

AGRICULTURAL RITES AND BELIEVE OF BOROS

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The Boros, Bodos, Boro-Kacharis, or Meches, by wherever name one may choose to call them are the same people and form a sub section of the Bodo-Naga section under the Assam-Burma group of the Tibeto- Burman branch of the Sino-Tibetan speech family. Today, the Bodo people constitute an important section of the population of the plains of Assam, and are called by different names at different places of North-East India. In the Brahmaputra valley, they are known as Bodos or Boros, In Goalpara (earlier) district of Assam AND Jalpaiguri district of North- Bengal, they are known as 'Mech' by their neighbours while those are living in and to the east Kamrup (earlier) are known as 'Kachari'

It is well known to all that more than 70% Indian population depend on agriculture. The main livelihood of the Boros are also agriculture. It is the custom of the Boros or Bodos that they select a site for their living after getting information that there is a facility for agriculture. In the earlier time Bodo people use to select the field for agriculture first, then they select the site for the house construction. Along with the suitable site for agriculture they also select a grassing field for the cattle, rivers or streams for the purpose of fishing and hunting. If they do not have any one of these facilities they abandon the place and select another new site for their living. For the successful agriculture the Bodo people select a field very carefully. For the cultivation of the paddy, the Bodos select the plot of land taking some conditions into view. They never select the soil called 'khandani ha' which is very temporary for the cultivation. The plot of land which is situated by the bank of the river or stream is called 'hasrao ha'. This type of land also regarded to be not suitable for the paddy cultivation. The plot of land where the cultivation of paddy is duct with the help of rain water this type of plot of land is called 'Jampwidaria ha' which is regarded most suitable land for the

paddy cultivation. About the selection of the plot of land for agriculture purpose there is a popular traditional folk song which was prevailed among the Bodos in earlier time and the song is like this,-

“Ha ladwngmwn agini kona
 Mwswo ladwngmwn gong mena
 Jampwi daria daria mai gainaiya
 Dao jalangbai oma jalangbai
 Makwo jabaonw agwi...”

(English rendering:- a pair of bullock with curved horns was purchase, paddy was planted at the plot of jampai daria land, birds and pigs have eaten all, nothing has been left for me to eat.)

In earlier time, the Bodo people cultivated three main paddy which is known as ‘Maisali’, ‘Baoa’, and ‘Ashu’. The ‘maisali’ which is called ‘ Sali dhan’ in assamese is transplanted as winter rice in low laying land. The ‘baoa’ is a stemmed rice which is shown mainly in marches which is deep water , and the other type of rice i.e. ‘ashu’ which is known as ‘ashu dhan’ in assamese is sown in the spring time and is grown in high land. Among these three kind of rice which is shown the ‘Maisali’ which is known as ‘shali dhan’ in assamese is preferred mostly by the Bodo people. The ‘Maisali’ has many varieties. Out of numerous varieties one is large variety and another is smaller variety, which are called ‘Maima’ and ‘Maisa’ in Bodos respectively.

The main festival of Bodos are classified under three heads which are (i) Religious festivals (ii) Seasonal festivals and (iii) Agricultural festivals. Among the religious festivals the “Kherai Puja” festival and the main “Garja Pujafestival are the main. The purpose of both festival is linked with agriculture and welfare of the family. Among the seasonal festivals, one of the most and popular festival is ‘Bwisagu’ which is called “Bohag Bihu” in assamese and “Magw Bwisagu” or ‘Domachi’ which is called “ Magh Bihu” or “Bogali Bihu” in assamese and “khati Gasa” which is called “khati Bihu” in assamese. Among these three the khati gasa

of the Boros are mostly related with agriculture or paddy cultivation. Excluding religious festivals and seasonal festival of the Bodos. I am going to discuss only about the agriculture festival of Bodos including 'khati gasa' as it is generally connected with the agriculture mostly with paddy cultivation, with some heads.

- (i) **Khwtia Phwnai (sowing seeds of paddy):-** In earlier time the Bodo people do not show the paddy seeds without offering 'mainao'. It is believed that if they show the paddy seeds without offering 'mainao' she (mainao) will be angry and the paddy will be destroyed in the future with various natural calamities. Therefore after making the field ready for ploughing the owner of the house offers a pair of areca nuts and betel leaves to the goddess 'mainao' or 'lokhmi' and salutes towards the east and prays for all goods for his cultivation. After while he starts showing the seeds of paddy.
- (ii) **Khwtia phunai (uprooting the seedling):-** At the time of uprooting the seedlings for transplantation, the Bodo or Boro people also followed with some rule or rites. When the seedling becomes mature the elder most female or female guardian of the family goes earlier in the morning to the field and offers a pair of 'goi jora pathwi jora' (areca nuts and betel leaves) to the mainao or lokhmi and starts uprooting seedlings. After her the female member of the family or female of the village. The female member bundles the seedling in a some special manner, in which the eight bundles of seedlings are called as 'dangries'. After the seedling, the male member of the family carries these seedlings into the field where seedling should be transplanted.
- (iii) **Mai gajennai or mai ag lanai (paddy plantation):-** From the earlier time to till now the Bodo or Boro people start the Mai Gajennai or Mai Ag Lanai with some traditional rites or rituals. At the day when the first paddy is to be planted, the guardian of the family generally the elder female member of the family rises early in the morning and takes bath, and goes to the field without tightening her hair or leaving her hair open. After arriving to the field she keeps a leaf of banana in the east corner of the plot of land and plants here a 'Tulunsi' (holy basil tree) and Taso (a

- kind of plant) and offer a pair of Goi jora, Pathwi jora (areca nuts and betel leaf) in the name of 'Mainao' or Lokhmi' or goddess of wealth and applying little mustered oil on a small quantity of seedlings and salutes toward the east and then start plantation. Then other members of the family start plantation all saluting to the east. It is seen that during the first plantation of paddy all the village female member come and help plantation to the household freely. After the plantation (during this particular day) the head of the household call all the female member to his\her house and offer 'jwo' or 'jumai' (rice beer) and food for this day.
- (iv) **Nangwl Jangkhra or Mai Gaijwbnaï(Finishing ceremony of paddy plantation):-** The Bodo people finished their paddy plantation with some minor ceremony which is known as "nangal jangkra". In this ceremony when the paddy plantation is to be end the house holder tell to the villagers that he? She is going to finished there paddy plantation on particular day. On that day the villagers both the male and female come to there house to help to finished the paddy plantation. On that day the house holder and the villagers enjoy with mudding each other into the paddy field. If the plantation is finished the house holder call all the members who are present on the field for food. The house holder provides 'oma bedor(pork meat) and jwo or jumai(rice beer) to the villagers. In this way the Bod people finished their paddy plantation.
- (v) **Khati gasa saonai:-** The" kathi gasa saonai" which is called 'Kati Bihu' or khongali Bihu in assameseis observed by the Bodos or Boros by burning "Alari Bati" or 'Chaki'or the earthen lamp at the paddy field, at the altar of the 'Bathou', at the 'Maswo Goli' (cowshed) and at the 'Mai Bakhri' (granary) in the evening of the last day of Assamese' 'Ashin' or 'Ahin' month. Mthe unmarried girls of the Bodos families go to the paddy field with 'Jewari Bati', a long Bamboo stock used in wearing, polished it with mustered oil and touch the paddy plants with sticks. Bu doing like this Bodo people believe that the paddy plants would bear large scale of paddy.
- (vi) **Mainao Lainai or ag Lainai(Bringing Mainao or Lakhmi from the paddy field to the house):-** Amongst the Bodo people when the paddy

become ripe and suitable for reaping or cutting, the first ripe paddy cutting is performed with some special rites. When the family decided to cut the ripe paddy first the female guardian of the family rise early in the morning (generally before the sun rise) and take bath and without the changing her cloths and without polishing oil on for body or hair, she use to go to the paddy field and brings a small quantity of paddy with sprinkling holy water on it and the small bundle of paddy is kept inside the 'Bakri' or the store house(granary). It is important to note that during the going to the paddy field or back from the paddy field the female head of the family does not responds while she is called from the back. It is believed that when she responds to the call the 'Mainao' will up sad to her family and does not come to her home.

- (vii) **Wngkham Gwrlwi or Gwdan Janai (New rice eating ceremony):-** This ceremony of the Bodo people is held within the month of December after harvesting the major rice crop or 'Maisali' of the year. On the occasion of the ceremony the new rice is taken by inviting the neighboring peoples. It seen that along with the "Wngkham Gwdan" (new rice) 'Oma-bedor'(pork) and Jjwo' or 'Jumai'(rice beer) are also supplied in abundance. Before taking the 'wngkham gwdan' or "Wngkham Gwrlwi" (new rice) and anything the head of the family disclose the purpose of the occasion by taking the name of "Bathou Bwrai" and offer a little quantity of cooked rice and curry of the pork to the god and goddess mainly to the "Bathou Bwrai" and "Bathou Burwi" and after that all the members who are present on the occasion took the rise offered to them.

This are the mainly traditional agricultural rites and believes of the Bodos of Boros. But due to the influence of the urbanization and advancement of the technology as well as changing the religion among the Bodos and influence by the Hinduism tradition this traditional believe and festival of the Bodos are seem to change to some extent.

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