CHAPTER VII

RITUALS CONNECTED WITH AGRICULTURE

This chapter presented Agricultural rites, Economic organization of the thesis
CHAPTER VII

RITUALS CONNECTED WITH AGRICULTURE

In the village, the economic activities are connected with various beliefs and rituals. Along with the technical activities directed towards the use of natural resources, ritual is usually considered necessary for success in agricultural, pastoral, hunting, especially with regard to fertility of the earth and the succession of the seasons. There are rituals for house building, trading operations, for making of any special crafts etc. It may be necessary to wait for auspicious days for beginning of a work and some people carry out certain taboos or special regulations throughout the whole period of work. The annual rituals of the Boros of the study area are shown in the following table,
TABLE 17 THE ANNUAL AGRICULTURAL RITUALS OF THE BOROS OF STUDY AREA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of the month And English calendar</th>
<th>Name of the puja or ceremony</th>
<th>Place where these are performed</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bwisagw (April-May)</td>
<td>Bwisagw</td>
<td>Individual household</td>
<td>Welfare of the village</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Apeswari</td>
<td>Village field</td>
<td>Welfare of the village</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Khwthia farinai</td>
<td>Paddy field</td>
<td>For good seedling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ahar (June-July)</td>
<td>Amthi</td>
<td>Individual household and village ‘than’</td>
<td>Purification of earth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Gossa lanai</td>
<td>Paddy field</td>
<td>Fertility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Xraban (July-August)</td>
<td>Ashu Noan</td>
<td>Individual household</td>
<td>Taking of new rice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Harvesting feast of ashu)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kati (October-November)</td>
<td>Kati Bihu</td>
<td>Individual household</td>
<td>For good crops</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agwn (November-December)</td>
<td>Agw lainai</td>
<td>Individual household</td>
<td>Welcoming of the goddess mainao</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Noan janai</td>
<td>Individual household</td>
<td>Taking of new rice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(harvesting feast of main corp, i.e., sali)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Magw (January-February)</td>
<td>Magw</td>
<td>Individual household</td>
<td>Celebration after good harvesting</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Field study*

Table 17 reveals that the Boros of Belguri, Ghiwnala and Murmela have performed number rituals throughout the agricultural cycle namely, *Bwisagw, Apeswari, Khwthia farinai, Amthi, Gossa lanai, Ashu Noan, Kati bihu, Agw lainai, Noan and Magw etc.* The rituals are performed at individual households, at village field or paddy field.
AGRICULTURAL RITES

Agriculture is the main source of livelihood of the Boros and various rites and rituals are observed throughout the year of agricultural operation. For the fertility of production of agriculture they perform puja for different deities. As the pujas are related to agriculture, they perform the puja just before the sowing of seeds, first day of plantation, on first harvesting, after the harvesting of crops etc. According to the observation and interview in the village the villagers have observed major and minor festivals and ceremonies throughout the year. The festivals and ceremonies are religious, seasonal and agricultural related. In fact all the religious and seasonal festivals are closely related with the agriculture. These are, Bwisagw, Khwthia farinai, Amthi, Khwthia funai, Gossa lanai, Ashu Noan janai, Kati bihu, Agw lainai, Noan janai and Magw.

FIRST MONTH OF THE ASSAMESE CALENDAR (Bwisagw)

Bwisagw is celebrated from the sankranti (last day of chait, Assamese month) day of the month of Chait and Bohag, up to seven days of Bohag.

On the sankranti day they took their cows and bullocks to the river and
bathed them. Before going to the river they smear the animals with the mixture of ash and mustard oil, spotted the cattle's body with the mixture of mustard oil and ash; prepare garland of fresh turmeric and water gourd etc. and taking it on a basket they move to the river to bathed the animals. On the way they beat the animals with 'dighlati pat' and tharai (tora in Assamese) and throws the pieces of water gourd, brinjal etc. to the animals. At that time they recites as

*Lao ja Phanthao ja,*

*Bwswr bwswr er hanja hanja;*

*Bimani khither, bifani khither,*

*Nwswr jagwn halua geder.*

In English-

Eat gourd eat brinjal,

Grow up year to year

To spite your mother and father,

You will be large bullock.

In the river the cow are bathed and exchange an old rope with other household. After bath the animals are set free for grazing. In the evening time the master of the household offer puja to the god Gopal (Sri Krishna)
with earthen lamp, betel nut, rice grain and the new rope. They believe that the god Krishna is the god of cows and bullocks. So the housemaster prays to the god for the well being of their cattle. After that they offer rice beer to the ancestor on the southern direction of the courtyard.

On the other hand, the females of the household clean their houses; utensils and throws out the old broom sticks and replace with new one. The douri of the village sprinkles holy water, and only after that females have started cooking. On this day they have prepared gwkha (bitter), gwkhwi (sour) item. It is also known as gwkha-gwkhwi janai or khungkha janai, mwkhwu thukhwnaï (mwswu thukhwinaï) or mwswuni bihu (goru bihu in Assamese). There is also a tradition of searching khwijema (eggs of a kind of ants, umrulî in Assamese). It is also fried for taking with meal. Another special vegetable is dingkhia (a kind of eatable fern).

From the first day of Bwisagw the young boys and girls also the elderly men and women used to go singing and dancing with the traditional musical instruments from door to door of the village; even they move to the other village also. They beg alms from the households so it is known as Bwisagw domanchini maginaï (begging in Bwisagw). In the villages
the households offers rice beer to the elderly dance groups and bows down to them. Some of the villagers also offer gamucha to such elderly group. These elderly groups include members of each of households of the village. This festival lasts up to seven days of the Bwisagw, the first day Makhau or Mashau bihu meant for cattle; the second day is Mansi bihu meant for men, starting with worship of their gods. The dance groups both arrange feast of merriment at the end of the Bwisagw festival, usually the elderly group have bought salt and distributed among the members and arrange a feast with pork.

As it is related with the cattle worship and cattle is the main agricultural help of the Boros Bwisagw may consider as an agricultural rite. This rite is welcoming of the Bwthwr gwdan (new year). According to Mr. Kamini Narzari, Baisagu is a Bodo word, which has origin in the word Baisa, means year or age and Agu means start, hence, Baisa+Agu, Baisagu means the starting of the year or age (Brahma, 1995).

This Bwisagw festival is a symbol of joy, love and affection among the peoples of the area. It strengthens the interpersonal and neighboring tie of the area.
SOWING OF
SEEDS (Khwdia Farinai)

In the month of Bwisagw they prepare the paddy field and sow as required. Before sowing they offer a pair of betel nut, rice grain, basil leaf on a piece of plantain leaf to goddess mainao (Lakshmi). On that particular day they don’t take any alkaline curry. Generally they prepare sour curry that day, as they believe, it is the curry of mainao jurainai, which means keeping cool the heart of goddess Lakshmi.

MENSTRUATION PERIOD
OF MOTHER EARTH (Amthi sua)

In the month of Ahar from the seventh day of the month, it is considered as the menstruation period of the mother earth known as Amthi sua. During the weeklong period they do not dig soil, do not plough the land, do not cut the useful tree, never enter into bhakhri or bakhri (granary) and never offer puja. On the seventh day women throw away their old broomsticks and replace them by new ones. The village douri sprinkles holy water in every household of the village. After this purification rite the villager have offered puja to household gods and to their village than
by all households of the village jointly. As the menstruation period of mother earth is over, the Boros of these villages believe that the earth is ready with fertility for cultivation.

UPROOTING OF SEEDLING (*Khwthia funai*)

After preparing the field by ploughing the owner of the household offer a pair of betel nut to the goddess *mainao*; bows down towards the east and started sowing of seeds of paddy. It is the rite for the better growing of the seedlings.

STARTING OF PADDY PLANTATION (*Gossa Lanai*)

Usually during the second week of *Ahar* they have started the paddy plantation. On the day the females of the household have to clean their houses and utensils and offer *puja* to goddess *Mainao*. They offer earthen lamp, *Prasad* to the *Bathou, Bakhri* and goddess of kitchen. After the *puja* they moved to agricultural field, planted a tender banana plant, a basil plant, a black arum plant and a small branch of bamboo; along with this they have to offer a garland made of cotton and white thread, *prasad*,...
betel nut etc. After completion of the puja the prasad is distributed to all the members present there. On that day they have to prepare the sour curry to keep cool the heart of mainao, and they have a belief that they can produce better crops throughout the season after performing this ritual.

COMPLETION OF PADDY PLANTATION (Hali thikhangnai or Hali uthinai)

There is a rite on the day of completion of the paddy plantation of the household. On the day the household arrange a feast for the males and females present in plantation. After completion of the paddy plantation before coming to home the female of the owner bring a small quantity of mud from the agricultural field. In bringing the mud the fellow females in the field paint on bikhung (on back) of the female with mud and this mud is paint on granary; it is believe that they bring the Lakhi in their house. And there is also a tradition of constructing a granary (simply a structure made with seedling) in their field with the seedling by the female of the owner. And wished for good production of the rice. This day is known as he hali uthinai or hali dikhangnai (completion of paddy plantation). On this day the villagers arrange a feast for the peoples present in
transplanting work. The females are called as *Ruwani* and the male are called as *Haloi*.

**TAKING OF NEW RICE OF ASHU CROPS (*Ashu Noan Janai*)**

It is the rite of taking new rice of *ashu* crops. They have arranged a harvesting feast for the *ashu* crops during the month of *xraban*. They have offer *puja* to their household gods and sacrificed fowls, goat etc. to the god. The Boros of these villages does not consider the *ashu* as major crops. So, there is no fixed day for performing this harvesting rite.

**LAST DAY OF ASHIN (*Kati bihu*)**

The *Kati bihu* is observed on the last day of *Ashin* (October-November). It is the time the paddy fully grown up and just ready to full of rice grain, the villager observed this *bihu*, which is known as *kati bihu* (*kongali bihu* in Assamese). It is observed on the dark night, the females of the households cleans the houses and utensils, and in the evening the male members of the household offers *prasad*, earthen lamp at their paddy field, kitchen garden, at gate of the house, at cowshed and at every
houses. The villagers have come to take prasad at every households of the village.

**CUTTING OF NEW CROP (Agw lainai)**

It is usually performed on the eight day of Agwn. But it is varied in some household that some may delay in performing this rite. On the day the females of the household clean their houses, utensils and throws out the old broomsticks and take bath after that a male member sprinkles holy water. After this purification rite a female dressed up with white cloth and offer earthen lamp, betel nut, rice grain on a piece of plantain leaf to their household gods and goddesses and start cooking. After preparing meal the female moved to the agricultural field and offers earthen lamp, betel nut and rice grain on a piece of plantain leaf to goddess mainao. The female selects three chuba (bundle) of paddy and reaping it, then tie it up with the piece of plantain leaf in two parts and tie it again with a white cloth. According to their believe it is a the rite of well coming and bringing the goddess mainao to their house and the goddess mainao always wore the white cloth. On the way of returning the female does not utter a single word, as they believe that if she utters any word the goddess mainao will
remain on the way. After reaching house she ties up the two paddy bundles separately with bamboo string and keep one part in kitchen and one part in granary. Just after the completion of this rite she takes bath and whole family members take their meal.

TAKING OF NEW RICE OR HARVESTING RITE (*Noan janai or engkham gwdan janai*)

It is generally observed on the ninth day of the *Agwn*. In some households the date may be different according to their convenience to celebrate the ceremony. But the *Bathou* followers observed on the first day of *Agwn* at individual household and also jointly at their *than* (temple i.e. their place of prayer). It is the harvesting ceremony of the major crops. They offer *rice beer to their ancestors*. It is believed that, through this ceremony the households take new rice and it is a media to beg apology from each other that during the cultivation period if they have made any mistake or misbehaved. In taking the rice the invited neighbor and the household members sit together by making a circle. Before taking rice they have to offer all the prepared curry and rice to god and goddess; and also offer to their implements, which were used during cultivation. After offering the village *ojha* has chanting mantras and beg apology on behalf of the
members and than a male owner make sound by beating the implements. After this sound all the members start taking rice. In the evening the owners of the households feed straw to their cows and bullocks.

Following two case studies explains the harvesting rite.

Case No. 1
Name – Rajen Boro
Sex – Male
Age – 56 years
Occupation – Cultivation
Place – Ghiwnala

Rajen Boro aged about 56 years of Ghiwnala village has 25 bighas of agricultural land. Paddy cultivation is the main source of income. He manages his family with the income nicely. In every phase of their agricultural practices they offered Noan janai. He practiced the Noan janai (harvesting rite) on ninth of Aghun (October). In this rite he has sacrificed goat, fowls, pigeons and duck. In this rite at first offer puja to goddess Manasa by offering prasad, banana, betel nut, earthen lamp etc. and sacrifice a pair of pigeon, two goats, a duck, and a red male fowl. Secondly he has offered puja to Bathou (Siva) by sacrificing a pair of pigeon, white female goat, and eighteen fowls. Lastly offer puja to
goddess *Mainao* (Laksmi) at kitchen and granary accordingly by offering rice beer and sacrifice two fowls at Kitchen, one fowl at granary. After completion of these rites he offers rice beer, rice grain, betel nut, coins etc. to ancestors. With the sacrificed objects he has arranged a feast for the villager.

Case No. 2
Name - Bhaben Boro
Sex - Male
Age - 52 years
Occupation - Cultivation
Place - Belguri

Bhaben Boro of Belguri village, aged about 52 years is a cultivator. He has 32 bighas of land and he cultivates both the Ashu and Sali cultivation. He practices rites and rituals in every steps of cultivation, in the time of sowing seed, transplantation, harvesting etc. He performed *Noan janai* rite by offering prasad, betel nut, banana etc. At the rite he does not sacrifices any objects. After performing the puja he arranged a feast for the neighbourers.

Besides agriculture the Boros have also cottage industries.
Weaving is one of the main cottage industries of the Boro women of the village Belguri Ghiwnala and Murmela. The women are expert in weaving. Weaving expert women are preferred in marriage. A woman not knowing the art of weaving is known as *Aluri* in Boro. Most of the domestic requirements of cloths are met from their family loom. They *prepare simple cloths as well as cloths of very high artistic designs.*

The yarn for weaving is generally bought from the market of Tangla. The *yarns are available in* various colours and sheds. However in some households women folk of Belguri, Ghiwnala and Murmela prepare *eri* yarn to weave shawl for domestic use.

In general, women weave cloths for domestic use only. But few women are there who weave the cloths for additional income. The cloths are *prepared for the master on contract basis; it may of half sharing of the master or on cash per cloth.*
Some of their weaving products are *Dokhna, Shawl, Gamcha, Phali* (scarf) etc.

In relation to weaving of the Boros a brief case is given below.

**Case No. 1**
Name - Niharika Boro  
Sex  - Female  
Age  - 23 years  
Place - Ghiwnala

Niharika Boro aged 23 years of Ghiwnala belong to a poor family with her elder sister and younger brother. She narrated that as they have no agricultural land, she and her sister weave cloths for money. They took charges of weaving as for Gamcha Rs. 12/- to Rs. 15/- per cloth according to size, for Dokhna it is charged Rs. 120/- per cloth. As such they earn money from weaving and meet their needs.

**BASKETRY**

Basketry is another cottage industry adopted by the Boros of Belguri, *Ghiwnala and Murmela*. Families belonging to the poor carry on basketry as a means of their additional source of income. Basketry includes, fishing
traps and other household implements like basket (Khirkha), storing basket (Duli), winnowing fan (Dala), seive (Sandri) etc.

The baskets are made of bamboo and cane. Generally they used bamboo from their own house and canes are brought from the nearby market.

The Basketry-products are sold mainly to the villagers and also sold in nearby market. The prices are varies from Rs.15/- to Rs.200/- each item.

**VARIOUS MEANS OF CASH INCOME**

In the three villages there are various means of cash income of the families. The means are recorded as follows-

(1) Sale of paddy

(2) Sale of arica-nut, betel leaf etc.

(3) Sale of domestic products such as milk, fowl, duck, pig etc.

(4) Sale of vegetables, fruits etc.

(5) Daily wage labourer
It is evident that the families of these villages sell their excess products of paddy for cash income. However some families sells paddy to meet their needs. The rates of the paddy ranges from Rs.2.00/- to Rs. 6.00/- per Kg. Paddy. The rates of the different paddy varieties are more or less of same.

Selling of arica-nut, betel leaf is another means of cash income. The mode of selling arica- nuts is on the basis of contract or self by the owner. The price of the arica-nut varies from Rs. 2.50/- to Rs. 10.00/- per Kg.

Most of the households of the village Belguri, Ghiwnala and Murmela are rears cattle. All of them know how to milk a cow. Milk is sold to the contractor on weekly or monthly payment basis. The price of milk is Rs.8.00/- to Rs.10.00/- per liter. The villagers also sells the fowls, duck and pig etc. in the local market and meet their domestic requirements.

To meet their needs the villagers also sells the vegetables, fruits etc. in the local market.
It is observed that ‘agriculture’ holds the principal position in economy in three villages. The economy of Belguri, Ghiwnala and Murmela are agriculture oriented though some deviations are focused in certain cases.

ECONOMIC ORGANIZATION

SELF HELP GROUPS AND COOPERATIVE SOCIETY IN BELGURI VILLAGE

The introduction of Self Help Groups in Belguri village is another additional way to help their economy. There are three female self-help groups and a male self-help group in the village. Out of three, two ladies Self Help Group have received Rs.25000/- (Rs.10,000/- revolving fund and Rs.15,000/- subsidy) each from the Government fund. There is also a gents Self Help Group in the village, they have registered their group against horticulture scheme. The ladies group using their fund in internal lending @ 5% per month within the group members and @ 10% per month outside the group members. Through this the village received financial assistance to full fill their day-to-day needs. The villager has taken 30-bigha school lands on lease @ Rs.350/- for high land and @
Rs.450/- for low land. The total high land is 8 bigha and the total low land is 22 bigha. Out of total land one part have taken 4 bighas of high land and 14 bighas of low land; another part of the village have taken 4 bighas of high land and 10 bighas of low land. The villagers of each part work jointly in their individual part of the field. The income of this land is used in internal lending within the village at low interest.

**SELF HELP GROUPS AND COOPERATIVE SOCIETY IN GHIWNALA VILLAGE**

There is a cooperative society and a community granary in the Ghiwnala village, which is additional source of village economy. Only the male members are participating in the cooperative society. The villagers have 42 bigha of common land and all the land leased out to the land less people at very low cost, that is, at two mounds per bigha of land. From the collection of rice grain of the leased out land they help the needy villagers at very low interest. There is a mahila samiti and two-registered female self-help group in the village. The two self-help groups have received an amount of Rs.25000/- amount from the Government, out of which Rs.10000/- is revolving fund and Rs.15000/- is subsidy amount.
These two women groups are running their money in internal lending only.

**SELF HELP GROUP AND COOPERATIVE SOCIETY IN MURMELA VILLAGE**

The introduction of Self Help Group is also another adding way to help their economy in the Murmela village. There are three female Self Help Groups and two male Self Help Groups in the village. The only two female groups have received Rs.10000/- revolving fund and Rs.15000/- as subsidy money from the Government. Both the male and female groups are running on internal lending basis, there is no other activity of the groups. The rate of interest of lending is @ 5% among the group members and for outsiders the rate of interest is @10%. Through these groups the needy people of the village has received financial assistance to fulfill their day-to-day needs. There is also a cooperative society in the village and have taken 42 bighas of land on lease from Murmela high school committee. They have to pay Rs.350/- for high land and Rs.450/- for low land to the school committee. Out of total land they have taken 12 bighas of high land and 30 bighas of low land. The villagers work jointly in the
field and the income of this land is used in internal lending basis within the villagers at low interest.