

The Inter-Relation Of Dress And Culture In Bodo Society

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ABSTRACT: *Dress and culture is play very important role in Bodo society. From the primitive age to modern, the traditional dresses and ornaments have played a very important role in molding the socio-cultural life of the Bodos. They have their own culture, tradition, belief and customs, etc. The women still wear their traditional dress like- Dokhna, Gamacha, Jwmgra Phali, Sadri and Aronai. The Bodo people weave traditional hand woven dresses such as Dokhna, Sadri, Gamsa and Aronai. The Bodo women are bestowed with expertise in weaving their own traditional dresses. The Bodo women wear Dokhna and Sadri, while men wear Gamsa and Aronai.*

Key words:- *Dokhna, Jwmgra Aronai khorom, ficha, Thaosi, matha, bwirathi, Agor, Ishan, Jhapkring, Pulkhuri, mwsanai*

INTRODUCTION

The Bodo people:

The earlier inhabitants of Assam were probably the various sub branches of great Tibeto-Barman group of Indo-Chinese family, whose core is said to have been along the upper courses of Yangtse-Kiang and Hawang-Ho. The Bodo or the Plain Kocharis, Chutia, Dimasa, Hill Kochari, Mech, Rabha, Garos, Miris, Abors, Mishimis, Moran, Bora hi and other similar population elements in the states are the sub-branches of Tibeto-Barman. They are unevenly distributed over Assam. The Bodos, Mech and Rabhas are majority in Kokrajhar, Goalpara Dhubri, and Northern part of Kamrup District of Assam.

The Bodos are a race of Mongolian people who are described to be the inhabitants of a country, North of Himalaya and west of the china. This land is known as the Bod. The Bod is supposed to mean a homeland. The inhabitants of Bod country were known as the Bodo-Ficha or Bodocha or Bodosa (Bod means land and Ficha or cha means children, hence children of the Bod country). In course of time they came to be known as simply Boddo-Bodo-Boro¹.

‘The Bodos indigenous includes a large group of people who are the speakers of the Tibeto- Barman Language family mostly inhabitants of the North Bengal, Assam and Burma. They are the Bodos or Boros of the Brahmaputra valley, Meches of lower Assam and west Bengal, Rabhas, Garos, Dimasa and Kocharis of Cachar district, Trpura, Lalung, Sonowals Hajangs, Mishings, Deuris, Moran, Chutia and etc².

The Bodos constitute a very important section of different groups and races in Assam with their distinct culture and linguistic traits. The Bodos are also indentified as the Kiratas. From the primitive age to modern, the traditional dresses and ornaments have played a very important role in molding the socio-cultural life of the Bodos. Linguistically, the Bodo language belongs to Sino-Tibetans language family. They are characteristically Mongoloids in appearances such as the strong chick bones, slit eye, slight growth of hair in the body and scant beard with distinct food habits and life style.

Social/Ethnic classification:

Mongoloid > Tibeto Barman > Bodo > Kochari > Chutia > Moran > Rabhas > Miri > Dimasa.

The Boros are one of the composite parts of the greater Assamese society and form a major tribe of Assam. Suniti Kr. Chatterjee writes ‘the Bodos who spread over the whole Brahmaputra valley and North Bengal as well as East Bengal forming a solid block in eastern India and they form one of the main bases of the present day of population tract. Judging from the wide range extension of their culture, the Bodos appear to have settled over the entire Brahmaputra valley and extended into North Bengal’³.

The Bodos also known as the Boro is one of the major communities of Assam belonging to Indo-Mongoloid ethnic group of Tibeto-Barman language family. The generic name of the Bodo was first given by Hudgson. The Mech or the Kocharies called themselves as the Bodo or the Boro. The neighbouring Assamese speakers call these people and their speech as Kochari or

Kosari. The Bodos who lived in Jalpaiguri district of West Bengal are known to their neighbours as Mech. 'The term 'Mech' is a corruption of the term 'Mleccha'⁴.

The Bodos have their own language and literature, which are known as the Boro language and literature. The women still wear their traditional dress like- *Dokhna*, *Gamacha*, *Jwmgra Phali*, *Sadri* and *Aronai*. They have their own culture, tradition, belief and customs, etc.

Cultural Heritage of the Bodos:

The Bodo people have affluent cultural inheritance since early civilization. The Bodo culture and tradition are the manuscript of the Bodo nature, habits, character and daily lifestyle. A Community cannot be identified themselves without a language and culture. It is a matter of great regret that though the Bodos have rich cultural heritage such as dress, ornaments, dances and food habits, etc. but it could not be expressed proportionately in both inside and outside of the state. The Bodos are losing their own identity due to cultural globalization.

The Bodo people weave traditional hand woven dresses such as *Dokhna*, *Sadri*, *Gamsa* and *Aronai*. The Bodo women are bestowed with expertise in weaving their own traditional dresses. The Bodo women wear *Dokhna* and *Sadri*, while men wear *Gamsa* and *Aronai*. The women do not fond of heavy ornaments, but they wear light ornaments mostly like necklace, bracelets, ear ring and nose ring made of gold and silver. The Bodo men of today do not use any kind of ornaments but some of the traditional Bodos do.

The study of human being involves the study of cultures. It records the delicate contour of human emotions. There are many ways to express one's own culture which includes art, music, dress, architecture, literature, science & technology, philosophy, religion, and a millions of things. The word culture is intractably related to all the branches of knowledge. In our day to day life also we speak about it, like family culture, study culture, devotional culture, food culture, religious culture and spiritual culture, etc., but the present study intends to deal with the culture relating to social life that throws light on the traditional dresses and ornaments of the Bodos.

The traditional Bodo culture which was introvert in nature came under external impact through historical contact and cultural domination of the great Indian tradition and inclined towards common cultural consciousness that has been formed among the Hindus of the sub-continent.

The process of conversion into different cultures of the Indians like dresses, ornaments food habits, westernization, etc. brought many reforms in the traditional Bodo society. Changes were brought in economic, organization, rites, ritual and customs, etc. of the Bodos. These changes and reforms have brought upward social mobility among the Bodos.

The interlacement of two series of threads is termed as weaving by the Bodo woman and it creates beautiful ornamental fabrics on looms applying their own techniques and design. Since time immemorial this craft has been practiced by the Bodo woman, meeting the necessities of herself and her family members. The art of weaving is inherited from generation to generation and it plays an important role in the socio-economic life of the Bodo people.

Dresses and ornaments of the Bodos are the symbol of their traditional art and culture living in the society. Most of the tribes belonging to the Mongolian races in the North Eastern Region of India deserve the same character of dresses and ornaments. Their arts of such dresses and ornaments are intrinsic reflections of the nature within which they are shaped and molded.

They weave different kinds of clothes like - *Dokhna*, women dress for covering the whole Body, *Jwmgra* or *Chadar* or *Orna* (scarf of women), *Gamsa* clothe for covering the lower part of the body of man. Traditionally the Bodo man folk used to wear male garment called *Gamsa* to cover the body from waist down to the knee. Previously the Bodo old man used to wear wooden footwear known as *khrom*. There was no use of shirt in the past days. They only used a type of clothe known as *Jwmgra* made of *Eri* trade and a small cloth on the shoulder during the winter and summer season respectively. But now a day, they put on modern dresses available in the market.

The dresses of Bodo women are distinguishable feature of the Bodo culture. The Bodo woman is identified by her dress. The Bodo women wear *Dokhna* or *Dokhona* covering the body from the chest down to the ankle. Its length and breadth is made in such a way that it can be tied one round at a time in the waist. The *Dokhna* is made of varied colours and *Agor* or *phul*. The *Dokhna* without *Agor* or *phul* is called *Salamatha* or *Matha*. The *Dokhna Thaosi* (pure *Dokhona*) is generally used as bridal attire, the *Bwirathi* (women receptionist of bride and bridegroom in Bodo marriage). Now-a-days the Bodo women wear blouse to cover her upper body and adorns with various colours *Jwmgra* (scarf) with full of *Agor* (designs). The *Jwmgra* cover the upper portion of the body.

A species of various types of *Agor* (handy work designs) which bloom in the art of Bodo women costume are given below:

1. *Phareo Megon* (pigeon eye)
2. *Daorai mwkhreb* (winkle of peacock)
3. *Phul mwbla* (verities of bloomed flowers)
4. *Daosa mwkhreb* (winkle of chicken)
5. *Dingkhia Mohor* (fern design)
6. *Gangu Godo* (A design representing the shape of a kind of insect called mantis)
7. *Singri bibar* (A design representing the *singri bibar*)
8. *Bwigri bibar* (A design representing the flowers of plum)
9. *Gongar thaiship* (A design representing the fruit of *Nuni* tree)
10. *Thaigir Bibar* (A design representing wood apple flower)
11. *Gondola agor* (A design representing the insect of dragonfly)
12. *Khusli Denta* (A design representing the Spoon)
13. *Laosong Agor* (A design invented by a Bodo girl called *Laosong*)
14. *Mokhordoma Agor* (A design representing a litigation or zig zag)
15. *Bandhuras Agor* (A design first crafted by Bandhuras Kochari)
16. *Agor Gidit* (A design representing *Diamond* shape)
17. *Gorkha Gongbrwi Agor* (A design representing twill)
18. *Hajw Agor* (A design of Hills)
19. *Baksu Agor* (A design like a Box).

The favourite colours of the Bodos are generally *Gwmw* (Yellow), *Gwthang* (Green), and *Bathogang* (Colour of parrot's feathers). So, most popularly used words “*Gwmw-Gwthang-Bathaogang*” is the representation of it. Now-a-days they do not want to stick in old styles and fashion. They use various types of treads or yarns suited for them for *Dokhna*.

Traditional dresses and ornaments of the Bodos are symbol of creativity and identity. They are unique in designs, style and attractiveness. The Bodo have rich cultural heritage since early civilization. The unique dress and ornaments are integral part of the Bodo culture. These traditional dresses and ornaments of the Bodos are conveying the culture and tradition from one generation to next generation. The Bodo women are expert in rearing the *Endhi Emhou* and *Muga latha*. The arts of weaving are inherited from generation to generation and it also plays an

important role in socio-economic life of the Bodo people. The Bodo weavers are charmed by the scenic beauty of the nature and express their pleasure and bliss by setting *agors* (designs) of leaves, flowers, trees and hills etc. Such dress and ornaments are intrinsic reflections of nature within which are shaped and molded. The women are expert in weaving activities in their *Ishan* (loom). The Bodo used varied types of ornaments for nose, ears, neck and hands etc. like *phulkhuri*, *japkhiring*, *Dul boula*, etc. This traditional attire is used by specific individual for specific occasion.

The Dress Use in Bodo Dance :

The Dance is called '*Mwsanai*' in the Bodos. The word '*Mwsanai*' is derived from *Mwdwm* + *sanai* = *Mwsanai*. The *Mwdwm* means body and *sanai* means to be twisted in English. Thus the word *Mwsanai* means the twisting of body in motions and waves. The Bodo dances are exceptional and scientifically set to characteristics choreographically forms and rhythmic patterns. The Bodo dances are inherited from one generation to another since immemorial

a) The *Haba Janai Mwsanai*:

This class of dance in the Bodo means dance in marriage. The '*Haba*' means 'marriage' or work while *Janai* means to eat or to be. So, the word *Habajanai Mwsanai* bears the meaning of the Bodo dance associated with marriage ceremony. This class of dance is consisted of i) *Habajanai* ii) *Bwirathi Dor Khengnai* iii) *Bwirathi Kaojrum chanai* iv) *Barlanpha mwsanai* and v) *Bangsial or Sifung Dariya mwsanai*. The *Haba janai Mwsanai* is a natural talent of the Bodo people acquired from the nature who plays an important role in socio-cultural life of the Bodos.

b) The *Bagurumba* dance:

It is the most beautiful and attractive dance of the Bodos associated with merry making and gossips exclusively by the fair sex. Taking both the ends of the hand woven colourful scarf called *Rege-Regang* spread around the neck in their hands, the dancers move like flying butterflies. The dancer's steps forward with alternate foot and the dance begins in horizontal lines, takes circular patterns with rising tempo.

The Dresses:

- a) *Gwmw gabni Dokhna zwng Agor Gubwi* (yellow colour of *Dokhna* with embroidery).
- c) *Gwja gabni fahar agor gwnang fasra* (Red colour scarf with hill embroidery)
- d) *Gwja gabni blouse* (Red colour blouse)

- e) Two *Aronai* (scarf)
- f) *Khwmayao khithlang Khatobnai* (hair remain free and looms)
- g) *Kwmayao Kheru* (Ear ring)

c) The *Bwirathi Goi rannai mwsanai* :

In Bodo society there is a dance that performed by the *Bwirathi* in distribution of betel nut during the wedding ceremony. It is called The *Bwirathi Goi rannai mwsanai* . Now-a-days this dance is performed on the stage.

d) The *Raijw Janai Mwsanai*:

The ways of daily social life of the Bodos are the root causes of these types of dance. The *Raijw* means society, the state or country, the people and *Janai* means “to eat’ or to be”. Therefore “*Raijw janai mwsanai*” means a type of Bodo dance which is based upon their daily life style.

The Dresses and Ornaments use during *Na gurnai Mwsanai*:

1. *Gwmw gabni Dokhna* (yellow colour of *Dokhna*).
2. *Gwja gabni blouse* (Red colour Blouse)
3. *Gangnwi gabni Arw Gwza gabni Aronai* (Green colour and Red colour two *Aronai*)
4. *Gwja gabni pwtha* (Red colour tip)
5. *Gwdwnayao Jinjiri* (Neck-Chain)
6. *Kwmayao Kheru* (Ear ring)
7. *Akhayao Ashan* (Hand Bangles)
8. *Gongse Jekhai* (one Fishing net)
9. *Gongse Khobai* (A fishing basket)

The Use of Ornaments:

The Bodo used varied types of ornaments for nose, ears, neck and hands like - “*Phulkhuri*” *Japkhiring*”, *Dul*, “*Boula* (For upper ear), “*Phuti*’ (A design of flower attached to earlobe) etc.

The ornament of the nose is *Nakhaphul* (A hole is made on the skin of upper side of the nose for holding the *Nakhapul*), *Nolot* (Holding from the middle of two nostrils), *Buluki* (Nose pendent), etc.

The Bodo women wear ornaments in the neck also. The popular ornaments are:

1. *Chandra Har* (A heavy necklace)

2. *Bisa Har* (A Necklace).
3. *Thanka Siri* (A round neck ornament).

The popular ornaments of the hands are “*Ashan*” (bangles) both big and small. The small bangle is called “*Ashan Suri*” and big bangle is called “*Ashan Shankha*”. The dresses and ornaments of the Bodo men and women have changed except *Dokhna* and *Chadar or Orna* of Women. All the Bodo women still put on *Dokhna* and *Jwmgra or Orna* to symbolize their culture. The ornaments of ear, nose, neck, hair style, etc. are now modified with modern design accessories.

CONCLUSION:

Traditional dresses and ornaments of the Bodo, are the symbol of creativity and identity. They are unique in design, style and pattern. The unique dress and ornaments are integral part of Bodo culture unlike other communities in today’s modern society. The art of weaving beautiful ornamented and embroidered clothes have been perfected by the Bodo people.

Notes and References:

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