

# CHAPTER VII

## CHAPTER - VII

### RITUAL STRUCTURE AND MATERIAL CULTURE

The present chapter deals with the ritual structure among the Barman, it includes rituals of their life cycles, religion in disease and difficulties, belief: God and deities, the religious year and their material culture. In material culture dance, drama, song and their traditional dress and ornament and food habit discussed.

#### 1. RITUALS OF LIFE CYCLE

Rituals are those formal actions which follow a set pattern and express a public or shared meaning through symbol. They are typically the practical aspects of a religious system and express shared values rather than seek to achieve some utilitarian end. (Abercombie et. al. 1994 : 360).

In Barman society, there are a number of rituals which constitute the behavioural milieu of religious life. The Barman practises both Hindu as well as tribal rituals of life cycle. The main rituals of life cycle among the Barman are as follows :

- i) HEGOCHUJABA (BIRTHRITE)
- ii) NAGUNGAINBA (INITIATION)
- iii) JUKUBA ( MARRIAGE)
- iv) THIBA (DEATH)

**(i) HEGOCHUJABA :-**

The barman believes that the childrens are God gifted and they perform some rituals at the time of the birth of a child. Before childbirth a pregnant women is not allowed to go outside the village, because they believe that some ill-intended look may do some harm to her and the unborn child. The rituals related to this occasion start at least one month before the childbirth and a number of rituals are performed at different stages. These are

- (a) Naisod-Naosodi Puja
- (b) Sibrai Puja
- (c) Kharaoba
- (d) Gamadi Puja
- (f) Nanadhibonaba and
- (g) Nanabecheng Jiriba

**(a) NAISOD-NAISODI PUJA**

It is an occasion observed in Barman society by the husband of pregnant women. He worship, the Godness of child welfare, just few days before the expected date of delivary. At this occasion, a chicken is sacrificed to Goddess Naisod-Naisoid in the premise of the house and they believed that if she is satisfied their child will have good health.

**(b) SIBRAI PUJA :**

It is occasion related with child-birth and it is also performed before the childbirth. The midwife locally called *Hojaijik* worship Sibrai (God Siva) by sacrificing a pair of pigeon for the welfare of new born at her residence.

**(c) KHARAOBA :**

It is another type of ritual performed before childbirth. It is performed by the family members of the pregnant women. The traditional priest called *Hojai* performs this ritual for the welfare of the mother. It is believed that at that time life of the lady is in danger, so ritual is performed for her life, good health and welfare. Generally for this occasion *Hojai* is assisted by one or two *Barwa* (helper of the priest).

**(d) GAMADI PUJA :**

It is an occasion perform after the childbirth. After normal delivery of child the household deities are propitiated for the well being of new born. Devi *Gamadi* is equivalent to Goddess Durga of Hindu Society. She is worshiped in a tribal way by sacrificing a chicken. For this ritual they take a plantain leaf and chicken is sacrificed on it. The Barman believes that the head of the chicken must be removed in one stroke at the time of sacrifice; otherwise it will not be fruitful. The male members of the household are not allowed to participate the occasion. The mid-wives and other lady members of the household perform this ritual.

**(e) NANADHIHONABA :**

It is a ritual which is performed when the mother come out form the out house with her child after staying for a period of one month, which is located adjacent to the main house building; and it is temporarily built up only for this occasion. During their stay in out house the male menbers are not allowed to visit this place. Probably because of belief that mother and child are impure till the performance Nanadhihonaba, the ritual of purification.

**(f) NANABECHING JIRIBA :**

It is occasion which is perform on the same day along with Nanadhihonba, when the mother comes out from the out house, the *Hojaijik* sits down in fornt of the door of the main house and put some essential items like flowers, basil leafs etc. on a plaintain leaf. the mother comes out from the out house, and she gives her baby to *Hojaijik*. She then carries the child in the main houses. At this occasion the child wears traditional Barman dress i.e. *rimchao* for male child and *rikaocha* for the female child. On this day father and mother of the new born give a present to *Hojaijik* and *Barbaijik* (helper of the midwife). The villagers are also invited at this occasion and good food is served to them, with blessing villagers also give present to the new-born, and on the same day *Namkarana* ceremony is also performed, which they have adopted after confessing the Hinduism.

After complition of one year of the newborn on a suitable day the midwives are invited for a meal. On this day edible items like cooked rice, meat and *Ju* (rice beer) are served, but chicken is prohibited on this day. If the child is expired by this

time, the rice and beer chicken are offered only. The belief is that if good food is served to the midwives the family of the new born will be saved from sins.

Other than the above mentioned rituals there are certain rules and regulation in connection with childbirth; these are ; if a pregnant women or her husband kill a snake it is treated as very unfortunate; if child birth is very near, she should not face any strange male person *Hoiaijik* (traditional midwife) performs all the activities of childbirth, but some times if she feel the case is complicated she may take help from the *Barbaijik* (helper of midwife); like *Hoiaijik* a *Barbaijik* must be a widow and must have children. The labour room maintains privacy ant it should be well protcteted from physically unfit persons; male members of the family are not allowed to enter this room.

After birth, child is given bath in tepid water, wrapped in dry cloths and put on especially prepared bed in an open space. Midwife collects a branch of sacred basil and nine tips of of bend grass, a gold ring and ties them with a piece of cotton yarn. And then she takes fresh water from a pitcher and with a basil leaves she sprinkles the water on the new born baby and says you child, what ever you were before is not fact but from this day you have become a Bare (Bara means a person belongs to Barman society).

These types of ritualistic practises are observed in study village Kumacherra. However in other study villeges namely Dormikhal and Nikamas only a few villegers practicing these rituals at the time of child birth. But in case of others those who are educated or those who have a regular interaction with the urban areas usually admit

the pregnant lady in Primary Health Centre at the time of delivery and doctor is usually consulted for the health care of both mother and child. In these areas the traditional rituals are performed usually after childbirth i.e, by performing *Nanadhihonba*.

**(ii) NAGUNGAINBA :**

The Barman of the Barak Valley perform the initiation ceremony in a Hindu way. A group of boys between the age group of seven to fifteen years are generally initiated, and a sacred thread is given to them. Before initiation the villagers must discuss the matter with the *khunang* (headman), then a meeting is held at the residence of headman along with members of village committee.

At a time more than three boys are initiated, it may exceed upto nine or ten. A Brahmin is called for the ritual those who related with their community (Barman have their own Brahmin priests those who are Bengali and come to live in the plains of Cachar during the period of Raja Krishnachandra), the priest organise the ceremony and perform this job, but traditional priest i.e. *Hoiyai* is not allowed to assist this occasion. The boys stay three days in a room without seeing the women and meal is served to them in that room from outside. Only certain items like vegetable, fruit etc are given to them. They are not even allowed to talk to any person outside the room. They must not talk at the time of taking their food. On the fourth day, they come out from the room and a barber shave their head, then after taking bath they go for *Bhiksha* (begging) from the neighbouring household. At this time, they wear traditional Brahman dress. After begging session they go to the nearest river of the

locality in the evening and Trishul (three headed stick of Lord Siva) is put inside the river bed and it indicate that some tribal rituals are mixed up with Hindu rituals in case of initiation ceremony.

In the meantime, the Bengali priest propitiate God Vishnu in a Hinduised way. When the boys come back from the river side, a big feast is arranged for the villagers. In this ceremonial feast rice beer (*Ju*) is not served.

The youth above the age group of seven to fifteen are not allowed directly for initiation. They perform a *Prayaschitta* ceremony called *Paichitlaiba* and then allowed to go for initiation. In *Prayaschitta* ceremony God Vishnu is offered and afterword the initiation ceremony is performed in the same way as mentioned above. Although, the practice of initiation is observed in all the three study villages but there are certain variations in observance. In case of Kumacherra village they call the Bengali Brahmin as priest, particularly those who had come in this region during the regime of Raja Krishna Chandra. The Barman call this Brahmin as *Baroghoria* (means twelve Brahmin families brought from the Banaras during the period of Raja Krishna chandra). But in case of other two villages namely Dormikhal and Nikama it was observed that any Bengali priest may be called for the purpose of initiation.

Another noticable feature is that the tendency of observance of initiation rite among the Barman people of all the study villages is very high, which is an indicator of the high degree of their *cultural assimilation* with Hindu society.



### **(iii) *DISHINGBA OR JUKUBA (MARRIAGE)***

Marriage is one of the important ritual of life cycle among Barman. At the time of marriage a number of ceremonies are performed in the Barman society. Generally the marriage negotiation is initiated from the groom side. They send their proposal through a middle man, known to both the parties. The negotiations are initiated only when the boys and girls attain adulthood. Clan consideration is an important factor in the negotiated marriage in Barman society. Both male and female members have separate clans in their society, therefore, at this occasion precautions are taken to avoid both mother's and father's clan and violation of this is considered a crime against the Barman society and such family is ex-communicated from the society. Bride price is also common among the Barman. The ceremonies related with the ritual of marriage start before marriage. These are as follows :

- (a) Chandidang Chengba
- (b) Lauthai langba
- (c) Lauthai Langagini
- (d) Kulti
- (e) Mayofargurba and
- (f) Phira thangba

#### **(a) *CHANDIDANG CHENGBA :***

This ritual is performed on the first day when a formal proposal is send to the brides house. Women folk carry arecanut and bettle leaf wrapped in a plantain leaf

tied with a bamboo thread in seven knots in a symmetrical arrangement. This gift is accepted by brides family with great respect in the presence of headman (*khunang*) and village elders. This is known as *Chandideng Chengba* in Barman society.

**(b) LAUTHAI LANGBA :**

It is a ritual performed after *Chandidang Chengba*. On this day the date of marriage is fixed. The ritual is followed by a few rounds of *Ju* (rice beer) along with meat.

**(c) LAUTHAI LANGAGINI (FORMAL ACCEPTANCE) :**

It is an occasion performed after *Lauthai langba*. On this day two elder brothers of the groom carry dry gourd filled up with *Zu* (rice beer) and go to brides house for expressing their regards to brides parents. On this day the date of second *Lauthai langnba* is fixed, which is given by bride side to groom side.

**(d) KULTY (BRIDE PRICE) :**

In Barman society taking of bride price is common practice. Bride price is a fixed amount of money taken by bride's father. The amount is settled down with the consent of both the parties. Although the amount of bride price is fixed Rs. 305/- by the Regional body of the Barman recently, which consist of different headman of the villages of the region, however, the amount may varies from village to village. The taking of bride price is called *Kulty* and here the amount is not important but the practice seems to be more important.

(e) **MAYOFARGURBA (MAIN MARRIAGE RITUAL) :**

This ritual is performed at two places. First, at the house of groom in morning on the date of marriage. In the evening this ritual is performed at brides place. It is observed when the groom becomes ready to go for brides house in the forenoon of the marriage day, the bride-groom is dressed with white cloth and shirt namely *Rimchao* and *Richa*. And he puts a white turban on the head and ties a yellow band wraps around the neck. Then bride groom and his companions start for the brides place. They also carry *Ju* (rice beer) and meat with them. The priest performs mayofargurba in traditional way. After reaching grooms place they handed the *Ju* (rice beer) and meat to the family members of bride.

At brides place, the ceremony starts with the blessings received from the elders of the bride groom. All the members of the grooms family are seated in the right side of the marriage stage and similarly on the left side the family members of bride are seated. Generally at this time the *kulty* is given in a beg full of coins. Then the main ceremony of marriage starts.

Among the Barman a Brahmin priest is called for the purpose where he perform the rituals as prescribed in Hindu *Shatra*. Like as Bengalis at this moment the bride-groom sits on a chair/wooden stool in *Kunja* (A place of performing Hindu Bengali marriage ceremony, constructed by using bamboo poles, plantain tree and decorated by coloured papers, flowers etc). Like Bengalis holy fire is not required in the *Kunja*. The Bride takes seven rounds of the bride groom and change their garland. In addition to this tradition '*dan*' is observed among the Barman, where



***Hojai (traditional priest) is busy to perform the Midogurba***



***Sacrifice of duck at the time of midogurba***

father or elder brother do this job. During this time a dinner party is given by the bride side.

At the same time *mayofar gurba* is performed at the back side of the house. *Hojai* (traditional priest) perform this ritual and he is attended by *barwa* (helper of the *Hojai*). Where they clean where they portion for the purpose and *Hojai* make a tiny size of bamboo mat (*sadap*) and put all the essential items of rituals. The ritual requires some brinjal leaf, bannana leaf and bamboo thread. Out of bannana leaf he make three bowls. The way of making the bowls is also typical in nature because he use five peiece of bamboo leaf for one bowl and use three bamboo peace for remaining bowls. Then he cut the brinjal leaf into small pieces alongwith bannana leaf and then boil it. The boil mixture is put into the bowls and place it in *sadap*. In front of it *Hojai* out three piece of cut bamboo serially which is treated as an image of bride, bride-groom and *Sibrai*. Image of *Sibrai* placed in between boy and girl. Similarly big bowl is also offer to God *sibrai* alongwith some amount of row *Ju* (rice beer) and it is known as *Jugap*. He (*Hojai*) placed all the items in front of *Sadap* and start the ritual. A male duck is required for the sacrifice. The blood of the duck is sprinkled on all the items. And by this time he knot the cotton thread with bamboo stick which is treated as an image and fire it. They believe that by doing this they can understood the life span of both boy and girl. That is, if the thread of a bamboo stick which bears the image of either boy or girl stop lightening, it indicates that either boy or girl will died first.

The brides father requests the grooms parent to treat the bride as their own daughter. the bride-grooms further speaks with equal huminity on this auspicious

occasion as ordance by God *Sibrai* (Siva), he accepts the bride as his own daughter. Then, four adult males accompany the bride-groom and he receives blessings from their common priest who perform this ceremony, and at that time two another male persons covered grooms feet by a *Rimchao* (typey of traditional swal), when he takes blessings from elderly persons. Later on his bride also join him and both request the guests to take *Ju* (rice beer), which is followed by the dinner arranged by the bride side.

The sexual intercourse takes place on the same night. The bride-groom is allowed to enter into the room of bride in presence of the village elders invited for the occasion. After sometime the elders and companions comeout leaving the bride-groom inside, sometmes they are teased by the young Kinsman from outside at this occasion.

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**(g) *PHIRATHAGBA (RETURNING)* :**

The return of the bridegroom with his birde to his own house after the marriage is called *Phirathangba*. At this occasion *Ju* and other items are served to the bridegroom side. After staying three days in his own house he goes to meet father-in-law with his wife for second time and stays three to five days there and is callked *Longkhauba*. Then he finally return to his own with his wife.

However, some variations were observed in the three sutdy villages in performance of the marriage ceremony. Marriage rite is performed in a traditional way at all the three sutdy villages by practising the above mentioned procedure of mar-

riage, but at the same time it is observed in Dormikhal and Nikama village is that a bride is dressed up in a Bengali style, where she wears Banarasi Shari and used ornaments of Bengalis. But in the village Kumacherra the bride is still wears *Righu*, *Risa* and *Rijamphai*, the traditional dress of Barman of marriage ceremony. It suggests that there is a gradual change is noticed in the village Dormikhal and Nikama in performance of marriage ceremony.

Another significant change observed in the study villages was that in village Kumacherra marriage ceremony is performed by Baroghoria Barhmin (traditional priest of the Barman). Where as in Dormikhal and Nikama, the villagers calling local Bengali priest for performing the marriage ceremony. The main reason for this change is that the traditional priest of the Barman are in limited number. In these two villages there is no traditional priest and for performance they have to call the priest either from Silchar or else where, whose rates are also very high. Therefore, now they prefer to call a Bengali priest, who is also engaged by Bengali families of the area.

(iii) **THIBA (DEATH) :**

It is observed that among the Barman, if a person is seriously ill and is supposed to die, they never take him out from the house, instead they wait for death and afterwards they take out the body from the room. By this time they make a whole in the roof due to a belief that through this whole the soul may go out from the room. At this occasion they sing religious songs, called *Garachimang* eg. *Kharman Hamia Benghining elai jane Gayamu* means, (we missed you so we are not lucky but why you take birth in our family, if you had a plan to leave us), this

song sung at the time of death and the dead body is taken out from the room and put on a bier in front of the house, keeping the head always in north direction.

The way to construct the bier for carrying the dead body is itself typical. A long bamboo is taken in the two equal halves transversely. A plant in tree is split into two or three pieces and are placed at the right middle part of the bamboo. The split bamboo pieces are then tied to the bier and it is now ready for carrying the dead body. The middle portion of an egg is spreaded on the forehead of the dead body. The dead body is completely covered by a white linen from tip to toe. Then they carry the bier to the near by river of the locality for cremation. At the time of carrying they also put some oil seed on the bier, and on the riverside they gave bath to the dead body. Where they built up the pyre in typical way. They decorate the pyre by giving seven steps of wooden blocks, the elder son lighten the dead body of his parents. When the dead body is totally burn a plaintain tree is planted near by side of the cremation spot by a wiseman of the locality.

In case of minor child death the body is buried not burnt. However, the death of a pregnant woman is considered as very unfortunate, and they obey and perform certain rituals in this connection. The death of pregnant is called *thiyamayyothiba*. The youngs are not allowed to see the dead body of pregnant women and even they should not touch the people those who participate the death ceremony. On this sudden death the *garachimang* singing is prohibited. From the date of expiry upto one month working on loom by the womenfolk of the family is strictly prohibited. As well as the *Shardha* (funeral) ceremony is also not attended by the young boys and girls.



In case of death caused by snake bite, the dead body is not burnt and it kept on a raft of plantin, tree and flocked on the river stream.

After returning from the cremation ground all the accompanied persons are entertained by offering *Zu* (rice beer) and holy water is sprinkled on them. The rituals perform by the Barman in relation with death are as follows ::

**(a) *JUBAICH KHAIBA* :**

It is an occasion performed after one week of the death. The villagers along with *Khunag* (headman) invited on this day for fixing the date of *Maimutharba* (Shardha). On this day rice beer (*Zu*) and other items are served to the guests, then *khunang* fix the date of *mainutharba*, it may be after one month or three month or may be after six month or one year, but within one year it must be observed. The date of *mainmutharba* is fixed on the same day of the week on which the person was expired.

**(b) *MAIMUTHARBA* :**

It is an occasion performed by the family members of the died person to propitiate the soul and equivalent to *Shardha* of Hindu Society. The death ceremony is not completed until and unless the *Zu* (rice beer) is offered to the departed soul along with rice cakes and meat. Mainly family god, goddess and all the departed souls of the ancestors are offered oblation on this day and the rituals is performed at the southern side of the courtyard of the died person. On this day guests are invited with meal and the rice, curry, chicken and *Zu* (rice beer) are served to them.

Among the three study villages it is observed that in case of performance of the death ceremony there are certain variations are found. In case of Jubaich Khaiba, it is not found in the village Nikama and Dormikhal. But in Kumacherra village a few families perform the ritual. And similarly in Nikma and Dormikhal the villagers should not perform *maimutharba* they call it *Horad* and is performed in a vedic way. Hindu Bengali priests is called for the ritual and he perform the occasion as like as Bengali. On the 13<sup>th</sup> day of expiry the *Horad* ceremony is observed. Two priests required for the occasion, One is for performing the Vishnu puja and another, who perform the rituals of *shardha*. On that day a feast is given to the guest those who are invited and addition to other edibles, the *Zu* also served to the guest.

## 2. RELIGION IN DISEASE AND DIFFICULTIES

The religion among the Barman includes all those patterns of behaviours which are related to some specific ritual practices performed by them at the time of crisis or disease or unfortunate incidents in the life. It is through neumarous procesess like prayers, sacrifices and magic, that they attempt to please supernatural being. Super natural beings for them may Gods, demons, spirits etc. and to secure their aid with special powers and abilities such as the priest serve as media between the people and supernatural power.

The rituals performed at the time of difficulties, it is found that the sacrifice of goat, fowls, pegeion, duck, chicken etc. are very common in their society. There are several occasion or puja found that which are performed at the time of crisis. This may be called as limited participation rituals, means those occasion, which are per-

formed whenever the society faces peculiar types of problems. In order to overcome such types of problems they perform several rituals. These are:

(a) *DAINIPUJA*

(b) *RUPASI*

(c) *RATANI AND*

(d) *OTHER RITUALS*

(e) *DAINIPUJA :*

Dainipuja is associated with supernatural spirits and it is a ritual performed by the people whenever their belief on medicine or on the other methods of curing the diseases are failed. It was observed that when a person is suffering from a disease for a very long period and donot get any relief from the treatment of a medical practitioner he calls a traditional priest - *Hojai* to perform a puja to satisfy the evil spirit called *Dainee* in Barman language, but there is no definite image of *Dainee*. The ritual must be performed on Friday night. The *Hojai* (traditional priest who perform all the non-vedic rituals of Barman) goes to the deep forest along with his companions and patient, where chicken, *Zu* etc are also required and in deep forest he perform the ritual. The blood of a chicken is sprinkled on the deseased person, this process is called *Misomisoni*. They believe that the desease will be cured by performing this ritual.

**(b) RUPASI :**

It is an occasion where malevolent spirit is worshiped. They believe that the cause of the pox is the displeasure of the spirit. Therefore they perform a specific ritual known as Rupasi, to please the spirit and for this they sacrifice a fowl. On Friday night the spirit must be worshiped. A twig of *peepal tree* is required for this purpose, they plant the peepal twig at a sacred place chosen for performance of ritual and the fowl is sacrifice in front of it. The participation of female is strictly prohibited in this ritual.

**(c) RATANI :**

Ratani is the name of a ghost whose displeasure may cause natural calamities like famine, earthquake, flood etc. Therefore, the Barman worship *Ratani* whenever natural calamities occurs. For this purpose the *Hojai* is called and he performs the ritual by sacrificing the egg and chicken in order to please the Ratani.

**(d) OTHER RITUALS :**

There are some other rituals in connection with disease and difficulties. These rituals bears different name and different purpose. Among this *Misengba* and *Hachonghuba* are worth mentioning. *Misengba* is an occasion related with rain. If there is no rain in a particular year the Barman organise a marriage ceremony of two frogs and they believe that after this marriage ceremony there will be torrential rain-fall. Where as the *Hachonghuba* is related with an evil spirit, whose ill-intended look may destroys the agricultural products in the field. Therefore they worship this evil spirit *Hachong* in which they sacrifice the duck.

### 3. BELIEF : GOD AND DEITIES

The belief in several God and Goddess is common among the Barman. In addition they also believe in existence of ghosts spits and witches.

The Barman of Barak Valley worship many deities bearing numerous name and their entire life cycle is dominated by religious beliefs. They believe that unknown supernatural powers, controls their life. Thus, they observe submission, devotion and reverence to these supernatural power. All such beliefs, faiths and powers constitute the structure of religions among the Barmans.

These deities of Barman society are generally hostile to human being. However, they worship both the tribal as well as the Hindu deities for their well being. They believe that at the beginning of the Barman society their ancestor was *Bansi Raja* and *Arikidima*, the term *Arikidima* is equivalent to Goddess Bhagavati of Hindu society. She produced seven eggs at a time and from this egg, the traditional deities namely *Sibrai* (Lord Siva), *DooRaja*, *Naikhu Raja*, *Waa Raja*, *Ganyung Eraiung*, and *Hamaido* came in to existence. These deities are identified as *Madai* and possess high respect in their society. but from the last egg a few evil deities come out and they cause disease, natural calamities, pest infestation and so on. So to please the deities out of fear they worship these evil deities.

Out of these above mentioned six deities *Sibrai* (Lord Siva) occupies the highest position and he is worshipped on all occasions. In addition to these few deities in their society namely *Larikgong*, *Dilaoju*, and *Mungrang* are also enjoying high status but they are not belonging to *Madai* category.

To worship the traditional tribal deities earlier the entire Barman society on the basis of their abodes of God and deities was divided into twelve divisions and it is known as *Daikh*. According they built up twelve *Daikhjigni* (Mandir of *Daikh* deity), where they establish their own deity. The deity was worshiped by their traditional perest *Jonthai* (now worshiped by *Hojai*). *Daikh* is divided on the basis of each deity with high respect. The headman (*Khunang*) of the village enjoys the right to worship the clan deity or some time it may be called as village deity. Earlier the Barman were settle down in a village were it was observed that a particular clan people living in the same village, where date of worship of the clan deity was choosen by the headman (*Khunang*)

However, it is also observed that there are few God and Goddess in the society those who are worshiped on special occasion, namely at the time of child birth, at the time of harvesting, at the time of natural calamities. Gooddness *Khanchida* is worshiped at the time of child birth, they believe that she is goddess of child wellbeing. Similarly worshipping of *Mongrang* is associated with warfare.

When they worship all the deity generally it requires egg, duck, chicken, goat etc for sacrifice. Earlier they sacrifice human being, but at present sacrifice of human being is not found in their society. The sacrifice of any animal is done by a male of *Hapilaso* clan only.

## **MINDU DEITIES**

The Barman worship the Hindu God and Goddess with equal respect and they also enjoy very high status in their society. The Brahminical ways of practising

the ritual is came into existence in their society when they shifted their kingdom from Dimpur to Maibong and the process still continues and come to an end when they again settled down at Khashpur where they attracted much more towards Hindusim, so accordingly they started worship of several Hindu deities.

They started to believe in the Hindu concept of Trinity Comprising three manifestations of divinely-Brahma, the creator, Vishnu the sustainer and Siva the destroyer has an all India spread, and in common with the Hindu of the other parts of India. But in Barman society Lord *Siva* is given importance to compare with other two. The other worthmenting Hindu deities of the Barman society are *Ganesh*, *Kali*, *Durga*, *Ganga*, *Saraswati*, *Laxmi*, *Vagirath*, *Sani* and so on. In addition to these deities are Devi Kamakhya (of Guwahati, Kamrup dist.) Ranachandi (of Maibong, N.C. Hills) and Kanchakanti (of Udharbandh Silchar) is given more impotence in their soiety. Here it is an intersetting observation that the deities are localised which is important to them. All the three deities are equivalant to Devi Durga.

Like Hindus they also Worship sacred tree, sacred river, sacred weapon and sacred animal. The worshipping of river associated with God Mal Raja, where as worshipping of Scythe is known as worshipping of *sang*, it denotes their intimacy with Hindu religious aspects. But in case of all the three study villages a variation is observed in performance of rituals connected with tribal deities. In Kumacherra it is observed that the six *Madais* are still worshipping with great respect but in case of other two villages only *Naikhu Raja Sibrai* and *Dooraja* are worshiped.

### 3. THE RELIGIOUS YEAR

The Barman observe most of the Hindu festivals as well as their Tribal festivals. The festivals and celebration have a great significance in their social life and it reflects the socio-religious aspects of their society. On the basis of performance, the Barman festivals may be classified into three categories. These are :

(a) *Seasonal Festival,*

(b) *Calender of Barman Festival and*

(c) *Other Festivals.*

#### (a) *SEASONAL FESTIVAL :*

The seasonal festivals are those festivals which are observed in a particular season. In this context celebration of *Bushu* is very important. The term *Bushu* is equivalent to Bengali term *Sankranti* or Assamese term *Bihu*.

#### (i) *BUSHU :*

Barmans are the agriculturist group and their social and religious life more or less related with either harvesting or collecting of food grains. Generally at the end of agricultural period the *Bushu* is observed by the village people. At the time of *Bushu* festival, date and time are fixed as per convenience of the villagers.

In traditional Barman society *Nodrang* (Bachelor Dormitory) had to play an important role in arrangement of the *Bushu* festival. But in contemporary Barman society, the institution of *Nodrang* has been now replaced by youth organisation



(*Hangsao*). The *Bushu* is organised by *Hangsao*, and they arrange a big community feast. At this, occasion a number of cultural activities like, dance, song and various musical activities are performed. Both male and female members of the community participate in the festival. The festival is celebrate at least twice in a year as they usually take two crops in one year, one is in *Baishak* and another in *Magh* month of Hindu calender year.

At this occasion, they wear traditional dress and ornament, while performing traditional folk dances. This festival is performed in two typical ways one is called *Churem Bushu* and another is called *Hangchaomanaoba*. Generally village people celebrate *Churem Bushu* because *Hangchaomanaoba Bushu* is very expensive and it takes seven days to perform the festival, where as *Churem Bushu* is observed for three days only. But for both type of *Bushu* the last day of celebration must be Saturday. More importance is given to food and drinks in case of both types of *Bushu*. A term *Edining Bucujiba* is used when they perform the festival for three days. In addition to food and drinks, the dance and songs have signifance at this occasion.

The first day of *Bushu* is called *Bushu chataiba*. On this day raw meat is distributed to every household of the village. In the past, for this purpose, they used to go for hunting and after returning they used to share it equally. But at present it has been observed in all the three study villages that this practice is now discontinued either due to the deforestation of the neighbouring area or non-availability of wild animals in the forest. Therefore, they now purchase raw meat from the market for this purpose.

The second day of *Bushu* festival is called *Bushuma*. On this day, they express their regards to the elders and in return the elders give some presents to youngsters.

The making of *Fanglsa* is very important in the context of *Bushu* festival and it is an indicator for the celebration of *Bushu*. *Fanglsa* is a bamboo gate built up by the Barman in a typical style for the welcome of the outside guests at this occasion. It is generally built at the entrance of the village. The main precaution in fixing the date of the *Bushu* is that the nearest villages should not observe the *Bushu* festival at the same time, so that, the member of these neighbouring village can also participate the festival.

*Midogurba* is a ritual performed at the time of *Bushu* festival and *Hojai*, the traditional priest perform this occasion. He offers *Zu* (rice beer), *Mogong* (meat) etc to God *Sibrai*. The belief is that, if they perform this ritual, the *Bushu* festival will not be disrupted by any evil spirit.

At present the *Bushu* is celebrated in its traditional form in the village Kumacherra as they still make the traditional village gate *Fanglsa* at the time *Bushu* festival. But it is celebrated as *Churem* i.e. for three days only. In other two villages namely, *Dormikhal* and *Nikama* *Fanglsa* is not made because, these two villages are mixed village, where people of other community are also living. However, the *Midogurba* ritual is performed in all the three villages at the time of *Bushu* festival. Another variation observed between the study villages is that, at the time festival the people of *Kumachera* village wears their traditional dress whereas, in other two villages

some people prefer to wear traditional dress while the others wear non-traditional dresses depending on the individuals choice. It is observed in Dormikhal and Nkama that *Bushu* is called as *Bushudima* (probably a mixed form of two traditional forms of Bushu) where as in Kumacherra it is called as Bushu.

**(ii) JIDHAB :**

It is an occasion as like as Bushu, but this occasion is celebrated by the youngsters of the village. It is less expensive and requires only one day for the purpose. The youngsters collect money from the village people and enjoy by organising cultural activities within the village. But this festival is not performed by the villagers of three study villages only few have idea of this festival.

**(c) CALENDER OF BARMAN FESTIVAL :**

In a calender year the Barman perform a number of Hindu festivals. These festivals are observed on a fixed date according to Bengali calender. The major festivals performed by the Barman in calender year are as follows :

- (i) Durga puja (worship of Devi Durga on last week of Aswin).
- (ii) Janmastami (worship of God Krishna on last week of Shravan).
- (iii) Laxmipuja (worship of Devi Laxmi on week of first kartik).
- (iv) Kali Puja (worship of Devi <sup>Kali</sup>Saraswati on <sup>fast</sup>second week of <sup>Kartik</sup>Magh).
- (v) Saraswati Puja (worship of Devi Saraswati on second week of Magh).

(vi) Sibratri (worship of Lord Siva on second week of Falgun)

(vii) Ganga Puja (worship Devi Ganga on last week of Jaistha).

In addition to this they also observe Biswakarma Puja, Dolyatra, Rashyatra and Rathyatra according to Bengali calendar year. But these festivals are not given much more importance in their society. The Hindu festival those which are not performed by the Barman are as follows.

(a) Buddha Purnima

(b) Rakhi Purnima

(c) Jagathdhatri Puja

(d) Ramnavami and

(e) Rashlila

In addition to the performed Hindu festival, the Barman perform a number of other tribal festivals as well in a calendar year. These festival are namely *Gerba* and *Maichali Puja*. *Gerba* occupies a very important position among all the tribal festivals in Barman society. The celebration of *Gerba* is related with their community status and divided into several types.

### **GERBA :**

The word '*Gerba*' means '*Puja*' or '*Worship*'. Originally, there were five types of *Gerbas* among the Barman. These are as follows :

- (i) *Krongfangni Gerba* ;
  - (ii) *Haja Gerba* ;
  - (iii) *Lamfungbani gerba* ;
  - (iv) *Raji gerba and*
  - (v) *Buchni gerba.*
- (a) **KRONG FANGI GERBA :**

The festival is celebrated before the first Pnima (full moon) of the month of Baisakh. This ritual is performed for the welfare of the society at the commencement of the new year.

Here *Krongfang* means the ‘Savor’, who save them from any type of mishap. This *gerba* is fixed by the villagers on a convenient date in consultation with *Khunang* (head man) and *Hojai* (traditional priest), but it must be performed either on Monday or on Friday. The making of jokes is strictly prohibited on this day. The expenditure incurred for this festival is equally shared by the community members as per their economic condition.

All the entry points of the village are sealed on this day, so that no outsider can enter in the village. For this they put barriers on each entry point. If somebody from out-side enter the village on this day, it is considered that the festival is spoiled and it should be performed again. One egg is sacrificed on each entry point of the village at the time of putting barriers.

The main ritual of this *Gerba* is performed in the deep forest, where they go with their traditional priest *Hojai* along with his helper *Barbai*. The *Barbai* clears a proper place in the forest as selected by the *Hojai* for performance of *Gerba*. Where they make an earthen platform and divide it into seven equal parts. This platform is called *madaikh*, means a place where only the traditional God and Goddesses belonging to Madai category can be seated. Generally pig, egg, chicken, goat and *Ju* (rice beer) are sacrificed to the God. The sacrificed items are never brought in the village and are cooked and consumed at that place only. In the performance of the ritual in the forest only male persons are allowed to go. However, women folk celebrate the festival in the village. The food, preferably non-vegetables are cooked and served at a proper place under the supervision of some influential ladies of the village. The festival is not found among the Barmans of study villages because of the effect of Hinduisation i.e., the tradition of Bengalis among the Barman is noticeable where sacrifice of a pig is not found in Bengali society however, sacrifice of pig is essential in this ritual and due to this factor the *Krongfangini Gerba* is discontinued among the Barmans of the valley.

(b) **HAJA GERBA :**

It is an occasion celebrated by the villagers in the month of June. 'Haja' is an evil deity, who came into existence from the last egg of *Arikidima*. They worship this evil deity to protect themselves from different types of diseases. This festival is celebrated on Friday and *Hojai* performs the ritual of this festival. In this festival four rituals are performed by sacrificing each an animal to the evil deities, these are Bairagi (sacrifice of duck), Dakhinja (sacrifice of chicken), Hachong (sacrifice of

goat) and chog (sacrifice of dog). On this day a pepal tree is required and a chupin (flute), an image of a monkey and a Khram (Drum) is put in front of the tree and then the animals are sacrificed. The meat of sacrificed animals is distributed among the participants. This festival also discontinued among the Barmans.

**(c) LAMFUNGBANI GERBA :**

This *Gerba* is related with *Bushu* festival and it is observed after *Bushu* festival. *Hojai* perform the ritual for the welfare of society. It is performed on Friday night. Here, an evil deity i.e. *Lamfungbani* worshiped by sacrificing eggs. Although this, festival is also not performed by the Barmans but they still never use to call the name of this deity within the premise of their boundary.

**(d) RAJI GERBA :**

This festival is celebrated by the villagers in the month of Magh of Bengali claender year. On this occasion they worship *Sibrai* (Lord Siva) and *Gamadi* (Devi Durga), *Raji Gerba* means festival of the whole community for their wellbeing and it is celebrated at the end of agricultural season. *Hojai* the traditional priest is called for performing the ritual and it is performed on Friday.

*Hojai* make a platform of bamboo, where he sacrifice the goat, pigeon and duck. Alongwith *Sibrai* and *Gamadi* they worship *Yaosi* (Dakini) and *Yaoda* (Yougini) also on this day. This festial is very important among the Barman becasue they should not perform the other *gerbas* so by performing this *gerba* they continue their tribal tradition.

(e) **BUAHUNI GERBA :**

It is an occasion celebrated by the villagers before *Bushu* festival. It is performed for smooth running of *Bushu* festival, and they believe that if they perform this festival the incoming *Bushu* festival will not be disturbed by any evil power. *Hedemoti* (mother of Vir Gatath-Kouch) devi is worshiped on this day and five eggs are sacrificed to her, the ritual is performed on Monday night and *Hojai* is called for the occasion. He is attended by a Barwa (helper of *Hojai*). This *gerba* should not be treated as very important, however among the three study villages only in Kumacherra people celebrated this festival, however in other villages they should not celebrate the festival.

In the calendar of Barman festival a ritual is adapted which added a new element in their ritual structure i.e. the performance of *Kalipuja* in place of *gerba*. *Kalipuja* has some similarities in performance with *gerba* of their society. Moreover there are some other technical problems that arise at the time of performance of *gerba* namely the non-availability of the forest areas, and multi-caste settlement-pattern, they could not be able to perform the festival in a traditional way. So after observing some similarities of *Gerba* with *Kalipuja* they accepted this Hindu festival in place of their traditional festival. These similarities are offering of alcohol to the deity, performance at night and Tantrik (magical) ways of rituals. However, there are certain purposive modifications made by them in the pattern of observance of *Kalipuja*. Among the three study villages, it was observed that in Kumacharra village it is performed in its original form, whereas in Dormikhal it has been replaced by the *Kalipuja*. However, in Nikama, both *Gerba* and *Kalipuja* are observed.



Kumacherra is a village populated by the Barmans, it is surrounded also by other Barman villages, so in this condition entering of an outsider may be checked in some extent and more over, it is a forest village which is ideal for their purpose i.e. they can able to perform the ritual in the deep forest. Another important observation is that the village is located near by the N.C. Hills district, as a result the influence of Dimasa tradition is noticed in their behaviour pattern.

But in case of Dormikhal it is observed that, it is a village where people of other community also live in the village and neighbouring villages are also non-Barman village. Therefore, they found it difficult to maintain the customary rules, that no outsider should enter into the village on this day. Another problem faced by them is that there is no forestland found in the nearby areas. Here it has to be noted that the village Dormikhal was not an original Barman village. The Barmans were settle down in this village about hundred years ago. Before that they were staying at Hailakandi district in the foothill of Lushai Hills, where their village was raided by the Mizos and they were bound to leave the place and settled down in Cachar district. It was due to the influence of Bengali culture that they replaced the traditional *gerba* and accept the *Kalipuja* as their festival. It is a 'functional alternative' (Merton : 1954) of their traditional festival.

However, in case of Nikama village, the situation is something different. It was observed that they discontinued *gerba* for several years and it was replaced by *Kalipuja*. But for last fifteen years they have revived the tradition of performing the *gerba* festival in order to maintain their tribal identity, but in a modified way. In Nikama it was also observed that the two adjacent villages i.e Nikama and Kangla

celebrate the *gerba* on a same date. By doing this they resolved the problem of outsiders and adjust them selves with new changing situation. Moreover they do not treat the people of other community in the village as outsiders.

The celebration of *Kalipuja* in their society is also performed in a typical way. In two study villages namely Dormikhal and Nikama they celebrate the Kalipuja in two ways, these are *Sainigedeba* and *Saranimatai*. *Sainigedeba* is performed in morning, where as *Sarimimatai* is performed during the night. For both the rituals, sacrifice of goat is must. Only difference between the two rituals is that in *Sainigedeba*, a white goat is sacrificed where as a black goat is sacrificed in *Saranimatai* Kalipuja. The Kalipuja among the Barman is celebrated on the same date as among the Hindus, they believe that few evil deities become more powerful on this day. Therefore, to suppress them the worship of Devi Kali is necessary.

It is clear that the Barman society is passing through a process of cultural change. The outside contacts and migration to other places are important factors, which induced cultural change among the Barman's.

#### ii) **MAIKODAUSA THAIBA :**

It is an occasion performed for the welfare of the farmers. The *God Siva* and *Devi Laxmi* is worshiped at this occasion. The ritual is performed at household level. It is performed when they take new rice for the first time from their store. A *Hojai* is called to perform the ritual. He sacrifices a pair of pigeon at this occasion to God *Siva* (*Sivrai*) and *Devi Laxmi*.

iii) **HABRAHUBA :**

This festival is related with welfare of domestic birds and animals of their society. On this occasion they worship God Siva (*Sibrai*) and Durga (*Gamadi*) by sacrificing a chicken. *Hojai* perform this ritual and they believe that if they perform this ritual they will never lost their animals.

ii) **FAICHNIDI PUJA :**

It is an occasion related with agriculture, Barmans are the agriculturist group therefore, there religious life has also become a part and parcel of their occupational life. In this context they worship Devi *Faichnidi*, she is equivalent to *Goddess Laxmi* of Hindu society that is they worship *Faichnidi* for high production of food grains. The festival is celebrated just before the commencement of agricultural seasons at the residence of *Khunang* (headman).

At this occasion, two *Hojai*'s are required and they are assisted by a *Barwa* (helper). The *Hojai* makes an earthen platform for the ritual, where he put plantain leaf and sacrifices the goat, chicken and egg. The sacrificed items are equally shared by the villagers, both male and female can consume it.

**6. RELIGIOUS FUNCTIONARIES :**

Among the Barmans of the study villages it is found that both the Brahmin and tribal functionaries are required to perform the rituals. The ritual structure of the Barman consist of both tribal and Hindu rituals. For the performance of tribal ritual, they call tribal functionary. However, the Hindu rituals are performed by Bengali

Brahmin priests. The tribal functionaries are namely : *Hojai*, *Hojaijik*, *Barwa Barbaijik Jonthai* and *Gorachali*. As far as the case of Brahmin priest is concerned there are two categories among them (i) Local Bengali priest and (ii) Migrated Brahmin Priest, those who are brought by Raja Krishnachandra from Benaras and who exclusively perform rituals for the Barmans only.

## TRIBAL FUNCTIONARIES

### ***HOJAI :***

Among all the tribal functionaries at present *Hojai* occupies most important position. They are called at every occasion of tribal rituals. To become a *Hojai* there is no clan bar, any one can be a *Hojai* after performing some ritual conducted by a *Hojai*. Keen interest is given much more important in this context. After becoming a *Hojai* he can perform the religious rituals. They are called by the people at every occasion except in case of initiation ceremony. More than one *Hojai* can leave in a village. Among all the three study villages it is observed that the *Hojai*'s are less educated.

### ***HOJAIJIK :***

*Hojaijik* are those who perform the duty of midwives in their society. At the time of child birth a *Hojaijik* is called for the purpose. Along with this, certain rituals are also, performed before child birth, and after child birth. She is treated as women *Hojai* in their society. A *Hojaijik* must be a married women. bears, children.

**BARWA :**

As like as Hojai a *Barwa* belong to any *semphong* (clan). After performing certain rituals he attain the position of Barwa. Barwa means the helper of Hojai. At every occasion a Barwa is called along with Hojai but he never performs any rituals alone.

**BARBAIJIK :**

Barbaijik is the helper of Hojaijik, at the time of child birth along with a Hojaijik a Barbai is called in Barman society. She help Hojaijik at every steps and at a time more than one Barbaijik can be called. As like as Hojaijik a Barbaijik must be a married women with child.

Jonthai : Among all the religion functionaries Jonthai is given much more importance, earlier they are only allowed to perform the traditional religious activities and treated as holly priest. The man of Fonglosa clan only belongs to this Jonthai category and at every religious occasion they are called for sprinkling the holy water and purify the occasion because they believe that they only can purify the man. It also believe that Jonthai has certain special power i.e. he may communicate god and goddess directly.

Gorachali : Gorachali are those people in Barman society who perform the black magic in their society. On the special occasion they are called to perform the Dainipuja and Worship of evil spirit and anything else equivalent to this.

## **BRAHMIN PRIEST**

### **Local :**

The local Brahmin those who perform the rituals of Bengalis are called for performing the Hindu rituals in their society. The priest those who are called for performing the rituals bears Chakraborty and Bhattacharjee title, where as among the Bengali Brahmin there are several titles found.

They perform the rituals in a Vedic way, however, there is no differentiation of performing the rituals with Bengalis.

### **Migrated :**

This group of Brahmin also belonging to Hindu fold but they are not Brahmin of Bengalis, where as they bear title as like as Bengalis namely Chakraborty. The History tells that they came to the region at the time of Raja Krishna Chandra when he decided to accept the Hinduism. This group of Brahmin came from the Banaras side but at present they behave as like as Bengalis and few tried to mixed up with Bengali Brahmin culture, but the Bengali Brahmin believe that this group of Brahmins are inferior. This group of people are recognised as *Baroghoria* means twelve Brahmin families those who came to the region at the period of Krishnachandra Raja, they perform only Hindu rituals not traditional rituals of the Barmans.

Among all the three study villages it is observed that all the traditional functionaries are at least living in the villages, where as in case of Brahmin priest of *Barogharia* group, it is only found in Kumachera village that one family leave in the

village. He is called for performing the marriage, death and other relevant ceremonies. But in other villages they take service of Bengali Brahmin those who are cheap and in case of *Baroghoria* group, they take much money for the purpose, so due to this the people are not interested to call them for performing the rituals.

## PERFORMING ARTFORM

### (a) SONG :

Folk song is an important genre of verbal art, and it orally transmitted from generation to generation. Most of the Barman folk song represent the way of expression of their daily life including the joys, sorrows, day to day life activity. Thus folk songs have certain important role in respect of social functions. At different context they sung this song, which are very simple, not too artistic and rhythmic in nature.

Among the Barman of study area two types of songs are found, one is traditional Dimasa folk song of their own community and another type of Bengali songs adopted by themselves for various occasion. The traditional folk song of their community reflect the entire Dimasa and Barman culture while Bengali folk song only reflect few traits. The traditional folk songs consist of the religious movement, heroic deeds custom, manners, traditional beliefs love and sorrow. Moreover often folk song provide good recreation and amusement to the people of Barman society.

The traditional Barman folk song may be classified into following categories :

- (i) Harvesting song

- (ii) Religious song
- (iii) Love song
- (iv) Festival song and
- (v) Marriage song

From the study areas songs of different occasions are collected. This song is collected from Kumacherra village where the villagers sang the song at the time of marriage. The functional element of the song is to take the blessings of the God.

*barai sibrai barai Gamdi,*  
*ning ning dara galangba*  
*ning ning disa galangba*

the meaning of the song is that with blessing received from 'Lord Siva' and 'Mother Durga' they followed the path which is considered as the direction of Lord Siva' and 'Mother Durga'. And they expect that they will save the newly married couple. Another example of religious song collected from the same village is that

*Kharman hamia bang hining*  
*elai jane gayamu*  
*elai mmithne mikhade*  
*habechao chadia lailanang*

This song is sung at the time of death and it is known as garachimang. The meaning of the song is that 'we are not lucky because we lost you so why should



you take birth in our society’.

It is a festival song collected from the village Dormikhal, and it is sung at the time of *Bushu* festival.

Jiring jni diehi rajichijang dichichijang

abaha baehain khaka Baharkhaka

bachain chapaikha bhar chapaikha

means we the villagers fixed the date of *Bushu* festival. On this occasion all of us celebrate the festival by arrange a big feast where we take good food.

Another example of child song collected from the study village Dormikhal is that

ani hona budhocha gud gud

amalong bhaidi jai phal bhaidi

this song is related with child where the mother sung this song at the time of sleeping of a child.

So from the above discussion it become clear that among the Barman, songs are the unseperable part of their cultural life. And it reflect the meaningful expression of different occasion. Among the three study villages it is found that only in Kumacherra village most of the village people know the traditional Barman folk song while in case of other two villages it is noted that maximum number of household sung the Bengali songs either translated or in original form.

## b. DANCE AND MUSIC

As like as song, dance bears utmost importance in their society, it also reflect various functional aspects of their cultural life. But, at present situation, the Barmans of Cachar almost given up their traditional dance, only few people tried to continuing the trend which has long association with them. The dance are performed at different context by both male and female. The use of musical instrument is very common among themselves. It has a cordial appeal to the spectators which appears to be monotonous. Generally, the dances are performed at the time of festival, but in the earlier at every context the dances was performed namely at the time of fishing, jhuming, harvesting, hunting and so on. A few dance type of Barman society collected from the villages are discussed below.

- i) *Baidima* : Traditional dance, which is performed by both  
(circle dance) male and female.
- ii) *Jaobani* : The young boys and girls perform this dance at  
(circle dance) different occasion.
- iii) *Jaopinbani* : The aged pairs also can participate the dance along  
(half circle dance) with young stars. They make half circle when performing the dance.
- iv) *Renginbari* : It is a type of festival dance perform by both male  
and

- (line dance) female. At the time of performance they make two equal row facing each other group.
- v) *Daish lalaibari* : Only the female perform this dance at the time of  
(crossing dance) festival where they make two rows and at the time of dance they cross each other.
- vi) *Baichorgi* : This dance is associated with agricultural activity  
(round dance) where only women folk perform the dance at the time of collection of food grain from their own grinder.
- vii) *Kunlobani* : This dance is also performed by the women folk  
at  
(weaving dance) different occasion where they shows that how women folk doing their work on their own loom at the time of weaving.
- viii) *Nana bairibani* : Like *Kunlaobani* this dance reflect the activity of  
(child dance) women folk. It shows how they rare their children.
- ix) *Kamothaikim kaobani* : It is a group dance shows how women folk wear  
their

(group dance) ear-rings. It also shows that if any girl lost her ear-ring then how she will search it.

x) *Homaodaobani* : This dance is associated with making of *JU* where  
(dance of *ju* making) both men and women folk perform this dance.

At the time of performance of all the above mentioned dances the use of musical instrument is must. The musical instruments playing in this context are namely

Muri	–	fife
Khawm	–	drum
Chupia	–	flute
Muriwaitha	–	Bugle likeflute
Khol	–	Manipuri drum
Khramdubung	–	Dhol.

At present they generally use musical instrument like Khram, Chupin and Khol while muri is not very common. The technique of making *muri* is quite difficult and raw material is also not available for making *muri*.

In case of other musical instrument they are still trying to continue the tradition. Among the study villages it is observed that the population of both Dormikhal and Nikama village prefer to use the modern musical instrument along with their tradi-

tional dances. The reason behind that they think then their dance become more rhythmic. Nirupama Hagjer in her Assamese book 'Dimasa' explain that from their early history it was known that Barman king Krishna Chandra married a Manipuri Prince Induprava and she introduced Manipuri patterns among the Barmans. The use of Manipuri Khol (Drum) is the example of that incident. Because Khol is not traditional Dimasa musical instrument of their own. Among the study villages the performance of drama is not common practices, it also noticed that villagers of all the three study villages are more interested in watching T.V. programmes, when religious and social serials are telecasted. In comparison it is observed that the aged village people are more interested towards religious serials of T.V. but the young stars of the villages watch all the T.V. programmes regularly.

### **c. ART**

Art is kind of manifestation of nature, where man tries to manifest the various objects of nature through the medium of art. Secondly it also found that through the art generally the day to day life of a community can be pictured. It is not the demand of daily life, only the aesthetic pleasure can be fulfilled through the art.

Among the Barman art is not found in a sophisticated form, only they practice the tradition in a local way. They use different local made colours, and paint their house walls depicting various motifs of birds, animals, god, goddess and flowers.

The womenfolk artistically designed their cloths with several beautiful design, this design are very impressive and alternative. Another example of their attraction toward art is the making of *fangsla* (which is decorated in a beautiful way) at the

time of Bushu festival

Attraction toward the art among the Barman is noticed declining at present situation. Among the three study villages all the trait of art form are become extinct only in village Kumacherra it is noticed that the villagers trying to continuing the traditional art form those which are designed on their cloth earlier. In case of Dormikhal and Nikama few famelies continuing the artistical trend of weaving.

#### **d. CRAFT**

Craft has remarkable sequester position in Barman society, where we find that, not for aesthetic pleasure due to its usefulness, the people make various items of daily use as well as luxurious commodities from bamboo and cane. Due to practising of this trend from long time back it become indispensable part of their life. Different types of craft items used by the Barmans are namely bucket for carrying agricultural product, fishing instrument, different types of mat and hand fan and above all, the kitchen items.

Among the three study villages only few households of all the three villages still engaged themselves in this tradition, while others are of opinion that with low cost they can buy this items from the market. As a result a very popular tradition become less profitable and in this condition it can be extinct from their society.

#### **e. ARCHITECT**

A very rich cultural heritage is found amongst the Barman tribe. In comparison with other tribals of Assam, they can claim their superiority in the field of architect.

The example of their superiority can be proved to mention their works on Dimapur, Maibong and Khaspur. The remains of *Singhadwar* (maingate), three temples of *Ranachandi Devi*, the *Shnan Mandir* (the royal bathroom) of Joypur tell us true history of their rare heritage.

This works reflect their highly improved techniques of architect. In day to day life it is noticed that they like to live in bamboo made thatched houses with mud wall. The techniques is quite similar with Assamese architect.

#### **f. FOOD HABIT**

Rice is the staple food of the Barmans of the Barak Valley. They take three meal in a day along with dal, vegetables, fish, egg, chicken and mutton. But they generally take dal, vegetable as their daily food. From their own kitchen–garden they collect vegetables for eating purposes. The milk is also included in their daily diet, they use milk on tea, at present the taking of red tea is noticed among the Barmans. Earlier they often include pork as an edible items but know the use of pork is very rare case, while their Dimasa counterpart often use the pork.

In case of rice beer (*Ju*) it is noticed that earlier after conversion to the Hinduism they partially given up the taking of rice beer in daily life as a normal drink. But after conducting the survey it became clear that the people of study area again started taking rice beer tradition in every occasion. In case of many rituals, it requires rice beer among the Barmans.



***Collection of ornaments of Barman***



***Modified latest design of womens cloth***



## **g . DRESS AND ORNAMENT**

The Barmans have their own traditional dress and ornament. The dress and ornaments of the Barman as like as Dimasa, there is no differences observed in this contact to Barman with the Dimasas. The traditional dresses are woven by their women folk, in their own loom. The cost of the traditional dresses are very high because it takes more time to weave the cloth as local procedure is very tough one. The Barman womens are very good wieaver and beautifully make the border of their dresses with different types of exclusive designs. In addition to this they coloured their cloths by using traditional technique, where they use lot of wild trees of few varieties.

### **TRADITIONAL DRESSES OF MALES**

- i) *Richa* – It is a type of short dhuti, used at the time of doing household work.
- ii) *Rikaocha* – It is a type of costly swal not used regularly.
- iii) *Rithab* – It is type of *endi* swal, the cost is very high and used only at special occasion.
- iv) *Rimachao* – It is also a type swal used as dhuti.

### **TRADITIONAL DRESS OF FEMALES**

- i) *Righu* – It is quite similar with Assamese *Mekhela* (lower portion of Sari like dresses).
- ii) *Rijamphai* – They use rajamphai on the upper portion of the body, it is like



***Traditional Dresses of Barman Women***



a piece of long cloth and use as a blouse of the women folk.

iii) *Rikaocha* – It is a type of Swal used by Barman women as a part of *mekhela* in the upper portion of the body.

Among the three study villages it is observed that a changing trend is already started in the field of dresses only the degree and rate is some extent differ in each villages. In this context Dormikhal and Nikama, it can be said that the process is already over where as in Kumacherra. It passes the transitional period.

The Barman womens are very fond of ornaments, while use of ornament by the menfolk is also common practices. Among the Barman the important ornaments are *Khadudima, Khadu, Yaocher, Kamauthai, long bar, Bangbarcha, Vhandrahar, Ligjao Khamontuai Eansidam*. The use of gold is very rare, generally they like to use silver ornaments along with ornaments of shells, coins, different types of beads.

Thus, among the Barman there are a number of rituals, which constitute the behavioral milieu of their relations life. They practice both Hindu as well as tribal rituals of life cycle. The main rituals in this connection are *Hegochujaba* (birth rite), *Nagaungainba* (intitiation), *Tukuba* (marriage) and *thiba* (Death). The traditional rituals of birth rite are in only few villagers practicing the rituals such as *Naisod-Naisodi puja, Sibrai puja, Kharoba, Gamadi puja, Nanadhihonba* and *Nanabechengjiriba* at the time of childbirth. In case of educated elite group those who have a regular interaction with the urban areas usually admit the pregnant lady in Primary Health center at the time of delivery Doctor is usually consulted for the

health care of both mother and child. In these villages traditional rituals are performed usually after childbirth i.e. by performing only *Nanadhihonba*.

One of the notable features of Barman society is the acceptance of Hindu rites in their tribal ritual structure. The tendency of observance of initiation rite is a new element in their cultural system. It is an indicator of the high degree of their culture assimilation with Hindu society.

Marriage is one of the important rituals of life cycle. At the time of marriage Barmans of the study village performed a number of rituals namely *Chandidang chengha*, *Lauthailangba*, *Lauthai langagini*, *Kalti*, *Mayofar gurba* and *Phirathongba* along with Hindu Bengali rituals. But some variations were observed in the three study villages at the time of performance of marriage ceremony. Marriage rite is performed in a traditional way at all the study villages by practicing the above mentioned procedure but at the same time observance of Hindu Bengali rituals at same occasion varies in case of three study villages. In Dormikhal and Nikama village bride is dressed up in a Bengali style. At this occasion, she wears a *Banarasi sari* but in Kumacherra village bride still wears *Righu*, *Risa* and *Rajamphai*, the traditional dresses of the Barman. It suggests that there is a gradual change in the village Dormikhal and Nikama in performance of marriage ceremony.

In the rituals connected with *Thiba* (death), some variations are observed in all the three study villages. The villagers of Dormikhal do not perform *Jubaichkhaiba* ritual and Nikama but few families of Kumacherra village perform this ritual. Similarly *Maimutharba* is also not performed by the villagers of Nikama and Dormikhal, they perform *Horad*. It indicates that the process of acculturation is at different rate in different villages depending upon the degree of contact with Hindu Bengali com-

munity. It can be noted here that Nikama and Dormikhal village have more exposure to Bengali community in comparison to Kumacherra village.

All the Barman villages in Barak valley do not perform Gerba, the seasonal festival of the Barman society. Among the three study villages celebration of Gerba is only performed in Kumacherra village. It is observed that they discontinued Gerba for several years and it was replaced by *Kali puja* of Hindus. But for last fifteen years they have revived the tradition of performing the Gerba festival in order to maintain their tribal identity, but in a modified way. In Nikama it is observed that the two adjacent villages i.e. Nikama and Kangla village celebrate the Gerba on a same date. By doing this they resolved the problem of restriction of entering of any outsiders in the village and adjust themselves with new situation. More over, they do not treat the people of other community in the village as outsiders.

It suggests that the Barman society is passing through a process of cultural change. The outside contacts and migration to other places are important factors, which induced cultural change among them.