionally the custodians of culture. The Women Council helps to maintain folk songs and dances such as *Bagurumba*, festivals like *Bwisagu*, *Domashi*, and *Bathou* worship, traditional attire and weaving patterns, and folk stories, oral literature, and rituals. They ensure that the younger generation remains connected to their cultural roots.

3.1.3.1.5 Promotion of handloom and weaving:

Handloom is an essential part of Bodo identity. The Women Council organizes weaving workshops, encourages youth to learn traditional patterns, promotes handloom products in fairs and exhibitions, and supports women entrepreneurs to earn income from weaving. This preserves heritage while improving economic strength.

3.1.3.1.6 Cultural education for children, Encouraging girl's education:

The Women Council conducts cultural classes, dance and music training, folk literature workshops. These initiatives help transfer values and traditions across generations. The Women Council stresses the importance of formal education. It conducts awareness programs about the benefits of schooling, works with schools and teachers to reduce dropouts, supports families facing financial difficulties, and encourages girls to pursue higher education and vocational training. This has helped increase literacy among Bodo girls and promoted academic achievement. Many women's groups run adult literacy centres where elderly women learn basic reading and writing, and important topics such as health, finance, and rights are taught. This enhances confidence and self-reliance among adult women.

3.1.3.1.7 Career Guidance, Skill Development, and Economic Empowerment:

The Women Council helps young women gain employable skills such as tailoring, weaving, and embroidery, digital literacy, entrepreneurship training, and leadership and communication skills. These programs help women enter the workforce and become financially independent. The Women Council often supports and manages Self Help Groups (SHGs) that provides micro-loans, enables small-scale businesses like weaving, poultry, farming, and food processing, and strengthens women's income

and financial independence. Self Help Groups boost local economies and reduce poverty. The Women Council encourages women to start handloom enterprises, organic farming, small shops and markets, and food processing units. They connect women to banks, training institutions, and government schemes. The Women Council also helps women to access health insurance programs, and skill development missions. By acting as a bridge between government and community, they increase development outreach. The Women Council holds sessions to teach voting rights, importance of participating in elections, government policies and schemes, and leadership skills. This has enhanced political consciousness among Bodo women. Many women from Bodo society now serve as panchayat leaders, village heads, members of autonomous council bodies, and leaders in community organizations. The Women Council serves as training grounds for future leaders. During periods of political tension or conflict in the region, the Women Council has helped mediate disputes, promotes peace-building, provides support to affected families, and advocates for human rights. Their involvement has been crucial in maintaining stability. The Women Council regularly conducts workshops on maternal and child health, nutrition, sanitation and hygiene, preventable diseases, and menstrual health education. This is vital in rural areas with limited health facilities. Women council works directly with Accredited Social Health Activist (ASHA) workers, Anganwadi workers, and Non-Governmental Organizations to organize vaccination drives, conduct anemia check-ups, promote institutional deliveries, and distribute supplements and sanitary materials. This ensures healthier families and communities. It plays active roles in village cleanliness campaigns, plantation drives, waste management, and conservation of riverbanks and forest resources. This protects the environment and encourages sustainable living. The Women Council advocates women to understand legal rights, property and inheritance laws, and protection laws against harassment and abuse. It works to eliminate gender discrimination, supports widows, single mothers, economically disadvantaged families, elderly women, and victims of violence. By doing so, they build an inclusive and equitable society. The impact of the Women Council is visible in several areas like more girls are attending school and pursuing higher studies. The Women have become active contributors to household and community economies, traditional arts and customs are being preserved and promoted. Awareness programs have helped reduce early marriage, alcoholism, and domestic violence in many areas. A growing number

of Bodo women are emerging as influential leaders. Better sanitation and health practices have improved the quality of life.

3.1.3.2 Challenges Faced by Women Council and the Recommendations:

Although their achievements are significant, the Women Council still face challenges such as limited financial resources, gender stereotypes and patriarchal attitudes, lack of political support in some areas, inadequate infrastructure for training and activities, and balancing household responsibilities with public roles. Addressing these issues is essential for further progress. The Women Council plays a pivotal role in shaping the development of Bodo society. From cultural preservation and social reform to education, economic empowerment, political participation, and community welfare, these councils have become pillars of progress. They have transformed the role of Bodo women from traditional caretakers to active leaders, educators, entrepreneurs, and agents of change.

3.1.3.3 Recommendations for Strengthening Women Council:

The Women Council plays a pivotal role in shaping the development of Bodo society. From cultural preservation and social reform to education, economic empowerment, political participation, and community welfare, these councils have become pillars of progress. They have transformed the role of Bodo women from traditional caretakers to active leaders, educators, entrepreneurs, and agents of change. Strengthening the Women Council will need emergent activities like provide financial grants for women-led initiatives, enhance leadership training for young women, increase collaboration with government and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), expand Self Help Groups (SHGs) and entrepreneurship programs, improve digital literacy among women, strengthen legal support systems for women in crisis, promote representation of women in local political bodies, and encourage research and documentation of women's contributions. Strengthening the Women Council will not only empower women but also ensure the holistic development of Bodo society. As women rise, the entire community rises with them. The continued success of the Women Council reflects the dynamic, evolving, and resilient spirit of the Bodo people.

3.1.4 Contribution of Goalpara Jila Boro Barodal to the Development of Bodo language and Literature:

The Bodo language has experienced a remarkable revival and formalisation over the past century moving from an overwhelmingly oral tradition to a written, taught, and institutionally supported language. While the Bodo Sahitya Sabha is widely recognised as the primary literary organisation for Bodo, local and district-level bodies such as the *Goalpara Jila Boro Barodal* have played an essential, though often under-documented, role in preserving local traditions, encouraging literary production, and connecting community practice to broader language movements. This essay examines the functions, achievements, and challenges of the *Goalpara Jila Boro Barodal* in promoting Bodo literature and language in the Goalpara region analysing historical context, concrete literary activities such as publishing, oral-literature collection, education, standardisation and script debates, and the organisation's ongoing importance for cultural resilience.

Goalpara district occupies a distinctive place in Bodo literary history. The region on the southern and northern banks of the Brahmaputra has historically been a meeting point of cultures and languages; in this geographical and social mosaic, Bodo oral genres such as songs, folktales, ritual texts retained vitality. The first printed Bodo text known from the region, *Boroni Ficha O Ayen*, a compilation of customary laws and ritual texts used by Bodo communities of South Goalpara, shows how Goalpara was a site where writing and print for Bodo began to take root. District-level organisations, local scholars and activists in Goalpara were therefore naturally among the early actors pushing Bodo from orality into print and institutional life.

The *Goalpara Jila Boro Barodal* is a district-level Bodo functions as a grass-roots node of cultural stewardship within the Goalpara district. Its mandate typically includes collecting and preserving oral literature and rituals particular to Goalpara's Bodo communities, sponsoring local authors, poets and folk performers to compose and perform in Bodo, publishing pamphlets, songbooks, ritual manuals and translations for local use and schooling, running or coordinating cultural events, recitation competitions, and community reading circles, and liaising with statewide bodies such as Bodo Sahitya Sabha and educational institutions to include local materials in curricula and dictionaries. Local studies and college reports that surveyed Goalpara's

Bodo communities emphasise that district bodies like the *Goalpara Jila Barodal* occupies the practical space between village oral keepers and state-level literary institutions, they are often the people who transcribe rituals, sponsor local booklets, and keep micro-archives of songs and life-cycle texts.

3.1.4.1 Documentation and publication of oral and ritual texts:

One of the most direct literary contributions by the *Goalpara Jila Boro Barodal* has been the collection and publication of oral genres and ritual manuals used by the Bodo community of Goalpara district. Works such as locally printed ritual books and printed versions of customary law for example, editions or reprints of *Boroni Ficha O Ayen* in local circulation have helped shift fragile oral genres into durable written forms. This process preserves content that otherwise risks loss and also makes local knowledge accessible for teaching and comparison across Bodo-speaking areas. District groups typically publish small-run primers, songbooks and readers for use in local schools and adult literacy programmes. These are often authored by local teachers, elders and *Goalpara Jila Barodal* members and are crucial for region-specific vocabulary like agriculture, fishing, local festivals that larger, state-level textbooks might omit. Such grassroots publishing keeps the language functional in everyday domains and supports intergenerational transmission.

3.1.4.2 Encouraging creative writing and performance:

The *Goalpara Jila Boro Barodal* usually organizes local competitions, festivals and reading events that encourage new poetry, drama and short fiction in Bodo. These events create a pipeline for new writers to gain confidence and to be noticed by regional literary journals and the Bodo Sahitya Sabha. By sponsoring youth contests and encouraging school-level composition, the *Goalpara Jila Boro Barodal* helps diversify the body of Bodo writing beyond canonical or highly formal registers. Because many technical and modern terms are not native to Bodo, district organisations often compile glossaries and propose localised terminology for agriculture, health, education and governance. These lexicons though sometimes unpublished or circulated as pamphlets are important for making the language usable in modern public life and schooling.

3.1.4.3 Educational outreach and mother-tongue instruction:

The *Goalpara Jila Boro Barodal* has collaborated informally with local schools and teachers to develop reading materials in Bodo, assist with teacher training, and advised on syllabus inclusion of Bodo literature and folk genres. Efforts at the district level to get Bodo taught or to supplement classroom materials are important steps towards institutional recognition and formal language planning. The Bodo Sahitya Sabha founded in 1952 in Basugaon, undivided Goalpara is the principal statewide literary institution; district bodies like the *Goalpara Jila Boro Barodal* feed into this larger movement both by supplying materials like local texts, talent, knowledge, and by helping implement Bodo Sahitya Sabha decisions locally, e.g., promoting standard orthography, organizing book distribution, and translating major works. The Bodo Sahitya Sabha's origin in the Goalpara area itself and its early activity in the district means that Goalpara's district organisations were often part of initial waves of standardisation and publication.

3.1.4.4 Role in script and standardisation debates:

Bodo's script history involves shifts among Roman, Devanagari and Assamese scripts before adoption of Devanagari for official use in many contexts. In the early decades, Goalpara saw experiments with Roman-script primers and printed texts choices reflecting missionary schooling, local literacy patterns, and printing access. District desks and local *Goalpara Jila Boro Barodal* committees historically debated which scripts and orthographic norms best served local readers. By preserving local print traditions and providing practical teaching material in whichever script was available, *Goalpara Jila Boro Barodal* helped maintain literacy and continuity through periods of orthographic change.

3.1.4.5 Preserving dialectal richness and local genres:

Goalpara's Bodo-speaking population includes dialectal variants and region-specific rituals and poetic forms. The *Goalpara Jila Boro Barodal's* literary efforts foreground these particularities: collecting songs that are sung only at particular Goalpara rites, documenting local proverbs, and publishing examples of speech that would otherwise be unrepresented in pan-Bodo anthologies. That work matters: language standardisation risks erasing local forms; district bodies act as custodians of

the local linguistic palette and cultural identity. College and university research (local NAAC reports, university projects) often rely on materials preserved by district organisations. Academic work on Goalpara's folklore, ritual, and language frequently cites district collections, reprints and manuscript holdings created or kept by *Goalpara Jila Boro Barodal* members. The availability of primary materials enables linguistic description like morphology, lexicon, ethnography and folklore studies which in turn feed back into better literacy resources and curricula.

3.1.4.6 Challenges faced by the Goalpara Jila Boro Barodal:

- (a) **Limited Publishing Resources:** Small print runs, lack of International Standard Book Number (ISBN) registrations and limited distribution keep many valuable local texts out of wider circulation. This constrains academic access and reduces the long-term preservation prospects for these works.
- (b) **Documentation Standards:** Field transcriptions and recording practices vary; older collected materials may lack metadata, i.e. dates, informant names, contextual notes which reduces their research value.
- (c) **Funding and Institutional Support:** District bodies rely on donations, membership fees or small grants. In the absence of steady funding, activities such as archiving and quality publishing are difficult to sustain.
- (d) **Language Shift Pressures:** Younger generations face pressure from regional lingua francas and English making engagement with written Bodo less fashionable unless the language is made relevant to schooling and careers.
- (f) **Orthography and Script Politics:** State-level decisions about scripts and official recognition can create confusion at the grassroots if local materials use a different script tradition. This sometimes creates a gap between district-produced material and official curricula.

3.1.4.7 Measurable impacts:

Despite constraints, the *Goalpara Jila Boro Barodal's* grassroots work yields visible outcomes such as (i) Survival of ritual texts: By transcribing and printing local ritual and customary law texts, the *Goalpara Jila Boro Barodal* has kept these forms available to younger community members and scholars. *Boroni Ficha O Ayen* and

similar local prints are examples of this preservation impulse. (ii) Pipeline of writers: Local competitions and festivals incubate talent; writers who start at district-level events often go on to contribute to regional journals and participate in Sahitya Sabha conferences. (iii) Educational support: District primers and readers, even when small-run, provide regionally relevant vocabulary and culturally resonant texts for school children an essential step in mother-tongue literacy. (iv) Research enabling: Primary data preserved by the *Goalpara Jila Boro Barodal* have enabled college-level research projects and local scholarly reports on Goalpara's folklore and Bodo cultural life. (v) Digital archiving: A modestly funded digital repository scanned pamphlets, recorded songs, transcriptions with metadata could multiply access and protect materials from physical loss. (vi) Standardized documentation training: Workshops for *Goalpara Jila Boro Barodal* members on field recording, metadata, and transcription conventions would raise the research value of collected texts. (vii) Partnerships with universities and the Bodo Sahitya Sabha: Formal linkages would enable small grants, student projects like digitisation, linguistics fieldwork, and curricular integration of local texts. (viii) Micro-publishing grants: Seed funding for short-run high-quality editions with ISBNs and distribution plans would get local texts into libraries and increase their visibility. (ix) Youth programming: Sustained workshops in schools and youth clubs creative writing, local-history zines, digital storytelling would foster the next generation of Bodo readers and writers. (x) Translation and bilingual editions: Publishing bilingual or Trilingual like Bodo/ Assamese/English editions of key local texts could broaden readership and encourage comparative scholarship. The *Goalpara Jila Boro Barodal* plays an outsized cultural role relative to its modest resources. By collecting oral texts, publishing locally relevant primers, encouraging creative writing, and linking community knowledge to broader networks, the organisation preserves and enlarges the living capacity of the Bodo language in Goalpara. Its work complements that of the Bodo Sahitya Sabha, supplying the raw materials songs, rituals, lexical items, and local narratives that make a language vibrant and locally rooted. Strengthened the support of digital archiving, standardised documentation, university partnerships and small publishing grants would greatly amplify the *Goalpara Jila Boro Barodal's* impact: turning fragile pamphlets and cassette recordings into durable, accessible heritage that both scholars and the community can use to keep Bodo thriving in the twenty-first century.

3.2 Findings:

The *Goalpara Jila Boro Barodal* occupies an essential space in the social, cultural, and spiritual life of the Bodo community in Goalpara district, Assam. As one of the oldest and most culturally rich indigenous groups in the region, the Bodos maintain a distinct identity rooted in language, tradition, religion, and community values. The Bodos have historically organized themselves through various community institutions to preserve their way of life and unite members around shared goals and collective progress. In this tapestry of community action, three institutions, such as the Religious Committee, the Cultural Committee, and the Women Council play vital, interlocking roles in strengthening the fabric of Bodo society at the district level.

The religious dimensions of Bodo life are deep, symbolic, and woven into everyday practice. Many Bodos follow Bathouism, the indigenous religion that celebrates the five principles of creation, such as earth, water, air, fire, and sky, and recognize Bathoubwrai as the supreme deity. Additionally, several Bodos practice Hinduism and Christianity alongside traditional beliefs, creating a rich mosaic of religious expression. Within this context, the Religious Committee of the *Goalpara Jila Boro Barodal* fulfills several core functions.

This Religious committee preserves and fosters Bathouism and other Bodo spiritual practices. It organizes and coordinates religious festivals such as *Bwisagu*, i.e. the Bodo New Year, *Bathou Puja*, and seasonal rites. These ceremonies, rooted in agrarian rhythms and spiritual devotion, embody the community's bond with nature, ancestry, and divine forces. Through careful planning and guidance, the Religious committee ensures that rituals remain authentic and meaningful, even as the community navigates modern pressures. Religious teachings in the Bodo context are not purely ceremonial, but they guide social values like honesty, respect for nature, and communal harmony. The committee reinforces ethical norms that support peaceful coexistence within the Bodo community and with neighboring groups in Goalpara. Its work nurtures moral accountability, encourages compassionate conduct, and sustains trust among members, strengthening societal cohesion in times of change.

Given the religious diversity within the Bodo community and the broader multicultural environment of Goalpara, the Religious Committee also acts as a platform

for respectful dialogue among different faith traditions. By encouraging cooperation among Bathou, Hindu, Christian, and other believers, the committee helps minimize conflict and foster mutual understanding, contributing to social stability at the grassroots. A critical long-term role is educating younger Bodos about their spiritual heritage. The committee supports youth camps, storytelling sessions, and religious gatherings that transmit traditional knowledge and practice. This bridging between generations helps anchor identity and resilience in the face of globalization and cultural dilution. The Religious Committee anchors Bodo identity in its deepest roots, such as belief, ritual, and spiritual worldview while adapting those traditions to modern societal needs and encouraging harmony both within and across religious lines.

Culture for the Bodos is not static; it is lived, stated, and celebrated through language, music, dance, art, and communal ceremonies. Bodo culture reflects centuries of indigenous knowledge, agrarian life, and artistic expression expressed in *Bagurumba* dance, folk music, traditional attire, and rich festival customs. The Cultural Committee serves as the steward of this vibrant cultural landscape. One of the committee's primary tasks is organizing cultural festivals and events that highlight Bodo traditions. These events provide forums for showcasing folk performances, storytelling, and artistic forms that strengthen community pride. Ritual festivals like *Bwisagu* also serve cultural functions beyond their religious meaning they are times of reunion, remembrance, and renewal. Culture that is not documented risks being forgotten or distorted. This committee often engages in recording songs, dances, oral histories, and traditional wisdom. By preserving these expressions in archives, publications, and multimedia, the sub-committee ensures that Bodo culture remains accessible to scholars and community members alike.

Cultural Education and Outreach beyond celebration, education is vital. The Cultural Committee curates workshops, exhibitions, and school programs that introduce young Bodos to their heritage. By doing so, it fosters continuity and supports educational curricula that incorporate indigenous knowledge alongside formal schooling. Representation of culture, cross-cultural collaboration, and cultural identity thrive when shared. The Cultural committee often participates in inter-community festivals, showcasing Bodo traditions to wider audiences. These interactions promote respect, reduce prejudices, and position the Bodo cultural legacy within broader multi-

ethnic narratives of Assam and India. In essence, the Cultural Committee ensures that Bodo cultural life from music and dance to language and social customs remains a vibrant, evolving, and respected part of community life.

Women's roles in Bodo society as mothers, educators, custodians of domestic and ritual knowledge, and agents of social change are substantial. Yet, traditional structures sometimes limit opportunities for women's voices to be heard in public decision-making. The Women Council of the *Goalpara Jila Boro Barodal* addresses this gap directly. The Women council provides a formal platform for women to engage in governance, articulate needs, and influence key decisions related to family welfare, education, and community development. It ensures that women's perspectives are factored into planning, resource allocation, and community policies. Women are often at the frontline of social welfare addressing issues like healthcare, child education, nutrition, and social support for vulnerable groups, such as children, elderly, and single parents. The Women council leads initiatives on these fronts, mobilizing volunteers and coordinating with other committees to channel support where it is most needed. By offering training, leadership workshops, and exposure to broader social movements, the Women Council builds capacity among Bodo women. Empowered women leaders, in turn, inspire wider participation in community life, creating pathways for gender equality and socioeconomic development.

Women play essential roles in preserving and transmitting cultural and moral values. Through the council, they organize events that teach traditional arts, crafts, and etiquette to younger girls and families. Additionally, they serve as mediators in community disputes and guardians of ethical conduct in social affairs. The Women Council advocates for women's rights, safety, and justice within the community. It acts as a support network for survivors of abuse or discrimination helps to navigate legal systems, and fosters awareness of rights guaranteed by law. This protective function strengthens social justice and community cohesion. Thus, the Women Council is not only a support structure but an engine for progressive change, shaping not just the lives of women but the future of the entire community.

Individually, each body serves a distinct purpose, such as spiritual guidance by Religious Committee, cultural preservation and celebration by Cultural Committee, and gender empowerment and welfare by Women Council. However, their greatest impact

emerges through interdependence. The Religious Committee and Cultural Committee often coordinate festivals that blend spiritual meaning with cultural expression, reinforcing identity in ways that are both heartfelt and public. The Women Council enhances the reach of both bodies by ensuring that festivals and religious rites are inclusive, safe, and empowering for women and children. All three bodies work together in community outreach strengthening social bonds, educating youth, and presenting a unified face of the Bodo community in Goalpara's multiethnic context. Through coordinated efforts, these institutions sustain a holistic model of community development and one that embraces tradition while pushing for progressive transformation.

The *Goalpara Jila Boro Barodal* and its committees do not operate in a vacuum. They face challenges including globalization, migration pressures, loss of language usage among youth, and social transformations that sometimes dilute traditional practices. But strengthened by organized leadership and community engagement, the committees adapt by fostering collaborations with educational institutions and cultural organizations beyond their immediate community to broaden influence and learning opportunities. Ultimately, the Religious Committee, Cultural Committee, and Women Council of the *Goalpara Jila Boro Barodal* represent more than administrative structures. They are living expressions of a people's commitment to preserve their heritage, maintain moral and social unity, and adapt with resilience to a changing world. Their efforts uphold the dignity, diversity, and continuity of Bodo life nurturing identity not as something frozen in time but as a vibrant, evolving tradition that sustains community solidarity and pride in Goalpara and beyond.