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## 8. A Study on The Socio-Cultural Lifestyles of Bodo Tribes of Assam

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**Abstract:**

*Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Tripura and Sikkim are eight states located in the Northeast of the country and hold special importance not only because of their exciting locations but also for their rich and unique cultures. These states have distinct cultures and multiple ethnic groups. The variety of languages and religious practices gives us a great example of unity in diversity. This article is a conceptual attempt to focus on one of the most lovable tribal communities of Assam "Bodo".*

**Keywords:**

*Ethnic, Tribe, Ethnolinguistic group, Festivals, Bagurumba, North-east.*

**Methodology:** *The study depends on secondary data. Those are collected from sources like books, journals, library and internet.*

### 8.1 Introduction:

Assam is a land of scenic beauty which yet has unexplored mountain ranges, evergreen forests, rare wildlife, mesh of rivers dominated by the Brahmaputra and Barak, expansive tea gardens, oilfields, varied fairs and festivals.

The state is situated in the heart of the north-east corner of Indian subcontinent. The area of Assam extends from latitude 24°10N to 27°58N and longitude 89°49E to 97°26E between the foothills of eastern Himalayas and the Patkai and Naga ranges. Assam has been the meeting ground of diverse ethnic and cultural groups. People from different backgrounds and traits have made the state their home. The ethnic groups of Assam are Bodos, Dimasas, Karbi, Thai-Ahom, Missing, Rabha, Deori and Tiwa.

The Bodo is the largest ethnolinguistic group in Assam. They are a part of the greater Bodo-kachari family of ethnolinguistic groups and spreads across north-east India. They are concentrated mainly in Bodoland autonomous region of Assam.

The true ethnic tribal community of north-western parts of Assam are Bodo tribe and the Kachari is the subunit of the Bodo. They are known as the earliest settlers in Assam. Bodos are the first to cultivate rice and rear silkworms. The most important and lovely thing about Bodos is that they are peace loving people and believes in rebirth.

There were times when Bodos were cut off due to geographical and weather conditions from other parts of the country and this was the main reason which led to lack of education and economy among them.

For this, Bodoland Movement was started under the leadership of Upendra Nath Brahma who is now known as the Father of Bodos. A Bodoland Territorial Council is formed to protect and preserve the rich culture, language and identity of Bodos. The 6th schedule of the Constitution of India has conferred Bodo community the status of plain tribe and Kokrajhar town is regarded as the hub of Bodo tribes.

### **8.2 Languages:**

Bodo people speak Bodo language and it is not same as the Assamese. Though many of them speak Assamese language. It is one of the official languages of Assam. The Bodo language has Tibeto-Burman origins. Nowadays, the Bodos have accepted the Devanagari language. They have a language of their own called Deodahi.

### **8.3 Culture of Bodo Tribe:**

Bodo community is known for their rich and diverse culture. The traditional Bodo culture is a part of the great Mongoloid culture. But with time, the changing trend of social outlook of the traditional Bodos can be visualized in the 20th century due to the close contact with different societies and cultures. In different times different changes are seen in the traditional institutions like religion, marriage, economy, social rules, customs and also in their social status, foods and dress habits and all the other aspects of life. Though the Bodos have come across a lot of changes and developments, but they do not forget their basic values, customs and identities.

Culture of Bodo tribe includes dancing, singing etc. The Dokhona is the traditional costume of Bodo women. Bodo dokhonas are very colourful. They are woven in all sorts of colors: blue, green, yellow, purple and orange. Then the Dokhonas are adorned with elaborate designs such as those of flowers, butterflies, hills, leaves. These designs are referred to as Agor in the local Bodo language. Weaving of Agor is very important part of being a woman in the Bodo culture. Like Dokhona, the traditional dress of Bodo men is Gamsa. This is quite similar to the Indian bathing towel called Gamchha. However, the Bodo men rarely wear the Gamsa nowadays as they have started wearing modern shirt and pant attire now.

### **8.4 Religion of The Bodos:**

Bathouism is the ancient religion of Bodos. This involves worshipping of forefathers and a Shijou tree. The Shijou tree is taken as the symbol of Bathou and worshipped. In addition to Bathouism, Bodo people have also been converted to Hinduism.

Majority of the Bodo people still follows Bathouism but in census, they are being classified as Hindus because their native religion has no official recognition under the Constitution of India.

### **8.5 Food Habits:**

Rice is the main food of Bodo people. Bodos eat boiled rice like anywhere else in India. They also used rice to make alcoholic drinks such as rice beer and wine. The rice wine is called Zu Mai. Apart from rice, there is a lot of non- vegetarian component in Bodo cuisine like fish, pork. They now usually prefer non vegetarian dishes. The main dishes are Oma Bedor, Onla and Narzi.

### **8.6 Occupation:**

Agriculture is the main occupation of Bodo people. They used to work in the field and sell those agricultural products in the market to earn their livelihood. Along with whole Indian communities even Bodo people have undergone different changes and taken up several occupations. Besides agricultural activities pig and poultry farming, silkworm rearing is a major occupation of Bodo tribe. One another important occupation of Bodo tribes are weaving. At a very young age, the Bodo girls learn the art of weaving.

Moreover, the Bodos are excellent bamboo craftsman and the Bodo tribal community has also developed craftsmanship in creating several products from things like bamboo. All the products that these tribes have created over the years have been the main force of enabling the Bodo tribes to reach to its zenith.

### **8.7 Dance and Music of Bodo People:**

The tradition dance of the Bodos is Bagurumba. Bagurumba is also called the butterfly dance. There is no specific time to perform this dance. Bagurumba dance is performed by bodo women. The women in Dokhona wear jewelry and Bindis and looks very stunning as they dance to the tunes of the Bagurumba song. While the women dance and sing, the men plays a variety of musical instruments like drums, violin and flutes.

### **8.8 Festivals:**

Festivals are the symbol of uniqueness and happiness of a community. All ethnic groups have their own distinct festivals which have unique features and values. Festivals constitute a significant part of the Bodo culture. Those are the religious and seasonal festivals and all are connected with agricultural practices. One of the most important and cherished festivals of this tribal group is 'Baishagu'. It is basically a springtime festival and is celebrated during mid-April. Among all the religious festivals, the Kheri puja is the greatest festivals of the Bodo people. It is a festival of hope and desire. The Bodos performs this puja before and after cultivation for the success in cultivation. The other festivals which Bodo people celebrates are Hapsa Hatarani, Awnkham, Janai and Domashi.

### **8.9 Conclusion:**

The Bodos are one of the most important tribes of Assam. They are considered as the earliest immigrants of Assam and this community plays a very important role in the culture and tradition of the state. The Bodos are peace loving people of Assam.

They are very easy, simple and straightforward type of people and are said to be the most culturally rich community of the state. Even at this age of modern globalization, the community is still success in keeping their own ethnic identity.

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