CHAPTER-II

PROFILE OF THE BODOS:
AN INTRODUCTION TO THE BODOS:

The Bodos are one of the aboriginal groups of people in North-East India. They are the known earliest settlers of Assam and the whole of the North-East History is quite sure about this fact. Rev. Sidney Endle says, "It may be said that the Kachari race were the original autochtones of Assam and that even now, though largely Hindunised they still form a large, perhaps the main constituent element in the permanent population of the province.

The Bodos are a section of the greater Mongolian racial stock. This is evident from the description offered by Sir Edward Gait of the features of Mongolian people. He says, "The Mongolian original features are a short head, a broad nose, a flat and comparatively hairless face, a short but muscular figure and yellow skin." And the Bodos perfectly resemble to this description. Of course, there is no second opinion on the fact that the Bodos form a section of the Mongolian racial stock.

In the pre-historic period, the Bodos were known by different names at different places. The Aryans called them Rakshyasas, Kiratas, Asuras, danavas, Mlechchas, etc. These were certainly derogatory names given to the aboriginal indigenous people of the country by the newly arrived Aryans who found their culture quite unresembling to their own. They always tried to undermine the indigenous people and their culture and used to call them with derogatory names. The ancient dynasties of Pragjyotisha, Hirimbapura, Agnigarh, Kundila all belonged to Bodo race. The ancient Hindu literature like the great epics- Ramayana and
Mahabharat, Puranas, Yoginitantra etc. have mentioned the Bodo in different ways. The famous pre-historic Asura ruler Narakasur was a Bodo and his son Bhagadutta married his daughter to the Kaurava prince Duryodhana. In the famous battle of Kurakshetra, the great Bodo warrior took the side of the Kaurava and created terror among the Pandava army. Only the sophisticated ‘Vana’ of Karna, which was preserved for killing Arjuna, could save the terrified Pandava army from further holocaust.

The ruler of Dwaraka, Shrikrishna married Rukmini, daughter of the Bodo ruler of Kundila. Dr. D.D. Kausambi, in his “Culture and History of Ancient India” mentions this fact— “Rukmini, a Kirata woman of immense beauty and art was stolen and taken away to Mathura by Shrikrishna who fell in love with her and Rukmini taught the art of dancing in Mathura, known as Garba Art.” Also Aniruddha, grandson of Shrikrishna, married Usha, daughter of Bana, Bodo ruler of Agnigarh. As Bana did not support the marriage and detained Aniruddha, Shrikrishna came for his rescue, which resulted in the famous battle of ‘Hari-Hara’ where the Lord Shiva took the side of Bana, his astute devotee. Also the second of the Pandava, Bhima, married Bodo princess Hirimba and by virtue of this many Bodos do not hesitate to claim themselves as the descendents of Bhima. Dr. Nagendra Nath Basu, in his “Social History of Kamrupa” mentions that, “The Mlechcha dynasty who ruled Pragjyotisha for four thousand years, was indeed shorn of its royalty towards the end of the 11th Century.”

The history of the ancient period shows the Bodos to be the dominant race in the North-East India. Dr. Suniti Kumar Chatterjee, in his “Kirata Jan Kriti” opines that “The Bodos, who spread over the whole of the Brahmaputra Valley, and North Bengal as well as East Bengal, forming
a solid block in North-Eastern India were the most important Indo-
Mongolian people in Eastern India and they form one of the main basis
of the present day population of these tracts."

The Hiuen Tsang’s account offers a valid picture of the Bodo people
and an idea about their language, as it says, “Their speech differed a
little from that of Mid-India which unmistakably resembles to that of
Bodo people.” During the time of visit of Hiuen Tsang, Kumar Bhaskar
Barman, a Bodo Emperor, ruled over Kamrupa. He sent a valuable gift
called ‘Halali’ to the Chinese visitor. Rajmohan Nath, in his “The
Background of Assamese Culture” mentions this fact, “The Bodo word
‘Halali’ means luster-emitting and the Chinese traveler of Assam in the
7th Century A.D. praised very much a Halali coat made with Bodo silk
and presented to him by the then King of Assam.” At that period, the
Bodos had acquired a vast kingdom in Eastern India. Captain Fischer
mention the fact, “The Kacharies gradually acquired an empire over
Assam, Sylhet, Mymensingh and the valleys of the east of the
Brahmaputra, their original seat being Kamrupa; and ultimately their
rule embraced everything from Kamrupa down to the sea.” Thus during
the 7th Century, the Bodo empire covered the present Assam, West
Bengal, parts of the Bangladesh and Northern Bihar.

The advent of Ahoms in Assam ushered an era of conflict with
the Bodos, the powerfulmost section of the Indo-Tibbetan people in
Assam. At that time, the Bodos were reigning over Southern Assam only
with their Capital in Dimapur. At that time, the Bodos were known as
Kachari. Of course, the Ahoms called the Bodos as “Timisa”, clearly a
corruption of “Dimasa”, which means “Sons of Rivers”. Dr. Banikanta
Kakati, in his “Assamese, its Transformation and Development” has said
that "Among the Tibbeto-Burman people, the Bodos were the most powerful. They built up strong kingdoms and with varying fortunes and under various tribal names- The Chutiyas, The Kacharies, The Koches etc." In the British India, the Bodo kingdom of Kachar was annexed to the British empire in India in 1832 A.D. through the "Doctrine of Lapse" as the last independent Bodo king Iragdāo or Gobinda Chandra had no male issue. Of course, the North Cañchar Hill area still remained under the rule of Tularam Senapati till his death in 1854 A.D. Then the East India Company annexed it to its empire in 1855 A.D. applying the same "Doctrine of Lapse". Sir Edward Gait writes, "Senapati Tularam was last Bodo-Kachari King who held his suzerainty till his death in 1854. The East India Company wrongfully annexed Cachar with infamous Act, under the 'Doctrine of Lapse' in 1855."

Yet the freedom lover Bodos did not bow down to the British pressure so easily. Swmdwn, better known as Sambudhan in history, started a rebellion against the British occupation of Cachar. He organised the Bodo youths into an army and offered a stiff resistance to the British. But lastly, though he was able to capture a few places like Ganzong, had to face defeat at the hand of the British. Col. L.W. Shakespear gives an account of this rebellion "In 1882, Sambudhan started a minor insurrection to try to restore the all Kachari Kingdom."

In the freedom movement under leadership of Indian National Congress, many Bodos came out in the street crying for freedom. Madan Kachari, Rauta Kachari, Lerela Kachari and many Bodos laid down their lives to the bullets of British Raj in the 1942 "Quit India" Movement. Many Bodos were imprisoned and spent prison term whom the Government has offered Tamrapatra recognizing as Freedom Fighter.
DISTINCTIVE CULTURAL AND LANGUAGE OF THE BODOS:

BODO LANGUAGE:

The Bodos have their own language. The language is very rich in social vocabulary. The Bodo Language has distinctive characteristics, with many a words connoting various meanings according to stress on sound and pronunciation. The Bodo language is a very old language, which has come down to generations orally. It has its own grammatical rules and is a systematic language.

History is silence whether Bodo Language was used for writing in the ancient period. But as the Bodos ruled over vast Kingdoms for thousands years, the language must have been used in the Royal Houses and Courts. But very unfortunately, there are no written records on the use of Bodo in writing. As there is no certain evidence of writing, the language seems to have come down to generations in speaking form only. Records of use the Bodo in writing can be traced only since the coming of the Missionaries in Assam in the later part of the 19th Century.

It the later half of the 19th century, Christian Missionary came to Bodo areas and took up the task of preaching Christianity among the Bodos. The Christian Missionaries considered the Bodos as animistic and took up the task of Christianising them as with the concept of "Whitemen’s Burden" of enlightening the uncivilised people. The missionaries first started their activities among the Bodos of the Darrang district. They used to translate the Christian tracts into Bodo which eventually led to the use of Bodo in writing. In the process, the Missionary also started schools in the Bodo areas and compiled “Kachari Reader”—a premiser in Bodo for pupils. Side by side, a few books in Bodo came to
published which ultimately facilitated creation of a sort of literature in Bodo. The time period of Christian Bodo literature has been recognised in the history of Bodo literature as the “Missionary Period”. Rev. Sidney Endle, J.D. Anderson, O.L. Skrepsurd and many Christian Missionaries contributed a lot towards the creation of written literature in Bodo at that period.

Then in the first half of the Twentieth Century, a few newly educated Bodo youth took up the venture for creation of Bodo literature. In the south Goalpara, the Bodo customary Laws and Social Rules compiled into a book titled “Boroni Phisa’ O Ayen”. A sort of rudimentary Bodo literature was given from at that area in that period. The venture by these few newly educated Bodo youth ushered into a new era in the domain on Bodo literature. This venture helped in creating a Bodo literature worth to be called so and strengthened the existence of the Bodo language opening up the prospect of survival of Bodo language in times to come. The foundation of Bodo Sahitya Sabha in 1952 helped the language to attain own independent existence and opened the door for future progress.

On constant demand and persistent efforts of the Bodo Sahitya Sabha, Bodo was introduced at the primary school as a medium of instruction in 1963. At present, Bodo language is a medium of instruction upto secondary level. Also, the Colleges offer M.I.I., subject in Bodo and Gauwahati university has opened Certificate, Diploma and P.G. Courses in Bodo. In 1984, Bodo was recognised as an Associate official Language of Assam, but very unfortunately the State Government has not implemented it and is discouraging its use in offices.

The Bodo Sahitya Sabha and the Bodo people as a whole had
been demanding inclusion of Bodo into the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution as a regional language. Very recently the central Government has paid due attention to this demand and has included Bodo in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution and thus Bodo has become a regional language of the country.

BODO LITERATURE:-

As said above, there is no certain record of use of Bodo in writing in the ancient times. The Bodo language might have come down orally in the form of spoken language. Use of Bodo in writing started only when the Christian Missionaries came to Bodo areas in the later half of 19th century, for preaching Christianity among them. The Missionaries translated Christian religious literature into Bodo which ultimately led into use of Bodo in writing.

The period in Bodo literature and its history, in which Christian Missionaries initiated writing in Bodo has been recognised as the “Missionary Period”. In this period Rev. Sidney Endle compiled the “An Outline Grammar of Kachari Language” in 1884 A.D. J.D. Anderson compiled “A Collection of Kachari Folktales” and O.I. Skrepsurd compiled “A Grammar of Kachari (Mech) Language”. Finally came out the famous masterpiece of Rev. S. Endle, “The Kacharies” in 1911.

The formation of Bodo Chatra Sanmilani in 1919 A.D. found a few newly educated enthusiast Bodo youths. They took up the task of publishing a Bodo magazine. But as they had no money for the purpose, from 1920 began to publish wall magazines. In 1924, was published the everfirst Bodo magazine, namely “Bihar” (Flower) under the editorship of Satish Chandra Basumatary. The period saw the compilation of “Khonthai Methai (Poems and Songs) by Madaram Brahma and Rupnath Brahma (1923).
A unique type of hymnical verse was composed by Madaram Brahma, titled “Boroni Gudi Sibsa arw Aroj” (Bodo’s First Principle and Hymns) in 1926. The period witnessed the growth of poetry, prose and drama. Madaram Brahma wrote “Dimapur Raijw Bainai”, “Raimali”, Sodang Bwiragi”, “Nala Buha”- dramas which unfortunately saw no light of publication till this date.

The Bibar period was followed by another series of ventures under leadership of Promod Chandra Brahma. He edited a new Bodo magazine named “Olongbar” (Pole Star). This magazine created new trend in Bodo poetry. The period saw creation of the first Bodo short-story “Abari” by Late Ishan Mwshahary. The Bodo prose attained its highest quality at the hands of Anandaram Mwshahary. Dwarendra Nath Basumatary wrote a quite a good number of dramas like “Dwrshwn Jwhwlao”, “Sukharu-Dukhuri”, “Raja Nilambar” etc.

Besides, Mohini Mohan Brahma perfected the Bodo Vocabulary and wrote superb proses. Also the period saw the publication of “Sonakhi Bijap” by Promod Chandra Brahma, which was a sort of Mini-Encyclopedia. Besides that Brahma published magazines like “Jentokha”, “Sanshri Arw Mushiri” and also, compiled a volume of Bodo Dictionary.

The foundation of Bodo Sahitya Sabha saw the regular publication of “The BODO”, annual mouthpiece of the Sabha. Yet the period saw no progress till publication of another magazine called “Nayak”. Mohini Mohan Brahma was its editor. Accordingly, this period of Bodo Literature is called “Nayak Age”. This period saw a host of Bodo writers of superb quality like Mohini Mohan Brahma, Gahin Chandra Basumatary, Ilabati Brahma, Prasenjit Brahma and Sobha Brahma. Poetic-prose had a peep into the domain to Bodo Poetry through the able hands of Prasenjit Brahma.
Introduction of Bodo as medium of instruction at Primary Level in 1963 necessitated compilation of Bodo Primer. Rajendralal Narzary composed the primer “Mokhojennai”. The gradual upgradation of Bodo as medium of instruction upto the Secondary Level also demanded production of more and more standard Literary Works. Eventually, many new compilation have come out till this date. By latest, introduction of P.G. Course in Bodo by Gauhati University along with Certificate and Diploma Courses have led to the creation of quite good number of books in Bodo. Consequently, there has been creation of many investigative and analytical Bodo Literatures of superb quality.

The Modern Period in Bodo Literature is believed to have started alongwith the introduction of Bodo as medium of instruction in 1963. Now, Bodo Literature can claim to have attained maturity. This has created quite a good number of famous Bodo writers among whom Manoranjan Lahary, Kamal Kumar Brahma, Bajendra Kumar Brahma, Jagadish Ch. Brahma, Kameswar Brahma, Madhuram Boro, Dharanidhar Wary, Ramdas Basumatary, Ramdas Boro, Chittaranjan Mwshahary, Nilkamal Brahma, Chanakya Brahma are worth mentioned. Among women writers Priyadini Brahma, Renu Boro, Ramela Islary, Anjali Narzary, Rani Helen Wary, Virgin Jekova Mwshahary, Mina Kherkatary, Swarnaprabha Chainary, Indira Boro are worth to mention.

The Modern Bodo Literature is in the process of complete development. Newspapers, Magazines, Novels, Dramas, Poetry, Short Stories, Comics, etc. are now published in Bodo. A complete Bodo-English-Hindi Dictionary has been published in 1997. A word stock of official vocabularies have been compiled. Late Bihuram Boro composed the epic type poem “Gibi Bithai” (The First Creation). A full history of
Bodo Literature has been compiled by Prof. Manoranjan Lahary and Madhuram Boro.

Despite all above development and achievements in the field of Bodo Literature, there are many other shortages in respects of complete development of Bodo Literature. There is no daily newspaper, an encyclopedia, a Comprehensive Anglo-Bodo Dictionary and Scientific and Technological Vocabulary in Bodo. Unless these wants are fulfilled, Bodo Language and its Literature will remain far away from being recognised as fully developed ones.

**SOCIAL SYSTEM:**

Bodo society is basically agrarian in nature and agriculture is the main occupation of the majority in the society. The Bodos live in the villages and have established social customs and traditions, which have ultimately become the social rules.

**BODO VILLAGE**

1) **Bodo Family:**

Each Bodo village comprises of a comfortable number of families. Each family lives in the separate house with specific boundaries. The family comprises of the parents and their children and also other elder members and relatives in the family which is joint one. The eldest member of the family usually becomes the head of the family under whose command family affairs are run and issues related to the family are resolved.

In the family, normally the male issues only enjoy the right to property. Female issues are not given this right as they are destined to be given to other’s family. The property may be equally divided among the sons and shares are given away to who after marriage become separate
from the family. After the death of father or head of the family, the property becomes automatically divided equally among the male issues if they no longer wishes to stay together. When a few of the male descendants of the family wishes to stay together, shares of those who still wishes to stay together remain intact and shares of those who want to get separated is given away. Of course, now with the dawn of courts and their universal rule over the village life, property laws related to Hindu Laws are having a dent to the Bodo property rules. Now, if one wishes, as many do, a father can give share of his property to daughter during his life itself. Of course, property rights enjoyed and preserved by Bodo females can never be compared to that of “Stridhana” as found in the Hindu Property Law.

**Marriage System:**

As procreation is the law for all living beings in the nature, in a human group, formal marriage is a must. Bodos have their Unique Principles like “Bwirathi” and “Barlangpha”. Marriage among the members of the same family and relatives are not permitted. Even among the boys and girls related distantly from mother side are not allowed. Also, the marriage between the elder girl and younger boy is not approved by the society. Usually, male partner is expected to be elder and female partner younger by age.

There are two unique principles namely, *Bwirathi* and *Barlangpha* in the Bodo marriage. Bwirathi is the female couple who conducts the task of welcoming the married couples. They dances with the lighted lamps in the *Sandri* (shieve) at hand rounded up by a thin circular cover of banana pulps covered by the bamboo‘made fan so as to waive to the intending couples and welcome to the dias of the marriage. They also
perform the essential task of distributing betel-nut to the guests in the marriage hall. So to say, **Bwirathi** is an unavoidable part of Bodo Marriage, without **Bwirathi** there can be no Bodo marriage. It is considered too sacred for Bodo Marriage.

**Barlangpha** is the male counterpart of Bwirathi. In time of Bodo marriage, he used to dance ahead of the marriage procession. In the way, he dug out a piece of earth and made the groom to take it on his back saying, “Oh, dear! Take this burden from today”. That is, shoulder the burden of a married family by virtue of this marriage, ‘shoulder the burden’ means own the responsibility. Of course, now-a-days this principle of Bodo Marriage has been discarded and seen only in quite a selective areas.

While going in search for a match, the groom side have to go bride’s house and offers among others, a pair of betel-nut and a bottle of ‘Jou’(vodka). If the female family accepts the offer, the discussion for the marriage begins. While discussion is on, one of the male side distribute the vodka they have brought. When this is finished, the female’s side also offers a few more bottles. The final agreement for a marriage may need a number of times of discussion at female’s family.

In the ancient days, marriage through Asurik and Gandharva Pratha were recognised. Thus forcible marriage was accepted by Bodo society. Through Gandharva Marriage, secret marriage between a boy and a girl was recognised, if the family members of both side consented to it later. Of course, now-a-days forcible marriage has almost been discarded and marriage between the intending couple is decided through mutual discussion and consent.

‘Agarbad’ is applied to when social offences like marriage or
sexual intercourse takes place between two members of the same family or among the members related by blood i.e., near kins. 'Daokhibad' is applied when sexual offences takes place between the members who are socially permissible for marriage for not being related by blood and illicit sexual intercourse takes place between them. 'Khaoalibad' is applied when any member of the society takes the character of "Khaoali"—Gypsy who bring the materials given away with dead from the graveyard. 'Fongslothbad' is applied when offences in the nature of sexual intercourse takes place between a Bodo and a Non-Bodo ("harsa") member. Lastly, 'Khoulwbwt' is the penalty made to pay by a person who unnecessarily rebuke other person in the society or disseminate false information. Mythological story goes that when Sandw Bandia, a bachelor male had to free two unmarried sisters Ashagi and Bwishagi from the magic trap who were caught up there while stealing fruits from his garden, then the elder God Mwnsingsing Bwrai came down to earth and gave these five ways of social reform.

PERFORMANCES ON DEATH:-

On dead of any member of the society, a tearful and mournful funeral is given to the dead. The members of the family feed cooked and other foods and drinks favourite of the deceased during his life time, to the dead. Then the dead is brought to the graveyard shouldered by four persons on a temporary bed made of bamboo, in procession. The first person ahead of the procession bears in hand 'dwi shanti'(pure water) and the last person takes a ball of white thread and leaves the thread stretched on ground upto the graveyard. A red ribbon of thread is placed on the mouth of dead.

The dead body is normally burned to ashes, but at many places
dead body is buried. In the first case, a male member of the family or a near relative in case no male member left in the family, lit the pyre with fire on a bundle of jute-canes. He has to take five full round around the pyre and other follow him suit shouting – “here we lit it, here we lit it, ...”. In the second case, essential commodities like earthen jars, cooking utensils, edibles, etc. are left with the dead on graveyard for future use. It is believed that after burry, the soul of the dead still remain alive and need all these commodities in his daily life. The dead body is never left in open for vultures and foxes.

**BODO HOUSE:**

While going to construct a new house, a few scientifically agreeable methods are adopted for selection of the site. There is famous saying Bodo in this context —

“Hangsw sanjaha, goi saha
Owa swnabha,, bla-bla khwla.”

That is, pond for swans in the east, garden with betels in the north, bamboo bush in the west and wide open in the south. Here, the eastern side of a household is suitable for digging pond as the morning sun can create a scenic beauty on the pond and also the household can get fresh air and sunlight, northern side can be utilised for planting tender-full trees like betel as then no fear remains for trees befalling upon the house-roof as wind blows strongly from south-west direction only, western side can be covered by bamboo bushes as these can protect the houses from strong Monsoon wind from the west, and southern side should be kept wide open for fresh air and sunlight in the noon so as to get the harmful germs of diseases burnt down.

The main house of the family always remains in the north of the
courtyard. This is called Noma No or the mother of the houses. The easternmost room of the “Noma No” is treated very sacredly and called Ising where the Goddess of Wealth, Mainao (Lakshmi) is placed. No man other than family members or unmarried house-cook (rauthi) can enter this room.

Normally, the bakhri or barn is located in the northeast corner of the courtyard where paddy is stored after harvest. It always remains raised above the ground so as to help protect the stored paddy from getting dampened for direct contact with the moist ground and also to prevent premature seedling. On the day, when the paddy is first reaped, a bundle of paddy is cut and kept in the front inside of the barn. It is believed that by this act, the Goddess of Wealth could be introduced and placed inside the barn and so the family always remains rich for continued blessing of the Goddess.

The western house almost always happens to the kitchen of the family. The well is placed very near the kitchen as convenient for cooking purpose. The southern house always happens to contain a drawing room for the guest and called “Soura No” or rest-room. Now-a-days with the prevalence of latrines with modern amenities, it is placed in the northeast corner so that Monsoon wind can not disturb with bad smell. The house for the cattle is called Goli and is located in a place far away from the main house. Also, the huts made for pig or goat or bird/hens is called Gondra separate for each other and Oma Gondra (shed for pig) is always placed far away from the main house so that bad smell do not disturb to the house.

Village Administration:

The whole village possesses a head called “Gamibrai” or “Gami
gwra”. He is the administrative head of the Bodo village. He presides over all meetings pertaining to the village affairs and pronounces the Final Judgement in case of social offences. In ancient time, his words became the Law in the village. But now with passing time, his whims over the village affairs has lessened to a great extent. Now the Gamibrais are selected annually and at rotation basis.

To assist the Gamibrai in the village administration, a subordinate official is appointed who is known as the Halmaji. He plays the role of a “boy errand” and informs the villagers about the time and date of the meeting when scheduled. He also collect the offerings from the end of the villagers and also dues from the defaulters on behalf of the village administration. He is paid an annual remuneration from the village fund or by every family in the village on equity basis.

All the elders and the head of the villages constitute the village General Council. They all are expected to attend the village meeting whenever called. Though in the proceeding of meeting against social offences, all villagemen including women and youths can attend they have no final saying at the time of verdict. They can just witness the proceedings and offer moral boosting to village elders.

**Administration of Justice:**

As said before, the Gamibrai is the fountain of all justice in the village affairs. His words become the Law and he give the Final Verdict. Of course, while pronouncing his verdict, he takes into account the opinion of the village elders and also of the gathering as a whole.

In the proceeding against social offences, a complainant has to pay a token amount to the Gamibrai a file a compliant with him. Then, when the actual meeting is called, after Judging the validity of the
compliant, the accused also is to pay an equal amount as that of the complainant. This amount is spent in providing drink or refreshment to the gathering of the meeting.

When the Gamibrai pronounces the Final Verdict the same becomes binding on all parties concerned. The fine so imposed on the guilty is called "dai" or "dai nangnay". Unless the guilty can pay the fine within the stipulated time, additional fine for defaulting may be imposed. If the guilty has no intention to pay or cannot pay the "day" finally, he may even be boycotted from the village society. Then none from the village society are permitted to visit the boycotted family or prohibited even from any type of exchange or talking. Thus the defaulters may be compelled to lead a solitary life keeping away from the society, which proves very miserable and difficult.

**Method of Agriculture:**

Each family in the village possesses own land for agriculture. They cultivate the land and rows paddy there. As no single man in the family or family members together can sufficiently carry out agricultural activities, services of the landless persons may be borrowed on payment. For that, a male or female worker may be hired by keeping them alongwith the family for a specified period on a fixed amount of pay. The male worker thus hired is known as Dahwma and the female worker as Ruathi. Normally, they are hired separately for each sowing and reaping period, that is, separately for summer and winter. After the agreement has been finalized, the hired worker has to stay in the house who hire them. They are provided with free feeding and lodging. As the Dahwma and Ruathi stay together with the family members of the owner, they become family members during their service period. Eventually, they come to enjoy the
right to protect the family properties, prevent any attempt to harm or
take away the same.

Besides, the two, there is another usual servant in each family. He
is to look after the cows and is called *Laokhar* or the cowboy. He is
usually tender in age and normally boys below twelve are engaged as
cowboy. Besides keeping cows, at times he participates in the family’s
household works and agricultural activities and by age grows into a
matured *Dahwna*.

As counterpart of *Laokhar*, mention may be made *Bokhali* – who
is teenage female servant kept in the family to look after infants and
children. She also, besides taking care of the children, helps the family
members in other household activities. She also learns during her
internship as *Bokhali* about household works and by age grows into a
matured *Ruathi*.

**Co-operative Agricultural Activities:**

The Bodo family and the society as a whole very well understands
the need for co-operative actions so as to finish the emergent and difficult
agricultural works. Among the two co-operative activities are *Saori Janai*
and *Gatha Lanai*. In *Saori Janai*, on the day when an emergent and huge
work is to be finished, the owner of the family appeals for help and co-
operation in finishing the job. Then the villagers, male and female alike,
come in huge number to help the house owner. They work till midday
and retire. Then the house owner has to offer drinks and meals to the
helping workers.

In the case of *Gatha Lanai*, number of *Dahwnas* with due consent
from their respective masters, enters into an agreement for daily co-
operative activities on rotation basis. Normally, only later half part of
the day is fixed for Gatha. In the first part of the day Dahwnas work in their own master’s field and in the later half of the day, participates in the work of the concerned dahwna’s work whose turn falls on rotation that day. Normally, agriculture and firewood collection draws maximum co-operative activities through Saori and Gatha. Thus planting rice-plant finally in the field and preparing logs for firewood draws maximum number of such co-operative activities.

The last day of the summer agricultural works of a family is known as Nanggan Janglekha. On that day, a finishing touch is given to rice-planting for the season. On that day, many persons in the village, who are free for the time being, even without being invited, join the rice planting, simply on getting information. After finishing the work, the workers make marry in the paddy field by throwing mud to each other in gay. On that day, the house owner has to provide a free midday meal to all those who have turned to Nanggan Janglekha.

Food Habit of the Bodo:-

Bodos have been living in naturally endowed fertile land of the North-East. As autochthones of the region, they have been playing the role of preserver of various flora and fauna found in the forests of the region. They have remained as extreme lovers of nature and very tenderfully handling the forest resources so that their food habit does not lead to destruction of natural resources and its beauty.

Bodos have been very familiar with the various flora and fauna available in the forests of the region. They are also accustomed with the nature of various species, their growth and dietetic utilities. Also they know delicious qualities of these species and their medical usefulness. Hence the Bodos have been very careful in selecting natural species for their
food and giving a shape to their food habit.

Among the many dietic items of the Bodo food habit rice have remained the most favourite food of the Bodos. All individuals and families strive for two meals a day, which comprise first of all rice. Then only other supplementary and complementary food items come into question. Among these wngkhri (curry), ronja (salad), bathwn (pickles), eonai (fried), etc. comes to appear among the other food items.

Bodos like very much the green vegetables. They always use to take fresh green vegetables which keep them always healthy and handsome. Among other common dietic plants mention may be made of potato, radish, cabbage, carrot, salgom, pumpkin, gourds, etc. Besides these, Bodos use to take a few peculiar plant and leaves as diet to which other neighbouring caste and communities are not accustomed with. The most particular dietic plants is Mwitha, scientific name of which is Hibiscus sabdariffa. It is a radish herb medium in size and growth. It has sour taste and the Bodos like it to take as bathwn (Satnee). In most times, they take it with small fishes, emphou (erimoth), chicken and pork whenever latter are available. They find it very delicious and has remained single most highly consumed item peculiar to Bodo ethnic people. It has another varieties two in number. One is Mwitha bangal (Hibicus urcatus), which varies altogether in size, colour and taste. It is not a herb but tall in size with short branches. It has bitter taste and better can be consumed with meat and big fishes. Of course, this also at many items consumed as semi-fried food item as ‘bhaji’(fry). The other is Mwitha Phathw (Hibicus canafinus), which is in reality a jute plant. Ordinarily it is not considered worth as food item but at many items when the two former varieties are not available, or just for the sake of taking different taste,
Bodos use to take this as food item. Otherwise it is a jute plant, tall in size resembling almost in all aspects with the **Mwitha Bangal**, from which also by many Bodo families jute fibers are strewn off.

Another peculiar dietetic plant consumed by the Bodo is **Lapha** (*Malva verticillate*). It is a small mint-plant, bright green in colour. It has normal delicious taste, but a few other varieties have mild sour taste. Among the other varieties, one is called **Gonggar Lapha** which is ‘palok’ like in size. Another variety is called **Lapha Gaorao** which has bigger leaves and has less favourable taste. When prepared with ‘*kharwi*’ (soda) a delicious taste which item is specially called ‘*Lapha Gwbab*’ (salty curry). Of course, other neighbouring communities like Bengali are now becoming familiar with this food item and beginning to take it.

Among other prepared food items peculiar to the Bodo only is ‘**Ondla Khari**’. Basically, it is prepared with grinned rice powder applying ‘*kharwi*’ in it. It is normally not taken singly but favoured with chiken, which is favouritely called ‘*ondlajwng daujwng*’ (Ondla curry with chicken). At other times it is favoured with fish, *emphou* (erimoth), pork, etc. At some times, specially during the summer, pumpkin leave is cut into grinned pieces and added to it. In winter, also dried jute leaf (‘*narjee*’) is added to it, which is called ‘*ondla narjee*’.

Among other peculiar diets prepared are ‘**Sojina**’ leaves, **Bombra** (*Xanthium stramonium*) leaves and arum leaves. These leaves are cut into grinned size and by adding little *kharwi* slipy tasty curries are prepared. At many times, small fishes or erimoths added whenever available. Other neighbouring communities have never been accustomed with these peculiar techniques of preparing such food items.
Among the meats taken, pork (‘oma bedor’) has remained the single most favourite food items for the Bodos. The neighbouring communities, till two decades ago, did not use to take pork. Nor they had any eagerness or idea about rearing pigs in the household. Still Bodos form the single community domesticating pig in their household. Of course, very recently, neighbouring communities like Rajbongshis are indulging into pig rearing. Pork is so to say, single most favourite meat item for the Bodos. They love to take it as fried and curry both. As pigs are nasty in character and habits, they are kept at a little away from the household, under the trees or sheds popularly called ‘oma gondra’ (pig sheds). As to bring them up, ‘ophri’ (rice remains of prepared Vodka) is required for feeding then, the profession is hated by the neighbouring communities. But as the Bodos use to take ‘jou’ (vodka) as usual drinks, they find it no difficult in bringing up pigs without much extra labour.

By religion, Bodos have remained as ‘Semi-Hindu’, at least from the British period. The neighbouring caste Hindu treat them as ‘Bad Hindus’. The Simon Commission also reported Bodos as ‘Bad Hindu’. By virtue of being so, perhaps, the Bodos are known not to take beefs. Of course, now, Christianised Bodos indulges into taking beef as normal food item.

Any way, Bodos have some food habits peculiar to their ethnicity and only when these are served, the guests in Bodo families feel satisfied. Among these are “Jou” (Vodka), “Ondla Dau”, “Sobai Khari” (Pulse with Chicken), “Oma Bedor” (Pork) besides plain rice. “Napham” is another peculiar food item of Bodos, which is prepared from dried fish leaving it for rotting.
Drinks:

Bodos use to take a number of drinks peculiar to them. First of all these is ‘jou’ (Vodka). It is prepared from plain rice, through the process of fermentation. It is a sweet but very strong drink. Bodo villagers in earlier days used to take this after day’s work in the evening while in rest, or during festivals, in a balanced manner. But in Post-British period Bodos have begun indulge in to excessive and untimely drinking of ‘jou’, which has caused irreparable ruins to their health and family. Nowadays, drinking ‘jou’ is not favoured and those who indulge in drinking it is looked down upon, though its prevalence in the society could not be limited to a satisfactory extent. Today the ‘jou’ has proved a single most curse for the Bodos leading to ruin of families and disintegration of society.

Bodo Medicinal Plants:

Bodos have been living amidst of nature and have remained very familiar with nature and quality of almost every plants and trees. By virtue of knowing the plants and their medicinal utilities, the Bodos could keep their health strong and handsome. They apply medicinal plant or their extracts, whenever any physical trouble arises, according to the needs for their remedy. Diseases have been cured, health preserved without treatment by Allopathic or Homoeopathic Medicines, by virtue of their original knowledge on medicinal uses of plants.

‘Kharwi’ (Soda) is a prepared medicinal item prevalent among the Bodos. Its use helps in keeping the stomach free of trouble, by washing away all harmful remains in the stomach and intestines. It is normally prepared from banana trees, mainly from it’s roots. Of course, other part of the banana trees, like lobes and leaves also can be used for preparing
Kharekha (*Rauwolfia serpentina*) is a small medicinal plants available in the household gardens. It has immense medicinal value. When a man suffers from instantaneous pain of stomach, he should find out a root of 'Kharekha' and grin it. Then its juice is to be extracted and the let the patient to drink it. The patient can get instant relief from the pain of stomach.

Khansingsa (*Leocus aspera*) is another small herb with small whitish flowers. Its flower can be used when one is suffering from troubles in nostril, like pharynxities. Its extracted juice is to be applied to the nostril in drops.

'Daodwi Bibar' is another plant, which has immense medicinal use for eye troubles. Whenever one suffers from pain or trouble in eyes it should be grinned and juice extracted, then applied in few drops inside the suffering eye. It washes away all irritating ingredients inside the eyes.

'Emao' is a marvelous medicinal biscuit prepared by the Bodos. It is prepared from rice, by grinding it alongwith the leaves of *Chourai-Thita* (*Andrographis peniculata*), banana leaves, Jack Fruit leaves, Mango leaves, Pine Apple leaves, 'Bongphang Rakheb' etc. It is applied in the preparation of ‘jumai’ ('Jou' – Vodka). Its preparation is a marvelous technique still not known by other neighbouring communities.

'Narji' is another food item prepared by drying the jute leaves. This technique still not known by other neighbouring communities. When the jute plant is cut, women folk fluck the leaves and dry it in the sun. then they store it in the gunny bag or bamboo made baskets. Whenever it is required, it is brought out in the required quantity and used. It can be
prepared as curry singly or with pork, or may be added with Ondla and prepare a curry of light bitter taste. This is very useful for keeping the stomach free from troubles and play the role of an anti-biotic as it helps ditter the micro-organisms going inside the body from spreading.

**Thaigir** (*Dillenia indica* fam. *Dilleniaceae*) and ‘**Thaikha**’ (*Bd.*) are two useful fruits. The former is sour in taste while the latter is little bitter though it is basically sour in taste. ‘Thaigir’ provides adequate Vitamin-C to the body. The latter is cut into small slices, dried and kept ready for future use. When one is tired of sun and suffers some sorts abnormality, it is deeped into water for a few hours and the soup is given to drink. This refresh the ailing body and the ailed kidney of the patient.

The use of **Thulusi** (*Ocimum basilicum* fam. *Lamiacea*) as medicinal plant, as known to the other communities, is also known to the Bodos as well. It is used by the Bodos specially to cure ‘**khuru**’ (*Kujali*). For the purpose, first the leaves are grinned, mixed with salt and then applied on the affected areas of the body through vigorous messaging. Also, it is applied when the eyes suffer from some irritation, by grinding it and applying the extracted juice in drops. It is believed by many that whoever use to take Thulusi leave a day continuously for years, even when snake bites, have nothing to fear.

The use of other medicinal plant like **Amlai** (*Phylanthus emblica*), **Khamreugga** (*Avaria carumbola*), **Khunthainara** (*Solanum nigram*), etc. are known to the Bodos as other civilised communities of India know about them. Except a few minor variations in purposes and methods of use, almost all other aspects remain the same.

**Festivals of the Bodos:**

Like all other indigenous people of the World, Bodos also have a
few festivals peculiar to their ethnicity. These all are related to their particular belief and needs. These are observed according to season and occasions and hence most of them seem to resemble to ones those of neighbouring indigenous people in the region.

These most favourite festival of the Bodos is **Bwishagu**. Apparently, it seems to be one similar to ‘Bihu’ of Assamese community. But almost all thinkers agree that as Bodos are the autochthones and earliest settler of the region, this festival has originated among the Bodos. Later only this festival percolated to among the other neighbouring communities who migrated later.

This festival is related to the agrarian life of the Bodos. When reaping of crops form the paddy field is over and new season comes with light raining, giving new life to the nature hitherto naked due to severe cold and dryness of winter, Bodos celebrate the Bwishagu – the new year festival. This is held in the first month of the year according to the Bodo Calendar, that is, ‘Bwishak’. As Bodos have been living with more advanced communities in the area since long, there is no difference between the Bengali and Assamese Calendar or that of the Bodos. Now this calendar has silently passed to the cleaver neighbours who had migrated later on. Bodos popularly call this new year festival as *Rongjali Bwishagu* or the “merry-making new year”. In the same vein, neighbouring Assamese people also call their new year festival as ‘Rongali Bihu’.

The second most favourite festival of the Bodos is **Kherai**. It is related to the traditional Bathou religion of the Bodos. It is performed when harvesting is over, normally in the month Magh in the year. This festival is proved to be the heart and soul of the Bodo people and
continued for a week together. Whole of the villagers and visitors from the neighbouring villages use to take part and make marry therein through whole day and night dancing. This festival requires a 'Doudini' and an 'Oja' to carry on the rituals pertaining to this festival. The 'Doudini' is a female oracle while 'Oja' is a male oracle. A strong team of instrumentalists with 'Siphung' (Flute), 'Kham' (Drum), 'Jotha' (Simbel), 'Serja' (Violin), etc. keep company of them with their rhythmic music, the 'Oja' recites the 'mwnthwr'(Mantra) and the 'Doudini' dances with the rhythm, with two 'Thunggri' (swords) in dance, her hairs unfurled. The attending public alongside accompanies the 'Doudini' dancing round the 'Bathou Than' (altar), dancing and screaming. In this festival, chicks are sacrificed in the altar of the 'Bathou Than'.

Many thinkers tend to opine, by observing this 'Kherai' festival that the Bodos are animistic and believer of animal sacrifice. But on the contrary, the Bodos have the concrete philosophy of 'Bathou' religion and this philosophy explains the sacrifice of chick as the sacrifice of vanity or greed stored in the heart of men. This explanation shows that the Bodos have their own religion, though Rev. Sidney Endle mistaked then to be animistic. They are the worshipper of 'Bathou', the Supreme God. They have their Gods and Goddesses. They believe in ghost and spirit also. But the conception of Supreme God is predominantly remarkable.

Another remarkable festival is Marai. It is another part of the Bathou puja. It is offered in the month of Ashwin, when the cropping in the field is over. This festival is not as joyous and gorgeous as Kherai. Minor offering is made to the Supreme God, 'Bathou' praying for wellbeing of the crops in the field. It is said that this offering is meant for
an alien non-Bodo ('harsha') god and hence the god being given this offering is even termed as ‘Harsha Mwdai’ or inferior god. This offering is made on a separate ‘Lai’ (share) placed alongside the ‘Bathou Than’. It is noticeable that to perform this offering a non-Bodo ‘Oja’ is required and the Bodo ‘Oja’ never performs this offering.

It may be mentioned that the Bodos do not consider the Khatrigasa and the Domashi as parts of Bwishagu. On the contrary, the Assamese considers ‘Kati Bihu’ and ‘Magh Bihu’ which happen to coincide with the above two, as a part of Bihu festival. But the only truth remains that all of them have relation to cropping or agricultural life of the population. Khatrigasa is lighted up when planting paddy is over and growth is in full swing. This festival is observed on the last day of Ashin (Ashwin) and the first day of Kathik (Kartik) months of the Bodo calendar which incidentally coincide with the Bengali and Assamese Calendars. The Domashi is celebrated when harvesting is over. But Bwishagu is enjoyed before people go again to the field for cropping. The last one, the ‘Rongjali Biwshagu’ may be explained as a new year festival, rather than an agricultural festival, as it is celebrated on the advent of the new year and even when the time for agriculture is more than a month apart.

Thus, Domashi is another favourite festival of the Bodos. It is celebrated on the first day of Magh month. As harvest is over, the people indulge into marry making by preparing edible rice item and offering them to others. Cows and buffalos are given rounded marks by black ashes through applying by bamboo nods, so that they are nor missed while going for celebration to relatives house.

Deowl used to be another favourite festival among the Bodos of
Lower Assam, specially of former Goalpara District. It is not a traditional festival, but none can say firmly when this Hindu festival percolated into the Bodo society of Lower Assam. Anyway, proverbs goes that Jaoliya Dewan, a Bodo Zamindar of Bhutanese King, indulged into the “Dolyatra Puja” of the Hindu Bengalis, wishing welfare of the subjects of his domain. A big festival of the sort used to be celebrated at Gilaguri village near Dotma of present Kokrajhar District. Nowadays, of course, the Bodos are taking active interest in every Hindu festival celebrated in the neighbouring towns and localities.

RELIGION:

The Bodos have their own religion. It is known as Bathou religion. This religion has the conception of the Supreme God, ‘Bathou’. The followers of this religion use to lead their life following the principles of “Five Bads” or five social laws and hence they are called as Bad+yari > Badoyari > Bathouyari. And the religion followed by them has come to be known as the ‘Bathou’.

But many enlightened thinkers like Rev. Sidney Endle, had been mistaking the Bodos to be animistic, that is, without a religion. In this context, opinion of Dr. P.C. Bhattacharya is enough to prove that the Bodos have their own religion. He writes, “They are worshippers of ‘Bathou’, the Supreme God. They have other Gods and Goddesses. They believe in ghosts and spirits also. But the conception of Supreme God is predominantly remarkable.”

As said by Dr. Bhattacharya, the Bodos believe in other Gods and Goddesses. They have altogether 18 other Gods and Goddesses, among them Rajphuthur, Rajkhandra, Mainao Buri, Khwila, Bwrliburi, Agrang, Laokhar Mwdai,, etc. are predominant.
The Supreme God Bathou is placed on an altar called “Bathou Than”, in the middle of which a ‘Shijou’ (Euphorbia nerifolia) tree is planted. In the altar, alongside the Shijou, a few other like Thulungshi, Jatrashi, etc. are also planted. In fact, the ‘Shijou’ plant is the sign of the invisible Supreme God, Bathou. The Almighty is invisible and is believed to appear before the believers in the form of the Shijou plant.

The altar of Bathou is encircled with a bamboo wall having 18 polls. The rounding fences should be of five folds. This is called ‘Bandwba Bathou’. Thus the Bodo faiths and beliefs have eternal relations with the number five.

“Bathouni bandwa bandwba,
Shijouni siriya siriba,
Sipphungni goronga gorongba,
Thaigir bikhonga khongba,
Bodo bwraini raoabw phongba.”

That is, the altar of the Bathou has five bandw (folds), the ‘Shijou’ plant bears five siri (rib), Siphung (flute) has five holes (‘swars’), the Thaigir (‘Outenga’ ) has five lobes, and in the same way, the words of Bodo elders are five in number.

Thus going by this sayings, many a Bodos try to relate the concept of Bathou to ‘Panch Tatva’ as the congregation of five main elements – “Panchabhuts”, i.e., Air, Water, Sun, Earth and Sky. But nowadays this explanation of Bathou is discarded.

The Kherai and Marai festivals have inseparable relation to the Bathou worship. The two are too necessary celebrations of the Bathou
religion. To conduct the rites and rituals of the Bathou religion, there should be a male oracle “Oja” and a female oracle ‘Doudini’. The ‘Oja’ recites the ‘mwnthwr’ (Mantra) during the Puja and the ‘Doudini’ manifests the supreme God in herself and prophecies the forthcoming misfortunes of the followers.

Five “Bad” and its Significance:

There is a legend about how the five Bads came into being in the Bodo society. Once upon a time, there was a youth called Sandw Baodia in a village. He was an orphan and lived a life lonely by rearing a garden of fruits. He used to go to the forests during daytime and back home in the evening.

There were two sisters – Āshagi and Bwishagi in the village. The both were growing young girls and were restive. They found ripe fruits in the garden of Sandw Baodia and planned to steal them. While Sandw was out of station during the day, they used to come to his garden and eat up all ripe fruits. After a few days, Sandw Baodia noticed that his garden fruits are being stolen by someone. As he could not stay home during daytime and guard his garden, he left home bearing ‘Mwnthwr Ban’ (‘mantra’) around the garden.

In the noon, both the sisters – Ashagi and Bwishagi came to steal fruits. But they were caught in the cage built by Sandw Baodia’s Mantra Ban. Despite their best efforts, the two sisters could not get out of it. While back home in the evening, Sandw found both the sisters in cage. He resented his fault of catching unmarried girls in cage. Finding no other way, he freed the two sisters handling them out of the cage.

But after a few days, crows began to flew crying over the village warning of some social fault. The Ganibrai called a public meeting and...
I took statements. Sandw Baodia admitted his fault. The villagers could not decide the case, as his offence could not be fitted into any existing social codes. Then they invited Mwnsingsing Bwrai, the elderly God, from the heaven. He came climbing down a golden ladder and helped to adjudicate the case. The meeting continued for seven days and gave to the Bodos the five Bads for social adjudication.

EDIBLE SWEETS:

A few marvelous and peculiar edible sweets item are prepared Bodo housewives. The Bodos have their own peculiar food habits. Their prepared edible sweets are peculiar to the crops grown by the Bodos and their agrarian life, prepared whatever available from the crops.

*Phitha, enthao, laru, babrikhob, sibing sereb, sobai gwran, sourai* etc. are few edible sweets item prepared in the Bodo families during festival and in normal days. *Phitha* is an item prepared two or three layers of grinned seasum in between the semi-round lobe of rice powder. *Enthao* is prepared by inserting a layer of seasum mixed with “gur” in between two flat layers of the rice powder, semi-round flat moon in size. *Laru/Babrikhob* is a small flat roundish but a little heavy grinned powder rice by soaking into the boiled oil. The *Sourai* is another item prepared from ‘maibra’ rice. It is prepared from maibra rice wetting for the whole night, by drying on Korai in the oven. *Sobai Gwran* is prepared by frying dry *maibra/matha* rice on oven. *Sibing Sereb* is prepared by mixing fried seasum with little gur.

The above edible sweets are found in some cases resemble the ones prepared by the neighbouring Assamese people. But they eventually vary in quality and taste. The ones prepared by the Bodos are certainly more delicious and tasteful.

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Above are the edible prepared from rice and some of complementary things. They can prepare curd, prickles, etc. as well.

**BODOS IN THE PRESENT AGE:**

In the threshold of the New Millennium and the present 21st Century the Bodos are at a critical juncture. By this time, the Bodos have attained a magnitude of national development in terms of ethnic identity, political consciousness, cultural development, flourish of language and literature, social emancipation, economic progress and assertion as a people. The multitudes of such developments have helped the Bodos to occupy a respectful place in the comity of world people.

The Bodos are now, so to say, a people with sound standing. They now can claim for a respectful position in the milieu of world people. Now they are in a comfortable number of populations, spreading far and wide. They have their own identity in sound footing. They have attained stability in respect of populations and social standing. Their economic progress is satisfactory and their prospect for future development is almost assured.

Bodos are now a people known throughout the World. The vigorous mass-movement since 1987 under the leadership of All Bodo Students' Union has informed the World about the existence of this group of people on Earth. The news media world over took pain to publish news reports about the Bodo mass movement for a separate State under the leadership of a students organisation. Detailed reports about the sorrowful events of heinous crime committed by the Police and Para-Military personnel, mass arrest of agitating Bodo people, imprisonment and inhuman torture inside the jail, destruction household properties during the village raids, poisoning of wells and food-stuff during the village raids perpetrated
under the patronage of the State Machinery all got featured under those news items. Some foreign audio-visual media featured documentary films on the Bodo Movement and remarkable happenings therein. These all helped the Bodos get wide mass publicity throughout the World.

The All Bodo Students Union, the organisation spearheading the mass movement for separate State, sent in September, 1989 a detailed report about the violation of human rights upon the Bodo people by Assam Government to the Amnesty International, the famous Human Rights Organisation based in London. The All Cachar-Karimganj Students Association helped the ABSU in the task and also signed the report.

The Bodos possess inborn genius in games and sports. May be it is due to the fact that Bodos were a martial and warrior race in the past. So long, it is alleged, the Bodos did not get adequate attention and scope from the end of the Assam Government. Rather a continuous attempt to suppress the growing inherent talent of Bodos in the domain of sports. After the creation of Bodoland Autonomous Council the Bodos got scope for separate representation in the national events of games and sports. It was seen that since then the Bodos could make a remarkable progress in the national events of sports. Many Bodo athletes could join the various national events by representing Bodoland Autonomous Council and could carry winning medals. The Bodoland Autonomous Council could earn name and fame by such winning spree of the athletes whom it sponsored for representing it. In many events, especially in martial art and run the Bodo inmates could carry winning medals by their own merit and genius, with feeble sponsorship of the newly found Bodoland Autonomous Council.
The Bodo Language has seen a pace of miraculous development. Within a comparatively short span of eighty years the language could attain a height of vertical development. The fact remains that actual attempt to create literature in Bodo was made only from 1920s and the language was formally introduced as medium of instruction in 1963 only. Yet the Bodo could grow and got spread as spoken language far and wide and developed into an Associate Official Language in 1984. Bodo is now medium of instruction upto Secondary Education, offered as Modern Indian Language in colleges of Gauhati University, North Eastern Hills University of Shilong and Dibrugarh University.

Now, under the relentless effort of the Bodo Sahitya Sabha, the Central Government is paying attention towards the Bodo Language. The Union Government is sponsoring seminars on Bodo Language and trying to evolve a scientific Bodo Language capable to be used in official works. For that, the Union Human Resources Development Ministry is sponsoring seminars to compile official terminology in Bodo. Along with this Union Ministry is extending its helping hand towards securing recognition for Bodo Sahitya Academy, which is a prerequisite for a language to be included in the Eight Schedule of the Constitution as Regional Language. It may be mentioned that inclusion of Bodo in the Eight Schedule of the Constitution is a longstanding demand of the Bodos. Of late, the Central Government has arranged for inclusion of Bodo “Sahitya Chaman Award”. Such an initiative from the end of the Central Government has led the Bodo towards inclusion in the Eight Schedule of the Constitution and consequently had been recognized as one of the Regional Language of the land.

As ethnic group, the Bodos are now a people known far and wide.
The creation of the Bodoland Autonomous Council as a political arrangement for the Bodos has enhanced the prestige of the Bodos as a separate people. The Bodos, with this maximum autonomy in political, financial and administrative spheres can grow, if they want, to a developed position, at least socially and economically. As a result of relentless efforts from the end of the Bodo Organisation and by dint of Centre's initiative Bodo could be included in the Eight Schedule of the Constitution, the Bodos certainly can hope to grow to a fully developed people.

Politically, the Bodos now can claim a much developed entity. They are now politically much conscious, assertive on many counts and expert in political manipulation. The leading of the mass movement on political demand of a separate State by a Student Organisation – All Bodo Students' Union itself is a rare example. Now it is interesting to note that the ABSU is in the forefront of Bodo Nationalistic Politics and its whims prevails everywhere. It is the front-runner of power in the sphere of Bodo politics and organisations are to go by its words. It is worth to mention that owing to the wave of nationalistic sentiments created in the Bodo minds, it could participate in active politics without any resistance from mainstream political parties of Bodos by sponsoring independent candidates. In this process, it could return nine MLAs and one MP in 1991 and ten MLAs in 2001. In between, the ABSU could return two MLAs in 1996 and one M.P. in 1998 and 1999 respectively. In 2002 the ABSU could return its outgoing President Urkhao Gwra Brahma to Rajya Sabha following the tactics of electoral alliance with the ruling AGP in the State and BJP in the Centre. At present, ABSU has 10 MLAs and two M.P. at its disposal to get its political will carried out as and when it requires.
The period following the formation of the Bodoland Autonomous Council has witnessed a remarkable development in the Bodo areas of the State. Various Government Buildings, Roads and Bridges those got damaged during the Bodoland Movement already got repaired and many roads and streets have been developed. The long shattered school buildings have been built a new and many new health center have been created. In the sphere of employment now many Bodo youth could secure Govt Job, which is now under disposal of the Bodoland Autonomous Council. In the field of business and industries many entrepreneurs could start new ventures with financial assistance from the BAC.

Socially, Bodos now have been recognised as an advanced community. Many famous journalists from reputed national media who visited the Bodo area during the movement period, were of the opinion that enlisting Bodos as Scheduled Tribe in the Constitution is a mistake. Naming the Bodos as Tribe is misnomer and instead it is found that they are much more advanced than many other group of people who are known to be advanced. Most of them got surprised to see that Bodo households have provisions for separate houses for abode, store, kitchen, cowshed, goat shed, pig shed, logshed, poultry, duckery, retiring room and other purposes. The cowshed and pig shed are located far away from the main house so as to avoid bad smells and nasty scenes. Likewise, poultry shed, goat shed, duckery shed though kept alongside the main compound of the household, are located below the barn or in separate house little away from the main house. Also, the kitchen is located near to the well so as to facilitate for easy access of water for cooking purposes. Viewing from all these points, the visiting journalists were of the opinion that the Bodo people possess a high sense of hygiene. Some of them go the extent of
opinion that no group of people in India are found with such a high hygienic sense.

Over and above, it may well be said that now Bodos are an advanced people with intense social and political consciousness accompanied by a sound economic footing. Ethnically they have remained much assertive and racially they have much emboldened. Besides, already they possess sound historical background and a stable culture providing distinct identity. It can be well be hoped that by the turn of next two decades, the Bodos will turn to a fully developed people.

**ASPIRATION FOR A SEPARATE STATE:**

The above state of thing for the Bodo people have left them much elated and now they aspire a separate State under the Indian Union with a view to help them to get recognition as a distinct nationality as per the ongoing concept of “One People, One State”. For that, they are carrying out a domestic mass movement till now since late 1960s.

The historic 1993 ‘BODO ACCORD’ have failed to satisfy the aspiration of the Bodo people for a separate political arrangement for them. To be frank, the ABSU had accepted the Bodoland Autonomous Council on experimental basis only. The scheduled destination still remained the Separate Bodoland State which is evident form the declaration of Mr. Sansuma Khungquirrel Bwiswmuthiary, the then Present of ABSU and first signatory of the Bodo Accord that “The Accord is a milestone towards a full pledged Bodoland State”. After a short experiment of two years only, the ABSU has already declared Bodo Accord a failure and reiterated the demand of a Separate Bodoland State.

At present, though the Bodo Accord has been declared a dead letter by the ABSU signatory o the Accord, its outcome Bodoland Autonomous
Council is still functioning. It is delivering the amount, which are being released by the State Government. The amount of financial allocations so released has been criticised by many on the ground that whatever amount is being released is quite meager ones and can never fulfill the need of the time. Whatever meager amounts are allocated under State’s budgetary heads are never released in full. The amounts are released in parts and with a long gap sometimes of some four years. A huge amount is still pending release under many budgetary heads since creation of the Bodoland Autonomous Council.

For the above reasons, the present arrangement of Bodoland Autonomous Council has become unacceptable lot for the Bodo people. Rejecting the concept of Autonomous Council, the Bodos are now demanding back a full pledged Bodoland State. For what, they are again on warpath. The ABSU have already resumed their mass movement for a Separate State. Very recently, a new BODO ACCORD has been signed between the Centre, State Government of Assam and the Bodo Liberation Tiger (BLT) which has facilitated constitution of the Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC). Experiment is going on to see whether the BTC can fulfill the political aspirations of the Bodos in absence of a separate State. Thus the aspiration of the Bodo people for a Separate Bodoland State still remains, though dormant for the time being.

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9. AN ACCOUNT BY COL. L. W. SHAKESPEAR.
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