

## TYPICAL HUNTING AND FISHING TRADITION OF THE BODOS OF NORTH EAST INDIA



### Abstract:-

This paper tries to present the skills and tools of the people of the Bodos of Assam in the field of hunting and fishing of its typicality and tradition. Men the Supreme Being led their lives through hunting to solace their hunger before the civilization and it is still prevailing among the different communities of people in the world as a document of tradition. The word hunting in English is meant in Bodo as Mwihur Khalamnai. Hunting is based on experience, adaptation, local culture, resources and the environment of the people of the region of a community where they live. This tradition has been handed down generation to generation to the people of the community which is remained as a part of property of the entire community. They use different tools of different shapes and sizes for hunting purposes and according to the season and weather they step in hunting field. Somewhat it has become a culture to the people of the community as a part of enjoyment and entertainment.

### Keywords:

Bodo Community, Hunting and Fishing, Skills and Tools.



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## INTRODUCTION

### HUNTING AND FISHING

Hunting and fishing is literally a part of material culture which can be discussed under the sub-genre of Folk literature. The word hunting in English is meant in Bodo as *Mwihur Khalamnai*. According to the archeologists and the anthropologists of human civilization hunting was the first stage of human being's intelligence power and meat was the stable food of men. To get rid from hungry in the earlier period, before the civilization men did hunting as the livelihood mean and led their folk life. Hunting depends on weather and season. Men and the all things and living being in this world have a close relation to the nature and they live amidst the nature, nature is the mother of their knowledge and development of mental faculties. They cultivate their knowledge and experiences gathered from nature and again applies it on its surrounding's objects. Bodos have been also residing and staying since the ancient near to the river, dense jungle and forest as they like the nature most, its objects and the surroundings. So, they have faced and struggled with nature for surviving by different means. They learned how to hunt to satisfy their hungry and applied their intelligence power as they can. They go into the hunting and fishing field according to the hunting objects. They usually go for hunting in both on ground and in river in different times. So, hunting and fishing of Bodos can be divided into two types i.e. hunting in river and hunting on the ground. There are different specific names behind the hunting and fishing according to and suiting to the skills and instruments to be hunted use by the hunter. The methods, names and the skills presented here have been collected and gathered as informed by the informants and from self experiences residing in the rural area from the childhood and as a representative of the society. Illustrating hunting and fishing, their names, nature, the most frequent and common normal hunting and fishing primitive handmade applied tools and skills of the Bodos are supposed to discuss here.

### HUNTING AND FISHING SKILLS AND INSTRUMENTS

Hunting and fishing is just like hobby of the people now a day. Some people like hunting not as a profession but just for an enjoyment and refreshment of mind. By hunting here fishing, catching and capturing of some medium animals and birds were assumed as prevalent in ancient periods and it's happening among people in the world in present day life as a document and experiences of the past people. Bodos usually use bamboo, spear, fishing net, Chinese net, rope and string, tin and nylon threads for their hunting and fishing purposes. Attempt and emphasis in this paper has been given on traditional and typical hunting and fishing skills and tools used for hunting in ancient periods of Bodos. They have a good knowledge about their hunting. They gather these knowledge and instruments for hunting animals according to their food habit, inhabitants, foot print and stool of the animals. For instance the stool of rabbit is a bit of small than the stool of goat and it is round and a bit of flat while it dries then it is just the dry grass like, foot print of deer is deep pointed a bit of and the fish is captured by because of its slow movement. Here, this is a good example of animal proverbial sayings from the experience perspective of the hunters regarding the hunting and fishing of its nature-

*mwiya thwiyw aaganao*

*sesaya thwiyw khiyao*

*mansiya thwiyw khugayao*

*naya thwiyw phorkainayao*

i.e. The deer dies because of his foot print.

The rabbit dies because of his stool.

Man dies because of his mouth.

The fish dies because of slow movement.

Thus they observe and guessed, gather knowledge about the animals, fish and birds according to their nature.

### Belief on god, deities and days

Before marching into the jungle, river or forest for hunting and fishing they pray and offer something to the gods and deities as they believe every living being is led by someone and everything has a master to guide them. So, they offer something to the gods and deities and pray as not to face any problems and come back well again while they go for hunting and fishing. Even they also offer deer meat to the deities while they come back from hunting if they could catch. As they believe if they offer some portion of meat and pray for their successful hunting then they would not have to come with empty hands without catching deer or pigmy hog or any birds in the next hunting. They have a belief on days also. The Tuesday, Saturday and Thursday are not preferable days for hunting as they believe these days as strong days (*barai gwsa*). If they go for hunting on these days then something unhappy, unusual, unwanted or accident may also happened. Thursday is believed as master day or *guru barai* in Bodo. This is the day to worship guru as their guide.

### Hunting on Ground

They use and apply different types of tools and methods for hunting purpose suiting to be hunted. Hunting on ground is inclusively both of small and big animals, birds. Small beings are of birds, mice, tortoise, hare etc. and big beings are of deer, pigmy hog etc. All living being and animals and birds on ground are hunted with the skills and methods as mentioned below.

#### Sesani Faan:

*Douleng Ban* is a kind of tying with rope or string. Hunting of this type is called *Sesani Faan sanai*. Pillar of 1 feet long, 3-5 inches thickness bamboo piece is used for preparing *Douleng Ban* hunting. The bottom part is made pointed to pierce underground and on the top of the pillar the string is tied. This is such a kind of tying where one side of string is kept on tying and another side is while thrust into land. This type of tying is said as tying on slip knot. If any member crosses through by tying hole then that member will be tied up automatically. Such kind of tying is called *Douleng Ban* or *Bwnsrwdnai* in Bodo. To capture fox and hare, this method for hunting is prepared. Usually this hunting happens in winter seasons while mustered plants grow up. Hares come for grazing in the mustered field as the mustered plant and the newly sprouting grass grows up during this season in the cultivation area. Seeing the stool of the hare the hunter assumes their roaming in the area. They put *Sesani Faan* on that path where they trace the stool. It is used only to capture rabbit and sometimes for catching the fox.

#### Khwisar:

This is generally known as trapping and is called *Khwisar Sanai* in Bodo. It is prepared with bamboo branch and bamboo stakes and laths of bamboo which is of at least 1 to 2 inches of thick and 2 meters long. The bottom part is made pointed to press underground. String or rope is tied on the top of the bamboo stick. Two “[” shapes are pierced underground and edible insects are kept on between this two shapes. The string is pulled down and ties on the “[” shape. The stick shapes like a bow while it is pulled down and tied on the “[” shape. *Douleng Ban* or *Bwnsrwdnai* which tying on slip knot is also used for capturing the birds, as with this kind of hunting aims only to capture any kind of birds.

#### Khal Sanai:

*Khal* is also call *Faan* in Bodo. This is made of bamboo sticks and laths, ropes and strings. Flat 1.5 to 2 inches breathe and 1 inch thick, almost 1 feet long of bamboo of two pieces and one piece 2 to 2.5 feet long bamboo (it may be flat or round shaped) and 3 to 4 inches thick. The longest and thickest Bamboo is made hole about 1 feet long perpendicularly. This is used for capturing mice and mongooses. In the winter season's crops in paddy field and in jungles the *Faan* is opened and kept across the way by which way the mouse comes. This way of mouse is called in Bodo *Der*.

#### Mwi and Oma Gaonai:

Bodos use bow, arrow and spears of different shapes and sizes for hunting *Mwi and Oma*. But some people who had licensed gun by the government those people hunts by gun. Hunting of pigmy hog and deer is known as *Mwi and Oma* Gaonai in Bodo or shooting or darting of deer and pigmy hog. Hunting of Mwi and Oma happens both in the winter and summer seasons of the year depending on the weather. In earlier period if someone had gone for hunting deer and pigmy hog, he is thought as rich and courageous because only those people can enter into the jungle that who had well experiences for hunting, as most dangerous and ferocious animals dwell in the dense jungle or forest. In ancient time *Mwi and Oma* are hunted by nets also. The nets for hunting were prepared with jute's rope and from odal (a kind of tree use its bark as rope by the Bodo people) tree's rope. It is just like the throwing net which is of handmade net.

#### Bathul:

*Bathul* or catapult is used for hunting birds. This is of “V” shape's. The ribbon shaped rubber is tied up on top of the both side of the “V” shape. After tying both side of the rubber again the remaining part is tied up with a small portion of leather so as to hold on stones in it or stones like hard objects to throw from it by pulling the rubber. It is used for capturing and killing of birds, mongooses and other kinds of reptiles also.

### Hunting in the River

Here different and varieties of fishes have been hunt. Mosquito net like net which is called fishing net is mostly used in hunting in river. Fishing hook is also being used in this hunting. Despite hunting with

fishing hook and fishing net people use to hunt fish by making boundary supposing to be available of fish in a area of lake of flowing drain or lake by throwing its water by tin or water pump.

**Bwrsi Bwnnai and Batha Sanai:**

Both of this type of fishing is done with fishing hook inserting into the hook with insects like earthworm, larvae of bee (wasp), bee hive, grasshopper etc. The hook is tied with thread or nylon. **Bwrsi Bwnnai** in Bodo which is usually known as fishing in English is prepared having with a long stick or stake of bamboo and long rope is tied in the top of the stick and the other side is keep for handle to hold. Length of stick is as own required but the thickness of the stick is usually prefer finger like shapes. **Batha** is prepared having hooks with 6 to 7 inches long finger like big sticks of floatable sticks. **Batha** is kept on the surface of the water on floating inserting into the hook as prepared **Bwrsi Bwnnai**. It is kept generally on currentless water. Usually the snake headed fishes are being fished by **Batha**. Fishing with **Batha** is called **Batha Sanai**.

**Sen Sanai:**

**Sen** is a kind of fishing trap made from bamboo laths making it round and small sticks like. It is just like the fencing of bamboo, its shape is long and long pumpkin like a bit of pointed but a bit of flat to the both side of the top and bottom, and it is round swelling shaped on middle. Two holes are there on any side of the body of the shape by which the fishes can enter through. The hole of the body is made as such that once entered fish cannot come out from it. It is put in the embankment of paddy field to which water is let flow through by or any small streams or streams where water flows. Catching fish with this instrument is known as **Sen Sanai** in Bodo.

**Khokha Sanai:**

It is a kind of fishing trap. This is prepared having with at least 4-5 internodes of a bamboo piece. 2-3 internodes have been made small laths within the piece of bamboo keeping 1 internodes of the bamboo so as it can hold up all the laths of the bamboo within an internode with the help of the node. Then the lath's pieces of bamboo have been spread a bit of and made just like the sieve and shape as mike horn so the fishes can enter into the **Khokha**. This is kept in the river or lake or into the ponds diving to the current and currentless water. After a few week or month the **Khokha** is taken up from the place to see whether the fish has been inside or not. This kind of fishing is called **Khokha Sanai** in Bodo.

**Zekhai:**

**Zekhai** is also a type of fishing trap like fishing net made of bamboo splits of triangle shaped having with handle of bamboo and rope or string to the front side. It is a kind of bamboo sieve like but its shape and size is different to the normal sieve. The front side is opened and the back side is made pointed knitting with the bamboo slices. Horizontal two parts to the front side is tied up with a piece of rope. Holding to the handle and on rope it is pulled on the bank of the river, lake, on muddy area etc. where nathur zunai or shrimp (a kind of small prawn) and nasrai, (snake headed fish), bwthiya (a variety of ell fish) and swordfish, etc. are assumed to be available. It is such a kind of tool by which something small solid and liquid things can pass by through it. Fishing with **Zekhai** is called as **Na Gurnai** in Bodo. Usually Bodo women and damsels go for fishing with this instrument but sometimes men also but very rare. The Bodo damsels express their thoughts and weakness to someone by signing folk songs while they go for fishing in the fishing filed as-

*Fai hai lwgwfwr, Fai hai lwgwfwr  
Dwisa jiriyao na nathur gurhwini  
Gwswni khwthakhou fwrmailaini  
Gwsw thwnaifwrkhou methai khonnni*

i.e. Lets Come oh my friends, Come oh my friends  
Lets come for fishing shrimps (a variety of small prawn) in streams  
Lets express our heart's thoughts and words  
Lets sing song for love ones.

**Sandanga:**

It's a kind of mate like but round and rectangular of shape having with small hole in every knitting bamboo split so as to pass something through by. This is called Sandanga in Bodo language which is of big bamboo sieve. It is bigger than the usual sieve. This is used to winnow mustard seeds and sesame seeds etc. Apart from those works Bodos use it for catching all kinds of small and medium fish too.

**Khusia Sunai:**

Spears and rode like instruments are used in fishing of *Khusia*. *Khusia Suli* by name is a kind of instruments used by the Bodo people for fishing *Khusia* which is made of rode having with bamboo handle. *Khusia* is kind of fish that dwells in muddy and wet land which is known as eel fish in English. Usually it is hunted by stabbing the rode like spear into the muddy land or wet land. This is called *Khusia Sunai* in Bodo language.

**Chinese Net:**

This is a type of fishing net having four corners tied each corner by bamboo laths crossing the laths to each corner of the net. The fishing handle is tied up just to the middle of the crossing point of the laths as like the fishing hook has handle. This is put on the flowing slow current water.

**Pholo:**

This is prepared with at least 3-4 feet long having 3-5 nodes of bamboo according to its size. This piece of bamboo is made laths to one side within the piece so as at least one node of the bamboo can hold up all the laths then it is made just like the sieve but having handle on to the another side. This is used just to catch only the big fishes in pond and lakes. This is called in Bodo *Pholo* and catching fish with this instrument is called *Pholo jwng na homanai* e.i. catching fish with *Pholo*.

**Bidhan Mara Ze:**

It is a mosquito net like which is called fishing net and in Bodo it is *Bidhan Mara Ze*. It is of at least 5 meters long and 2-3 meter breath. The surrounding boundary is knitted with thread lining with parachute string like strong rope. On the two sides of the breath, handles of bamboo is tied according to the size of the net. One the side of the net *Guli* is knitted to make the net dive into water. *Guli* a kind of iron of one inch big and long having with hollow in the middle. The rope is passed through the hollow and knitted with thread. Two men hold in two sides and pull the mosquito net like cloth. This is called *Naa Honai* in Bodo and in English capturing fish with fishing net and the name of net is called *Bidhan Mara Ze* in the language.

**Langi Ze:**

This fishing net is bigger than the *Bidhan Mara Ze*. Bodos use this fishing net to catch fish more at a time in the pond, lake, river and river banks etc. This fishing net is known as *Langi Ze in Bodo*. But it does not have handle as *Bidhan Mara Ze* has. More than two people requires for catching fish with this fishing net.

**Khurwi Sanai:**

Bowl, piece of thin cloth and feeds of rice husk, rice malt is being used in this kind of fishing. Usually powder of rice husk is made paste with rice malt. The cloth is made a small hole so as it lies in the middle of the bowl. A small solid or paste prepared from rice malt or rice husk is put into the bowl and then the bowl is covered with the cloth and tied to the back of the bowl with its covering remaining cloth then it is dived into the river or in the pond. Fishing in the river is more amusement than in the ponds and lakes. This is called *Khurwi Sanai* in Bodo. This type of method is applied to capture small fish only.

**Khangkhrai Khononai:**

Bodos have also the tradition of thrusting and grabbing crabs to the hole of the crabs where they stay. This skill of thrusting and grabbing crab is called *Khangkhrai Khononai*. In both the season of the year thrusting happens but most in summer season. They take all variety of crabs and prepare as their cuisine.

**Samo Khonnai:**

*Samo Khonnai* is a kind of fishing, picking up snails from the river, lake or from the paddy field. This is known as *Samo Khonnai*. They pick up snails of different sizes which are edible and have a good taste for and which live in water only. They do not take all kinds of snails but there are some variety such as *samo gwlaio*, *samo dahwna* and *samo ladai*. These are recognized by them as edible variety and more taste.

**Na Gaonai and Jangkhra:**

Bodos also hunt fish with bow and arrow. Sometimes they use to fish by bow and arrow which is

known as *Na Gaonai* and stabbing of fish by arrow like pins in bamboo internodes having handle which is by name *Jangkhra* in Bodo. *Jangkhra* is made of umbrella sticks inserting it into the bamboo stake's internodes.

#### **Ashra Ze:**

This fishing net is made of nylon. It is of at least 5 feet long and the normal size is 5 feet long. It is sewed with nylon. It is handmade fishing net. Bodo peoples knit it own. This is called throwing fishing net in English and in Bodo it is *Ashra Ze*. It is different types according size of the fish for instance for catching big fish big nylon thread is used and it's sewed hole is also big and for small fish both thread and the hole is also small so as it is able to hold up the fish.

#### **CONCLUSION**

Men the most clever being in this world satisfy their needs in different means and ways. They never lag behind intelligence power. In different times and periods they had been developed their skills of works suiting to the place and surrounding of the nature in the regions where they live. History and evolution of men says in the primitive age men used stones, sticks, fire produced from stones by fractioned to satisfy their needs and that remained as documents among the communities of the people of their own in different types and forms in this globalised era also. Bodos have been accustomed with the skills and tools, they learnt many things from nature intuiting nearby and being close to the nature, every member of the community people knows more or less of hunting and fishing as they also reside in the midst of nature, learns how to adjust and to survive mingling with the varieties of nature's objects and animals. In most of the fishing and hunting bamboo, rope and the string have a major part and profusely been used as the fishing and hunting equipments and those tools and instruments have been made with those things. They step into the hunting and fishing field while the weather favours and insist their heart to go for hunting and fishing. Bodos go for fishing in the month of April and May in summer and in winter in the month of December to January where the water of the lakes, ponds dries and the water level of the rivers also becomes down and dries. Despite those months of the year they go for fishing as their wish as they live near by the river and in the midst of nature. Hunting also happens both in winter and summer season of the year. Suiting to the weather and season they come down for hunting but they come for hunting in April as the New Year starts in this month and in January month as these two months of the year is special for Bodos to enjoy and stays free. This hunting and fishing have been occupied to most of the people as a hobby. In most of the time they go for fishing while they are free. Now a day hunting among Bodo people is rare but fishing is still frequent phenomenon among Bodo people as it is the most easiest way and surrounding areas where they staying is too river and lakes are nearby to them. Since Bodos have the habit of taking varieties of foods whether there is vegetarian or non vegetarian among them. So, they catch fish such as eel fish and its variety, snake headed fish, crabs, prawn, snail etc. and other normal fishes as all people take and catch.

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