

# Weaving Songs of the Bodos: A Study

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**Abstract:** Rev. Sidney Endle opines that the origin of the Kachari race is still very largely a matter of conjecture and inference, in the absence of anything entitled to be regarded as authentic history. G. A. Grierson calls them Bara, Boro or Plains Kachari. S.K. Chatterjee regards the Boros as the most important Indo-Mongoloid people in Eastern India.

The Boros or Kacharis or Bodos are belong to Sino Tibetan language family. The Bodos have rich work culture since immemorial. The Bodo women are very expert weaver. Weaving is an integral part of their own cultural heritage. At the time of weaving, they sing a lot of songs from their inner heart. The songs are closely related to weaver's Bodo women. In this paper, it is going to explore.

**Keywords:** Bodo women, weaving, folk songs.

## 1.0 Introduction:

The Bodos are one of the earliest ethnic groups among the Indo-Mongoloid origin of the Tibeto-Burmese Language family. Bodos are considered to be culturally and linguistically rich ethnic group of the North East India. They have rich folklore which is the foundation of Bodo literature, usually in the field of songs. Bodos are basically agrarian society. Agriculture is the me main livelihood. As they mostly agrarian background the Bodo women are also work almost equal to their counterpart. Apart from they weave cloths for their household uses.

The traditional religion of the Bodos is known as *Bathou*. 'Ba' means 'five', 'thou' means 'depth', i.e. the philosophy of five depths. These five philosophies of Bathou religion is earth (*ha*), water (*dwi*), wind (*bar*), fire (*or*) and sky (*okhrang*). *Bathou* is based on the five philosophy or the five principles. The five spiritual elements are *ong*, *hring*, *khling*, *fwth* and *che*. These are sounds for the worships of *Bathou*. The counting system also in earlier Bodo society it is five, i.e. *mwnse*, *mwnnwi*, *mwntham*, *mwnbrwi*, *mwnba*. The sayings of The *Bathou* is-

## Bodo:

*Thaigirni khonga khongba*  
*Sijouni siria siriba*  
*Sifungni gudunga dungba*  
*Bathouni bandwya bandwba*  
*Boro bwraini acharabw mwnba.*<sup>1</sup>

## English rendering:

The delleniens indica fruits has five rinds  
 The Sijou tree (*Euphorbia splendens*) has five ridges  
 The Sifung (Bodo flute) has five holes  
 The Bathou has five knots  
 Bodo old man has five moral words (custom).

The social structure of the Bodos are patriarchal, though a few matriarchal systems also there. They are very simple. They are like to live nearby river bank and amongst the green nature surrounding by them.

## 1.1 Objectives of the study:

The main objectives of the study are-

- i. To highlight about the Bodos.
- ii. To explore about the Bodo women
- iii. To explore about the weaving system of the Bodos and related folk songs on it.

## 1.2 Methodology:

Descriptive and observation method is applied here for the discussion.

## 2.0 Bodo women:

Bodo women have an important role in the Bodo society. They have strong physical structure and very hard worker. They can work more than other non-tribal women. From early morning to till night they have to work a lot of household works. For example- cleaning yard, caring their children, cooking, rice grinding, planting, guest reception as well take care all the members of the family. They have vast knowledge about the every household work. They are deeply involved in cultural practices, religious festivals and social ceremonies. Bodo society is generally patriarchal though the Bodo women play a crucial role in family management, for which it is often considered as 'mainao' (goddess of wealth). They are also participating in political and social movements. Pramila Rani Brahma, Rekha Rani Das Baro, Kamali Basumatary, Supriya Rani Brahma, Malati Rani Narzary, Pratibha Brahma, Bina Goyary, Narayani Basumatary are the prominent in this area. A few women are gradually advancing in business as well as entrepreneurship. These are good sign for the Bodo women. There are some national and international sports personality also.

A few higher educated women are working in various sector, i.e. doctor, engineer, professor, teacher, nurse, police, designer and some are administrative area. Educationally they are growing gradually. Earlier there were a minimum number of educated Bodo women, but now it is increasing day by day.

## 3.0 Weaving:

Weaving is a significant part of Bodo culture. The Bodo women have a key role in weaving. Weaving is one of the household industries of the Bodos. They use weaving or handlooms to create intricate designs and patterns on their fabrics, often drawing inspiration from nature. They use of traditional loom for weave the cloths. The art of weaving is passed down through generations, with women often bearing from their mothers or grandmothers or aunties. They produced their yarn from the cocoons, Eri (indi) or muga. And the cocoons are reared by the Bodo women. For yarn, they cultivated cotton cultivation also. Dyeing knowledge, they have also. Traditionally they dyed the yarn as per their needy basis. Most of The Bodo women weave on throw-shuttle looms. Their looms are very simple.

Every Bodo women are very expert to weave. There is a says that - women if she does not know the weave then she can't be eligible for marry. And calling her as does not know nothing (*auluri*). Therefore, all the guardians, generally elder women are very careful to teach the technique of weaving to their girl child from their childhood.

The main dresses of the Bodos are *dokhona*, *gamsa*, *fashra* or *jwmgra* or *sadri*, *aronai*, *fali*, *indi zi (chi)*, *sima zi*, *dril* etc.

Earlier, they use to weave for household uses only. Now They are becoming business purposes also. Bodo women are expert in rearing the 'Endi Emphou' (eri worm) and *Muga-latha* (muga worm) and find out threads from them.<sup>2</sup> All the materials required for weaving are gathered by the womenfolk, who turned them into an impressive fabrics.

Weavieng has always been considered as a dignified work of the Bodo women. But unfortunately in the influence of modern it is gradually decreasing. But recently after getting GI tag on various Bodo attires slight demand is becoming. This a good sign for Bodo traditional cloths as well as systems traditional weaving systems.

## 3.1 Folk song:

Folk song which is called in Bodo as 'Khuga methai' or 'Subung methai'. The folk songs are also called songs of the soil. These folk songs are closely related with village folk. There are various types of folk songs, but in this paper the weaving related folk songs have taken.

### Bodo:

*Dehai lwgw bima burwini*  
*Danai lunai agor ernaikhou swlwngdini*  
*Sikhiri bidwi swbnai*  
*Okhrangao dao birnai*  
*Agor erwi boinibw sigangao*  
*Khinthani lwgw khinthani*<sup>3</sup>

### English rendering:

Come friend  
 Let us weave the butterfly  
 And to make the design  
 Of our mother old  
 Let us weave the butterfly  
 That gathers floral honey sweet  
 Let us weave the flying butterfly  
 On our cloth and display to all.

Bodo women are very expert weavers. They are well versed in weaving their dreams through their looms. The song expresses the quality and fineness of the yarn, the design woven and the standard of cloth in the process of production.<sup>4</sup> It is related to the weaving trade gives a picture of the weaving skill of Bodo Women.

Here is a song expresses the sentiment of a weaver who expresses her feelings of unrequited love, but she has the satisfaction in that she has kept the 'Fali' (a kind of scarf) ready for her beloved.

**Bodo:**

*Hangma thabai hangma thabai ada  
Zamphwi gurini Sayaram mandar bibar  
Deglai bwisaguao hangma hangsani  
Fali Gangse khounw langfwidw.<sup>5</sup>*

**English rendering:**

Afflicted and over burdened with sorrow I am  
O dear, Sayaram, red like moder flower  
Of the village near the pond  
Please come and take the  
Scarf woven with sorrow  
Even though I  
Don't have the blessings of your love.

**4.0 Findings:**

The following are the findings of this discussion:

- i. Bodo women are physically very strong and hard worker.
- ii. Weaving is traditionally practiced by the Bodo women in their simple loom.
- iii. Bodo women are very expert weavers.
- iv. Weaving is so closely related to the life and thought of the Bodo people that they express their deepest feelings through folk songs.
- v. These folk songs are reflects the strong tradition of weaving.
- vi. Some folksongs relating to weaving have already been lost.

**5.0 Conclusion:**

Weaving is very closely related to the life and thoughts of the Bodo people, generally of the women that they express their deepest feelings of heart through folksongs. There are various types of spinning and weaving folk songs. Through these songs their tradition reflects very strongly. However, the coming generation is reluctant to sing these songs. Some folk songs related to weaving have already been lost which were very popular in earlier age. Therefore, for the preserve these work or songs it is need to be digitalized. without documentation the valuable folk songs of the Bodo weaving system will be disappear. Therefore, everybody should very conscious about on it which is the heart and soul of the Bodo weaving system.

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