CHAPTER-III

NEO-VAISHNAVISM AND ITS IMPACT ON BODO MATERIAL CULTURE

INTRODUCTION

Like oral literature, material culture is also one of the important genres of folklore. "Material culture responds to techniques, skill, recipes and formulas transmitted across the generation and subject to the same forces of conservative tradition and individual variation as verbal arts. How men and women in tradition oriented societies built their homes, make their choices, prepare their food, farm and fish, process the earth's beauty, fashion their tools and implements, design their furniture and utensils are questions that concern the students of material culture."1 This aspect of folklore and folklife is visible rather than natural. Thus, the students of material culture, though they are expected to pay close attention to the description and evaluation of artifact, are even more concerned with how people used objects and assigned meaning to them. The thought and behaviours associated with material items is, in the end, considered more important than their physical attribution.

Religion is also one of the part and parcels of human life. There are certain rites and rituals in every religion as their own and even to maintain them certain materials are essential in their daily life. For example, the dress used during the time of prayer is different from religion to religion. The dress used in the church among the Bodo society is a remarkable one. It is observed that the dress used in the namghar is different from the dress used in the Christian Church. Indeed, each religion maintains distinctive culture. In this regards the material culture items of the Neo-vaishnavite Bodo society can be classified into the following sub heads:

1. Folk Art
2. Folk Craft.
3. Folk Architecture
4. Food Habit
5. Costume: Dress ornaments

IV.1. Folk Art

Art is a kind of manifestation of nature. Man tries to manifest the various objects of nature through the medium of art. As such art is always associated with the life and the society.

Different kinds of art forms are appreciated by the Bodos. The designs used by the womenfolk in their weaving are very attractive and
impressive. The artistic lives of the Bodos are seen in the field of their
dresses and ornaments. The colour combination, styles and designs of
the dresses are extra ordinary to their society. Their hand woven popular
designs of the ornamented *Dokhona* are many. Among them most
common are *Daothu Megon* (pigeon eye,*Hazo Agor* (Design of the hill
scenery), *Mwider Agan Agor* (design of elephant foot print). Their
favorites colours are orange, red, green, yellow and sky colour.

There are some arts of *Satriya* School of paintings in Assam which
can be classified as (i) manuscript painting (ii) Paintings on wood and
paper Mache, (iii) wooden figures and curving combined with painting
(iv) figures on wall and parts of *namghar* (v) painting for theatrical
performance. But M. Neog refused to accept all the paintings of satras
were “developed and created by Sankardeva and Madhavdeva.”

About the painting in the *namghar*, B.K Baruah says “Wooden
figures and carvings combined with painting are also very. In a *namghar*
the place where the idol is kept is a called *manikuta*. In the neo-
vaishnavite tradition of Assam, sometimes idol is not kept high esteem,
generally composed by the saint then a neo-vaishnvite scripture of high
esteem, generally successor Madhabdeva in kept on a *simhasana* or
wooden tray for offering prayer. In some *namghars*, the *simhasana* is set

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up at the first room of the main namghar from the manikuta. The simhasana is specially decorated with wooden seat having three, five seven nine stairs, each stair being supported by four wooden leogriff models. The simhasana where the scripture is kept is also called thapana. Above the simhasana is fixed a decorated canopy with fine whisks, made of yak’s tail, hanging from the four corners and the centre of it.

The namghar of Ulubari and the Satra of Dhunaguri village is well decorated with the above mentioned elements. There is a simhasana inside the namghar which is decorated with utmost care with traditionally woven gamocha. The two side of the entrance to the manikuta are also decorated with wooden images of jay and vijay and at the image of simhasana, i.e. the altar, the images of garuda, hanumána, laruagopala are carved.

Besides these, there are lots of artistic expressions which are clearly reflected in the paintings for theatrical performance. The village namghar is the main centre for the performance of bhaona and it may be called as the auditorium. Sometimes, if the namghar doesn’t have available space for performance, then a temporary pandel (rabha) is built in an open field for the performance of bhaona in the village. It is

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3 Baruah, B.K., Asomar Loka Sanskriti, 1961, p-143
4 Rajguru S., Medieval Assamese Society, 1980, p-264
also seen that a large white cloth representing the sun, moon and lotus leaves are hanging over the stage. Thereafter the namghar is decorated with leaves, flowers and festoons during the performance of bhaona in the Bodo village as well as in the Assamese society. Earlier, particularly in the rural village where there was no modern electric facilities the light was provided on the stage with the help of chandeliers (gacha), now due to good electrification in every village it becomes easier to provide the light.

Various masks and equipments are made for the purpose of bhaona. According to M. Neog "another class of green room properties is masks which form striking features of Assamese acting. These are meant to represent such unusual appearances as the ten heads of Ravana, the four heads of Brahma, the bird-like face of Garuda and son." In fact masks are made for the characters like Ramayana with nine numbers of extra head and face, Brahma with two extra head and face, Hanumana, Bali, Sugriva, Angada, Nala, Nila masks are monkeys. Sometimes some effigies are also made like those of horse, duck, snake, bird etc. These masks and effigies are made of kathi (thin of split bamboo) of bamboo, dried straw, cloth etc. The images of the masks and effigies look as if a living beings. These are painted with different colours.

5 M. Neog, op. cit, p-270
During the *bhaona* performance different types of crowns and helmets for the kings, princes and ministers are also made with paper, tin foils etc. which are also beautifully decorated and painted by the neo-vaishnavite Bodos. And it is seen that weapons of battle such as bow (*dhanu*) arrows (*Kar*), *gada*, (*jathi*) (spear), *ton* (contains of arrow) etc. are also made for the purpose.

**IV.2. Folk Craft**

Another important genre of material culture is folk craft. According to Dorson "folk crafts are traditional crafts. It is indeed, in the crafts that one can observe with special clarity the operation of tradition. Until relatively recent times craft techniques and designs were passed down within one family for many generations were transmitted by the apprehensive system wherein a boy learning the craft served for as long as seven years under a master craftsman."6

Craft is one of the important aspects of their everyday life and the impact of craft is far reaching in the life and society of the Bodo people. In case of fishing implements, there is also no vast difference between the Assamese and Bodos: *Jekhay* (a kind of bamboo scoop), in Assamese it is called *jakai*, *sen* (a kind of fish trap in rectangular shape used to catch fish in shallow water) in Assamese it is called *chepa*.

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They prepare various types of cane and bamboo utensil, musical instruments, baskets and so forth and are the indispensable part of their life.

The Bodo people use different types of cane basket for carrying food grains from the agricultural field. Similarly most of the fishing implements and fish carrier is also made out of bamboo. Of these the Jekhay is worth mentioning, it is used for fish catching and is an automatic bulved trap is an evidence of their good craftsmanship.

The Bodos use different types of items made out from bamboo for carrying the things. So to speak there are no much differences between craft items of the Assamese and Bodos.

The Bodos use only pira to sit and paleng to sleep. In the modern times the wooden craft such as chair, table, taktapos, salpira, etc are the most important things mainly for the rich and educated people in our society. These wooden crafts are almost used in every household of the Bodo society. Besides these the household equipments made of wood are also used by the Bodos.

There is also traditional agriculture related implements in the rural life of Bodo society. There is no much difference between the Bodos and Assamese people in case of agricultural implements. The implements of the Assamese and Bodos are as follows:
Vocabulary

*Nangal* (*nangwl* in Bodo)- implement used to plough

*ih*: the shaft of a plough

*Maiteka* (*dankhwr* in Bodo)- implement used to connect *mwi* with the *jungali*

*Juwali* (*jungali* in Bodo)- implement used to combine two bullocks

*Moi* (*mwi* in Bodo)-implement used to make plain the household land

*Holonga* (*holonga* in Bodo)-pipe of bamboo of which both ends are pointed and which is used to carry paddy

*Baokha* -(*baokha* in Bodo) a split of bamboo of which both ends are used to carry paddy.

*Esari* (*laothi* in Bodo)-bamboo stick

*Gari* - bullock or buffalo cart

*Duli* -a large basket in which grain is kept

*Tom* - container of seed

Besides the agricultural implements there are also lots of household implements which are almost alike with the Assamese people. These are as follows:

*Dhari*: This may be called mat

*Paci* (*khada* in Bodo)-a kind of large basket

*Kharahi* (*khirkha*)-a kind of small basket
Bichani (gisib in Bodo) - hand fan

Chalani (songray in Bodo) - Sieve meant for husked paddy

Dhan chala shalan: Sieve made for paddy

The Bodos have been using these implements since earliest times. Due to development of science and technology, people are utilizing sophisticated machines and instruments in the agriculture sectors for improving their production which are also influenced vehemently on the downtrodden societies in India.

Besides the above mentioned craft, Sarai is also another most important craft in the Assamese society. S.N Sarmah observes regarding this craft saying that "it is the most artistic thing commonly used in Satras as well as in the household of nobles and kings on all ceremonial occasions is Sarai of various size and types. Sarai is a kind of tray having artistically carved stand and made of both wood and copper. To offer anything in a Sarai whether to deities or to guests is considered to be an expression of the highest honour and reverence in Assamese life." This is used mostly in the neo-vaishnavite Bodo society.

Japi is one of the most important craft produced by the Assamese people in Assam and is offered as a mark of honour to the guest in the meeting.

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7. Rajguru, op-cit, p-264
Now due to impact of the Assamese culture the neo-vaishnavite Bodos discarded the traditional musical instruments whereas they use the Assamese musical instruments viz-

*dhol* (drum) *khol* (one kind of long drum), *tal* (cymbal) *Bartal* (big drum), *gagana* (Jews harp) etc. According to some scholars, Sankardeva borrowed lots of musical instruments from different tribes and communities. But it is not clearly noticed that Sankardeva borrowed these instruments from the Bodos, Karbis, Khasis etc. The most important instruments of him are *Khol, Dhol, Tal, Bor Tal*. The Bodos, after being converted to the vaishnavism discarded the traditional musical instruments like *Kham, Sifung, Serija, Thorkha* etc whereas they accepted the Assamese language and musical instruments. Besides the above mentioned there are lots of materials used by the neo-vaishnavite Bodo people are as follows:

**Khol**: This is one of the important musical instruments of 2-3 feet length, used by the Assamese people in religious occasions. This is the main instrument for vaishnava music. In the dramatic performance, the *khol* is regarded as percussion instruments.

**Dhol**: Generally this folk instrument is a kind of drum which was not used by Sankardeva but now this is the most important musical instrument of the Assamese people. There are various kinds *dhol* found
in the society-Bor dhul or Bihu dhol. The Bor dhul/ daba are big size and kept inside the namghar and satra. This is used in religious functions.

The Bihu dhol is small in size and used in the Bihu festival. This musical instrument has great significance in the Assamese society. Without it there is no enjoyment and marry making in the Bihu festival.

Gagana: Among the musical instrument used by the neo-vaishnavite Bodo people is Gagana also. It is a small, split-bamboo instrument, very finely cut and delicate. This instrument is played by young women by holding it between the teeth, striking with the right forefinger, allowing the wind to pass as and when necessary.

Pepa: Another instrument used by the neo-vaishnavite Bodo people is called Pepa. In Bodo language it is called femfa. We have not seen such kind of musical instrument in modern Bodo Society. According to some scholars, this instrument belonged to the tribal people. Gradually the Assamese caste Hindu people started using this instrument during the Bihu festival. Later it has become one of the important musical instruments in the Assamese society.

Tal (Cymbols): Generally there are different types of tals in Assam used in different purposes. Sankardeva used this tals. According to M.Neog, “three types of cymbals are of general use in Assam. The big
size cymbal looking like hemisphere with much flattened rim of a helmet, gives a roaring, deep sound, and is known as *bar tal* (big cymbal), *bhot tal*, or *bhod tal*.”

About the origin of this instrument he says that “it is believed to have been introduced by Sankara from Bhutan, which land still possesses the instrument.”

In the neo-vaishnavite Bodo society particularly in some villages which I have found using the two kinds of *Tals* such as *Bor tal* and *saru tal*. The details of cymbal are discussed below:

**Bortal:** This is a large kind of cymbal, made of bronze or brass metal with a wide this flat pat but with a large *betu*. Diameter of the pat i.e., circular discs of this instrument is usually anywhere between 40-60cm and diameter of the lower part of the *betu* is about 30-40cm. According to M. Neog, the big size cymbal looking like a hemishphere with the much flatted rim of a helmet, gives a roaring, deep sound, and is known as *bar tal*, *bhoti tal* or *bhod tal*.

*Bortal* is used in *nam kirtan*, *Puja-archana*, *Gayan bayan* with *khol*. Among these the used of this instrument is very much prominent in *nam-prasanga*. According to scholars, *Bortal* had been used since the origin of Sankari culture.

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8. M. Neog, op-cit, p-291
9. *ibid*, p-291
10. *ibid*, p-290
Saru Tal: This is mainly used as a accompanying instrument with Thiya-nam, Bahanam and Palnam and Nam prasanga item. The pathak (reader of religious scriptures) begin to sing nam then pali (the companions) play chapari (clapping) and musical instrument nagara and tal continue to play.

Nagara: This is one of the important musical instruments used particularly in the performance of nam kirtona. There are two kinds of nagara, one is big size and another one is small in size. There are two small and short stick to assist during the time of playing this instrument.

Sankha: Another important instrument used by Sankardeva was Sankha (conch shell). In respect of this musical instruments M. Neog observes “it has its use in connection with the worship of various forms of Vishnu-krsna images in different sattras; it can, of course, hardly be called instrument.” In the namghar of Ulubari village this instrument is also one of the important uses for the congregational ceremonies.

In fact the people of Sonitpur district are also very expert in respect of weaving. There are lots of people living in the district with their rich inherited language, culture and tradition. The Bodo people of Sonitpur district are very expert and rich in weaving.

\[\text{ibid.291}\]
Like other communities, the Bodos have also their own musical instruments, viz, *Kham* (drum), *Siphung* (flute), *Serja* (violin), *jotha* (cymbal), *japkhring*, *thorkha* (bamboo crapper), *gagana* (Jews harp). The use of *gagana* is not seen used by the Bodos. Now due to impact of the Assamese culture the neo-vaishnavite Bodos are discarded the traditional musical instruments whereas they use the Assamese musical instruments viz-*dhol* (drum) *khol* (one kind of long drum), *tal* (cymbal) *Bartal* (big drum), *gagana* (Jews harp) etc.

Another important material offered in the *pujas* or social ceremonies is the *Prasad*. In Bodo religious ceremonies like *kherai*, *garja*, there were no evidence of offering *Prasad*, where powder of rice, egg, betel nut and leaves and lots of animal sacrifice was offered. But now a days some section of the Bodos offer *prasad* in place of animal sacrifice in these worships. *Prasad* are also offered in the *nam* and are distributed among the women and the other participants including young and children. Therefore we can presume that the tradition of offering *prasads* in the worships and ceremonies came under the impact of Hinduism or neo-vaishnavism. In this way, it is seen that the Bodos have come far away from their aboriginal faith.

**IV.3. Folk Architecture**
Folk architecture may be said to be traditional architecture. It is concerned with all traditional aspects of buildings: the shapes, sizes and layouts of buildings of all kinds, such as dwellings, barns, sheds and craft shops; the materials used and the tools and technique of building; the sites chosen and the placement of various buildings and various parts of buildings were put.\textsuperscript{12} It is that branch of study which deals with the size, form and functions of houses and settlement of human race.

The Bodo people can claim their caliber, expertise and superiority in the field of architecture. The ruins of the Kachari architect discovered in Dimapur, Maibang and Khaspur may furnish definite proof regarding the rich heritage of the architect. In this regard historian, E. Gait observes—the ruins of Dimapur, which are still in existence, show that, at that period, the Kacharis had attained a state of civilization considerably in advance of that of the Ahoms. The use of brick for building purposes was then practically unknown to the Ahoms and all their buildings were of timber or bamboo, with mud-plastered walls. Dimapur, on the other hand, was surrounded by on three sides by a brick wall of the aggregate length of nearly two miles, while the fourth or southern side was bounded by the Dhansiri river.\textsuperscript{13}

\textsuperscript{12} Warrent & Roberts: \textit{Folk Architecture in Folklore and Folklife}, ed, R.D. Dorson, 280
\textsuperscript{13} E. Gait, \textit{A History of Assam}, 2004, p-301
i. Bodo Homestead

Every family member lives in some houses within a homestead or compound, generally within the boundary of a village or town. Each and every society of the world has its individual architecture of building the home. In Assam, whether tribal and non-tribal their folk architecture is primarily based on bamboo, wood and the skills connected with them. Regarding the building of home A.K. Ojha has rightly observed "a typical Assamese home is built of wood, bamboo, reed and thatch. The posts of the home are made of wood, or bhuluka bamboo and the roof is made of dried saran or buralikher and bamboo. The doors and windows are made either of wood or bamboo. Various knots connected with construction of namghar are matagadhi or ghargathi and barashigathi used to fix thatch with kami (long thin torn bamboo piece) mosara gathi used to tie kami with posts and reeds etc. The techniques of all the knots are different."  

The minimum numbers of houses, constructed by the family for their use, are the choraghar, the maralghar and the barghar. The choraghar is an outer house like a modern drawing room, constructed for the purpose of sitting and receiving guests. Next, comes the moralghar. This is also an outer house used by the members of the

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female members generally receive their female guests here. The barghar is the main house of the family where sleeping accommodation for the headman and others and arrangements for keeping valuable things are made. Almost all the families had these three houses. Next to these three houses, there are the Randhanighar or randhani Sali (the kitchen), the namghar or gosaighar (a house for daily prayer or worship) the Gohalighar (a cowshed), the dhekisal (a shed where a paddle is kept for husking the paddy), the Bharalghar (a granary or store house where the paddy or corps for the consumption of the family for the whole year is kept in store). Every family of the higher rank and status, including high Brahmans and Mahantas had a Batchora, a shed at the gate, indicating the dignity or aristocracy and importance of the family.\(^{15}\)

Like the Assamese homestead, the Bodo homestead contains a choraghar, maralghar and barghar and others home such as gohalighar (cowshed) bharalghar (granary) and dhekighar (a shed where a paddle is kept for husking paddy). The neo-vaishnavite Bodos, also to some extent construct almost same type of house. Even the educated neo-vaishnavite Bodos, especially the rich people have a separate namghar or gosaighar and batchora, shed at the gate at home. Like the neo-vaishnavite, they perform nam kirton inside the gosaighar.

\(^{15}\) Rajguru, S. op. cit. p-149
According to Kameswar Brahma "the main house of the Bodos is called nomano which is built on the north side facing to the south. This main house is partitioned in to three rooms. The first is known as khophra, the middle room is akhong and the third is known as the ishing. The first room akhong is used as kitchen. The first room khopra is used as sleeping room of the unmarried girls of the household, the second room akhong is used as dining room and the third room ishing is used as kitchen. The Bodos attach sacredness and sanctity to the main house nomano. The altar of Bathou gods in chief Bathou bwrai and of mainao burwi are placed in the ishing. The guest house is built in front of the homestead and generally it is kept outside the inner compound of the homestead. The Bodos call the guest house as chorano or alohighor in Assamese.\textsuperscript{16}

Kitchen is the sacred house for the Bodos. No one can enter inside the kitchen without washing their legs. If anyone enters then there is a belief that mainao or lakhi will be desert the family. Formerly the namano was used by the Bodos as a place of cooking. There was only one door and a passage inside from one room to another. But now some families have provision for doors, one room for kitchen and another room for dinning.

\textsuperscript{16} Brahma,K. \textit{A Study of Socio-Religious Beliefs, Practices and Ceremonies of the Bodos}, 1992,p-46
At the north east corner of the courtyard and in front of the granary house, parallel to the ishing of the main house nomano, an altar about a foot high is built. At the altar the sijou (a cactus plant) is planted. A little to the south of the Sijou plant (Euphorbia Splended) is planted. A little to the south of the Sijou tree, a basil plant (thulansi) also is planted. Around the altar, there is a fencing of narrow pieces of bamboo splits with nine pairs of bamboo posts. The whole altar is known as Bathou. The Sijou and Thulansi represent as Bathou Bwarai (God) and Bathou Burwi respectively. The household worship Bathou regularly in the morning and evening.¹⁷

The Bodo family also keeps the bakhri, (granary) in the east of the homestead. Another important house is the goli (cowshed) which they build in the north east corner. It is noteworthy to mention here that there is a folk song associated with the importance of these two houses, namely the granary and cowshed: Here is an example:

Daokha habnay noawlai

Sila habnai noawlai

Ankhou dabilai apha gosai

Mai bakhri munaiao,

Mwsou goli munaiao.

¹⁷ B.Narjee, B. Boro Samaj aru Sanskriti, 1966,
Ankhou bilaihor apha gosai,
Ankhou bilaihor apha gosai,\textsuperscript{18}

English rendering: Do not give me in marriage to a house where the cows and the kites have easy access, my father gosai (God); Give me in marriage to a house where the granary and cowshed are easily visible; O! My father.

From this folk song, it is revealed clearly that the Bodos have been giving much importance to the presence of the granary and cowshed in the family since immemorial times. Even they also believe that if the cow and the kite enter the house, mainao (goddesses of wealth) doesn’t reside there. Such kinds of song are not found and are being obsolete among the follower of neo-vaishnavite Bodos. Religion is one of the great factors for changing the society which help the eradication of such kind of folk belief in the neo-vaishavite Bodo society. They adopted automatically the faith and ethos of the new religion i.e. neo-vaishnavism discarding the old belief of the Bathou religion.

Most of the neo-vaishnavite Bodo people are not seen planting sijou (euphorbia) plant at home. This is the clear evidence of discarding the Bodo traditional culture. It is more interesting to mention here that a

\textsuperscript{18} Brahma, B, \textit{Folk Song of the Bodos}, 1968, p-34
few families are also seen building separate manikut and Bathou altar separately along with sijou plant at home side by side and they worship both of them in different occasions according to prescribed form of religion. For example, they observe kirton path and nam kirtana in the birth or death anniversary of Sankardeva, Madhabdeva and other saints of neo-vaishnavism. On the other hand, they pray the almighty god at the altar of Bathou.

ii. The Sacredness of the Nomano or pakghar

The altar in the ishing of Bathou Bwrai is made of earth which is about two inches high and one and half feet long. A small quantity of every item of food is offered to God and goddesses before consuming the same. Just near the altar in the ishing, an earthen jar called Maihendo is kept. In this jar two pieces of round stones are kept. The Bodos regard them as the symbols of Bathou Bwrai and Burwi or mainao, the goddess of wealth. The cook of the family first salutes the earthen jar by touching it, and then takes off the mairong (rice) for cooking. The outsiders or non Bodos are not allowed to enter in the ishing. When an outsider enters into the nomano, the owner is to offer chicken by
sacrificing as a means of avoiding calamities. But these are not seen among the followers of the pure Neo-vaishnavism.

The Bodo village or a neo-vaishnavite Bodo village is not very big in size. There are about 50-60 households in a village. The shape of the village is normally long and narrow. Houses are constructed on both sides of a common street. The village land used for rice cultivation is kept on one side. Generally it is seen that the grazing field is situated by the bank of a river or stream. In the Bodo village Garzasali or common place of worship of gods and goddesses is kept in a corner of the grazing field. It is interesting to note here that there are some villages where both the kheraisali and garzasli are found although they have been practicing neo vaisnavism, for example village like Shengahiloi, Madorbil, Dhekipeloa etc. Still these villages perform Bodos traditional kherai and garja worship, on the other hand they perform bhaona, kirtona etc. But these are not seen in the pure neo-vaishnavite Bodo villages such as Ulubari, Veveki Kachari gaon, Oubari etc. In case of the cremation ground all the Bodo religious groups either Bathou or other sects of religion keep it far from the village and placed on a solitary place to the southern direction of the village.

19 ibid
Generally the Bodo village is controlled by the village management committee consisting of president, secretary, treasurer and members. All the matters related to the welfare of the villagers are discussed by organizing a meeting where the President presided over the meeting. The village has separate paddy field to cultivate and these are distributed among the villagers on the basis of agreement for a certain time period. In the neo-vaishnavite Bodo society there is also a same kind of administrative system. The main purpose of this is to look after the namghar, to celebrate the bhaona, kirton and any kind of social occasions, festivals in the village. If the fund of the village is not enough then they hold a meeting and make a unanimous decision to collect little money from each of the households.

The village fund is operated by them which are kept for the village management. They are assisted by a functionary called halmazi. In the village there is a douri but Oja is very rare. The position of the douri (priest) village is higher than the Oja (medicine man). Religious occasions like puja and festivals are performed by douris, while for eradication of the evils the Oja is required in the Bodo village. But in neo-vaishnavite Bodo villages, Oja is not required like the traditional Bodo society.
Another important contribution of Sankardeva to the Assamese society, particularly in the field of material culture is the building architecture of *namghar*. Sankardeva created and developed the *satra* and *namghar*. It can be called the greatest contribution to the Assamese society. According to S.N Sarmah “the special feature of Assam Vaishnavism is the *satra* institution. It is an institution, to a certain extent, the Budhist monastery system or the *matha* institution of the medieval period.”²⁰ In fact the architecture of the *satra* and *namghar* seem to have similarities with the Buddhist monastery system. Sankardeva and his later disciples built many *satras* and *namghars* for the purpose of spreading the philosophy of Sankardeva throughout Assam. The *satras* have certain special structures S.N. Sarma remarks “*satras* are generally situated on quadrangles surrounded by palisades or walls. Each principal *satra* is marked by the existence of a *namghar*, a *manikuta*, a *batchara* and two or four rows of *hatis*. “²¹ Details of these structures can be discussed:

According to S.N. Sarmah says “the centre of the main activities of a *satra* is the *namghar*. It is a large open hall with gabled roof having an apsidal facade. The *namghar* serves the

²¹ Ibid, p-100
purpose of a prayer hall as well as hall for holding religious meetings and discussions. A namghar of the ancient type consists of a nave and side aisles having rows of wooden pillars separating the nave from the aisles. The size of namghar may vary according to the number of disciples it has to accommodate."²² There are number of namghars among the neo-vaishnavite Bodo society in Sonitpur district. There is no any dissimilarity in size and structure of namghar with the neo-vaishnavite Assamese society.

According to S.Rajguru, the size of namghar which is constructed from east to west length-wise, consists of three or five or seven rooms. The room of the western end is a gabled room. Towards the west of the manikuta, the right hand post of the 2nd part is wrapped with a piece of red apron at its upper part.²³ It is not confined to satra alone. It is a common feature of Assamese namghar also.

The namghar as seen in the neo-viahnavite Bodo village of Sonitpur are constructed on the models of an Assamese namghar. It can be divided into three houses viz. the manikuta, the namghar and the chho-ghar. There is a batchora also shed at the gate of namghar. Mainkuta is an integral part of namghar and is

²² Ibid, p-100
²³ Rajguru, S:op.cited, p-264
comparatively a shrine attached on the eastern end of the namghar as repository of the idol or the sacred books. Namghar is a place where a congregation of people can offer their prayer. Society. The cho-ghar is constructed on the side of the namghar adjoining it. On the occasion of a bhaona performance the make up is done here. After the bhaona performance, the village people preserve their masks, artificial dresses and ornaments, weapons used by the actors etc. in the namghar. Most of the namghar in the Bodo villages don't have cho-ghar. It is also seen that their namghar is not well constructed due to financial constrain.

Regarding the place and importance of namghar, S Rajguru says that in the village namghar "almost all the Hindu inhabitants from Brahmana down to the Keot, Koch, Chutia etc. enjoy equal share in the village namghar differing a little in the social status only. Through namghar, everybody living in the village can demand social equity and justice; even Mahamadans, who happen to live in the neighbourhoods of the village and cannot enter the namghar, can demand justice and equity at the initiative of the namghar."24

The traditional religion of Bathou did not prescribe for a permanent house or temple like structure. In Bodo Neo-Vaishnavite village, there is a

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24 Rajguru, S. op. cit, 1980, p-260
namghar, a socio-religious cum cultural centre of the villages. This is the place where the village inhabitants put their heads together to discuss matters regarding social, economic and other problems of the village. Besides these, the villagers observe their occasional, social functions and festivals in the namghars. Any kind of cases of offence or crime & feuds and quarrels are decided by the elderly man of the village who pronounce judgment on them. Whatever decision they arrive at or whatever punishment they impose upon the wrong-doer, the party concerned is bound to abide by it. Of course, only trials or social and religious offences were held in the village Namghar.

The Bodo village namghar in a neo-vaishnavite village primarily meant for observing religious functions and festivals. Like the church, this is a community prayer hall, where the supreme lord Vishnu in the form of Krisna, is only worshipped. In the Namghar, the village people perform their annual religious functions such as Namgoa, Barsabah etc. and religious festivals such as Janmastani, Sivaratri and observe other days also having religious significance by holding recital of Nama-Kirtanna.

Among the Assamese Hindu society the namghar is the main centre place for observing any kind of functions. Like this, the neo-vaishnavite Bodo people are also seen observing the birth and death anniversary of
Mahapurush Sri Sankardeva, Madhadeva, Damodardeva and other vaishnavite preceptors in the village Namghar with great devotion and enthusiasm.

In fact, the Bodo Namghar serves as a genuine seat of learning the art of dancing, singing and playing on musical instruments. The young folk of the village learn the art of 'Bhaona' performance, the art of singing and dancing and the art of playing on with the help of musical instruments from the elderly artists of the village and this tradition is still going on among the neo-vaishnavite Bodo society.

There are also a few Satra found in the neo-vaishnavite Bodo living areas or villages such as Dakhin pat satra located at Dipota, Dhunagui satra, Sirajuli Satra, Borgaon satra located under Dhekiajuli circle etc. These satras were established by the Satradhikar of Dakhin Pat Satra in 17th century. Like the Satras of Majuli, the Satras of the Neo-vaishnavite Bodos have the same elements placed inside the Satra or namghar.

iv. Manikuta: The altar or the sacred place where idol of the deity or the sacred scripture is kept is called Manikuta. It is a smaller structure than the namghar and is generally attached to the latter adjoining the eastern end. In addition to the idol and sacred scriptures, all the precious things dedicated to the deity are kept in the manikuta. As all the valuables and jewels of the
Satra including the sacred idol are kept and preserved here, it is called *manikuta*, literally the house of jewels. Unlike the *namghar*, the *manikuta* or the *pada-sila-ghar* is not open to all.\(^\text{25}\)

**v. Hati**: Centering round the *manikuta* and the *namghar* exist four rows (sometimes two) of residential huts intended for clerical devotees. These four rows of huts are known as *cari-hati*. The word *hati* is derived from Sanskrit *hatta*, meaning a market or a fair. To each devotee is allotted a hut consisting one or more rooms according to his status and need.

Minor Satras where monastic life is not observed could hardly be distinguished from ordinary households. Such minor Satras could be identified as such only for the existence of the *namghar* and the *manikuta*. The system of *cari-hati* is rarely noticed there.\(^\text{26}\) The neo-vaishnavite Bodo villages don’t have the concept of *hati* and *carihat*.

**vi. Batcara**

*Batchara* is also one of the part of *namghar*. The entrance leading to the interior of a Satra is usually marked by a small open house known as *batcara* or *karapat*. It functions as the gate-house. Distinguished guests are first received at the *batcara* and then they are escorted to the interior of the

\(^{25}\) Ibid, pp-100-101
\(^{26}\) Ibid, p-101
Satra. A few of the Bodo village namghars have batchara in the village namghar.

There is a strong committee in each village to conduct the social and religious functions of the village people. These office bearers are assigned seats of honour according to the rank and status their office in the namghar. Among these officials are the Medhi, the Satala, the Pathak, etc. The mediator or informer comprising three or four villages of the neo-vaishnavite society is called medhi. The main work of the medhi is to inform about the programme of the society.

It is needless to say that the building structure of the Satra and namghar of the neo-vaishnavite Bodo villages are not well built and even the namghar is not so clean like Namghar in the Assamese society. However, the other properties of namghar such as Daba (drum), Kah (bell) Ghanta (bell) Sankha (conch), Sarai (raised tray), Bata (tray), Tau (an utensil made of brass) Charia (tub), Ural (a mortar) Ural mari (pestle), mat etc., are also kept well inside the namghar.

At present the followers of modified Bathou religion construct Bathou Thansali like the namghar, church etc. This is clear evidence of the influence of other religious architecture on the Bathou religion.

\[27\text{, ibid, p101}\]
GROUND PLAN OF A TYPICAL ASSAMESE HOMESTEAD

Diagram 1
IV.4. Costume: Dress and ornaments

i. Folk Costume

Folk costume is also another genre of material culture. Folk costume, according to Don Yoder, “is the visible outward badge of folk group identity worn consciously to express that identity. In the peasant cultures of Europe, identity was determined geographically, and the local costumes expressed locality, region, or province.”28 In fact, costume has separate place and position in any group of people in the world. Every tribal community of Assam has its own traditional dresses and ornaments with particular designs and colours and also different types of techniques to wear it. For a tribal society it is important for them as an identity marker.

Dress is one of the basic needs of mankind. Like other tribals and non-tribals of Assam, the Bodos have their own traditional dress and ornaments in their society. The dresses used by them are woven by the Bodo women folk of their society. The Bodo women are expert in weaving. They have their own looms in their households. The traditional dresses are totally woven by the Bodo women, and out of the traditional dresses important clothes are viz. Dokhona, Gamcha, Jwmgra ji, Aronay

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28 Don Yoder, Folklore and Folklife: An Introduction, 1972, p-295
etc. are worth mentioning. The womenfolk weave almost all kinds of their dresses in their own loom. The uses of endi silk are prevalent in their society.

_Dokhona_ is the most traditional dress of the Bodo women. This is tied round the chest just below the ambit and hangs to the toe. When _dokhona_ is plain one it is called _sala matha_ and when it ornamented it is called _dokhona thaosi_. This _dokhona thaosi_ is essential in the marriage ceremony where the _hinzao gwdan_ (bride) and two _bwirathi_ have to dress compulsorily. As the informant furnished, in the earlier days the Bodo women didn’t use any body cover except a scarf which is called now _alowan_, a scarf. Such habit is seen even today among the old women in the villages. It is noteworthy to mention here that in Sonitpur district, there are some areas where the Bodo women folk wear _agrang dokhona_ which is called _mekhla_ by the Bodos of Kokrajhar. _Dokhona_ is called _failang or langga_ by the Bodos of Sonitpur. Previously they did not wear _dokhona_ or _failang_, so to speak they started wearing _dokhona_, just after the Bodoland movement.

The neo-vaishnavite Bodos of Sonitpur also use _gamocha_, the piece of cloth is generally used as a towel after bath or sometimes for keeping betel nuts and is about 3 to 4 cubits in length and 1 to 2 half
cubit in breadth. This is called gamocha because with it body is rubbed (Ga-body, mocha-rub). Sometimes the common people use this piece as a turban on their head. This is the most common piece of cloth required for the daily use of the Assamese people and is the most significant piece of garment in the national life of the Assamese people. In their national festival called Bihu, the Assamese people offer Gamocha to their kith and kins, or to their dearest ones, as a token of their love and regard to them. Besides the holy and respectable persons are also honoured with the Gamocha are decorated with floral designs with coloured threads.29

Kurta is also one kind of full shirt which is also being used by the Bodo people now. Paguri or turban is an important head gear of the Assamese people; whenever they go out, they use to put on a turban on their heads. On the occasion of bhaona, gayan bayan, the band of the singers and players, put on paguri. The neo-vaishnavite Bodo people also put this turban on their heads like the Assamese people. Hachati is a small narrow piece of cloth for holding betel nuts that is generally carried with the person.

Besides these the Bodo people use verities of costumes such as tangali, shirt. In Assamese society, the women folk wear mekhela as

29 Rajguru, S. Medieval Assamese Society, 1980, p-180
their traditional dress. *Mekhela* is the lower garment worn round the 
wrist covering down to the ankle-joint. *Chador* is wrapped round the 
upper part of the body. Another female wear is *riha* which is worn by 
the women with *mekhela chador*. In the neo-vaishnavite society the 
Bodo women also use these dress. The use of *riha* is decreasing day by 
day, it is used only the bride.

Besides these, *cheleng chador*, *bar kaopor* and *eri kapor* are 
various types of wrapper round the upper part of the Body used men 
folk. *Cheleng chador* is made of rift cotton yarn while *bar kapor* is of 
coarse yarn and chador of *endi* silk. These cloths are used in the 
winter.*Hachati* is a small narrow piece of cloth for holding betel nuts 
that is generally carried with the person.

Every society has own distinct ethnic dress to wear in certain 
ceremony such as, marriage ceremony, death ceremony etc. Wearing 
*dhuti* and *mekhela* in the Assamese marriage and *gamocha* and *dokhana* 
in the marriage ceremony of the Bodo society is one of the customs. 
Both the communities have still preserved their tradition. Among the 
neo-vaishnavite Bodo society it is seen that their dress code is different 
from the non-vaishnavite Bodos during the marriage ceremony. The 
bridegroom wears the *dhoti* and the bride wears *mekhela* in the marriage 
ceremony. Due to impact of neo-vaishnavism, the bridegroom still has
to offer *riha mekhela* to bride otherwise marriage is not held. This is the clear instance of giving up their traditional dress *gamcha* and *dokhana*.

*Aronay*, now a day has become a very common and popular item of dress in Assam. This dress is used by both male and female of all ages. The use of *aronay* has become a kind of identity symbol of the Bodos like the Assamese *fulam gamocha*. Among the neo-vaishnavite Bodos, the use of *aronay* is a new found cultural object and not much popular than Assamese *gamocha*. Even they did not know how to weave the traditional Bodo dresses. In course of time with a view to create good relationship and increase communication among the Bodos, the Bodo nationalist organizations planned and suggested for maintaining close relations between the Bodo speakers and Vaishnavite Bodo Assamese speakers. They started marriage relations with each other so as to enable to exchange their feeling as well as learn the language, culture etc. Consequently, the families and the kith and kin were able to exchange their thinking, feeling through the Bodo knowing bride. They have acquired now how to weave the traditional Bodo dresses.

The dress used by the neo-vaishnavite Bodos in the *namghar* is also remarkable; generally the devotee attached with a *namghar* uses three pieces of white cloth, a *dhoti*, a *cador* and a *gamocha*. There is no any differentiation with the Assamese neo-vaishnavite society in putting
white *gamocha* on the *simhasana* and grill or cover is also put on the *manikuta*.

In a neo-vaishnavite Bodo people *namghar*, devotees use various, blankets (*thanga*) rush-mats and mattress (*kah, pati* and *dhara*) made of grass, bamboo slits, matrush and ribs of withered plantain leaves, betel nut etc. In this regard S.N Sarmah clearly remarks “high stools are never used.” The neo-vaishnavite Bodo people are also not used high tools in the *namghar* like the Assamese people.

In respect of this S.Rajguru says that “it has been the practice of the women to embroider their various pieces of garments and cloths, such as *khania, cheleng, riha* etc. For the embroidery work they use coloured threads, *Muga*, Gold or silver threads. the piece of cloth which is used to cover *Sinhasana* (at the altar of god of the chapel) and generally known as *Gosai ghar*, is profusely known as embroidered with the designs of flowers and trees; sometimes, verses from the much revered *Namghosa* and *Kirtona* are also woven there. Even the incantatory figures of God and the activities of Lord krshna in Vrindavana, as recorded in the literary and biographical works, are woven with, the designs of the cloths.” But it is not clearly mentioned

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30 ibid, 144
31 *Katha guru charit*, quoted in S.Rajguru, op-cit, p-304
here about any one of the name of the community really who made such kind of embroideries in the medieval Assamese society.

Presently, *chador*, *riha mekhela* and *gomacha* are recognized as the traditional dress in the Assamese society. It is already said in the above that the Bodos have separate ethnic dress. After embracing neo-vaishnavism the Bodo people discarded their traditional dress and accepted Assamese *gamocha* and even still the neo-vaishnavite Bodos have been using it and the place of this *gamocha* has occupied very important among them. They offer it as a token of love, affection during the Bihu festival to the elders.

The Bodo people have a tradition in which they believe that women can support earning and happiness to the family if they are experts in weaving as well as other usual works. Bodo people have great fondness for coloured garments. They have their own dresses used by male and female. The male both young and old put on *gamocha* woven in domestic loom, which hangs down to the knees from the loin. During winter they use to wrap the body with cotton or *endi* spun made at home. This wrapper is called *jwmgra ji* (wearing cloth). They put a banian coat of cotton or *endi*. Villagers of the interior places put it today also. Such kinds of dress are not used and available among the neo-vaishnavite follower of Assamese speaking Bodos. There is a proverb
common among the Bodo society as a whole which goes under the following lines:

_Bwswrse abad jaywikhou dagab,_

_Hinjao haba rwngwikhou gab._

**English rendering:** Don’t cry for not having cultivation for yearning, Cry for women inefficient in their works. This proverb is also prevalent among the neo-vaishnavite Bodos of Sonitpur:

_Eta bachar kheti nuhuwato nakandibi_

_Buwari kam najatohe kanadibi._

To become expert in weaving and work is the most important not only in the traditional Bodo society but also in the modern Bodo society. Even today expert and efficient girls get due proposal from marriageable boys. The practice of spinning yarn with a spindle is called _Thaokhri_ and the pit loom is called _Hi-chan chali_ are still running among the Bodo women particularly in rural areas. Their hand woven popular designs of the ornamented _Dokhona_ are many. Among them most common are _Daothu Megan_ (pigeon eye, _Hazo Agor_ (Design of the hill scenery), _Moider Agan Agor_ (design of elephant foot print). Their favourite colours are orange, red, green, yellow and sky colour.

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32. Merbang Mochahari, M, 65, Shenagahiloi, Shengahiloi, Sonitpur
33. Taaj Narzari, M, 70, Dhekidoi, Ghoramari, Sonitpur
The Bodo people like to wear colourful dresses, particularly the women folk used to take colourfull *Dokhona, Fasra*, blouse etc. and the male members also preferred coloured *Gamocha* and shirt. But under the influence of vaishnavite culture some of them have almost given up the original habit of wearing. As said by the informants there were some reasons for avoiding the traditional wonderful Bodo dress. “One of the reasons was the *guru* or initiators of neo-vaishnavism did not allow to put on their traditional dress. There was a taboo to enter inside the *Namghar*. If someone wants to pray then he should wear Assamese dress. Gradually the Bodo men and women started wearing *mekhla, chador*, blouse etc. Lastly they avoided all the traditional dresses knowingly or unknowingly.”  

Another important costume of the vaishnavite culture is the *sutradhar* dress. The dress used by the *sutradhara* is really very beautiful. The *Sutradhara* dress glitter with white costumes of the orchestra and huge effigies of demons and animals made out of bamboo and covered with paper mach. Indeed the dress is very beautiful and has unique features of this art form. The *sutradhara* wears a kind of *paguri* on his head. The neo-vaishnavite Bodo people don’t have permanent

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*Keshab Saikia Daimari, 60, Dhekiajuli, Sonitpur, Assam*
sutradhar dress; but they bring them by hiring from nearby showroom. This is a respectable material in the Assamese society.

Further, the dresses used by the actors in the bhaona are also very beautiful. The neo-vaishnavite Bodos don’t have of their own dresses. These have to hire the dresses by paying money for time being.

ii. Ornament

The ornaments used by the women folk of the village are highly artistic. Generally these ornaments are made by the jewelers. It is very interesting to note here that the Bodo womenfolk have been using different types of ornaments since immemorial times.

If we think then questions comes out that how did the Bodos make ornaments? Was there a blacksmith in the Bodo society? No written records or documents on it. Even no Bodo scholars has been commented or done research on this topic. But it is certainly true that there was a tradition of producing thread from copa in the Bodo society. Now it was not available in the society due to impact of science and technology they buy thread from the market.

Like the Hindu or other societies, the uses of ornaments are seen among the various groups of tribal communities. Among the Borman people or Dimasa people of Kachar, there was a blacksmith which is mentioned by N.Paul “The women used by the women folk of the
village are highly artistic. Generally these ornaments were made by the jewelers of their own society. The technique of making ornaments was handed down from generation to generation. The ornaments made by the Borman jewelers were highly artistic, chiseled, stylistic and meticulously perfected. But due to impact of modernity this tradition is fast changing. Now they buy ornaments from the market.\textsuperscript{35} Although like other tribals or non-tribals, the Bodo people also have been using these ornaments since earliest times but there is no any information having the blacksmith among the Bodo society. Whatever, it may be, still the Bodo women put \textit{Kheru, japkhring, bawla}, in the ear, made of silver and gold.

1. The women put on \textit{nakful, bulakhi} in the nose.

2. They put on \textit{thanka siri, jibao zin siri, Chandra har, bisahar} etc in the neck.

3. They put on \textit{astham (ring), mutha, ashan suri} in the finger.

The ornamental used by the women are: \textit{moni, kharu, tarhar, anguthi, ujanti, kundal, sankha, sindur}.

Moni: It is not clearly found using of \textit{Moni} in the Bodo society, when and how they make and use it.

Kharu: This is also another important ornament used by the Bodo women. However, the use of \textit{gam kharu} is seen on the wrist of Bihu

dancer and on that of the bride on marriage ceremony in the neo-
vaishnavite Bodo society.

Anguthi (ring): This is also one of the important ornaments used by men
and women in the every society. The male person also use this ornament
on the finger and chain in the neck.

Sindur: *Sindur* (Vermilion) is one of the important ornaments used by
the Hindu women. The practice of mark on the forehead (*phot*) between
the eyebrows is a common practice among the Hindus. Frankly
speaking, it has a great significance among the Hindu society. Now the
Bodo people also use it. When women put or take it on the forehead and
also on the line made by parting the hair on the head vermilion. The
marks of vermilion especially on the parting line of the hair indicated
the married status as well as feminine grace. The unmarried women
also put a simple *phot* on forehead. Tradition says that the Bodos were
not Hindu. The custom of using vermilion was not available among the
followers of the Bathaousim. It is clearly revealed that adoption of this
custom is taken from the neighbouring Hindu society particularly from
the Assamese speaking Hindu Society.

In *Bhaona*, the actors are used certain fixed dress and mask. On the
other hand the boys are decorated as girls being dressed with artificial
breasts and hairs for dramatic purposes.
Some cosmetics and paints are used in the kirtonghar. Regarding this materials M. Neog says "the materials for painting on the stage were generally were vermillion (hengual), yellow arsenic (haital), indigo, chalk, brown ochre (gerua), lamp-black, collyrium, mica, some of which were used in painting the walls of the kirtonghars or in ordinary paintings." Such kinds of materials are also used more or less in the namghar of the Bodo villages but very few.

IV.5. Food Habits

Rice is the staple food of the people of Assam. Since time immemorial rice have been main food of Assamese people. Kathagurucarita describes that the husband had refused to take food cooked by his wife because only because, his wife was uninitiated. It was indeed prevalent in the traditional Assamese society.

Further, Katha Guru Carita narrates "every Bhakat of Vaishnava cult prepares rice after taking bath. They are fond of cira, sugar, milk, curd, and molasses and mustered and verities vegetables used as curry. Betel nut are taken both by men and women without any hesitation. Dringking liquor was strictly prohibited. Salt, musterd oil, pumkin, brinjal, scented oil, chilli and a dish seasoned with alkali were also known to them as like as to-day. Pigeon curry made of arum-plunt

36 Neog, M., op-cit, 273
and pepper etc. and given to a woman on the third day her children birth was also current during these days."38 Fish even flesh of deer were also favourite dish for a vaishnavite bhakat.

Further, there is also a Katha guru carita, there is also a specimen of fish cooking on the occasion of Madhabdeva’s father’s shraddha:

Paca guru jane bule, amie chaul sijam, eibuli mach duta baci pata karhi dhuli kalat jori di ari phica kati dabar pati capile, khamucile cale, harhe railgoai, agie same jalat dile, gut hai paila, katarire kuti, khar kai, tenga di, bhaji kai lun, jaluk, joni, gandha, gastion di mah magur, mati, panchukan anja amudita hail, barhi dile, gonea ginyatie bule tane mac ane hai buli kune jane39

Generally it is also revealed that fish and meat are not taboos in neo-vaishnavite Assamese speaking society. Almost all the reformers including Sankardeva and Madhabdeva were vegetarians. As the description of Carit puthis, meat and fish weren’t considered as prohibited things (food) for Vaishnavs. Even they shouldn’t indulge in killing animals for the purpose of food and they can take meat of animals killed by others. S.N. Sarmah quotes and observes that katha guru charita as well as in the Vamsigopaladevar Carita regarding the use of fish may not be out of place here to mention. Vamsigopaladeva

38 Ibid, pp-360-362
39 Ibid, pp-79-90
was a celibate Brahmin and was a vegetarian. Once when he visited the house of Sankardeva (who was no longer than alive) the latter’s wife deliberately served him with fish without his knowledge.”\textsuperscript{40}

From the above explanation of the \textit{carit puthis} it is clear that there were lots of restriction taking food in the Assamese society. Therefore S.N Sarmah has rightly remarked that the followers of Vaishnavism in Assam are very careful in taking food. It is also that the food cooked by a person of the same caste or sub-caste is not taken by another, unless the former is an initiated one and belongs to same order. There are some extreme cases where one member of a family is seen refusing to take food prepared by another.\textsuperscript{41}

Whatever it may be the main food of Bodo and the people of Assamese society is rice. Both the Bodo and the Assamese people take various curries, such as acrid acids with their meals. They also take vegetables both boiled and smoked in fire. Fish and meat were sometimes taken by roasting on a spit. Such kinds of habituation to consuming food were also available in every society and still these traditions have continued more or less in Assam.

In modern Assamese societies also different varieties of pulses such as \textit{mati kalai (ha sabai} in Bodo), \textit{muchur dal, magu dal} are also

\textsuperscript{40} Sarmah, S.N. op.cit p-143
\textsuperscript{41} Sarmah, S.N. op-cit-143
taken. They are prepared varieties of various items of *pithas* (cakes) from rice such as *shunga pitha, laru, keteli pitha* etc. Apart from these, though the Assamese Hindus take different kind of fish such as *rou, barali, puthi* etc. they don’t take some fish such as *Seng, Goroi, Sal, Singi, Garua, Mirika* etc. In this regards, S. Rajguru says “The Hindus including many of the Hinduised non-Aryans, don’t take all kinds of fish and animal meat. Such as *Sal, Singi, Garua, Mirika* etc. and meat of animals and birds, such as cocks, pigs etc are tabooed. The meats of ducks, pigeons, goats, castrated goats, tortoises, deer etc. are universally taken.” 42 Except beef and fox, the Bodos take all kinds of fish and meat of animal and birds in the Bodo society. Even they take some kinds of insect. Although there is no restriction in taking buffalo in the Bodo society specially in the Kokrajhar, Udalguri, Bagsa, Chirang, Goalpara, the Bodo people of Sonitpur, Nagaon are not taken buffalo. Among the meats, Pork is the most important in any social ceremonies in the Bodo society. Without pork no ceremonies can observe.

Besides the above mentioned items of food, *cira, muri, doi, payas* and other foods are also used as a light food in modern society. Some favourite combinations with tea are various *pitha, khala pitha, tekeli pitha, ghila, bar pitha, narikalor laru* (coconut ball) etc.

42. Rajguru, S. op-cit, p-163
It has been already mentioned above that the food habit of the Bodos are not at all admissible in the vaishnavite society. So, the converted Bodo people of neo-vaishnavism had to change as well as to give up their food habit gradually. For instance, wine or the rice beer is prepared very much and used in the Bodo families has totally been avoided and minimized in some families of the Bodos. It needs mention here that Saraniya Kachari were out and out the Bodos and but they have become now Semi-Hinduised who has totally given up making rice beer at home. On the other hand it is seen that rearing of Pig was totally stopped by the Saraniya Kachari and the Pigs were reared in the villages of the Bodos. Pork was taken abundantly but now they have avoided the same. Even the meat of buffalos was taken by them at times, but after conversion it is seen that they avoided the same. Now a days, few Bodos generally, the follower of the other sects of Hindu religion such as, Joyguru are also seen taking vegetarian and they have totally given up pig eating and rearing at home.

Interestingly, the language, dress and ornaments used at home and outside home are completely Assamese there is no any doubt and hesitation. So to speak, it is easy to identify easily outside home but it is very easy to identify them through their food habit only. Among the neo-vaishnavite society also, they drink and make rice beer and even
they take pork individually at home but it is not seen offering pork in the marriage, and death ceremony etc Mutton, Chicken and fish are offered in place of pork in these ceremonies. Some of the followers of Sankar Sangha and Krishnaguru don’t take pork and anything from the non initiated members of their religion in the Bodo society. Even they don’t take food cooked by his mother and sisters if they are not initiated. Sometimes cira, muri, doi, payas and other foods are also used as a light food in modern Bodo society.