

# ECONOMIC LIFE OF THE BODOS

**Manaj Kumar Brahma**  
**Assistant Professor**  
**Deptt. of Bodo**  
**Fakiragram College, Fakiragram**  
**Kokrajhar, Assam, India**

## **ABSTRACT:**

Agriculture is the main economy of the Bodos. Varieties of rice are cultivated. Besides rice, several crops are also grown by them. The major crops are mustard, jute, cotton, tobacco etc. and vegetables like potato, cabbage, cauliflower, radish, cucumber, gourd, green leaves, pulse, beans, small-beans, sweet potato, turmeric, pumpkin, melon, brinjal etc. including varieties of spices like chili, onion, garlic, coriander, ginger etc. Another important fruit tree which brings more economy to them is the *Goi Biphang* (areca tree). The areca nuts are most essential for them in day to day life including the religious functions. Without areca nuts and betel leaves no social function or ritual can be performed in their society.

**Keywords:** Agriculture, rice, jute, potato, cabbage, cucumber.

## **OBJECTIVE:**

The objective of the study is to highlight and study the economic life of the Bodos. As we have seen that now a days the Bodos are also used different kind of agricultural crops and agricultural goods. With the sole objective of understanding the economic conditions and their earning sources have been developed in this paper.

## **METHODOLOGY:**

The methodology adopted in this paper is inter-disciplinary approach which included consulting number of written sources as well as interview method. The people who have knowledge about economic life of the Bodos and various associated with information. The technique of anthropological data collection, participants, interview method are adopted. The collection of data has been analyzed both quantitatively and the qualitatively wherever necessary.

## **ANALYSIS:**

## **HUNTING: ECONOMIC LIFE:**

Agriculture is the main economy of the Bodos since the early days. Different kinds of rice are cultivated. They also cultivated several crops like mustard, jute, cotton, tobacco etc. and vegetables like potato, cabbage, cauliflower, radish, cucumber, gourd, green leaves, pulse, beans, small-beans, sweet potato, turmeric, pumpkin, melon, brinjal etc. including varieties of spices like chili, onion, garlic, coriander, ginger, etc. till today. *Goi Biphang* (Mondal, 2011: p. 199.) (areca tree) is another important fruit tree

which brings more economy to them. It is the most essential for them in day to day life including the religious functions. No social function or ritual can be performed in their society without areca nuts and betel leaves. (Hazowary, 1998: p. 30.)

The Bodos used different kinds of agricultural utensils specially made of bamboo and wood at agricultural activities. *Nangal* (ploughshare), *Jungal* (yoke), *Suken* (a kind of straw separator made of bamboo), *Mwi* (harrow), *Mwi Dangur* (a kind of land equalizer made of bamboo), *Beda* (made of bamboo and wood with spikes to remove the grass), *Hasini* (rake), *Royna* (made of bamboo and wood to make collectively the rice), *Khasi* (sickle), *Khodal* (hoe), *Hulabari* (a kind of bamboo stick for the collection of bundle rice on shoulder) etc. are the agricultural tools of the Bodos. (B.C. Gait, C.G.H. Howard, 1979: p. 63.)

In early days, the Bodos have been reliant on other economic activities such as hunting-gathering, animal husbandry, handicrafts etc. The economic life of Bodos was very much impacted by their habit of frequent migration. They gave much importance to the foods of day to day life. They were self sufficient with some degree of necessities and led to a simple rural life without much knowledge of earning and accumulating wealth and property in those days. The economic life of the Bodos can be studied such as hunting, fishing, (handicraft), *Si Danai* spinning and weaving and trade and commerce. (Informant: Janabhir Brahma, Age- 62, Occupation- Priest, Vill- Santinagar, P.O.- Dotma, Dist- Kokrajhar, BTC, Assam on 17/02/2017.)

Bodos are fond of hunting. In Bodo the hunter is called *Polan* (Brahma. 2009: p. 8.) from the ancient time. Hunting can be done both group and individual. *Bwrla* (bow), *Thir* (arrow), *Thop* (made of bamboo), *Jong* (spear), *Je* (net), *Rua* (axe), *Sika* (dao) etc. are the tools used in the hunting.

In the hunting, more or less 15 to 25 persons are engaged which mainly base on the nets that to be used. If the used of the nets are very few, less people will involve and more nets will be more people. In a hunting party to trace the animals there might be two or three leaders. The foot prints and stools of the animals are detected by examining the presence of animals in a particular area. (Narzi, 2006: p. 105.)

Rev. Sydney Endle stated that deer and wild pigs are very oftenly caught in hunting. For hunting purpose, they also used net for hunting wild animal and regular hunting parties are organized. Among the Bodos, the practice of offering right leg of the trap animal to the owner of net is prevalent. Meat is distributed among the villagers who joined in hunting and half or less share of meat is received by the villagers who do not participate in hunting because of his engagement to village work. Sick person and widows are also apportioned a little share of hunted meat. (Endle, 1911: p. 16.)

#### **FISHING:**

Fishing is also one another occupation of the Bodos. Though, fishing is not considered as an occupation of the Bodos but at least 5% families run their family by fishing in the rural areas. From the ancient days fishing is regarded as a hobby and it is done by

both man and woman. *Jekai* (A triangular basket made of bamboo with open at one end and three triangular sides are closing with each other to the point and having a handle which is fixed to the whole body.) which is a triangular basket made of bamboo with open at one end and three triangular sides are closing with each other to the point and having a handle which is fixed to the whole body is the female used implement. A triangular basket made of bamboo with open at one end and three triangular sides are closing with each other to the point and having a handle which is fixed to the whole body.

#### **HANDICRAFT:**

Since the ancient days, the Bodos are very expert and skillful in the field of handicraft. All Bodo male members are talented craftsman. To meet the needs of their day to day life they collected raw materials from the forest and produced different kinds of handicrafts. The whole work of handicraft is confined to male members only. From the point of view, it can be understand that all the required things of the family are made by male but not by the female. (A kind of fishing trap.) *Abwi Dangi, Kamplai, Don, Duli, Sandanga, Dahra, Kada, Songrai, Sandri, Sagong, Uwal, Gaihen, Kadwo, Jantha, Laothai, Dwihu, Maldang, Dabka, Mwkra Koro, Kopri, Goi-Batha, Baoka, Suken, Mwi, Mwi-Dangur* etc. are the household utensils used by the Bodos which are made of clay, bamboo, wood, cane, etc. (Informant: Marjina Brahma, Age- 58, Occupation- Housewife, Vill- Dotma Chariali, P.O.-Dotma, Dist- Kokrajhar, Assam on 23/05/2015.)

#### **WEAVING:**

The Bodos have their own traditional dresses which produced by themselves which shows their artistic skill of weaving traditional dresses like *Dokhna, Jwmgra, Aronai, Phali, Indi* etc. (Hodgson, 1847: pp. 120-121.) Spinning and weaving are only reserved for the women not for the men because all Bodo female acquire the knowledge of art of weaving. The Bodos rear silk-worm. For personal use and later on for the commercial purpose, they produce various clothes from the cocoon of silk-worm. *Muga rearing* is one of the most important economic activities and very common among the Bodos which is considered a high level economic earner. (Informant: Gunabati Brahma, Age- 54, Occupation- Housewife, Vill- Kwdwmthola, P.O.- Dotma, Dist- Kokrajhar, BTC, Assam on 21/10/2016.) The women produce the clothes for the use of the family members on free of cost. This indicated that the women contributed a lot in the society as well as the family to save extra expenditure. In fact, Assam was famous for the production of varieties of silk clothes like the China and silk trade was very profitable. (Hodgson, 1847: p. 121.) A device called *Thaokri* is used by the women for the spinning of yarn both from raw cocoon and cotton.

#### **TRADE AND COMMERCE:**

The Bodo word *Falangi Kalamnai* means trade and commerce. For trade and commerce as well as money economy the source materials for the Bodos are very limited. The Bodos live self-sufficient and self-defendant economic condition. Like other

ancient societies, they produced only for consumption purpose or to meet their needs only of their own family. But, later on, they also began to produce more food grains and other commodities required by them and surplus products were made exchange which led to the emergence of trade. In the early days, barter system or exchange of goods for goods was a common practice in the Bodos society. The Bodo society was not encouraged trade and commerce in early days believing that trade or business involved telling untruth. Speaking of lie was regarded as a sin by the Bodos, so trade and business were not done by them. (Brahma, 2006: p. 37.) As a result; the selling of a cow for making profit within unpermitted period or earning of profit by means of business was not allowed. But, to compare to that of the early days, today many changes have been noticed in the economic life of Bodos due to the impact of modernization.

### References:

1. Mondal Satyendra Nath, *History and Culture of the Bodos*, Edited by Bonny Narzary, Jalpaiguri, West Bengal, 2011, p. 199.
2. Hazowary Mangal Singh, Gwjam Mugayao Boro Harimu Sibinaini Bidinti in Rupesri, Edited by Padmashree Madaram Brahma, Kokrajhar, 1998, p. 30.
3. B.C. Allen, E. A. Gait, C.G.H. Allen and H.F. Howard, *Gazetteer of Bengal and North East India*: Delhi, Reprint, 1979, p. 63.
4. Interview with Janabhir Brahma, Age- 62, Occupation- Priest, Vill- Santinagar, P.O.- Dotma, Dist- Kokrajhar, BTC, Assam on 17/02/2017.
5. Brahma Binoy Kumar, *Boroni Subung Harimu*, N.L. Publications, Kokrajhar, BTC, 2009, p. 8.
6. Narzi, Bhaben, *BoroKochariniSomajarwHarimu*, Chirang Publication Board, Kajalgaon, 1<sup>st</sup> Ed. 2003 & 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed. 2006, p. 105.
7. Endle, Rev. Sydney, *The Kacharies*, Low Price Publication, Delhi, 1911, p. 16.
8. A triangular basket made of bamboo with open at one end and three triangular sides are closing with each other to the point and having a handle which is fixed to the whole body.
9. A kind of fishing trap.
10. Hodgson B.H., *Essay the First; on the Kooch, Bodo and Dhimal Tribes, In Three Parts, Part III.-Location, Numbers, Creed, Customs, Condition and Physical and Moral Characteristics of the People*, Baptist Mission Press, Calcutta, 1847, pp. 120-121.
11. Interview with Gunabati Brahma, Age- 54, Occupation- Housewife, Vill- Kwdwmthola, P.O.- Dotma, Dist- Kokrajhar, BTC, Assam on 21/10/2016.

12. Hodgson B.H., *op. cit.*, p. 121.
13. Brahma Binoy Kumar, *Boroni Subung Harimu*, N.L. Publications, Kokrajhar, BTC, 2009, p. 86.
14. Brahma Sekhar, *Religion of the Boro and their Socio-Cultural Transition*, DVS Publishers Guwahati, 2006, p. 37.

\*\*\*

