CHAPTER- 6
6.0 Introduction

“Play is a form of expressive behaviour common among all human beings and manifested overly in all cultures. Like language and religion, play is a complex phenomenon that can not be defined succinctly.”1 Play is a pleasant social control for both children and adults. It is symbol of unity among the human being. Human being, specially the children and youths, love to play games. There is no exception to the Bodo children and youths in this regard. Like other children and youths of the world they also like to play games, sing songs and dance during leisure. The Bodos have a variety of folk games. A number of games among the children are also played which are sometime differing to gender. The ‘Dora Khwina’ is played by the female children only while the cockfight is played by the boys though it is played by girls also. There are some games which differentiate the children on age basis. The small children play the games like Udu Pudu, Ongkham ongkhri gelenai, Phuthla Gelenai etc. Where there is no need to run and lose energy. The older children among them play the Asw Bisw, Hau Kud Kud, Dang Gelenai etc. and the youths specially play the games like Mwsa Msw Gelenai etc. The games are played in the evening or morning after or before school time. Mainly the centre place or the play ground of the village is use to play games but the small children use their own home or the neighbour’s home where there is child of same age. Some time the elder sister or brother takes their younger sisters or brothers along with them to play. The information gathered from field study from the Bodo villages of Goalpara district about the different types of Gelenai (games) are discussed below.

The folk games of the Bodo’s can be divided into two groups - outdoor and indoor games.
6.1 Outdoor games

6.1.1 Badua Gelenai

In Bodo ‘Badua’ means unclean or foul. There is no limit of players in this game. Many players can take part in this game. It is a simple traditional game that can be played anywhere. This game is even played by the kids below two years with their elders for having fun. The players who are interested in playing this game gather at the play area and select a player who is going to be foul. Each player has to pass a test here. The test is like this- each player has to spit through the vacant space made by putting together the end of the thumb and forefinger. In this process if the spit fall on or touch any part of the concerned player’s body, the player becomes ‘Badua’ or foul. Once the foul player is selected the other says ‘Jabaina’ (ready for the game) and start running here and there and the foul player runs after the other players to touch or catch and impose or transfer his or her foul on them. The players run in such a way that they try to escape the touched by the foul player. Once the foul player touches any running player that player becomes the foul or ‘Badua’ player and he needs to run after others to make them out. Between the games, if any player gets tired or if they want to stop the game at any point any one player can stop it by yelling ‘Ababaa’ (wait ease). Once someone says ‘wait ease’ all have to stop running or the foul player should not touch the player who said ‘wait ease’, even if the foul player touches that player he or she will not be out.2

6.1.2 Dang (Gwthang Gwmwn) Gelenai

Two groups with equal number of players are necessary in this game. Here, specific number of squad equal to the number of players of a team is made by drawing lines on the ground. In each quad one player is placed for restraining the entry of the Gwthang player of the opposite group. If the restrainer touches opposition player in his or her entry then the opposite group lose the game and the second group starts to play. Or if a player of the group succeeds to enter and exit all the quads then they win the game again. In this way the game continues.3
6.1.3 Dao Swlainai (cockfight) Gelenai

In this game minimum two players are required. The players have to stand on one leg holding the other leg with one hand. The other hand is placed on the opposite shoulder. Then they fight with each other using elbow and the shoulder and try to defeat the other players. The player who stays at the end is the winner of the game.4

6.1.4 Ongkham Ongkhri Gelenai

This game is played by the girls especially by the small ones who can not go outside for playing. They make models of houses on the yard or village road making a number of squares or circles with small branches of trees. Then they name the squares or circles like bedroom, kitchen etc. Then they collect varieties of fruits, flowers, leaves etc. In the playway method the girls cook food and serve to the family members. They established a market and go shopping. The children use leaves as money. In this way they enjoy the whole day.5

6.1.5 Balayao Gelenai (game of sand)

As this game needs sand for playing, it is played on riverbanks. This game increases skills like face reading, direction finding and hiding things without others knowledge even if the opponent is in front.

Things required:

Two players, sand filled ground, bamboo stick/ shell/ cotton lamp wick etc.

A sand stage of size 1 to 1.5 feet length and width with height of 4 to 5 inches is made and the players decide who is going to hide the stick and who is going to find it by tossing the bamboo stick. Then the player who is going to hide takes the stick and holds it with two fingers (thumb and index finger) and inserts it in the sand stage from one side of it and collects it on the other side using the other hand in such a way that the stick is inside the sand and is not visible. The player has to move the stick inside the sand, confuse the opponent, and position it in a place.
The opponent gets only one chance to find the stick. She/ he needs to observe the movement of the hand and face of the player who hides the stick and should conclude where the stick would be and point it by criss-crossing the fingers blocking the place with his or her palm to the player who hide the stick. If he/she fails then the player who hides the stick will get one point and he/she will get a chance to hide the stick for the second time. If the player finds the stick then he/she gets the chance to hide the stick in the second round.

6.1.6 Kabadi Gelenai

Kabadi too is an indigenous game. It is a team game and has been played in the Bodo society since ages. In kabadi two teams compete with each other for higher scores, by touching or capturing the players of the opponent team. Each team consists of 5 to 8 players. The two teams fight for higher scores, alternating defense and offence.

The kabadi playing area is divided into two halves by a line. The side winning the toss sends a raider, who enters the opponent’s court chanting ‘kabadi kabadi’. The raider’s aim is to touch any or all players of the opposing side, and return to his or her court in one breathe. The player, whom the raider touches, will then be out. The opponent team is supposed to capture that raider and prevent him or her from returning to his or her own court, until the raider takes another breathe. If the raider cannot return to his court in the same breath while chanting ‘kabadi’, he will be declared out. Each team alternates in sending a player into the opponents’ court. If a player goes out of the boundary line during the course of the play, or if any part of his body touches the ground outside the boundary, he will be out, except during a struggle.

6.1.7 Tang Guti (Ghanta Gelenai)

Tang Guti or Ganta Gelenai is a very popular game among the children in Bodo society. It is played all over Assam and can be enjoyed for hours together.
To play this game, the players need a long stick, and a short stick with tapered end. The long stick is used to flick the short stick (Guti) into the air, and then hit it to travel to a maximum distance. The opposing team here has to try and catch the Guti that gets the hitter out. Also, if the hitter misses the Guti thrice he loses. The hitter's score is measured by the distance from the place where he hit the Guti and place it landed. It is measured by the long stick.\(^7\)

6.1.8 Onhkwnanai Gelenai (hide and seek)

Hide and Seek is a timeless game that has been played by the children throughout the ages. It is not only the children who enjoy it. A natural instinct for parents is to play a facial form of Hide and Seek with their children from the earliest age, as it teaches children about attachment/detachment in a safe and caring environment. Leaving aside the psychology, however, the outdoor game provides wonderful interaction amongst children and is easy to play and never gets boring.

At least three players are needed to play Hide and Seek. Naturally, however, the more players you have, the better is the fun.

To play this game outdoor location is more suitable than the indoor one. Outdoor location works best where the players have more choices to hide, although indoor is fine for rainy days.

To determine who will be ‘out’ can be done a variety of ways, for example use of an elimination word game, such as

"Adeng padeng lakhor deng
Jua mara sagol deng
Bel bung pa du ra"

Now to begin the game, the person who will be ‘out’ has been chosen, he or she stays at a central place behind a tree or pillar, closes his or her eyes with hands and begins counting out loud to a number from about 1 to 10 or 20. All of the players who are not ‘out’ should run off and quietly hide from the player who is
counting. The person who is 'out' is not allowed to peek at the players hiding from him or her.

Once the player who is 'out' has finished counting, he or she yells "ready or not, here I come!" at this point, the player who is out must try to find all of the players who have hidden. The players who are hiding cannot move or switch hiding places as the seeker may find easily. The player who gets found first becomes 'out' in the next round of the game. Find all the people who are hiding and start playing the second round with the person who was found first as seeker.8

6.1.9 Gud Kud Gelenai

It requires more than one player to have fun. The aim of this game is to capture maximum number of squires in the grid by hopping and jumping through the court in a specific pattern without the feet touching the lines and without putting a hand down to gain balance. A small and flat concrete ground would be ideal to play this game. The grid is drawn on the ground.

Phase-1

The player stands out side of the grid, near square 1, throws the 'Degao' (broken piece of earthen pot) in square 1 and start hopping and strike the 'Degao' with his or her foot, chanting "Gud Kud Gud Kud" breathlessly and passes the 'Degao' square 1 to 2, 2 to 3 up to square 5. In the square 5 she/he rest for sometime and again start hopping and turn back to the home grid. The player throws the 'Degao' in square 2 starting from square 1, hop and strike the 'Degao' on her way to home. The players repeat the above process by throwing the piece in 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 and 10.
Phase-2

The player places the ‘Degao’ on the palm opened hop, starting from 1 to 5, rest there for sometime and hop back to the home. The process is repeated by placing the ‘Degao’ serially on the arm, on the foot and on the head.

Phase-3

After completing all the phases the player hopping to the grids cross the last line with back facing the grid and throw the ‘Degao’ so that it may fall on any of the squares and hop back into the grid, and pick up the ‘Degao’ as in the previous steps draw a cross in the box in which she/he pick up the ‘Degao’ (in this box, she can rest both of her legs).

Hopping out the grid with the ‘Degao’, now indicates that she/he has captured a box. Go through all above phases to capture the boxes. She/he can rest both of legs in boxes that she has captured.

A player loses her chance at any stage if

1. He/she lands a box that is captured by the opponents.
2. The ‘Degao’ felt out of the grid.
3. The ‘Degao’ falls on the lines of the grid and
4. The ‘Degao’ slips down off the palm, arm, foot and head.
5. He/she loses his/her breathe.

6.1.10 Hau Gud Kud Gelenai

Hau Gud kud is an indigenous game of the state of Assam. Children from all the societies of Assam play this game. The number of participants varies from place to place within the state, and there is no rigidity as far as the dimensions of the area to be played is concerned. The game is mostly played by the girls.

One group is called the out group, while the other is called the in group. Each group can have 5 to 10 players, if not more. The in group selects one
player as the ‘Bima’ (mother) or ‘Poka’ (ripe), who takes up her position at a point about 20 to 25 meters away from his team members. All the players of the mother’s group are confined to a specified marked area (circle made from sticks or branches of tree) which is called ‘nwo’ (house). The members of the out group spill over the entire area to foil the mother in her attempts to reach the nwo, without being touched by any member of the out group.

As the game begins players of the in group run one by one, shouting ‘hau kud, kud’ or any other word of their choice. The players of the in group attempt to touch out players or make way for the mother’s safe passage to the nwo. The in players are permitted to stay in the mother’s chamber, and make a human chain from where they can touch out the out players, who are then considered as dead. A player declared dead can no longer participate in the game. Thus, the mother’s defenders keep her foes at bay, while the mother herself is involved in finding a way, whereby she can outwit her enemies and reach the nwo safely. The moment the mother ventures out of her room, all the out players rush to touch her, and if any one of them succeeds, the mother is declared dead. The two groups then interchange their roles.10

6.1.11 Sikhao Police Gelenai

This is also a simple game where the players form 2 groups, one group will be police and the other group will be Sikhao (Thief). The thief group will do some mischief or take one toy and hide it and the police group will find the toy or the Sikhao group will hide and the police group will search them as we play Hide and Seek. It is same as the concept of Thief and Police in real life.11

6.1.12 Asw Bisw Gelenai

This is an interesting folk game played in water by the Bodos especially by the boys. More than one player is needed to play this game. More the players more fun is generated. The game is almost same as the game ‘Badua
**Gelenai**. The players who are going to play this game stand in the water in a circle position. Then they select a player is going to be out. Determine who will be out they use an elimination rhyme game such as

"Asw bisw gumbrisw  
Saldang madand ao jading  
Naobari silabari  
Ojani laothi thalangbai  
Siri sarai go"

As soon as the out player is chosen, he stays standing in the water and the other players hides in the water or run far away from the out player. The out player tries to catch or touch the players. Once the out player catches or touches any player then that player becomes the out player. He then needs to run after the others to make them out.¹²

### 6.2 Indoor games

The following are the games played indoors or in case of difficulties it is usually played under trees in villages.

#### 6.2.1 Mwsa Mwswu Gelenai

Mwsa Mwswu is a strategic, two player board game. The player uses board or the board drawn in the ground using chalk piece. The game is asymmetric in which one player controls 2 tigers and the other player controls upto 20 cows. The tiger hunt the cows while the cows attempt to block the tiger’s movements.

**Things needed to play**

- Board with game chart or chart drawn on a floor.
- Two players
- Three stones as tigers, 20 small stones as cows (some time immature betel nut is also used as tiger and cow)
Objective of the game

The cow’s objective is to encircle the tigers so that none of the tigers can move. Tiger’s objective is to kill minimum five cows. Tigers win if all the cows are captured and cows wins if the movements of the tigers are blocked.

After drawing the chart on the ground, to start the game with two tigers are placed in the apex of both side of the chart. The pieces must be put at the intersections of the board lines and the move should follow these lines.

The player controlling the cows move first by placing a cow on the free intersection on the board and when the tiger’s turn come it is moved to an adjacent position along the lines that indicate the valid moves. Moves alternate between the players.

A tiger captures a cow by jumping over it to an adjacent free position. Cows can not move until all the fifteen cows have been put on the board.

Rules

The tiger must move according to these rules
1. It can start capturing cows only moment after the match has started.
2. It can capture only one cow at a time.
3. It can jump over a cow in any direction but it must be to an adjacent intersection following any of the lines drawn on the board.
4. A tiger can not jump over another tiger.

The cows must move according to these rules
1. It must leave the board when captured.
2. It can not jump over the tigers or the other cows.
3. It can only move after all 20 have been put on the board.

6.2.2 Udu Pudu Gelenai

This is an indoor game played by the small children. All the children sit together in a circle position and they lay their hands on the floor. One player
recites a rhyme. While reciting one of his hand will be on the ground and the other hand will be used to point or stroke and count the back of the palm of the other players. For each word in the rhyme one hand is counted for example while saying ‘Udu’ one hand is counted. The count will go in clockwise direction. The player declared as rat and has to close his finger if the song ends in his hand. Then the player again starts reciting and counting. If the hand with closed finger is pointed for the second time then that player hand should be taken out from the circle and not be counted again. Then the game continued until the number of hands is reduced to single.

The rhyme of this game is as follows:

“Udu pudu panir podu
Golpiana budu kana
Syam sindur
Barahia endur.”

6.2.3 Phul Phul Gelenai

This is an indoor game specially played by the girls. In this game girls play with small stones or seeds of ‘karabi’ flower. This game is also known as ‘Lasguti’ among the Bodos. Total of five stones are needed to play this game, takes first one on the hand picking up three stones tossing the first one, then in one and couple, then triple, then again one by one for two times, then in couples, then all the four picked up at one go. After completing all these steps all the five stones are tosses in air and the player retaining by as many as possible on the back of the player’s palm and then again tossing and take on the palm.

In these whole process players recite a rhyme,

“Phul phul phulanti
Eti lokhon dulanti
Telonti
Eti eti eti”
6.2.4 Gudgudi

Gudgudi is a famous traditional game played by parents or the elder one to the kids under 3 yrs. By playing this game the children learns the importance of sharing, identify various food items cooked at home, and helps in identifying the relationship among people in the family and builds patience in them.

The parent or an elder taking care of the kid stretches the kid’s fingers, describes the food items one by one, and assign it to each finger virtually. Once all the fingers are assigned with one food item, the person take the kids palm and pretend it as a plate and take the assigned food items from the fingers and mix them all in the palm. Then he should pretend as if he takes some food from the kids hand and feed him, then person should distribute it to others in the family by mentioning their names and the relationship (like father, mother, sister, etc.) with the kid. All the actions are done virtually.

Once the food is distributed to others the parent pretends that he/she washes the vessel (i.e.) the kid’s palm. Then the elder one says “today there is nothing to eat in dinner lets go for fishing or searching for crab” and move his finger starting from the fingers of the kid to the shoulders singing “ejwngbw guia ajwngbw guia” repeatedly and tickle the kid when he/she reach the shoulder, this amuse the kid and the kid starts laughing.
Gud kud gelenai

Ongkham ongkhri gelenai
Phul phul gelenai

Asitham gelenai
Udu pudu gelenai
6.2.5 Dora-Khwina Gelenai

In this game, the children make dolls ‘Dora’ and ‘Khwin’ (bride and bridegroom), parents, children etc. with faded pieces of clothes and threads. They make different types of dolls and make colorful dresses for their dolls according to their ages. Then the children arrange marriages of the dolls and enjoy the whole process. This game is specially played by the girl children.

6.2.6 Asitham Gelenai

This is an interesting traditional game played by bride and groom in marriages. This game is played in traditional marriages just to have fun and establish an understanding between the bride and groom.

This game is played only after the marriage ceremony is completed. The bride and groom are asked to sit in opposite direction. A bowl of water (mixed with milk) or rice is placed in front of the bride and groom and then a relative is asked to put a ring in the bowl and whirl the water. While the water with the whirls, the bride and groom asked to get the ring, since there is only one ring in the bowl it will either go to the hand of bride or the groom. They do it for three times. To add more fun the relative will not put the ring in the bowl for one instance. All the relatives gather around the bride and groom and make fun of them by commenting on their movements. This game is played to bring an understanding between each other on the first day of their married life with relatives as the witness. 17

One striking difference between the children of today and the previous generation is that in the previous generation children used to play variety of indoor and outdoor games that were the games of this soil. Now-a-days almost all kids play games like cricket, tennis and football. Folk games like Badua gelenai, Kut kut gelenai etc are played by very few children. It is seen that the folk games played by the Bodo's and the other societies are not just games, they were designed in such a way that one can develop lots
of skills like logical thinking, concentration, mathematics, aiming and a lot more. Now-a-days we develop these skills by paying money to centers that conduct personal development courses.

Traditional games act as learning aids. They teach us many things while playing like to learn to win and lose, count, improve hand eye co-ordination and finally to have fun. These folk games help not only in physical co-ordination but also helps in improving social skills.
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