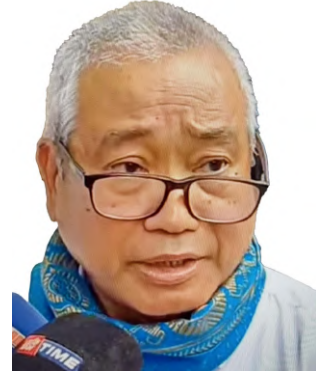


# The BDF लाइसि



Issue 1 | Vol 4 | Aug 2024

**Mr. Janak Lal Basumatary**, a former Indian Revenue Service (IRS) officer, and **his associates** had spearheaded and successfully challenged the legitimacy of the Scheduled Tribe (ST) certificate presented by Naba Kumar Sarania in Gauhati High Court. This ST certificate had enabled Mr. Sarania, a former ULFA commander, to contest and win the Member of Parliament (MP) seat in



the Lok Sabha elections of 2014 and 2019, twice. **After years of court appeals by Mr. Basumatary and his associates, coupled with significant public outcry, the Gauhati High Court ruled in favor of Mr. Basumatary.** Accordingly, Mr. Sarania's nomination papers filed at Kokrajhar District Election Officer for the 2024 Lok Sabha election were rejected. A big salute to Mr. Janak Lal Basumatary and his team.

**Inside:** There is something for everyone to read and learn about, including the status of the Boro (Bodo) language and literature. For instance, can we reclaim Boro place names? Do you remember Nileswar Brahma? Who was Renu Boro? Also included is an essay on the life and works of Shobha Brahma. Who is Prakash Basumatary? Have you heard of the Baokhungri Festival and the BERE, and their connection to the surrounding sacred ecosystem? What does 'Stay Hungry' mean to you? And much more.



## BORO DIASPORA FORUM

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1

## Editorial

### ***Advancing Boro Language and Literature: A 15-20 Year Strategic Vision***

Kishore Wary, PhD

As an inquisitive individual, I frequently ask questions on various topics, including the future of the Boro people, their language, and their literature. For example, I am curious about the current status of the Boro language and literature. What are the emerging trends? Are they on the rise, declining, or have they plateaued? How are colleges and universities performing in terms of providing the tools and academic environment necessary to foster the intellectual growth of our students receiving education in Boro language as medium of instructions? How are we doing? If we are falling short, what are the strengths and weaknesses of Boro language education? What should be done now to prevent further erosion or potential loss of the Boro language and literature? Why should students and teachers of the Boro language be excited about its future? What steps are being taken, and what further actions should be taken, to elevate the Boro language and literature to greater heights? Importantly, how will you inspire future students and scholars who are using the Boro language and literature as vehicles for their educational journey? In my opinion, the Boro writers, authors, teachers, students, and the institutions where the Boro language is currently being taught and researched, have a collective responsibility to shape and guaranty the future of this important language and take corrective measures.

The Boro language, spoken predominantly in the northeastern Indian state of Assam and parts of the neighboring regions, holds

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a profound cultural and historical significance for the Bodo people. As we look ahead to the next 15-20 years from now, the development of Boro language and literature presents both opportunities and challenges. To ensure its survival, proliferation, and maturation, a strategic vision informed by historical precedents and innovative practices from institutions such as Oxford University and the American education system is essential.

#### **A. Strengths and Potential**

Historically, the Boro language has demonstrated resilience and adaptability. It boasts a rich oral tradition and an emerging body of written literature that reflects the socio-cultural narratives of the Bodo community. The Boro Sahitya Sabha (BSS) and various local initiatives have made commendable strides in fostering literary creativity and preserving linguistic heritage. The foundational work laid by these institutions is analogous to the early efforts seen in Oxford University's commitment to the preservation and study of regional languages and literatures. The Boro language scholars and their mentors should evaluate the current strengths and weaknesses of Boro language and as a medium of instructions at all levels; and devise strategic short-term and long-term goals: such as plan-A, plan-B, plan-C to address above questions.

#### **B. Challenges and Weaknesses**

Despite these strengths, several challenges impede the comprehensive development of Boro language and literature. Firstly, the lack of standardized orthography and limited resources for academic research pose significant barriers. For example, spelling errors, whether introduced inadvertently or deliberately often deter serious readers to read and understand the complexities associated with reading Boro literature. Secondly, the disparity in educational infrastructure and the need for

institutional support further complicate efforts to integrate Boro language studies into mainstream academia. These factors seriously impede the recruitment of talent and scholars. The challenges are reminiscent of those faced by various minority languages historically, as seen in the early efforts of American educational institutions to incorporate diverse linguistic studies into their curricula.

### **C. Center for Boro studies**

To ensure the sustained growth and recognition of the Boro language and literature, it is crucial to establish dedicated centers for Boro studies in prestigious institutions such as Jawaharlal Nehru University, Delhi University, Mumbai University, Calcutta University, Hyderabad University, and Madras University. Additionally, creating such centers in foreign countries will foster international academic collaboration and enhance global awareness of the Boro language and culture. The development of centers for Boro studies cannot happen overnight or even in a year or two. However, such a long-term plan spanning 10 to 15 years timeframe should be feasible.

### **D. International visitor exchange program**

Launching an International Scholars Visitor Program, e.g., similar to the Fulbright fellowship program, to train the next generation of Boro language experts represents a strategic initiative to bridge cultural and technological gaps. By sending emerging scholars to prestigious Western universities, the program aims to equip them with cutting-edge research methodologies and technological advancements. This cross-cultural exchange will not only enhance their expertise in Boro language studies but also foster innovative approaches to preserving and promoting this rich linguistic heritage. Through this immersive experience,

scholars will gain invaluable insights and tools to contribute to the global academic community and ensure the sustainability of the Boro language and literature.

### **E. Strategic Innovations and Development**

To address these challenges and foster the growth of Boro language and literature, a multi-faceted strategic approach is required:

1. **Standardization and Research Infrastructure:** Drawing from the rigorous academic frameworks of Oxford University, it is crucial to establish standardized orthographic systems and comprehensive research facilities dedicated to Boro studies. This includes creating accessible digital archives and databases to support linguistic research and literary analysis.
2. **Curriculum Development and Educational Integration:** Inspired by the American education system's emphasis on diverse curricula, research, innovation, educational institutions should integrate Boro language studies into both secondary and higher education levels. This involves developing a robust curriculum that includes Boro literature, history, and linguistics, accompanied by training programs for educators. For example, in the United States high school and college textbooks changes every 5-7 years, curriculum changes.
3. **Promoting Literary Creativity and Publication:** Encouraging literary production through grants, fellowships, and literary awards can stimulate creative engagement with the Boro language. Collaborative projects with established literary institutions and international

scholars can further elevate the visibility and impact of Boro literature. The authors and writers should collaborate with publishers, so that they received monetary compensations for their scholarly feedback and contributions.

4. **Community and Institutional Collaboration:** Building partnerships between local cultural organizations, educational institutions, and government bodies is crucial. These collaborations can facilitate the creation of cultural programs, language workshops, and public outreach initiatives that enhance community involvement and support. Establish a collaborative

*feedback loop system* where students, teachers, and employer network to share success stories and discuss failures on a regular basis.

5. **Digital and Technological Integration:** Embracing digital platforms to promote Boro language and literature is vital. Developing online resources, e-books, and interactive language learning tools will make Boro more accessible to a global audience and support its integration into the digital age. This effort will require collaboration with computer engineering, scientists, and the stakeholders.

## Conclusion

This editorial is not a roadmap but a talking point for the survival, expansion, proliferation, and maturation of the Boro language and literature. Drawing from historical precedents set by institutions such as Oxford University and the American education system, we can overcome existing challenges and unlock the full potential of Boro language and literature. With thoughtful investment in research, education, and technology, the Boro language and literature, coupled with short-term and long-term goals; together, can not only preserve its rich heritage but also inspire future generations of scholars, students, and writers. This vision, rooted in both respect for tradition and a commitment to innovation, will pave the way for a thriving Boro linguistic and literary landscape. *Importantly, we must inspire today's youths, remain optimistic, and foster hope.*

\*Disclaimer: The author, not BDF Laisi or the Editorial Board, is responsible for the views expressed in this article.

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*For comments: Please write to, [Editor@Borodiaspora.org](mailto:Editor@Borodiaspora.org)*



**2**

**From the Vice President of the BDF:  
*Preserving and Learning Boro Language***

***Author: Atul Basumatary***  
*Vice President, Boro Diaspora Forum*

There are as many as 121 languages (\*mother tongues) spoken by 10,000 or more in India, out of which 22 are under the Eight Schedule of the Constitution of India. 96.71% of the total 1,21,08,54,977 Indian population speak Scheduled Language \**Mother tongue is the language spoken in childhood by the person's mother to the person. If the mother died in infancy, the language mainly spoken in the person's home in childhood will be the mother tongue.*

Out of this 96.71% who speak Scheduled language, the highest 43.63% speak Hindi, and the lowest 0.12% speak Bodo (*Boro*) numbering 14,82,829 [Bodo (14,54,547) + Kachari (15,984) + Mech/Mechha (11,546) + Others (852)]. 1.26 % speak Assamese.

In the state of Assam, total 14, 16, 125 people speak Bodo. Bodo is also spoken in neighboring states of West Bengal (42,739), Nagaland (7,372), Arunachal Pradesh (7,095), and Meghalaya (4,879) and other states where the number people speaking Boro is less than 4, 000.

Due to globalization and cultural homogenization, world's many languages are in danger of vanishing. UNESCO has identified 2,500 languages that are at risk of extinction. As many as 197 Indian languages have been declared 'endangered' by UNESCO.

Mentioned in the new education policy NEP 2020, over 220 languages have become extinct in India in the last 50 years alone, and even the 22 languages of the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution of India are facing serious difficulties on many fronts.

The Bodo (*Boro*) is one of the 22 languages in the Eight Schedule of the Constitution of India inserted with the Constitution (Ninety-second Amendment) Act, 2003, published in the Gazette of India vide Notification No. 8, New Delhi, Thursday, January 8, 2004.

The Bodo (*Boro*) language is known as the Meche and Boro rao in Nepal and North Bengal, Dimasa in the North Cachar, and Borok or Kok-Borok in Tripura.

The Bodo language faced the threat of extinction due to neglect, care, conversions, and assimilations. And this was further imperiled by lack of documentation, though it had its own vocabulary and structure combined with a distinctively rich ethnic culture passed down by the ancestors. Dokhona (women's attire), Bagurumba (folk dance), Kham (a cylindrical leather instrument), Sifung (a five-hole flute), and Serja (4-string traditional string instrument like a violin) are the testimony to the rich, distinctive ethnic culture of Boros.

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More than a century ago before the independence of our country, British historian Sir Edward Gait expressed in his book “*A History of Assam*,” published in 1905, the following: “*The Bodo dialects, though spoken in Assam by more than half a million people, are in their turn giving away to Aryan languages, i.e., Assamese and Bengali, and their complete disappearance is only a matter of time.*”

Bodo language has traveled an arduous and long journey. In 1963, it was introduced as a medium of instruction for the primary level in the then Kokrajhar Sub-Division in Assam after it was declared so on 18th May, 1963, by then Chief Minister of Assam, Bimala Prasad Chaliha. In 1968, the language as a medium of instruction was upgraded to secondary level via an Assam government order of 2<sup>nd</sup> April, 1968. It has now been extended to the higher secondary level i.e., to classes XI and XII. It is now taught at the university level with research facilities in Universities in the Northeast of India. With the approval of the State Assembly, Boro was made an Associate Official Language in the State of Assam in 1985.

With education in the Boro medium, there are now people in multiple professions, academicians, doctors, engineers, scientists, and civil servants contributing to nation-building. It is said that 25% of the world’s languages are spoken by fewer than 1,000 people, and if these are not passed down to the next generation, they will be gone forever. Over the years, for varied reasons, many people have either given up the Boro language or forgotten altogether; some cannot speak fluently thus cannot teach their children to speak it.

To provide children a sense of identity, belongingness, and appreciation for their roots and culture, children must be helped to learn the language. But when the parents themselves don’t know the language of their culture and no materials are available for learning, children are bound to forget the language and lose the connection to their culture.

To keep language relevant and vibrant, we should have quality learning materials—print, digital, videos, plays, poems, novels, magazines, etc. There are many who are willing to learn and relearn the Boro language. Ethnic traditions and culture attract people to explore; many want to discover their lost roots.

During the first lockdown in 2021 due to the COVID pandemic, we had started online classes every Saturday and Sunday for learning Boro speaking and getting to know each other alongside. All professionals, some of us were from the USA, UK, Germany, Guwahati, and Delhi. We were all eager and enjoyed the classes which continued for over 2 months. We could not proceed fast due to lack of proper teaching materials and felt urgent needs of the following for a crash course learning for Boro speaking.

- a) **Crash course learning material:** Short-term and Long-term modules will help people relearn to speak the language.
- b) **Standard Boro Dictionary:** This will provide access to standardized spellings and help people enrich themselves with vocabulary and how words are used in sentences.

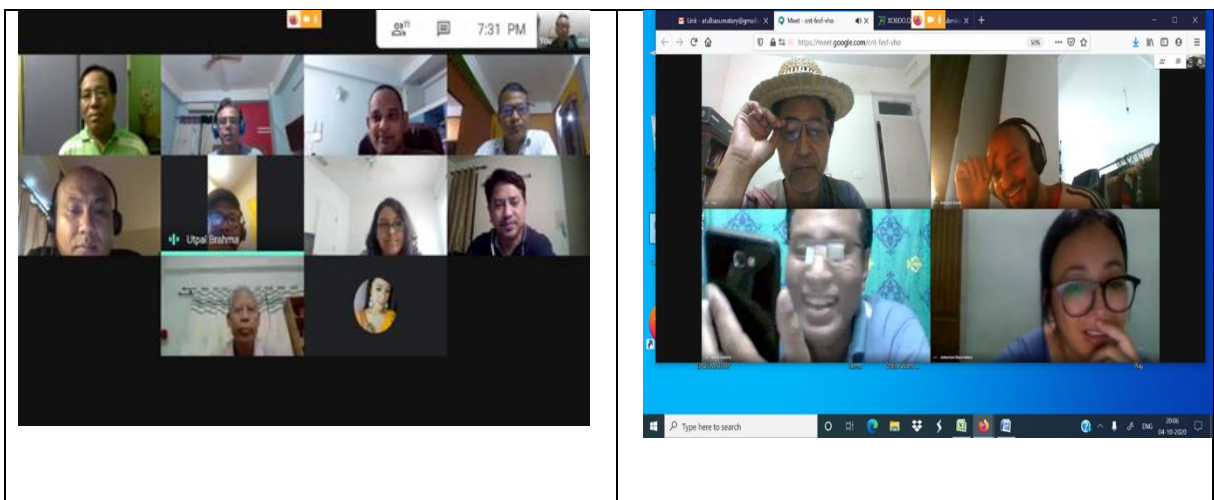
- c) **Grammar Books for self-learning:** With this, people who already know a few words will be able to frame sentences across tenses, stimulating interest in the language.
- d) **Facility centers for online learning:** Many parents, professionals, youths, and even non-Boros desire to learn the language but don't know how to proceed. Facility centers for online learning will address this problem. They can have videos and audios made specially for learning the language.
- e) **Teachers/instructors committed to teaching the language:** There are many educated youths with spare time, educated homemakers who do not have jobs outside. They can teach the language online if they have standard teaching material. This can be on a revenue model—the teachers/instructors can charge fees from the learners.

To spread and preserve the Boro language and culture, to support individuals in relearning and learning it, to help community members living across the globe stay connected, to give Boro children a sense of identity and belonging, and to foster appreciation for their roots and culture, we should all join hands. The Bodo Sahitya Sabha, as the apex body for the Boro language, should take initiatives to address various needs, including those encountered during online classes, to facilitate learning and relearning Boro online.

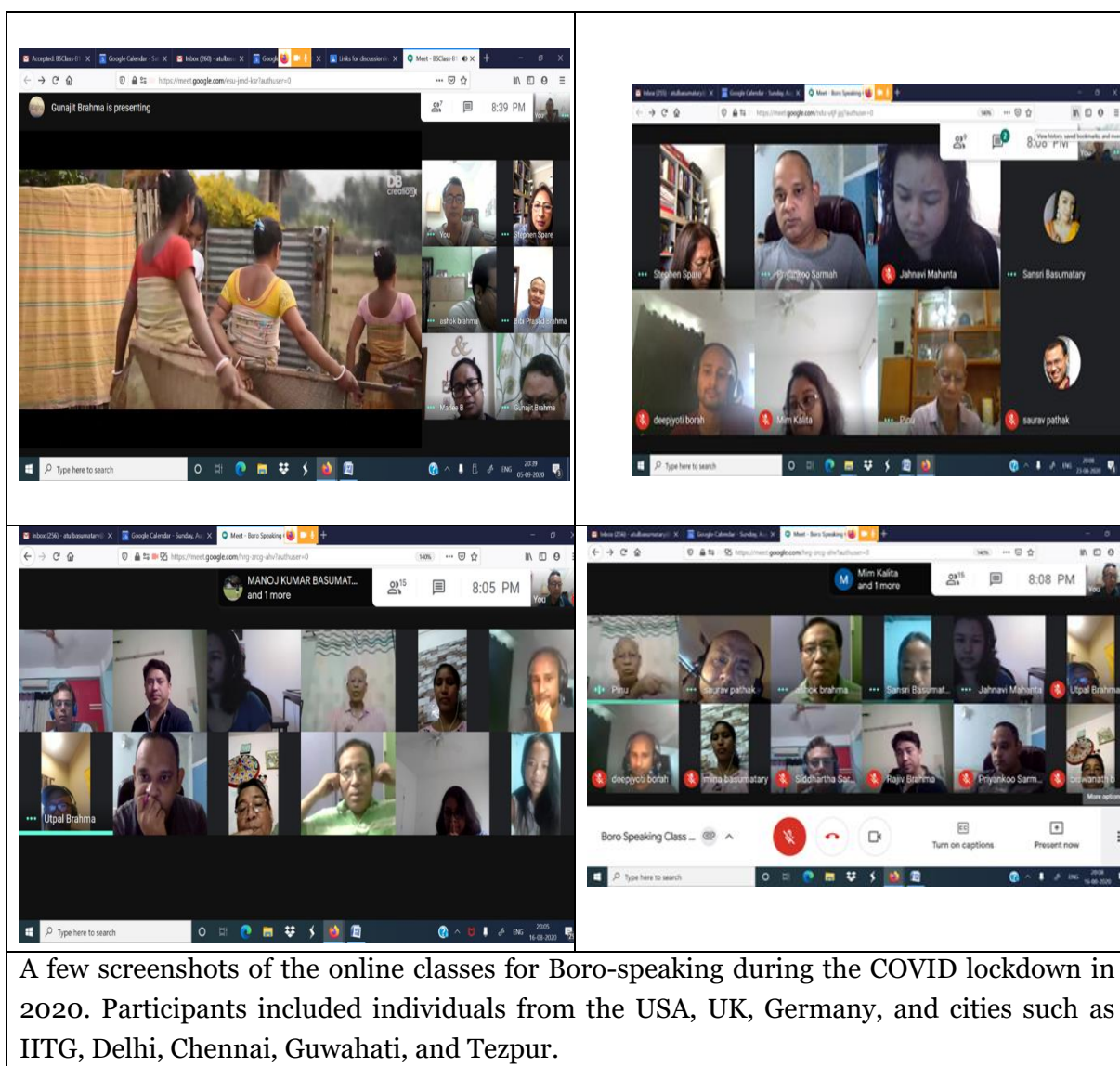
**References:**

- 1. Census 2011
- 2. National Education Policy 2020Census 2011(Census 2021 is not out)
- 3. <https://bodosahityasabha.com/home/about-2/>
- 4. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/languages/guide/languages.shtml>

If we have well-designed materials for learning Boro, the language can be taught and learned online with ease. Teachers and instructors can also earn money for their time spent.







A few screenshots of the online classes for Boro-speaking during the COVID lockdown in 2020. Participants included individuals from the USA, UK, Germany, and cities such as IITG, Delhi, Chennai, Guwahati, and Tezpur.

\*Disclaimer: The author, not BDF Laisi or the Editorial Board, is responsible for the views expressed in this article.

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**3**

To,  
The Chief Editor,  
The BDF Laisi.

Dated, Kolkata, the 17th May, 2024

**Re:** *Are the incumbent President of ABSU and the current regime of the BTC not concerned about the disappointing status of implementing the various clauses and projects outlined in the 3rd MoS?*

Dear Sir,

I wish to highlight the slow and indifferent attitude of both the central and state governments in implementing the clauses of the 3rd Memorandum of Settlement (commonly known as the BTR Accord), which was signed on January 27, 2020.

In this context, I would like to highlight the current status of the implementation of the clauses and projects, as outlined in the minutes of the high-level review meeting conducted by the Home Secretary of the Government of India on January 3, 2024. *A brief summary is provided below:*

The minutes of the meeting (through Video conference) held on 3rd January, 2024 under the Chairmanship of the Home Secretary, GoI with the official representatives of the departments concerned and decisions taken thereof relating to the status of the projects as enumerated in the Annexures I to IV of the 3rd MoS --

**1.** Regarding the inclusion of the Boro-Kachari in the list of Scheduled Tribes (Hills) for the districts of Karbi Anglong and Dima Hasao, the official representative of the Ministry of Tribal Affairs stated that the Constitution (Scheduled Tribes) Order (Amendment) Bill, 2019, will be withdrawn, revised, and then presented to Parliament for further discussion and approval.

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**2.** Regarding the Cultural Complex and Centre for Excellence named after Bodofa U N Brahma, the official representative of the Ministry of Culture (MoC) reported that the Detailed Project Report (DPR) submitted by the State Government of Assam on August 3, 2023, was not available with the ministry. Additionally, the project does not fit into the Tagore Cultural Complex Scheme. The State Government has been asked to resubmit the DPR after making suitable amendments for consideration under another appropriate scheme.

**3.** As regards to: (a) the Regional Campus for the Indira Gandhi National Tribal University (IGNTU) at Bhairav Kundu (Udalguri) and (b) U N Brahma Central University at Barama (Baksa district), it was reported by the official representative of the Department of Higher Education that the IGNTU already has a Regional Campus in Manipur since 2019, which has not been fully developed. Besides, the State of Assam already has two existing Central Universities (at Tejpur and also at Silchar), and that too, one of them which is situated at Tejpur is not at a far distance from Bhairav Kundu. It was further stated that a Tribal University is similar to a Central University in terms of admission procedure, reservation, recruitment of faculty etc. Therefore, it was suggested that the State Government may submit a proposal for introducing some tribal related courses in Tejpur Central University instead of establishing a Regional Campus of IGNTU.

**4.** Regarding the National Institute of Technology (NIT) at Udalguri, the representative from the Higher Education Department stated that, according to the Central Government's existing policy, only one NIT can be established in a state. Since an NIT has already been established in Silchar, the State Government is advised to submit a proposal with justifiable grounds to the Higher Education Department (Government of India) if they wish to establish another NIT in Udalguri. This proposal should consider the geographical location and other relevant parameters of the state.

**5.** Regarding the establishment of new Navodaya Vidyalayas in each district of the BTAD, the representative from the Department of School Education noted that, according to the existing policy, each district within the BTAD already has a Navodaya Vidyalaya. However, the representative suggested that the State Government could submit proposals for new Navodaya Vidyalayas in other districts of Assam where none currently exist.

**6.** Regarding the establishment of the North East Regional Institute of Medical Science in Rowmari (Chirang district), the representative from the Department of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India, reported that there is already one Regional Institute of Medical Science in Manipur and a functioning AIIMS in Guwahati to address

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the medical needs of the entire North-East region. Therefore, the State Government may reconsider the project based on a thorough assessment of its necessity and requirements.

7. (a) Regarding the establishment of Sports Authority of India centers in Udalguri, Baksa, and Chirang, and (b) the creation of a National Sports University (Academy) in Udalguri, the Secretary of the Sports Department noted that there is an existing National Sports University in Imphal (Manipur) that serves the needs of the North-East region. Additionally, a proposal for constructing an Indoor Stadium in Udalguri, estimated at ₹180 crores, has been delayed due to budgetary constraints. However, it was suggested that the State Government submit a comprehensive plan for enhancing sports infrastructure in each district under the Khelo India Centre (KIC) and related schemes to the NITI Aayog for necessary approvals and funding.

8. Regarding the construction of the Bodoland House in Bengaluru, the official representative from the Department of North-Eastern Region (DoNER) stated that there are no funds allocated for this purpose. Additionally, it was not included in the Ministry of State (MoS) provisions of 2020.

9. Regarding the establishment of a Railway Coach Factory within the BTAD areas, the Ministry of Railways stated that there is currently no proposal for such a factory in these areas. However, the Railway authorities suggested exploring the feasibility of setting up additional facilities or ancillary units for railway parts within the BTAD.

10. Regarding the recruitment of Bodo youths into the army, paramilitary forces, and police to increase their representation, the representative from the Department of Military Affairs stated that eight recruitment rallies have been conducted, including two for Agniveers. As a result, 332 Agniveers were recruited, and 105 individuals received pre-recruitment training in Udalguri. The Department of Military Affairs was requested to provide information on the number of recruits specifically from the BTAD. The State Government was advised to coordinate with the army to facilitate this process and to conduct additional recruitment rallies to increase the number of youths from the BTAD who are recruited.

By the way, I have gone through the minutes of the aforesaid review meeting with a lot of interest and curiosity to learn about the existing status and also the degrees of implementation of the projects and infrastructure which are mentioned in Annexures I to IV to the 3rd MoS (popularly called as BTR Accord). But I was rather disappointed at the present status of projects. The feedback given by the official representatives of different departments under the Government of India were not at all encouraging. Both the State

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Government and the Union Government appear not to be serious and proactive enough in implementing those projects even after more than 4 (four) years from the date of signing the said MoS on 27th January, 2020. Besides, it also reveals from the minutes of the said high level review meeting that most of the projects will not see daylight. The chances of getting them implemented are very remote and dismal for the reasons which were clearly highlighted by the representatives of the executing departments in the review meeting.

It is apparently clear that the incumbent BTC Government has not been effective enough in getting the projects enumerated in the 3rd MOS implemented. The incumbent President of the ABSU, one of the signatories of the said Accord, is likely aware of the unsatisfactory status of the implementation. However, there are no visible signs of meaningfully removing the roadblocks in this regard. As regards extension of the boundary of the Bodoland Territorial Region, a tiny number of 60 villages from the current Sonitpur and Biswanath districts have only been added (these have been added to their adjacent district of Udalguri without indeed notifying their inclusion in the BTR). *Given these challenges, one has to wonder: Is there any real effort being made to address these problems, or are they simply biding their time?*

Yours sincerely,

K Mochhary.  
Kolkata

\*Disclaimer: The author, not BDF Laisi or the Editorial Board, is responsible for the views expressed in this letter.

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*For comments: Please write to, [Editor@Borodiaspora.org](mailto:Editor@Borodiaspora.org)*



4

## The Second Governing Body of Boro Diaspora Forum (BDF) [2024-27]

**Website:** <https://borodiaspora.org>




**E-Mail:** [borodiaspora@gmail.com](mailto:borodiaspora@gmail.com)

<b>Chief Adviser</b>	<b>Musri Ranjit Shekhar Mooshahary, IPS (R)</b> Former: Director General of Police, Kerala; Director General, National Security Guard; Director General, Border Security Force; State Chief Information Commissioner, Assam; Governor of Meghalaya.	
<b>Adviser</b>	<b>Musri Benudhar Basumatary</b> MA (Eco) Gauhati University, AIII; Former: Dy Superintendent of Police, Assam Police Service; Asstt. Editor (Script & Broadcaster) in Bodo Section, AIR Guwahati; and General Manager, Oriental Insurance Co Ltd.	
<b>Adviser</b>	<b>Prof. Janak Jhankar Narzary</b> Ph.D. (Visva Bharati), PG (Art History), Boston University; Eminent Artist (Sculptor); Former: Principal of Kala Bhavan, Visva Bharati University; Born at Mwidher Khoro, Kokrajhar; Lives at Santiniketan.	
<b>Adviser</b>	<b>Prof Kishore Wary</b> Ph.D. (Biochemistry), NEHU, Shillong; University of Illinois, Chicago, USA.	

<b>Adviser</b>	<p><b>Musri Khalendra Mochhary, IAS (R)</b>          Former: Secretary to the Govt of West Bengal;          Administrative Member of the WB Land Reforms &amp;          Tenancy Tribunal;          Eden City Housing Complex,          Kolkata -700137</p>	
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<b>Executive Member</b>	<p><b>Dr. Jeetumoni Basumatary</b> Ph.D.  (English), Gauhati University, Guwahati;  Assistant Professor of English,  Cotton University, Guwahati.</p>	
<b>Executive Member</b>	<p><b>Musri Phuleswar Basumatary</b>  MA (Pol Sc), NEHU, Shillong;  Deputy Commissioner of Taxes,  Government of Assam.</p>	



<p><b>Executive Member</b></p>	<p><b>Dr Pinosh Kumar Hajoary</b>                  Ph.D. (Strategy and Management of Technology), IISc Bangalore;                  Postdoc from University of Stuttgart, Germany;                  Assistant Professor, IIT Madras.</p>	
<p><b>Executive Member</b></p>	<p><b>Musri Rajani Kanta Brahma</b>                  BA Hons (Geog), Cotton College, Guwahati;                  MBA (HR), CAIIB;                  Working in Banking Sector.</p>	
<p><b>Executive Member</b></p>	<p><b>Dr Subungcha Mwshahary</b>                  Ph.D. (Political Science), Gauhati University, Guwahati;                  Asstt Commissioner of Taxes, Government of Assam.</p>	

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## ***The Trailblazing Role of Nileswar Brahma: An Epoch Maker of Modern Boro Music***

*Author: Dr. Janak Jhankar Narzary*



**Nileswar Brahma**  
(1927-1986)

My elder brother, Sarat Narzary, hired and brought a gramophone player to our house one lovely evening, and he played recorded current Boro songs by Nileswar Brahma. In 1951, his songs were recorded by the Kolkata-based HMV of Columbia Gramophone Record Company, a first for the Boro music industry. For the Narzary family, it was an amazing occasion as we were all thrilled to see and hear a record player for the first time, as well as to hear recorded Boro songs. At that time, I was just 9 years old.

The recorded music of Nileswar Brahma became quite well-known and was played at public conferences, marriage celebrations and festivals. The story of Nileswar Brahma was told to us by my elder brother Sarat da (Narzary), who met him several times in Shillong at the residence of first Boro Cabinet Minister, Rupnath Brahma. He also met Kamini Narzary and other performers, singers, and cultural people. Around the age of 18, Sarath da moved out of his family and lived in Shillong under the care of Rupnath Brahma. In those days Rupnath Brahma's home served as a sort of cultural hub where Boro musicians, dancers, and playwrights would occasionally gather and perform. Sarat da was an accomplished clarinetist, who also learnt and performed Neolai Mwsanai (नेवलाय मोसानाय) under the guidance of Kamini Narzary (I was informed by Vinoo aka Banalakshimi, Rupnath Brahma's youngest daughter).

Nileswar was born on February 11, 1927, to a Boro family in Goibari village, which is now a subdivision under Kokrajhar district. His father, Doloram Brahma, was a talented Serja player, and mother Gwnwshri Brahma was a magical dancer known as Doudini, who performed the ritual of Bathou Kherai worship to the rhythmic beat of the kham (a long drum), sifung (a long flute with five holes), and jotha (paired metal bell). Kherai is the name of the traditional religious practice of the Boro community.

The Bathou is the indigenous belief system of the Boro represented by an outdoor alter or shrine constructed of bamboo, at the centre of which a Sijou plant (Euphorbia genus /a variety of cactus tree) serves as the symbolic Almighty. The Pancha-bhut (five elements of creation) theory, which encompasses water, fire, soil, air and space, is the foundation of the Bathou religion. The Boro Bathou religion makes extensive use of the number five. For example, the Sijou tree has five sections, the flute has five holes, the serja has five strings, and the circular bamboo shrine has five horizontal knits from bottom to top.

A portion of the Boro community later embraced the Brahma dharma introduced and propagated by Gurudev Kalicharan Brahma. He brought Brahma Dharma among the Boro people from Bengal after becoming a disciple and receiving blessings of Shivanarayan Param Hangsh in 1905. The parents of Nileswar had embraced Brahma Dharma and were forbidden from engaging in the magical Kherai worship, which entailed the Doudini magic dance, wine consumption, pork eating, and blood sacrifice. However, Nileswar's mother used to rush away from her home at the loud sounds of kham and sifung (drums and flutes), traversing miles of open fields, forests, and rivers to join and perform Doudini dance in the Bathou worship. No one was able to stop her since she was enthralled by the magical power of the kham and sifung. It seems she was tied with rope to a pillar of the bakhri (granary), but she used to somehow unfasten herself and run away madly.

As the son of a humble family, Nileswar struggled to support his dream of being a singer. He moved to Kolkata and studied Indian classical music at Swami Pragnananda ji's classical music institute. Nileswar the poet, lyricist and singer, had told Prasenjit Brahma that he would like the Boroni Onsai Afad to set up a fund-raising campaign to record his songs with a gramophone record company. Prasenjit talked with the Afad members about the issue and took it seriously. A youthful group of Boro students, led by Nila (Nileswar Brahma) as the president, Saben (Samar Brahma Chowdhury) as secretary, along with somah (Sobha Brahma) and praji (Prasenjit Brahma), founded Boroni Onsai Afad in 1949. Working towards the advancement of Boro language, literature, art, music and culture was its main goal. It was during his arrest warrant from the Assam government that Kalaguru Bishnu Prasad Rabha was in frequent contact with them, as he was holed up in Kokrajhar, Gosaigaon, Bijini. Their inspiration to contribute to the advancement of Boro literature, art and culture came from Bishnu Rabha. In fact, The Writer's Association (1939), the Youth Cultural Institute (1940), the People's Theatre of Bangalore (1941) and Indian People's Theatre Association (IPTA, 1943) can all be seen as forerunners of the Boroni Onsai Afad (1949) in a larger Pan-Indian context. In the Northeast and Assam, IPTA is referred to as Bhartiya Jan Natya Sangh; in the South, it was known as Praja Natya Mandali.

Founded in 1947, the Assam chapter of IPTA promoted the advancement of humankind via culture. The founding secretary of the chapter, Hemango Biswas, collaborated with several well-known state figures, including Jyotiprasad Agarwala, Bishnu Prasad Rabha, and Bhupen Hazarika. In the 1950s, Bhupen Hazarika returned from the United States and immediately established a close relationship with IPTA. The heyday of Hazarika's music career, which spanned from 1952 to 1962, was also the golden age of IPTA. In 1955, Hazarika and Biswas collaborated to arrange the organization's third Assam conference.

Nileswar wrote poetry, lyrics, and music during the golden period of IPTA of Assam, 1951–1957. He also recorded eight modern Boro songs on a gramophone during this time, coinciding with the prime time of Bhupen Hazarika.

Beginning with the owners of small shops in market towns, the members of Boroni Onsai Afad set out to collect money from the wealthy Boro people and businessmen. From Darang, they traveled to Odalguri, Bijini, Sidli, Kokrajhar, and farther west to Jalpaiguri in North Bengal. According to Prasenjit Brahma's autobiographical novel "Fwilya Sikhmaya," he was required to justify the reasons behind the money collection. While some were grateful and gave what they could, others viewed them as 'unstable'. Remarkably, Prasenjit said that an elderly naked

beggar was listening to the public's explanation at a market for a modest contribution of money. Maybe realizing the importance of song recording, the beggar pulled out his alms and placed them in the collection box. In 1951, the Columbia Gramophone Company Limited's HMV recorded songs by Nileswar Brahma:

- i. Bifangao Bananwi (बिफांआव बानानै),
- ii. Honwi Sanjaha (हनै सानजाहा),
- iii. Wi Bibwnang Godai (ऐ बिबोनां गदाय),
- iv. Dukhu Mwnw Ayo Mwdwi Fwiw (दुखु मोनो आय' मोदै फैयो),
- v. Mwnwikhou Mwngwn Hwnnanwi (मोनैखौ मोनगोन होत्रानै),
- vi. Swrjigiri (सोरजिगिरि),
- vii. Udang Bwthwr (उदां बोथोर),
- viii. Dina thandwng halw dwilw (दिना थांदों हालो दैलो)

These (above) are some of his songs that have been recorded.

Nileswar rose to prominence as one of his generation's most well-known lyricists. He began penning poetry and songs when he was still a student. 1951 saw Nileswar broadcast his songs on AIR Kolkata when he was living in Kolkata. Boroni Onsai Afad published his collection of poems and lyrics, "Balabganwi" (Two Episodes) in 1952. Following the song recording process, he moved to Luckow to pursue instrumental music at Bhatkhande Music College, where he also picked up *kathak* dancing and the violin. Regretfully, his father had to summon him back home in 1957 because of financial difficulties.

Nileswar Brahma became a member of the Dhubri IPTA group. As the oldest theatre artists' association in India IPTA, established in 1943, its goal was to promote Indian freedom movement themes. The Indian people were to have a cultural awakening as a result. Formerly known as Bhartiya Gana Natya Sangha in Assam and the Northeast, it was one of the key players in the growth of a progressive cultural movement in India. Modern Assam's progressive cultural movement has benefited greatly from the influence of the progressive movement, which was spearheaded by the Indian People's Theatre Association. Its values drew in a number of cultural visionaries in the area, who subsequently became involved with the group. Since its founding, the group has taken an active part in a range of cultural events with the goal of raising public awareness of culture.

Assam's cultural icons Bishnu Prasad Rabha, Jyoti Prasad Agarwal, Bhupen Hazarika, and many others emulated the cultural ideal propagated by IPTA for the advancement of common people. Bishnu Prasad Rabha was an active member of IPTA. In addition, Rabha joined the Marxist political movement and worked to free the illiterate and impoverished. He declared that the proletariat and destitute in India still lack freedom and that Indian freedom is a myth.

Nileswar has offered the Bodo community his encouraging voice. His songs, which center on themes of societal harmony, devotion and universal love, are recognized for introducing contemporary Bodo music to Indian society. On November 16, 1952, in Basugaon, in the present-day Chirang district, he had taken part in the Bodo Sahitya Sabha's founding day and given a performance of his melodic songs. On January 1, 1986, he passed away from high blood pressure.

Nileswar Brahma cared for the advancement and well-being of the Boro community. In addition to being the chairman of the Bardwi-Sikla Gosaigaon Tribal Cinema Co-operative; the President of the Gosaigaon Assam Sahitya Sabha; a member of the Land Advisory Board of the Gosaigaon Sub-division; and an active member of other organizations, he was also the founder and general secretary of Amritpur Brahma Sebahram of Anthaibari, Gosaigaon. After receiving a citation from Sidli-Chirang Boro Jatiyo Sanmilan in 1952 for his musical services to the Bodo people, he went by the name Jwhwlaio Nileswar Brahma.



**A Group photo:** Rupnath Brahma with his family members and youth Boro cultural workers, Nileswar Brahma with flute in hand extreme right seated on chair: and in the standing row, right to left- **i.** Sarat Narzary (commercial artist, camera photographer, clarinet player, actor); **ii.** Prasenjit Brahma (poet writer, lyricist, music composer, actor, director, orator, socio- political and cultural activist); **iii.** Ramesh Wary (Boro folk music singer, radio artist AIR Guwahati center), others not identified. Rupnath Brahma, his wife and three daughters in the center of middle row.

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\*Disclaimer: The author, not BDF Laisi or the Editorial Board, is responsible for the views expressed in this article.

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*For comments, please write to: [Editor@borodiaspora.org](mailto:Editor@borodiaspora.org)*



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## थुलुंगानि नेर्सोनः रेनु बर'



ड॰ अनजलि दैमारि

1987 मायथाइ । जुन दाननि रबिबार सान । खालारखौ गोसोआव गैलिया । अब्ला आं गुवाहाटी भुम फरायसालियाव फरायगासिनोमोन । सानसेखालि जौनिनो फरायसा लोगो सासेया खिन्थाफैयो दि बर'मानि रेनु बर' मुनि आइजो सासेया आंखौ लोगो हमनो नागिरदों । गावनि न'आवनो थानानै लोगो हमथारनो खावलायहरदों । जाहोना जाबाय-बर' फिल्म मोनसे बानायनायनि बागै सावरायनो । आं बै समसिम बरमायाव थांफेराखैमोन । आब' रेनुनि मुंखौबो खोनाफेराखैमोन ।

साननैसोनि उनाव आं भुम फरायसालिनियो लोगो सासे लानानै बासआव गाखोना बरमा फारसे ओंखारलाडो । नाथाय बरमा मोनहैना थि जायगायाव ओंखारनो रोडैलाय सानजौफुनि थिं थिं सान्दुडाव हान्थिनो गोनां जायो । लामा लामा सोडै सोडै थानानै जेब्ला आब'नि न'नि सिथलायाव गसंहैयो अब्ला सानजौफु समनि हासि-हुसि आबहावआ । सोरगिदिं नायब्लाबो रावखौबो नुवाखैसै । माबा बुंहां जानायावनो सासे आइजो न'निफ्राय ओंखारना - "ए आलासि फैदों माथो" होनफैयो । आं लोगो लोगोनो आब' रेनुखौ सोंनायाव जौखौ जिरायनो होनानै गाव आब'खौ लिनो थाडो । दान्दिसे उनाव सासे आइजोखौ बारि खनानिफ्राय फैनाय नुहरो । गाब खारनाय गोजाम दखना गस्ला गान्नाय, देहाया गोलोमदैजों सिग्लाबजोबनाय, बालें लें थिनज्रेब आरो हायलो देहानि आइजो । अब्लासिम आं बे आइजोखौनो आब' रेनु होन्ना सान्ना लानो हायाखैमोन । बिथाडाबो जौनि फारसे नायालासेनो दैखर फारसे थोंजों थाडो । आं सानबाय गुबुन सोरबा आइजो ..... । नाथाय उनाव नुबाय सानजौफुनि थिं थिं सानदुडाव बारियाव खामानि मावनाय बे हायलोलो थिनज्रेब आइजोआनो अरायनि थुलुंगानि फुंखा - आब' रेनु । दुगैसां-लोबसां जौजों लोगोसे जिरायफैना - "इसे गोबाव जाबाय, गाजि दामोनसै, अनजालिया सोर सासेयाथो?" होन्ना मिनिस्लुयै सोंबाय । आं बिथानि खुगानि राव जोबरस्ताबैयावनो सिख'नानै बुंबाय - "आं आब'" होन्ना । आब'आ आंनि मोखाडाव नायनानै "दे फैनायनि गोजोनबाय" होन्ना बुंफिनो । दान्दिसे सम आं आब'खौ नायहाबफ्लाडो, मानोना आं आंनि गोर्बोआव साजायना लानाय आब' रेनुनि महरा जौसां देरसांमोन । मोखथानि आब'नि महरा आंनि सान्नायजों इसेबो गोरोबाखिसै । नाथाय मानोबा माहि आखुनि थिलेबलेब आब'नि महरा आंखौ बांसिनैसो आब'नि फारसे सिबिनाय अननाय सोमजिहोयो । जिखि जाया आब'खौ आंनि जिउआव लोगो मोनजेननायनि बेनो गिबि सान ।

1943 मायथाइनि 1 मे खालि बै समनि बरपेटा जिलानि खाग्राबारि गोर गामियाव जोनोम मोनदोंमोन आब' रेनु बर'आ । बिफानि मुडा राम बर' आरो बिमानि मुडा जुनु बाला बर' मोन । बिथाडा 1961 मायथायाव मेट्रिक आनजादखौ 2 थि थाखोआव उथिसारो । बेनि उनाव गुवाहाटीनि Cotton College आव फरायना P.U. आनजादखौ उथिसारो आरो Economics बिफानाव Honours लानानै 1965 मायथायाव Bajali College निफ्राय BA आनजादखौ उथिनो हायो । बेबादिनो 1967 मायथायाव गुवाहाटी भुम फरायसालिनिक्राय Economics बिफानाव MA आनजादाव उथिसारनो हायो । मख'जाथाव दि गेदेमा रेनु बर' बिथाडानो दुलाराय बर' आइजोनि मादाव गिबि MA डिग्री लानाय आइजो ।

रुंसारि रेनु बर' आब'आ 1968 मायथायाव बरमा हिन्जावसा गोजौ फरायसालियाव फोरोंगिरि महरै खामानि मावजेनो । 1971 मायथायाव आब' रेनु बर'जों लोगोसे माखासे सानसुमै सुबुंनि नाजानायाव बरमा कलेजखौ गायसन्नाय जायो आरो बिथाडा बे बोसोरनि 1 आगष्ट निफ्रायनो 2003 मायथाइसिम गोलाव सम फोरोंगिरि, लेडाइ गोरायुं (Vice Principal) आरो जोबथारनायाव गोरायुं एबा Principal महरै साखि जिउखौ आबुं खालामो । बरमा कलेजनि सोमोन्दै आब' रेनुनि मुं लायाजासे जेरै सावरायनो हाया बेबादिनो बरमा कलेजखौ नागारनानै बिथानि बागै सावरायनायाबो आबुं जाया । बरमा कलेजखौ आब' रेनुनि जोनोम होनाय गथ' होन्ब्लाबो बांद्राय बुंनाय जाया । बे कलेजखौ गायसनखानानै फोथाना लाखिनो थाखाय आब'आ गावनो बस्था लानानै गामियाव माय खांथिं खांथिं रां बुथुमनो गोनां जादोंमोन होन्ना मिथिनो मोनो । कलेज होन्ब्लाथाय गांनाय-उखैनाय,

मेंनाय-बानाय जेबो मिथियामोन आब'आ । न'निखुइ कलेजावसो बांसिन सम थायोमोन । जाया-लोडा बेरे फुंजानिफ्रायनो खामला मावग्रा लानानै कलेजनि खना-खनला फोसाबनायनिफ्राय मोनाबिलि 7-8 बाजिसिम office आव जिरायना खामानि मावनाय नुनो मोनोमोन । बरमा कलेजाव गोलाउ सम थानाय समाव आं बिथांखौनो साबसिन आरो गोख्रोंसिन बेंगिरि (Most active and efficient administrator) महरै नुनो मोन्दोंमोन । सम लायै सम बिथाडा जोबोत खरा (strict) मोन । Non-teaching staff फोरा आब'नि सेराव खम्फि खम्फि गसंना बाथा खोनासंनाय नुनायखौ आं दासिम बावनो हाया । बिथानि थाखैनो बरमा कलेजाव बर' फरायसाफ्रा जुनिया बर' बिफान, जुनिया बर' बिजाब खुलि, Scholarship बाइदि मोन्नो हादोंमोन । मख'जाथावदि बिथाडा कलेजाव फरायसाफोरनि जेंना आरो गोनांथिफोरखौ सुफुंनयाव हेफाजाब होनो हानायबादि Barama College Boro Students' Association मुंनि आफाद दानानै होदोंमोन । आब'नि उनाव आं गावनो बर' बिफाननि गाहाय फोरोंगिरि महरै 26 बोसोर बे गौथुमनि आफादगिरि मासियाव दडमोन । मखनो गोनांदि बरमा कलेजाव दिनैसिम बे गौथुमा दड' आरो बरमा कलेजानो गंसेल' कलेज जेराव दासिम ABSU Unit गैया । गंसे गोजौ सोलोंथाय फसंथाननि गाहाय महरै गिलिर बिबान थासेयावबो हारिनि बागै साननो, मावनो, थुलुंगा होनो अरायबो थियारिमोन । बिथाडा 1976 मायथायाव बर' थुनलाइ आफादा दानानै होनाय All Boro Women Association (ABWA) नि गाहाय नेहाथारिमोन । ओजों 1992 मायथायाव दाजेन्नाय Boro Women's Justice Forum नि गिबि जथुम्मनि थान्दै मेलाव (19, 20 फेब्रुवारि, 1993) हरसे थोलो थाफानानै जोंखौ बाइदिसिना बिथोन होनानै हेफाजाब होनायखौ जों माब्लाबाबो बावनो हाया । बबेखानि 1993 मायथाइनिफ्रायनो रुंसारि जानाय समसिम आब' रेनु बर'आ BWJF नि सुबुरुनगिरिमोन ।

आब'नि गोसोनि बोलो-साहसखौ नुनानै आं जेब्लाबो सोमो नाडोमोन । गोदोनि बाथायाथ' आरोबाव आलादामोन । मानोना जाय समाव बिथांजों फरायनाय सासेबो आइजो लोगो गैयामोन, जाय समाव हिन्जाव मानसिफ्रा बायहायाव ओंखारनायखौ समाजआ सैयामोन, बै समावनो आब'आ हौवा मानसिजों आथिं गाजाब गाजाब बर' हारिनि मोनथाय, गांनाय-उखैनायखौ जाफुंहोनो आरो खोमसि फोथायनाय फोरनि बेरेखा गोबां जुजिदोंमोन । बे बादिनो र'मान हांखोनि सोमावसारनायाव आब'नि बिहोमाखौ रायखाडाब्ला बे लिरबिदाडानो आद्रा जागोन । बे सोमावसारनायनि बागै आंहा बांदाय गोसोआव गैया । आंनि आइ, आब', आदामोनखौ जोबथेसालियाव थानांनाय बाथाखौ मिथिनानै तेजपुराव फरायनो थानाय समाव ह'स्टेलाव रुखु रुखु गाबनायखौल' गोसोआव दड' । बर' थुनलाइ आफादनि दैदेन्नायाव गाव बिमानि रावखौ र'मान हांखोजों लिरना सिबिनो, फेहेरनो, जौगाहोनो दाबि खालामनानै सोमावसारनाय समाव आब' रेनु बर'आ गोख्रोडै बाहागो लानायनि थाखै बरमायाव भारा लानानै थानाय न'निफ्राय होखारजानो गोनां जादोंमोन । सान-हर हाथर-अन्थाय खुबैना हामला खालामजानाया हुदाबादिसो जाबायमोन । गाव हारिनि थाखै खामानि मावनायनि जुनैनो गुबुनारिफोरजों राइजोनि मेल खुंजानाय आरो बे मेलाव बयजोंबो सोंखारिजानाय समाव फिन होनो नागिरब्ला माइक्र'फ'न सिख'जानाय बादि दुखुनांथाव जाथायफोरनि बागै सानसे आब'आ गावनो खिन्थादोंमोन ।

ओजों र'मान हांखोनि सोमावसारगिरि होन्ना पुलिसजों नागिरजानानै माय दुब्लि दुब्लि थाखोमानो गोनां जानायजों लोगोसे College आवबो सोमावसारनायाव बाहागो लानायनि खेंफोरथि होनो गोनां जालायनाय थासारिनि मोगा मोगि जानांनाय बाथाफोर फोरमायदोंमोन । बबेखानि बै समाव आब'आ बर' फिसा हिसाबै गुबुनारिनि मुगैनाय, नासयनाय, गादबनाय, नेवसिनाय बाइदि बाइदि खैसारनि बोलि जानो गोनां जादोंमोन । बेनिखायनो माब्लाबा सानखांनाय फैयो - बे बादि गेदेमा आइजोखौ जों बेसेबां सिनायखो? बेसेबांबा मान होनो हाखो?

आब' रेनुआ बायदिसिना गिलिर बिबान थासेआवबो थुनलाइ सोरजिनायखौ माब्लाबाबो नागारामोन । बिथानि राफोट आखायजों गासै 13 बिजाबफोर सोरजिनानै बर' थुनलाइनि बाख्रिखौ गोगोमसिन खालामना दोनलांबाय । बिथानि माखासे बेसेन बह्हा लिरबिदांफ्रा फरायसालि/फरायसालिमनि फरायफारियाव थिसनजादों । मख'नो गोनांदि, आब' रेनु बर'आ बिथानि 'बापुकन' मुंनि बिजाबनि थाखाय गथ' थुनलाइ आयदायाव 2017 मायथायाव साहित्य अकादेमी बान्था मोननो हायो । बे बान्थाखौ बिथानि रुंसारि जानायनि सान्ने उनाव फोसावनाय जादोंमोन जायनि थाखै बिथाडा बे बान्थानि बागै जेबो गुमुर मोनलाडाखिसै ।

जों बयबो गोसोआव लाखिनो नांगोन दि, बिथाडा लेनथारियैनो सासे फोरोंगिरि, समाज फोसाबगिरि, हारि सिबियारि, थुनलाइगिरि, फावगिरि, मेथाय खनगिरिनि अनगायैबो दानाय-लुनाय, गायनाय-फुनाय, नाहा-मैहा, न'खर बेंनाय बाइदि बाइदि खामानियाव जोबोत आखा-फाखा मोन । बिथाडा 'बासिराम जोहोलाव' मुंनि गाव

लिरनाय बिजाबनि सायावनो बिथा खालामनानै सोदोमस्रि हारिमु आफादनि बान्जायनायाव 'बासिराम जोहोलाव' मुंनि सावथुन दिहुनदोंमोन आरो गावबो फाव खालामदोंमोन ।

बाइदिसिना गुन आरो रोंगौथिनि बिगोमा आब' रेनुनि हाबाया जादोंमोन बडाइगाव कलेजनि History Dept. नि HoD प्रफेसर मंकेश्वर बसुमतारिजों 1975 मायथायाव । नाथाय बिथाडा 1990 मायथाइनि 2 मे खालाराव हरखाब रुंसारि जालाडो । बेनि उननिफ्रायनो आब'आ जिउआव जिरायनाय गैया, थादनाय गैया अरायबो खामानियाव मुखुब जानानै थायो ।

आब' रेनुखौ लोगो मोनामोनब्ला आंबो कलेज फोरोंगिरि जागौमोनना जायामोन बुंस' हालिया । जेब्ला आं MA Final आनजात लिरगासिनोमोन अब्ला आंनिसिम खौरां फैयो दि - आनजात जोबनाय लोगो लोगोनो आं बरमा कलेजाव बर' बिफाननि फोरोंगिरि महरै खामानि मावनो थांनो नांगौ । कलेजाव गोबां बर' फरायसाफोर दड नाथाय फोरोंगिरि गैया । ओजों फोरोंगिरि दिन्थिनो हायाब्ला बर' MIL आयदाखौ थिसन्नो हानाय नडा । आंहा एसेबां गोख्रैनो साख्रि मावनो गोसो गैयामोन । थेवबो बर' फरायसाफोरनि इउनखौ सान्नानै आरो आब'नि बाथाखौ नेवसिनो हायैलाय आंनि फाइनाल आनजात जोबनायनि उनाव न'आव थाडालासेनो गुवाहाटी भुम फरायसालिनि ह'स्टेलनिफ्राय थफ्ला-थफ्लि लानानै थोंजों बरमा मोनहैयो । बेबादिनो आब'खौ खाथिनिफ्राय लोगो मोन्नो, मिथिनो, खामानि मावजाबनो खाबु मोनो । बे खाबुखौ आं आंनि जिउनि बोर होन्नानै सानो । गासैबो समाव, गासैबो बिथिडाव जेब्लाबो सांग्रां जानानै थाग्रा आब'जों थायोब्ला मोन्नो हायोमोन थुलुंगा, अरायबो थुलुंगा ।

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\*Disclaimer: The author, not BDF Laisi or the Editorial Board, is responsible for the views expressed in this letter.

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*For comments: Please write to, [Editor@Borodiaspora.org](mailto:Editor@Borodiaspora.org)*





7 ***Shobha Brahma: A pioneer of Modernism  
in the Art World of Assam***

**Author: Rishav Gandhar Narzary**  
*Assistant Professor History of Art Kala Bhavana  
Visva Bharati*

**Abstract**

Very few in Assam would know of the *late Shobha Brahma*, a Bodo artist who, without a doubt, can be credited with introducing modernism in the art world of post-independence Assam, India. The development of modern art in Assam is not very old. It emerged only after the first quarter of the twentieth century and without the legacy of colonial art traditions, unlike the art scenes at Madras, Calcutta, Lahore, and other colonial cities of the country. Though few Assamese artists were trained to work in the western style of painting under the influence of western academic schools since the 1930s, no art school was established either by the colonial rulers or by the state government in Assam. In this context, this write-up will present the journey of not only Shobha Brahma's personal journey as an artist but also his contribution to propagating modern thought through representational art.

**Introduction**

One of the most essential names and pioneering personalities in the field of establishing modernist languages of art in Assam is Shobha Brahma (1930-2012), who individually embarked on a never-ending search of experimental pictorial linguistics. He was born into a humble Bodo tribal family in Kokrajhar, Assam, and eventually emerged as a stalwart painter and sculptor who gave a contemporary stroke to the art of the north-eastern region, where he literally single-handedly developed an era of modernist practice of painting and sculpting in the region. Brahma completed his studies in art at Kala Bhavana at Santiniketan in 1957. Soon after returning home, he started to teach private art classes in Guwahati, and in 1960 he joined the School of Arts and Crafts, which later became the Government College of Arts and Craft, where he became the principal in 1964.

His artistic journey had begun under the influence of the unprecedented and quintessential history of Bengal School that laid the foundation of Indian modernity during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, and which continued to the avant-garde artistic practices seen in the works of Ramkinkar Baij and Binode Bihari Mukherjee, establishing a very independent nature of modernism in art. Undeniably, the formations of Calcutta Artist Group and Bombay School of Artists in 1940s, in true sense, brought in the occidental idiom of contemporary modern art within the indigenous artistic practices, genetically mixing and altering the radical structure of Indian creative instincts. The names like Raza, Souza, Hussain, Ram Kumar and Tayeb Mehta are accounted synonymous with the evolution of distinctive language of modernity under the light of Western modernism. Even during later 1960s and 70s artists like K. G. Subramanyan, Ganesh Payne and Bikash Bhattacharya became the torch bearers of experimental modernity associated with individually stylised Indian art practices. It is within this context that Shobha Brahma becomes an important figure for discussion vis-à-vis Assam because being trained under the two leading Master artists of Santiniketan, Nandalal Bose and Ramkinkar Baij, Brahma planted and enhanced a creative idiom that was at once avant-garde and ahead of his time in innovation.

He was very much idealistically inspired by the individualist and uncompromising modernism of Ramkinkar - following the vehement spiritual and emotive search for experimentation by breaking the line of convention. Ramkinkar's such fluent and spontaneous interpretations of western yet indigenously and distinctively personalised idioms of pictorial modernity placed much powerful impressions in Shobha Brahma's inner thoughts. His understanding of modern art was again moulded by the liberal creative freedom that he gained from his alma-mater - the Santiniketan School of art and the teachings of Bengal School. He had also closely worked under Dhirendra Krishna Dev Barman and learned the Indian style of painting in tempera technique. In singular expression, his art had evolved as distinctive in style or language under the light of vastly flexible learning procedure involving analytical and experimental studies of both modernist and traditional schools. His pictorial experimentations became much confident mostly involving large expressive surreal biomorphic and organic human forms - often masterfully modulated with toned naturalistic senses or worldly urges of pain, pleasure and eroticism,

which were also deeply connected to personal, social and political contextualities of varied humanist qualities like vigour, joy, romance and atonement; where again in later phases he involved uniquely quasi-abstract organic formalism to the design structures of his representations.

What, however, makes Brahma's creations unique since his early phase is, he projected the subjects from his own socio-cultural environments; the stylised figural forms, vigorous colours and instinctive tones and shades are rendered skilfully in the styles of Santiniketan masters like Ramkinkar, which also spiritually relate to the pictorial characteristics of Assam's plains tribes - the Bodos and Dimasas, the Rabhas and the Karbis and that brought in Brahma's art a prominent social identity strata within the experimental modernist bracket by which he became everyone's own.

One can say that Brahma's evolvement as a modernist painter began during 1950s. He began searching for ways to find a different facet in the art and culture of Assam, different from their seniors in the 1930s and the 1940s. The previous trends had largely followed trails explored by Raja Ravi Varma, along with representations of beautiful rural scape with an Impressionist influence, respectively. Brahma turned out to be more individually prolific than other contemporary artists of Assam in the 1960s. Returning after a long stint at Santiniketan (where he went after graduating from Cotton College, Guwahati, in 1948), he stood at a creative dilemma between locally developed academic traditionalism and experimental modernism. He ultimately moved in a trajectory involving a unique amalgamation of traditional and socio-cultural contextual roots with uniquely modified modernist language. And there began to take shape intensely poetic and symbolic compositions. Amid deep dark surfaces, there was a sudden burst of colours, developing a distinguishing play of formal and chromatic dynamism. He had emerged himself as one of the most powerful artists from his immense volume of works. In his painting the huge transfigured biomorphic forms on his immense canvases always give us certain physical senses of profound vastness, heaviness and monumentality associated with intricate lyrical feelings of psychological, emotional and social complexities. Often these figures seem to be under tension to release themselves from the space that surrounds and holds them, which also develop certain minute and radical contrastive design patterns. The vast area of his paintings is generally

covered with lyrical mysterious dark shades, where suddenly appears a strong gesture of contrasting vibrant colour projecting a vehement force of dynamic design of nature and mind. The use of metaphor and symbolism in his painting proves his deep intellectual dexterity, sometimes the metaphors become so overlapping that the paintings turn to echo his inner complex psychic states.

### **Reading Shobha Brahma's Art**

There are mostly three primary contextual grounds related to his paintings, which are the eternal celebration of strength and humanly urge of femininity, the profound symbolism of socio-political struggles of tribal communities of Assam during the 1980s and 90s, and lastly the quasi abstraction of naturalistic designs. The first contextual aspect is about his own personal psychoanalytical or romanticised view towards the existential struggle and poetic or lyrical depiction of natural eroticism of womanhood, which he mainly devised through centralised metaphoric and organic biomorphic forms along with rich and spontaneous design patterns of natural motifs and also combining visual dynamics of physical motion, cohesively forming a much pictorially heavy surreal view, involving a deep emotive facet of the artist himself. The surreal biomorphic forms against rich and dull chromatic contrasts of space project a more dream like condition involving aspects of personalised expression of eroticism and spiritual romanticism, which is certainly in formal view aided with heavy distortion of organic curvilinear shapes and dense organic textures, altogether projecting a natural sense of vigour and force and that also with a feel of solid weight in the structures and volume, thus, developing a character of strength and emotive lyricism. It is evident that the distortion or formal metamorphosis of figurative structures in relation to spaces in these compositions is also much precisely devised with certain technical features of 'passage' and 'geometricity' of Analytical Cubism, comprehensively developing a sense of quasi-abstraction. Beyond the formal distortions of crude organic forms, a playful idea of poetic sensation or a spiritual contrast between the lightness and heaviness of self being also gets reflected in these compositions.

In case of the second subjective area, Brahma's approach becomes much more direct or upfront in nature, where he had used much aggressive and clear symbolisms of attacking tigers and wounds and blood depicting the

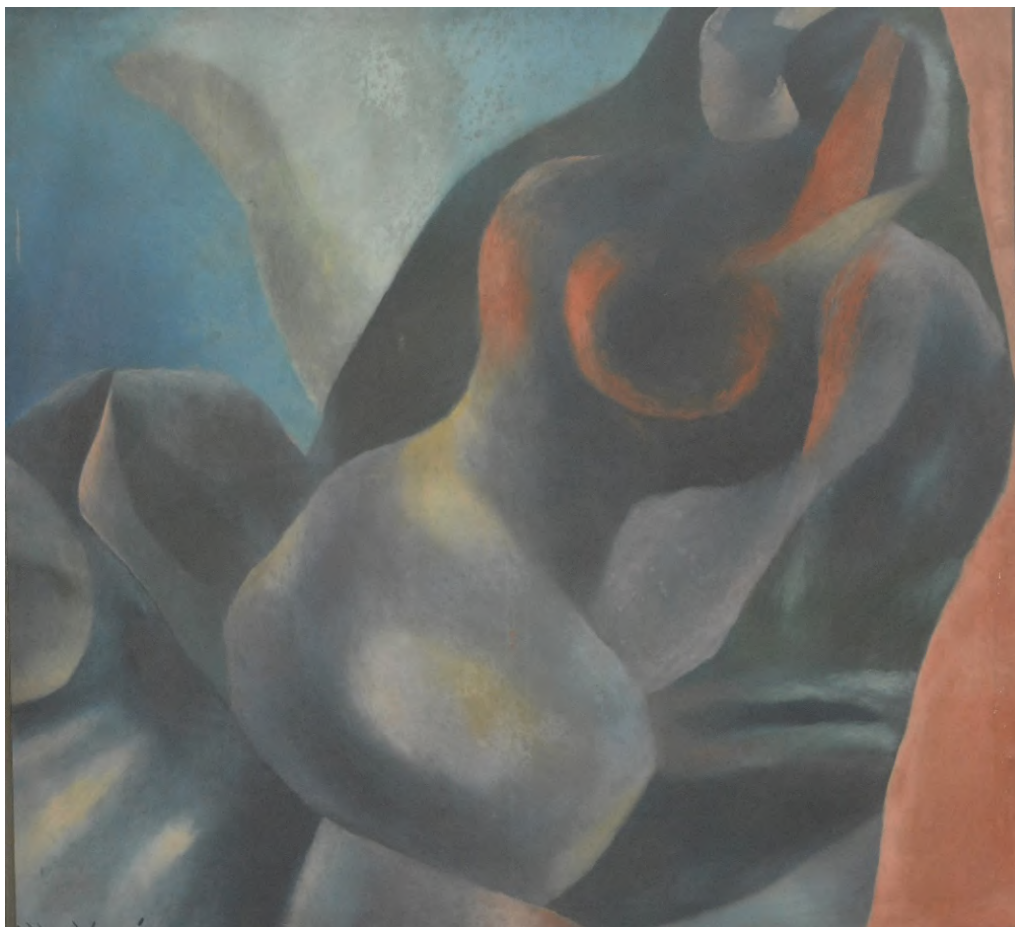
terror, power and struggle of socio-political unrest of his times. Unlike the lyrical and organic biomorphic forms of womanhood and rich mystique designs of natural spaces, the socio-political symbolisms in this case appear more prominent as pictorial narratives, sharply projecting the artist's personal statement about the actual political scenario. The symbolisms and metaphors of vehemently gestured tigers and anguished faces of women with flag and suggestions of wounds create a theatrical stage to clarify his idealistic view towards the contemporary political turmoil and violence related to the struggle for liberation of tribal communities along with developing a complex grade of surreal idioms. Also, an evident aspect of raw and radical crudeness or distortion in drawing of faces and figures in these compositions reaches a truthful characteristic of pure expressionistic reaction towards depictions of various social characters. In most of his paintings we find a strong and conscious romanticised and dramatic intention towards construction of forms or in depicting a narration.

The third genre of abstraction of simple natural designs and spaces in his compositions mostly reveal a soft playful and sensitive poetic side of the artist's personality, which mainly involve the aspects of decorative geometricity. The representations of natural forms, figures and spaces have been broken down and re-arranged in much balanced and geometric designs of Cubistic format, developing an organised pattern of rhythm, stability and colour field. Again, a prominent factor of caricature like distortions of faces can be observed in these design-based compositions, giving them a more critical and sensitively psychoanalytical subjective angle of socio-political characterization. The distortive faces become the critique of the society itself, some reflecting the essence of satire, some physique projecting an essence of carnal desire along with the intricate subject of self-introspection of the artist himself, proving a distinctive modernist tendency in the stylised forms. Expressionistic stylisation and surrealistic quasi-abstraction have always been the most essential parts of Shobha Brahma's experimentations in developing certain modernist language in the context of the regional art practices in Assam. His enduring dedication and sole individual venture of developing a personal modernist pictorial style, merging both the contexts and formalism of local and worldly cultures, ignited the light of modernity in

the field of art practice in Assam during mid to late 20th century as can be read from the paintings presented here for reference.

**Plates:**

1. Oil on Canvas, 1987



2. Oil on Canvas, 1987



3. Oil on Canvas, 1987



4. Oil on Canvas, 1996

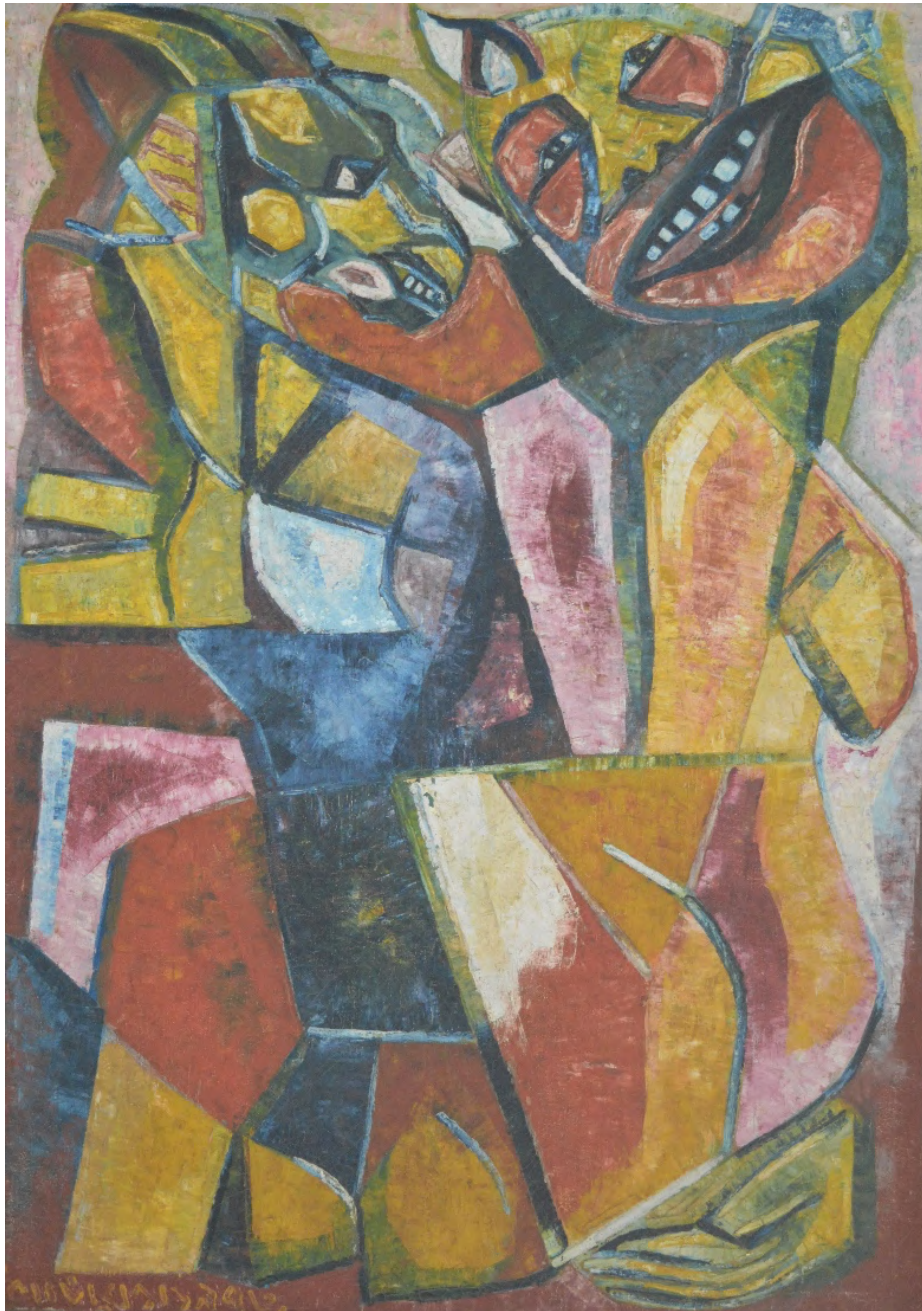


5. Title- Home My Home, Oil on Canvas, 2008





6. Oil on Canvas, 1973



7. Oil on Canvas, 1971



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*For comments: Please write to, [Editor@Borodiaspora.org](mailto:Editor@Borodiaspora.org)*



## ***Reclaiming Boro Place Names***

***Author: Pinuel Basumatary***

### **ABSTRACT**

Changing or modifying place names is a call of history that nations follow at various points in time. The purpose and motivations vary from time to time and place to place. The most common and important reasons for this exercise are to reclaim cultural heritage, right historical wrongs and strengthen identity of the ethnic, linguistic and cultural groups involved, the region and the nation. In the context of the Boros, their village names have lost official recognition over time and it is now felt that traditional Boro names should be reclaimed by following procedures laid down in this behalf by the respective authorities.

### **INTRODUCTION**

Every time I see the sign of a village inhabited predominantly or entirely by Boros in Assam such as Khanthalguri or Khasibari, I wonder why the sign there calls those villages 'Kothalguri' or 'Kahibari' and not by the respective names by which the native inhabitants call their village. Obviously, the names on the signs are the Assamese language version. The usage disregards the local language, Boro (I prefer this spelling to the official 'Bodo'). There could be place names in other indigenous languages such as Rabha and Mising which might have suffered similar fate.

### **THE CAUSE FOR THE DISTORTION**

This phenomenon is clearly a case of distortion or corruption of local geographical names to suit the pronunciation system of one's own native speech. Naming of Fakhribari as Pakribari, or Zamphrabari (or Jamphrabari) as Jhaphrabari in Assamese further illustrates this process. The process also involves calque (loan translation) of the name from Boro into Assamese. Mwidher Khoro > Hatimatha in Kokrajhar is a telling example of this. Other examples are aplenty.

Lack of knowledge of the pronunciation of the name in the local language would be one of the reasons for the distortion. The current spelling of the name of the Udalguri town in English (and Hindi in the sign of the railway station) is a case in point. The name of the place is said to have come from the Boro name of the tree, 'odal'. Although, in this case, the Assamese spelling is closer to the original, it is not clear as to why the English spelling of the name had to begin with 'u'. The current spelling of the name of Kokrajhar (may be originated from *khungkhra jahar*) too does not sound like a Boro word. It uses two sounds 'k' and 'jh' which are typically not in the Boro phonemic inventory. Opinions about the original name vary. Clearly, more research is required on this name that should determine the authentic geographical name in the local language. Rectifying a historical wrong in this case will have a symbolic importance, the town being the capital of the Boro territory.

It is a universal experience that places are named in the language of the people who predominantly inhabit the area and that such names are in sync with their culture and tradition. This is largely not the case with Boroland. Reasons could be many, the most important among them being three. Firstly, the Boros cohabit in their homeland with people of other ethnic, cultural and language groups who indeed are now in the majority. The second reason could be Boros' lack of a written system despite having an undying language and strong cultural traits. A situation of seize by dominating Aryanised-Sanskritised culture coming from the neighbouring areas and the gradual loss of political power and influence could be the third significant reason for this anomaly.

### **RECLAIMING THE HERITAGE**

Is there a case for reclaiming the original place names? We have discussed this matter briefly in the Boro Diaspora Forum. The general opinion is that there is. Through this write-up I wish to take this conversation forward and to provide further perspective on the subject.

It is noted that Boros have recognised the appropriateness of naming their new settlements in their own language. Thus, new areas in the towns and villages set up by the members of the community in the northern areas of Sonitpur, Biswanath, Dhemaji and Golaghat districts in the last half a century or so are mostly named in Boro. Consequently, names such as Mainaosri, Gwzwnphuri, Swrang Hador, Rwmwijuli, Sudemphuri and the like are rather common.

### **THE PRACTICE WORLDWIDE**

Many countries have adopted a policy of changing place names by either standardising the spelling, or going back to the original names or giving entirely new names. Large scale changes have happened as part of the decolonisation process in the countries that gained independence in the mid-twentieth century. Indian cities have attained new forms of name such as Thiruvananthapuram replacing the Anglicised, meaningless Trivandrum. In Assam, Nowgong has become Nagaon and Gauhati has become Guwahati. Streets have been renamed in most cities. In Kolkata (itself a mutation from Calcutta), the first capital of British India, most streets used to bear English names. Since Independence, they are being continually renamed after national and State leaders involved in India's freedom movement, social reforms and after cultural icons.

Some names are prompted by political ideologies and considerations. A good example is renaming of Harrington Street to Ho Chi Mihn Sarani during the Vietnam War. Renaming of this street on which the American Consulate is located was meant to give a strong message to the United States fighting communism at the time.

Preserving cultural heritage can motivate a desire to change names of cities. The recent renaming of Gurgaon as Gurugram, the name connected with the Mahabharata story of Guru Dronacharya is said to be restoration of the historical name. Likewise, renaming Allahabad as Prayag Raj is considered to bear cultural significance.

## **RESISTANCE AND WAY FORWARD**

Any move to reclaim the original or traditional Boro names by way of official restoration can be expected to meet with resistance. This is but natural human tendency. In his essay “Place Names in Multicultural Societies”, the Norwegian Social Anthropologist Thomas Hylland Eriksen makes this observation: “However, resistance to such changes can be stubborn and vehement” and cites the unsuccessful initiatives over the years to have a street or small square in Oslo named after one of the country’s finest novelists.

One of the solutions to such resistance could be to adopt the tradition prevalent in European countries and cities where the same geographical name could bear different names in different languages. Germany is the English name for the country which Germans themselves call Deutschland, the French Allemagne, the Italians Germania, the Spaniards Alemania and so on. England is Inglaterra to the Spaniards. Italy is Italia in the native Italian language, Italie in French and Italien in German, Danish and Swedish. (From the point of view of this tradition, the move to drop the name ‘India’ from the name of our country is wholly unwarranted. In any case, according to the Constitution of the country, India and Bharat are one and the same thing, “India, that is Bharat”.)

Ditto for cities. The German city by the River Rhine, Cologne is Koeln to its inhabitants and Colonia to the Spanish and the Italians. Likewise, the German city, Aachen is called Aix-La-Chapelle (of the 1748 treaty fame) in French and English. Munich is actually Muenchen in High German, and the Italians call it Monaco!

In a multilingual society such as ours, places can be expected to have more than one name. In my opinion, it would be expedient not to seek to have a common name in all languages. The status quo of the Assamese form of the name can be maintained while having the Boro form of the name recognised by competent authorities. As regards the name in languages other than the Assamese, the Boro form should be followed, the reason being they are not local languages and have no historical reasons. In other words, ‘Odalguri’ will be the form of the name in the English, Hindi and all other non-Assamese languages.

There would naturally be names of many villages which are originally in Assamese owing to their original inhabitants. Such names should be left untouched.

The name of the place where one is born and raised has always a special place in his heart. It has to do with his/her emotions, sentiments and indeed his/her spiritual being. In his essay “Place Names in Multicultural Societies”, Thomas Hylland Eriksen of University of Oslo states that place names give a sense of belonging and attachment which he describes by the German word *Heimatsgefuehl*.

Reclaiming the traditional Boro and other tribes' names of places in the Boro heartland is necessary to reclaim the identity of the indigenous people. When this is achieved it will be a powerful tool to promote pride of the culture and language of the people whose self-confidence has suffered from marginalisation for long.

There is an underside to changing place names. It can cause division, misunderstanding and a sense of exclusion among communities. It can give in to politicisation and distortion of history.

### **CONCLUSION**

When an exercise to propose and effect official recognition of place names in the indigenous languages is undertaken care must be taken to avoid the pitfalls mentioned above and instead aim at upholding the principles of inclusivity and the ideal of fraternity as contained in the Constitution of our nation.

The procedures that have been laid down by authorities for effecting change of place names will require to be followed and proposals taken up with competent authorities such as the municipal body, the State Government, and so on.

### **REFERENCE**

“Place Names in Multicultural Societies”, Thomas Hylland Eriksen, University of Oslo in the Journal Osla.

*The author can be reached at [pinuel@hotmail.com](mailto:pinuel@hotmail.com)*

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## ***The Boros at the Crossroads***



***Author: Jayanta Kumar Basumatary, MSc & PhD,  
Guwahati, Assam.***

*All of us, as human beings, love our own people and want to see them thrive & flourish. Without going into the history of our community, as I am not an expert in it, I believe there are some important issues, briefly described below, that, in my view are worth looking at, and relevant at present day scenario, for a community like ours, to steer the journey of our lives to a brighter future.*

### **Language & Literature**

One of the biggest assets of our community is our language. We can proudly say that *Boro* (or *Bodo*) is the mother language of many ethnic groups, not only in Assam, North East & Bengal, but also of the significant number of ethnic communities living in neighbouring countries like Bangladesh & Nepal. We must be proud of the status of our language. Due to the sacrifice and efforts made by many individuals and the *Boro Sahitya Sabha* (BSS) or the *Boro Thunlai Afad*, now the *Boro* is an Associate Official Language of Assam and one of the languages included in the 8th Schedule of our country's constitution. So, every year, one from *Boro* community or anyone writing books in *Boro* language, is also eligible for national award like the *Sahitya Academy award*. In fact, this is a big achievement considering that the *Boros* constitute a mere fraction of 140 crores population of the country.

However, does this mean that the *Boros* should continue to write exclusively in *Boro*? The *Boro Thunlai Afad* should earnestly encourage and support our people's efforts to write in and translate to other languages, given our limited

audience and the likelihood of our writings and thoughts reaching larger audiences. In addition to acknowledging those who write books in *Boro*, we should also acknowledge those *Boros* who write books in other languages and those who translate books from other languages into *Boro*. Failure to do so could lead to the alienation of our own people, who can compete with other communities within their own backyard.

Also, the *Boro Thunlai Afad* and the *All Boro Students Union (ABSU)*, in addition to recognizing the achievers from the *Boro* medium curriculum, the achievers amongst our boys and girls from other medium like Assamese, English and Hindi, should also be recognized and rewarded equitably. Such efforts shall help eliminate the sense of alienation amongst our boys and girls, who are otherwise compelled to pursue their studies in other mediums due to geographical locations & absence of *Boro* medium schools in their vicinities.

### **Education & Literacy**

Education plays a crucial role in the development of a community, and it empowers the people. Literacy implies

the ability to read and write, and is a quantitative term, on the other hand education defines quality of the system and the people, and plays much bigger role in the overall development of communities. Attaining a desired level of literacy can be achieved through mass movement with government support. However, achieving the desired level of education depends on the prevalent systems, laid down curriculum, and individual efforts of the teacher and the students.

Present literacy rate of *the Boros* is about 75%. Raising this level in a short span of time shall be difficult, as majority of illiterate amongst us are adults, women and more precisely, the poor and aged amongst us. It is desirable that all of our people become literate, so that all of us become aware of what is happening around us, what the state & central governments are doing for the upliftment of its citizens, particularly the weaker section of the society and Scheduled Caste (SC) and Scheduled Tribe (ST)s. As long as the large section of our people remain illiterate, we shall be deprived of the basic privileges provided by our governments. Therefore, it is imperative that required steps be taken by the people at helms of the society & governance to achieve 100% literacy rates amongst us.

Almost 90% of our people live in villages and small towns. Therefore, the level and quality of education provided in the schools in the Boro-dominated areas are not comparable to those available in other communities and in bigger cities. It is mainly due to non-availability of knowledgeable, experienced, adequately trained qualified teachers, putting majority of our youths in disadvantageous position *vis-à-vis* the boys and girls of other communities. Learnings in school are the building blocks for a solid

foundation for our boys and girls future.

The only way to come out of such situation is to employ qualified and knowledgeable teachers and train them to enhance their skills. The other way is the efforts to be made by the students themselves, by studying hard with sincerity, dedication, and perseverance. Our boys and girls need to understand that there is no substitute for hard work, and they should not be complacent and remain in the comfort zone of "Reservation Quota", which is to be shared by other ST communities. Those bright boys and girls should aim to secure seats along with the general category students, so that the seats in the reserved category can be filled with more ST boys and girls. This way our representation in colleges, universities & employment will increase. The efforts put in by BTR administration in opening coaching centres at Kokrajhar, like Super-50, for preparing our boys & girls from BTR region for JEE, NEET and Civil Services, are laudable. More such centres should be opened in other places within the BTR region.

### **Careers & Employment**

As one grows and becomes an adult, it is paramount that one has own means of livelihood. Now the question is, are there employment opportunities for everyone to pursue & live with the same career? The answer is, all of us will not be employed and shall not get opportunity to follow the same career path. Therefore, career counselling and guidance are very essential in students' life. It must be done in the high school itself, so that our boys and girls can identify their core competencies and strengths & weaknesses, choose their stream of studies and finally aim for their identified or chosen career path. Not all of our boys and girls will excel in science. Similarly, not all of them can become civil servants, engineers &



doctors. Also, not all of them will become lawyers & judges. It is also certain that many of our boys and girls may not be able to become graduates and they may have to confine themselves to looking for low paid & menial jobs. If one is good in studies, he or she shall excel in any stream, and as career path converges after graduation and post-graduation, it shall entirely depend on one's dedication, sincerity and hard work. For those young boys and girls, unable to pursue higher studies, there are plenty of opportunities to be grabbed through vocational courses in institutes like ITIs. Moreover, our boys and girls should not shy away from taking up employments in armies, factories, travel & tourism, hospitality, hotel management and catering, health care, building and road constructions, etc.

It is 2024 and the time has changed, and competition has become tougher with qualified boys and girls from other ST communities also vying for the same opportunities. For example, the absence of names of successful Boro boys and girls in UPSC civil & other central services and negligible selection in central PSUs & bank jobs are some of the glaring examples. Even in state civil services, the number of our boys & girls getting selected for Class-I cadres are not significant enough, and most of the seats are being captured by other ST communities of Assam itself. Therefore, it is very essential for our boys and girls to study hard with sincerity & dedication. There is no harm in aiming for the top-most of the employment opportunities, but one should remember such opportunities are few and difficult to achieve. As long as one follows own passion and choose career based on core competencies, he or she shall always be successful and a happy person in life.

### **Agriculture & Farming**

Agriculture shall continue to remain the primary occupation of *Boros*. But gone are the days when every family used to have herd of cattle to till the paddy fields & could easily hire workers. These days, it is observed that most of the *Boro* families are not interested in earning livelihood through agriculture & farming. This is despite that *Boros* have the required inherent skills for agriculture & farming, passed on from generation to generation. The waning interest may be attributed to people aspiring to earn livelihood by doing white collar jobs. Also decreasing crop yields, inability to breed and maintain cattle, non-existence of proper irrigation system, non-availability of workers for hiring and above all, small land holdings, are making agriculture & farming non-viable for many *Boro* families.

Despite all these, there are a few *Boros* who are excelling with their dedication and sincere efforts in agriculture & farming like *Padmashri Shri Sarbeswar Basumatry*, Assam Gaurav *Shri Monoj Basumatary* in pig farming and *Shri Tenzing Bodosa* in Tea Plantation. Such ventures may not be achievable for every *Boro* families in the villages, but with adoption of modern mechanized methods, learning the techniques from the experts & from the experience of other region like Punjab, overcoming the disadvantages of small land holding through group or cooperative farming, and with government supports and supervision, the past glories can be brought back. This will be a reality when the *Boro* youths take up agriculture and farming also as one of the means of livelihood with right earnest.

### **Games & Sports**

The *Boros* have been exposed to mainly the game of football, with occasional excellence in the sports like boxing and

archery. The Government has also established coaching centres for football, boxing & archery in Boro dominated areas within the BTR region. We have produced national level footballers like *Shri Pradip Brahma, Shri Holicharan Narzary, and Ms. Apurna Narzary*, boxers like *Ms. Ankushita Boro, Ms. Fwilao Basumatary* and *Ms. Jamuna Boro* and in archery many *Boros* generally represent Assam and many government departments and in the armies. Usually, it is observed that *Boro* boys and girls excel in games & sports at sub-junior & junior levels. However, their performances fade as they grow older and as a result, *Boro* youths are not able to get their places at senior levels to represent the country.

The main reason is the poor economic background of the families of these youths and the absence of proper coaching and proper guidance. As they come from poor families, getting employed in government departments and in armies becomes the primary objectives to earn their livelihood, and as a result, they become complacent and lose the urge to excel further. Our talented youths should, therefore, be identified, supported, provided with the best available infrastructure and coaching. They should also be mentored and taught to dedicate, learn continuously with perseverance, and aim to represent the state and the country.

Games and sports, apart from being a passion for an individual, is also turning out to be rewarding career for many individuals around the world. There are plenty of examples like basketball players of US, footballers of Europe and Latin America, Indian cricketers and many more, like professional boxers and wrestlers. Our youths should also look for opportunities and earn their livelihood

through the games and sports, instead of looking for ever dwindling government jobs. This calls for not looking only at usual games of football, boxing, and archery, and instead venture into sports like athletics, cricket, hokey, kabaddi, tennis, badminton, wrestling etc. People at the helm of BTR administration should allocate sufficient funds to campaign, provide infrastructures and get our youths trained.

### **Financial Literacy & Independence**

Financial literacy refers to understanding a variety of important financial skills and concepts. A strong foundation of financial literacy can help support various life goals, such as saving for children's education or plan for retirement, etc. Financial independence, on the other hand, refers to financial security with enough funds for emergencies and every day as well as future requirements.

Talking of finance, more precisely personal finance, is a distressing topic in our society. But nothing moves in our lives without money. Whatever we do to improve our lives largely depends on our financial capability. We all take up employment and pursue a career to provide for ourselves and our families with the best of amenities by becoming financially independent. Here, the focus should be on those large sections of our community who are in lower pay brackets or earn just to sustain their livelihood. Consider the present cost of higher education, which every parent aspires to provide to their children:

- B.Tech./BE in partially government funded colleges: ~Rs.8 Lakh.
- MBBS in reputed private colleges for entire course: >Rs.50 Lakh.

- IIMs for 2 years MBA degree:  
~Rs.20 Lakh.

Here comes the necessity of financial planning. With proper planning & starting early investment, these requirements can be achieved. As we begin the journey with our career, we should start early to set aside at least 10-20% of our monthly income by investing in well-meaning financial products (not in bank FDs alone). We need to appreciate the power of compounding. The investment should preferably be in equity mutual funds for long terms. The expected returns in mutual funds @ 12% annual rate of return are as follows:

- Monthly investment of Rs.3000/- without break for 25 years: ~Rs.57 Lakh.
- If one continues for 30 years, the final corpus works out to: ~Rs.1.0 Crore.

This way, even those people in lower pay bracket can plan to accumulate the fund needed for their child's education, his/her retirement, etc. Finally, one must always remember to purchase a term life insurance cover for self at a young age as a safeguard for their dependents to take care of any unfortunate eventualities.

### **Conclusions**

*We all wish and like to see our people, particularly the youths, thriving and flourishing in every sphere of their lives. With our rich language, culture and tradition, if we all become literate and educated, we will have the drive to work harder with sincerity and devotion and, if we all become financially literate and independent, no other community or group can suppress us for ever.*

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*For comments: Please write to, [Editor@Borodiaspora.org](mailto:Editor@Borodiaspora.org)*



## ***Identity and Crisis of Bodo Language***

***Author: Dr. Dulen Basumatary***  
*Vice-Principal, Salbari College*

### **Introduction**

The North-East India is home to numerous ethnic groups with varied culture and traditions, language, heritage, political ideology, thinking, etc. Whatever the demographic make-up of these groups, they always maintain their distinct traits and ethos. Strong senses of ego and nationalism have bound them together. There may be cultural and ideological conflicts between groups, but they also show strong affinity and camaraderie.

The ego conflicts among various ethnic groups have resulted in an identity crisis in the region. Imposing an alien culture on a small ethnic group can have significant and difficult-to-understand consequences. This has led to a strong statement against the leftover effects of imposition.

### **The Meaning of Ethnic Identity**

The term 'ethnic identity' has become a significant topic of discussion in today's modern world. Identity, or more clearly, 'ethnic identity', emerged as the topic of discussion after the Second World War. The postcolonial period's rampant social change created the backdrop. If an entity undergoes constant change without any interruption, it could completely disappear.

Ethnic identity is generally defined as the collective identity of a group or groups that share the same psychological attachment. One's ancestry, values, culture, language, and religion are manifestations of the psychological attachment. According to Kurt Lewin, a German psychologist, an individual needs a firm sense of group identification in order to maintain a sense of well-being. People express their sense of group identification or ethnic identity when they face obstacles to the flow of ethnic culture, discrimination, or heritage sabotage from larger entities. When we refer to 'ethnic identity' or 'ethnic communities', we are referring to smaller groups that have distinct cultural features and traits, based on demographic data. This concept can be applied to existing tribal groups, which are characterized by their ethnolinguistic characteristics.

Ethnic communities are essentially the aboriginal people of a particular region or scattered regions from the past; many of these communities may have established significant kingdoms and made significant contributions to the development of the region's civilization. Due to various factors, these communities became minorities and faced dominance from larger entities and their identities, thereby posing a significant threat to their continued existence.

The UNO concludes, “Indigenous communities, peoples, and nations are those which, having a historical continuity with pre-invasion and pre-colonial societies that developed on their territories, consider themselves distinct from other sectors of the societies now prevailing on those territories, or parts of them. They form at present non-dominant sectors of society and are determined to preserve, develop, and transmit to future generations their ancestral territories and their ethnic identity as the basis of their continued existence as peoples, in accordance with their own cultural patterns, social institutions, and legal system.”

### **Identity Crisis**

Eric H. Erikson coined the term 'identity crisis'. The term 'identity crisis' in a community context refers to the fear of losing the ego of a community, which can manifest in the form of language, culture, religion, and livelihood. Losing these ethnic features will result in the total extinction of a community. So, fear of loss of ethnic identity or identity crisis leads to the growth of ethno-nationalism or nativism.

Ethno nationalism has something to do with the feeling of exclusion. The fear of losing a group's ego in the context of democratic rights, which the Constitution aims to protect, contributes to exclusion, given that the Constitution's framers classified indigenous people as tribesmen. Tribals and indigenous people experienced a sense of alienation upon realizing their democratic rights, as their subjective needs for development were not satisfied. After India's independence, the state government tried to integrate developmental schemes, but the intermediate and vested sections were not interested in implementing rights and privileges intended for the development of the weaker sections of society. Big guns of Assamese literature juxtaposed the purposeful intention that had crept into the heart of the implementing sections, while a handful of non-governmental organizations sabotaged the privileges meant for the tribals or ethnic groups. The process of assimilation unfolds naturally, and hastening it to shorten its duration risks suffocating the culture. As it turned out, the execution of the assimilation process was excessively harsh, filled with hatred, and hostile. The tribal people stood upright rather than leaning toward assimilation. Tribals' oblivious minds shape the concept of ethno-nationalism in its truest sense at this juncture.

The sense of exclusion was evident in various spheres of ethnic life. These were visible in the economy, politics, religion, social and civic treatment, employment, etc. The policy of exclusion is a deliberate policy of the majority, and it tends to give assimilation a more smooth process! Ironically, despite the merger, the assimilated part of the ethnic people continued to feel alienated. In the context of North-East India, "the ethnic group involved in the cultural identity movement typically asserts its identity around specific social problems, which intimately leads to demands from the state to preserve its cultural heritage, language, etc." (Pakem, B.)

The Bodos of Assam are an ethnolinguistic group with a unique identity and culture. Their language and other ethnic characteristics bind them together. According to the 2019 census, 14,54,547 people (14,82,929 in 2011) speak the Bodo language. The Bodos were the earliest settlers, i.e., indigenous people of North East India, and left a significant political legacy. They established the first civilization in north-east India, primarily in Assam.

Multiple factors led this community to become an ethnic minority, posing a serious threat to their identity, culture, and traditions. In a democratic country like India, peaceful coexistence of all ethnic minorities is a pre-requisite condition for safeguarding democratic values. We must guarantee the democratic rights granted to individuals or groups. The Bodo, also known as the tribals of north-east India, have suffered from maltreatment and assimilation. Naturally, the Bodos, by any means, wanted to safeguard their identity and culture. Datta asserts that the prevailing socio-cultural and socio-political trends determine ethnicity. Previously passed down consciously but silently from one generation to another, ethnicity has now become a matter of open declaration, even loud public display.

### **Ethnicity and Language**

The relationship between language and ethnicity is complex, as both terms are inherently elusive. Of course, language is inextricably linked with the question of ethnicity. It is considered the primary and single most important ingredient for an ethnic community's survival. While other community features may not serve as markers in the cultural milieu of neighboring groups, language can serve as a deliberate symbol of differentiation. On the other hand, when it appears in composite form, it plays a multifaceted role in imbuing common sense among the people of that community.

As the majority language advances, it is common for minority language groups to merge into the larger one. The census predicts the loss of 90% of the 7,000 languages currently spoken worldwide by 2050. In India, the total number of spoken languages at present, from smallest to

largest, is around 445. There are 22 scheduled languages among them, while the remaining languages remain unscheduled. Methodical overshadowing of smaller languages by dominant ones plays a very crucial role in the extinction of smaller languages. This process encompasses both forceful or gradual assimilation, as well as the loss of democratic rights. Moreover, the dominant groups' exclusion policies significantly contribute to the emergence of ethno-nationalism among the marginalized groups. Such distressed groups use their most potent weapon, the piercing crux, to assert themselves in the oblivious world of culture and language.

### **Historical Evidences**

In 1960, the Assam State Language Bill was passed, which categorically imposed Assamese on the tribal people of the North-East India. The bill aimed to safeguard Assamese identity through Assamese language. The imposition of the Assamese language has threatened the identity of the tribal people, igniting an ethno-national zeal among them. The imposition of the Assamese language attempted to undermine the tribal people's identity, leading them to feel alienated. The immediate response led to the creation of Nagaland (1963) based on language. Similarly, language led to the separation of Mizoram, Meghalaya, and Arunachal Pradesh.

In 1972, large-scale ethnic clashes broke out in Assam when the Assam government declared Assamese as the sole medium of instruction in Gauhati University and Dibrugarh University. These two incidents clearly demonstrate the Assamese people's intention to impose linguistic hegemony on other communities, a result of their fear of losing their own language.

### **Language is the Benchmark of Assertion**

Definitely, language is the first criterion of ethnic consciousness. As for the Bodos, inclusion of their language into the Eight Schedule in 2004 was the first and foremost dream. The establishment of various organizations by Bodo vanguards, later on the birth of Bodo Sahitya Sabha (BSS) in the year 1952, and subsequent agenda undertaken to usher the Bodo language clearly withstand the hegemony of others. Sir Gait did express his concern regarding the existence of the Bodo language. He had foreseen the coming future and stated that the "complete disappearance is only a matter of time." But Gait is wrong.

After the Six Schedule arrangement under the Constitution of India in the Bodo-dominated area, they received tremendous scope for self-determination and for molding a situation for envisioning a bright future of their own. Nobody can deny the fact that only language and culture could defend an ethnic community for a longer period, provided that the level of their consciousness in case of understanding the need of having uniqueness in offering

their best in its development. A solemn legacy should be guaranteed for handing down a prolific service to the end.

Notwithstanding, if someone evaluates the workings of the Bodos for the development of their language and literature, the picture is not encouraging; rather, one will see a meager sight. This would corroborate the tendency that always tries to suspend its finger for grabbing the chances of assimilation.

On the other hand, ethnic languages are always under serious threat as the ghost of the English language is transparent anywhere in the path of vernacular language, cutting across the safeguard of ethnic identity based on language. Basically, the commonwealth nations have an impactful weakness towards the English language, as these countries experienced British as their English teacher! As of 2019, there are 55 sovereign states and 27 non-sovereign entities where English is an official language. Can there be any compromise between ethnic identity and English learning?

It is a great irony that ethnic assertion is stronger among nations with commonwealth. The continuous weakness toward the foreign language will lead to gradual and silent assimilation. In today's globalized world, no one can deny the importance of English as the primary means of communication. However, ethnic identity ensures that one's dream of a deliberate cultural identity never diminishes at the expense of another language. We do not subscribe to the utopian notion of a composite culture emerging from a multitude of languages. Time cruelly reveals that the aspiration of ethnicity will never abandon human psychology; instead, it will intensify in assertiveness as ethnic groups grow increasingly conscious of their democratic rights and historical background, proving the adage "history repeats itself."

The sixth schedule arrangement in the region has provided increased opportunities for making our self-identity stronger than ever. Intelligent political maneuvering in the region will foster building ethnic wealth and create opportunities for cultural marketing. Some of the factors that could elevate the Bodo language to greater heights are the number of speakers of the mother tongue, its introduction as a medium of instruction, a strong sense of ethno-nationalism, a strong sense of belonging, faith in one's own mother tongue, love and affection for the mother tongue, a sense of pride when speaking even in a foreign place, pride in one's own language and its independence from neighboring languages, the creation of abundant literature, and the translation of literature into other languages.



## **Concluding remarks**

Ethnic identity is a matter of pride for any community. Every individual or group has the right to cherish their unique culture. Ethnic identity always starts with language, and it is the parameter of the ethnic community's survival. Only by making the vernacular language a compulsory medium of instruction, an ethnic community can achieve longevity. Only adhering to speaking the language will never serve the purpose of our great Bodoland Movement and the dream of Bodofa. We must guarantee a robust medium of instruction in the region, and as a Bodo, it's crucial to maintain a strong sense of integrity. The Government of India has placed significant emphasis on learning both national and local languages in the NEP 2020 plan. As a singular entity, the hunger for survival will determine who will rule the land.

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[For comments: Please write to, Editor@Borodiaspora.org](mailto:Editor@Borodiaspora.org)



## आंगुबै: मोनसे थुनलायारि बिजिरथि



प्र. इन्दिरा बर'

### 1.0. जागायनाय:

“आंगुबै”आ बर' आइजोफोरनि गिबिसिन लाइसि। बेयो नुजादोंमोन बांला 1356 पुस दानाव थामहिनवा 1950 मायथाइनि जानुवारी दानावा बर' आरो असमीया मोननै रावजों दिहुननाय बे लाइसिनि सुजुगिरिया फारियै बर' बाहागोनि थाखाय हरेश्वरी ब्रह्म आरो असमीया बाहागोनि थाखाय निरुपमा नार्जियारी। गौथुमनि मासिगिरि महरै दडमोन हरेश्वरी हाज'वारी बिथाडा। बे लाइसिखौ बिथांमोनहा आखाइजोंनो लिरनानै दिहुनदोंमोन। बिथांमोनहा बे लाइसिखौ दानथामारि महरै दिहुनलांनो थांखि लादोंमोन। भारत उदांमिनि नै बोसोर उनावनो जोबोर दुखु दाहा सहायनानै दिहुननाय आइजोफोरनि बे लाइसिया थारैनो जोंनि बर' थुनलाइथिलियाव मोनसे जारिमिनारि बेसेनथि थानायजों लोगोसे थुनलाइ थिलिनि गुबैयै बर' आइजो लिरगिरि मुलुगनि मोनसे माइल खुन्थिया।

### 2.0. सावरायनाय:

बे सावराय बिदाडाव “आंगुबै” लाइसिया माबादि थुनलायारि थाखोनि सोरजि बेखौनो सावरायलांनो लानाय जादों। मासिगिरि हरेश्वरी हाज'वारी बिथाडा गावनि गहारियाव एरै मख'दों-“साहित्ये शैछे जातिब वाहन स्वरूप। एठा जातिब उन्नति अन्नतिब मूल काबन शैछे साहित्य। किन्नो यि जातिब साहित्य नाई सेई जातिब आकाल भडान अक्रोबेई नाई बुनिब पाबि।” बबेखानि बुंनाय दड बोद्ला बोद्ल सिन बोब्लानो सावगारि जाया, थिग बेबादिनो लिरब्लानो थुनलाइ जाजोवनो हाया। नाथाय बिब्दि होननानै दिनैसिम रावबो रोखायै बुंनोबो हायाखैदि माबादि लिरनायफोरा थुनलाइ जागोन।

थुनलाइया सुबुं जिउनि रिफिखांनाय। सुबुं जिउ सोलिथायानो थुनलाइनि गुदि फुंखा। थुनलाइ सोरजियाव मैखोम बिफाव लायो रावा। रावा सुबुं गोसो सानमिखौ फोरमायग्रा मोनसे बिजों। बेबादिनो फारि फारि जौगाबोनाय सुबुं हारिया सानमि मोनदांथिनि आबुं फोरमायथिनि थाखाय थुनलाइ सोरजिनायनि बिबानखौ वाननानै

लाबाया। सानस्रि बोदोर सुबुं गोसोआ बेवनो गावसोरनि मावनायनि गेजेरजों मुगायै मुगा साबसिननिफ्राय हामसिन खालामनानै दिनैनि बे थुनलाइखौ महर होफैबाया। मोनफ्रोम रावनि थुनलाइ सोरजियानो मुलुग हारिमुथिलियाव मोनसे मख'जाथाव आरो जारिमिनारि दोहोन महरै गुरस्लायलांबाया। बेबादिनो अभयापुरी गोजौ फरायसालिनि फरायसुलिफोरा आखाइजोंनो लिरनानै दिहुनलांनाय बर' आइजोफोरनि गिबि लाइसि "आंगुबै"आबो बर' राव-थुनलाइ, हारिमुनि मोनसे मख'जाथाव दोहोन।

गोदोनि भारतारि थुनलाइ सावरायगिरि आरो गहेनागिरिफोरनि बादिब्ला थुनलाइनि जोनोमा मोननै रोखोमनि जानो हागौ। बेनिनो गिबिया जादों 'सहितस्य भावः साहित्यम' आरो गुबुन मोनसेया जादों 'हितेन सहवर्तमानम सहितम-तस्य भावः साहित्यम' थामहिनबा जायफोर लिरनायाव सुबुं हारिनि बानजायथाव एबा गाहाम खालामग्रा गुनफोरा थुब्रायनानै थायो बे रोखोम लिरनायानो थुनलाइ महरै आजावनानै लाजायो।<sup>ii</sup> बर' रावआव जायखौ थुनलाइ होननानै बुंदों बेखौ असमीयायाव साहित्य होननानै बुडो। इंराजीयाव बेखौ Literature होननानै बुंनाय जादों। जाय सोदोबआ लेटिन सोदोब 'litterae' निफ्राय सोमजिबोनाय। बेनि दारै रिंसारथिनि जथायजों माबा मोनसे लिरनायखौ खिन्थानाय जादोंमोना। उनहालागै बेखौनो जायखिजाया लिरनायनि सेबखानायखौनो फोरमायनाय जालाडो<sup>iii</sup>। William Henry Hudson आ इसे साबसिनै सोदांनानै बुंदों- "Literature is composed of those books, and of those books only, which, in the first place, by reason of their subject-matter and their mode of treating it, are of general human interest; and in which, in the second place, the element of form and the pleasure which form gives are to be regarded as essential."<sup>iv</sup>

मुंदांखा थुनलाइ सावरायगिरि Matthew Arnold आबो एरै बुंदों- "Literature consists of all the books where moral truth and human passion are touched with a largeness sanity and attractive forms"<sup>v</sup>. औरैहाय De Quincey मुंनि थुनलाइगिरिया थुनलाइखौ मोननै खोनदोआव राननानै सावरायदों। बेनिनो मोनसेया जादों- Literature of Knowledge जेराव सोलोंथाइ सांग्रांथियारि आदबै लिरनाय जायो। गुबुन मोनसेया Literature of Power जायफोर लिरनायफोराव इसिडारि हाबखोमानानै थानाय थुलुंगा गोहोफोरखौ फोरमायनानै होनाय जायो। बे रोखोम थुनलाइखौ सानस्रि दैबायग्रा एबा गोथार थुनलाइ होननानैबो बुंनाय जायो।<sup>vi</sup>

थारैनो थुनलाइ सोरजिया गियान होग्रा सैथो एबा गोथारखौ फोरमायग्रा सुबुं जिउनि खोथा बुंग्रा, बेफोरनि अनगायैबो जोवनो गैयै समाइनानि विदै बिलायग्रा मह्रै खामानि मावनो हायो।

थुनलाइया सुबुं जिउजों थोंजोडैनो लोब्बा थायो। सुबुं जिउआनो थुनलाइ सोरजिनि गुदि फुंखा। सुबुं जिउनि गांनाय-उखैनाय, गावनाय-मिनिनाय, मोननाय-मोनै बायदिमैया गोसोनि साननाय हनायफोरखौ गावबागाव मोनदांनायजों लोगोसे गुबुनननोबो बेखेवसारनानै होनो लुबैयो। बिब्दिनो थुनलाइनि जोनोम जायो। सुबुं जिउआ जेरै गोमोथाव, सोमोनांथाव, थुनलाइनि आयदायाबो बिब्दिनो बायदिसिना गावजों गोमोथाव सोमोनांथाव। नाथाय थुनलाइ सोरजिनि आवथाया जेसेबां गुवार जायाथों मानो अब्लाबो William Henry Hudsonनि Theory बादियै आंगुबै लाइसिखौ थुनलायारि बिजिरथि होनो थाखाय नाजानाय जाबाय।

1) गावनि मावमोनथाइ (The personnel experiences of the individual as individual)- बे आयदायाव जों लाबोनो हायो हरेश्वरी हाज'वारीया लिरनाय लामा खिन्थिनाय मुंनि खन्थाइखौ-

बर' हारिनि होन्जावफोरनि गेजेराव  
गसंयो आं आंगुबै नाम लानानै  
चानछ'हाया मिथिछ'हाया  
दडः बर' हारिनि होन्जावफ्रा गोदोछोनानै।

.....  
गसंयो आं फिसा होन्जावफोरनि गेजेराव  
खिन्थिनो बिछोरनि धर्मनि बाश्राखौ।<sup>vii</sup>  
(लामा खिन्थिनाय)

खन्थाइगिरिया गावनो आंगुबैनि मह्र लानानै बर' आइजोफोरनो दोहोरोम, सोलोंथाइ जेरावबो जेरैबो गियान फोरोंनायजों सांग्रां जाहोनायनि इसारा बेरखांहोदों। गोग्लैसोनाय बर' आइजोफोरखौ गावबो सासे आइजो मह्रैनो बिथानि गोसोआ गावखांदों, मोनदांदों, बर' हारिया गाहायै बर' आइजोफ्रा गुबुनजों रुजुनायाव बेसेबां गोग्लैसोनाय। गावनि मान मोनथाइया बेवहाय नुजालांदों।

2. सुबुं हिसाबै मोननाय मावमोनथाइ(The experience of man as man)- सुबुं हिसाबै मोननाय मावमोनथाइयाव जों दिन्थि लाबोनो हायो कुमारी प्रमिला ब्रह्मआ

लिरनाय “बड’ हिन्जावनि हांमा सुरनाय” राइथायखौ। बेवहाय बिथाडा गोग्लैसोनाय बर’ आइजोफोरनि जिउ थासारिखौ हमदांहरनानै दुखु मोनहरनाय खोथाया बेरखांदों। “जेरेइ हिनजावखौ लिखा पढायाव हगाराखै एरेइनो हिनजावफ्रा जामबि-जामति जालांबाइ। मात्र मिथिसिगौ नों अखा नाइब्लानो माय छौखेबबाइनो, सिला सिबनो, गोबर गारनो, थुरछि सुनो बिखौनो फोरोंना होबाइ। हाबाब मा एसे आलाइ-चिलाइ जों हिनजाव जातिनि कापालालाया।”<sup>viii</sup> गुबुन हारिजों रुजुनायाव बर’ आइजोफ्रा गदथाय गोग्लैसोनांनाया। नाथाय दिनै मुलुगआ गोबां जौगाबाया। बे जौगानायजों बर’ आइजोफोराबो जौगाफाजानो लुबैदों राइथायगिरिया। समाजनि बाहागोसे राइथायगिरिया गावनि मावमोनथाइजों सुबुंनो गियान होनो नायगिरनाय सानस्रिया राइथायनि गेजेरजों रोखा नुजादों।

**3. गुबुननिफ्राय एबा समाजनिफ्राय मोननाय मावमोनथाइ(The relationship of the individual with his fellows, or the entire social world, with all its activities and problems)-** बुहुमाव दिनै गुबुन हारि-माहारिफ्रा जेरैबो जेरावबो आखा-फाखा जौगानाय, नाथाय बर’ हारिया दिनैसिमबो गोग्लैसोनानै दड, गाहायै बर’ आइजोफोरा । बेखौनो प्रमिला ब्रह्म मुंनि राइथायगिरिया गावनि “बड’ हिन्जावनि हांमा सुरनाय” मुंनि राइथायाव एरै मख’दों- “जाम्बि हिन्जावफ्रा सिबाइ लिखा-पढा रोडैनि थाखायनो लामा छचेखौनो थाबायनो हाया । थाबायनो हायैनि कारना जादों द’छरा भाषा रोंडा । बिखाइनो देश बिदेशफ्रावबो गावनि जाति बंश थाब्लाबो हौवा फिछा नडाब्ला थाबायनो हाया । किन्तु मालाइ जातिया मालाइ हौवाखौनो नांडा । मालाइ लिखा पढा रोंनाइखाइ जेरेइबो जिनिबो बुद्धि थानायखाइ हार्छिडै हार्छिडै लामा थाबाइनो हाछिगौ । बिछोरबादि जोंबो शिक्षा मोनब्ला जों मालाइ बिबादि खामानि मावनो हायादाबि? ”<sup>ix</sup>

**4. बाहेरा बुहुमनिफ्राय मोननाय मावमोनथाइ (The external world of nature, and our relation with this)-** गियानखौ जों खालि इसिडारि थासारिनिफ्रायल’ आजावनानै लानो हायो बे नडा, बाहेरा बुहुमनिफ्रायबो जों गियान आजावनानै लानो हायो। जेरै-शिक्षार प्रय’जनीयता मुंनि असमीया रावै लिरनाय राइथायाव हरेश्वरी हाज’वारीया एरै बुंदों- “ভাৰত স্বাধীন হোৱাৰ পিছত আমি বিচাৰোঁ জাতীয় জীৱনত এটা নতুন যুগৰ সূচনা। দেশ স্বাধীন হোৱাৰ পিছৰপৰা আমালোকৰ শিক্ষাদীক্ষা চাৰিওফালৰপৰা জয় জয় ময় ময় হ’ব লাগিছিল। কিন্তু বৰ দুখেৰে কবলগীয়া হওঁ আমাৰ ট্ৰাইবেল তথা কছাৰী সমাজৰ অৱস্থা এতিয়াও

অজ্ঞান অন্ধকাৰত। তাৰ কাৰন আমাৰ ট্ৰাইবেল লোক সকলৰ অজ্ঞতা। আন আন সম্প্ৰদায়ৰ লোক সকলে স্বজাতিৰ উন্নতিৰ কাৰনে উঠি পৰি লাগিছে যদিও আমাৰ কছাৰী জাতিৰ মাজত এতিয়াও চৈতন্য ভৱ উদয় হোৱা নাই।<sup>x</sup> “ভাৰত উদাসিনী উনাব গুবুন গুবুন হাৰিয়া জৌগালানাযখৌ নুনানৈ ৱাঈথায়গিৰিয়া বৰ’ সুবুং এৰা ট্ৰাইবেল হাৰিফোৰখৌ জৌগালানাযনি গিয়ান সোলোঁহৰজানো হাস্থায়দোঁ।

**5. বায়দিসিনা ৱাহাজোঁ গাব গাহোনানৈ ফোৰমায়নায়( man’s own efforts to create and express under the various forms)-** থুনলাই সোৱজিনায়নি থাংখিয়া ফায়াগ্ৰাফোৰখৌ গোসো গৌজোন হোনায়। নাথায় বে গৌজোনা সৱাসনস্ৰা গৌজোননায় এৰা জানায়-লোঁনায়নি গৌজোননায় নঙা। বে গৌজোনা জুদা। বে নিখায়নো সংস্কৃত গহেনাগিৰিফ্ৰা বেৰাদি সোৱজিখৌ “বাক্যং ৱসাৎমকং কাব্যম”<sup>xi</sup> হোনানানৈ বুন্দোঁ।

আজিকালিনি ছেঁগ্ৰাফোৱা চুলথুমারা  
হাৰাব খামানিথিং নাইবোলা মোনবো গৈথারা।  
বিসোৱো বুংযো বৰ হাৰীয়া জাখাংনাংগৌ  
জোঁবো ছানথারো বি বাগ্ৰায়া নংথারমাৱগৌ।<sup>xii</sup>

(গোদান জুগনি ৱাঈথাং বিদাং- হৰেশ্বৰী ব্ৰহ্ম)

সোদোব আৱো বিদৈ লুফাবনানৈ সোৱজিনায় থুনলাইফোৱা আংগুবৈ লাঈসিয়াব গৌজোৱৈ জায়গা লানানৈ দঙ। মানোনা জায় বিজাবা ফায়াগ্ৰানি গোসোয়াব বিদৈ লাবোনা মুজিহোনো হায়া বে খন্থাঈ এৰা থুনলাই হোননা গনায় জায়া।<sup>xiii</sup> জায় খোথাখৌ সোনাৰাৰি থুনলায়াব সমাঈনা হোননানৈ মখ’যো। জায়খৌ সাৱৰায়নো থাংনায়াব কান্টআ “Beauty is a state of mind, a satisfaction which is purely subjective”<sup>xiv</sup> হোননানৈ বুন্দোঁ।

আহা আহা সবে আকৌ আহা আগবাঢ়ি  
পুনৰ আমাৰ সেই অতীত সোঁৱৰি।  
নেযাবা নেযাবা ভাই কাচিসে পাহৰি  
হিৰষ ৰজাৰ সেই সোনোৱালি পুৰী।<sup>xv</sup>  
(আহান, নিৰুপমা নাৰ্জিয়াৰী)

लिरनाय आदबनि समाइस्त्रि बिदै थानाय बे खन्थाइ दोडा जोंनि बर'फोरनि राइजो गोनां राजा गोनां गोग्गाथाव समखौ गोसोखांहेनो नाजादों। जोंहा मोनसे समाव हैरम्ब राइजो दड-मोन। जौगा सोदोमस्त्रिजों आबुं जानायमोन। नाथाय सम थासारियाव गोमालांबाया। बेखौ खन्थाइगिरिया गोसोआव लाबोफिनना गोदानै सांग्रां जाफिननायनि इसारा होदों। समाइस्त्रि देंखो खबामजों जेराव किटसनि Truth is beauty and beauty is truth<sup>xvi</sup> खौ फोरमायना होनानै मोनसे थुनलाइ सोरजि।

आखाइजों लिरनानै दिहुननाय बे लाइसिखौ बिथांमोनहा दानथामारि महरै फोसावनो थांखि लादोंमोन। नाथाय सम आरो खाबुनि आंखालाव जानांगौ बिथांमोननि मिजिडा मोखथाडाव महर मोननो हायाखिसै। जाय खोथाखौ सावरायनानै रबीन्द्रनाथ टेगर बान्था आरो साहित्य अकादेमी बान्थाफोरजों लोगोसे गुबुन गुबुन बान्था मोनगिरि गोदान बर' खन्थाइनि दोहौ लाबोगिरि, बर' थुनलाइ आफादनि बारग' आफादगिरि ब्रजेन्द्र कुमार ब्रह्मवा गावनि लिरबिदाडाव एरै मख'लांदों- "एसेबांनि उनावबो बे गोदै मिजिडा मोगथां महर मोनाखैसै- बे बाश्राखौ सानोब्ला दुखु मोनखाडो। अब्लाबो जों बंनंगोन- बर' थुनलाइनि जारिमिनाव गोगोम फोथायनायजों नाजानायनि मोनसे गोजों नेरसोन थालांबाया। बेखौ नुनानै इयुन जोलैया थुलुंगा मोनगोन।<sup>xvii</sup> थारैनो सैथो खोथा। जायनि थुलुंगायावनो दिनै गोबां आइजो लाइसिफोरा नुजागासिनो दं।

### 3.0 फोजोबनाय-

थिलेबलेब महरनि बे लाइसिनि सोरजिफोराव intellectual element, emotional element, element of imagination, technical element बायदि बायदि element फोराबो जायगा लानानै दंजोबो। जेराव थुनलाइनि फुंखाफोरखौ रोखा रोखायै नुनो मोनो। जिहेतु थुनलाइया सुबुं जिउनिनो रिफिखांनाया। बेनिखायनो साबसिन थुनलाइया जोनोम जायो मेलेम आरो गोसोनि अंगुबै गोरबलायनायाव। बेनिखायनो नुनो मोनो थुनलाइनि गिलिरथिया सोनारो लिरगिरिफोरनि सोरजिनाय गिलिरथिनि सायाव। लिरगिरिफोरा जिउनि माखासे जुनिया जुनिया बाहागोफोरखौ खना खनला मोजाडै नोजोर होनानै बेनिफ्राय सरासनस्रा मानसिफोरा नोजोराव गोग्लैयै सोदोबथि आरो समाइनाखौ दिहुननानै थुनलाइनि गेजेरजों रुक होनानै दिन्थिलाडो। बेनिखायनो सावराइगिरिफोरा बंनो नागिरो 'गांफा थुनलाया मोनफा समनि दैदेनगिरि' होननानै। उन्दै उन्दै बर' हिन्जावसाफोरनि गोसो गोरबोनि आंग्रिखांनायाव नुजानाय मोननै रावारि "आंगुबै" लाइसिनि लिरबिदांफोरखौ नोजोर होनानै बेनिखायनो बंनो हायो बे बिजाबाव

थारैनो थुनलायारि बेसेनथिनि गांसे मोननो गैयै सोरजि। जाय सोरजिया बर' हारिनि, बर'  
थुनलाइनि, बर' आइजोफोरनि मोनसे माइल खुन्थिया।

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## ***Managing Domestic Waste in Indian Urban Society: A Call to Action***

*Author: Mamoni Basumatary*

It is a pleasure to address a matter of growing concern and urgency: *the management of domestic waste in our urban society*. As our cities expand and our lifestyles evolve, the challenge of managing waste becomes increasingly important. Today, I want to discuss how we, both as individuals and as a community, can effectively address this issue to create cleaner, healthier, and more sustainable urban environments. The choices we make today regarding waste management will shape the quality of life and the health of the planet for future generations. It is our responsibility to ensure that we leave behind a sustainable and habitable non-toxic environment.

Waste management is an issue that affects us today and will profoundly impact future generations. As environmental challenges increase, the way we handle waste has never been more crucial. Effective waste management is a collective responsibility, and everyone has a role to play. In Indian urban society, managing domestic waste requires a unified effort, demanding awareness, responsibility, and a readiness to adopt new practices.

By segregating waste, embracing the three R's (*reduce, reuse, recycle*), composting, implementing effective collection systems, leveraging technology, involving the community, and supporting strong policies, we can address the waste management challenge on multiple levels.

Let us commit to making our urban environments cleaner, healthier, and more sustainable. Together, we can transform waste into a resource and create a better future for ourselves and generations to come.

I will now focus on a critical issue affecting our environment, health, and quality of life: the challenges faced in managing waste and pollution in India. Despite significant efforts and progress, many obstacles remain that hinder effective waste and pollution management.

To understand why domestic waste management is so urgent today, let us consider several pressing factors:

### **Environmental Impact:**

1. **Climate Change:** Improper waste management, particularly the disposal of organic waste in landfills, generates significant amounts of methane, a potent greenhouse gas that contributes to global warming.
2. **Pollution:** Waste, especially plastics, contributes to widespread pollution of land, waterways, and oceans, affecting wildlife and ecosystems. Microplastics, for example, have infiltrated various environments and food chains.

### **Resource Depletion:**

1. **Finite Resources:** The extraction and processing of raw materials for new products deplete natural resources and require significant energy, leading to further environmental degradation.
2. **Sustainable Practices:** Recycling and reusing materials help conserve resources and reduce the need for new raw materials, promoting sustainability.

### **Public Health:**

1. **Health Hazards:** Inadequate waste management can lead to the spread of diseases, particularly in regions where waste disposal systems are underdeveloped.

2. **Chemical Exposure:** Improper disposal of hazardous waste, such as electronic waste and chemicals, can lead to contamination of soil and water, posing health risks to humans and animals.

### **Economic Considerations:**

1. **Cost Savings:** Effective waste management can lead to significant cost savings for municipalities by reducing the volume of waste that needs to be managed and processed.
2. **Job Creation:** The recycling and waste management industries generate jobs, contributing to economic growth.

### **Policy and Regulation:**

1. **Global Agreements:** International agreements and policies, such as the Paris Agreement, emphasize the need for sustainable practices, including effective waste management.
2. **Local Legislation:** Governments are implementing stricter waste management regulations to mitigate environmental impact and promote sustainability.

### **Public Awareness:**

1. **Education and Advocacy:** Increased public awareness and education about the environmental impact of waste are driving more people to adopt sustainable practices.
2. **Consumer Demand:** There is growing consumer demand for environmentally friendly products and packaging, which encourages businesses to adopt sustainable practices.

### **Technological Advances:**

1. **Innovations in Recycling:** Advances in recycling technology have made it more feasible to recycle a broader range of materials, improving waste management efficiency.
2. **Waste-to-Energy Technologies:** New technologies are emerging that can convert waste into energy, providing a sustainable way to manage non-recyclable waste.

Thus, discussing domestic waste management now is crucial due to the escalating environmental, economic, and health challenges associated with waste. By addressing these issues, we can work towards a more sustainable and healthier future.

Domestic waste management is a critical issue that involves the collection, transportation, processing, recycling, and disposal of waste materials. Effective waste management is essential for protecting the environment, conserving natural resources, and maintaining public health.

### **Now, let us first understand the pressing problem.**

India's urban centres generate a staggering amount of waste each day. Much of this waste ends up in landfills, contributing to environmental pollution, health hazards, and resource wastage. The problem is not just the volume of waste but also how it is managed, from collection to disposal. This calls for a multi-faceted approach involving awareness, responsibility, and innovative solutions.

Understanding these challenges is essential for developing effective solutions and promoting sustainable practices.

Firstly, one of the primary reasons is **rapid urbanization and population growth**. India's cities are expanding rapidly, and with this growth comes an increase in waste and pollution. The infrastructure in many urban areas has not kept pace with this expansion, leading to inadequate waste management systems. Overburdened cities struggle to collect, segregate, and process the massive amounts of waste generated daily, resulting in overflowing landfills and widespread pollution.

Secondly, **lack of public awareness and education** plays a significant role. Many people are not fully aware of the importance of proper waste management and the impact of pollution on their health and environment. Public education campaigns on waste segregation, recycling, and the dangers of pollution are often insufficient. Without this knowledge, people may not take the necessary steps to manage waste responsibly.

**Cultural and social habits** also contribute to the problem. Traditional practices of waste disposal, such as open dumping and burning, are still prevalent in many areas. Changing these deeply ingrained habits requires persistent education and cultural shifts. Additionally, the stigma associated with waste management jobs can deter people from participating in these essential activities.

Another significant factor is the **lack of infrastructure and resources**. Many cities and towns do not have adequate facilities for waste collection, segregation, and recycling. The absence of proper waste treatment plants, composting facilities, and recycling centres means that much of the waste ends up in landfills or polluting the environment. Investment in infrastructure is crucial to handle the growing waste effectively.

**Economic constraints** are also a barrier. Many people, especially in low-income communities, prioritize immediate survival needs over environmental concerns. The cost of implementing waste management practices, such as purchasing bins for segregation or paying for waste collection services, can be prohibitive for many households. Additionally, informal waste collectors, who play a significant role in waste management, often lack support and recognition.

**Government policies and enforcement** pose another challenge. While there are regulations and policies in place to manage waste and pollution, enforcement is often weak. Corruption, bureaucratic inefficiencies, and lack of political will can hinder the effective implementation of these policies. Ensuring that regulations are strictly enforced and that violators are held accountable is essential for improving waste management.

**Industrial pollution** adds another layer of complexity. Many industries do not comply with environmental regulations, leading to significant pollution of air, water, and soil. Weak enforcement of regulations and lack of incentives for industries to adopt cleaner technologies exacerbate the problem. Addressing industrial pollution requires stringent regulations and support for businesses to implement sustainable practices.

Lastly, **behavioral changes** are necessary. People need to adopt more sustainable lifestyles, such as reducing single-use plastics, composting organic waste, and supporting recycling initiatives. Promoting such behavioral changes requires continuous education, incentives, and community involvement.

**Call to action:** To address these problems there are several ways to encourage citizens to take action in domestic waste management .

**1. Promoting Segregation at Source**

The first step towards efficient waste management is segregation at the source. By separating biodegradable waste (like food scraps) from non-biodegradable waste (like plastics and metals), we can facilitate recycling and composting.

Households should be encouraged to maintain separate bins for different types of waste. Local governments can support this by providing necessary infrastructure and conducting awareness campaigns to educate citizens on the importance of waste segregation.

**2. Embracing the Three Rs: Reduce, Reuse, Recycle**

We need to embed the principles of Reduce, Reuse, and Recycle into our daily lives.

Reducing waste means making mindful choices about the products we buy and consume. Reusing involves finding ways to repurpose items instead of discarding them. Recycling helps in converting waste into new products. Urban societies can promote these practices through community programs, workshops, and partnerships with recycling companies.

### 3. Encouraging Composting

Composting organic waste is a simple yet effective way to reduce the burden on landfills and create valuable compost for urban gardening. Residents can be provided with compost bins and trained in home composting techniques. Community composting centres can also be established to manage organic waste at a larger scale. This not only reduces waste but also produces nutrient-rich soil for urban green spaces.

### 4. Implementing Effective Waste Collection Systems

Municipalities must ensure that waste collection systems are efficient, regular, and cover all urban areas. Door-to-door collection services can be complemented with designated drop-off points for recyclables and hazardous waste. Technology can play a crucial role here, with apps and digital platforms helping to streamline waste collection and track waste management processes.

#### A typical waste management system of GR township



### 5. Leveraging Technology and Innovation

Innovative technologies can revolutionize waste management. Smart bins equipped with sensors can alert authorities when they need emptying, reducing overflow and litter.

Waste-to-energy plants can convert non-recyclable waste into electricity, reducing landfill use. Supporting start-ups and entrepreneurs who are developing sustainable waste management solutions can also drive significant improvements.

### 6. Community Involvement and Responsibility

Community involvement is key to successful waste management. Local groups and resident associations can organize clean-up drives, awareness campaigns, and workshops. Schools and colleges can incorporate waste management education into their curriculum. By fostering a sense of community responsibility, we can ensure that everyone plays their part in managing waste effectively.

### 7. Policy and Regulation

Government policies and regulations are crucial in guiding and enforcing proper waste management practices. Stringent laws against littering, incentives for recycling, and penalties for non-compliance can drive behavioral change. Collaboration between government bodies, private companies, and non-governmental organizations can create a robust framework for waste management.

Involving communities in waste management helps create a shared sense of responsibility and fosters collective action which is crucial for achieving long term sustainability

I want to highlight the crucial roles that students and housewives can play in domestic waste management. Empowering both the key members of our community to take waste management initiatives and involving them in decision making processes can lead to sustainable and culturally appropriate solutions.

Engaging students and housewives in waste management is crucial for several reasons:

1. **Education and Awareness:** Students and housewives are key to spreading awareness about proper waste management practices. Educating them can lead to a more informed community that actively participates in recycling and reducing waste.
2. **Behavioral Change:** By involving these groups, you can foster habits that contribute to long-term sustainability. Students often influence family practices, while housewives manage household waste directly.
3. **Community Impact:** Both groups can lead or participate in local initiatives, such as clean-up drives or recycling programs, enhancing community engagement and improving local environmental conditions.
4. **Sustainable Practices:** Educating these groups about sustainable practices, such as composting or waste segregation, can reduce the overall waste burden and encourage more eco-friendly lifestyles.
5. **Future Leadership:** Students, as future leaders, can drive future waste management policies and innovations. Involving them early can prepare them to advocate for and implement better waste management practices.

Overall, engaging these groups should help build a culture of responsibility and proactive waste management within communities.

**In conclusion**, managing waste and pollution in India is a complex challenge due to rapid urbanization, lack of awareness, inadequate infrastructure, economic constraints, policy enforcement issues, and industrial pollution. To solve this problems, we must learn from best practices around the world and implement comprehensive strategies. By focusing on public education, investing in infrastructure, and enforcing strong policies, we can make significant progress. It is essential for the government, businesses, and citizens to collaborate in creating a cleaner, healthier, and more sustainable India.

The issue of domestic waste and its environmental impact demands immediate attention and action. Our responsibility to future generations is clear: every action we take, no matter how small, contributes to a better future. Let us commit to making a difference now, for the sake of our environment, our health, and future generations. If we do not act now, we may miss the opportunity to improve our waste management systems, leading to a pollution-free environment and a better quality of life.

\*Disclaimer: The author, not BDF Laisi or the Editorial Board, is responsible for the views expressed in this article.

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*For comments: Please write to, [Editor@Borodiaspora.org](mailto:Editor@Borodiaspora.org)*



## *Cry, My Beloved Baokhungri*

*Author: Pinky Brahma Chaudhury*

In the spring of 2023, a group of artists and media persons came together to form **Baokhungri Eco Reverence Ensemble (BERE)**<sup>1</sup>. The word BERE (बेरे) in Boro language means the bee. *'The bee is our symbol. Bees contribute to complex, interconnected ecosystems; their presence symbolizes life'*, they explained. BERE *hanja* (बेरे हान्जा), the team, met the Baokhungri Festival organising committee, initiating a dialogue to work towards transitioning the annual flagship festival of the government of Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) in Assam, into an ecological event. The committee headed by the honourable Executive Member, Tourism, BTC, welcomed the idea and small steps began to be taken towards this initiative. The first being the arrangement of dustbins for garbage management. The Town Committee Chairperson at once ordered for a huge number of eco-friendly bamboo dustbins, to be installed in the main festival venue. But the dialogue itself was very close to the festival, the sheer magnitude of organising the event clouded the garbage management and left much to be desired.

Situated about 10 km east of Kokrajhar, the capital city of BTC, the hill range of Baokhungri is the highest peak in the entire BTC area, rising up to 1,491 ft. above sea



level. Baokhungri, along with Dangdufur, Bamunshula, Zuzai and Raja Pahad makes a contiguous range of north-south oriented hills in the heart of the sprawling 45.568 sq.km hilly terrain of Chakrashila Wildlife Sanctuary. The annual Baokhungri Festival events spread across these hill ranges. Hosted by the BTC government in association with the departments of

Tourism, Sports & Youth Welfare and Forest & Environment, the 3 to 4 day long festival offers many laudable competitive events like cycling, hill trekking, folk dance, ethnic food and beverage stalls, indigenous games with attractive

<sup>1</sup> [https://www.instagram.com/bere\\_baokhunguri/](https://www.instagram.com/bere_baokhunguri/)

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prizes. Designed to coincide with the very popular *bwisagu*<sup>2</sup> (*rongali bihu* or *bohag bihu*), the traditional spring festival of Assam in the month of April, it is an extravaganza for the people of the region. The traditional practice of Baokhungri *hajw gakwnai*<sup>3</sup> (hill trekking) of the Boro people on the first day of *bwisagu*, in turn, adds an element of tradition and culture to the festival, drawing a huge local crowd.

Baokhungri *hajw gakwnai* (hill trekking) falls on the day of *Sankranti*<sup>4</sup>, the last day of the month of Choitra, the last month in Indian calendar, hence the last day of the year; it's the local New Year's Eve for the people of Assam. An agrarian community, the Boro people's social and cultural life revolves around seasons. The *Sankranti* is the onset of the spring festival of *bwisagu*. On that day, it is customary to consume *gwka-*



*gwkw*<sup>5</sup>, an assorted seasonal vegetable dish. The name suggestive of the taste ranging from bitter at one end of the taste spectrum to sour at the other, *gwka-gwkw* can be a mix of 16 to 24 or more types of seasonal vegetables and herbs, taken as an antidote for combating any kind of impending seasonal ailments. The forest of Chakrashila Wildlife Sanctuary is abounded with wild edible greens which makes it into a perfect treasure trove for the people in the periphery of the forest. That is

how the tradition of the traverse on that day began many decades back. The origin is contested, claimed by people from the different villages in the periphery. Foraging for the wild delicacies in the wild has always been a collective joyous adventure. The brooks and waterfalls, with table rocks to bask on are an added attraction. And as one reaches the peak of the hill, it offers a splendid view of the sprawling valley, dotted with impressive lakes of Dheer, Diplai and Dakara in the western side. On the opposite, eastern side, is the prized view of the great river Brahmaputra. Decades ago, it was said to flow just at the edge of the foothills, but gradually shifted further away. It is an ecstatic moment to reach up there, and ponder for a while: a blessed moment, an embodiment of peace. In the olden days, it was always believed that only the blessed could reach the top. The thick forest with layers of vegetations and water bodies was never easy to negotiate. Besides, only the one with reverence for the place would be

<sup>2</sup> 'w' is used as a vowel for the back phoneme to write Boro language in Roman script. In *bwisagu* it is pronounced like the 'u' in the English word 'urn.'

<sup>3</sup> Case of 'w' as a vowel for the back phoneme

<sup>4</sup> Sankranti संक्रान्ति refers to the transmigration of the sun from one zodiac to another in Indian astronomy

<sup>5</sup> Pronounced *gwka-gwkw* ('w' used as a vowel for the back phoneme). In Boro language, every consonant before a vowel is always aspirated. So, consonant 'k' before vowel 'a' and 'w' & 'i' is pronounced as 'kh'.

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blessed to experience the magical abundance of the sacred place, the '*gwthar thaoni*' the Boro people believe. Flowers or '*goi jora-patwi jora*' (a pair of betel nuts and betel leaves) are offered in the names of the forest deities whenever one embarks into this forest. I heard these stories from my mother, and seen her offering too; it was from her that I first heard about this hill since I was a child; from the song she used to sing, 'Baokhunguri'<sup>6</sup> (বাওখুংগুৰি/ বাউখুংগুৰি), a song written and composed by her father, my grand-father, Sri Rupnath Brahma. It was written as a tribute to Baodya who used to run a flourishing cotton field, cotton spinning and cotton weaving concerns in these parts; *khun* means cotton in Boro; hence the name *Bao-khun-guri*, where *guri* stands for place or region. Having spent years of my own child-hood by its foot-hills during my impressionable age in the early '70s, I have experienced climbing up the hill during *Sankranti*; witnessed the streams of people in groups flowing towards the hill forest by the crack of dawn, full of laughter, singing, clapping, accompanied by flute, drum, 'serja' (the traditional fiddle of the Boro people), 'jotha' (brass cymbal). The early birds would get the best spots on various rocks by the gurgling stream; many would even arrive the previous day and 'book' a spot with a mark or writings on the rocks. It is an annual get-away for a fun picnic, welcoming the spring festival, celebrating nature and love with merriment; a fun time before the onset of the toil of the paddy cultivating season. But in the decades of arms insurgency in the 1980s, this practice began to wane. The series of ceasefires and peace accords since 1993 leading to the formation of the BTC, gradually diminished the arms insurgency. With the BTC government organising the Baokhungri Festival since 2013, there has been a renewed enthusiasm towards the hill trekking tradition, the crowd getting bigger by the year. It was reported to be more than 100,000 this year. In addition to the many exciting events, this element of age-old tradition definitely is an attraction, brilliantly designed by the BTC government, focussed in boosting the tourism industry. It is absolutely an exciting prospect to boost the economy of the region, and the local people.

Over the last decade, concerned citizens have occasionally brought to light the ecological footprint of Baokhungri Festival, responding through their voluntary actions both as individuals and as a collective. Others have expressed it through social media. The concern is that of plastic and glass bottle litter in the forest! It is heartening that people are voluntarily attempting to clean up. Inspired by such actions and alarmed by the situation, BERE *hanja* was formed; a physical survey was done of the forest area where people visit. Single-use plastic, largely of food packaging, bottles, plastic bags, disposable tableware like glass, cups and cutlery are rampant from the foothills to the top; most tragic is the litter of alcohol glass bottles; broken glass pieces can be found all around, particularly by the stream side. In many spots, streams are clogged with such garbage. Various committees have been designated to clean up certain parts of the venue after the festival but usual practice is to collect the garbage and burn them, throwing up clouds of smoke and burnt plastic odour. It is an alarming sight! Open plastic burning pollutes air and is detrimental to health, which led to the

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<sup>6</sup> It is spelt thus in the original text prints of the song



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National Green Tribunal (NGT) of India imposing a complete ban on burning of waste in open places.<sup>7</sup>

Chakrashila Wildlife Sanctuary is a protected area, specified as an Eco-sensitive Zone from ecological, environmental and biodiversity points of view and is necessary to prohibit industries. According to the notification, strict protocols are required to follow in plastic waste management inside the sanctuary.<sup>8</sup>

The narrative of the local people living around the sanctuary on this issue was



documented by BRLF in a project 'Baokhungri Eco Restoration Initiative' which is of significance (Rabha, et al, 2024). While they acknowledge the livelihood opportunities and the economic benefits offered by the growing tourism, they are highly disturbed by the garbage accumulation and the entry of vehicles into the forest till late at night. They complain of the streams turning dirty, clogged with

garbage; the stream water that was potable once is not suitable for even bathing or washing clothes anymore. The villagers in the vicinity of the festival site complain of the stench and the proliferation of flies and maggots soon after the festival, induced by the food waste from feasting and food-stalls. Another very alarming complaint is that of littering of broken glass bottles in the forest which poses the risk of cutting their feet; the broken glass pieces are infiltrating the paddy fields as well, where it has



become unsafe for them to cultivate as well as fish in the traditional way (Rabha, et al, 2024). These hazards pose equal threats to the wild animals and the environment. While the hazard of the plastic in the wild may not be in the narrative of the local people, the fact that ragpickers frequent the forest to collect recyclable trash like empty plastic bottles, glass bottles every 2<sup>nd</sup> or

3<sup>rd</sup> day (Rabha, et al, 2024) is a tragic sight; the sacred forest is silently growing to be a garbage resource place. During picnic seasons in New Year or winter months, their frequency is much more (Rabha, et al, 2024). But large parts of the garbage like that of plastic bags and food packages which are not recyclable are not picked. Most plastic items breakdown into microplastic and remain in the environment and can enter human and animal bodies through inhalation and absorption. Substantial evidence shows that the chemicals in plastic are linked to alarming health hazards.<sup>9</sup> Plastic clogged ditches and water channels could be breeding grounds for mosquitoes and

<sup>7</sup> [https://greentribunal.gov.in/sites/default/files/all\\_documents/Reportin-Original-Application-No.-209-2019.pdf](https://greentribunal.gov.in/sites/default/files/all_documents/Reportin-Original-Application-No.-209-2019.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change Notification

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.unep.org/interactives/beat-plastic-pollution/>

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pests, leading to diseases. It is of grave concern and needs urgent address, especially with the recent report of resurgence of malaria in Kokrajhar, Chirang and Udalguri.<sup>10</sup>

In the Baokhungri Festival 2024, Bharat Rural Livelihood Foundation (BRLF)<sup>11</sup> in collaboration with BERE *hanja*, engaged with the Baokhungri Festival organising committee, leading to the Forest and Environment Department putting up sign boards not to litter the forest area with plastic garbage. Volunteers monitored the proper disposal of garbage. BERE artists put up installation art addressing the issue. It was encouraging that no single person objected when told about the litter, and use of dustbins and were seen following instructions. But in a sea of 100,000 plus people, spread across the forest, euphoric with the *bwisagu* mood of singing, dancing, drinking and feasting, what good is a group of 50 odd people trying to manage civic discipline? A situation like this calls for the government will, to declare restrictions which will not only save the environment but also boost the tourism industry. At a time when awareness of ecology and eco-tourism is the trend, it lies in the wisdom of the government to adopt an ecological approach in its true sense.

The toxic garbage in the forest has far-reaching negative consequences. Plastic debris and microplastics have the potential of spreading to the entire BTC, even to the urban



areas through rivers and innumerable water channels, reaching up to the river Brahmaputra. Most of all, we must be warned of what it can do to our wetlands at the foothills. The legendary story of the Baokhungri hill is of significance. Diplai, one of the major lakes in the western side of the hills, known in ancient times as Diblai, was a bathing lake of Diblai Khungri, daughter of a feudal head.

When her beloved dies in a war, Diblai renounces worldly ties, goes to the hill-top to meditate, sitting on a white rock, not caring to eat or drink. On the 3<sup>rd</sup> day she is liberated from her body; she sacrifices her life for renunciation. 'Bao' in Boro means sacrifice to the gods. Baokhungri is the place where Khungri (princess) sacrificed her life for renunciation (Brahma, Mohini Mohan). Baokhungri and its adjoining hills are thus considered sacred. A community of people till date pay their respect to these hills by pouring milk at the white rock around the time of Holi (Rabha, et al, 2024). It is believed that the milk trickles down to the Diplai lake; and the year the milk does not reach the lake, famine is sure to prevail, the crop production will be low.<sup>12</sup> The legend establishes the connection of the hills and the lakes below; indigenous communities

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<sup>10</sup> Times of India, Aug 8, 2024, 05.26 AM IST

<https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/guwahati/malaria-resurgence-in-kokrajhar-chirang-and-udalguri-districts/articleshow/112359692.cms>

<sup>11</sup> Bharat Rural Livelihood Foundation (BRLF) working in BTC in partnership with BTC Government since 2023

<sup>12</sup> Brahma, Mohini Mohan; Sona Pukri

have a deep understanding that the hill ranges of Baokhungri, Dangdufur, Bamunshula, Zuzai, Raja Pahad, the catchment of the lakes are crucial for the survival of the wetlands of Dheer, Diplai and Dakra; that these lakes support the livelihood of the people of the region.

The wetlands have great ecological and socio-economic values with their roles in recharging groundwater,



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regulating hydrological flow, support for agriculture and aquatic lives; they prevent floods by holding water, and provide moisture to soil and air during dry seasons. Often referred to as "earth's kidneys", they purify surface water and

filter our waste pollutants (Sharifi, et al, 2013). The East Kolkata Wetlands testifies this, being the world's largest natural, biological sewage treatment system, 'positively impacting the lives of millions residing in and around Kolkata'.<sup>13</sup>

The wetlands of Diplai and Dheer and Dakra have been identified as internationally important sites for protection of several species, a habitat of many local species as well

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as a ground for a good number of migratory birds, including two globally threatened species (Sinha, et al, 2012). These wetlands are also the major breeding grounds for varieties of fishes, which are a big source of livelihood and nutrition for the local people. Most of the aquatic food-fauna in the Kokrajhar district markets

come from these lakes (Machahary, et al, 2023).

The mythical narrative of the origin of the name of Baokhungri hill reflecting the collective wisdom of the local communities of the region calls for an urgent heed. The protection of the wetlands and their catchments, and the hill ranges from the growing anthropogenic hazards is imperative. When there was a massive landslide in the centre of the forest of Baokhungri on 21<sup>st</sup> August 2015 (Gayary, 2015), disfiguring the entire topography, the local people attributed it to the irreverence towards the forest in the recent times, the indiscriminate felling of trees primarily, but also the irreverence

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<sup>13</sup> <https://www.theclimategroup.org/our-work/publications/east-kolkata-wetlands-ekw-community-led-nature-based-solution-combat-climate>

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shown in polluting the forest with litter and noise, compelling the spirits or the deities of the forest to depart. Such beliefs are deeply rooted in the psyche of the communities



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which can be traced to their myths and legends invariably laced with insights on natural phenomena and human values. It is said that once, the weary *badaris*, the wood cutters unmindfully threw the *kalai*, the defiled food soiled leaf plates in the river; the river at once dried up as the river goddess was hurt and angered. This is an act of sacrilege, defiling the water, as rivers are considered sacred, worthy of

reverence. Baodya, a great exponent of *serja*, eventually revives the river by appeasing through his melodious fiddling of music.<sup>14</sup>

The forests of Chakrashila, abound with rich wildlife and vegetation, were the prized hunting ground for the ‘zamindars’ as well as the local communities; and most of all, it was a source of lucrative timber logging. Once under the Bijni Estate, the forest was later recognised as Chakrashila Hill Reserve Forest in 1966 by the government. But the timber logging continued. The operation of the timber mafia who used the impoverished local communities to cut the trees for a pittance, led to the massive deforestation in the area. Nature’s Beckon, an environmental activist group initiated



the conservation and awareness campaign that eventually led to the recognition of the forest as Chakrashila Wildlife Sanctuary by the Govt. of Assam in 1994. Endemic of the endangered golden langur, the Sanctuary today is the only protected area exclusively designated for long term preservation of golden langur in the world.<sup>15</sup> It will be of

great prestige, honour and blessings if the citizens of BTC, along with the current

<sup>14</sup> Brahma, Nilkamal; Sandw Baodya (1996)

<sup>15</sup> Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change Notification

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dynamic BTC government under the leadership of Sri Pramod Boro, come together to save the diverse flora and fauna of 20 mammal species, 109 species of avifauna, 13 amphibian species, 3 insect species, 10 reptile, 76 butterfly species, 62 species of birds, belonging to 17 families (Sinha, et al, 2012). And 67 fish species belonging to 49 genera under 25 species (Machahary, et al, 2023). Not to forget the golden langur, the designated mascot of the BTC government. Absolutely a win-win prospect; along with the rich forest resources, and thriving agrarian livelihood, the tourism industry will also prosper to new heights.

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For comments: Please write to, [Editor@Borodiaspora.org](mailto:Editor@Borodiaspora.org)



## ***The Importance of Data in Improving Socio-Economic Conditions of the Boro People of Assam***

***Author: Utpal Brahma, BTech, MBA***

Let us start with a quiz:

*“What is the average number of children per woman in the Boro community?”*

*“What is the high school graduation rate amongst the Boros?”*

*“How many households have access to clean drinking water?”*

*“In the rural areas within BTC, what is the ratio between population and available health care workers?”*

*“How many Boro tailors are present in the greater Guwahati area?”*

While I do not have answers to the above questions, I am unsure whether anybody even has a reliable database that can address the questions listed above - which are critical when it comes to understand the developmental needs of Boro people.

The Boro community, one of the largest tribes in the North-Eastern part of India, faces unique socio-economic challenges. Without robust data, efforts to improve their living conditions are often misdirected or ineffective.

This article delves into the significance of data in driving socio-economic development for the Boro people and presents a successful example of how data collection has transformed an underdeveloped community elsewhere. Additionally, it explores the potential role of Boro intellectuals and organizations in spearheading data-driven development.

When it comes to data collection and analysis, one could write a big book with much details. However, that will be beyond the scope for an article in this magazine and I will touch various discussion points in a concise manner as “bullet points”.

### **The Role of Data in Development**

Data is the cornerstone of informed decision-making in any development initiative. It provides a clear picture of the community's needs, strengths, and weaknesses, enabling policymakers to allocate resources effectively and design strategies that address real issues.

1. **Needs Assessment:** Accurate data allows for a thorough assessment of the community's needs. For the Boro people, this means understanding various factors such as education levels, healthcare access, employment rates, and income levels. Tailored

development programs can be implemented to address these specific areas, ensuring comprehensive community welfare.

2. **Resource Allocation:** Effective resource allocation hinges on understanding where needs are most pressing. Data helps identify sectors requiring immediate attention and investment. For example, if data indicates high unemployment rates among Boro youth, initiatives can focus on job creation and vocational training programs.
3. **Monitoring and Evaluation:** Data is crucial for monitoring development project progress and evaluating their impact. It offers measurable benchmarks to track improvements over time, ensuring initiatives are effective and allowing for necessary adjustments.
4. **Empowerment of Communities:** Data provides communities with valuable insights, enabling them to advocate for their needs. Data supports self-driven development projects and initiatives.
5. **Fosters transparency and accountability:** Data collection promotes open governance and accountability.
6. **Identity preservation:** Data collection can help preserve the Boro culture, language, and traditions.

### **The Current Data Deficit**

Despite the critical role of data, the Boro community faces a significant gap in good quality, well-defined, and reliable data. This deficit presents several challenges:

1. **Inaccurate Representation:** Without reliable data, the true socio-economic conditions of the Boro people may be misrepresented, leading to misguided policies that fail to address actual community needs.
2. **Resource Mismanagement:** Lack of data can result in inefficient resource use, with development funds allocated to areas that do not require immediate attention while critical issues remain unresolved.
3. **Missed Opportunities:** Good data can uncover growth and development opportunities that may not be apparent otherwise. The absence of such data means potential areas for intervention and improvement may be overlooked.

### **The Challenges:**

There are a number of challenges to overcome if we were to create a reliable database that can be used for the benefit of the Boro people.

1. Limited access to government data.
2. Lack of representation in policy-making.
3. Language barriers (Boro language vs. dominant language)
4. Socio-economic marginalization.
5. Skepticism towards external data collectors.

By acknowledging these challenges and adopting culturally sensitive strategies, data collection can become a powerful tool for the Boro community's empowerment and development. The use of technology can be an important game changer.

### ***Strategies for circumventing challenges:***

1. Community-based data collection initiatives.
2. Collaboration with local organizations and NGOs.
3. Use of local language (Boro) and culturally sensitive methods.
4. Capacity building and training for Boro data collectors.
5. Technology-enabled data collection (e.g., mobile apps, digital platforms)

### **Example: Data-Driven Development in Kibera, Kenya**

One notable example of a successful data collection effort improving an underdeveloped community is the case of Kibera, Kenya. Kibera, one of the largest informal settlements in Africa, faced numerous challenges due to a lack of reliable data. The community's efforts, supported by NGOs and local government, highlight the transformative power of data-driven development.

**Reference:** <https://mapkibera.org/>

### **The Data Collection Initiative**

Recognizing the importance of data, several organizations and local residents initiated the **Map Kibera** project in 2009. This initiative aimed to map the entire settlement to provide accurate, up-to-date information on the community's needs.

1. **Community Engagement:** Local residents were trained to collect data using GPS devices and mobile technology. This approach ensured that the data was accurate, and that the community felt a sense of ownership over the project.
2. **Use of Technology:** The project utilized OpenStreetMap, a collaborative mapping platform, to create detailed maps of Kibera. The maps included information on schools, health centers, water points, and other critical infrastructure.
3. **Collaborations:** The initiative was supported by various NGOs, including GroundTruth Initiative and UNICEF, as well as local government authorities. These collaborations brought in technical expertise and resources necessary for the project's success.
4. **Capacity Building:** Training programs were conducted to build the capacity of local residents in data collection and analysis, ensuring sustainability of the project.

### **Impact of the Data Collection Initiative**

The comprehensive mapping of Kibera had several significant impacts:

1. **Improved Infrastructure:** The detailed maps highlighted areas lacking basic services, leading to targeted interventions. For example, the identification of water access points resulted in the installation of new water kiosks, improving access to clean water.
2. **Enhanced Service Delivery:** Accurate data enabled NGOs and the local government to deliver services more effectively. Health centers and schools were established in underserved areas, directly benefiting the community.



3. **Empowered Community:** The involvement of local residents in the data collection process empowered the community. Residents gained valuable skills and a sense of agency, fostering a more proactive approach to addressing their own needs.
4. **Policy Influence:** Reliable data from the Map Kibera project influenced local government policies. Policymakers were able to make informed decisions based on concrete evidence, resulting in better resource allocation and more effective development programs.

## **Building a Data-Driven Approach for the Boro People**

To bridge the data gap and ensure effective socio-economic development for the Boro people, a concerted effort is needed to collect, analyze, and utilize data. The Boro community can leverage its own organizations and intellectuals to spearhead these initiatives:

1. **All Bodo Students Union (ABSU):** With its extensive reach among Boro youth, ABSU can play a crucial role in mobilizing young people for data collection efforts. Training programs can be organized to equip students with the necessary skills in data gathering and analysis.

ABSU can contribute in the following manner:

- Leading community-based data collection initiatives
- Mobilizing students and youths for data collection and advocacy
- Conducting research and surveys on issues affecting the Boro community
- Collaboration with local organizations and NGOs
- Empowering students with data literacy and research skills
- Advocating for inclusive policy-making representation

2. **Bodo Sahitya Sabha:** As a cultural and literary organization, the Bodo Sahitya Sabha can help raise awareness about the importance of data in community development. It can also facilitate communication and collaboration among various stakeholders, ensuring a cohesive approach.

BSS can contribute in the following manner:

- Documenting and preserving Boro culture, language and literature with a focus on digitization
- Collecting and analyzing data on Boro language and literature
- Promoting research and publications on Boro history and culture
- Supporting community-led data collection initiatives

3. **Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC):** As a governing body, BTC can provide the necessary policy support and resources for data collection initiatives. It can collaborate with academic and research institutions to ensure scientific and standardized data collection methods. BTC's involvement can also ensure that the data collected is used to inform policy decisions and development programs.

4. **Boro Intellectuals and Professionals:** Boro intellectuals, including statisticians, economists, and sociologists, can play a vital role in guiding these efforts. They can help define the scope of data collection, design methodologies, and provide expertise in data analysis. By working closely with local organizations, these professionals can ensure that the data collected is relevant, accurate, and actionable.

## **Conclusion**

Improving the socio-economic conditions of the Boro people of Assam hinges on the effective use of data. While the current lack of reliable data presents a challenge, it also offers an opportunity to build a robust data infrastructure that can guide development efforts. By engaging the community, building local capacity, leveraging technology, and fostering collaborations, we can ensure development initiatives are well-informed and impactful. Reliable data is indeed a goldmine for decision-making, and tapping into this resource is essential for the sustainable development of the Boro people. The success of the Map Kibera project serves as a powerful reminder of what can be achieved when communities and organizations come together to harness the power of data. By utilizing the strengths and reach of organizations like ABSU, Bodo Sahitya Sabha, and BTC, along with the expertise of Boro intellectuals and professionals, the Boro community can embark on a data-driven path to sustainable development.

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## ***Thulungani Fungkha (TF)5***

***Prakash Basumatary***

**Interviewers: *Atul Basumatary, Mamoni Basumatary, Pinuel Basumatary***

*In this issue of The BDF Laisi, the Thulungani Fungkha team (TF) of BDF is pleased to present to our readers, Prakash Basumatary (PB), a well-known builder and entrepreneur from Guwahati. With his youthful, athletic, and energetic personality, PB has chosen to excel in the challenging field of entrepreneurship. He comes across as a veritable source of inspiration and a role model.*



**BDF: Mr. Prakash Basumatary, as you begin, how would you like to introduce yourself in a sentence the way you would like people to know you.**

**PB:** I am an IRONMAN athlete, an entrepreneur with a background in engineering, sales, and multiple business ventures in Assam, ranging from real estate from petrol pumps to rice milling.

**BDF: Name your village and tell us about the schools and colleges you went to.**

**PB:** I grew up in the village of Lechera, in the Baksa district of Assam and attended primary and high schools in a nearby village. After my secondary education from Pandu College, Guwahati, I went to the Regional Engineering College, Durgapur and obtained my engineering degree in 1994 from there.

**BDF: You lost your father when you were yet young and your mother had to raise 5 children as a single mother. Tell us about the salient features of the challenges you faced in getting your education. Please name your parents.**

**PB:** My father, Late Dharendra Basumatary worked in government and his last posting was in Kokrajhar, Assam. In 1984, after my father's death, the



family pension my mother received was a measly Rs. 300 a month. That made it extremely difficult for us to meet our basic needs. We moved back to our village. My mother had to supplement her income by working in other people's paddy fields.

Given the financial constraints, my elder and younger brothers went to live with my maternal grandfather, while I stayed on with my mother and pursued my studies. My mother was determined to educate us. Her resilience and hard work inspired me to persevere and complete my engineering studies.



**BDF: As a builder, you are a pioneering Boro entrepreneur in the real estate sector in Guwahati, the largest real estate market in the Northeast. Tell us how you have arrived here. Who inspired you? In what specific way?**

**PB:** My journey into the real estate sector in Guwahati began after I left Mumbai leaving my six-year old job in sales for a digital colour lab. That was in the year 2000. The experience I gained there, coupled with my engineering background, gave me the confidence and skills to venture into business on my own.

My first business in Guwahati was to set up a digital colour lab. I was driven by the desire to create something to contribute to the development of my home state. The success of the digital colour lab gave me the financial stability and the confidence to explore other business opportunities.

The transition into real estate in 2004 was inspired by a combination of factors. Firstly, I saw the growing demand for quality housing and commercial spaces in Guwahati. The city was rapidly developing as the largest real estate market in the Northeast. Secondly, I was inspired by successful entrepreneurs in the real estate who had made significant contributions to urban development and economic growth.

One of my key inspirations was my mother, Mrs. Hiranya Basumatary. She instilled in me a strong work ethic and the belief that hard work and perseverance can overcome any challenge. Additionally, successful businesspeople I met during my career provided valuable insights and guidance. Some of them acted like mentors for me.

**BDF: Like in most businesses, you can encounter adverse demand supply situations in this business. How do you tackle such adverse situation?**

**PB:** To be brief, I believe and adopt the following in my business: thorough market research, financial planning, cost management, customer-centric approach, marketing and sales initiatives, diversification of investments, building strategic partnerships, and Continuous Learning.

**BDF: What kind of people you hire, and how do you source them?**

**PB:** We normally hire the following:

- a) Civil Engineers, Architects, Project managers, and Sales Professionals with skill set and expertise relevant to our business.
- b) Customer-Oriented Staff with strong interpersonal and communication skills and commitment to providing excellent customer service.
- c) Innovative and forward thinking people who can bring new ideas, think creatively, and offer innovative solutions.

Our employees understand the company culture and the requirements of the roles. We therefore encourage our current employees to refer candidates. This can lead to high-quality hires. We also partner with recruitment agencies especially for specialized or senior positions.

**BDF: Would you like to mention anything significant about the principle(s) you follow in mobilizing resources in your business in the most cost-effective manner?**

**PB:** Briefly, we follow the following principles: planning and budgeting, negotiation with supplier, technology integration, freelancers and contractors, and maintaining financial stability.

**BDF: Whom do you see as your stakeholders? How do you relate yourself to them and their interests? What is the secret of your success?**

**PB:** Our customers, employees, investors and financial institutions, suppliers and contractors, and government and regulatory bodies are our stakeholders. If I may, I would ascribe our “secret of success” to our resilience and adaptability, customer-centric approach, strong team and leadership, continuous learning and improvement, and financial prudence.

**BDF: What is the biggest challenge you have faced in establishing yourself in the business? What is the challenge you face in staying on? How do you stay focused?**

**PB:** The biggest challenge I faced was in establishing credibility and gaining trust in a competitive market.



**BDF: Tell us the three most important requirements to be a successful entrepreneur in your field. What would you say to the youth who wish to be a builder?**

**PB:** Expertise and knowledge of real estate market dynamics, construction processes, legal regulations, and financial management are essential requirements. Besides, ability to manage risk, network and build relationships is required to succeed as an entrepreneur.

To the youth who aspire to be builders, I would say: to begin with, dedicate yourself to your work, be prepared to work hard, and be resilient.

**BDF: If you were given 10 acres of land near Guwahati or Gohpur or Odalguri, how would you use this land?**

**PB:** With the land in Guwahati, I could do the following:

- i) Real Estate Development:** Depending on the location and market demand, develop residential apartments, villas, or gated communities.
- ii) Commercial Projects:** Building shopping complexes, office spaces, or mixed-use developments to cater to business and retail needs.
- iii) Industrial Development:** Set up industrial parks or warehouses to support local manufacturing and logistics.

**iv) Recreational and Leisure Facilities:** Develop resorts, amusement parks, or sports facilities to promote tourism and leisure activities.

**Land in Odalguri or Gohpur:** I will set up organic farming and institutions to develop skill.

**BDF: Tell us three most important steps State and BTC Governments should take to accelerate development in BTAD/BTR.**

**PB:** The following would be my three priorities:

- i) Infrastructure Development:** Enhancing road connectivity, electricity, water supply, and telecommunications infrastructure to facilitate economic growth and improve quality of life;
- ii) Education and Skill Development:** Improving access to quality education and vocational training to equip youth with relevant skills for employment and entrepreneurship opportunities; and
- iii) Conflict Resolution and Peace Building:** Fostering dialogue and reconciliation among different communities to ensure peace and stability, creating an environment conducive to development.

**BDF: Your parting words for the youth.**

**PB:** **a)** Dream Big, Start Small; **b)** never stop learning and growing; **c)** persevere and learn from setbacks; **d)** build trust through honesty, integrity and ethical conduct; **e)** collaborate with others, support your community, and contribute positively to society. Remember, each of you has the potential to make a meaningful impact; believe in yourself, follow your passion, and strive to leave a positive legacy. Finally, aim at creating a better future for everyone.

**\*Disclaimer:** The author, not BDF Laisi or the Editorial Board, is responsible for the views expressed in this article.

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## ***Stay Hungry, Stay Focused, and Ask Questions!***

***Author:*** Kishore Wary, PhD

I must admit that mothers are always right. *Devi Rani Islary*, my mother is still alive today (July, 2024) and currently 90+ years old. She retired in 1992 as a Block Development Officer (BDO) from the Gossaigaon Block Development Office, Gossaigaon, Kokrajhar district. In her 30s and 40s, she juggled her job with motherhood and being a wife. In my opinion, my mother was a taskmaster, capable of managing multiple tasks simultaneously. As a mother, she has always been a typical mother, a sweet trait she maintains to this day. However, she also exhibited the toughness of an administrator, which sometimes collided with our upbringing as her children. As I grew older, I gained a deeper appreciation for my mother's life principles and the significant role she played in shaping my upbringing during my formative years.

Growing up I often felt I was not given enough food to eat. I constantly craved more rice and cooked fish daily, but I often remained hungry throughout the day. Whenever I asked for more food, her immediate response was consistently, "*Stay hungry.*" This principle of *staying hungry* stayed with me even when I was a student living in *Stephen Hall* dormitory/hostel at *St. Anthony's College* in Shillong. In the dining hall, we were served no more than one helping of rice, often with *alu*

*gobi* (potatoes and cauliflower) or sometimes *beans*, and a *big mug of watery dal*. The hostel meals were never sufficient for me; in other words, I was literally hungry most of the time. Next to *St. Anthony's College* in Shillong, there was a *Gurudwara*, a Sikh temple that I visited occasionally to have free food. As I pursued my MSc in Biochemistry at NEHU Shillong, I came to understand the biochemical reasons why *staying hungry* (*Upvas in Hindi*) is beneficial, both literally and metaphorically.

Biochemistry textbooks I studied described that rice, being rich in carbohydrates/sugars, when consumed can undergo a process called *glycolysis*, which can produce alcohol as one of the by-products of glycolytic metabolic pathway. Alcohol is sedative and it can impair brain activities and alter our thought processes. Being an Asian I also have an inactive variant (mutant) alcohol dehydrogenase (*ALDH*)<sub>2</sub> gene. Individuals with the inactive variant *ALDH*<sub>2</sub>, when drinks alcohol, another by-product of glycolysis, called *acetaldehyde*, is produced in the body, resulting in facial flushing, vomiting, and rapid heartbeat. In other words, eating too much rice is literally toxic for me. Although my mother didn't know biochemistry or what the *ALDH*<sub>2</sub> gene mutation is, her philosophy of *staying hungry* was more powerful than my textbook knowledge and scientific

explanations. To *stay hungry* can mean many different things for different people (1-4), but for me, it means to maintain a greedy appetite for knowledge and growth. Just as eating excessively can be sedative and missed opportunities, complacency in learning can dull the mind and impede personal development. Instead, a hunger for knowledge fuels innovation, breeds creativity, and propels individuals forward on the path to success. *Staying hungry is an open mindset* where setbacks are seen as opportunities for learning and improvement rather than reasons for defeat. This hunger pushes individuals to constantly seek new perspectives, embrace change, and adapt to evolving circumstances—whether in politics, in classroom, daily life, or even on the battlefield. Many leaders, entrepreneurs, musicians, poets, songwriters, artists, and scientists from all walks of life adhere to the principle of *staying hungry* - this *open mindset* helps them appreciate diverse opinions and pitfalls, which can aid in designing effective courses of action and corrective measures in case something goes wrong.

Additionally, my parents gave me the freedom to pursue any interests I had—whether it was playing a musical instrument, playing soccer, or going on vacation—with the caveat that I should question everything before taking action while remaining focused. For example, *why do you want to go to Delhi or to Mumbai, what is your goal?* Be inquisitive, questioning everything in life and work becomes integral to staying hungry. It encourages individuals to challenge assumptions, explore alternatives, and innovate

beyond traditional mindsets. Even when answers seem clear, questioning opens doors to clearer understanding and breakthroughs that can redefine possibilities. This hunger becomes the driving force behind personal and professional achievements, propelling individuals to reach new heights of success. In contrast, “*I know it all*” is an impediment to progress as it closes the door to learning and growth. When someone believes they have all the answers, they become resistant to new ideas, feedback, and perspectives. The “*I know it all*” is a *closed mindset* that limits innovation, hinders collaboration, and prevents personal development. Progress thrives on curiosity, openness to new knowledge, and continuous improvement—all of which are stifled by the illusion of knowing everything. Therefore, *stay hungry*, ask questions, and demonstrate willingness to learn, traits that are key to advancing both personally and professionally, and making discoveries and breakthroughs. *Staying hungry* can also sharpen *focus* by avoiding the lethargy associated with overeating and fostering a strong drive and motivation. *Focus* enables us to prioritize what matters most, avoid distractions, and achieve meaningful outcomes within a set timeframe. If we are not hungry, many of us will lack motivation and to stay focused. An overabundance of food and constant entertainment are counterproductive, serving as serious impediments to human progress.

Now that I am a little older, a little wiser, I believe that staying hungry is therapeutic, as it slows down aging and helps prevent many food-



related illnesses. Even if a host or restaurant offers you '*all you can eat*,' it's never a good idea to completely fill your stomach, as it can impair your ability to think effectively, engage in prolonged, meaningful conversations, or stay focused on your duties on the battlefield. While *staying hungry* can help with focus, it's important to

balance it with adequate nutrition to avoid adverse effects on health. As a scientist, I am always hungry to learn, explore, improve, and discover, and I remain ever inquisitive. Therefore, my mother was correct in her mantra of staying hungry.

*Stay hungry, my friend; and go places!*

***Additional Materials:***

1. Steve Jobs: Stanford University commencement speech, *Stay Hungry and Stay Foolish!* 2005.
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**Dear Readers:**

The Editorial Board (EB) of *The BDF लाइसि* invites letters to the editor to be featured in the coming issues.

*Why should you write A Letter to the Editor? Here are a few general suggestions:*

- You are concerned and have questions about specific topic(s) or issue(s) and you want others to know about it. Your concern is crucial that you must talk about and ask for clarification or resolution.
- Your letter to the editor could supplement, praise, comment in relation to the contents published in the newsletter.
- Your letter could also suggest an idea to others, influence readers opinion, educate the readers on a specific topic, emerging issues, influence stakeholder or elected officials directly or indirectly.
- Your letters to the editors could publicize the work of your organization and attract volunteers and participants.
- Your letter should be relevant to the mission of the BDF, and most importantly concise and tell the readers what should be done, your suggestion should be feasible and actionable.
- A letter to the Editor of *The BDF लाइसि* should be written in plain English or Boro, in no more than 500 words. Font, Georgia; size, 12.
- Please email your letter in word format to: [Editor@borodiaspora.org](mailto:Editor@borodiaspora.org)

The EB may contact you (the contributor) for clarification. The editorial team reserves the rights to edit your letter to improve readability and shorten according to the space available without altering the primary content of the letter. However, the editorial board will have the right to reject irrelevant or incomplete letter. Please include your name, contact details including your phone number and verifiable email.

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## Members of Editorial Board of the BDF Laisi



**Dr Kishore Wary** is a faculty member at the University of Illinois at Chicago, USA. He is a published author and serves as an academic editor of several scientific journals. His hobbies include gardening, music, and tennis.



**Dr Dharitri Narzary** teaches History to Undergraduate/Graduate students in the School of Liberal Studies at Ambedkar University Delhi (AUD) and an Adjunct Fellow at the Institute of Chinese Studies, Delhi. She specializes in Japanese history and her interest areas include material/non-material culture, indigenous history, East Asian society. Previously, Dr Dharitri worked with the Yomiuri Shimbun, the largest circulated Japanese newspaper at its India Bureau in New Delhi.



**Mamoni Basumatary** is a Chemical Engineer and currently working at Indian Oil Corporation as a General Manager (Tech. Services) at the Guwahati Refinery. A Petroleum Federation of India (Petrofed) award winner, Mamoni earned a B.E. (Chem) Degree from Assam Engineering College of Gauhati University. Her expertise lies in Strategic Business Planning, Energy Management, and Faculty support services. Sports, Cultural activities, and associating with NGO activities are her main area of interest.



**Bibi Prasad Brahma** is an Assistant Teacher, currently working at the Harinaguri High School, Kokrajhar. He earned his B.Sc. from Cotton University, Guwahati and M.Sc. (Maths) Dibrugarh University, Dibrugarh and D.El.Ed. from KKHSO University, Assam and TET qualified. He is a E-Content creator in DIKSHA, SCERT, Assam and his expertise lies in the E-content review in Mathematics (Bodo Medium).



**Biswanath Boro** is currently working as a Regional Manager at the New India Assurance, the largest general insurance company in India, stationed in Guwahati. He comes from Baghmara, a village in the Baksa District. He went to Rupahi High School, BH College, and graduated from Cotton College. In addition, he is a recipient of Fellowship in Insurance (FII). He is actively connected with several social organizations and sports.

## Members of Editorial Board of the BDF Laisi



**Aleendra Brahma** is a Lecturer & Junior Research Officer at the Central Institute of Indian Languages (CIIL), Mysuru, and currently the Head of the Press & Publication Unit of CIIL. He is also the Officer-in-Charge of the North-Eastern Regional Language Centre, Guwahati; the Centre for North-Eastern Language Development; and Centre for Folklore, Lexicography and Creative Writing. He has authored 12, edited 11 and translated 3 books, and published 13 peer-reviewed research articles; several book chapters and >60 popular articles in Bodo, Assamese and English. His areas of interest include Assamese and Bodo-Garo languages and linguistics, folklore, science-fiction, and translation. Recently, he received the *Abou Khobam Raja Uttam Chandra Kherkatary Literary Award 2021* from Salbari District Bodo Sahitya Sabha for his poetry *Angni Gurbwao Nwng Dinwibw Jujaini Or*.



**Dr. Pompi Basumatary** is an Assistant Professor of English at Christ (Deemed to be University), Delhi NCR. She earned her Master's in English Literature and Ph.D. in English (Translation Studies) from The English and Foreign Languages University, Hyderabad. Her research interests include Translation Studies, Colonial Studies, Folk Literature, etc. In addition to academic engagement, she is also a translator and a creative writer.



**Dr. Jeetumoni Basumatary** is an Assistant Professor in the Department of English, Cotton University, Guwahati, Assam (India). She has an M.A. & M.Phil from the Department of English, University of Delhi, and a PhD from English Department, Gauhati University. Before Cotton University, she taught at the English Department of Ramjas College, Delhi University from 2009 to 2015. She is interested in drama and translation and her research interest is cultural nationalism and identity formation. She has translated two Bodo works into English and has also scripted two plays in Bodo, one of which is a Bodo adaptation of Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, called *Nangwljangkhra Horni Simang* (2016), and the other is based on *Thengphakhri*, a Bodo legendary woman, called *Thengphakhri Tehsildar* (2015). She has contributed a number of articles and book chapters (academic and otherwise) in English as well as Bodo, to journals and books.



**Mr. Niranjana Brahma** is a Civil Engineer by profession with interests in fine arts, literature and linguistics. A graduate of 1989 from Assam Engineering College, a resident of Kajalgaon in Chirang District of BTR. Professionally, he has worked in various industries such as Oil & Gas, Metals & Mining and Infrastructure in the fields of engineering design as well as construction and has been associated with renowned corporate engineering companies. Currently stationed in Delhi, Mr. Brahma is working at the India office of Bechtel Corporation of USA. Socially, he has been associated with community works of Boro people in Delhi. By some he is known as a perfectionist. As a child, he wanted to learn 'everything' in the world, including, at last, the black magic, but realised that it is unachievable in one life. Even if it is achieved, the fate might be as that of *Dr. Faustus*, a character of a play with the same name authored by Christopher Marlowe.

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### Contacts

Editor@borodiaspora.org and cc to gs@borodiaspora.org, and visit us online WWW.Borodiaspora.org

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# The End