

## Topic-the philosophy of Bathou religion in the north-east part of India

Sanjay Baro

Asstt. Prof. Department of Philosophy, Barama College, Barama, Baksa, Assam, India

### Abstract

The Bathou religion is mainly constituted by the five deep spiritual thought which is practiced by the Bodo society in the north-east part of India. According to this religion, the almighty God is the only one or monistic. It manifests that the three form of gods. e.g- 1. Rangrashi (Brahma who is the creator) 2. Mwithahasi (Vishnu who is the sustainer) and 3. Barigangtham (Maheswara who is the destroyer) the three form of god ended with the only one form of god which is known as the Sijowma Gossai or the almighty soul. This religion states that the creation of the world, social custom, moral order etc are signified by the five primary elements and thought. The five subtle elements for the creation of the world are earth, water, air, fire and ether. The world's creation of creatures and beings are impossible if yet absence of one element among the five. The inter relationship among the five elements creates the almighty power or supreme power which is known as "the Bathw Bwrai." The Bathw Bwrai is the almighty, omnipotent, omnipresent, omniscient, infinite, and eternal and the absolute soul.

**Keywords:** asari, douri, douchi, bibar bathou, ojah, rangrashi, mwithahasi, barigangtham

### Introduction

The Bathou religion is one of the most important and the oldest religion among the Bodos. There is no such particular name of the propounder of this religion. It has no form, because He is invisible and imperceptible. Therefore the followers of this religion do not keep any idol or statue in the name of the supreme god and it has no traditionally written scripture or religious book. Some priests and worshippers attempt to state that as this religion born during the period of first civilization, so there is no fixed name who was the propounder of this religion. It is also considered that the ancestor of Hojorat Muhamad, Jesus Christ, and Gautam Buddha had their own religion but they had no propounder of their respective religion. Their religion were animist or totemism or spiritual or anyother. Holi man like Asari, Douri, Douchi and Ojah are very important persons of this religion to attend the puja and worship. From the very beginning, the Bathou religion was worshipped by sacrificing animals and beings. During the puja time, some parts of the people used to drink home made wine and kherai dances were also performed. But now the modern trends of the Bathou religion is something different in respect of offering puja. Because it is prayed and worshipped by offering flowers and garlands instead of sacrificing animals and beings. The modern Bathou religion is called "Bibar Bathou" which is prayed and worshipped by offering flowers and performed Aaraj (praying song)

### Aims and Objectives of the study

The study has been undertaken with the following objectives:

1. To expose the basic concept of the religion.
2. To find out the inter-relationship between the bathe religion and other form of religion like Hinduism and Chino-Tibetian's.
3. To show the religious and social customs, way of worship, puja, rituals and rites of this religion.
4. To show the origin of this religion, specific power of the gods and goddesses.

### Methodology

To collect the data in this research paper, both the primary and the secondary source are applied. The primary sources of data are collected from various Bathou organization asking question to priest and by visiting some other bathou Temples under the area of Baska district, BTAD, Assam. Again the secondary sources of data are collected from the books, and internet.

### Significance

The Bathw religion is generally practiced by the Tribal community of Bodos. It has no much familiarity among the non-tribal community but most of the people eager to know its nature, characteristics, custom, creed, rituals, ways of paying worship and puja. Therefore keeping all those purposes, this research paper attempts to expose the basic features of the Bathw religion and its interlink between the other form of religions. This paper attempts to carry out the origination and its destination of the religion. It will be helpful to the regional basis, national and international basis for knowing the mythological thought of the Bathw religion.

### Origin of the religion

Generally the term "Bathou" is derived from the two root words, "Ba" and "thou". Here 'Ba' means five and 'thou' means deep spiritual thought. Etimologically 'bathou' means five deep spiritual things. It is an interesting matter that the religious thoughts of bathou are related to the numeral five or five tattva. This numeral 'Five' is very closely related to the pancha-tattva which concept is found in Vedas and Upanisads in Hindu shastra. According to Vedas and Upanisads, there are five subtle elements e.g-earth, water, air, fire and ether by which out of those five elements our world and beings are created. Mahapurusa Sankaradeva, who is known as the most popular philosopher of Assam, also stated about the five subtle elements or Panchabhuta or pancha-tattva related with the creation. The Bathou is the master of beginning and end routes of human and animal world, nature and the whole universe. He is Himself

science and monistic nature in pluralistic. With the profound belief, Bodos plant the Sijou tree as the symbol of the supreme god, which is rename as Anan Gosai, or Obonglaori or Bwrai Bathou or Sib Bwrai or Siva.

The Bathou religion is based on five moral and spiritual messages. E.g-

1. The message on holy realization includes of Bathou as the supreme god. The realization of one's own soul is the part of Bathou and realization of the need of good in this world.
2. The message of holy practice emphasis on meditation for god, conservation on religion and spiritual matters charitable donation to the poor.
3. The messages on love includes love for god, love for fellow being, love for family and love for all living beings.
4. The messages on truth emphasis on leading a truthful life and
5. The messages on hatred urges one to abstain from committing sins like stealing, telling lies, adultery, murder and association with bad company.

The numeral 'Five' of the Bathou religion has been expressed in the following verse;

Viz-  
 "Thigirni khongna khongba  
 Sijuni chiria chiriba  
 Sifhungni gudungna gudungba  
 Boro bwraini acharabw fongba"

The meaning of this above given verse is that the Dillenis indica (Aaw tengna) fruit has five rinds, the sijou tree has five ridges, the sifung has five holes (It is occasionally used in the kherai dances) the Bathou has five knots (the bamboo fencing around the alter) and so the great saintly Bodo has five moral words or preaching. These are the five kinds of achar (custom) similarly in many cases Bodos have the principles of five.

**The first imaginary god worshipped by the primitive Bodo peoples are also only five e.g**

- a. Hailong: It is the god of earth.
- b. Argran: It is the god of water.
- c. Khwila: It is the god of air.
- d. Sanjabwrlri: It is the god of light or fire.
- e. Rajkhumbree: It is the god sky or fire.

The principles given by the primitive Bodo man called Mwnchinchin are also five.

e.g-1. Saithi (peace) 2.Laothi (control of mind) 3. Nalathi (co-operation of mind and body) 4. Maothi (activeness) 5. Sonathi (dearer to ones)

Again the following are some of the examples of five fold preachings collected from the traditional slokas, tales and stories related to the religious rites of Bathou.

- A. The five holy realisation of Bathou are given in the following –
  1. Realisation of the supreme 'Sijou'. The supreme soul.
  2. Linking up the 'Jiwma' (human soul) with sijiou, the supreme being.
  3. Realisation of Mainao. It means the realization of the goddess Lakshmi.
  4. Realisation of the five great elements, e.g- earth, water, air, fire and ether.
  5. Realisation of the need of worldly affairs.

B. The five senses of love:

1. Love to Anan Gosai (eternal god)
2. Love to fellow beings.
3. Love to husband/ wife and children.
4. Love to other lower animals and objects of nature.
5. Love to ones motherland and world.

C. Hatred for the five sinners. E.g-

1. Hatred for the murderer.
2. Hatred for the thief.
3. Hatred for the liar.
4. Hatred for one indulging in illicit and unnatural intercourses.
5. Hatred for the association with a man guilty of offences.

The Bathou religion states that the absolute vacuum was prior to the creation of the universe. When there was only the vacuum, the almighty Anan Gosai become tired of His formless existence and so He desired Himself by taking a form of flash and blood. Anan 'Gosai', the eternal god expressed himself by taking a form of flash and blood in lively human being and called himself 'Jiw Bwrai' or 'Sibrai'. Here jiw means life and siw means soul and bwrai means the ripest man. i.e- the primitive individual who possessed first life and soul. Later, it is called 'Siwa' and then Sanskrit word 'siva' according to the priest of Bathou religion.

There are much common features in respect of faith, beliefs, customs, offering puja, between the Bathou religion and the rest of tribal communities in the north-east part of India. Moreover, its features are related to Chino-Tibotian and the Mongoloid family. According to the some priests, the Bathou region is not the Hindu religion though there are some common features and concept of pancha-tattva and Siva. It is a kind of peculiar religion. But it is officially included and mentioned as the Hindu religion. It is a fact that most of the peoples of Bathou religion follow up the basic features, customs, faiths of Hindu religion without hesitation and restriction. Because the goddess of learning Saraswati is called Bwrlri bwrai-bwrlri burwi, the goddess Lakshmi is called Mainao, the god and goddess of music is called kham bwai-kham burwi, the god Viswakarma is called Rajang bwrai and Rajang burwi, and The main symbol of Bathou religion is the Sijou plant (Euphorbia genus) which is worshiped and regarded as the holy tree. It is considered the living embodiment of Bathoubwrai. The term 'Sijiou' is originally derived from the Bodo language 'Si' and 'Jiou' which means Soul or atma and the highest respectively. Etymologically, Sijiou means the highest soul or atma in the philosophically thought of the Bathou religion. There are eighteen pairs of designed bamboo sticks with five fastenings surrounding the Sijiou tree and five pairs of ring of bamboo which must be completed within a half of day and with only one bamboo. Each pair symbolize the eighteen pairs of minor gods and goddesses In front of Sijiou within encircled bamboo ring, there is Dathou Bikha or Dove Heart. It signifies the co-operation and harmony among the deties and among the members of society just like brotherhood and sisterhood. The five fastening signify, from the bottom- 1. Birth 2. Pain 3. Death 4. Marriage and 5. peace. The bottom three fastenings e.g-1. Birth 2. Pain and 3. Death are those that nobody can escape in life; whereas two one could.

Song raja is usually represented inside the house in an alter called 'dham' a deity who obtains devotion from women, and receives offering during women's menses; but this offerings are due to course of time brought out and laid at the Sijiou tree representing Bathou.

### The eighteen pairs gods and goddesses

Since, a 'Sjiou' shrub is fenced with eighteen pairs of strips, there are mythological meaning in the bathou religion. Because each pairs signifies eighteen pairs of minor gods and goddesses. They are-

1. Aham Bwrai-Aham burwi
2. Khuria Bwrai-Khuria burwi
3. Rajong Bwrai- Rajong burwi
4. Hasong Bwrai-Hasong Burwi
5. Gangar Bwrai-Hasong Burwi
6. Eheo Bwrai-Eheo Burwi
7. Kham Bwrai-Kham Burwi
8. Song raja-Song rani
9. Monsinsin Bwrai-Monsinsin Burwi
10. Agrang Bwrai-Agrang Burwi
11. Mohela Bwrai-Mohela Burwi
12. Hazw Bwrai-Hazw Burwi
13. Emao Bwrai-Emao Burwi
14. Hafao Bwrai-Hafao Burwi
15. Bwrlu Bwrai-Bwrlu Burwi
16. Deva Bwrai-Deva Burwi
17. Joumwn Bwrai- Joumwn Burwi
18. Mainao Bwrai-Mainao Burwi

The above eighteen minor Gods and Goddesses have their own special power to bless for the welfare of all beings in this world and the universe. Among them, there are Gods and Goddesses of Law maker, owner and first creator of medicine to make relief and cure from diseases or suffering, Imparting knowledge, wisdom and learning, wealth, weaver of garment and cloth, protector during the time of journey, good health and beauty, controller of machine, tools, utensils, house holder and protector of dangerous environment, and so on.

### Inter-relation with other religion

There are inter-relationship between the Bathou religion and the native Tibetans religion called Shamanistic or gods of Bon. It can authentically be inferred to prove that the Bodo tribes are originated from the North China and Tibetans. Native Tibetans use the five colours e.g- Blue, white, red, green, and yellow to honour the native gods Bon, in their Shamanistic religion. Each colour represents the five elements, in a particular order-

1. Blue colour is the sign of sky or space
2. white colour is the sign of air.
3. Red colour is the sign of fire.
4. Green colour is the sign of water.
5. Yellow colour is the sign of earth.

Similarly, The Bathou religion also believe the five elements for the creation of the world as well as colours are also followed accordingly. Hindu religion also believe the trinity concept of god; e.g-brahma who is he creator, Vishnu who is the sustainer, and maheswar is the destroyer of the world and universe. In the same way, in the Bathou religion too, there is the concept of the trinity of god; Rangrasi, Mwithahasi and Barigangtham having the same attributes. Samkara's concept of advaita- Vedanta, states that the monistic idea of god, that is Brahma having no attributes or qualities. Islam religion also states that the God is only one that is 'Allah' which is having attributeless but having the supreme power and the almighty god. Similarly 'Bwrai Bathou' is also the monistic form of god having the supreme power, the almighty but attribute less.

There are two forms in the Bathou religion in respect of offering puja and worship to god. E.g- Traditional Bathouism and Reformative Bathouism.

Traditional Bathouism does not have any written scripture or religious book, nor permanent temples. The worship is performed at the Thansali or Sijiousali, During the puja, flowers, fruits and moreover beings and animals are also sacrificed for the sake of dedication and worshipping to gods and goddesses. Again it believes various ghosts, devils, and spirits and to satisfy them life of birds and animals are sacrificed, liquor or vodka prepared by domestically are also offered. In the public place or mass gathering places if the bathou puja is celebrated, then kherai dances like bagurumba, rwnswndri etc.dances are performed where sometime the Deodhoni takes the active role. Traditional system of bathouism has much more superstitious belief which is the consequences of witch hunting and some followers become liquor or vodka addicted. In this system the dedication to the supreme god is right and concerned with the deep mythological thought but there are some defectives.

Reformative Bathouism -A reformative form of the Bathou religion is originally emerge out from the traditional form of bathou religion wherein some defects are eliminated for better attraction and to reform the society. All Bathou Religion Union, an organization, was constituted in 1982' and it has begun reviving and reforming the traditional religion. The traditional Douri and Doudhani are replaced by the Gwthar Asari appointed by the organization. A band of singers who sing in a practice called Bathou Araj. Bathou Araj is performed on every Tuesday in Thansali or temple. Now in this form, sacrifices of animals and being, and offering of rice beer as modes of worship has been replaced by offering of flowers, fruits, prasad and the burning of incense. Modern Bodo society prefers reform Bathou which is free from superstitious belief and the belief of ghost, devils, etc.

### Conclusion

The sjiou plant (Euphorbia sp) is taken as the symbol of the Bathou religion and worshiped. Bodos, in the north-east part of India traditionally practice Bathouism which is worshipping forfather, the absolute spirit, the only one form of god in the ultimate sense and it is also claimed as the supreme soul. In Bodo language, 'Ba' means five and 'Thou' means deep thought. As Bodos believe in five mighty elements of god, which are earth, water, air, fire and ether have become a very significant number in the Bathou religion. In absence of even one element, there is no creation and living being in this world. Such as like the planet of Jupiter, March, Neptune etc. there are no any living being since there is absence of such elements.

### References

1. Brahma Dr. Kameswar. Aspects of Social Customs of the Bodo. By Bina Library, Guwahati Assam, reprinted edition.
2. Barama College Research Journal, Barama College Barama. Published by Research cell (IQAC), Baksa, ISSN 2455-6637. 1(1):15.
3. Brahma Dr. Liladhar. Religious and Dances of the Bodos P.K Bhowmik, Kokrajhar, Assam. Boro, Bihuram, Gibi bithai Onsumoi Library Edition; 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition. Feb/, 2005.
4. Sarma Dharmeswar (Translator) 'Srimadbhagavat Gita' published by navajyoti dev Choudhury, Techno and publication, guwahati.

5. Brahma Dr. kameswar. An Introduction to the Myths and legends of the Bodos Onsumoi library, R.N.B Road Kokrajhar, BTAD, Assam.
6. Shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/bitstream/10603...
7. www.tibetreliffund.co.uk/Tibetan-prayer-flags.
8. Hirianna M. Outlines of Indian Philosophy, Motilal Banarsidas Publishers, Pvt. Ltd. Delhi.