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## **RELIGIOUS BELIEF AND FOLK CULTURES OF THE BODO-KACHARIS IN ASSAM: SOME ISSUES**

Religion is an important aspect of a particular culture. It is regarded as one of the major social organization through which a society or a community makes their own social and cultural identity. Every tribal society has a strong traditional belief system regarding religion and any other social aspect of life. Bodo-Kachari is a major Tribal group of North east India, particularly located in the Kokrajhar, Darrang, Udalguri, Baksa, Dibrugarh, Lakhimpur and other districts of Assam. In this paper an attempt has been made to focus on the relationship between religious belief and significance of co-related folk culture among the Bodos of Darrang district in Assam. There is a close relationship between religion and folk culture because religion is such a kind of organization in which the folk culture is associated along with the various traditional customs, rites and rituals of the community. Bodo-Kacharis of this region are basically the worshipper of their traditional Deity whom they considered as the supernatural being or supreme power of the world. They performed certain religious customs and rituals like prayer, offerings and chanting *Mantras* through the help of village priest or religious specialist of the village to worship the Deity. Their tradition and customs are closely associated with the religious beliefs and rituals which reflect their traditional way of livelihood and social system. The paper also attempts to study various folk culture of the society which are transmitted orally throughout the generations and made them unique amongst the various tribes of the studied region. The present study is based on primary data collected through participant observation and interview methods by conducting a fieldwork among the studied people.

### **Introduction**

Religion is a universal and pervasive institution in human society of all the manifestations of man's intellectual and social life, religion stands most elusive. The belief, thought and action with which religion is concerned could be found at all the levels of culture, primitive or civilization. The Bodo Kacharis constitute the largest ethnic group among the tribal population of the state of

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Assam. From the very beginning this indigenous tribal group has a distinct culture, belief, customs, language and religious practices of their own. Especially their traditional religious belief system reflects their unique identity among the various communities of the region.

There are many scholars who tried to carry out research on religion from ancient times. Anthropologists have considered religion as a product of the evolutionary development of human brain. There are different theories regarding the origin of religious beliefs. Anthropological theories of religion have been concerned mainly with examining the content of various conceptions of the supernatural as prevalent in different societies at different times. One of the earliest social scientists to propose a major theory of the origin of religion was E.B. Tylor. In Tylor's view, religion originated in people's speculation about dreams, trances, and death. Tylor thought that the belief in souls was the earliest form of religion; animism is the term he used to refer to belief in souls. (Ember, 2012).

Anthropologist Anthony F.C Wallace defined religion as, 'a set of rituals, rationalized by myth, which mobilizes supernatural powers for the purpose of achieving or preventing transformations of state in man and nature.' (Haviland, 2009).

Regarding the tribal religion Elwin (1957) wrote 'tribal religion is associated with a social ethic that unites the tribe in its discipline and undoubtedly makes for a certain nobility of conduct. The great tribal virtues are discipline, devotion to work, generosity and hospitality, truth, kindness.'

Haviland (2009) gave a simple definition of religion, 'an organized system of ideas about the spiritual sphere or the supernatural, along with associated ceremonial practices by which people try to interpret and/or influence aspects of the universe otherwise beyond their control.' Haviland again said, 'a hallmark of religion is belief in supernatural beings and forces. In attempting to control by religious means what cannot be controlled in other ways, humans turn to prayer, sacrifice, and other religious or spiritual rituals.'

There are some scholars who had made efforts to study the religion of Bodos. S. Endle (1975) in his book 'The Kachari' states that 'the religion of the kachari race is distinctly of the type commonly known as 'animistic' and its underlying principle is characteristically one of fear or dread.' On the other hand P.C. Bhattacharya points out that 'the Bodos are not animistic. They are worshippers of Bathou, the supreme Deity.' (Boro, 2010).

The traditional religion of the Bodo is called Bathou which has been practiced since time immemorial in South East Asia. This is worship of Bathoubwrai or Sibrai i.e. the Supreme Deity of the Bodos. The Bathou is an ancient religion of the Bodos. (Basumatary, 2014).

Bhattacharya (2009) wrote, 'The worship of Bathow (Shiva) and the erection of the alter of this Supreme Deity (Bathow) with the sizu plant in their courtyard are noteworthy features of rural life. In addition to the domestic worship of Bathow in the courtyard, there is the common place of worship for the community as a whole.'

When we discuss about religion or religious belief of a society then it could be clearly said that the religious belief and folk culture of a society is closely associated with each other. Because folklore covers a wide area including within its periphery traditional songs, tales or narratives, beliefs and superstitions, institutions, customs, costumes, ornaments in use among the backward or less cultured people in an advanced society. The emergence of the term 'folk life' to supplement the word 'folklore' has further widened its scope of study. (Boro, 2010).

Folklore is a new field of learning which emerged only in the 19<sup>th</sup> century when the antiquaries in England as well as the philologists in Germany began to take serious interest in the tales, songs and traditions of the lower classes of people. (Boro, 2010) again he said that 'in the 19<sup>th</sup> century the word 'folk' meant an illiterate man in a literate society. Folk meant a peasant or rural people. Boro also referred Alan Dundes definition of the word as "any group of people whatsoever who share at least one common factor. It does not matter what the linking factor is- it could be a common occupation, language or religion- but what is important is that a group formed for whatever reason will have some traditions, which it calls its own."

In order to explain the religious belief and the co-related folk cultures associated with religious context, Anil Boro (2010) stated that religion mostly take the form of ritual involving offering of sacrifice, recitation of prayer and other outward ceremonies. The Bodos who believe in many Deities and Deityesses observe varieties of rituals. These rituals are mostly connected with their religion. (Boro, 2010).

Religion is made overt in ritual, whether in any other way or not. A ritual is a repeated act or set of acts- usually but not always ceremonial in nature- by means of which a community or, more rarely, an individual, makes manifest its celebration and repetition of the myths explaining the nature of the interrelationship among the cosmographical, divine, and social world. (Bohannan, 2007).

### **Objectives of the Study**

1. To study the religious belief and traditional customs among the Bodos.
2. To study the various folk cultures of the society associated with the religious belief.
3. To understand the relationship between religious belief and co-related folk cultures among the people.

**Methodology:** The study was conducted in Darrang district of Assam. The studied people were belonging to the Bodo tribal group which was the numerically dominant people of the concerned districts respectively. A pilot survey in the studied area was done during December 2016. Further during the pilot survey it was noticed that, in this settlement the concerned people were associated with their traditional cultural practices and social norms, in the context of their livelihood. These two major criteria provided the prime emphasis to select the said village as the studied area. The study was conducted among 150 Bodo families, where most of the members were associated with the practices of animistic rituals and folk cultural performances. The total population was 1095, among them there were 579 males and 516 females. The studied people could easily communicate through Bodo and Assamese. Our knowledge of Bodo and Assamese enabled to have an intimate interaction with the studied population. The concerned field work was conducted into various phases. It was started from the above mentioned time and extended upto April 2018. There were four divisions of the total field work.

## Results and Discussion

### *Animistic Religious Belief of the Bodos*

The studied people were all Animist. They strictly followed their own traditional religion Bathou which has been practiced by the Bodos since time immemorial. In every household there was a Bathou alter in their courtyard and they worshipped their traditional deity through the household Deity (na ni modai). The Sizu tree is planted at the Bathou alter which stands as an emblem of the Supreme Deity or Supernatural power of the community.

#### **1] Religious belief and rituals related to life cycles of the people:**

There are certain religious beliefs and rituals followed by the people of this village related to their life cycles. They observe various ceremonies and festivals in relation to birth, wedding, death and agricultural activities etc. These are as follow:

**A] Folk beliefs and rituals related to birth:** There were some religious beliefs and rituals regarding the birth of a child. Pregnant woman is not allowed to go out alone in the evening. They believed that in the evening time the ghost or evil spirit has roamed around the village and they might attack the upcoming child and it would be harmful for both mother and the child. There were certain rituals followed by the people during pregnancy of a woman. In the 7<sup>th</sup> month of pregnancy they observed a ritual that the woman has to come to her natal home and take blessings from her parents and other relatives. Her maternal family has arranged a small tea party or offerings for the village people. In this ceremony the elderly people are offered *zau* or *jumai* (rice beer) with pork or fish.

The pregnant woman is asked to keep a small branch of leaf of jujube and a small knife under her bed and she is also asked to hang a piece of fishing net inner side of the door. They believed that both mother and child would be protected from evil spirits by keeping these staffs.

After the birth of a child there are certain rituals which have been followed by the village people. There is a purification ceremony which has been followed after seven or eight days of the birth. The people who outsiders of the clan sprinkled the holy water with *tulsi* leaf in the whole campus of the house.

After one month they observed a final purification ceremony of the new born. For a month from child birth the woman remains unholy and is not allowed to touch anything related to religious practice or sacred staffs. From this day she is allowed to do every household work and the family and their clan members have been allowed to perform the religious activities. Until this day the family and all clan members are not allowed to join in any religious activities and go to any sacred places like temple and any auspicious occasions. In this day a small ritual has been conducted by the family and the puja and offerings have been made to the household deity. They offered flower, grams, coconut, fruits etc. and the village priest (deori) has to chant some mantras and sometimes read the holy book. The village people enjoy the *gazi* (Prasad) and tea party and wish for the bright future of the new born baby and good health for the mother. In the afternoon a feast is offered to the village people with pork, fish, chicken etc. as well as *zau* or *jumai* (rice beer).

After this ritual another ceremony is conducted by the family called *ankam dwnai* (annaprasan). This ceremony is observed after seven or nine months in case of girl child and eight or ten months in case of boy child. The purpose of this ceremony is to allow the child to have rice as a diet from this day. The maternal uncle (*amai*) has to play a vital role in this ceremony. He is the first person to feed the child and other clan members and relatives from maternal side also followed the procedure of feeding after the maternal uncle. The Bodo people believe that the relationship with maternal uncle is most important one among all other relationships and the uncle-niece relationship has to be continued for further generations. In this ceremony also the tea party and a feast is offered to the village people and other invitees and they present small gift items like dress, doll, toys, baby kits, small utensils etc. to the new born baby.

***B) Folk belief and rituals related to marriage:*** Regarding the marriage there have been certain rituals followed by the people of the village. In case of arranged marriage they follow some rituals before fixing the date of wedding ceremony. The family of bridegroom has to bring a pair of betel nut as a sign of respect and honour when they come to ask the girl for marriage. The people believed that the marriage proposal should come from the boy's

side first and it should not be from the girl's side. They believe that in the beginning of the journey if they see any dead body, cat crossing the road from right to left side, empty vessels or cutting bamboo then the journey is inauspicious or it would be unsuccessful. Then they cancelled the journey and fix it for another day.

If the family agree with the proposal then they send a message to the boy's family and the boy's family has to come again with some stuff like betel nut, sugar, rice, *zau* (rice beer) etc. and the society of the girl has come to know about the news of marriage. After this ritual both of the families fix the date of marriage and proceed for further rituals.

On the auspicious day of marriage ceremony, in the main entrance of the decorated house or *pandal* two vessels of water and coconut have to be placed and they believe that it is the symbol of wealth and prosperity. Besides, they also believe that a garland of mango leaf should be kept in the main gate of the house. The folk belief behind these customs is that no harmful things or evil spirit could affect the newly married couple.

Whenever the bridegroom party reaches the bride's home the sisters or cousin of the bride have to wash the feet of bridegroom in the entrance (decorated gate) with *maah-haladhi* and rub his face with betel leaf.

At the end of the wedding ceremony when the couple is ready to come out, in the time of parting of bride from her natal home she has to sprinkle some husked rice to her backside and she cannot look back again. It is believed that if she turns back then the *mainao* of the house (lakshmi) will also come out from home and never return again. Therefore the newly married bride has to follow this ritual with this hope that *mainao* (lakshmi) will remain forever in her birth place.

**i) *Hathasuni*:** *Hathasuni* is a kind of ceremony which is observed in the bridegroom's place after the wedding ceremony. In case of love marriage or elopement this *hathasuni* must be observed to get consent from the society. Through this ceremony the bride is allowed to cook meal for the family and she is approved as the new member of the family. In this ceremony a small ritual is done and it is a kind of small reception party of marriage. In this ritual the bride has to cook for first time in the bridegroom's house and from this day she is allowed to use all the utensils and cooking items of her husband's family. The new bride has to light the earthen lamp at bathou alter of the house and worship the household Deity. The ancestor worship is also observed in this ceremony and the bride is asked to offer food and rice beer to the ancestor of her husband's family. After that the bride has to serve the food among the people and both husband and wife kneel down to the villagers and seek blessings for their happy and prosperous married life.

**ii) *Aathmongola*:** *Aathmongola* is a part of marriage ceremony which is observed after eight days of wedding ceremony. In this occasion the bride

and bridegroom come back to bride's natal home with a number of relatives from her husband's family. In this day the newly married couple has to reach her home in the morning and her parents and relatives warmly welcomed them. After sometime they go to the village temple and observed some rituals as per the village norms. Her parents have to arranged everything before they come and the couple worship the village deity in presence of village priest and villagers. They offere a *thogi* which consists of grams, coconut, fruits, betel nut etc. to the village deity and after the rituals it has been served among the people. A small tea party is observed at the place of bride and they serve it to the village people with the snacks which have been brought by the newly wedded couple. The elderly people of the village are served with *zau* and meat or other light snacks. The bride and bridegroom kneel down to village people and bow their heads to get blessings for their happy conjugal life. In the evening or next day they leave the bride's house and this is the final concluding ceremony of the marriage.

**C] Folk belief and rituals related to death and disposal:** After death of a person they believe that it is the last journey of departed soul to heaven. After washing the corpse carefully the offerings is made with this hope that in this journey the soul might not be hungry and reach the heaven comfortably. The offerings consist of rice, boiled egg, boiled potato etc.

They have a common cremation ground nearby the village. After cremation of the corpse at the cremation ground in the returning path the village people take bath outside in the nearby stream or river. It is believed that if they come back without taking bath outside the spirit or ghost will also come back with them. Therefore they keep it away outside. In the evening every household of the village burn some dry leaves, thatch etc. with this belief that the spirit would not harm them.

After ten days of the death a purification ritual is observed which is called *daha*. In this ritual all members of the family and village has to taste the gravy of bitter jute which is called *narzi* and sour items also be tasted. These items are considered as the symbol of separating the departed soul from the family and village.

In *shraddha* ceremony also the same rituals are performed like *daha*. The ancestor worship is also observed in this ritual with the help of village priest or deori. There is no specific time to observe this ceremony. It depends on the good situation and financial condition of the family as well. In this ceremony the family has to offer a feast to the village people and other relatives. The feast consists of pork, chicken, fish, other vegetables etc. along with the *narzi* (gravy of dry jute) and other sour items. Rice beer is also served to the people with pork or other snacks.

**2] Other religious belief and customs:** Besides the rituals and religious beliefs of life cycles, the people of the village also observe some rituals

and traditional customs in relation to their daily activities of rural life style. Some of these are described below.

**A) Religious belief related to courtyard:** They believe that front courtyard of the house is a sacred place and they place the *bathou* alter in the north or east side of the courtyard. They use to plant a sijou plant there and fence it with nine pairs of small bamboo strips folded with five fastening which symbolises and signifies the religious and spiritual principle of Bathouism or supreme deity. Regarding the courtyard P.C. Bhattacharya(2009) wrote, “this courtyard not only serves as the place of Habsa worship offered to the supreme Deity, but also serves as a place for diverse duties connected with agricultural activities, weaving and social gatherings. These are Bodo- Kachari folk-beliefs related to the courtyard, the sowing and reaping of the paddy, and some of these folk-beliefs are also found among the Assamese and Bengali peoples.”

Usually the village people prefer all rooms to be separate like living room, kitchen, bachelor’s room etc. they do not have drawing room and therefore the guests have to sit in the courtyard. Generally the courtyard is in the middle of the house surrounded by separate rooms. The easternmost portion of the main house is meant for cooking and worship. The room of northern side is generally used as main dwelling house. The store house or granary must be built near the kitchen. The toilet and poultry house should always be in the backside of the house.

They always keep the courtyard clean and they never keep any garbage or broom or any unclean stuff in front of the courtyard. They believed that the guests are like Deity and if they have seen all these unpleasant things they would be offended and *mainao* (lakshmi) will run away from their home. Especially in front of the kitchen a sacred corner is there and they fence it with a bamboo grid and no outsiders are allowed to enter inside the fencing. They keep the place always clean and sometimes the place is used for having meal as well.

They always lighten earthen lamp on the *bathou alter* and *bhakhri* (granary) in the evening and every Tuesday they sing *bathou aroj* (a kind of traditional prayer). An example of *Bathou aroj* is like this-

*Asu mainao, Sali mainao*  
*Mainao, mainao nung jungni lai,*  
*Ayo ayo, gwsu mwduw jiu nung jungni lai*  
*Datha ayo jwnkhow baona*  
*Datha ayo jwnkhow baona.*

Means: Ahu lakshmi, Sali lakshmi, you always belong to us, oh dear lakshmi, You are our life and wealth Do not forget us, do not forget us.

**B) Religious belief related to agriculture:** There are some traditional customs and rituals observed by the village people regarding



agriculture. During the time of harvesting in the month of November-December some families ask village people to help them in reaping grain. Sometimes the people exchange their members in each house's work. This is called *palla*. On the other hand, sometimes the family entertains to a feast to those members who helped in the paddy field and that custom is known as "*khaori janai*". This feast has been comprised with meat of pork, chicken, goat etc., as well as fish, *bathwn* (chatney), rice beer etc. The people prefer to observe this tradition because it is like a festival of joy and happiness. The people enjoy the feast and it reduced the expenditure of family for labour as well.

Besides the *khaori janai* ceremony, there is another custom related to agriculture. When the harvesting is over the people of the village observe a ceremony called *ankham gwdan janai* (eating new rice or na-khuwa). It is a festival of feasting and dancing accompanied by the folk drink *zau* or *jumai*. At the day time a small ritual is also observed by the people. A *thogi* or *puja* has been offered with gram, pulses or fruits to the Deity and ancestor worship is also been observed. They offer the new paddy to their household deity and past generations first and after that only they start to eat the new rice for the entire year. After completion of the ritual the feast is offered to the people with various items like meat, fish, vegetable curry etc. This festival is observed in every household individually and in one auspicious day it is observed commonly by the all village people in public temple (*thansali*) as well.

**C] Religious belief related to seasonal festivals:** *Bwisagu* is the main seasonal festival observed by the people of this village. It can be considered as the greatest agricultural festival of the society. The festival is celebrated in the spring season with the advent of New Year. *Bwisagu* is celebrated in the month of April (assamese month of Bohag). There are certain rituals observed in this festival which are closely connected with the agriculture. The first day of this festival is called *mocouni bwisagu*. On this day Cattle is decorated with garlands and dotted spots and taken to the nearby river or streams for bathing. The pieces of gourd, brinjal and turmeric are thrown towards the cattle and being bathed in the river or stream. In the evening the cowsheds are cleaned and surrogated by smoke. The cattle are tied with new rope. A folksong related to this festival is-

*Lao za, phanthao za,  
Bocor bocor er hanza hanza,  
Bimani khither phiphani khither  
Nong cor jagon halua gidir.*

Means: Eat gourd, eat brinjal, Grow up year to year, To spite your mother and your father You will be large bullocks).

Besides this, certain rituals like cleaning house, offering worship before the bathou alter, ancestor worship etc. are also observed on this day. The second day of *bwisagu* is known as *mansi ni bwisagu*. On that day every member

of the family takes bath with *maah haladhi* and offers prayer to household Deity and recall the past generations of the family, to whom food items, rice beer, rice cake etc. are offered. The village priest or *deori* chants mantras and prays for the well being of the people and keeping the people free from any harm or disease. He also prays for the blessings of Deity and wishes for a happy and prosperous new year. In a festive mood the young boys and girls sing *bwisagu* songs and dance to welcome the New Year. The elderly people also celebrate the festival with full joy by singing, dancing and drinking rice beer.

*Domashi* or *magho domashi* is a festival of certain rituals and merry-making. The festival is celebrated in the month of February (assamese magh bihu) when the harvesting is over. On the eve of the day, the women get busy in preparing rice cake and other refreshments. The young boys build a makeshift cottage called *bhelaghar* at the paddy field. The whole night they spend there by feasting, merry making, singing and dancing. Next day early in the morning, the people take bath and go to the *bhelaghar* and kindle it ceremonially uttering Deity's name and congregational prayers are held at that time. After the bonfire is over, the people come back home and observed some rituals.

At home the ancestor worship ritual observed by offering rice cake, other food items and rice beer to the deceased soul of the family. All the trees in the compound are tied to bamboo stripes or paddy stems. The rice cake, piths and other refreshments are served to all the family members by the women of the house. The whole day various sports are held in the public place or playground.

*Kati gasa* is the ceremony observed in the month of Kati. In this festival there is not much fun since the villagers' store-house (granary) is almost empty. At this time of year paddy seedlings begin to grow. In the evening offerings are made to the *tulsi* plant in the courtyard. The earthen lamps are lighted at the feet of *tulsi*, at the granary and at bathau alter or *siju* plant and at the paddy field. The prayer and *matras* are uttered for the protection of paddy from insects, rodents and animals or natural calamities. In fact, all these *pujas* and rituals are meant for the welfare of the growing crops. An example of prayer is like this-

*Ayo bima mainao,*  
*Phwido nung zonkhw onna,*  
*De ayoi zwng ni noao.*

Means: Oh mother ceres, Come out of love for us, Oh mother, to our house.

**D] *Amthisua*:** *Amthisua* (*ambubachi*) in fact, is not a festival rather it is a ritual of austerities which is followed by the people in the month of June. It is believed that mother earth is supposed to be in menstruation during the

days of *amthi* and she remains impure during these days. Ploughing or digging earth, weaving, grinding etc. are not allowed during these days and no religious activities are to be performed.

***E] Ancestor worship (gothisi baonai):*** Ancestor worship or *gothisi baonai* is an important religious belief of the Bodo society of this village. They believe that they need to perform certain rituals to satisfy their past generations, otherwise if they remained unsatisfied then they could cause harm to the present generation. Therefore an offering is made at every occasion and festival to the ancestor of the house. This is a traditional custom of the village which has been followed since time immemorial. In this ritual they recalled and worshipped the soul of their past generations and offered flower and food items like meat, fish, rice cake, *zau* or rice beer etc. in this ceremony the worshipper has to use only the left hand and the right hand is never allowed to use in this ritual. The village priest chants the mantras and prayer for the peace of departed soul. Each adult person of the family can take part in this ritual and sometimes the other clan members are also invited to take part in this ritual.

**3] Relationship between religious belief and various folk cultures of the Bodos:** There has been a close relationship between religious belief and folk culture of a society. Religion is an integral part of culture and in this particular village there are many religious beliefs which are closely related with the folk life of the society. In day to day life they follow various religious beliefs and customs which become a natural habit for them. For example the religious beliefs related to courtyard, granary etc. and specially their daily activities like cooking, weaving, worshipping etc. are closely associated with each other. Likewise there are various myth, folktales and legends transmitted from generation after generation which has been closely related to the daily life of the people and make the folk culture of the society very rich among the various communities of the region.

***A] Significance of Deori:*** The deori or village priest plays a very important role in every religious activity of the village. He has to perform certain rituals like offerings, chanting mantras and pray for the village people. He has to perform his duties in both individual households and in public temple or village *thansali* as well. The deori has to be changed every year and he has to maintain all the responsibilities regarding socio-religious aspects of the society. His position is right after the village headman and in any circumstances or important issue of the village the deori also can put his opinion and give solutions as an elderly person or honourable person of the village. He is considered as most powerful person who has the direct connection with Deity or supernatural power and he enjoys the higher social status and position in the society because without this person people cannot perform any religious activities and rituals.

***B) Significance of traditional customs and co-related folk culture in their socio-cultural life:*** The people of this village are primarily farmers and being dependent on nature. They have a specific religious philosophy influenced by neighbouring Hindu religion of Assamese caste people. They have their own social laws and customs regarding their traditional socio-cultural life. Their traditional customs and folk-cultures play a significant role in their entire livelihood and domestic life. They believed that the folk-beliefs, rites, rituals and worship of Deity control the society from any illegal tasks which could be harmful for the individual or the community.

The significance of village priest, folk beliefs, spirit worship, prayers, mantras on different occasions and ceremonies is also noteworthy. The consumption of rice beer which is used as their common drink in different ceremonies and worship has a significant position in their traditional domestic life. Besides this, their sacrifices consist of rice, fruits, meat, fish, grams, rice beer etc. All these are essential for performing their traditional customs and rituals.

### **Conclusion**

From the above discussion we have found that there are different religious beliefs and practices among the people of this village. There are various folk cultures as well which are closely associated with their religious beliefs and customs. These traditional cultures make them unique and special amongst the various communities of the region.

The people of this village are mainly worshipper of Bathow (Sibrai or Shiva), the Supreme Deity. They have minor Deitys and Deitydresses as well. They believe in ghosts and spirits also. But the conception of the Bathow or supreme Deity is predominant. They have observed various traditional customs and rituals which are intimately connected to their agricultural and household activities as well as various occasions and festivals.

As time changed, due to the impact of modernization and culture contact with different communities of the region some changes have taken place in the traditional customs and belief system among the people of this village. Due to the negligence of younger generation the age old traditions of the society seem to be diminished. But still the older generation has tried to uphold their culture and passed it to their next generation.

It can be summarized that, the studied Bodo people had a rich traditional culture including religious practices and folk belief for whom they can make their own identity as an indigenous group of the said region. Their socio-religious activities and customs are different from other communities though these are influenced by modernisation and other changing factors. After all for the distinct and remarkable traditional belief system and culture they could become a major ethnic community of the area and they have been maintaining their

traditional folk culture throughout the generations.

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