

Reclamation of Sonowal Kachari: An Extinct Tibeto-Burman Language

A Thesis Submitted to the University of Hyderabad in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Award of the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

IN

LANGUAGE ENDANGERMENT STUDIES

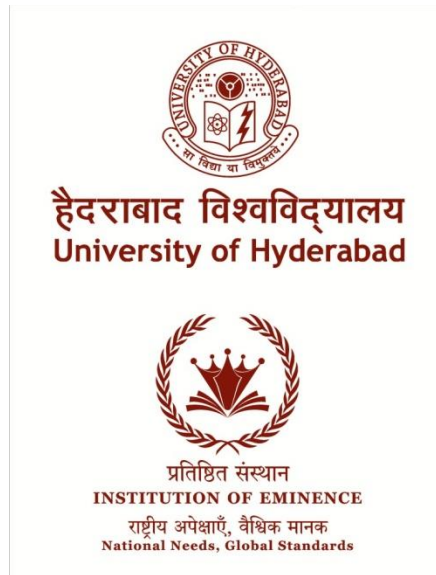
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July- 2022



CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the thesis entitled **“Reclamation of Sonowal Kachari: An Extinct Tibeto-Burman Language”** submitted by Jenny Merry Daimari bearing registration number 15HLP01 in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the award of Doctor of Philosophy in Language Endangerment Studies University of Hyderabad is a bonafide work carried out by her under my supervision and guidance.

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Research article related to the topic of this thesis have been published in the following journals:

1. Daimari. J. M. 2019. An Ethnolinguistic Study of Sonowal Kachari. *Think India Journal*, 22(35), 1772-1785. (ISSN No: 0971-1260)
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The student has made presentations in the following conferences:

1. Presented a paper titled, **“Sonowal Kachari: A Case Study of Language Loss in Assam”** in the 23rd Himalayan Language Symposium organized by the Centre for

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2. Presented a paper titled, “**Origin, Culture and Kinship Structure of Sonowal Kacharis of Assam**” at the International Bilingual Webinar on Tribal Lifestyle: Literature-Culture-Anthropology-Linguistics 2 (IBWTL-2, 2021) held on 25th September to 1st October, 2021.

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DECLARATION

I, Jenny Merry Daimari (Reg. No. 15HLP01), hereby declare that the thesis entitled, **“Reclamation of Sonowal Kachari: An Extinct Tibeto-Burman Language”** submitted by me under the guidance and supervision of Prof. Panchanan Mohanty is a bonafide research work. I also declare that it has not been submitted previously in part or in full to this University or any other University or Institution for the award of any degree or diploma. I hereby agree that my thesis can be deposited in Shodhganga/ INFLIBNET.

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Abstract

Amery (2016:19) defines language reclamation as, "an attempt to relearn a language from material recorded in another era when the language was spoken". The language reclamation approach utilizes a range of linguistic techniques to retrieve, piece together, develop and transform the language into a form capable of being relearned and used for a range of contemporary purposes. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) report indicates that India has the highest number of endangered languages in the world. A major cause of concern is that the UNESCO's Atlas report identified 197 languages that are endangered in India. Out of which 5 are extinct, 81 languages are vulnerable, 62 languages are definitely endangered, 7 are severely endangered and 42 languages are critically endangered. Nearly 60% of these endangered languages originated in Northeast India and Andaman & Nicobar Islands.

Language loss or language death results in a huge loss of human knowledge; along with language the unique knowledge of culture and history of the language and community gets lost. Each language embodies unique knowledge in it, and when a language dies the knowledge dies along with the language. The death of languages has resulted in an irrevocable loss to human society in the form of losing valuable unique knowledge engraved in those languages. Thus, there is a necessity to document languages properly and revitalise them.

The present study is an attempt to collect the surviving Sonowal Kachari vocabularies and make them available to larger audience. As the reclamation of a language can provide an empirical basis for a wider range of activities, the present study is conducted with an attempt to reflect the Sonowal Kachari culture and extract the vocabularies incorporated in their speeches

and day to day conversations. The present study provides the word lists and the cultural activities prevalent in the Sonowal Kachari society. The study is also an attempt to find out if the Sonowal Kacharis have some similarities in their language with other Tibeto-Burman languages like Bodo and Dimasa. Participant-observation and interview techniques are employed to extract the data. Also secondary sources like books, various online articles, periodicals, study materials, journals whichever is available are consulted. Fieldwork for the present research study is conducted in Sivasagar, Tinsukia, Dhemaji and Dibrugarh districts of Assam which is located in the upper part of Assam in the North-Eastern part of India.

As according to the UNESCO report 60% of the endangered languages originated in Northeast India and Andaman & Nicobar Islands, there is a huge necessity to document and preserve those endangered languages as each language embodies a huge knowledge in it and once the language dies the knowledge system which is unique to that particular language alone dies along with the language. With these points in mind the present study is conducted to document whatever surviving vocabularies can be found in the Sonowal Kachari language and their unique cultural practices, so that they can be preserved to posterity.

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An Ethnolinguistic Study of Sonowal Kachari

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Abstract

This paper attempts to provide an ethnolinguistic profile of Sonowal Kachari, a language once spoken in Assam. The Sonowal Kachari belongs to the Mongoloid race of people. They are predominantly found in the districts of Lakhimpur, Dhemaji, Tinsukia, Dibrugarh, Sibsagar, Goalpara and Jorhat districts of Upper Assam. The total population of the area under the jurisdiction of Sonowal Kachari Autonomous Council, which comprises of 450 villages according to Survey of India Census Report, 2011 is about 3,12,656. The Sonowals share close affinity with the Boros and Dimasas in terms of religion, deities and clan structure. The arrival of the Tai Ahoms and the subsequent battles and power struggles with the Kacharis weakened the social structure of the Sonowals. As a result, the Sonowals along with other tribes most probably had to learn Assamese after the Ahom king made it the official court language during their rule. Though Assamese was primarily used as the lingua franca of the Ahom kingdom, later it engulfed the local languages and gradually became the mother tongue of the Sonowals.

The present paper would examine the historical evolution of Sonowal Kachari's identity as well as about their language and culture. The study is based on the fieldwork conducted in the districts of Sivasagar, Dhemaji and Tinsukia districts of Assam. Data has been collected through interviews, questionnaire, participant observation as well as relevant literature of this area.

Keywords: ethnolinguistic, Sonowal Kachari, historical evolution, Assam.

Ethnic profile of the Sonowal Kacharis of Assam

- *Jenny Merry Daimari*, PhD Scholar, Centre for Endangered Languages and Mother Tongue Studies,
University of Hyderabad.

The present paper, Ethnic Profile of the Sonowal Kacharis of Assam is studied through field study carried out in the districts of Dhemaji, Namrup and Tinsukia districts of Assam. The total population of the Sonowal Kacharis according to the Survey of India Census Report 2001, is about 2,35,881. The Sonowal Kacharis have completely lost their language and presently the members of the community speak the Assamese language. The study depicts the origin, culture, physical appearance, dress pattern, religion and festivals, and rituals and customs of the Sonowal Kacharis. They have a patriarchal family structure in which the father is the head and the inheritance of property is through the male line. The Sonowal Kachari tribe, though with time is subjected to the changing economic, political and religious conditions, yet it maintains its traditional culture.

Keywords : Sonowal Kachari, Mongoloid, khiring khiring bathow, haidang huchari, Bihu, baitho puja.

Introduction :

The Sonowal Kachari belongs to the Mongoloid racial group of people. They are one of the tribes of Assam who belong to the family of the Bodo tribe. They are predominantly found in the districts of Lakhimpur, Dhemaji, Tinsukia, Dibrugarh, Sibsagar, Golaghat, and Jorhat of Upper Assam. The total population of the Sonowal Kachari according to the Survey of India Census Report, 2001, is about 2, 35,881.

This paper is an attempt to throw light on the origin, culture, physical appearance, dress pattern, religion and festivals, and rituals and customs of the Sonowal Kacharis.

Origin of the Sonowal Kachari tribe :

To track the origin of the term 'Sonowal' or to know how this group of people came to be known as 'Sonowal' is difficult. Like many other tribal communities, the Sonowal Kacharis too does not have a written record and therefore the origin of the tribe lies obscure and we have rely on their folktales, legends and traditions to trace the origin of the tribe.

Over the period of time, different scholars have attempted to give their views regarding the origin of the term 'Sonowal.' L. A. Waddel (1901: 38) remarks that, "The Sonowal or Sodial are mostly gold washers in the Lakhimpur district in upper Assam." In his view, the gold washers of Sadiya always displayed superior ability in gold collection, and those groups of people associated with the task of collecting gold came to be known as Sonowals. However, this theory is rejected by most of the Sonowals on the ground that no folk tales or songs of the Sonowal Kachari speak of this profession whereas some other scholars speculated that they were the same group of Kachari people such as Dimasa and Boro. They later came to be known by different names due to geographical separation, which eventually led to developing different cultures though the core remained the same. According to other schol-

CHAPTER- 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1. The Notion of Language Endangerment

If a language is on the way to disappear soon and its usage as a medium of communication is likely to discontinue, it is called an 'endangered language'. According to *Ethnologue*, (2021) "An endangered language is one in which the child-bearing generation is no longer transmitting it to their children". At present, most of the world's languages are spoken by a very few people, and a majority of the languages are on their way to extinction. The *Ethnologue*, as cited by the Foundation for Endangered Languages Manifesto, lists nearly 7,000 living languages of which:

- Less than 10,000 people speaks 52% of the languages,
- Less than 1,000 people speaks 28% of the languages,
- 83% of the languages are spoken only in single countries, and so are particularly exposed to the policies of a single government.

Whereas on the other side of the range, 10 major languages of the world which are each spoken by more than 109 million people serves as their mother tongues, which is almost half of the world's population.

According to the Census of India Report (2011), there are a total of 1369 rationalized mother tongues including the 22 scheduled languages and 99 non-scheduled languages. Out of the total population in India, 96.71% speak one of the 22 scheduled languages as their mother tongue and the remaining 3.29%, speak the remaining 1347 mother tongues (i.e., $1369 - 22 = 1347$) including the 99 non-scheduled languages.

Many linguists have attempted to elucidate as to when and how a language can be categorized as endangered. Fishman (1991) has proposed the 'Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale' with eight stages of intergenerational disruption taking into account the failure to establish intergenerational mother tongue dissemination. He has graded the most threatened languages at stage eight where the languages are being used only by the socially isolated elderly people and where the adults who could learn the language are demographically scattered.

Table 1 provides a summary of the Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale.

Table1 Fishman's 1991 GIDS Model [Retrieved from Lewis & Simons, 2010:105]

LEVEL	DESCRIPTION
1	The language is used by the government at the nationwide level; it is also used in the education domain, in the domain of mass media, and workplace.
2	The language is used in the governmental services and also in the regional and local mass media.
3	The language is used for regional and local work by both insiders and outsiders.
4	Through education the literacy of the language is transmitted.
5	The language is spoken by all the generation groups and is also effectively used in written form by all the members of the community.
6	The language is spoken by all the groups of people and is taught to the children generation as the first language.
7	The child-bearing generation knows the language fluently and uses it to speak with their elders, but the language is not transmitted to their children.
8	The grandparent generation people are the only remaining speakers of the language.

The UNESCO report of 2003 in the document entitled ‘Language Vitality and Endangerment’ establishes six degrees of endangerment that may be distinguished concerning the intergenerational transmission. These criteria can also be seen as a manifestation of the state of the exuberance of the languages. They can be graded in a tabular form as follows:

Table 2 (Source: UNESCO Ad hoc expert group on endangered languages 2003:8)

Degree of endangerment	Grade	Speaker population
Safe	5	The language is used by all age groups of people, strating from children up.
Unsafe	4	Some children use the language in all domains; some children use the language in limited domains.
Definitively endangered	3	Mostly the parental generation group and up use the language.
Severely endangered	2	Mostly the grandparental generation group and up use the language.
Critically endangered	1	The language is used mostly by very few speakers, of the great grandparental generation.
Extinct	0	There exists no speaker.

According to these criteria, a language can be termed **safe** when all the speakers of the community of all age groups from children to the older generation use the language. But a language is **unsafe** when some children use the language in all domains; some children use the language in limited domains. A language is categorized under the category of **definitively endangered** when it is used mostly by the parental generation and up. A **severely endangered** language is the one when it is mostly used by the grandparent generation and up.

A language falls under the category of **critically endangered** when it is used only by a very few speakers of the great grandparental generation. And lastly, **extinct** languages are those languages that have no speakers/users left; the language dies at this stage.

Terralingua (2000, cited by Ward & Genabith 2003:235) has divided the world's languages into three groups:

1. Moribund (those languages which are no longer being learnt by children)
2. Endangered (languages which will no longer be learnt by the children soon)
3. Safe (those languages which are neither moribund nor endangered)

Krauss (1992:4) has compared languages with the biological species which are endangered and classified languages into the category of endangered when they cease to be learned by the children in the near future, and moribund when the language is not being passed on to children by their parents as their mother tongue. There are various determining political, cultural, and economic reasons, like the extent of use of the English language, and globalization which make it difficult for many declining languages to survive at all. According to Crystal (2000:70), "The current situation is without precedent: the world has never had so many people in it, globalization processes have never been so marked; communication and transport technologies have never been so omnipresent; there has never been so much language contact, and no language has ever exercised so much international influence as English".

Moseley (2007: XIV) further states: "The destruction or decay of a language follows certain reasonably well-defined paths. Patterns borrowed from the encroaching language impose themselves on the receding one in a particular order. At the present stage, it would be unwise to state too categorically whether syntax, phonology, grammar, or vocabulary are eroded first in an endangered language; what we can say is that the erosion occurs at all levels over time. Unique elements are lost in the process- features that at first may appear to

be of curiosity only to linguists, but which have implications for the study of human thought and society itself”.

We may raise a question as to why so many of these languages are getting decayed. However, there cannot be one particular explanation for it, but as we can see there are various reasons involved behind it. In several cases, many of these languages are in hazardous circumstances, and when the last speaker passes away those languages are not spoken anymore, which ultimately leads to the death of a language. Other factors that lead to the death of a language are brought by issues like emigration of the speakers to improve their economic conditions, from areas which fall into the prey of drought and become impoverished, denudation or any other natural calamity which leads to forced migration, scattering, or dissipation of speakers to other areas as well as shifting from rural areas to the cities in search of better living opportunities, political reasons, etc. Moseley (2007: IX) states: "The economic factors that lead to language death are undeniably important, but they are not uniform. We can say with some certainty that urbanization is a killer of languages, especially if a rapid economic change takes place over one or two generations and attracts the rural poor to urban centres in search of work. Not only does urbanization fragment families, especially in post-colonial states, where the breadwinner may be constrained to move to the city from a subsistence economy to earn a livelihood in a major language environment, but it generally fails to provide an institutional basis for maintenance of the non-local languages within the new urban environment". All these factors contribute to the breaking or impairment of the community where else the language would have been disseminated and spoken, and since the language is not an individualistic entity and needs more population or at least more than one speaker for it to survive and flourish, the impediment of the speaker to communicate in the language leads to the death of the language.

To determine the factors of language endangerment and vitality, the UNESCO report (2003) has identified the following nine criteria:

1. Intergenerational language transmission
2. Absolute number of speakers
3. Proportion of speakers with the total population
4. Shifts in domains of language use
5. Response to new domains and media
6. Materials for language education and literacy
7. Government and institutional language attitudes and policies including official status and use
8. Community members' attitude towards their own language.
9. Amount and quality of documentation.

Language loss or language death results in a huge loss of human knowledge; along with language the unique knowledge of culture and history of the language and community gets lost. Each language embodies unique knowledge in it, and when a language dies the knowledge dies along with the language. According to Bernard (1996:142, cited by UNESCO's Ad hoc expert group on endangered languages 2003: 3) "The irony of the world's linguistic situation is that about 97 percent of the world's population speak about 4 percent of the world's languages, and conversely, about 96 percent of the world's languages are spoken by about 3 percent of the world's people". And "what is more shocking is that about one third of the total population of the world's languages has not been documented yet which means there is no record of more than 2000 languages" (Mohanty 2009: 190). The death of languages has resulted in an irrevocable loss to human society in the form of losing

valuable unique knowledge engraved in those languages. Thus, there is a necessity to document languages properly and revitalise them.

The UNESCO report cited by the UNESCO's Ad hoc expert group on endangered languages (2003:16) provided a scale to measure the effort as well as the scales of documentation. Following are the scales provided by the UNESCO report:

1. **Superlative documentation:** Superlative documentation is the one where there are comprehensive dictionaries and grammars, extensive texts, a constant flow of language materials. In this annotated high-quality audio and video, recordings exist in abundance.
2. **Good documentation:** Good documentation is the one where there is an adequate number of grammars, texts, dictionaries, literature, every day updated media and also has an adequate number of high-quality audio and video recordings.
3. **Fair documentation:** Fair documentation may have a sufficient amount of grammar, texts and dictionaries; but it does not have everyday media, audio and video recordings may exist in varying quality or degree of annotation.
4. **Fragmentary documentation:** Fragmentary documentation includes some word-lists, grammatical sketches and texts which are useful for limited linguistic research but does not have adequate coverage. A video and audio recording may exist in varying quality, and may or may not have annotation.
5. **Inadequate documentation:** In inadequate documentation, only a few grammatical sketches, fragmentary texts and short word-lists are included. Audio and video recordings do not exist in inadequate documentation.
6. **Undocumented:** Undocumented is where no material exists.

Hale (1992, cited by Moseley 2007: XV) states: "The loss of local languages, and of the cultural systems which they express, has meant an irretrievable loss of diverse and interesting intellectual wealth, the priceless products of human mental industry. The process of languages loss is ongoing. Many linguistic fieldworkers have had, and will continue to have, the experience of bearing witness to the loss, for all time, of a language and of the cultural products which the language served to express for the intellectual nourishment of its speakers".

“The only person I have left to talk to is a linguist and talking to a linguist is no fun”.

- quoted in Fishman 2000:24. (Reagan 2019:292)

The above-quoted assertion by a native speaker of 'about to die' language presents us with a picture of the plight of a language, and it also helps us to understand the exigencies of the issue of language endangerment. The statement also insinuates that those languages which are small, in terms of population, are rapidly ceasing from human edification. Even though this circumstance is pervasive, the rate or the number of dissipating languages cannot be prognosticated. Although it is a matter of validation to predict the precise number of languages which are going to evanesce, in a stringent conjecture by Krauss (1992), it was said that by the end of the next century over 4000 of the world languages will be abated.

1.2. Language Reclamation: What it is and Why it is required

Wiecha (2013, cited in Child Language Research and Revitalization Working Group 2017:1) states that out of the 7,000 language communities, the present research indicates that 46% of the languages are in the danger of facing a total interruption in transmitting language to the next generation, and thus the communities are retaliating to this situation by expediting their efforts to relearn, reclaim and revitalize their languages. According to Leonard

(2012:359) language reclamation is, “Larger effort by a community to claim its right to speak a language and to set associated goals in response to community needs and perspectives”.

Amery (2016:19) defines language reclamation as, "an attempt to relearn a language from material recorded in another era when the language was spoken". He states that he uses “the term language reclamation specifically to refer to language revival in situations where the language is no longer spoken and little is known orally within the community”. The language reclamation approach utilizes a range of linguistic techniques to retrieve, piece together, develop and transform the language into a form capable of being relearned and used for a range of contemporary purposes. It increases feelings of wellbeing and pride amongst indigenous people. It begins with the community and the language is continually shaped in response to community needs and sensitivities.

Amery (2016: 23) is of the view that “just as life can exist as relatively inert spores in a bottle, languages too can exist in a static unchanging form as words written in a book, or indeed as sounds recorded on a tape, or even accompanied by images on video and film. Given the right conditions, the spores can be activated and burst into life”. Amery quotes Comrie et al. (1996: 214) DNA metaphor here, "Just as plants and animal species can be preserved and recreated by preserving their DNA, the sounds, grammar, and vocabulary of languages can be stored on tape and disk for posterity and even for later resuscitation".

Hale (1994, cited by Amery 2016:24), “sees language revival, based on written, audio, video, and electronic records, as being an increasingly common and feasible undertaking in the future, further underscoring the need for comprehensive documentation of endangered languages for the benefit of future generations affiliated to them”. As a basis for reviving a language, Amery (2016:25) is of the view that, in his conceptualization of language reclamation, "it requires minimally a sketch grammar and a reasonable vocabulary, or at least

records of several genetically related languages which can be used to generate a distinctive vocabulary according to the principles of comparative linguistics".

The approach undertaken while reclaiming a language is it uses language materials primarily in the form of texts which are obtained from various historical sources, vocabularies, grammars, as the basis of a spoken language; taught and learnt in the then present conditions. Amery (2016:32) is of the view that "The language reclamation as a linguistic process begins with identifying and locating sources on the language. It is probably wise to begin by assessing what is still known within the community and identifying those with the most knowledge of the language and culture and those having a strong interest in the language itself". Amery (2016:34) also states that "Philology is a dominant methodology underpinning language reclamation" and goes on to state that, "Philological procedures provide the tools to assess and interpret historical materials. This is the preliminary work that must be done before the application of the techniques afforded by comparative and historical linguistics. Philological procedures include an examination of the written sources for internal consistency".

In the context of language reclamation, where a particular language has remained passive for an increased period of time, the exigency for vocabulary to talk about common everyday objects and notions that people wish to communicate is intensified.

1.3. Language Endangerment in India and specially in North-Eastern India

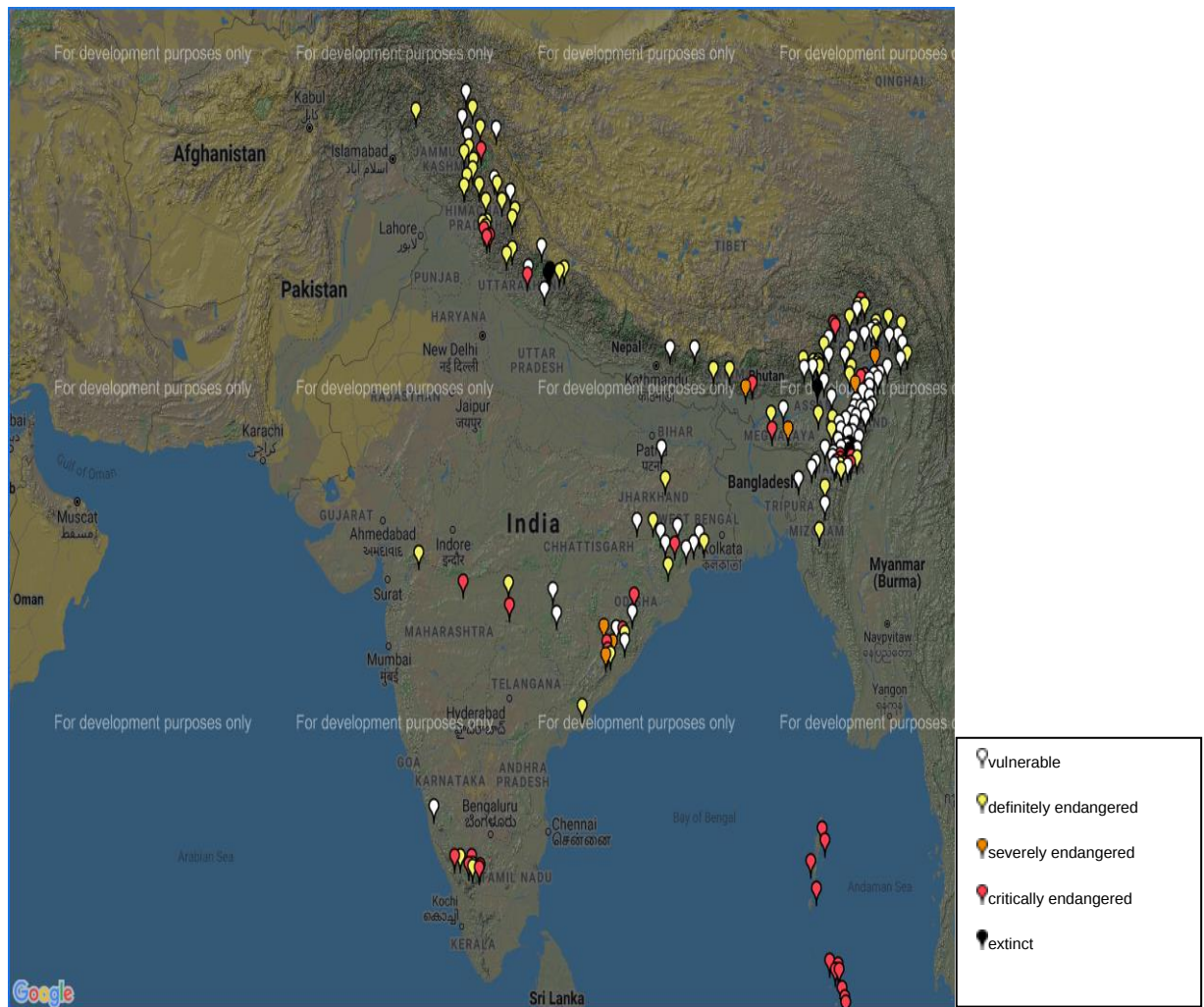
Austin and Simpson (2007:5) state that there are approximately 6,700 languages spoken across the world and half of them are said to be under the threat of extinction. The current linguistic situation presents that the small languages or languages which have a small population are under a stupendous thread of endangerment. The diffusion of world languages is also very asymmetrical. They also stated that 50% of the world population speak the top

twenty languages of the world. It can be observed that economic and political powers are also entrusted in the control of the people who speak the majority languages. Hence, the proclivity to leave aside the mother tongue can be seen in the current scenario and the speakers of smaller languages can be seen shifting towards dominant languages by relinquishing their mother tongue. In the history of human civilization, changes are ineluctable. So is the case in terms of languages. Languages too can encounter various phases of their life cycle. And in this process of their life cycle, many languages have evanesced altogether. That is why Crystal (2000: IX) calls it, "Language death is death". The committee of the Endangered Language Fund of USA has commented, "Languages have died off throughout history, but never have we faced the massive extinction that is threatening the world right now. As language professionals, we are faced with a stark reality: Much of what we study will not be available to future generations. The cultural heritage of many people is crumbling while we look on. Are we willing to shoulder the blame for having stood by and done nothing?" (Crystal 2000: VII). The feasibility of languages is dependent on numerous determinants like political and economic setting, the number of speakers, the attitude of the speakers towards their mother tongues, practices of language such as its usage in media, literature, education, administration, cultural tradition, etc.

The 2011 Census of India report shows that there are in total 121 languages in India as against 122 languages according to the 2001 Census report. The decrease in number is due to exclusion of Simte and Persian (which were not returned insufficient number in 2011) and the inclusion of Mao (which has returned more than 10,000 speakers at the all-India level at the 2011 Census)¹. Out of the 121 languages, 22 languages are spoken by over one million people, while the remaining 99 languages are spoken by more than 10,000 people. Also, some languages are not even listed because they are spoken by less than 10,000 speakers.

¹ Census of India. P.4

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization's (UNESCO) *Atlas of the World's Languages in Danger* (2009), exhibits a weighty illustration of the world's languages that are defunct or are on the brink of extinction. The UNESCO report indicates that India has the highest number of endangered languages in the world followed by the US and Brazil. A major cause of concern is that the UNESCO's Atlas report identified 197 languages that are endangered in India. Out of which 5 were extinct, 81 languages that are vulnerable, 62 languages that are definitely endangered, 7 that are severely endangered, and 42 languages that are critically endangered. Nearly 60% of these endangered languages originated in Northeast India and Andaman & Nicobar Islands. India's land of seven sisters is one of the most linguistically heterogeneous corridors in the world. Yet many of its indigenous languages are at the danger of getting extinct. More than half of the endangered languages have not been recorded in the Indian Census as these languages have fewer than 10,000 speakers and the Indian Census records only those languages with more than 10,000 speakers. The five extinct languages enlisted in the Atlas are Ahom, Andro, Rangkas, Sengmai and Tolcha.



Map showing the endangered languages in India

Source: Taken from the UNESCO's Atlas of the World's Languages in Danger (<http://www.unesco.org/languages-atlas/index.php>)

Surprisingly, out of the 197 languages identified as endangered, two languages that are included in the eighth schedule, i.e. Bodo and Manipuri are included in the category of being vulnerable. Also, among the official languages of the states of India, Ao, Angami, Chang, Khasi, Khiemnungan, Konyak, and Manipuri are categorized as endangered.

1.4. Assamese- the dominant language of Assam

The Constitution of India gave the Assamese language the status of the state language of Assam. Apart from the Assamese several other languages are spoken in the state, but because

of its majority speakers, Assamese attained the state's official language status. Before the 1970s and 1980s when Assam was not divided into several other states, Assamese was being used as the 'linguafranca' of the region. So, even after the division of the state into some other states, the Assamese language continued to remain as the dominant language of Assam.

Another mention-worthy reason for Assamese to remain the dominant language of the state is that it has a long tradition of recorded history of literature and culture. Also, the writings of the intellectuals like Kaviraja Madhava Kandali, Srimanta Sankardev, Lakshminath Bezbaruah, Birendra Nath Bhattacharya, Padmanath Gohain, Homen Borgohain, Bhabendra Nath Saikh, Mamoni Raisom Goswami, etc., took the Assamese language to a new height and gave recognition in the realm of Indian literature.

William Robinson is credited to have written the first Assamese grammar *A Grammar of the Assamese Language*. But he remarked that Assamese is nothing but a dialect of Bengali. Robinson (1841:253) wrote, "...with the exception of a very few words of Tai origin, Assamese seems to have been originally derived from the Sungskrit, and in most cases possesses a close affinity to the Bengali". Thus, there was a notion that Assamese is nothing but a dialect of Bengali. However, Banikanta Kakati, in his epoch-making thesis *Assamese: Its Formation and Development* (1935), proved that Assamese is an independent language and established the supremacy of the Assamese language in the region. In addition, various other writers attempted to write grammars and compile dictionaries which got due attention from the global researchers. Noteworthy among them are *Hemkosh*, the first Assamese dictionary, *Chandrakanta*, *Adhunik Assamiya Abhidhan*, etc.

All these factors contributed in helping the Assamese language to become the dominant language of the region.

1.5. The ethnic profile of Sonowal Kachari

The Sonowal Kachari belongs to the Mongoloid racial group of people. By establishing their powerful territory in the region of Sadiya in Tinsukia, a district in Assam, this group of people are able to maintain a record of themselves.

1.5.1. About the origin of Sonowal Kachari

To trace the origin of the term 'Sonowal' or to know how this group of people came to be known as 'Sonowal' is very difficult. Over the period of time, different scholars have attempted to give their views regarding the origin of the term 'Sonowal.' Citing L. A. Waddel (1901), Kachari (2011: 5) remarks that, "The Sonowal or Sodial are mostly gold washers in the Lakhimpur district in upper Assam". In his view, the gold washers of Sadiya always displayed superior ability in the gold collection, and those groups of people associated with the task of collecting gold came to be known as Sonowals. However, this theory is rejected by most of the Sonowals on the ground that no folk tales or songs of the SonowalKachari speak of this profession. Whereas some other scholars speculated that they were the same group of Kachari people such as Dimasa and Boro. They later came to be known by different names due to geographical separation, which eventually led to the development of different cultures though the core remained the same. According to other scholars, because they were settlers near the river Subansiri, they were known as Sonowal. In *Kachari Buranji* (1936), Surya Kumar Bhuyan, as cited by Kachari (2011:5), has mentioned about the Sonowals in this way:

"By establishing their kingdom in the region of Sadiya, the Kacharis were ruling the region with great power. The boundaries of their kingdom extended to Sadiya in the east, Dikhowmukh in the west, and Kinduguri in the south. The residents of this kingdom were called Sadiyal or Halali Kachari, in which ha means 'land' and lali

means 'bright' i.e. country of bright land. This group of Sadiyal Kachari later came to be known as Sonowal Kachari".

According to one folktale prevalent among the Sonowal Kacharis, those Kacharis who offered *xun* (gold) for conversion to Vaishnavism and became the disciples of Kesab Dev were regarded as Sonowal Kacharis.

A folklore of the Sonowal Kachari states:

"Having being blessed by the 'Khiring Raja', the god worshipped by the Sonowal Kacharis, the wife of a Sonowal Kachari named Manik gave birth to a cat. The cat was kept in a 'Hariyahar duli' (mustard loaded bamboo basket), and the cat turned into a golden cat, surprisingly. On having this heavenly gift from 'Khiring Raja', Manik could become the king of Halali. Later he bequeathed his kingdom to his grandson Mukuta". (Kachari 2011:5-6)

The Sonowals share a close affinity with the Boros and Dimasas in terms of religion, deities and clan structure, etc. Their claim that they were the same group of people is supported by the fact that many rivers and places in Eastern Assam and Arunachal contain /di-/ 'water' example: Dibang (*di-* water, *bang-* wide), Dibru (*dibru* in Dimasa means blister), Dihing or Dihong (*dihong*= wide river), Dikhow (*dikhou* in Dimasa means to separate), Dimow (Dimow must have got its name from *dimu* which in Dimasa means the main source of water), etc. The arrival of the Tai Ahoms and the subsequent battles and power struggles with the Kacharis weakened the social structure of the Sonowals. As a result, the Sonowals along with the other tribes most probably had to learn Assamese after the Ahom king made it the official court language later during their rule. Though Assamese was primarily used as the lingua franca of the Ahom kingdom, later it engulfed the local languages and gradually became the mother tongue of the Sonowals (along with the Chutiyas, Morans, etc).

1.5.2. Demographic profile

Sonowal Kacharis are predominantly found in the districts of Lakhimpur, Dhemaji, Tinsukia, Dibrugarh, Sibsagar, Golaghat, and Jorhat of Upper Assam. The total population of the areas under Sonowal Kachari Autonomous Council jurisdiction, which comprises 450 villages according to the Survey of India Census Report, 2001, is about 2,35,881².

1.5.3. Lifestyle

Different people have different habits, attitudes, tastes, moral standards, economic levels, etc., that together constitute the mode of living of an individual or group of people. Sonowal Kacharis too has their own way of living which knit them together in a society. This section of the thesis pertains to certain lifestyles of the Sonowal Kacharis.

1.5.3.1. Occupation

The Sonowal Kacharis are mainly cultivators. According to Kachari (2011: XI), approximately 90% of the total population lives on cultivation and only 10% are engaged in other jobs. Their main source of livelihood is the cultivation of paddy. Apart from paddy cultivation, they also grow various types of herbs and shrubs, plants, and trees. Planting of bamboos, betel- nut tree, and banana are common in the campus of every house of the community. Agricultural produce is the main source of their economic life. Both men and women take part in agricultural works. Ploughing is done by men with a wooden plough yoked to a pair of a bullock. However, in modern times using tractors and power tillers are to be seen. Ploughing is usually done in the month of April- July. Planting crops is done by women. Harvesting is generally done in the months of November and December. Both men and women take part in the harvesting of the crop.

²https://censusindia.gov.in/Tables_Published/SCST/dh_st_assam.pdf

Animal husbandry is an integral part of their lives. They rear animals such as cows, dogs, goats, ox, pigs and birds like pigeons, hens, swans, ducks, etc. Most of the Sonowal Kachari women are good weavers. They weave their own clothes in their handlooms. Domestication of the silkworm is widely practised among them. The men of the community are experts in various handicraft works. They are also skilled in making various types of equipment out of bamboo, cane, and out of wood different types of baskets, fishing equipment and various types of agricultural tools. They are also very skilled in constructing houses with various naturally available materials such as bamboo, hay, straw, etc.

1.5.3.2. Religion, Taboos, Beliefs, Faiths, and Rituals

The Sonowal Kacharis were originally the followers of Lord Shiva whom they address as *Khiring Khiring Bathow* (Sri Lord Shiva). They have a specific place for worshipping Lord Shiva or *Khiring Khiring Bathow* known as *Bathow sal* (temple). They also worship several other gods and goddesses like: *Phul Konwar*, *Luhit Konwar*, *Kechaikhatee*, *Lokhimi*, *Tamreswaree*, *Burdha- Burdhi*, *Balia Baba*, etc. They also worship their religious teacher whom they address as *Guru Gozai*. They believe in their dead forefathers as the protector of their house and family and practice worshipping them in every religious festival or occasion. With the introduction and advent of New Vaishnavism in Assam, most of the people have become followers of it, and the population now is predominantly Vaishnavism. Even though the Sonowal Kacharis have accepted Vaishnavism, which is completely against the worship of any gods and goddesses with or without sacrifice, yet they continue to hold sacrificial worship to their traditional deities. They have traditional beliefs about some animals, birds, and trees which they worship for the welfare of society. As a result, nowadays they simultaneously practice both Vaishnavism and their traditional rituals.

There are several taboos and belief systems prevalent among them. Some of them include; the prohibition of eating arum plants after *Baitho Puja* but to take young banana plants instead. They prohibit cutting bamboo on certain days such as Tuesday and Saturday. It is also worth mentioning that they never give paddy and rice to others on Thursday. It is believed that if they do so, the family who gives the rice or paddy on that particular day will become poor. Such types of taboos and belief systems are prevalent in the Sonowal Kachari society.

They also perform certain rituals on puberty of the girl child of the family in which only women are allowed to attain. They also perform rituals at the time of the birth of a child and also at the time of death of a person.

1.5.3.3. Family and Marriage

Family: The Sonowal Kacharis have a patriarchal, patrilineal and patrilocal family structure in which the father is the head and the inheritance of property goes through the male line. Generally, in the Sonowal Kachari society, joint family is more prevalent though the nuclear family also exists. Every family of the tribe bears a particular name which they call *hos* (family). And based on *hos* they are grouped into one of the fourteen clans. The fourteen clans are made up of four to ten different *hos* (family) which they believe to have descended from the same ancestors.

Marriage: Monogamy or marrying a single man/ woman is the common practice prevalent in the Sonowal Kachari society. However, widow/ widower remarriage is permitted in the society. Marriage among the cross or parallel cousins either from the side of the mother or father is strictly prohibited. Both love marriage and arranged marriage are common in the society. However, marriage between the members of the same *hos* (family) is strictly

prohibited as they are believed to be related to one another through blood and if anyone gets married among the same *hos* (family) they are excommunicated from the society.

1.5.3.4. Food, Dress and Physical Appearance

Food habit: The staple food of the Sonowal Kaharis is rice. They have some of their indigenous herbs and shrubs grown in their gardens along with different kinds of vegetables, which they use as special food items. They also make a cake out of rice flour, which is one of their favourites. They are basically non-vegetarian. They love eating non-veg. items. Some of their favourite non-vegetarian foods are pork, duck, chicken, pigeon, mutton, fish, etc. They are also fond of eating bamboo shoots and silk caterpillars. Rice beer is one of their favourite drinks. Almost all families prepare rice beer at home. They also have the tradition of putting sticky rice inside the tender bamboo and burn it with hay to get it cooked which they call as *suṇa pitḥa* that is a kind of cake made of sticky rice which is cooked inside a bamboo tube.

suṇa

pitḥa

a pipe, a joint of bamboo

a cake

They are very fond of eating *suṇa pitḥa* which is usually made in the months of January and February. They are also very fond of eating betel- nut after every meal. They have the tradition of offering betel- nut to welcome guests.

Dress and ornaments: The traditional dress of the Sonowal Kachari women includes the *mekḥela*, a type of lower garment worn around the waist. But the elderly women wear it on their chest above the blouse and then they wrap a cloth on their waist, which is below the knee length and is known as *eketḥiya*. They use a *gamusḥa*, their traditional towel, on their head which is called as *tokaiya*. The traditional cloths of males include *dḥuti*, a long white cloth on their waist and *kameez* (shirt) on their body; they also put on *gamusḥa*, the traditional towel, on their shoulders during the festivals and participation in other rituals. *Bor ka:pur*

(*bor*- big, *ka:pur*- cloth), which is made of eri yarn, *cheleŋ ka:pur* which is also made of eri yarn, and *mek^hela- sador* are some of their traditional garments. *Bor ka:pur* is a very long and broad cloth made of eri yarn which is usually used in bed in the winter season.

Physical appearance: The Sonowal Kachari belongs to the Mongoloid racial group. Their skin colour is yellowish-brown; they have black thick straight hair. They have scanty hair on their body and face. Their face is broad and flat with a prominent cheekbone. Their eyes are obliquely set with narrow slit opening and brown in colour.

1.5.3.5. Festivals

The Sonowal Kacharis, like all the other ethnic groups of Assam, observe the three Bihu festivals; ***Kati Bihu*** (celebrated in mid-October by the cultivators as a day of the first appearance of the paddy), ***Magh Bihu*** (a harvest festival which marks the end of the harvesting season which is celebrated in the month of Magh, i.e. January- February) and ***Bohag Bihu*** (celebrated by the people of Assam which marks the beginning of the Assamese New Year). Besides celebrating these three Bihu festivals, one of the most significant traditions of them is worshipping ***Bathow*** (Lord Shiva) which they call as ***Khring Khring Baitho Puja***. It is practised in the temple, which they call as *Bathou sal*, (Bathou temple) on the second Monday after the *Shivaratri* (it is the day for worshipping Lord Shiva by the other Hindus of India; which is generally practised on a particular day in the month of February or March) each year. They generally perform their folk song and dance which is known as *Haidang Huchari* (a folk song sung by people going in procession from house to house playing drums during Bihu festival which is performed only by the males). The rituals of *Baitho Puja* and the songs of *Haidang Huchari* reflect their socio-cultural life as well as their origin and history. Some of these songs are also related to their belief about the creation of the earth, sky, and life by Lord Shiba.

1.5.3.6. Housing patterns

The Sonowal Kacharis live in thatched houses made of bamboo, wood, and mud. They usually use reeds and sometimes even paddy straw for thatching the roof, bamboo splits, or reeds for walls and they use wood and bamboo for pillar. They use mud mixed with cow dung for plastering the walls. However, now-a-days, permanent houses made of cement, iron, tin, rods, etc., can be seen even in villages. Their traditional houses are generally made facing the east direction, i.e. the main door of the house always faces the eastern direction. The boundary of their houses is demarcated by the bamboo splits.

1.6. An Overview of the Thesis

The thesis is divided into six chapters. The first chapter gives an introduction to the notion of language endangerment in general and provides a picture of language endangerment in India in particular. Further, the chapter gives information about the ethnic profile of the Sonowal Kacharis. The second chapter gives a thorough analysis of the various theoretical works related to the field of research. The third chapter deals with the Methodology; the various methods that are employed in this research work have been explained. The fourth chapter presents the social structure of the Sonowal Kacharis. The chapter tries to examine the division of Sonowal Kachari society, how the society is interwoven, and the way it is organized, its inner functioning as well as its orientation, the occupation of the people, their housing patterns, family structure, social traditions, the belief system of the community, etc., and how these customs are encoded in the language. The fifth chapter gives the word- lists of the Sonowal Kachari language. All the words that were collected in the fieldwork were arranged categorically and presented in the fifth chapter of the thesis. The sixth chapter is the concluding chapter which deals with the research findings, recommendations and further

scope of research on Sonowal Kachari, and also tries to examine the reasons for the death of the Sonowal Kachari language.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The present research work was conducted after doing a thorough analysis of various theoretical works related to this field. Here, in this chapter, various theoretical frameworks relevant to the present research work will be discussed to provide support to the study. It starts with an attempt to understand why it is so necessary to save a language from dying and what various linguists' opinions on this are. It further goes on to discuss the existing research and literary works done in Sonowal Kachari.

Crystal (2000) gives five important reasons as to why we should be worried if a language dies and they are as follows:

1. Because we need diversity.

Just like increasing uniformity is a sign of impending jeopardy for the long-term survival of the species, growing uniformity in the language system too holds impending danger for the languages of getting lost. Crystal (2000:33) states "In the language of ecology, the strongest ecosystems are those which are most diverse". So, if diversity is the sine qua non for humanity to be successful, then the perpetuation of linguistic diversity becomes indispensable, for as Crystal rightly remarks, language lies at the heart of what it means to be human". Therefore, when transmission of a particular language breaks down because of language death, there arises a serious loss of inherited knowledge, because each language embodies a unique knowledge of its own, and if a language dies, the knowledge too dies along with the language. One field linguist, Romeo Labillois (1996, cited in Crystal 2000:34) puts it this way: "A native language is like a natural resource which cannot be replaced once it is removed from the earth". Also, Hale (1992:8) says, "Just as the extinction of any animal

species diminishes our world, so does the extinction of any language". Crystal (2000:36) quotes a Russian writer Vjaceslav Ivanov, who sums up in this way, "Each language constitutes a certain model of the universe, a semiotic system of understanding the world, and if we have 4000 different ways to describe the world, this makes us rich. We should be concerned about preserving languages just as we are about ecology".

2. Because language expresses identity

One of the reasons Crystal offers why we should care if a language dies is because language holds our identity. But if our own language dies, we lose a major part of our identity. Crystal (2000:36) quoted Ivanov who gave a very strong statement where he said, "A nation without a language is a nation without a heart". Also, Mithun (1998, cited in Crystal 2000:38) remarks: "The loss of languages is tragic precisely because they are not interchangeable, precisely because they represent the distillation of the thoughts and communication of a people over their entire history". Identity is what makes the members of a community recognizably the same, but if one loses its language, they lose their identity as language is the heart of one's identity. Sapir, (1921:220, cited by Crystal 2000:40) says, "Language is the most massive and inclusive art we know, a mountainous and anonymous work of unconscious generations".

3. Because languages are repositories of history

The third reason Crystal provides as to why we should be concerned if a language dies is because languages are the storehouses of history. Languages are the genealogy of nations. A language enfolds its speakers' history. Languages are the chronicles of history. Crystal (2000:41) quotes Van Hoorde (1998:8) who says, "When you lose your language, you exclude yourself from your past".

4. Because language contributes to the sum of human knowledge.

Languages contribute to the sum of human knowledge which is one of the reasons Crystal gives why we should be worried if a language dies. As language contributes to the sum of human knowledge, learning more languages and learning about languages can increase the stock of human wisdom. But if a language dies, one precious source of human knowledge dies along with the language which cannot be replaced by any other language. Hale (1992:36) states, "Language embodies the intellectual wealth of the people who use it". Crystal (2000:53) cites Ezra Pound, an expatriate American poet and critic, a major figure in the early modernist poetry movement, who says, "The sum of human wisdom is not contained in any one language, and no single language is capable of expressing all forms and degrees of human comprehension". Crystal (2000:53) also states that "Diversity, as we have seen, is a human evolutionary strength, and should be safeguarded as an end in itself, for out of it new houses of being can spring. Moreover, diversity breeds diversity".

5. Because languages are interesting in themselves.

Each language are a unique masterpiece of the Creator and each language are interesting in itself, so we should preserve each and every language as each language are created by God with a unique purpose and losing a language can create imbalances in the linguistic world.

Crystal then goes on to present some ideas about what can be done to counter threats to language death. The first point that Crystal points out is to gather information. Although there are thousands of languages that are at risk, they are not at the same stage of endangerment as while some of them are in the final stage of extinction, while some may have a great deal of life left in them. So, the need of the hour is to make an assessment of the languages current stage and act upon it as required. According to Ostler (1997:5, cited in Crystal 2000:92) "The first step in language rescue must be an informative assessment of a language's current situation". Crystal is of the view that assessments need to take into

account facts about the speaker's fluency, accuracy, and age levels in order to arrive at a proper evaluation of the likelihood of continuity.

Another way is by raising awareness both in the local and in the international communities. Lack of awareness of endangered languages is simply a revelation of the lack of awareness about language among the public at large. Therefore endangered languages have to be given priority which include devising appropriate publicity campaigns, use as a medium of education, use in media, etc. Awareness and concern for the endangered languages have to be fostered worldwide because all minority and endangered languages will be benefited from a universal consciousness-raising about linguistic diversity.

Fostering a positive attitude among the community is another way to counter the threats to language death. Sometimes people don't care for preservation of their own language. As a linguist working with the endangered language can explain the consequences of language loss to the people of the community and help them discover what is unique about its heritage. When a linguist working with an endangered language encounters people having a negative attitude towards their ancestral language, the linguist must create an opportunity for the people to improve morale so that they come to the point where they begin to have a sense of belongingness towards their language and regard their language with a feeling of confidence, self-esteem, and pride. There is little hope for a language to survive unless its speakers feel that it is worth continuing with.

Any approach towards the endangered languages must be done taking into consideration the authenticity of the whole community. As the true life of any language lies in its variation and readiness to change, to adapt to the new circumstances the speakers of the endangered languages need to be prepared for change. However, the acceptance of new forms of language does not imply the replacement of all the older forms of expression. The

respected language of old rituals and literature can be retained alongside whatever innovations are being introduced in the language. The native equivalent can be coined in order to provide equivalents for the borrowed words from the dominant language.

One other way to counter the dangers of language death is by encouraging the people of the community to see language as part of their culture as much of the culture is expressed in the language. This may create a sense of belongingness towards their language among the speakers.

Crystal (2000) presented the following six factors as the prerequisite for progress towards the objective of language being used at home and neighbourhood as a tool of intergenerational communication.

1. “An endangered language will progress if its speakers increase their prestige within the dominant community”. (Crystal 2000:130)

Prestige follows when one comes into the notice of the people. Therefore, an endangered community need to make its presence felt to the wider community. It needs to raise its visibility, its profile.

2. “An endangered language will progress if its speakers increase their wealth relative to the dominant community”. (Crystal 2000: 132)

Here, Crystal agrees with Grenoble and Whaley's observation that "Economics may be the single strongest force influencing the fate of endangered languages".

3. “An endangered language will progress if its speakers increase their legitimate power in the eyes of the dominant community”. (Crystal 2000: 133)
4. “An endangered language will progress if its speakers have a strong presence in the educational system”. (Crystal 2000:136)

The school provides an opportunity for children to listen and speak a language as they have to cope with the demands of the curriculum of the school. Therefore, if an indigenous language is taught at schools alongside the dominant language, the language can be passed on to the next generation.

5. “An endangered language will progress if its speakers can write their language down”. (Crystal 2000:138)
6. “An endangered language will progress if its speakers can make use of electronic technology”. (Crystal 2000:141)

Information technology and the internet, in particular, offers endangered languages which have been written down with a fresh set of opportunities to get a public profile.

Along with suggesting the above six conditions in language revitalization, Crystal also asserts for stronger attention on descriptive linguistics and fieldwork and emphasized the need to build a rounded revitalization team involving specialists from different fields and linguists.

The articles in the volume edited by Janse and Tol (2003) present productive and remarkable information about the current and future vitality of languages around the world and also recommend the directions that future scholars should take.

Janse (2003) gives an overview of many of the central concerns and factors leading to language death in his paper “Introduction: Language Death and Language Maintenance”. He exhibited that language death is not a contemporary occurrence and states factors determining language death. He ventilates the importance of documenting endangered languages for all language express thoughts and ideas in distinctive ways, both grammatically and semantically, and also every language is the custodian of its speakers’ history and culture and

its disappearance constitutes the irrevocable loss of a fragment of our own humanity. Also, he gives a history of linguists' attention to endangered languages.

Newman (2003:1-14) in his paper, "The Endangered Languages Issue as Hopeless Cause", argues that, the language loss is a scientific loss and that documenting endangered language is an urgent matter. He argues that linguists exacerbate rather than solve the problem because, firstly, linguists don't care, secondly linguists care too much and lastly, non-western colleagues don't care and would be unprepared to help out even if they did.

In "The language situation and language endangerment in the Greater Pacific area", Wurm (2003:15-47) offers a survey of the vitality of approximately 2300 languages in the Greater Pacific which includes the 1200 Austronesian language group, the 838 Papuan languages, and the 300+ surviving or recently extinct Australian languages or approximately one-third of the world's languages. The Greater Pacific area is the part of the world least affected by language endangerment and language death, considering the very large number of languages in it, with an exception to Australia, which is one of the most heavily affected in the world and New Caledonia, both because of the overwhelming presence of an outside dominant population with European metropolitan culture, speaking English and French respectively. Of over 400 Australian languages existing before European settlements, only 24- 25 are fully functioning now, with about 120 existing in various stages of endangerment, including 50 in the final stage of disappearance. However, the Greater Pacific area is of interest in that two language revitalization efforts, those of Maori and the Hawaiians, appear to have achieved some measures of success in reversing language shift.

Stary (2003:81-88) in, "Sibe: an Endangered Language", gives a brief account of the history of the Sibe language, he then concludes by saying that there are two factors that threaten the survival of the Sibe language and script: the necessity of thorough learning of Chinese and the interruption of the teaching of Sibe in secondary schools. It seems like the

main endangerment issue with the Sibe is the loss of written form (to Chinese) rather than the spoken language.

Georg (2003:89-106) in “The gradual disappearance of a Eurasian language family: the case of a Yeniseyan”, presents the situation of the Yeniseyan languages normally referred to as one of the Palaeoasiatic (also known as Palaeosiberian) language family. He gives a history of the language family and a few details on toponymy which shows that the original Yeniseyan settlers have been superseded by Turkic and other groups. Also, in the 1600s there was a devastating smallpox epidemic. From the notes and travel diaries of the travellers, there is linguistic information on six Yeniseyan languages but by the end of the 18th century only three, Ket, Yugh and Kott survived. However, by the end of the 19th century, the Kott language had finally ceased to exist, probably as a result of the language shift to Turkic. Also, Yugh died in the 1980s, and Ket, the sole remaining Yeniseyan language, is now severely endangered with the fluent speakers being over 60 years old. If the Ket language ceases to exist, it will lead to the death of the Yeniseyan language family.

Bolkland and Hasselblatt (2003:107-141) in their paper “The Endangered Uralic Languages”, surveys the Uralic language family mentioning several languages that have died out in the last 1000 years, leaving approximately 30 living one today. The author discusses five medium-size languages, Mordvin, Mari, Udmurt, Komi and Komi-Permyak, which have some official status and are potentially endangered, six smaller languages that are more endangered, Karelian, Saami, Nenets, Khanty, Mansi and Vepsian, and six minor languages which are in the process of vanishing, Ingrian, Votian, Livonian, Enets, Nganasan and Selkup. They note that social welfare systems are a two-edged sword: a lack of a system can mean less pressure to conform to a dominant language, but the presence of a system can support the maintenance of a language as well.

Menz (2003:143-155) starts his paper “Endangered Turkic Languages: the case of Gagauz”, with general information on the Turkic language group as a whole and goes on to give a brief overview of the endangered Turkic languages of the former Soviet Union, but focuses particularly on Gagauz, which is presently spoken mainly in the southern region of the Republic of Moldova. He enlisted some historical factors which encouraged the deterioration of Gagauz including a split in the group of speakers which began with the migration from Bulgaria around the 19th century, the famine, and also the agrarian society that no longer uses the written form of the language. However, active bilingualism (with Russian) and active use in the home among all generations are some of the factors encouraging the preservation of Gagauz. But, he concludes by stating that the minority languages with reduced communicative functions in restricted geographical areas are likely to be given up in the long run and that it is doubtful if the minority languages and dialects would survive in modern industrial societies.

Mous (2003:157-170) provides an assessment of the loss of linguistic diversity in Africa. He gives a brief account of the language families and the endangerment of the languages therein. The loss of linguistic diversity is a hindrance for linguistics as an empirical discipline. Shifting to a dominant regional language is one of the most prevalent dangers to languages in Africa. From his overview of the African languages, it can be pointed out that most of the African languages are not on the verge of extinction and can be said that, in general, they are healthy. However, entire Khoe and Kordofanian are endangered families and there are eight endangered isolates.

Sava (2003:171-187) in his paper, “Ongota (Birale), A Moribund Language of Southwest Ethiopia”, discusses the sociolinguistic situation of Ongota and presents some of its elementary features. Ongota is an SVO language in which independent subject pronouns can optionally appear. Because of some socio-economic reasons, Ongota is in an advanced

process of extinction, and the language hasn't been taught to children for two generations and today only eight elders speak it. Almost all Ongota speakers are switching to Ts'amakko language and today the language is almost dead, and so the need of the hour is to document it before it gets extinct altogether.

Haruva (2003:189-213) in his paper, "An Endangered Language: the Gurdung language of the Southern Bauchi Area, Nigeria", gives an account of what is contributing Gurdung people to adopt the language of another group. Gurdung has been largely replaced by Hausa since the Jihad in the late 18th century. He traces their history and describes some of the factors which led to the assimilation and language shift among the Gurdung people. He discusses the pre and post Jihad factors that led to the language shift. However, learned Gurdung people have developed Gurdung language association, and language is being taught formally, which can be seen as a positive sign.

Steenwijk (2003:215-226) discusses about the Resian language, which is traditionally spoken by the inhabitants of two Alpine valleys in the autonomous region of Friuli- Venezia Giulia who lives near the border with Slovenia. Linguistically, Resian speaking area is surrounded by Friulian, Italian and Slovene. Steenwijk says that within the European context, the existence of a language depends on the existence of a written form, and only a dozen or two speakers use it regularly in written form.

Janse and Tol's (2003) anthology "*Language Death and Language Maintenance: Theoretical, Practical and Descriptive Approaches*", is a good collection of papers on endangered languages focusing on the Eastern hemisphere. The book provides a general awareness about the situation of the languages that are discussed in the respective papers among linguists/ scholars. As the loss of any language is an irrevocable loss for all humanity, for each and every language embodies the unique cultural and historical wisdom of a people, the need of the hour is to take steps to preserve those languages that are faced with the threat

of extinction. And the book provides a good overview of languages that are on their journey of extinction, and so a responsible researcher/ scholar can pick any of those languages and take steps or provide an extending help in preserving the language and also create general awareness among the speakers of those languages and help the language from totally disappearing from the planet. Thus, the book with a total collection of twelve papers can be a light bearer to the languages that are discussed in the concerned papers.

Brenzinger and Graaf (2009) in their paper, ‘Documenting Endangered Languages and Maintaining Language Diversity’, made selected case studies of endangered languages and goes on to talk about the importance of language documentation.

They are of the view that the elementary duty for the linguists is research on the accumulation of data from endangered languages. Linguists can help in preserving the language data by documenting the language. Nevertheless, it is the members of the speech community whether they retain the language or give up.

The 31st session of the UNESCO General Conference held in October 2001 recognized a relationship between biodiversity, cultural diversity and linguistic diversity. Brenzinger and Graaf in their paper cite the UNESCO's action plan which recommends the member states, in connection with speaker communities, take up steps to make sure:

- Carrying on the linguistic diversity of humanity and extending assistance to expression, formation, and spreading of the significant possible number of languages;
- Inspiring linguistic diversity at all levels wherever possible, and encouraging the learning of several languages from the youngest age;
- Assimilating traditional teachings into the education process with the aim of protecting and making full use of culturally appropriate methods of communication and transmission of knowledge and with the consent of the speaker communities

provide universal access to information in the public domain through global network and thereby promote linguistic diversity.

Brenzinger and Graaf (2009) are of the view that “language endangerment may be primarily caused by external forces which may be in the form of cultural, religious, economic, educational or military subjugation. However, it may also be caused by internal forces such as the community's negative attitude towards their language”. They made selected case studies to spotlight some of the indispensable matters central to language documentation and maintenance, such as language policies, the role of education, records and archives of endangered and extinct languages, and also the foundation of the written system. The case study includes /Xam, a Southern Khoisan language spoken by one of the hunter-gatherer communities of Southern Africa, commonly referred to as San. The colonial war against the /Xam led to the extinction of /Xam identity and their language. /Xam is an extinct language today and is known only through language documents. Ainu people of Japan were oppressed and exploited by the Japanese intruders during the Meiji era with the government policy of assimilation. As a result, the Ainu language together with most aspects of traditional Ainu life disappeared within a couple of generations. Today less than fewer speakers are proficient in Ainu language according to some scholars working on that language. Nivkh is an isolated language spoken in Russia by a few hundred mainly older people. The younger generation has some inactive proficiency of the language but the youngest generation does not know the language. Two among the three Frisian languages are endangered, and language policies differ extensively in the Netherlands and Germany, where these languages are spoken. The last case study discusses aspects of the Amazigh language situation in Northern Africa. While the Amazigh languages have vanished without documentation, others are on the threshold of disappearance and will most disappear soon.

They concluded their paper with a challenge that “the speech communities of endangered languages, linguists, policymakers and language activists have a long-term task to accomplish in order to develop effective and viable strategies for sustaining the world's endangered languages”.

Existing research and literary works in Sonowal Kachari: Although the linguistic work across the world has bloomed into a significant shape, it is very saddening to mention that no major work has been done in Sonowal Kachari to preserve the language. There is no in-depth study on the language and no major research work has been carried out on the language. In a mouthpiece of Sonowal Kachari Jatiya Parishad, *Sonowal Darpan*, J. C. Hazarika wrote an article entitled, "Sonowal Kachari luptoprai bhasa udharor prahongikota aru iyar prayujoniyota", (The relevance and its importance of rescuing the nearly extinct language, Sonowal Kachari) where he tries to explain the importance of saving a language and how Sonowal Kachari is on the verge of extinction and list some few words which according to him are Sonowal Kachari words. Also, in the mouthpiece of Bodo Sahitya Sabha, *The Bodo*, 38th Issue 2013, B. Basumatary in an article, “Sonowal arw Bodo rawni gwrwbtha nagirnanwi”, (In search of similarity between Sonowal and Bodo) makes a comparison of some Bodo words and Sonowal Kachari words. N. Kachari, in the chapter, “Sonowal Kachari hokolor Bhasa” (The language of Sonowal Kacharis) of his book *Sonowal Kachari Samaj-Sanskriti aru Bhasar Parishay* (An Introduction to the Socio- Culture and Language of the Sonowal Kacharis), presents a collection of some Sonowal Kachari words. Thus, it can be said that those works are not a depth studies and to say that no serious research work has been carried out on the language or no major steps are being taken to preserve the language would not be an exaggeration.

CHAPTER- 3

METHODOLOGY

3.1. The Language Reclamation and Documentation Approach

The purpose of language reclamation is to endow an opportunity to the original speakers of the language to once again demonstrate themselves in their own languages. It requires an effort by the members of the community themselves to claim their rights and a desire to speak their heritage languages. According to McCarty & Nicholas (106: 2014) “Language reclamation includes revival of a language no longer spoken as a first language, revitalization of a language already in use, and reversal of language shift (RLS), a term popularized by Joshua Fishman (1991) to describe the reengineering of social supports for intergenerational mother tongue transmission”.

Language reclamation as defined by Amery (2016:19) is "an attempt to relearn a language from material recorded in another era when the language was spoken". The language reclamation procedure employs a variety of linguistic techniques to reclaim, repucerate, piece together, transform and develop the language into a form efficient of being releartnt and used for a range of contemporary purposes. The language reclamation outlook uses language materials, fundamentally in the form of vocabularies, grammars, and texts obtained from a variety of historical sources, as the basis of a spoken language taught and learnt in the contemporary context. According to Amery (2016:32), “language reclamation as a linguistic process commences with discovering and recognizing the etymology of the language. It is judicious to set about by evaluating what is still known within the community and associating those with the most knowledge of the language and culture”. He also states that "Philology is a dominant methodology underpinning language reclamation" (2016:34) and goes on to assert that philological procedures furnish the apparatus to appraise and elucidate historical

materials. This is the preliminary work that must be carried out before applying the techniques provided by comparative and historical linguistics. Philological procedures include an examination of the written sources for internal consistency. In the context of language reclamation, where a particular language has remained passive for an increased period of time, the exigency for vocabulary to talk about regular day-to-day objects and notions that people wish to communicate is intensified.

"Language documentation is concerned with the methods, tools, and theoretical underpinnings for compiling a representative and lasting multipurpose record of a natural language or one of its varieties. It is a rapidly emerging new field in linguistics and related disciplines working with little-known speech communities". (Himmelman, Gippert and Mosel 2006: v).

Himmelman (2006:15) identifies the following as new features of documentary linguistics:

- *Focus on primary data*- One of the important objectives of language documentation is to collect and analyze a large amount of primary data and make it available for a large group of people.
- *Explicit concern for accountability*- Considerable care should be taken to make the evaluation of the quality of the primary data possible which in turn makes the field situation transparent and all the documents are escorted by metadata.
- *Concern for long-term storage and presentation of primary data*- language documentation should focus on the quality of the recordings of the data with utmost care in order to make the documented materials available into the distant future for potential users.
- *Work in interdisciplinary teams*- A truly comprehensive language documentation work is not restricted to linguists alone and requires a team of experts from multiple disciplines.

- *Close cooperation with and distinct involvement of the speech community-* Language documentation requires collaborative and active work of the speech community both as co-researchers and producers of language materials.

A perspective in Malinowski's approach to the study of language specifically is that "A listener needs to be informed about the situation in which [certain] words were spoken. He would need to have them placed in their proper setting of native culture". In other words, language should be analyzed together with the indigenous culture and environment in which it is used. (Malinowski 1923, in Duranti 1997:216). Senft (2009:216) cites the following three guidelines which Malinowski suggested that the goal of ethnographic fieldworkers must be:

- *The organization of the tribe and the anatomy of its culture must be recorded in a firm, clear outline. The method of concrete, statistical documentation is the means through which such an outline has to be given.*
- *Within this frame, the imponderables of actual life, and the type of behaviour have to be filled in. They have to be collected through minute, detailed observations, in the form of some sort of ethnographic diary, made possible by close contact with native life.*
- *A collection of ethnographic statements, characteristic narratives, typical utterances, items of folklore and magical formulae has to be given as a corpus inscriptionum, as documents of native mentality.*

3.2. Scope of the study

The present study is an attempt to collect the surviving Sonowal Kachari vocabularies and make them available to a larger audience. As the reclamation of a language can provide an empirical basis for a wider range of activities, the present study was conducted with an

utmost attempt to reflect the Sonowal Kachari culture and extract the vocabularies incorporated in their speeches and day to day conversations. The documentation of a language is aimed at producing the most comprehensive record of linguistics practices possible, and so for the communities who have lost their languages or whose language is seriously endangered, the documentation ideally provides all the information they need to revitalize it. So, the present study provides the word list and the cultural activities prevalent in the Sonowal Kachari society.

3.3. Objectives of the study

The objectives of the present study are as follows:

- The area of research I am concerned about here is an attempt to collect and preserve the surviving Sonowal Kachari vocabularies so that it will pave a way to retrieve the language.
- To check some of the important domains of language usages where the lexicon of these domains are still being used or replaced by their Assamese counterparts.
- To study the cultural patterns by studying their social repertoire, divisions of society, living patterns, housing and settlement pattern, religion, festivity, etc. and how they are encoded in the language.
- To find out if the Sonowal Kacharis have some similarities in their language with other Tibeto-Burman languages like Bodo and Dimasa.

The analyses of these concerns will bring out the relevant Ethnolinguistic information of Sonowal Kachari community from a sociolinguistic perspective.

In the present scenario where languages are dying at the present rate, it is very essential to document the surviving endangered languages before it is too late that the language gets

blotted out from the surface earth. Each language is very important as it embodies a huge knowledge in it and once the language dies the knowledge dies along with the language which is unique to that particular language alone. So, with these points in mind, the present research was conducted to document whatever surviving vocabularies can be found in the Sonowal Kachari language and their unique cultural practices so that they can be preserved to posterity.

3.4. Duration of the fieldwork

Fieldwork for the present research study was conducted in Sivasagar, Tinsukia, Dhemaji and Dibrugarh districts of Assam which is located in the upper part of Assam in the North-Eastern part of India. The researcher went to different areas of the community in order to interact with the maximum number of people to gather the maximum number of data possible.

The fieldwork portion of the research was carried out in two years. The researcher made an initial exploratory visit to Sivasagar district in 2016. The data collection took place in different phases. In the first phase, it took the researcher some time to build a good rapport with the informants and to get culturally immersed with them in order to know their set-up in a better way.

In the second phase, after the initial orientation of the research period the researcher followed a more systematic methodology by participatory observation, conducting interviews, recording events etc. The second phase of the data collection was done in the districts of Dhemaji, Dibrugarh and Tinsukia districts of Assam. The maximum number of data was collected successfully in 2017, in the second phase of the data collection where the researcher was able to get into contact with the three main informants of her data.

3.5. Process of Data Collection

The actual process of the data collection and subsequent interpretation and presentation of data took place in the following steps.

3.5.1. Preparation for the Fieldwork

Before conducting the research, the researcher had done some pre-fieldwork preparation involving the following steps:

3.5.1.1. Pilot Survey

Before going for the actual proper fieldwork, the researcher conducted a pilot survey of the community in the district of Sivasagar in order to have indigenous knowledge about the community and their social setup. The main purpose behind conducting the pilot study was to understand the nature and temperament of the people which later helped the researcher in selecting the suitable informant (key informant selection). It also helped the researcher in recognizing the needs of various gadgets, aids and devices required for the survey. As before going for the actual full-fledged fieldwork, it is very essential to have a good knowledge of the community, it is very essential to go for a pilot study where the researcher can build a good rapport with the community. And it proved to be quite a very successful step in conducting the present research work.

3.5.1.2. Information collection

The researcher conducted a survey of the area and collected information regarding basic demographic data such as age, occupation, marital status, and household composition. Before going for the fieldwork, the researcher collected the information that the Sonowal Kacharis are one of the indigenous ethnic groups of the North-Eastern part of India and they belong to the Mongoloid race of people. They are predominantly found in the districts of Lakhimpur, Dhemaji, Tinsukia, Dibrugarh, Sibsagar, Golaghat and Jorhat of Upper Assam.

The total population of the areas under Sonowal Kachari Autonomous Council jurisdiction, which comprises 450 villages according to the Survey of India Census Report, 2001, is about 2,35,881³.

3.5.1.3. Mapping

Another data gathering tool used by the researcher in the early stages of fieldwork is ethnographic mapping. It is an attempt to locate people, material culture, and environmental features in space. The researcher was interested in mapping where people live, where they pasture their livestock, where the various public and private building is located, how people divide up their land, and how the people position themselves in relation to environmental features.

3.5.2. Data Collection

The research techniques employed by the researcher to collect data for the present research include:

3.5.2.1. Participant-observation

One of the techniques employed in collecting data for the present study is participant-observation. It is very important for a researcher to study the people in their natural socio-cultural settings by means of a direct face-to-face interaction and participating in different activities of the community with the aim of understanding different ways of life from a native or indigenous point of view. By participating actively in various cultural activities in various socio-cultural activities it is easier for a researcher to get immersed in the local culture.

In a community where the people don't speak their language anymore, it is very difficult to extract words of that language from its speakers. So, in a situation like this interview technique alone is not sufficient at all to extract the necessary data required. Thus,

³https://censusindia.gov.in/Tables_Published/SCST/dh_st_assam.pdf

in order to extract some words in that language in a natural setting, the participant observation technique was employed. By participating in various religious activities and also by going to the *Naam ghar*, (community prayer house) the researcher got an immense opportunity to interact with the maximum number of older people and in the process record all the conversations in the voice recorder without the knowledge of the participants and in the process, the researcher could extract some of the vocabularies of the language which cannot be heard among the younger generation speech anymore. These vocabularies which when asked consciously to the speakers may not have come out of their speech, which they spontaneously uttered unconsciously. Thus, the participant observation technique proved to be a very important technique in the present research work.

3.5.2.2. Interview technique

In addition to participant observation, the interview technique was also employed to elicit data from the community. This technique helped in eliciting information about their belief systems, certain aspects of folk-customs, storytelling, their ethnolinguistics profile, etc. The information was collected mainly by conducting personal interviews with the members of the Sonowal Kachari community, all of whom were older people. The main informants to be interviewed were:

- Nandeswar Kachari (63 years) from Silapathar of Dhemaji district, a retired professor from the Department of Assamese of Sipajhar Government College.
- Bhaben Sonowal (71 years) from 2 No. Silagaon village of Dhemaji district, a cultivator.
- Brajen Baglari (51 years) of 2 No. Silagaon village of Dhemaji district is a teacher of Arunodoi Jonojati M.E. School.

- Jagat Hazarika (56 years) from Dirak village of Tinsukia district is a lower primary school teacher.
- Khirod Chandra Das (61 years) from Namrup of Dibrugarh district, a retired serviceman.

The researcher has used the Scheme for Protection and Preservation of Endangered Languages (SPPEL) questionnaire designed by Central Institute of Indian Languages, Mysuru for acquiring ethnolinguistics data. The ethnolinguistics section aims to investigate and document the indigenous belief system, knowledge and culture of the community. Some of the few samples' questionnaires employed by the researcher to collect data in various domains while interviewing the respondents are:

1. Personal profile of the informant

- Name of the respondent
- Sex
- Age
- Education
- Occupation
- Residence
- Informant's birthplace
- Marital status
- Parent's first language

2. Stories, narration and folklore

- How long have the respondent been living in the place.

- Stories about the origin of the community.
- Lullabies.

3. Festivals

- List of the festivals celebrated in the community.
- What preparations are done for these festivals.
- Who performs the rituals, who can participate and who cannot.
- What type of attire and costumes are worn by the priests and common folks during the festivals.
- Types of food and drinks served during the festivity and if there is any cultural significance.

4. Worship and rituals

- If the community have any specific belief system.
- If they offer sacrifices. If yes, what is the process, who performs the sacrifice and where it is performed.

5. Life cycle and related issues

- Birth ceremony
- Naming ceremony
- Puberty
- Marriage
- Re- marriage
- Death/ funeral ceremony

6. Settlement and housing system

- Position of each hut and who is occupying which hut (size, elevation, situation).
- Materials used for building the hut/ house (wood, bamboo, grass, hay, bricks, etc.).
- Structure of the hut/ house.
- The shape of the roof and material used.
- Shape and facing of the doors and windows and the logic.
- What is the economic condition of the community.

7. Games and entertainment

- Native games available, playing strategies, occasion/ time/ season for playing.
- Available means of entertainment.

8. Attire, adornments and related

- Traditional attire of men and women.
- Attire used during festivals, marriages.
- Who makes the dresses or ornaments in the community.
- Different ornaments of the community and if it has any cultural significance.

All the interviews conducted were recorded in the Sony MP3 SO-ICD-PX440 voice recorder.

3.5.2.3. Secondary sources

Apart from the primary method i.e. participant observation and interview techniques employed in accumulating the data, secondary methods were also used in collecting the

required data. Different books, study materials, journals whichever is available have been consulted. Moreover, various online articles, books, journals, periodicals have also been consulted for the theoretical part of this research work.

3.6. Summary

In this chapter, methods employed in this study were discussed. Participant observation, interviews were used as the main instruments for collecting the data for the research, while secondary sources like journals, books, magazines, etc. were also used as complementary methods. After completing the fieldwork, the data was analyzed carefully.

CHAPTER- 4

SOCIAL STRUCTURE AS ENCODED IN THE LANGUAGE

4.0. Introduction

Social structure “is the patterned social arrangements in society that are both emergent from and determinant of the actions of the individuals. On the macro scale, social structure is the system of socioeconomic stratification (e.g., the class structure), social institutions, or, other patterned relations between large social groups. It is the structure of social network ties between individuals or organizations. On the micro-scale, it can be the way norms shape the behaviour of individuals within the social system”.⁴ It can be said as the idiosyncratic, substantial array of institutions where human beings fraternize and inhibit cooperatively in a society.

Brown (1940: 3) use the term social structure to refer to all social relations of person to person, unlike some other anthropologists who used the term to refer only to persistent social groups which retain their continuity, their identity as individual groups, despite changes in their membership such as nations, tribes and clans. He also includes under social structure the differentiation of individuals as of classes by their social role. According to him, “in the study of social structure, the concrete reality with which we are concerned is the set of actually existing relations, at a given moment of time, which links together certain human beings”. (Brown 1940:4)

According to Karl Mannheim "Social structure refers to the web of interacting social forces from which have arisen the various modes of observing and thinking. Social structure is an abstract and intangible phenomenon, individuals are the units of social structure. These

⁴ https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_structure

institutions and associations are interrelated in a particular arrangement and thus create the pattern of social structure. It refers to the external aspect of society which is relatively stable as compared to the functional and internal aspects of society. Social structure is a living structure which is created, maintained for a time and changes".⁵

The social structure incorporates all the social structures in which the coterie is braided together. It comprehends all the rituals and heritage, credence and perspective of the community members, their conception about heterogeneous societal and ethnic standards. Social profiles include customs and traditions through which social interaction are studied among the faction of people living together between the community members and outsiders. Social interaction is an acknowledgement of the participant in miscellaneous social relations. The paradigm of communication of a linguistic mass is mirrored in the social interactions.

Studies of social structure endeavour to illustrate subjects such as amalgamation and trends in disparity. In their endeavour to study social structure, sociologists scrutinize organizations, social categories which may include age groups or rates for example crimes or births. According to Ginsberg, "the study of social structure is concerned with the principle form of social organization i.e. types of groups, associations and institutions and the complex of these which constitute these societies".⁶

As stated by Alexander (2016:29) "Social structure is sometimes defined simply as patterned social relations- those regular and repetitive aspects of the interactions between the members of a given social entity. In any society, social life is structured along the dimensions of time and space. Specific social activities take place at specific times, and time is divided into periods that are connected with the rhythms of social life- the routines of the day, the month, and the year. Specific social activities are also organized at specific places; particular

⁵<https://www.sociologyguide.com/social-structure/index.php>

⁶<http://www.sociologydiscussion.com/social-structure/social-structure-meaning-elements-and-types/2224>

places, for instance, are designated for such activities as working, worshipping, eating, and sleeping. Territorial boundaries delineate these places and are defined by rules of property that determine the use and possession of scarce goods. Additionally, in any society, there is a more or less regular division of labour. Furthermore, in any society, there are arrangements within the structure for sexual reproduction and the care and education of the young. These arrangements take the form partly of kinship and marriage relations. Finally, systems of symbolic communication, particularly language, structure the interactions between the members of any society".

In the view of Ferraro & Susan (2014:296), "It is important to bear in mind that stratified societies cannot all be divided neatly into either class or caste systems. In general, class systems are open to the extent that they are based on achieved statuses and permit considerable social mobility, and caste systems tend to be closed to the extent that they are based on ascribed statuses and allow little or no social mobility, either up or down. Having made these conceptual distinctions, however, we must also realize that in the real world, class and caste systems overlap. In other words, most stratified societies contain elements of both class and caste. Rather than think in either-or terms, we should think in terms of polarities or the ends of a continuum. There are no societies that have either absolute mobility (perfect class systems) or a total lack of mobility (perfect caste systems). Rather all societies found in the world fall somewhere between these two ideal polarities, depending on the amount of social mobility permitted in each".

4.1. The Objective

The objective here is to examine the division of Sonowal Kachari society, how the society is interwoven, and the way it is organized, its inner functioning as well as its orientation. To look into the occupation of the people, their housing patterns, family

structure, social traditions, the belief system of the community etc. and how these customs are encoded in the language.

4.2. Structure of the Society and Family

The traditional structure of Sonowal Kachari is basically a joint family. But due to changing social structure, the nuclear family is slowly becoming prominent among them. The Sonowal Kachari is a patriarchal, patrilocal and patrilineal society. The eldest son of the family runs the house and after the death of the father the properties are divided equally among the sons.

The family tree of the Sonowal Kachari includes seven major *khels* (clans) which are divided into fourteen *bongshas* (sub-clans) and the *bongshas* are again sub-divided into several *pariyals* (family).

The name of the seven *khels* (clans) as mentioned in the *Haidang Geet*, one of the oldest folk songs of the Sonowal Kacharis are:

1. *Ujani Kusia*: *Ujani* means the upper part of a stream and *Kusia* may be the name of the area. Probably those groups of people who were residing in the upper part of the stream in Kusia were known as *Ujani Kusia*.
2. *Namoni Kusia*: *Namoni* means the lower part of a river or a country. So, those groups of people who were settling in the lower part of Kusia probably got the name *Namoni Kusia*.
3. *Amorabomia*: Those groups of people who settled in the region of Amora probably got the name *Amorabomia*.
4. *Tipomia*: Those groups of people who settled in the region of Tipomia probably got the name *Tipomia*.

5. *Siripuria*: Those groups of people who settled near Sripuria might have got the name *Siripuria*.
6. *Dhuliyal*: These groups of people might have also got their name from the place of settlement like any other clans, which is still unclear to the researcher.
7. *Balikhitiari*: *Bali* means ‘sand’ and *ari* means ‘group’ in Bodo. Probably those groups of Sonowals who settled in the sandy areas were known as *Balikhitiari*.

It is said that although Haidang Geet mentions the name of seven clans only three clans, namely: *Ujani Kusia*, *Namoni Kusia* and *Dhuliyal* are accepted by common consent (Kachari 2011: 51, 52).

From the history prevalent among the Sonowal Kacharis it is known that this group of people established a strong and powerful Halali kingdom in the region of Sadiya. And to rule the kingdom in a healthy way fourteen people were assigned fourteen positions to look into the administration of the kingdom. The fourteen positions that were assigned to fourteen people were:

1. *Madanial*: *Madanial* belongs to the royal minister group.
2. *Manikial*: *Manikial* belongs to the group of king’s officer.
3. *Hogral*: *Hogral* belongs to the king's group.
4. *Muktal*: *Muktal* guards king.
5. *Ezmal (Ehmal)*: *Ezmal* is a dry land warrior.
6. *Phormal*: *Phormal* is the deity's doorkeeper.
7. *Horu Hazual*: *Horu Hazual* is one who guards the army general.
8. *Bor Hazual*: *Bor Hazual* is the leader of an army.
9. *Lathial*: *Lathial* belongs to the hunter group of people.
10. *Sotiyal*: *Sotiyal* spy the foreigners.

11. *Kumral*: *Kumral* is the doorkeeper of the palace gate.

12. *Bormal (Athuwal)*: *Bormal* is the fortune- teller.

13. *Tekiyal*: *Tekiyal* is also spy.

14. *Diñjal*: *Diñjal* is a boat warrior

These arrangements of the position assigned to the people to look into the administration of the kingdom later with the passing time became the present *bongshas* (sub-clans) of the Sonowal Kachari society. This provision of arrangement of the clan system of the Sonowal Kacharis is a well-arranged provision which knitted their society together. These sub-clans are further divided into several *pariyals* (families). Around six to seven *pariyals* (families) together form a sub-clan. The *pariyals* (families) prevalent among the Sonowal Kacharis are as follows. In a few cases, the meanings of these words could be ascertained and the others are left for future investigation:

1. *Agari*: *Agali* in Assamese means the player in the front row who takes part in the boat rowing. Probably those groups of people who took part in the boat rowing occupying the front row were grouped under the family (*pariyal*) of *Agari*.
2. *Akhuari*: *Akhol-Akhu* in Bodo means ‘character’ and *ari* means ‘group’. Probably those groups of people who were known for their characters were grouped under the family (*pariyal*) of *Akhuari*.
3. *Akolhoriari*: The word *Akolhori* in Assamese means solitary or living alone. Probably those groups of people who were living a little excluded from the main group were grouped under the family (*pariyal*) of *Akolhoriari*.
4. *Baithoari*: Lord Shiva is addressed by the Sonowal Kacharis as *Baitho*. Probably those groups of people who were an ardent follower of god *Baitho*, or who took

the forefront position in worshipping god *Baitho* were grouped under the *pariyal* (family) of *Baithoari*.

5. *Balikhithiari*: *Bala* in Bodo and *bali* in Assamese means ‘sand’. Probably those groups of people who were residing in the sandy areas were known as *Balikhithiari*.
6. *Borghiari*: They must have got their *pariyal* (family) name from the *Bargayari* of the Bodo clan.
7. *Boglari*: This group might have got their *pariyal* (family) name from the *Baglari* of the Bodo clan.
8. *Borgiari*: The *Borgiari* might have got their *pariyal* (family) name from the *Borgoyari* of the Bodo clan.
9. *Demari*: They might have got their *pariyal* (family) name from the *Daimari* of the Bodo clan.
10. *Hazari*: *Hazari* must have derived from the *Hazoari* of the Bodo clan.
11. *Swargiari*: They might be the same group of the *Swargiari* of the Bodo clan.
12. *Bormajhiri*: *Bor* in Assamese means ‘big’ and *majhi* means ‘boatman’. Probably the superior categories of the boatmen of the Sonowal Kachari were grouped under the category of *Bormajhi* and got their family name *Bormajhiri*.
13. *Horumajhiri*: *Horu* in Assamese means ‘small’ and *majhi* means ‘boatman’. Probably the inferior categories of the boatmen of the Sonowal Kachari were grouped under the category of *Horumajhi* and got their family name *Horumajhiri*.
14. *Bailunguri*: *Bailung* means a priest. Probably those groups of Sonowals who belonged to the priestly class were group under the family of *Bailunguri*.
15. *Baolari*
16. *Betari*
17. *Besnari*
18. *Burha Mudari*
19. *Soitari*
20. *Dekanuwari*
21. *Dekari*
22. *Ahaori*
23. *Dhadumiari*

24. Dhaknari	25. Dhemkari	26. Daphlari
27. Ezlari	28. Gaokhari	29. Gebrari
30. Gherari	32. Gorporari	32. Ghuniari
33. Ghungiari	34. Ghotari	35. Hagun Murari
36. Hatkhuwari	37. Jarlogari	38. Jhoprari
39. Kenari	40. Kolakhuwari	41. Kekuari
42. Keontari	43. Khotari	44. Kharghiari
45. Kheprari	46. Kshagunmari	47. Kolari
48. Kshadiari	49. Kumrari	50. Loguwari
51. Lалуwari	52. Lohari	53. Lunpuriari
54. Ledhari	55. Lалуwari	56. Lokhanari
57. Makrari	58. Manari	59. Meglari
60. Matiari	61. Mukhrari	62. Nezkatarari
63. Pithari	64. Phalari	65. Pedari
66. Pingrari	67. Pikari	68. Putkari
69. Tepari	70. Titari	71. Tipamiari
72. Teziari	73. Tarari	74. Ujhari
75. Dakuwali	76. Dhawali	77. Dhenkiali
78. Dhokuwali	79. Kedali	80. Khatuwali
81. Muktali	82. Phatowali	83. Tekiyali
84. Bagri	85. Duliri	86. Ganthiri
87. Guiri	88. Hagumiri	89. Jhingiri
90. Khaniri	91. Langiri	92. Lapitri
93. Likamiri	94. Tangiri	95. Mudori
96. Nakori	97. Soruri	98. Thakuri

99. <i>Tuhuri</i>	100. <i>Hakuli</i>	101. <i>Selengi</i>
102. <i>Lerangi</i>	103. <i>Gelepi</i>	104. <i>Gezepi</i>
105. <i>Turuki</i>	106. <i>Dhadumial</i>	107. <i>Polashi</i>
108. <i>Makudumi</i>		

It can be seen that most of the family name ends in ‘*ari*,’ ‘*ali*,’ ‘*iri*,’ ‘*ori*’ and ‘*uri*.’ The fact that the Sonowal Kacharis are one of the branches of the Bodo Kacharis of Assam can be verified from their family names as most of them ends in ‘*ari*.’ *Ari* in Bodo means ‘group’. It is possible that ‘*ari*’ turned into ‘*ali*’ or ‘*iri*’ or ‘*ori*’ or ‘*uri*,’ which all may mean ‘group’. For example, *agali* in Assamese, which means the player in the front row who takes part in the boat rowing, becomes *agari* in Sonowal Kachari. Likewise, it is possible that *ari* in Bodo which means group in Bodo turned into *ali* in Sonowal Kachari.

Some surnames of the Bodos include *Baglari*, *Daimari*, *Hajoari*, *Swargiari* and *Bargayari* or *Borgoyari*. Such similar family names are found among the Sonowal Kacharis also. In Bodo, *daima* means ‘water’ and *ari* means ‘group.’ Those groups of people who lived by the bank of rivers and made their livelihood by fishing got their names as *Daimari* and probably this group of people in Sonowal Kachari are the *Demari*. The word *bagla* refers to bark of a banana or any tree and *ari* refers to people (Basumatary 2017: 57). Those groups of people who were entrusted with the task of collecting the bark of bananas or trees for making huts for the purpose of ritualistic performances got the name *Baglari* and eventually, those groups of people in Sonowal Kachari were called as *Boglari*. *Hazari* must have come from *Hajoari* of the Bodos. *Hajo* means ‘hill’ and it is probable that those groups of people who made their dwelling in the hilly regions might have been called as *Hajoary* and probably those groups of people in Sonowal Kachari were called as *Hazari*. *Swargiaris* were the group of people who were entrusted with the task of performing sacred works relating to the purification of guilty activities done by human beings (Basumatary 2017: 57). *Swarga* means

‘heaven’ and *ari* means ‘group.’ The *Swargiaris* were regarded as heavenly folk and the priests were selected from this group of people. The *Bargayari* Clan in Bodo community is derived from the word *bwr gabnai*, *bwr* means ‘blessings’ and *gabnai* means ‘cry’ or ‘pray’. Earlier the members of this clan were engaged as *Douris* (priests) and have to pray before the god *Bathou Bwrai* (Lord Shiba) for the blessings. These groups of people were also called *Borgoyari*, because they were strong and courageous. There is a story that while cooking food in the jungle, when the enemies attacked them some people fled leaving the food half - cooked but the people of this group did not leave and decided to face the enemies. So, they might be called *Bargayari* for that reason. Probably some people from those groups got separated from the Bodo community and those groups of people in Sonowal Kachari were grouped under the *pariyals* (families) of *Borghiari* and *Borgiari*.

4.3. Dwelling and Housing Pattern

Even before acquiring the name Sonowal, this group of Kacharis were residing in Upper Assam in Kandilya region of Sadiya. In Kachari language that kingdom was known as Halali. Books like *Ahom 'or Din* (1981) (Days of Ahom), *Kachari Buranji* (1936) (History of the Kacharis), *Deodhai Asom Buranji* (1932) (Deodhai Assam History) mentions the settlement of the Kacharis in the region of Sadiya. The boundary of the kingdom extended from Sadiya in the east, Dikhowmukh in the west to Kenduguri in the south. It is assumed that those groups of Kacharis are the present-day Sonowal Kacharis.

The *Husori Geet* (a folk song sung by people going in procession from house to house playing drums during Bihu festival) of the Sonowal Kachari mentions the following custom regarding the construction of the house:

<i>bali</i>	<i>mati</i>	<i>hu</i>	<i>b^hornɔ</i>
sand	soil	prefix signifying goodness	colour
good colourful soil and land			

mrityu-k zoi zoi
 death- ACC. victory victory
 victory over death

pub-e b^horal, passim goral
 east-NOM granary west cowshed
 granary in the east and cowshed in the west

uttor-e soru, dak^hin goru
 north-NOM cooking place south cow
 to the north cooking place and to the south cow

bari-t tamul pan
 garden-LOC betelnut betel leaf
 in the garden betelnut and betel leaf

nande bande bukuzurai kha-i thak-i-bɔ lage
 happily praise peaceful eat-HAB stay-HAB-FUT need
 should peacefully eat and stay happy

According to this song, the pattern of the construction of the house should be in the following way: granary on the eastern side of the house, the stable should be on the western side, the kitchen should be on the northern side, cowshed should be on the southern side and there should be betel-nut and betel leaf plants all around the house.

The Sonowal Kacharis live in thatched houses that are generally made of either cane or bamboo, or wood and mud. They either use reeds or paddy straw for thatching the roof, bamboo splits or cane for wall and wood or bamboo for pillar. They use a mixture of mud and cow dung for plastering the walls. However, now-a-days because of the scarcity of these natural resources and the recurring cost of repairing the houses and also coping with the

modern living style they have started to build permanent houses of brick, cement, tin, iron, rod, etc. in villages as well. The traditional houses are generally made facing towards the east, i.e. the main door of the house is always kept in the eastern direction. The house consists of three to four rooms. They have a fireplace near the kitchen which is used as a commonplace by all the members of the family, especially during winter. All eating and drinking activities starting from breakfast to dinner are done in this room. They use to make a raised platform with bamboo above the fireplace, which is used for various purposes like drying fish, keeping pieces of firewood, vegetables, etc. Usually, a courtyard or an open space is found in front of the house. A granary in which paddy is stored is placed on the eastern side of the house near the courtyard. Some people keep their domestic animals like pigs, hens, goats, etc. under the raised platform of the granary. Some others build a cowshed on the southern side of the house. On the western side of the house, they make coop- cum- pen for hen, duck, and goat. Some families rear pigs by making pigsty a little far away from their houses. Most of the Sonowal Kachari houses are demarcated by bamboo splits. One of the distinctiveness of Sonowal Kachari houses in the village is that the houses are connected with each other by a small gateway.

The granary of the Sonowal Kachari is worth mentioning. The whole year's production of paddy is stored in the granary. The granary is made of bamboo and is plastered with a mixture of cow dung and mud. The granary is generally respectfully termed as *Lakhimi ghar* (Lakshmi house). After harvesting, the paddy is brought and kept in the granary. The size of the granary depends upon the quantity of land the owner possesses. After cutting the paddy, they make a bundle of at least twelve handfuls of the heap of paddy in a much-secured manner. In the olden days, the older people did it in such a way that it was difficult to pull out even a small heap of the grain easily. It was done in a very organized manner. After storing up the grain in the granary, the granary was opened only in the month of *Fagun* (the eleventh

month of the Assamese calendar, i.e. February- March). In the olden days, there was a very special tradition of taking out the grain from the granary. Grain was not taken out of the granary in the month of *Magh*, i.e., January- February. There was a tradition of burning *saki* (light) the day before taking the grain out from the granary. The entire year's accumulated rice was eaten on the first day only with country beer and fish. It is worth mentioning that there was a traditional way of bringing the harvested paddy at home which was known as *Lakhimi ona* (bringing Lakshmi).

When the harvesting is almost done, approximately six bundles of paddy are left without cutting. When the last bundle of paddy is brought home, the head of the family takes bath, wear neat clothes and go to the paddy field and uproot three bundles of paddy and put it together along with other bundles of paddy and bring home. While coming back from the paddy field, the head of the family utter the following words to the land:

aah ã aah,
 come ye come
 come you come

gɔru kʰuz-e,
 cow footprint-NOM
 footprint of the cow

moho-r kʰuz-e,
 buffalo-GEN footprint-NOM
 buffalo's footprint

kɔt, kenekoi pɔri ase
 where however fall have
 wherever and however it has fallen

aah, aah.

come come

The head woman of the family also takes a small basket and goes to the paddy field and collects the left-out heaps of grain and brings it home. A small portion of the uprooted paddy is kept hanging in the verandah of the house. A new lamp is lighted at the entrance of the granary on that day. Granary is one of the most essential houses of Sonowal Kachari. In the olden days, there were no provisions for threshing out the grain from the heaves by cattle. But in present days, because of various problems, threshing of grain is seen and the grain is stored.

<i>uttor-e</i>	<i>soru,</i>	<i>dak^hin</i>	<i>goru</i>
north-NOM	cooking place	south	cow
to the north cooking place and to the south cow			

<i>bari-t</i>	<i>tamul</i>	<i>pan</i>
garden-LOC	betelnut	betel leaf
in the garden betelnut and leaf		

<i>nande</i>	<i>bande</i>	<i>bukuzurai</i>	<i>k^ha-i</i>	<i>t^hak-i-bɔ</i>	<i>lage</i>
happily	praise	peaceful	eat-HAB	stay-HAB-FUT	need
should peacefully eat and stay happy					

The above-quoted lines signify the house construction procedure of the Sonowal Kacharis which can be found in the 12th stanza of the folk song *Husori Geet*, the meaning of which is that if the granary is constructed in the eastern side, coop-cum-pen for hen, duck, goat in the west, kitchen in the north and cowshed in the south, then the land and property of the family will be abundant. They believe that the main house should be constructed in the direction of north-south. According to the ability of the family a separate house is constructed for the younger members of the family and guests in front of the courtyard. Also, those

families who are financially stable construct *Naam ghor* (a place of worship of the Vaishnavas of Assam) in the courtyard.

4.4. Rituals and Customs

There are certain customs practised by every community of people pertaining to birth and death. In the olden days, it was said that marriage was conducted only with the desire of begetting a son. From birth till death a man must go through several stages of the purification process. Even marriage is considered as one of the orders of purification because only after marriage a man and a woman are acknowledged or approved as a part of the society. And the fruit of honouring the approval of the couple as husband and wife is the subsequent generations. With the expectation that the subsequent generations would be successful in every way and skilful and be a great example to the society, ever since a child is in the womb of the mother various rituals and customs are practised in the name of the conceived child.

4.4.1. Birth Related Customary Acts

Regarding the customs relating to birth, it is worth mentioning that after the daughter-in-law of the family stops having her monthly mensuration periods, the responsibility of the mother-in-law increases. The daughter-in-law is made cautious of several evils. When the wife is pregnant, the husband is forbidden from killing any living beings. It is believed that whatever living being a husband kills while his wife is pregnant, the child acquires the characteristics of that living being. Also, the husband is forbidden from the act of cremation of dead bodies, from hoeing activities and from putting a handle in a knife. It is believed that if the husband performs such activities the wife has to bear acute pain while giving birth to a child. A pregnant woman is forbidden from visiting a family where death has occurred recently. She is also not allowed to go to the neighbour's house in the evening. It is believed that during the dusk the evil spirit roams around and the pregnant woman falls prey to such

spirits. Even the husband is forbidden from entering the bedroom immediately after coming back from outside duties in the evening. Also, it is advised to stay away from activities such as catching fish, hunting, etc. If a family member catches fish and brings home, the pregnant woman is not allowed to see the person or the fish first. Generally, a pregnant woman is advised to keep either a knife or a sickle with her. She is proscribed from sitting in the adjoining areas between the verandah and courtyard. She must abstain from listening to the news of the accident, death, bad news, negative discussion etc. To keep away from the evil spirit an amulet is given to the pregnant woman by the physician.

In some villages, wishing the wellbeing of the pregnant woman, some elderly women of the village gather together and make biscuit out of the mixture of rice flour, sugar, honey and feed her. This is known as *Panchamrut khuuwa* (that is a mixture of five nectars i.e. milk, curd, sugar, ghee and honey) in Sonowal Kachari society. There is no fixed day and date for *Panchamrut khuuwa*. It is done one or two months before the due date according to their convenient time.

When the birth is imminent, the women and midwife look after the activities. If the newborn baby is male, the people who are waiting outside the house is made known that the baby is a boy by making a thrilling sound of good fortune and blessing (known as *manjol urali*). And if the newborn baby is a girl, the wall of the house is stroked to let the people know that the baby is a girl. The umbilical cord of the baby is cut with a knife made of bamboo. The tongue of the newborn is cleaned with the bunch of hair tips of the mother and three drops of *rohi mɔd* (wine) are given in the mouth of the baby as a prasad of God. A necklace made with garlic is put around the neck of the child. It is believed that evil forces cannot harm the child when the garlic is with the baby. After three days of childbirth, the mother is asked to eat cocoyam or papaya cooked with black pepper. It is believed that the mother's milk becomes abundant if the pungent curry which is made of arum plant and black

pepper is eaten on the third day of childbirth. Generally during this time, the mother is not allowed to eat oily food.

The house, at this point in time, is called ceremonial defilement occasioned by the birth of a child. Till the time the umbilical cord of the child dries and falls is known as small ceremonial unclean (*hɔru suwa*). And from that point of time till the ceremonial cleanness is performed is known as big ceremonial unclean (*bor suwa*). The dried-up umbilical cord of the child is kept carefully in a small box.

4.4.2. Rituals of Rebirth

The Sonowal Kacharis believe in the ‘spirit’ or *atma* ‘soul’ and *punar zanam* ‘rebirth.’ When a child is born, it is not known to which caste, religion, race or *gotra* ‘sect’ the new born baby belonged to in his or her previous life. Thus, they believe that the whole family becomes impure with the birth of the baby. They call it *ahusi* ‘unholy’ or *suwa loga* ‘ceremonially unclean.’ The villagers do not dine with the family till the *huchikaran* (purification ceremony) is performed.

Baz uliwa rituals

After the naval cord of the child falls off, *baz* (the outside) *uliwa* (to bring out) ritual is performed as a birth purification ceremony. On the day of *baz uliwa* ceremony, all the clothes of the house are washed and soil dug out from *gohain ghɔr* (*gohain* house, a consecrated place where an idol is ceremonially installed) is brought and the house is cleaned properly. On that day after taking bath the mother of the child salutes or pays homage to the sun and bathes the child and let the child see the sun. Some mothers from the village are called to attend the *baz uliwa* ceremony. During the ceremony, a wooden stool is kept in the courtyard with a new towel over it and a lighted lamp, a bucket of water and a muller where spices are grinded and a straw is kept burning next to it. The mother cleans the child with a

wet towel and by keeping the child on her lap makes three circumambulations around the wooden stool. After that, the child is lifted above a bucket of water and circling the child three times around the bucket of water the mother of the child says, 'don't die by falling in the water'. In the same way, the child is lifted above the burning straw and makes another three rounds around the burning straw, and the mother says to the child, 'don't die by falling in the fire'. After that, the child is made to sleep in the wooden stool and wishing the dangers and adversaries along the way of the child to be removed, takes a branch of berry thorns through the feet of the child and throws it far away. And then the mother of the child salutes the sun and the devotees' shower blessings wishing all good to both the mother and child and concludes the *baz uliwa* ritual.

Suddhi- sabha: ceremony

The *suddhi* (clean, pure) *sabha*: ceremony is held after twenty-one days in the case of a male baby and thirty-one days in the case of a female baby. Until the *suddhi sabha*: ceremony is performed, the father of the child cannot take part in any social activities. It is believed that childbirth brings more defilement to the family rather than the death of a person in the family. The Sonowal Kacharis believe that when a child is born it is not known as to which family and in which religion a child was born in his or her previous birth, so on the day of *suddhi sabha*: the head of the child is shaved and purified and a mantra for including the child into the family/ clan is chanted:

<i>kul</i>	<i>lo</i>	<i>kul</i>	<i>nadi-r</i>	<i>kul</i>	<i>lo</i>
family/clan	take	family/clan	river-GEN	family/clan	take
take the clan of the river					

<i>hɔŋo</i>	<i>lo</i>	<i>hɔŋo</i>	<i>lo</i>	<i>zati-r</i>	<i>hɔŋo</i>	<i>lo</i>
associate with	take	associate with	take	race-GEN	associate with	take
associate with the race						

At the ceremony of *suddhi sabha*: a few devotees are invited to hold *naam kirtan* (chanting of the mantras). The baby is then blessed by the devotees so that the little one from that day becomes a real Kachari.

4.4.3. Death Purification Ritual

After taking birth, one has to die one day which is an eternal truth. One has to embrace death leaving behind this colourful world. The way many rituals are performed at the time of childbirth, in the same way, many rituals are conducted at the time of a person's death. According to the tradition followed in the Sonowal Kachari society, a person is not allowed to die in the main bedroom. If it is known that the person's death is imminent, the person is shifted from the main bedroom of the house to another room. If by any chance a person dies in the main bedroom, the dead body is taken out through the back door. However, if the main bedroom doesn't have a back door, there is a process of cutting the wall of the house and bringing out the dead body. It is believed that if a person is allowed to die inside the main bedroom it becomes ceremonially impure. The dead body is wiped with water or water is sprinkled over the dead body and the body is laid on a bamboo mat. Over the head of the dead body, incense and a lamp are lighted. Milk, water, honey and even money are put inside the mouth of the dead person. The dead body is kept covered with a white cloth. After getting the news of the death of the person, the relatives and villagers come forward for the cremation of the dead body. Also, a messenger is sent to the nearby villages to spread the news of the death of the person. As soon as the news of the death is spread, the villagers and relatives come forward and start making bamboo bier for carrying the dead body and also start collecting the firewood. Before putting the dead body in the bamboo bier, the clothes of the dead body are replaced with new clothes and turmeric is applied all over the body. A handful of grain is taken out of the granary and is placed at the hand of the dead person and is kept back in the granary. This process of putting the grain at the hand of the dead person and

putting it back at the granary is known as *Lakhimi era* (holding back Lakshmi). Before taking the dead body for cremation, a white cloth is hung on the door of the granary because they believe that the *Lakhimi* (Lakshmi) will go away along with the dead person and by doing so they stop the *Lakhimi* from going away with the dead person. The family members pay homage to the dead person before carrying the dead body in the bamboo bier for cremation and the people give their blessings. The dead body is wrapped with a new bamboo mat and kept in the bier. After taking the dead body to the place of cremation, the dead body is placed at the funeral pyre and a ceremonial fire is put on the face of the corpse before lighting the funeral pyre. Generally, the lighting of the funeral pyre is done by the son. But if the deceased person doesn't have a son then, either his/ her brother or nephew performs the task. It is believed that no one should look back towards the place where the dead body was burnt while returning and a branch of thorn is put on the way so that the evil spirit will not follow.

People who go to the cremation ground carrying the dead body usually stay back in the house of the dead person until *tiloni* (a ceremony performed on the third day after death) is performed. As they are considered ceremonially unclean, they do not go back to their own houses. Only on the third day after the *tiloni* ceremony is performed they leave for their own houses. According to their tradition, on the third-day *tiloni*, on the tenth-day *doha* (a ceremony performed on the tenth day after death) and on the thirtieth-day *ka:s* (a ceremony performed on the thirtieth day after death) are performed.

On the day of *tiloni* all the used clothes are washed and left to dry outside under the sun. Bhakats (a devotee of Vishnu) are called for the *tiloni* ceremony and are asked to sit on the mat in the courtyard. The *hanti zol* (sacred water) which is brought from the house of the *Brahma* (the Brahmin) or *Medhi* (an officer appointed by the Gosains, i.e. a religious instructor, of Assam to collect the annual contributions from the disciple) is drunk, the house is made ceremonially clean and the sacred water is sprinkled all around the house. After the

elders of the family drink the *hanti zol* (sacred water) and bow in salutation, the *tiloni* ceremony comes to an end. After eating the prasad of the *tiloni* everyone leaves for their own houses.

Dah diniya: doha:

It is a ceremony performed on the tenth day after the death of a person. There are two ways of performing *dah diniya: doha:*. They are known as *zol pinda* and *stal pinda*. The ceremony which is performed near the river is known as *zol pinda* and the ceremony which is performed in the dry ground is known as *stal pinda*. *Pinda* is a ball of rice made with a mixture of milk, sugar, offered in the name of the deceased person. This ceremony is performed under the counsel of the *Brahma* (the Brahmin) or *Medhi* (an officer appointed by the Gosains, i.e. a religious instructor, of Assam to collect the annual contributions from the disciple). In this ceremony, everyone in the village, relatives, near and dear ones are invited.

For performing *dah diniya: doha:* some auspicious things are required. Some of them are vermilion, a small earthen water jar, black pulse, sesame, milk, honey, sugar, jaggery, curd, mango leaf, a species of a fig tree, tulsi, areca nut and betel leaf, *zaha: saul* (a kind of fragrance rice), banana, peanut, sugarcane, flower, etc.

4.5. Marriage

In Sonowal Kachari society, two types of marriages are performed. They are *tuloni biya:* and *bor biya:*

Tuloni biya: The first marriage is known as *tuloni biya:* or *nuwai tuloni biya:* or small wedding, which is celebrated when a girl reaches the age of puberty.

Bor biya: *Bor biya:* is the real marriage where a couple becomes husband and wife officially.

Nuwai tulɔni biya:

This marriage is performed when a girl reaches the age of puberty and starts her first mensuration cycle. This marriage is celebrated with the same enthusiasm as a real wedding. *Tulɔni biya*: is a ritualistic symbolic wedding that is performed a few days after the girl has her first menstruation and signifies the attainment of womanhood and her coming of age. When the girl first discovers that she has had her first menses she normally tells one of her friends or her mother. From there word would spread to neighbours, close family and provisions would be made to bring her inside the house covered with a *sadar* (veil) on her head so that no one can see her. Once she is inside the house, a bed is made with hay and covered with a sheet. A *diya*: (earthen lamp) is lit on the floor right above where the girl is to put her head, and a bunch of bananas are placed there too. The girl isn't allowed to eat any other food except for fruits and is confined to the bed in the room. No man is allowed in that room, even her father, and she isn't supposed to be touched by anyone. Meanwhile, the family members would visit the nearest astrologer and ask him to chart her stars to find out how many days of confinement the girl has to go through. It can be as short as four days and as long as twenty-one days, depending upon the stars. Parents along with their relatives and neighbours pray to God to give the girl a healthy sexual and reproductive system. Usually, the ritual continues for seven days. During this period the girl is not allowed to see the sun, moon, cows, or any man, even her own father. On the third day, oil is applied on the head of the girl. And on the fourth day, the girl is bathed by the women where a wooden square frame is put over the bathing place. From the fourth day onwards, the girl is allowed to eat food once a day. The day before the wedding, oil is applied again on the head of the girl. On the day of the wedding, before the girl takes bath, the women go to the river to get water. From the place where water would be taken three small boundary lines are made by a bundle of dry grass and are wrapped by a nice thread. After that, a pair of betel nut and betel leaf is offered

and the women start filling the water. While the girl takes bath inside the wooden square frame, she is asked to chew betel nut and spit it out on the wall. After the bath, she is made to wear *mek^hela sadar* (traditional saree of the Assamese people). She is asked to wear whichever colour *mek^hela sadar* the astrologer suggests her to wear. It is worth mentioning that in the *tuloni biya*:, *hok^hi tula* (making an intimate friend) is done. A girl who has already had her mensuration cycle started and is of her own age, *hok^hi* (an intimate friend) is made with that girl.

Bor biya:

In Sonowal Kachari society there are various ways or methods or arrangements of selecting a life partner. There is a maxim in the Sonowal Kachari society which is as follows:

ahum -or sakoloh dumor bae
tumar patolit porisu
zi kora hei.

The meaning of it is that Sonowal Kacharis can marry in any of the methods of marriage prevailing in the Hindu society. However, there are some rigid precepts followed in the society. They can never marry anyone belonging to the same clan. For example, a Nakori family's son can never marry another Nakori family's daughter. If by mistake someone gets married to a spouse of the same clan, then they are punished by the society, e.g. they can be excommunicated, banished, or they may be cut off from the family. Often times they are expelled from the society.

There are eight kinds of marriages that are performed by the diverse community stocks. These are:

1. *Brahma*: This is solemnized based upon the Vedic rites.
2. *Daib^ha*: In this, a girl is offered to the priest.

3. *Arsa*: Marriage is a purchase in which the bride's father normally receives a pair of oxen from the bridegroom.
4. *Kaya* or *Prajapatya*: Here marriage takes place after the proposal is being offered by the would-be bridegroom.
5. *Asura*: Marriage by purchase.
6. *Raksasa*: Marriage by force or capture.
7. *Gand^harb^ha*: Union in secret.
8. *Paisasa*: A secret elopement.

In Sonowal Kachari society mainly four types of marriages can be seen practising. They are:

1. *Bor biya*:
2. *Prazapatya bibah*
3. *Gand^harb^ha bibah*
4. *Paisasa bibah*.

Bor biya: Among all the types of marriages performed by the Sonowal Kacharis, *bor biya*: is the most respectable and excellent arrangement of marriage prevalent in their society. In this type of marriage, the bride's parents search and select a deserving groom for their daughter. If the boy is acceptable and satisfactory from every angle and if there are no family clashes, then the bride's parents fix the boy as the groom for their daughter and go ahead with further arrangements for the wedding. The groom's family too inquiries about the bride's qualities, her character and then comply with the proposal. It is mention-worthy that after the bride's parents select the groom, they don't wait for the bride's consent. In compliance with the social provisions after fixing the suitable couple, they fix the appropriate date for conducting the wedding ceremony. According to the social customs, as a mark of fixing the bride, the

groom's party puts a ring on the finger of the bride. Also, the bride's party reciprocates the positive message by giving *p^hulam gamusa*, (Assamese traditional towel) to the groom.

If it is *bor biya:*, generally, *homa* (offering of the sacred fire) is not done. In this type of marriage, people from the villages, relatives, etc. are invited and *hewa* (humble salutation) is done to the elders and a skilful person gives instruction and conducts the wedding ceremony and the offering of the bride is done. The day before marriage, there is a system of offering presents to the bride from the groom's family which is known as *zuron diya*. After the bride is bid farewell by her family members and taken out of the house, it is believed that the bride should not look backwards. They believe that if the bride looks backwards the property of her parents will go along with her. There are no provisions of dowry among them. Some of the daily essential needs and other things are sent as a token of love to the bride according to the capacity of the bride's parents. But there is no dowry system prevalent in the society. When the groom arrives at his house along with the bride, even before entering the house, either the groom's sister-in-law or his elder sister welcomes them at the gateway. At the courtyard, the groom's younger sister washes the pair of feet of the newly wedded couple. After that, they make *hewa* (salutation) before the granary, an idol and the cowshed. After all the salutations are done, they are asked to put their hands inside the pot which is filled with water and they take out the areca nut, betel leaf and the silver coin which are inside the pot. After that, the bride is taken inside the house and is let to sit on the mat. They bow down in respect before his mother and father and also before the elders, especially his relatives. The bride offers a token of remuneration as a sign of respect to the relatives of the groom.

They also have the provision of conducting *ghor utha* which is the first visit of the bridegroom and the bride to the latter's house after their marriage.

Prazapatya bibah: Here marriage takes place after the proposal is being offered by the would-be bridegroom. According to the social procedures prevalent in the society, both the bride and bridegroom's parents present their approval for the wedding. Skilful guidance, direction and suggestions are given to the couples on how to establish a well-settled home. All the roles and responsibilities of a married couple are taught to them. The well-wishers wish and pray for the couple's happy and wealthy life. Even though *mantrapath* (instruction in reading of the Mantras) is not done in this type of marriage, skilful instructions are presented by a well-experienced elderly person.

In the *Haidan Geet* (a folk song) of the Sonowal Kacharis a very beautiful verse is composed about a daughter-in-law.

<i>sutal</i>	<i>ag-ɔr</i>	<i>bogori</i>	<i>gɔs</i>	<i>pat</i>	<i>hereŋ-reŋ</i>
courtyard	front-GEN	jujube	tree	leaf	thin hole

leaf of the jujube tree in front of the courtyard is thin

<i>b^hal</i>	<i>buli</i>	<i>buwari</i>	<i>an</i>	<i>da:t</i>	<i>hereŋ-hereŋ</i>	<i>reŋ</i>
good	on account of	daughter-in-law	bring	teeth	thin-RED	small hole

brought daughter-in-law thinking her to be a good person but her teeth turned out to be having gaps

The meaning of these lines is that, if a person has teeth like a pomegranate seed, it increases the beauty of the person, in the same way, her pleasing and sweet words add beauty to her character. Brought the daughter-in-law thinking her to be a good woman, but her teeth turned out to be having gaps. It means that some home-related issue gets passed on from the mouth of the daughter-in-law through the gap of her teeth and it becomes the topic of discussion for the neighbours. Through this proverb, an alert is being made about the character of the daughter-in-law.

Gandharbha bibah or paluwai niya bibah: This is a marriage that requires mutual amorous agreement or mutual consent. This type of marriage is very common among the Sonowal Kacharis. After a boy and a girl falls in love wholeheartedly, the boy brings the girl to his home secretly. Here, only after bringing the girl to his home, the opinion for or against the boy's parents is sought. There is a tradition of the boy's guardian visiting the girl's place after three days, which is known as *sur* (thief) *dekha* (seen) *diya* (give) to discuss about the issue. If the girl's parents have a good desire, then they extend *hōrai* (a platter or tray mounted on a leg). If there are no clashes between both the families and if both of them belong to different family clans then, the parents give their approval for this type of marriage. According to the social rules and regulations the couples are received by the society with civility.

Ahurik bibah: This type of marriage is the most inferior category of marriage among all the other marriages. In this type of marriage, a girl is forcibly taken away by the boy. If the boy gets rejected by the girl, sometimes the boy kidnaps the girl and forcibly marries her.

Bidhaba bibah: *Bidhaba bibah* is a widow re-marriage. There is no restriction of widow/ widower re-marriage in Sonowal Kachari society. Except for a person belonging to the same family clan, a widow/ widower can marry anyone and there is no restriction to it.

Burha puha: It is a special puja among the Sonowal Kacharis. One of the prevalent customary acts among them related to marriage is the *burha puha*. Two or three days after the wedding, there is a tradition of conducting a feast at the house of the groom where the bride has to serve the food to all the elderly people. All the elders from the village are invited for the feast on that day. While the new bride serves the food, one person takes away the spoon from her with which she serves the food. The bride then has to offer a token of remuneration as a sign of respect to get back the spoon. In the real sense *burha puha* is conducted as a medium to establish a heartfelt relationship with the new bride. Both the bride and groom pay

homage and seek blessing from the elders. From that day onwards everyone can eat the food served by the bride.

Ghər utha: *Ghər utha* is one of the integral arrangements connected with the marriage system in the Sonowal Kachari society, which is also known as *aath maṇṇla*, which is the first visit of the groom and the bride together to the bride's house after marriage. Basically, *ghər utha* is practised to introduce the relatives to the newly wed couples. On that day the newly wed couple give clothes as a token of respect to the relatives and pays homage. The head of the family too gives away some everyday essential goods and furniture to the daughter as a token of love on that day.

Ghər zuwai rakha: If in a family there is no male child or if there is no capable heir to inherit the property of the family, then there is a system of keeping the son-in-law in the family instead of giving away the daughter among the Sonowal Kachari society. All the possession which the head of the family possesses is entrusted into the hands of the son-in-law. On the death of the father-in-law and mother-in-law, the son-in-law has to carry the funeral. However, the son-in-law can never do the *pinda da:n*, i.e. oblation to the manes of the deceased person.

Biyoni bhat: There is a maxim in Sonowal Kachari which says: *no miti'r etha besi*, which means the adhesiveness of the new relative which is connected through marriage is more. To bring the alliance of the new relatives into proximity or to make the friendship of the newly formed relatives stronger, there is a tradition of inviting the father-in-law and mother-in-law from both the families and have a feast together. This arrangement of gathering both the in-laws together and having a fest is known as *biyoni b^hat*.

4.6. Gods, Goddesses and Worship

There are several ways of worshipping various gods and goddesses in Sonowal Kachari society. Various pujas prevalent in the Sonowal Kachari society are:

- *K^hriṅ K^hriṅ Bait^ho Puja*: Worship of Lord Shiba.
- *Bag^hdeo Puja*: Worship of Tiger-god.
- *Gatigiri Puja*: Worship of Invisible Power.
- *Gozai Puja*: Worship of Religious teacher *Gozai*.
- *Swargodeo Puja*: Worship of Heaven-god (Indra).
- *Zolk^hai Puja*: Worship of water-god.
- *Kulasol Puja*: Puja performed to satisfy the spirit *Kulasol*.
- *Raṅa Samon Puja*: Puja performed in order to satisfy the god of the evil spirit, *Samon*.
- *Bor Samon Puja*: Puja performed in the name of seven brothers of the god of *Samon*.
- *Xatriya Puja*: Puja offered in the name of 33 crore gods wishing the development and well-being of the entire society.
- *K^hin B^hoṅa Puja*: Puja performed in order to keep the house ceremonially clean.
- *Gukalika Puja*: Puja performed in order to satisfy *Kalika*, the spirit who dwells in the bodies of animals.
- *Burha- Burhi Puja*: Worship of Shiba and Parbati.
- *Baliya Baba Puja*: Puja performed in the name of *Baliya Baba* (one of the three forms of Lord Shiba).
- *Kesaik^hati Puja*: Puja offered in the name of goddess *Kesaik^hati* (another form of goddess Parbati).

In the same way throughout the year several *sabhas* (public worship) are observed by them.

The main ones among the *sabhas* (public worship) are:

- *Lak^himi sabha*: *Sabha* (public worship) performed with the purpose of worshipping *Lak^himi*, the goddess of property, fruit and crops.
- *B^hur- utuwa sabha*: Raft floating ceremony or public worship.
- *Bali sabha*: Public worship conducted so that cyclones and storms may not happen.
- *Goruk^hiya sabha*: Shepherd's public worship.
- *Apeswari sabha*: A public worship of goddess *Apeswari*.

K^hriṇ K^hriṇ Bait^ho Puja: One of the most significant and mention-worthy traditionally adorned pujas of the Sonowal Kachari is the *Bait^ho Puja*. *Bait^ho Puja* is practised at the *Bait^ho shal* (temple) on the second Monday after the *Shivaratri* (*Shivaratri* is the day for worshipping Lord Shiba by the Hindus, which is practised generally in the month of February or March on a particular day) every year. The preparations and functions related to *Bait^ho Puja* go on four days, with each day assigned for different rituals. In *Bait^ho Puja*, with the desire of satisfying various gods and goddesses' people generally offer sacrifices of cock, hen and pig. In this festival, people worship even different types of agricultural implements and household stuff. During the puja, they generally perform one of their most noteworthy folk songs, *Haidan Husori Geet* (a folk song sung by people going in procession from house to house playing drums during Bihu festival) which is performed only by the males.

Bag^hdeo Puja: After the day of *K^hriṇ K^hriṇ Puja*, i.e. on Wednesday, two groups of people one by the name of *Gatigiri* and the other *Baghp^huja* meets in the forest near the village. The two groups then get parted and the first group goes towards the north and the second group move towards the south. A game known as *kōniz^h* (one of the favourite games of Assam) is arranged and the fortune and misfortune are checked. The *Baghp^huja* party makes the soil smooth and constructs a boundary pillar in the structure of a tiger under a group of trees in the jungle. And then offers *prashad* in the mouth of the tiger by plucking two leaves. The

other group, *Gatigiri* makes a raised platform under a group of tree and performs puja separately. Here they offer red colour cock as a sacrifice. They remove the intestine of the cock and keep it on the raised platform. Another person also offers the sacrifice of a cock and shares it among the families. After that with the above mentioned sacrificial *prashad*, they arrange a feast and conclude the puja.

Gatigiri Puja: The invisible force or power which is believed to be residing in the village is addressed by the Sonowal Kachari society as *gatigiri danjoriya*. They believe that if they can satisfy the invisible force which they address as *gatigiri danjoriya* the village or the society will remain away from any misfortunes or any sort of dangers. So, in order to satisfy the *gatigiri danjoriya* they perform puja which is known as *Gatigiri Puja*. In this puja, they offer cock sacrifice.

Gozai Puja: Another mention-worthy pujas of the Sonowal Kachari community is the *Gozai Puja*. This *Gozai Puja* can be seen observed in every Sonowal Kachari villages. *Gozai* is one of the religious gurus and an ideal person of the Sonowal Kacharis. It is mentioned that during his lifetime, *Gozai Guru* accomplished many good works, the reason why *Gozai Guru* occupies the seat immediately after the god *Bait^ho* (Lord Shiba). In the prayer of *Bait^ho*, this great religious guru's name is attached:

uum k^hriŋ rɔja, d^horoni, gozai guru takoni

Here *K^hriŋ rɔja*, i.e. god *Bait^ho* is addressed as *d^horoni* which means he is the protector and *Gozai Guru* is addressed as *takoni* which means he is like a lid, a cover. Sonowal Kachari acknowledges *Gozai Guru* as worthy of veneration. In the Tinsukia district of Assam in the village of *Laina* of *Danjori* the *Gozai than* (*than* is a place of worship at the cremation ground of religious man for the worship) is acknowledged as a speciality *than*. At this *than* five *Gozai* ceremonies are conducted in a year.

Swargodeo Puja or Həkdeo Puja: This puja is dedicated to god Indra. That is why this puja is also called as 'Indra puja.' In this puja a pair of red colour cock without any blemish is sacrificed in a definite sacrificial altar with certain procedures. In the sacrificial altar, raw rice powder and parched rice are sprinkled and offered in the name of various gods and goddesses in 120 leaves. During the time of puja, a story about the main source of this puja is narrated. After the conclusion of this puja, grain which is respected as good fortune is put inside the granary. While putting the grain in the granary, the headman and the headwoman of the family should wear new clothes and get into the granary. A loose thread is tied from the place where the grain is taken to the granary. It is believed that if they perform this puja, they'll become the well of blessings, a barren woman will be able to conceive and have a child, poor become rich, and also a blind person gets a vision. That's why even though the expenditure incurred during this puja is high, it can be seen that they perform *Həkdeo Puja* after every two to three years.

Zolk^hai Puja: If a person doesn't get a cure from any prolonged illness despite taking treatment, it is believed that *zol debota*, (god of water) is the reason behind the illness and so to make the god of water satisfy *Zolk^hai Puja* is performed near the river. In this puja, one variegated of red, white and black colour duck, rice, pot herbs and vegetables, oil, salt, etc. are required. Sometimes people even offer cock. The duck is burnt alive in the fire and after cooking a portion of it is offered to the god of water, *zol debota* and to satisfy him homage is paid. A lamp is lighted and a prayer of healing is offered and if the sick person cannot go to the spot, a relative in favour of the sick person pays the homage and offers the prayer of healing.

Kulasol Puja: *Kulasol Puja* is held before starting the cultivation during the rainy season. With the hope that no misfortune may prevail this puja is conducted at the bank of the river and a black colour duck is offered at the trunk of the tree and homage is paid. To receive

healing from illness also this puja is performed and a black colour cock along with betel-nut and betel-leaf is offered and homage is paid. To get recuperation of the possession of evil spirit also this puja is performed.

Raṇa Samon Puja: *Samon* is the god of the evil spirit. To satisfy the god of the evil spirit, *samon* this puja is performed. In the middle of the forest, a pair of red colour cock is offered as a sacrifice after paying homage by the sick person. It is believed that if the injurious effect of the god of the evil spirit, *Samon* is possessed in the person, the person doesn't get cured and so to satisfy the god *Samon* and to release the person from illness, *Raṇa Samon Puja* is performed and a pair of red colour cock is offered to satisfy him.

Bor Samon Puja: *Bor Samon Puja* is performed in the name of seven brothers of the god of *samon*. In this puja, a pair of red colour cock is offered in the jungle. Some people even make a small temporary shed in the jungle and offer *prashad* and even sing *kirtan* (the act of singing the praise or proclaiming the good qualities of the gods).

Xatriya Puja: This puja is not observed by all the people belonging to the Sonowal Kachari community. In the month of *Aghun* (i.e. November – December month of Assamese calendar) on the second week of Monday, this puja is performed for two days in the village of *Teparguri* in the Dibrugarh district of Assam in the region of Sahikata. In the name of 33 crore gods sacrifices are offered in this puja. It is noteworthy that in this puja, pig and cock are not offered. Instead, goat, duck and pigeon are offered. During this puja, at night they go to a distant, far away forest from the place of worship and there they offer the sacrifice by making a garland of thatching grass and cover it up with a new muslin cloth. Wishing the development and well-being of the entire society this puja is conducted.

K^{hin} B^{hoṇa} Puja: To keep the house ceremonially clean *K^{hin} B^{hoṇa} Puja* is performed by the Sonowal Kacharis. This puja is observed at the beginning of the year. It is believed that because of *K^{hin} B^{hoṇa} Puja* no calamities or epidemics happen.

Gu Kalika Puja: This puja is performed so that no misfortune may occur to the cows in the cowshed. This puja is held on the day of *g^{oru} Bihu*, (cow Bihu) after feeding the cows with *g^{hila} pit^{ha}* (a pancake made of flour and molasses) and *bor pit^{ha}* (a fried cake of ground pulse). For this puja, seven pieces of pointed sticks, one wooden scimitar, servant, one bamboo musket, betel-nut and betel-leaf, lamp wick are required. After lighting the lamp wick in the name of the gods seven pairs of leaves are plucked and the offering is made. By saying *k^{hriṇ} k^{hriṇ} k^{hriṇ} tau* the musket is turned over in all the four directions of north, east, south, west seven times. Then the bamboo musket is burst by putting turmeric powder into it.

Burha- Burhi Puja: This puja is offered to the god and goddess ‘Shiba’ and ‘Parbati.’ In the *Burha- Burhi Puja* ‘Shiba’ and ‘Parbati’ are worshipped.

Baliya Baba: One of the forms of the supreme god ‘Shiba’ is *Baliya Baba*. God Shiba has three forms: ‘srajanta,’ ‘palav’ and ‘hangharanta.’ The ‘hangharanta’ or ‘hangharika’ form of Shiva is the *Baliya Baba*. It is believed that if the *Baliya Baba* is satisfied then there won’t be any calamities. Therefore, *Baliya Baba* is worshipped by the Sonowal Kacharis.

Kesaik^hati Puja: The wife of Shiba, Parbati’s another form is *Kesaik^hati*. At the *soik^huwa* riverside of the Tinsukia district of Assam, there is a worship place which is called as *t^{han}* of the goddess *Kesaik^hati*. In this *t^{han}* duck, goat, and pigeon sacrifices are made. *Kesaik^hati Puja* is observed at least four times a year. It is believed that if they observe this puja then there won’t be any sickness in the region.

Kali aai t^{han}: In the area of Bogibeel in the Dibrugarh district of Assam, near the river Brahmaputra there is the *Kali aai t^{han}*. On various occasions throughout the year, votaries can

be seen worshipping at the *Kali aai t^{han}*. *Kali aai t^{han}* is addressed by many as the place of worship where the goddess never falls asleep. It is believed that if one seeks blessing from the *Kali aai t^{han}* and takes *nirmali* (a garland given by priests and Brahmins with blessings) even a childless woman can give birth to a child.

Apart from the above-mentioned pujas, there are several other sabhas (public worship) prevalent in the Sonowal Kachari society. Some of them are:

Lak^himi sabha: With the purpose of worshipping *Lakhimi* (goddess Lakshmi) the goddess of property, fruit and crops this *sabha* (public worship) is held. This *sabha:* is generally observed twice a year: during the month of *Aahin- Kati* (i.e. September- November) and *Fagun* (February- March). However, it is seen observed mostly during *Aahin- Kati*. Praying for abundant crops in the field, honour and respect is extended to the goddess ‘Lakhimi.’ The people in the villages celebrate this *Lak^himi sabha:* with joyful haste at the *Naam ghər*. In this *sabha:* a group of people sing songs of praises to goddess Lakhimi accompanied by musical instruments and goes to the river and with a kind of bamboo- scoop which is used for catching fish and puts it in the river and brings whatever comes in the bamboo scoop to the *Naam ghər* and distributes it to every master of the family. During *Lak^himi sabha:* the lamp-wick is kept lighted on all four sides of the *Naam ghər* and is kept shining brightly. This is one of their most respectable *sabha*.

B^hur utuwa sabha: This *sabha* (public worship) is conducted during the month of *Jeth- Aahar* (i.e. May- July) with the hope that various diseases, epidemic, misfortune may not happen.

Bali sabha: This *sabha* (public worship) is conducted during the month of *Fagun* (i.e. February- March) so that cyclones, storms may not happen.

Narasiṅa sabha: The entire villagers come together and observe this *sabha* (public worship) three times in a year: after *Bohag Bihu*, after transplanting of paddy is over in the month of

‘*Ahin- Kati*’ (i.e. September- November) and after harvesting is over in the month of ‘*Magh- Fagun*’ (i.e. January- March). In these three *sabha*: all the villagers gather together unitedly and wholeheartedly and eat feasts in unity.

Apeswari sabha: If a person falls sick for a very long time and despite taking medicine doesn't get healed, if the children get thin, get headaches, eye diseases, etc. it is believed that it is because of the goddess ‘Apeswari’ and so this *sabha*: (public worship) is conducted. They believe that if they conduct this *sabha*: a sick person gets healed.

Bator sabha: To get protection from smallpox this *sabha*: (public worship) is performed. In the month of *Bohag* (i.e. April- May) in every Sonowal Kachari house *Bator sabha*: is arranged with the belief that if they conduct this *sabha*: they will be protected from smallpox.

4.7. Religion and Belief Systems

4.7.1. Religion

The Sonowal Kacharis originally were the followers of Lord Shiba whom they address as *K^hirin K^hirin Bat^how*. They have a specific place of worship called *shal* (temple) for worshipping Lord Shiba or *K^hirin K^hirin Bathow* known as *Bat^how mandir* or *Bat^how shal*. They also worship several other gods and goddesses like: *p^hulkonwar*, *luhitkonwar*, *kesaik^hati*, *lak^himi*, *tamreswari*, *burha-burhi*, *balia baba*, etc. whom they believe that each of these gods and goddesses is assigned their own duties for the living organisms on the earth. At the time of worshipping *K^hirin K^hirin Bat^how* i.e. while praying to Lord Shiba, they pray for all the organisms like living beings in the air, water and land, plants and animals etc. which can be seen as reflected in their folk song, *Haidan Geet*. They also worship their religious teacher whom they call as *Guru Gozai*. They believe in their dead forefathers as the protector of their house and family, and practice worshipping them in every religious festival or occasion. Every family offers the first share of each of their food item prepared at the festival

to their dead forefathers. They worship their ancestors as they believe that their ancestors help them from any kind of predicament.

With the introduction and advent of ‘New Vaishnavism’ in Assam, most of the people have become its follower and the population now is predominantly *Vaishnavism*. Every Sonowal Kachari village has an identical *Naam ghor* (it is a place of praise and prayer offered to Vishnu by the Vaishnavas of Assam) that follows strict religious rituals and customs. But, it is worth mentioning that even though they have accepted Vaishnavism, which is completely against the worship of any gods and goddesses with or without sacrifice, yet they cannot entirely abandon their ancestral religious systems. They still continue to hold sacrificial worship to their traditional deities. They have traditional beliefs about some animals, birds and trees which they worship for the welfare of the society. As a result, now-a-days they practice both Vaishnavism and their traditional rituals, simultaneously. There are two types of worship prevalent among them, they are: community worship and household worship. They worship household deities to maintain peace in their family and community worship for the welfare of the society.

4.7.2. Belief Systems

In the journey of life, a person accumulates all the taste of bitterness and sourness of life. All these experiences of bitter and sour in life give birth to a continuous succession of the human belief system. And many such belief systems can be seen prevalent also in the Sonowal Kachari society.

When a person got sick they started worshipping various gods and goddesses with the expectation of being getting healed. Whether it was because of the prayer offered or because of the effects of medicine, when a person gets healed people started believing that because of worshipping so and so gods and goddesses, the person got healed. Since then, the belief

existed among the people that if they worship so and so gods and goddesses, they get healed from so and so illness. In that way, the belief system started and by and by it got rooted among the minds of the people. Some of the noteworthy belief systems prevalent in the SonowalKachari society are mentioned below:

On the day of *uruka* i.e., the day before the Bihu festival, if the cows in the shed remain sleeping then it is believed that that year will be arid. But if the cows remain standing then they suspect of having a flood in that year. On the day of *goru Bihu* (cow Bihu), if they eat curry of several leafy vegetables for dinner, it is believed that there won't be any epidemic. Also, they believe that if on that day they remain awake near the gateway, then the evil spirits can't enter the premises of their houses. On the day of *goru Bihu*, they keep thorns near the main door of the house believing that if they do so the evil spirits can't enter their houses. If at the main door of the house a net is kept hanging, then it is believed that the devil has to flee away. If a person stumbles on the way while undergoing a journey, it is believed to be a sign of ill-luck. When a person sneezes while eating, it is believed that someone is speaking about that person. If the tamed duck flies away very far then it is assumed that that family can't raise duck. After transplanting the paddy seedlings if the woman who did the transplanting comes back home and sleep in the daytime, it is believed that the grain in the field will fall. It is forbidden to point a finger towards the graveyard as it is believed that an evil spirit may accompany the person who points the finger towards the graveyard. If a duck happens to somehow get thread tied up either on the neck or leg, then it is believed that the guest will come. If a crow caws, then it is believed that a guest from a far place will come. If an ear itches, then it is a sign of getting bad news. If in a dream a person happens to eat, then it is believed that the person will have stomach upset. To dream of a dead snake is believed to be the enemy's subjugation. If one dreams of fire burning, it is believed to have a very strong sunny day. If one dreams of climbing a tree or crossing a river then it is believed to be a sign

of having success in any endeavour. If a lizard falls over a person's body, it is assumed as a good sign. If the duck enters late inside the pen in the evening, it is believed that it will rain. If in a dream the front tooth break, then it is believed that a young person dies and if the wisdom tooth breaks in the dream, then it is believed that an old person in the family will die. To get a dream of *seni put^{hi} mas* (a kind of fish) is believed to be a sign of earning a huge income and if one dreams of *magur* or *g^oroi* or *hi^{ji} mas* (fishes of different kinds) then it is believed that one falls sick. To travel towards the east direction on Saturday is regarded as a misfortune. To plant a banana tree in the month of *B^hado* (August- September in Assamese calendar) is regarded as ill- luck. If from the same banana plant two flowers bloom at the same time, it is regarded as a misfortune for the owner. It is believed that one gets body aches if fern is eaten in the month of *Ahin* (i.e. September- October month of the Assamese calendar). It is forbidden to eat radish in the month of *Magh* (January- February month of Assamese calendar) as it is believed that by eating radish in the month of *Magh* one will suffer from dysentery. It is believed that if the floor of the dining room is undulating then the good fortune abodes and the householder becomes wealthy. If a male dog comes from another house and takes shelter it is regarded as a sign of bad fortune. One is forbidden to cut hair and nails on the day of his/ her birth. If while preparing rice beer, the one who prepares the beer farts, it is believed that the beer taste turns bitter. To see a cobbler, barber or woodman during one's journey on the way is regarded as a misfortune. There are several such beliefs systems incorporated in the Sonowal Kachari society.

4.8. Folklore

The Sonowal Kacharis are rich in folk music and folk literature. They have a good collection of folk songs scattered in their community. These folk songs are considered as the identity of their community. The folk songs prevalent in the Sonowal Kachari society are

divided into *Geet* and *Naam* according to their characteristics and topic. The *Geet* is sung by the men, whereas the *Naam* is sung by the women. The *Geet* prevalent among them are:

1. *Haidan Geet*: The hymn or prayer of the creation of the universe.
2. *Haidan Husori Geet*: A folk song sung by people going in procession from house to house playing drums during Bihu festival.
3. *Bihu Geet*: Bihu song.
4. *Bohua Nritya'r Geet*: A dance performed on the seventh day of the *Bohag Bihu* (celebrated to mark the beginning of Assamese New Year) where two or three males dress up in 101 banana leaves, split into thin strips and tie around their bodies in the form of a dress and wear masks made of an outer shell of the gourd, duly painted with white colour.
5. *Hogra Nritya'r Geet*: A song of the story of hunting by a Sonowal Kachari king Hograbir.
6. *Phulkunwor-Manikunwor'or Geet*: A song of the love story between Manikunwor and Kason Kunwori and that of Phulkunwor's fables.
7. *Jonadoi Gab'aru'r Geet*: A song of the sample of Jonadoi and Dutiram's powerful love story.
8. *Khel-D'emali'r Geet*: Songs sung by boys and girls while playing and having fun.
9. *Swargadeo Puja'r Geet*: Heaven god's song. A song sung basically during the *Indra Puja*.
10. *Gorukhiya Geet*: Song sung by shepherds while grazing flocks.

Among the *naam* are:

1. *Aai naam*: A devotional song sung in the name of the guardian of the smallpox goddess, 'Navami.'

2. *Lak^himi sabha 'hor naam*: A devotional song sung in the name of goddess Lakshmi.
3. *Gohain naam*: A devotional prayer song offered to Lord Krishna.
4. *Shiba-Parbati 'r (geet) naam*: Songs narrated with regards to god and goddess, Shiba and Parbati.
5. *D^hai naam or nisukuni (geet) naam*: Lullaby.
6. *Biya naam*: Marriage song.
7. *Taati 'r zuna*: Weaver's song.
8. *Kopah^o 'r zuna*: Story of a skilled spinner of cotton thread.

The folk songs, *Geets* (songs) which are sung by the males are narrated below:

1. *Haidan Geet*

Haidan Geet is one of the most important folk songs prevalent in their society. From the style of its composition and its characteristics, it can be said that it is one of the earliest composed folk songs of the community. This song is performed by the aged folks during the *Bait^o Puja* on the third day. *Haidan Geet* incorporates the ritualistic habit, knowledge and information of the tribe. In other words, the culture of the community is exhibited in the *Geet* and hence *Haidan Geet* becomes one of the most significant intangible heritages of the Sonowal Kacharis.

The *Haidan Geet* is divided into eleven sections according to its characteristics and each section bears the explanation of different themes. The primitive people were curious to know the source of the universe and years after when they acquired some knowledge, they started praying to a superpower. These prayer words are *haidan de*. Here, *ha-* means 'land' or 'universe,' *-dan* means 'creation' and *de* means 'song,' which means 'the hymn or prayer for the creation of the universe.' *Haidan Geet* starts with a prelude:

haio adi yugar Kachari'r haidan de

According to the prelude, after the creation of the universe, the earth, the sky, the living beings were created. In the first chapter of the *Haidan Geet* at the very beginning, they salute or offer prayer to the ruler or the master of the universe, 'Lord Narayan.'

haa... hai oi namo Narayan.

By which they mean that at the mercy of the Lord Siva, the earth, the sky, the sea and the four classes of living beings, i.e. *gajan* (the act of germination), *gamon* (cohabitation), *uran* (the act of flying up) and *buran* (the act of sinking), were created. Along with Lord Siva, the other thirty-three crore gods and goddesses are also being worshipped for the well-being of the universe in various ways at different times.

In the second chapter, the creation of the universe and the life on the earth has been described symbolically through the narration of the birth of the birds. It starts with the line:

iyo kerok kerok henu keroise

This means the movement has started slowly. In this chapter, the creation of life on earth is being defined metaphorically.

In the third chapter, comparative details on the excellence or greatness of the universe starting from the gods and goddesses, animate and inanimate, conscious and unconscious are being described. In this section of the song, it is stated:

haiyo debo'r danor kun danor

This means, who is the greatest among all the deities.

haiyo debo'r danor K'iririj rōja ze

This means, among all the deities, *K^hiriŋ rɔja* (a deity of the Sonowal Kachari who resembles Lord Shiva) is the greatest. Among the deities, Shiva, who is addressed by the Sonowal Kacharis as *K^hiriŋ rɔja*, is regarded as the superior, the greatest among all the other deities, as he is the supreme god.

In the fourth chapter of the *Haidan Geet*, how the people of the primitive stage have developed and formed the society has been described. It is in this chapter that we get to know the fourteen clans of the Sonowal Kacharis. They are:

1. *Madanial*: *Madanial* belongs to the royal minister group.
2. *Manikial*: *Manikial* belongs to the group of king's officer.
3. *Hogral*: *Hogral* belongs to king's group.
4. *Muktal*: *Muktal* guards king.
5. *Ezmal (Ehmal)*: *Ezmal* is a dry land warrior.
6. *P^hormal*: *P^hormal* is the deity's door keeper.
7. *Horu Hazual*: *Horu Hazual* is one who guards the army general.
8. *Bor Hazual*: *Bor Hazual* is the leader of an army.
9. *Lat^hial*: *Lat^hial* belongs to the hunter group of people.
10. *Sotiyal*: *Sotiyal* spy the foreigners.
11. *Kumral*: *Kumral* is the doorkeeper of the palace gate.
12. *Bormal (Athuwai)*: *Bormal* is the fortune-teller.
13. *Tekiyal*: *Tekiyal* is also spy.
14. *Diŋial*: *Diŋial* is a boat warrior.

These names of the fourteen clans are mentioned in the fourth chapter of the *Haidan Geet* and are sung lyrically.

The fifth chapter of the *Haidan Geet* narrates how *K^hirin rɔja* (a deity of the Sonowal Kachari who resembles Lord Shiba) went to the residence of king *Sanj^ho* for performing marriage and how the two daughters of king *Sanj^ho* by the names of *Lurupi* and *Surupi* gets amazed by the appearance of *K^hirin rɔja* and both of them gets married to him.

The sixth chapter describes the marriage of *K^hirin rɔja* with the daughters of king *Sangkho*, *Lurupi* and *Surupi*.

The seventh chapter of *Haidan Geet* describes how *K^hirin rɔja* came out victorious in the war which took place due to some restrictions in the marriage venue. The happiness and cheerfulness of the folks at the victory of the *K^hirin rɔja* are described in this chapter. While singing this part of the song, the dancers' dance by taking peacock feathers in hand and the others accompany them by playing the cymbal and sings the song.

The eight-chapter describes the warm welcome extended by the first wife of *K^hirin rɔja* to the new brides. After the completion of whatever work is required in the marriage, the lovely portrait of the grand feast which is conducted with much happiness is found in this chapter.

In the tenth chapter, prayer is being offered to all the worshipable deities of the Sonowal Kacharis. In the phase of life so that no dispute, misfortune, calamity, epidemic, etc. may befall on them prayer is being offered to various gods which are narrated in detail in the tenth chapter. However, among all the gods, that *K^hirin rɔja* or Lord Shiva is the main god among all the other deities is mentioned in this chapter of the *Haidan Geet* in a lovely way.

Agriculture is the main source of livelihood of the Sonowal Kacharis. The goddess of agriculture is the goddess, Lakshmi. They believe that the goddess Lakshmi sleeps in the lowest part of the sea. So, they have the tradition of welcoming the goddess Lakshmi for the prosperity of agriculture. So they collect goddess of the agriculture, Lakshmi from the river

and keep it under the post of *Jamu tree* (blackberry tree) of the main house of the *Bait^{ho} burha* (the main priest of the *Baitho puja*). This is mentioned in the tenth chapter of the *Haidan Geet*.

In the concluding section of the *Haidan Geet* a prayer is being offered to *K^hirin rɔja* to forgive them for every mistake committed by them knowingly or unknowingly while performing prayer to various other gods and goddesses.

The *Haidan Geet* serves a number of purposes, such as commenting on the creation of the universe, disseminating Sonowal Kachari traditional wisdom and storing information. The role of *Haidan Geet* is significant in understanding the community of Sonowal Kachari. This song preserved some folk knowledge and information of the tribe by keeping an attachment with the roots.

2. *Haidan Husori Geet*

Another mention-worthy folk song prevalent in the Sonowal Kachari society is the *Haidan Husori Geet*. Lyricist Late Rajani Hazarika gave a very important statement about *Husori geet* as, “among the people living in the plains only among the Sonowal Kacharis the main elementary materials or the fundamental origin of the culture of Bihu is being preserved”. (Kachari 2011:136) In their *Husori Geet* the true picture of the society is being reflected. They believe that they are the sons and daughters of Bali. They believe that at the time of equinox, Bali comes to the earth to console his heirs. On the occasion of the arrival of *Bali rɔja* (king Bali), the Sonowal Kacharis say *Bali rɔja dumahi* (the day on which the sun passes from one sign of the zodiac to another) and greets *Bali rɔja* (king Bali) by celebrating the festival of *Bohag Bihu*. They believe that:

<i>tini</i>	<i>tini</i>	<i>kuri</i>	<i>tini</i>	<i>din</i>
three	three	twenty	three	day

sixty three days

Bali rɔja dumah

Bali king two months

King Bali for two months

Bali rɔja ah-e aru za-i

Bali king come-3PRS.PFV and go-3PRS.PFV

King Bali comes and goes

The first day of the *Bohag Bihu* is regarded as *manuh Bihu* (man Bihu). On that day, they gather together at *Naam ghər* (a place of worship) and sing the *Husori Geet*.

They use a bamboo trunk along with two poles to support the bamboo while singing the *Husori Geet*. They hit the bamboo and sing the *Haidan Husori Geet*. *Haidan Husori Geet* is sung in every Sonowal Kachari village each year. It is first initiated every year at a particular place, usually under a tree or a *Naam ghər* (a place of worship). Then it is sung in every house of the village and finally, the *Haidan Husori Geet* is concluded at the same place from where it was started. Taking into consideration of the theme and property of the *Haidan Husori Geet*, the entire song is divided into five parts. They are:

- *Bare Mantra*: *Bare Mantra* is sung at the beginning of the song. In this particular type of song, prayer is offered for the family members with advice and the praying person remembers the great deed of *Bali rɔja*, the great ancestor.
- *Puhari Geet*: *Puhari Geet* is a part of the *Husori Geet* and it is basically about the society. This part of the song is about the rules of the society, emotions and feelings of the people.
- *Thiyo Geet*: This part of *Haidan Geet* deals with the description of nature.

- *Bor Geet*: *Bor Geet* presents comparative details on the greatness of the creation of the universe.
- *Husori Hamora Geet*: *Husori Hamora Geet* is the concluding song of the *Husori Geet*.

3. *Bihu Geet*

Bihu Geet is yet another special folk song of the Sonowal Kacharis. During Bihu, marriages, various works, etc. the *Bihu Geet* is performed and depending on the circumstances in some functions and celebrations also the *Bihu Geet* is sung. Various feelings like liking, love, sadness, laughter, crying, joy, etc. also various arts like farming, trade, commerce, etc. i.e. the pictures of the society are imprinted in the *Bihu Geet*.

4. *Bohua Nritya*

Bohua Nritya finds its own unique position among its various folk-dance forms and has successfully been able to establish its identity. According to the Assamese calendar, *Bohua Nritya* is performed in the month of *Bohag* (April- May). *Bohua Nritya* is performed on the seventh day of the *Bohag Bihu* with great joy and enthusiasm. They believe that the dance performed once a year purifies them and eradicate the evil spirits. In the *Bohua Nritya*, two or three males dress up in 101 banana leaves, split into thin strips and tie it around their body in the form of a dress and they wear masks made of an outer shell of the gourd, duly painted with white colour. The masks represent the king and the queen. Along with the ones who wear the masks, several people painted completely in black, wearing banana leaves as skirts participate in the performance. The performance begins with the emergence of the *Bohuas* i.e. the dancers from the jungle accompanied by the musicians playing the traditional instruments like cymbals, dhol, mridanga. At the end of the dance, as a part of the celebration and the associated rituals the *Bohua Nrityakars* (the dancers) and the other performers walk

to the nearby river. There they take a dip into the water and shed their dress made of banana leaves. This act symbolizes the washing away of the bad fortunes and evil beings from the village and the lives of the tribal people. According to the ritual while walking back to the village from the river the *Bohua Nritya* performers are not allowed to look back on their way. They leave behind thorns of berry trees with the belief that the thorns will block the way for the evil spirits from entering the village. Thus, this ends the *Bohua Nritya* which they conclude by merrymaking and dining together.

5. Hogra Nritya'r Geet

Hogra Nritya'r Geet is a lovely song of the story of hunting by a Sonowal Kachari king. The underlying story behind the lovely *Hogra Nritya Geet* goes like this:

There was a king by the name of Hograbir. One day king Hograbir along with his nephew goes for hunting near the bank of the river Rangdoi. On the way, they saw a wagtail bird sleeping with both legs up. On seeing the bird sleeping with both the legs up, the nephew thought that it was a sign of misfortune and requests the uncle to kill the bird. Uncle, at the request of his nephew, kills the bird with a bow and arrow and goes for hunting. King Hograbir had to face numerous dangers while hunting. He couldn't find any bird for hunting and noticed some more impending dangers. In the end, the king manages to kill *Haru p̄hu*, a kind of deer with a large branching horn.

On the other side, seeing that the king hasn't returned home on time, the queen started getting scared. Placing her child at the hand of the babysitter, the queen goes to look for the king. There the child started troubling the babysitter by crying and not falling asleep. The babysitter tries to persuade the baby to sleep but couldn't. Finally, the babysitter sings the following lullaby:

sou sou miri phasou sou haroi

bapek gɔise pɔhu marbo phasou sou halo

maa 'r gɔise maas marbo phasou sou halo

sukɔt aahi mador meta tare umolai thou

Only then the child starts sleeping. The Sonowal Kacharis narrate this story on the last day of *K'riṅ K'riṅ Bait'o Puja* in the form of *Hɔgra Nritya 'r Geet* (song).

6. *Phulkunwor-Manikunwor 'or Geet*

In the *Husori Geet* of the Sonowal Kacharis it is mentioned that at a place called *Namsai Barkala*, king *Haṅkaldeo* was ruling. He had two sons by the name of *Manikunwor* and *Phulkunwor*. The love story between *Manikunwor* and *Kason Kunwor* and their separation from each other is mentioned in this song. Also, the mentioning of *Phulkunwor's* fables like *Kat'or Pɔk'ig'hura*, *Malini Bari*, etc. is the *Phulkunwor-Manikunwor 'or* song's speciality.

It is believed among the Sonowal Kacharis that if they sing the *Phulkunwor-Manikunwor's Geet* even in the dry season, there will be rain.

7. *Jonadoi Gab'aru 'r Geet*

People's stories and history mixed together formed a religious ballad, *Jonadoi Gab'aru 'r Geet*. According to the story, the region of *Sadiya* was given to *Sadiyakhwa Gohain* for administration. His daughter, *Jonadoi* and *Dutiram* of *Kachari* tribe falls in love. But *Jonadoi's* father, *Sadiyakhwa Gohain* stood like a fence to their love. But the strong love of *Dutiram* enabled him to marry *Jonadoi* in reality. *Sadiyakhwa Gohain* couldn't take this easily and devised a plot. On the pretext of his son's marriage, *Sadiyakhwa Gohain* invites *Kacharis* from seven villages and arranges a feast. On the other hand, he involved *Khamti* (one of the tribes of *Assam*) boys in his secret scheme and while the *Kacharis* were

8. *K^hel-D^hemali'r Geet*

- *Tai-mai Khelor Geet*: Songs sung by children by clapping each others hands while playing.
- *Pador Khelor Geet*: Farting games song.
- *Marona Mara Geet*: Songs sung while treading out the grain.

ebehe *jan-ilu* *Krishno*

now	know-PRS.PFV	Krishna
now have known Krishna		

<i>gokulot</i>	<i>nai</i>
the childhood place of romantic	NEG-exist
adventure of Lord Krishna	
the childhood place of romantic adventure of Lord Krishna is not existing	

10. Goruk^{hi}ya Geet

While grazing the herd of the cow in the field, weariness or sorrow overwhelms the mind of the shepherds. So, to keep those sorrows, weariness away from their mind the shepherds sing the song which is known as *Goruk^{hi}ya Geet* (Shepherd song). Surrounded by a herd of cows they even compose songs from their real mature experience. The pain, sorrow, sigh, mournful conditions, etc. are beautifully decorated with similes in the song. The feelings of love, soft melody are resounded in this song.

The folk songs, *naams* which are sung by the women are narrated below:

1. Aai naam

Aai naam is one of the devotional songs of the Sonowal Kacharis. Aiming at the guardian of the smallpox goddess, 'Navami', *aai naam* is sung. According to the Assamese calendar in the month of *Bohag- Jeth* (mid April- mid June) in every household *aai* ceremony is performed. They extend their heartfelt worship and present an earnest supplication before the mother goddess so that the mother goddess will keep everyone in the family and society in good fortune. With this expectation, they sing the *aai naam*.

<i>aai</i>	<i>mur</i>	<i>ah-e</i>	<i>mohamaya</i>
mother	1SG.GEN	come-PRS.PFV	worldly illusions

Mother, worldly illusions come to me

<i>aai</i>	<i>mur</i>	<i>dibo-loi</i>	<i>ekutu</i>	<i>nai</i>
mother	1SG.GEN	give-DAT.	nothing	NEG.have
Mother I have nothing to give				

<i>aai</i>	<i>mur</i>	<i>mur-or</i>	<i>suli</i>	<i>nɔma</i>
mother	1SG.GEN	head-GEN.	hair	bring down
mother bring my hair down				

<i>aai</i>	<i>mu-r</i>	<i>pau</i>	<i>molsimi</i>
mother	1SG.GEN	foot	wife
Mother wife my foot			

<i>aai</i>	<i>mu-r</i>	<i>deha-re</i>	<i>pari</i>	<i>dim</i>	<i>haaku</i>
mother	1SG.GEN	body-INST.	make	give	bridge
Mother make a bridge with my body					

They believe that the mother goddess has nine sisters. That's why it is said as, *aai no- bhoni* (mother nine sisters).

2. *Lak^himi sabha'r naam*

In the agricultural dependant Sonowal Kachari society, the goddess of the property, *Lakhimi* (Lakshmi) is welcomed with great gaiety by the people. While welcoming the goddess *Lakhimi* they worship the goddess and sing devotional songs and in a very devoted manner bring the goddess Lakshmi home. The following lines are part of the song:

<i>megh-e</i>	<i>g^{hit}- g^{hiti}ni</i>	<i>ta 'le</i>	<i>mridango</i>
cloud-NOM.	the sound of things striking each other	musical note	a kind of drum
Cloud makes sound			

<i>Lak^himi</i>	<i>aai</i>	<i>an-u</i>	<i>buli</i>
Lakshmi	mother	bring-EMPH	reason

To bring Lakshmi mother

<i>Bhakat-e</i>	<i>gupini</i>	<i>di-ya</i>	<i>ahirbad</i>
devotee of Vishnu-NOM	wife of the cowherd	give-PST	blessing

Blessings given to the wife of the cowherd by the devotee of Vishnu

<i>Lak^himi</i>	<i>aai</i>	<i>ah</i>	<i>buli</i>
Lakshmi	mother	come	say

Come mother Lakshmi

3. Gohain naam

Among the prevalent devotional song of the Sonowal Kacharis, *Gohain naam* is also one of the important devotional songs. Through the prayer offered to *Gohain* (god) or Lord Krishna, they wish for the prosperity, good fortune of the individual, society and the country. The women sing *Gohain naam* with one accord at the *Naam ghər* (a place of worship) as a prayer offered to Lord Krishna.

4. Apeswari naam

Apeswari naam is also one of the devotional songs sung by women. *Apeswari naam* is sung by a group of women during *Apeswari sabha* which is conducted when someone falls sick, or if a child doesn't have normal growth, etc.

5. Shiba-Parbati 'r (geet) naam

Songs that are composed or narrated with regards to god and goddess, Shiba and Parbati, is known as *Shiba-Parbati 'r geet*. Although the songs are composed with regards to Shiba and Parbati, this song also paints the picture of the society.

6. Nisukuni geet or D^hai naam

The song which is sung to make a child fall asleep is known as *Nisukuni geet or D^hai naam*. The mother or the babysitter can be seen singing the following song (lullaby) to make the child sleep in the Sonowal Kachari family.

<i>ama-r-e</i>	<i>moina</i>	<i>hɔru</i>	<i>lɔra</i>
1PL.OBL-GEN-NOM	word of love for small child	small	boy
our small little boy			

<i>pat-ot</i>	<i>ne-k^hai</i>	<i>b^hat</i>
leaf-LOC	NEG-eat	food
does not eat food in a leaf		

<i>bap-er</i>	<i>gɔise</i>	<i>kahi</i>	<i>an-bo</i>
father-NOM	go- PRS.PFV	goat	bring-FUT
father is going to bring goat			

<i>soi</i>	<i>mah-or</i>	<i>baat</i>
six	month-GEN	distance
distance of six months		

7. Biya: naam

The song which is sung by a group of women during a marriage is known as *biya: naam*.

8. Tati'r zuna

Tati'r zuna is the weaver's song. Through this song, people's interest in the art of weaving since ancient times can be known. *Tati'r zuna* (weaver's song) can be said as a story song. In the song *Tati'r zuna*, Lord Krishna goes to a weaver to make her weave cloth for

Radhika and from the description of the pattern of the cloth itself the skilled weaver's identity can be known.

9. Kopaho'r zuna

Kopaho'r zuna is a song in which the story of a skilled spinner is narrated. A Sonowal Kachari woman spun a small strong thread out of cotton which is equivalent to a thread by which an elephant can be tied. The story of this well-versed woman in spinning is narrated in *Kopaho'r zuna*.

4.9. Summary

This chapter attempted to throw light on the social structures in which the Sonowal Kacharis are braided together in the society. The chapter attempted to provide a detailed analysis on the division of the society, about their dwelling and housing patterns, the rituals and customs observed by them, about their marriage system, their way of worship and also about the folk songs prevalent among them.

CHAPTER- 5

THE WORD- LISTS OF SONOWAL KACHARI

5.0. Introduction

This chapter presents the list of words that possibly could be Sonowal Kachari words that were collected during the fieldwork. The Sonowal Kacharis are presently surviving only as a group of community, they have completely lost their language. Although at present they have a population of over three lakh speakers, it is quite heart-breaking that they couldn't retain their language. An initial attempt was made through the present research work to collect the possible surviving Sonowal Kachari words which can be used in the future to go into further research and try to retrieve the language. This chapter gives a list of pronouns, body- parts terms, kinship terms, reduplication, adjectives, verbs and nouns.

5.1. Pronoun

The word pronoun as its name suggest stands for or refers to another noun. A pronoun is a word that replaces a noun phrase or a determiner phrase. A pronoun can be of different types like: personal pronoun, interrogative pronoun, possessive pronoun, demonstrative pronoun, etc.

5.1.1. Personal Pronouns

A personal pronoun can be free, i.e., an independent word or bound, i.e., a clitic or a tripartite distinction for the first person, second person and third person. The first person indicates the reference to the speaker, the second person to the hearer and the third person to the referents. The following table shows the personal pronouns of Sonowal Kachari.

Table 3 (Personal Pronouns)

Person	Sonowal Kachari	Bodo	Dimasa	Assamese
1 st person singular pronoun	aŋ	aŋ	aŋ	mœ
1 st person plural pronoun	jiŋ	juŋ	jiŋ	ami
2 nd person singular pronoun	naŋ	nuŋ	niŋ	tumi/ tœ
2 nd person plural pronoun	naŋ-bor	nuŋ-sur	nishi	tuma-luk/ tɔ-hôt
3 rd person singular pronoun	bo	bi	bo	hi/ tae
3 rd person plural pronoun	bo-bor	bi-sur	bunshi	hi-hôt

The above table presents the personal pronouns in Sonowal Kachari, Bodo, Dimasa and Assamese. The first column shows the person categories and the second column shows the personal pronouns in Sonowal Kachari of all the three persons in both singular and plural forms, the third column shows the personal pronouns of Bodo, the fourth column shows the personal pronouns of Dimasa and the fifth column shows the personal pronouns of Assamese. From the table, it can be seen that all the singular personal pronouns and first-person plural pronouns in Sonowal Kachari are basic stems. The second person plural pronoun and third-person plural pronoun are formed by adding the suffix –bor to the stems.

From the table, it can be seen that Sonowal Kachari, Bodo and Dimasa has the same first-person singular pronoun, *aŋ* whereas, the first-person singular pronoun in Assamese is *mœ*.

Both Sonowal Kachari and Dimasa have the same first-person plural pronoun, *jiŋ*. In the case of first-person plural pronoun, the front vowel ‘i’ in Sonowal Kachari and Dimasa corresponds the back vowel ‘u’ in Bodo.

jiŋ in Sonowal Kachari and Dimasa corresponds *juŋ* in Bodo.

Also, in the case of second-person singular pronoun the central vowel 'a' in Sonowal Kachari corresponds the back vowel 'u' in Bodo and the front vowel 'i' in Dimasa.

naŋ in Sonowal Kachari corresponds *nun* in Bodo and *niŋ* in Dimasa.

The third-person singular pronoun in both Sonowal Kachari and Dimasa are the same, *bo*. In the third-person singular pronoun, the back vowel 'o' in Sonowal Kachari and Dimasa, corresponds with the front vowel 'i' in Bodo, as can be seen from **Table 3** *bo* in Sonowal Kachari and Dimasa corresponds *bi* in Bodo.

Whereas in Bodo the plural marker of the personal pronoun is *-sur*, in Sonowal Kachari the plural marker of the personal pronoun is *-bor*. As can be seen from the above table, the second person plural pronoun is formed by attaching the suffix *-bor* to the stem *naŋ*. Also, the third person plural pronoun is formed by attaching the suffix *-bor* to the stem *bo*.

Thus, the above table shows some similarities in terms of personal pronouns between the Sonowal Kachari, Dimasa and the Bodo language.

5.1.2. Demonstrative Pronouns

A demonstrative pronoun is a pronoun that is used to point to something particular within a sentence. These pronouns can specify items in space or time, and they can be either singular or plural. The following table shows the demonstrative pronoun of Sonowal Kachari:

Table 4 (Demonstrative Pronouns)

Sonowal Kachari	Bodo	Dimasa	Assamese	Gloss
era	be	ebo	aitu	this
ibor	bep ^h ur	ibo	aibur	these
bora	bui	bo	heitu	that

it ^h ai	beyao	era	iyat	here
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The above table shows the demonstrative pronouns of Sonowal Kachari along with Bodo, Dimasa and Assamese. From the above table, it can be seen that the demonstrative pronoun 'this' in Sonowal Kachari is *era* whereas the demonstrative pronoun 'here' in Dimasa is *era*. While a slight similarity in the case of demonstrative pronoun can be seen between Sonowal Kachari and Dimasa, no such similarity can be seen between Sonowal Kachari and Bodo.

5.2. Body Parts

The table below presents some of the body part terms in Sonowal Kachari, alongside Bodo, Dimasa and Assamese.

Table 5 (Body parts)

Sonowal Kachari	Bodo	Dimasa	Assamese	Gloss
sala:i	sala:i	sla:i	zib ^h a	tongue
muk ^h aŋ	muuk ^h aŋ	muk ^h aŋ	mu:k ^h	face
yak ^h a	ak ^h ai	yao	hat	hand
yasi	asi	yasi	aŋuli	finger
yasigur	asugur	yasugur	nək ^h	nail
yat ^h aŋ	ait ^h eŋ	ega	b ^h ɔri	leg
yagu	hant ^h u	yasugu	at ^h u	knee
yadu	adui	yakhi	kəlap ^h ul	calf
udui	udui	boho	pət	belly
mo	megon	mut ^h ai	səku	eye

From the above table which presents the body part terms in Sonowal Kachari, it can be seen that the words for tongue and belly is the same in both Sonowal Kachari and Bodo and the words for face and finger is the same in both Sonowal Kachari and Dimasa.

5.3. Kinship Terms

Kinship terms can be defined as those terms which are used in classifying kindred of diverse varieties. We can see that in all societies, kinship is identifiable by a set of relationship expressions. According to Oxford English Dictionary kinship is, "the quality or state of being kin". The alliance between the people may be created either by marriage or is inherited by blood. The bondage of blood or marriage which secures people together in a group is called kinship. Kinship is of two types, namely:

1. Affinal kinship
2. Consanguineous kinship

The relationship which is created by the bond of marriage is called affinal kinship. When a person marries a woman, he establishes a relationship with the woman whom he marries and also with the woman's family members. Thus, from wedlock, a person establishes several new relations. For example, a person becomes husband to the woman whom he marries, brother-in-law to the woman's brother, son-in-law to the woman's parents and so on. This type of relationship created through the bondage of marriage is the affinal kinship.

The relationship which is inherited by birth or the bondage by blood is called consanguineous kinship. The bond between parents and children is consanguineous. Based on the ground of nearness or distance, relatives can be classified into three categories: primary kin, secondary kin and tertiary kin. For example, the father is the primary kin, whereas the father's brother is the secondary kin and the father's brother's brother-in-law is the tertiary kin to the ego.

Some of the kinship terms as prevalent in the Sonowal Kachari society are presented in the following table:

Table 6 (Kinship terms)

Sonowal Kachari	Bodo	Dimasa	Assamese	Gloss
ai	ai	amai	ma	mother
ada	ada	ada	dada	elder brother
adai	adui	ade	k ^h ura	father's younger brother
ap ^h a	ap ^h a	abai	deuta	father
abou	abou	abagra	koka	grandfather
abui	abui	badai	aita	grandmother
amayon	ayon	aboda	borma	father's elder brother's wife
ayon	ayon	ayun	bordeuta	father's elder brother
gomai	gumui	agim	b ^h indeu	brother-in-law
p ^h isai	p ^h isai	basai	griyeyk	husband
p ^h isou	p ^h isou	busut ^h ai	nati	grandchild
bazou	bazui	baoji	bou	sister-in-law

The above table gives the kinship terms in Sonowal Kachari which was collected during the fieldwork from Jagat Hazarika of Tinsukia district. From the above table, we can see many similarities of the address terms between Sonowal Kachari, Bodo and Dimasa. The address terms for mother, elder brother, father, grandfather, grandmother, father's elder brother, husband, grandchildren can be seen as the same in Sonowal Kachari and Bodo.

The following five kinship terms were collected from the fieldwork in Dhemaji:

mayen : grandmother's mother-in-law

lapundouta : grandmother's father-in-law

poyek : husband

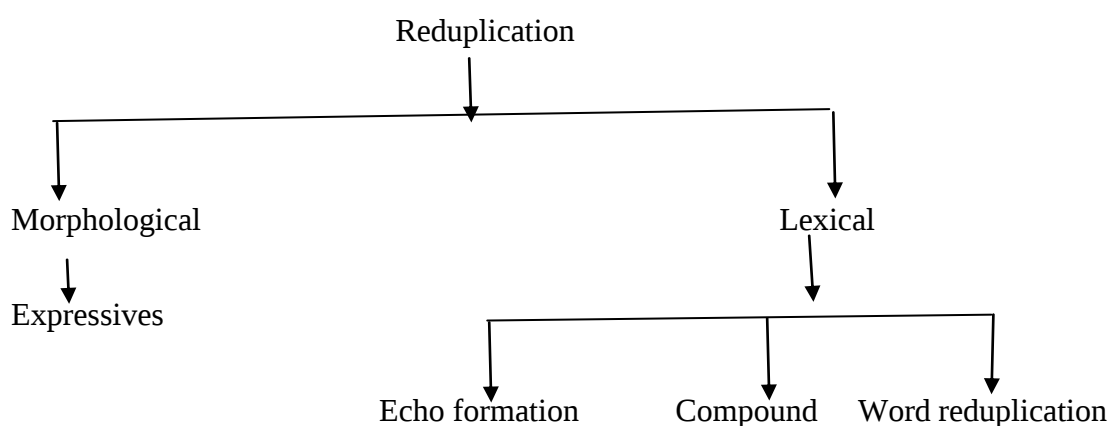
nisadeu : mother's elder brother

aputi : father

These five are the address terms used now.

5.4. Reduplication

According to Abbi (1990: 171), "Reduplication in general stands for repetition of all or part of a lexical item carrying a semantic modification". She stated that "duplicating a morpheme or a word to coin new words or express various grammatical aspects is a common phenomenon with the languages of the Tibeto- Burman family of South East and South Asia". She offered a classification of the reduplicated structures of the South Asian languages. The four-way division of the reduplicated structures as proposed by Abbi (1992:14) is represented below:



Two major types of reduplication found in South Asian languages are morphological and lexical. "Expressives are instances of reduplication where the minimally meaningful and segmentally indivisible morphemes are constituted of iterated syllables. Thus, the base and

the iterated part together constitute a single morpheme which is also a lexeme. Onomatopoeic constructions, imitatives, sound symbolisms, mimic words are all examples of morphological reduplication as the entire repeated structure signifies a given meaning without allowing any morphological cuts within". (Abbi 1990: 171-172)

Lexical reduplication refers to the recurrence of either a phonological part or a syllabic unit of a word or the recurrence of the total word itself. Three types of lexical reduplication are echo- formation, compounds and word reduplication.

The present research deals with the lexical part of the reduplication.

- i) Echo- formation: Echo formation is a morphophonemic change that reflects partial reduplication of lexical levels only. In echo- formation, only the initial phoneme or syllable is changed and the medial and final position remains intact. The echo words do not have their own specific or independent meaning but they expand or add some meaning to the headword.

Some of the echo- formations found in Sonowal Kachari are:

g^husuj- musuj: doing this and that in a restless manner.

k^hilij- milij: confusion, tumult.

k^hisij- misij: lying here and there.

k^husuj- musuj: to move about in vain without doing anything.

loloj- p^holoy: to tie loosely.

lay- paj: ordinary.

letej- petej: tall and thin.

toloj- poloy: to walk like a drunkard.

In the above-cited examples, the phonemes /g^h/ and /k^h/ changes to /m/ in the echo word. Phoneme /l/ changes to /p^h/ and /p/; and /t/ changes to /p/ in the echo words.

- ii) Compounds: The second type of lexical reduplication is the compounds. The compounds are formed with two different lexical items having independent meanings.

In the present research, no compound reduplication could be found in the target language.

- iii) Word reduplication: Word reduplication is subdivided into two categories. They are:

- a. Complete word reduplication: It means repetition of the total word of the base form.

Some of the complete word reduplications found in Sonowal Kachari are:

aloh- aloh: very gently.

aleŋe- aleŋe: keeping an eye secretly.

g^hasaŋ- g^hasaŋ: straight and truthful.

gide- gide: afterwards

goba- goba: full of leaves and branches, bushy

goŋ- goŋ: trespass.

kharao- kharao: to dry properly

k^hasaŋ- k^hasaŋ: genuine, accurate.

k^hilaŋ- k^hilaŋ: to tear page one by one

k^heŋ- k^heŋ: to speak harshly and with anger

mod^hom- mod^hom: nice smell

milou- milou: dim

solog- solog: less water

teŋ- teŋ: watery

udah- udah: bad thoughts.

- b. Partial word reduplication: It is the partial repetition of a phoneme or a syllable of a word indicating semantic modification. Some of the partial word reduplication found in Sonowal Kachari are:

Some of the partial word reduplications in Sonowal Kachari are:

k^hulug- lug: a hole in the earth, pit

k^hatap-tap: tasteless

k^hutup- tup: not talking to anyone out of anger

garau-rau: thriving luxuriantly (as a plant)

zolog-log: clear like water

topoŋ- poŋ: foolish, stupid

p^husug- sug: dry

b^hamau- mau: term used to describe a giant person

lot^hoŋ- t^hoŋ: not having anything

lut^hup- tup: fleshy, plumpy

hereŋ- reŋ: not dense.

holoŋ- loŋ: upright

abud- bud: swelling up of cheeks because of anger

sakoliŋ- liŋ: to move in a circular form

sapraŋ- praŋ: divided into pieces

tidan- dan: to finish eating

d^huldan- dan: to be relaxed

Thus, this section of the thesis presented the lexical reduplication found in Sonowal Kachari which includes eco-formation, complete word reduplication and partial word reduplication.

5.5. Adjectives

An effort was made to compile some of the surviving Sonowal Kachari adjectives along with their Assamese, Bodo and Dimasa counterparts.

1. ***ozogolon***: a person who doesn't know how to work properly

The adjective *ozogolon* in Assamese is: *kam-ban najana byakti*.

In Bodo it is: *k^hamani maonu ruŋi mansi*.

2. ***ogolod^ha***: arrogant, haughty

The adjective *ogolod^ha* in Assamese is: *ahan^hkari luk*.

In Bodo it is: *k^hut^ha maniyi*.

3. ***ohomok***: proud

The adjective *ohomok* in Assamese is: *gorb^hi*.

In Bodo it is: *ok^hra*.

In Dimasa it is: *sangaba*.

4. ***olou- tolou***: roaming around here and there

The adjective *olou- tolou* in Assamese is: *ot- tot g^huri p^hura*.

In Bodo it is: *adaŋ gadaŋ gidiŋnai*.

5. ***ohonzati***: an injurious person

The adjective *ohonzati* in Assamese is said: *onistəkari*.

In Bodo it is said: *sunī gunan*.

6. ***okoŋa***: impudent

The adjective *okoŋa* in Assamese is: *əkōra*.

In Bodo it is: *ok^hora/ laji ruŋi*.

In the adjective *okoŋa* the unaspirated velar plosive /k/ in Sonowal Kachari and Assamese corresponds with the aspirated velar plosive /k^h/ in Bodo; and the velar nasal /ŋ/ in Sonowal Kachari corresponds with alveolar trill /r/ in Bodo and Assamese.

7. ***abuda***: blunt knife

The adjective *abuda* in Assamese is said: *bōduwa*.

In Bodo it is: *budula*.

In Dimasa it is: *buyaba*.

The adjective *abuda* in Sonowal Kachari is *budula* in Bodo. Here we can see the deletion of the vowel-consonant cluster ‘ul’ in Sonowal Kachari and the insertion of the open front vowel /a/ at the beginning of the adjective.

8. ***abun- zabun***: untidy, filthy

The adjective *abun- zabun* in Assamese is: *zɔdʰɔla*.

In Bodo it is: *aili- zaili*.

In Dimasa it is: *ragaoyaba*.

9. ***elagi***: ugly to look at

The adjective *elagi* in Assamese is: *oguwani*.

In Bodo it is: *somaina nongi*.

In Dimasa it is: *naiba ha majanya*.

10. ***ketenja- keten***: lean, all skin and bone

The adjective *ketenga- keteng* in Assamese is: *kʰin- min*.

In Bodo it is: *kʰeten-ten*.

In Dimasa it is: *ramkʰrai*.

Here the unaspirated alveolar plosive /t/ in Sonowal Kachari corresponds with the aspirated alveolar plosive /tʰ/ in Bodo.

11. ***kemtai***: emaciated, thin

The adjective *kemtai* in Assamese is: *kʰin*.

In Bodo it is: *hamkʰren*.

In Dimasa it is: *ramba*.

12. ***ketahi***: acting like not hearing

The adjective *ketahi* in Assamese is: *kaan nokɔra*.

In Bodo it is: *k^huma huyi*.

In Dimasa it is: *kanada bo kanaya lai jamaisidu*.

13. *k^huluy- luy*: a hole in the earth, pit

The adjective *k^huluy- luy* in Assamese is: *gaat*.

In Bodo it is: *hak^hor*.

In Dimasa it is: *hakor*.

14. *k^hasay*: real, true

The adjective *k^hasay* in Assamese is: *xɔitya*.

In Bodo it is: *suiithu*.

In Dimasa it is: *gibi*.

15. *k^hamak^ha*: certain, exact

The adjective *k^hamak^ha* in Assamese is: *hɔt^hik*.

In Bodo it is: *noŋthargou*.

In Dimasa it is: *jasosi*.

16. *k^harao- k^harao*: to dry properly

The adjective *k^harao- k^harao* in Assamese is: *b^haldɔre hukaan*.

In Bodo it is: *randropnai*.

In Dimasa it is: *gra-in klaihi dengba*.

17. *k^hamidat^h*: courageous

The adjective *k^hamidat^h* in Assamese is: *hahɔhi*.

In Bodo it is: *bik^hlu ruza*.

18. ***k^hatap tap***: tasteless

The adjective *k^hatap tap* in Assamese is: *k^habɔloi huwad nologa*.

In Bodo it is: *t^haoyi*.

In Dimasa it is: *t^haoya*.

19. ***k^hahau- bihau***: not feeling good in mind

The adjective *k^hahau- bihau* in Assamese is: *mɔn b^hal nologa*.

In Bodo it is: *k^harau- birau*.

Here the glottal fricative /h/ in Sonowal Kachari corresponds with the alveolar trill /r/ in Bodo.

20. ***k^hisou- k^hisou***: small small

The adjective *k^hisou- k^hisou* in Assamese is: *horu- hour*.

In Bodo it is: *ese- ese*.

In Dimasa it is: *k^hasiba- k^hasiba*.

21. ***k^hilay- k^hilay***: to tear page one by one

The adjective *k^hilay- k^hilay* in Assamese is: *ek^hɔn ek^hɔn kɔi paat eruwa*.

In Bodo it is: *bisinai*.

22. ***k^hipiy- k^hapay***: in a confused manner, transversely

The adjective *k^hipiy- k^hapay* in Assamese is: *ot^hali- pot^hali*.

In Bodo it is: *adaŋ- gadaŋ*.

23. ***k^heŋ-k^heŋ***: to speak harshly and with anger

The adjective *k^heŋ-k^heŋ* in Assamese is: *k^hɔŋ ut^ha*.

In Bodo it is: *k^heŋ-k^heŋ*.

In Dimasa it is: *t^hamsi jaŋ sainlaiba*.

Here we can see that the adjective *k^heŋ-k^heŋ*, which means to speak harshly and with anger is used both in Sonowal Kachari and Bodo.

24. ***k^hutup-tup***: not talking to anyone out of anger

The adjective *k^hutup-tup* in Assamese is: *k^hɔŋot kaku namata*.

In Bodo it is: *ragazuŋ raizlaiyi*.

25. ***godopa***: thick

The adjective *godopa* in Assamese is: *dat^h*.

In Bodo it is: *ruza*.

In Dimasa it is: *rajaba*.

26. ***gomak***: intoxicant

The adjective *gomak* in Assamese is: *ragi d^hɔra*.

In Bodo it is: *p^henai*.

In Dimasa it is: *baola*.

27. ***goba-goba***: full of leaves and branches, bushy

The adjective *goba-goba* in Assamese is: *zupuha*.

In Bodo it is: *zamp^hra-p^hra*.

28. **gozaliya**: teenage

The adjective *gozaliya* in Assamese is: *kom boyohiya*.

In Bodo it is: *zoumun* (male)/ *laimun* (female).

In Dimasa it is: *nagasa* (male)/ *malasa* (female).

29. **goidali/ g^heleṇ**: lazy

The adjective *goidali* in Assamese is: *elehuwa*.

In Bodo it is: *alsiya*.

In Dimasa it is: *shle*.

30. **gap^hila**: proud/ haughty

The adjective *gap^hila* in Assamese is *ṇhṇkari*.

In Bodo it is *gonṅar*.

In Dimasa it is *saṅgraua- grau*.

31. **garau-rau**: thriving luxuriantly (as a plant)

The adjective *garau-rau* in Assamese is: *lohṇpohiyakṇi barhi aha*.

In Bodo it is: *gaurau-rau*.

The adjective *garau-rau* in Sonowal Kachari corresponds with *gaurau-rau* in Bodo. There is a deletion of the back close vowel /u/ in between the front open vowel /a/ and the alveolar trill /r/ in Sonowal Kachari.

32. **gid**: backside

The adjective *gid* in Assamese is: *pis^hale*.

In Bodo it is: *unt^hij*.

In Dimasa it is: *yahon gede*.

33. ***gide-gide***: afterwards

The adjective *gide-gide* in Assamese is: *pise-pise*.

In Bodo it is: *un-un*.

In Dimasa it is: *yahon ha*.

34. ***guzop***: extracting words

The adjective *guzop* in Assamese is: *kɔt^ha uluwa*.

In Bodo it is: *k^hut^ha dihunnai*.

35. ***guruli***: tasty

The adjective *guruli* in Assamese is: *huwad*.

In Bodo it is: *gut^hao*.

In Dimasa it is: *taoka*.

36. ***guta^l (M), guta^li (F)***: a lazy person

The adjective *guta^l/ guta^li* in Assamese is: *dat^h gɔd^hur*.

In Bodo it is: *zeldeb- deb*.

In Dimasa it is: *sauri- siyaba*.

37. ***guma***: symptoms of falling sick

The adjective *guma* in Assamese is: *bemar aramb^hɔ huwa lak^hyan*.

In Bodo it is: *lumzazrum*.

In Dimasa it is: *limba*.

38. ***gumut^ha (M), gumut^hi (F)***: man of few words

The adjective *gumut^ha/ gumut^hi* in Assamese is: *ãhaṅkar/ ãhaṅkari*.

In Bodo it is: *gomt^ha/ gomt^hi*

In Dimasa it is: *k^hom sainlai yaba subuṅ*.

The adjective *gumut^ha/ gumut^hi* in Sonowal Kachari correspond with *gomt^ha/ gomt^hi* in Bodo.

The back close vowel /u/ in Sonowal Kachari corresponds with the back high-mid vowel /o/ in Bodo and also there is an insertion of the back close vowel /u/ between bilabial nasal /m/ and aspirated alveolar plosive /t^h/ in Sonowal Kachari.

39. ***gut^hula***: not mature or not ripe

The adjective *gut^hula* in Assamese is: *ad^ha hiza*.

In Bodo it is: *munt^haṅk^hra*.

In Dimasa it is: *gataṅ*.

40. ***g^hitira***: stout

The adjective *g^hitira* in Assamese is: *suti, sapɔr, həkɔt*.

In Bodo it is: *gahai, loda*.

In Dimasa it is: *mote*.

41. ***sotai***: a woman with a sharp- tongue

The adjective *sotai* in Assamese is: *muk^h suka tiruta*.

In Bodo it is: *k^huga guusa*.

42. ***soloŋ- soloŋ***: less water

The adjective *soloŋ- soloŋ* in Assamese is: *bam- bam*.

In Bodo it is: *duiziri*.

In Dimasa it is: *di khom*.

43. ***solahi***: cunning

The adjective *solahi* in Assamese is: *teŋɔr*.

In Bodo it is: *saŋgrəŋ*.

44. ***saŋpota***: a liar

The adjective *saŋpota* in Assamese is: *misoliya*.

In Bodo it is: *t^hogaisula*.

In Dimasa it is: *t^hok^hiba*.

45. ***saudaŋ***: a cruel person

The adjective *saudaŋ* in Assamese is: *nist^hur*.

In Bodo it is: *onagari subuŋ*.

46. ***sapraŋ***: a flat or round piece

The adjective *sapraŋ* in Assamese is: *sopɔra*.

In Bodo it is: *sap^hra*.

The adjective *sapraŋ* in Sonowal Kachari corresponds with *sap^hra* in Bodo. The unspirated bilabial plosive /p/ in Sonowal Kachari corresponds with the aspirated bilabial plosive /p^h/ in Bodo and also there is an addition of the velar nasal /ŋ/ at the end of the word in Sonowal Kachari.

47. ***sinlaŋ- pitlaŋ***: impatience

The adjective *sinlaŋ- pitlaŋ* in Assamese is: *od^harzya*.

In Bodo it is: *odhurzuu*.

In Dimasa it is: *jonsofiaba*.

48. ***silou***: one who does not work, without employment

The adjective *silou* in Assamese is: *k^ormohin*.

In Bodo it is: *k^hamani guizayi*.

49. ***sikoliŋ- sakolaŋ***: staying here and there

The adjective *sikoliŋ- sakolaŋ* in Assamese is: *ot tot t^hɔka*.

In Bodo it is: *bit^hiŋ- buit^hiŋ t^hagra*.

50. ***suluŋ***: jocular person

The adjective *suluŋ* in Assamese is: *d^hemeliya luk*

In Bodo it is: *p^hesla*.

51. ***sekolaŋ***: one side

The adjective *sekolaŋ* in Assamese is: *ep^hal*.

In Bodo it is: *sit^hase*.

The word for ‘one’ in Bodo is ‘*se*’ and here we can see that the word for ‘one side’ in Sonowal Kachari is *sekolaŋ* where *se* means ‘one’ and *kolaŋ* may mean side.

52. ***soitali***: naughty man

The adjective *soitali* in Assamese is: *dusto puruh*.

In Bodo it is: *dut^haŋ*.

53. ***zoloŋ-loŋ***: clear like water

The adjective *zoloŋ-loŋ* in Assamese is: *pəriskar pani’r dore*.

In Bodo it is: *guzuuŋ dui badi*.

54. ***zoloka***: to be morose

The adjective *zoloka* in Assamese is: *sinta kəri mən mari t^hoka*.

In Bodo it is: *duk^hut^hiya*.

55. ***zogod^ha***: one who doesn’t know how to work

The adjective *zogod^ha* in Assamese is: *kam kəribo nazana*.

In Bodo it is: *k^hamani ruŋi*.

The adjective ***zogod^ha*** also mean heavy, which is *god^hur* in Assamese and *uluud* in Bodo.

56. ***totoya***: lean, emaciated

The adjective *totoya* in Assamese is: *serela*.

In Bodo it is: *randrob*.

57. ***tokuna***: destitute

The adjective *tokuna* in Assamese is: *ob^hab*.

In Bodo it is: *nik^haori*.

58. ***timp^hai***: cantankerous, irascible

The adjective *timp^hai* in Assamese is: *k^hɔŋal*.

In Bodo it is: *raga gusa*.

59. ***timok***: quick, prompt

The adjective *timok* in Assamese is: *k^hɔr tɔkiya*.

In Bodo it is: *guk^hrui*.

In Dimasa it is: *praba*.

60. ***tikira***: of small stature

The adjective *tikira* in Assamese is: *suti sapɔr*.

In Bodo it is: *hait^hu*.

In Dimasa it is: *subuŋ k^hasiba*.

61. ***tiŋ***: high place

The adjective *tiŋ* in Assamese is: *uk^hɔ t^hai*.

In Bodo it is: *guzou zaiga*.

In Dimasa it is: *guju yaba jaga*.

62. ***tiŋk^hap or tiŋk^haŋ***: very high, lofty

The adjective *tiŋk^hap or tiŋk^haŋ* in Assamese is: *ekebare uk^hɔ*.

In Bodo it is: *tʰikʰini*

63. ***tikʰor***: fast and skillful

The adjective *tikʰor* in Assamese is: *suka*.

In Bodo it is: *akʰa- pʰakʰa*.

64. ***dokʰora***: a small piece (in terms of meat)

The adjective *dokʰora* in Assamese is: *tukura*.

In Bodo it is: *dorse*.

In Dimasa it is: *mogon*.

65. ***dakoli or dapʰori***: big fat woman

The adjective *dakoli or daphori* in Assamese is: *daṇḍr həkət mṓhila*

In Bodo it is: *dampʰe*.

66. ***doluwa***: solitary

The adjective *doluwa* in Assamese is: *ɔkəlʰəriya*.

In Bodo it is: *harsin*.

In Dimasa it is: *saojang*.

67. ***tokuwa***: husk

The adjective *tokuwa* in Assamese is: *bakɔli*.

In Bodo it is: *bigur*.

68. ***topoka***: stout

The adjective *topoka* in Assamese is: *həkət sapər*.

In Bodo it is: *hait^ha, loda*.

69. ***tablay***: fat woman

The adjective *tablay* in Assamese is: *həkət tiruta*.

In Bodo it is: *ludwudu*.

In Dimasa it is: *mote heṇajik*.

70. ***terepa***: thin and weak

The adjective *terepa* in Assamese is: *hakti hin*.

In Bodo it is: *lurgeṇ*.

In Dimasa it is: *bol giri*.

71. ***tepa***: pale, of a faint lustre

The adjective *tepa* in Assamese is: *tezhin*.

In Bodo it is: *thuí guiyi*.

72. ***tepera***: short person

The adjective *tepera* in Assamese is: *sapər*.

In Bodo it is: *hait^ha*.

73. ***tepera- teper***: excessively fat and weighty

The adjective *tepera- teper* in Assamese is: *oti həkət sapər*.

In Bodo it is: *zubuur loda hait^hu*.

74. **teŋ- teŋ**: watery

The adjective *teŋ-teŋ* in Assamese is: *paniya*.

In Bodo it is: *lau- lau*.

In Dimasa it is: *jibaŋba*.

75. **topoŋa or topoŋ- poŋ**: foolish, stupid

The adjective *topoŋa or topoŋ- poŋ* in Assamese is: *murk^hya*.

In Bodo it is: *beŋra*.

76. **top^haŋ**: different

The adjective *top^haŋ* in Assamese is: *beleg*.

In Bodo it is: *alada*.

In Dimasa it is: *gibin*.

77. **tiŋali**: cunning

The adjective *totatiŋa or tiŋali* in Assamese is: *teŋɔr*.

In Bodo it is: *siyan*.

78. **t^habaŋ**: big and heavy utensil

The adjective *t^habaŋ* in Assamese is: *gɔd^hur bɔhɔl bɔstu*.

In Bodo it is: *ulud zinis*.

79. **dilaŋ**: weak

The adjective *dilaŋ* in Assamese is: *bɔlhin*.

In Bodo it is: *lurbay*.

80. ***debay***: possessed by an evil spirit

The adjective *dibay* in Assamese is: *kalika tʰɔka*.

In Bodo it is: *dabuuu ziu habnai*.

81. ***dʰendela***: a man who doesn't know how to work

The adjective *dʰendela* in Assamese is: *kam- kaz nazana manuh*.

In Bodo it is: *kʰamani ruŋi huua*.

82. ***nimoz***: smooth

The adjective *nimoz* in Assamese is: *hitɔl*.

In Bodo it is: *soman/ slim*.

In Dimasa it is: *mleba*.

83. ***nekeha***: wet firewood

The adjective *nekeha* in Assamese is: *tita kʰɔri*.

In Bodo it is: *gisi bon*.

In Dimasa it is: *gisi bon*.

84. ***potʰaliday***: to stop

The adjective *potʰaliday* in Assamese is: *badʰa diya*.

In Bodo it is: *hubtʰanai*.

In Dimasa it is: *mataoka*.

85. ***pak^hori***: colourful

The adjective *pak^hori* in Assamese is: *rojin*.

In Bodo it is: *p^hàk^hrì*.

The adjective *pak^hori* in Sonowal Kachari corresponds with *p^hàk^hrì* in Bodo. The unaspirated bilabial plosive /p/ in Sonowal Kachari corresponds with the aspirated bilabial plosive /p^h/ in Bodo and also there is an insertion of the back high-mid vowel /o/ between aspirated velar plosive /k^h/ and alveolar trill /r/ in Sonowal Kachari.

86. ***piyali***: small

The adjective *piyali* in Assamese is: *hɔru*.

In Bodo it is: *p^hisa*.

In Dimasa it is: *basaa*

87. ***pilaŋ***: bamboo with pointed end

The adjective *pilaŋ* in Assamese is: *bahɔr zuŋ*.

In Bodo it is: *uuani zoŋ*.

88. ***penaŋ***: child who cries easily

The adjective *penaŋ* in Assamese is: *kandura/ kanduri*.

In Bodo it is: *gabsula/ gabsuli*.

89. ***p^horoŋa***: person free from worries

The adjective *p^horoŋa* in Assamese is: *sinta hin*.

In Bodo it is: *dukhu guiyi*.

90. ***p^husun***: funny, joyful

The adjective *p^husun* in Assamese is: *kəutuki*.

In Bodo it is: *ronzalu*.

In Dimasa it is: *kajasisi*.

91. ***p^hutsai***: ash

The adjective *p^hutsai* in Assamese is: *sai*.

In Bodo it is: *hanar*.

In Dimasa it is: *tapla*.

92. ***p^husun- sun***: dry

The adjective *p^husun- sun* in Assamese is: *hukan*.

In Bodo it is: *guran*.

In Dimasa it is: *garain*.

93. ***p^hera***: a measure of the seedlings of paddy

The adjective *p^hera* in Assamese is: *mut^{hi}*.

In Bodo it is: *ak^{ha}*.

94. ***boholon***: wide

The adjective *boholon* in Assamese is: *bəhəl*.

In Bodo it is: *guar*.

In Dimasa it is: *warba*.

95. **baru**: good

The adjective *baru* in Assamese is: *b^hal*.

In Bodo it is: *muzaŋ*.

In Dimasa it is: *hamba*.

96. **buda**: not sharp, dull

The adjective *buda* in Assamese is: *b^huta*.

In Bodo it is: *but^huuu*.

97. **bedeŋa**: ignorant person

The adjective *degeŋa* in Assamese is: *mur^hɔ*.

In Bodo it is: *beŋra*.

98. **b^holoŋa**: one who forgets easily

The adjective *b^holoŋa* in Assamese is: *alopɔte pahɔri zuwa luk*.

In Bodo it is said: *baugargra*.

In Dimasa it is: *subuŋ blaoba raoba*.

99. **b^hakuk**: thoughtful

The adjective *b^hakuk* in Assamese is: *husintit*.

In Bodo it is: *sansumui*.

100. **b^hamau- mau**: term used to describe giant person

The adjective *b^hamau- mau* in Assamese is: *uk^hɔ daŋɔr hɔkɔt luk*.

In Bodo it is: *gu gum guzou*.

101. ***b^husuy***: worthless

The adjective *b^husuy* in Assamese is: *okamila*.

In Bodo it is: *k^hamani guiyi*.

102. ***b^hetali***: to rear once

The adjective *b^hetali* in Assamese is: *ebar puha*.

In Bodo it is: *k^hunse phisìnai*.

103. ***mod^hom- mod^hom***: nice smell

The adjective *modhom- modhom* in Assamese is: *hugundhɔ*.

In Bodo it is: *mudumna*.

104. ***monbay***: restless

The adjective *monbay* in Assamese is: *ost^hir*.

In Bodo it is: *suisu hayi*.

In Dimasa it is: *doṅba riṅyaka*.

105. ***mosuka***: to wither

The adjective *mosuka* in Assamese is: *lerelipɔra*.

In Bodo it is: *gumuur laṅnai*.

In Dimasa it is: *ra-in ba*.

106. ***moṭ^hoṅa***: strong

The adjective *mothoŋa* in Assamese is: *haktihali*.

In Bodo it is: *bulugura*.

In Dimasa it is: *raoba*.

107. ***milou- milou***: dim

The adjective *milou- milou* in Assamese is: *onuzzol*.

In Bodo it is: *milou- lou/ mule- le*.

There is a complete reduplication for the adjective *milou- milou* in Sonowal Kachari but partial reduplication, *milou- lou*, can be seen in Bodo.

108. ***muk^haŋ***: stupid

The adjective *mukhaŋ* in Assamese is: *burbok*.

In Bodo it is: *beŋra*.

109. ***ramdaŋ***: very big

The adjective *ramdaŋ* in Assamese is: *oti daŋor*.

In Bodo it is: *gidir*.

In Dimasa it is: *himsi diba*.

110. ***litora***: untruthful

The adjective *litora* in Assamese is: *misoliya*.

In Bodo it is: *salaik^{hi}/ salaik^{ha}*.

111. ***loloŋ- p^holoŋ***: to tie loosely

The adjective *loloŋ- p^holoŋ* in Assamese is: *d^hila*.

In Bodo it is: *olon- t^holon*.

The adjective *lolon- p^holon* in Sonowal Kachari corresponds with *olon- t^holon* in Bodo. Here there is an addition of the alveolar lateral approximant /l/ in the word initial position before the back high-mid vowel /o/ and the aspirated bilabial plosive /p^h/ in Sonowal Kachari corresponds with the aspirated alveolar plosive /t^h/ in Bodo.

112. ***lot^hon- t^hon***: not having anything

The adjective *lot^hon- thon* in Assamese is: *eku not^hka*.

In Bodo it is: *lont^hon*.

The adjective *lot^hon- t^hon* in Sonowal Kachari corresponds with *lont^hon* in Bodo. There is a deletion of the alveolar nasal /n/ in between the back high-mid vowel /o/ and the aspirated alveolar plosive /t^h/ and there is partial word reduplication in Sonowal Kachari.

113. ***lan***: long

The adjective *lan* in Assamese is: *dig^hl*.

In Bodo it is: *gulau*.

In Dimasa it is: *laoba*.

114. ***lalo***: beloved

The adjective *lalo* in Assamese is: *lahori*.

In Bodo it is: *onzali*.

115. ***lan- pan***: ordinary

The adjective *lan- pan* in Assamese is: *sad^haran*.

In Bodo it is: *sorasonsra*.

116. **lut^hup- tup**: fleshy, plumpy

The adjective *lut^hup- tup* in Assamese is: *mɔŋɔhal*.

In Bodo it is: *lut^hub- t^hub*.

The adjective *lut^hup- tup* in Sonowal Kachari corresponds with *lut^hub- t^hub* in Bodo. Here the bilabial plosive /p/ in Sonowal Kachari corresponds with the bilabial plosive /b/ in Bodo.

117. **lutoŋa**: poor

The adjective *lutoŋa* in Assamese is: *duk^hiya*.

In Bodo it is: *haoriya*.

118. **lebazan**: exhausted

The adjective *lebazan* in Assamese is: *b^hagoruwa*.

In Bodo it is: *mejlinai*.

In Dimasa it is: *lenjaoba*.

119. **lebaŋ**: a person who speaks a lot

The adjective *lebaŋ* in Assamese is: *kɔt^ha sohɔki*.

In Bodo it is: *raidao guusa*.

120. **leteŋ- peteŋ**: tall and thin

The adjective *leteŋ- peteŋ* in Assamese is: *k^hin*.

In Bodo it is: *lurgen gen*.

121. **hiriŋa**: neat and clean

The adjective *hiriŋa* in Assamese is: *pɔriskar*.

In Bodo it is: *sak^huun- sik^huun*.

In Dimasa it is: *rasaosi si*.

122. ***hereŋ- reŋ***: not dense

The adjective *hereŋ- reŋ* in Assamese is: *patōliya*.

In Bodo it is: *hereŋ- reŋ*.

Here we can see the adjective *hereŋ- reŋ* which is used to describe ‘not dense’ is the same for both Sonowal Kachari and Bodo.

123. ***holoŋ- loŋ***: straight

The adjective *holoŋ- loŋ* in Assamese is: *pun*.

In Bodo it is: *t^huŋzuŋ*.

124. ***haliŋa***: to move to and fro by wind

The adjective *haliŋa* in Assamese is: *hali zali*.

In Bodo it is: *aili- zaili*.

125. ***hedari***: edge, border

The adjective *hedari* in Assamese is: *dati*.

In Bodo it is: *sima/ ruguŋ*.

Thus, a total of 125 adjectives in Sonowal Kachari are listed above along with a gloss and its Assamese, Bodo and Dimasa counterparts.

5.6. Verbs

An effort was made to present some of the verbs which can be found in the Sonowal Kachari language along with their Bodo and Assamese counterpart.

1. ***abud-bud***: swelling up of cheeks because of anger

The verb *abud-bud* in Assamese is *kʰaŋət gal uphandai tʰɔka*.

In Bodo it is *budor-dor*.

Partial word duplication is seen in both Sonowal Kachari (*abud-bud*) and Bodo (*budor-dor*) for the verb which is used for swelling up of cheeks because of anger.

2. ***aloh-aloh***: very gently

The verb *aloh-aloh* in Assamese is *lahe-lahe*.

In Bodo it is *lasui-lasui*.

Complete word reduplication is seen here in Sonowal Kachari (*aloh-aloh*), Assamese (*lahe-lahe*) and Bodo (*lasui-lasui*) for the verb ‘very gently’.

3. ***alou-tolou***: showing too much of love

The verb *alou-tolou* in Assamese is *mɔrɔm seneh*.

In Bodo it is *onnai dinthinai*.

4. ***aleje-aleje***: keeping an eye secretly

The verb *aleje-aleje* in Assamese is *lɔkʰya kɔra*.

In Bodo it is *nuzuur hunai*.

5. ***abe-zabe***: saying meaningless words

The verb *abe-zabe* in Assamese is *nana-kɔtʰa*.

In Bodo it is *aba-aba*.

The verb *abe-zabe* in Sonowal Kachari corresponds with *aba- zaba* in Bodo. Here, the front high-mid vowel /e/ in Sonowal Kachari corresponds with the front open vowel /a/ in Bodo in the word final position when preceded by the bilabial plosive /b/.

6. **elai- et^hani**: incivility

The verb *elai- ethani* in Assamese is *ot- tot*.

In Bodo it is *alai- at^hani*.

The verb *elai- et^hani* in Sonowal Kachari corresponds with *alai- at^hani* in Bodo. Here, the front high-mid vowel /e/ in Sonowal Kachari corresponds with the front open vowel /a/ in Bodo in the word initial position when followed by the alveolar /l/ and /t^h/.

7. **emlowa**: disgust arising of over eating

The verb *emlowa* in Assamese is *k^hai amɔni lɔga*.

In Bodo it is *amainai*.

8. **uman**: getting to know, to report

The verb *uman* in Assamese is *gompuwa*.

In Bodo it is *mithinai*.

In Dimasa it is *tarmaidu*.

9. **ub^hay**: unfamiliar, unknown

The verb *ub^hay* in Assamese is *nozona*.

In Bodo it is *mit^hiyi*.

In Dimasa it is *tarmiya*.

10. **udah- udah**: bad thoughts

The verb *udah- udah* in Assamese is *beya b^habɔna*.

In Bodo it is *gazri sannai*.

In Dimasa it is *hamia baot^hai*.

11. **kuroise**: to carry, to collect

The verb *kuroise* in Assamese is *kɔriya*.

In Bodo it is *ruganai*

12. ***k^hasaŋ- k^hasaŋ***: genuine, accurate.

The verb *k^hasaŋ- k^hasaŋ* in Assamese is *prəkrit*.

In Bodo it is *gubui*.

13. ***k^hastaŋ***: to finish

The verb *k^hastaŋ* in Assamese is *hek^h kōra*.

In Bodo it is *p^huzubnai*.

In Dimasa it is *jamka*.

14. ***k^hiliŋ- miliŋ***: confusion, tumult

The verb *k^hiliŋ- miliŋ* in Assamese is *k^heli- meli*.

In Bodo it is *daorao- daosi*.

15. ***k^hiliŋ- k^hipiŋ***: in any direction

The verb *k^hiliŋ- k^hipiŋ* in Assamese is *ot^hali- pot^hali*.

In Bodo it is *bithiŋ- buithiŋ*.

16. ***k^hisiŋ- misiŋ***: lying here and there

The verb *k^hisiŋ- misiŋ* in Assamese is *k^heli- meli*.

In Bodo it is *zerao- merau*.

17. ***k^husuŋ- musuŋ***: to move about in vain without doing anything

The verb *k^husuŋ- musuŋ* in Assamese is *k^husmus*.

In Bodo it is *k^husuŋ- k^hasaŋ*.

The verb *k^husuŋ- musuŋ* in Sonowal Kachari takes the initial form of the Assamese verb *k^husmus* and forms an eco- verb like the Bodo verb *k^husuŋ- k^hasaŋ*.

18. ***k^huduŋ***: to grind

The verb *k^huduŋ* in Assamese is *k^hunda*.

In Bodo it is *denai*.

In Dimasa it is *honba*.

19. **goŋ- goŋ**: trespass

The verb *goŋ- goŋ* in Assamese is *ɔnɔdʰikar prɔbeh*.

In Bodo it is *habkʰaonai*.

20. **gobiŋi**: embrace

The verb *gobiŋi* in Assamese is *habɔtidʰɔra*.

In Bodo it is *bozobnai*.

21. **goina**: a shelter

The verb *goina* in Assamese is *asroi*.

In Bodo it is *ziraigra tʰaoni*.

22. **giloloŋ**: ate

The verb *giloloŋ* in Assamese is *kʰalu*.

In Bodo it is *zábái*.

In Dimasa it is *jika*.

23. **gede- geme**: feeling of laziness

The verb *gede- geme* in Assamese is *elah bʰab*.

In Bodo it is *bànnài*.

24. **gula**: to put cows in the shed

The verb *gula* in Assamese is *gɔru supuwa*.

In Bodo it is *muusou gograu sunai*.

25. **gula- gupa**: the act of pushing each other in a crowded place

The verb *gula- gupa* in Assamese is *tʰela- hesa*.

In Bodo it is *narla- narsi*.

26. **gubaŋ- gubaŋ**: the sensation of feeling like vomiting

The verb *gubaŋ- gubaŋ* in Assamese is *bomi- bomi lɔga*.

In Bodo it is *gubahaŋ- gubahaŋ*.

The verb *gubaŋ- gubaŋ* in Sonowal Kachari corresponds with *gubahaŋ- gubahaŋ* in Bodo. The back close vowel /u/ in Sonowal Kachari corresponds with /u/ in Bodo in between two consonants, velar plosive /g/ and bilabial plosive /b/. Also, deletion of the consonant glotal fricative /h/ and front open vowel /a/ in between a vowel and a consonant sound can be seen in Sonowal Kachari.

27. ***g^hasaŋ- g^hasaŋ***: straight and truthful

The verb *g^hasaŋ- g^hasaŋ* in Assamese is *sid^ha- sid^hi*.

In Bodo it is *hosa- hosi*.

28. ***g^huma***: the feeling of heaviness of head

The verb *g^huma* in Assamese is *mur gɔd^hur lɔga*.

In Bodo it is *k^horo sindaŋ- daŋ*.

29. ***g^huka***: catching fish

The verb *g^huka* in Assamese is *mas d^hɔra*.

In Bodo it is *na homnai*.

30. ***g^husuŋ- musuŋ***: doing this and that in a restless manner

The verb *g^husuŋ- musuŋ* in Assamese is *sɔtpɔtai t^hɔka*.

In Bodo it is *k^husur- musur*.

In the eco- verb *g^husuŋ- musuŋ*, the aspirated velar plosive /g^h/ in Sonowal Kachari corresponds with the aspirated velar plosive /k^h/ in Bodo, also velar nasal /ŋ/ in Sonowal Kachari corresponds with the alveolar trill /r/ in Bodo in the final position.

31. ***soya- moya***: seeing something in a blink of an eye

The verb *soya- moya* in Assamese is *hɔpunot dek^har dɔre*.

In Bodo it is *saya- maya*.

The verb *soya- moya* in Sonowal Kachari corresponds with *saya- maya* in Bodo. Here the back high-mid vowel /o/ in Sonowal Kachari corresponds with the front open vowel /a/ in Bodo.

32. **sokola**: circular

The verb *sokola* in Assamese is *g^hurɔniya*.

In Bodo it is *surgidiŋ*.

33. **sokolɔŋ**: to cut

The verb *sokolɔŋ* in Assamese is *katu*.

In Bodo it is *dannai*.

In Dimasa it is *raba*.

34. **sakoliŋ- liŋ**: to move in a circular form

The verb *sakoliŋ- liŋ* in Assamese is *g^hurɔniyakɔi g^hura*.

In Bodo it is *gulhui aogainai*.

35. **sanban**: to spread

The verb *sanban* in Assamese is *hisorit*.

In Bodo it is *ersranai*.

36. **sapraŋ- praŋ**: divided into pieces

The verb *sapraŋ- praŋ* in Assamese is *sɔpɔra- sɔpɔr*.

In Bodo it is *sit^ha- sit^ha*.

37. **silan- silan**: to run hastily

The verb *silan- silan* in Assamese is *begai dɔura*.

In Bodo it is *k^hilan- k^hit^han*.

In Dimasa it is *k^haibaraoba*.

In the eco- verb *silan- silan* the alveolar fricative /s/ in Sonowal Kachari corresponds with the aspirated velar plosive /k^h/ in Bodo.

38. ***sinaj***: to introduce

The verb *sinaj* in Assamese is *sinaki*.

In Bodo it is *sinait^{hi}*.

In the verb *sinaj* the Sonowal Kachari takes the initial four phonemes of the Assamese and Bodo verb followed by the velar nasal consonant /ŋ/ at the word final position.

39. ***suluj- salaj***: to roam around aimlessly

The verb *suluj- salaj* in Assamese is *g^huri- p^hura*.

In Bodo it is *adaj- gadaj berainai*.

40. ***sekolaj/ sukolaj***: leaving small parts of anything here and there

The verb *sekolaj/ sukolaj* in Assamese is *ot tot eruwa*.

In Bodo it is *ese ese garlajnai*.

41. ***sunda***: to cause to cease from crying, to comfort

The verb *sunda* in Assamese is *nisuka*.

In Bodo it is *burk^hainai*.

42. ***tidaj- daj***: to finish eating

The verb *tidaj- daj* in Assamese is *k^hai- ut^ha*.

In Bodo it is *zak^hajnai*.

43. ***tiylou- baylou***: to jump here and there out of pain

The verb *tiylou- baylou* in Assamese is *bihot zab mari p^hura*.

In Bodo it is *sanaizuj barzlonai*.

44. ***t^hilij- t^halaj***: turning to this and that side

The verb *t^hilij- t^halaj* in Assamese is *ep^hal- hip^hal zuwa*.

In Bodo it is *t^hilij- t^halaj*.

The verb which is used to refer to ‘turning to this and that side’ *t^hiliŋ- t^halaŋ* is same in both Sonowal Kachari and Bodo.

45. ***t^hilaŋ- laŋ***: to break and tear down

The verb *t^hilaŋ- laŋ* in Assamese is *b^haŋa- siŋa*.

In Bodo it is *baip^henai*.

46. ***tolaŋ- polaŋ***: to walk like a drunkard

The verb *tolaŋ- polaŋ* in Assamese is *ɔst^hir k^huz*.

In Bodo it is *k^hailaŋ- k^huilaŋ*.

47. ***telpuŋa***: to float

The verb *telpuŋa* in Assamese is *upɔŋa*.

In Bodo it is *guzaonai*.

48. ***toliudaŋ***: devoid of any means

The verb *toliudaŋ* in Assamese is *eku not^hɔka*.

In Bodo it is *nik^hauri*.

49. ***tohilan***: to finish

The verb *tohilan* in Assamese is *hek^h kɔra*.

In Bodo it is *p^huzubnai*.

In Dimasa it is *jamka*.

50. ***toŋa***: slowly getting healthy

The verb *toŋa* in Assamese is *ga kɔri ut^ha*.

In Bodo it is *p^huŋk^haŋnai*.

51. ***tanpota***: keeping an open ear

The verb *tanpota* in Assamese is *kan t^hiyo kɔra*.

In Bodo it is *k^huma- hunai*.

52. ***talos***: to observe, to notice

The verb *talos* in Assamese is *lak^hya kɔra*.

In Bodo it is *nuzuur- hunai*.

In Dimasa it is *naioba*.

53. ***t^hodra***: to cool down

The verb *t^hodra* in Assamese is *sesa huwa*.

In Bodo it is *suglainai*.

In Dimasa it is *gasainitik*.

54. ***dohai***: repeating the same word again and again

The verb *dohai* in Assamese is *bare- bare kuwa*.

In Bodo it is *bunp^henai*.

55. ***dihij- dipaŋ***: feeling sad

The verb *dihij- dipaŋ* in Assamese is *mon beya lɔga*.

In Bodo it is *duk^hu zàndài*.

In Dimasa it is *duku naŋba*.

56. ***d^hatuzuwa***: to die

The verb *d^hatuzuwa* in Assamese is *mɔra*.

In Bodo it is *t^huinai*.

In Dimasa it is *tika*.

57. ***d^huldaŋ- daŋ***: to be relaxed

The verb *d^huldaŋ- daŋ* in Assamese is *nisintɔ*.

In Bodo it is *duk^hu guiyi*.

In Dimasa it is *leŋma goba*.

58. ***d^hubaŋ***: to make empty

The verb *dhubaŋ* in Assamese is *k^hali*.

In Bodo it is *udaŋ*.

In the verb *d^hubaŋ* the bilabial plosive /b/ in the intervocalic position in Sonowal Kachari corresponds with the alveolar plosive /d/ in Bodo and the aspirated alveolar plosive /d^h/ takes the initial position.

59. ***nɪɟuwa***: to call

The verb *nɪɟuwa* in Assamese is *mata*.

In Bodo it is *leŋhornai*.

In Dimasa it is *luŋba*.

60. ***nihaha***: silent, still

The verb *nihaha* in Assamese is *nihɔbdɔ*.

In Bodo it is *nizum*.

In Dimasa it is *prik*.

61. ***niruwa***: to clear the jungle

The verb *niruwa* in Assamese is *habi sap^h kɔra*.

In Bodo it is *éusraŋnai*.

62. ***nibuka***: silent without speaking

The verb *nibuka* in Assamese is *mɔne mɔne t^hɔka*.

In Bodo it is *siri siri t^hanai*.

63. ***p^haŋ- p^huŋ***: to hide

The verb *p^haŋ- p^huŋ* in Assamese is *lukuwa*.

In Bodo it is *hak^homanai*.

In Dimasa it is *huiba*.

64. ***p^hiŋ- p^hiŋiya***: one who gets angry easily

The verb *p^hiŋ- p^hiŋiya* in Assamese is *k^hɔŋal*.

In Bodo it is *raga guusa*.

65. ***bit^hiŋ- bat^haŋ***: not determined

The verb *bithiŋ- bathaŋ* in Assamese is *t^hiraŋ nuhuwa*.

In Bodo it is *t^hiraŋt^ha guiyi*.

66. ***bibriŋ- babraŋ***: speaking in a way that no one can understand

The verb *bibriŋ- babraŋ* in Assamese is *gungun- gangan*.

In Bodo it is *bunbruŋ- banbraŋ*.

The verb *bibriŋ- babraŋ* in Sonowal Kachari corresponds with *bunbruŋ- banbraŋ* in Bodo. The front close vowel /i/ in Sonowal Kachari corresponds with the back close vowel /u/ in Bodo and the velar nasal /ŋ/ is deleted in between a vowel and a consonant sound in Sonowal Kachari.

67. ***bipaŋ***: to be puzzle, in a dilemma

The verb *bipaŋ* in Assamese is *dud^hur- mud^hur lɔga*.

In Bodo it is *adaŋ- gadaŋ*.

In Dimasa it is *gamaŋ- samaŋ*.

68. ***b^hosom***: damage

The verb *b^hosom* in Assamese is *nostɔ*.

In Bodo it is *gazri zàndài*.

69. ***b^homok***: to come out suddenly

The verb *b^homok* in Assamese is *totk^hyanat uluwa*.

In Bodo it is *okosmat uŋk^harnai*.

70. ***b^hadaŋ- daŋ***: to open widely

The verb *b^hadaŋ- daŋ* in Assamese is *k^huli rɔk^ha*.

In Bodo it is *k^heusranai*.

71. ***mit^hik- mat^hak***: shy

The verb *mit^hik- mat^hak* in Assamese is *lazukiya*.

In Bodo it is *lajislu*.

In Dimasa it is *laijiba*.

72. **hai**: quarrel

The verb *hai* in Assamese is *kajiya*.

In Bodo it is *nanzlainai*.

In Dimasa it is *namjalaiba*.

73. **habat^huri**: fatigue

The verb *habat^huri* in Assamese is *hairan*.

In Bodo it is *meṇnai*.

74. **hiska**: habit

The verb *hiska* in Assamese is *ɔb^hya*.

In Bodo it is *huda*.

In Dimasa it is *baisi*.

Thus, a total of 74 verbs in Sonowal Kachari which were collected during the field work have been listed above.

5.7. Noun

Some of the nouns in the Sonowal Kachari language are given below alongside their Assamese and Bodo counterparts.

1. **ok^hroy**: sky

The noun *ok^hroy* in Assamese is *akah*.

In Bodo it is *ok^hraṇ*.

In Dimasa it is *nokasao*.

The noun *ok^hroŋ* in Sonowal Kachari corresponds with *ok^hraŋ* in Bodo. The back high-mid vowel /o/ in Sonowal Kachari corresponds with the front open vowel /a/ in Bodo in between two consonant sounds, alveolar trill /r/ and velar nasal /ŋ/.

2. *ok^hapu*: moon

The noun *ok^hapu* in Assamese is *zun*.

In Bodo it is *ok^haphur*.

In Dimasa it is *dain*.

The noun *ok^hapu* in Sonowal Kachari corresponds with *ok^hap^hur* in Bodo. The unaspirated bilabial plosive /p/ in Sonowal Kachari corresponds with the aspirated bilabial plosive /p^h/ in Bodo and the alveolar trill /r/ is deleted in the final position after the back close vowel /u/ in Sonowal Kachari.

3. *oroŋa*: silly person

The noun *oroŋa* in Assamese is *buddhi-hin*.

In Bodo it is *ogyani*.

4. *amt^huŋ*: heart

The noun *amt^huŋ* in Assamese is *amt^hu*.

In Bodo it is *amait^hu*.

In Dimasa it is *baka*.

In Assamese and Sonowal Kachari, the diphthong /ai/ in Bodo is deleted in between two consonant sounds, bilabial nasal /m/ and aspirated alveolar plosive /t^h/ to form the noun *amt^hu* and in Sonowal Kachari the velar nasal /ŋ/ is added in the final position.

5. *at^han*: sex

The noun *athan* in Assamese is *liŋgɔ*.

In Bodo it is *at^hun*.

The noun *at^han* in Sonowal Kachari corresponds with *at^hun* in Bodo. The front open vowel /a/ in Sonowal Kachari corresponds with the back close vowel /u/ in Bodo in between two consonant sounds, aspirated alveolar plosive /t^h/ and alveolar nasal /n/.

6. *auk^ha*: a shoot, a sprout

The noun *auk^ha* in Assamese is *puk^ha*.

In Bodo it is *p^hen^hk^ha*.

7. *ekañ*: one side, one part, for example, one part of an areca nut

The noun *ekañ* in Assamese is *ep^hal*.

In Bodo it is *k^hanse*.

8. *eseklañ*: one part, one piece, for example piece of the pumpkin

The noun *eseklañ* in Assamese is *ep^hal*.

In Bodo it is *sit^hase*.

9. *ek^hetiya*: *ek^hetiya* is a small piece of cloth which the Sonowal Kachari women use for tying around their waist.

10. *eñt^ha*: burning coal

The noun *eñt^ha* in Assamese is *ɔñt^ha*.

In Bodo it is *ork^hi*.

11. *esok*: one side, one part, one slice, for example one slice of lemon

The noun *esok* in Assamese is *ep^hal*.

In Bodo it is *sit^hase*.

12. *uwadih*: news, information

The noun *uwadih* in Assamese is *batori*.

In Bodo it is *radab*.

13. *uwalis*: an owner, a master

The noun *uwalis* in Assamese is *goraki*.

In Bodo it is *biguma*.

14. *kaŋkrai*: crab

The noun *kaŋkrai* in Assamese is *kekora*.

In Bodo it is *k^haŋk^hrai*.

In Dimasa it is *kaŋkrai*.

The noun *kaŋkrai* in Sonowal Kachari and Dimasa corresponds with *k^haŋk^hrai* in Bodo. The unaspirated velar plosive /k/ in both Sonowal Kachari and Dimasa corresponds with the aspirated velar plosive /k^h/ in Bodo.

15. *kutoni*: back-biter

The noun *kutoni* in Assamese is *logɔniya luk*.

In Bodo it is *rai^homagra*.

16. *koitali*: a portico, a porch

The noun *koitali* in Assamese is *baranda*.

In Bodo it is *baranda*.

17. *komoni*: work

The noun *komoni* in Assamese is *kɔrmɔ*.

In Bodo it is *k^hamani*.

In Dimasa it is *kusi*.

The noun *komoni* in Sonowal Kachari corresponds with *k^hamani* in Bodo. The unaspirated velar plosive /k/ and back high-mid vowel /o/ in Sonowal Kachari corresponds with the aspirated velar plosive /k^h/ and front open vowel /a/ respectively in Bodo.

18. *k^hant^hal*: jackfruit

The noun *k^hant^hal* in Assamese is *kot^hal*.

In Bodo it is *k^hant^hal*.

In Dimasa it is *t^haip^hluŋ*.

Here it can be seen that the word for jackfruit, *k^hant^hal* is the same in both Sonowal Kachari and Bodo.

19. *k^hola*: husk

The noun *k^hola* in Assamese is *bak^oli*.

In Bodo it is *bigur*.

20. *k^hoka*: a fishing device made of bamboo

The noun *k^hoka* in Assamese is *t^huha*.

In Bodo it is *k^hok^ha*.

The noun *k^hoka* in Sonowal Kachari corresponds with *k^hok^ha* in Bodo. The unaspirated velar plosive /k/ in intervocalic position between back high-mid vowel /o/ and front open vowel /a/ in Sonowal Kachari corresponds with the aspirated velar plosive /k^h/ in Bodo.

21. *k^hason*: truthful person

The noun *k^hason* in Assamese is *h^oitya luk*.

In Bodo it is *suit^hu mansi*.

In Dimasa it is *gibi subuŋ*.

22. *k^hazon*: comb

The noun *k^hazon* in Assamese is *p^honi*.

In Bodo it is *k^hanzuŋ*.

In Dimasa it is *koz^oŋ*.

The back close- mid vowel /o/ in between two consonant sounds, alveolar fricative /z/ and velar nasal /ŋ/ in Sonowal Kachari and Dimasa corresponds with the back close vowel /u/ in Bodo. And the alveolar nasal /n/ gets deleted in Sonowal Kachari in between the front open vowel /a/ and alveolar fricative /z/.

23. *k^hadu*: thread

The noun *k^hadu* in Assamese is *huta*.

In Bodo it is *k^hundun̄*.

In Dimasa it is *k^hun*.

The noun *k^hadu* in Sonowal Kachari corresponds with *k^hundun̄* in Bodo. The front open vowel /a/ in Sonowal Kachari when preceded by the aspirated velar plosive /k^h/ corresponds with the back close vowel /u/ in Bodo and the alveolar nasal /n/ gets deleted after the front open vowel /a/ and the velar nasal /ŋ/ gets deleted in the final position in Sonowal Kachari.

24. *k^hes*: dirt, filth

The noun *k^hes* in Assamese is *letera*.

In Bodo it is *le^hra/ muila*.

In Dimasa it is *morba*.

25. *k^hepeŋ*: one of two branches forking out

The noun *k^hepeŋ* in Assamese is *p^hereŋni*.

In Bodo it is *p^hereŋga*.

26. *gopgaph*: showing off greatness, pomp, ostentation

The noun *gopgaph* in Assamese is: *b^hem*.

In Bodo it is: *duga*.

27. *gorop*: sharpness

The noun *gorop* in Assamese is *suka*.

In Bodo it is *dahar*.

In Dimasa it is *buba*.

28. *golok*: vomit

The noun *golok* in Assamese is *bomi*.

In Bodo it is *gubadui*.

In Dimasa it is *gababa*.

29. *gizəŋ*: a large knife

The noun *gizəŋ* in Assamese is *dah*.

In Bodo it is *sek^ha*.

In Dimasa it is *sisoŋ*.

30. *gideri*: foam, scum

The noun *gideri* in Assamese is *p^hen*.

In Bodo it is *p^hep^hon*.

31. *get^hal* (M), *get^hali* (F): proud man/ proud woman

The noun *get^hal/ get^hali* in Assamese is *gɔrbɔ*.

In Bodo it is *t^hip^hutla/ duga*.

32. *gula*: shop

The noun *gula* in Assamese is *dukan*.

In Bodo it is *gola*.

33. *ganu*: pillow

The noun *ganu* in Assamese is *garu*.

In Bodo it is *gandu*.

In Dimasa it is *gandu*.

The noun *ganu* in Sonowal Kachari corresponds with *gandu* in Bodo and Dimasa. The alveolar plosive /d/ in Bodo and Dimasa gets deleted in Sonowal Kachari between the alveolar nasal /n/ and the back close vowel /u/.

34. *git^hoisali*: graveyard

The noun *git^hoisali* in Assamese is *mɔrahali*.

In Bodo it is *gut^huisali/ maŋk^hor*.

In Dimasa it is *maŋklun*.

The noun *git^hoisali* in Sonowal Kachari corresponds with *gut^huisali* in Bodo. The front close vowel /i/ between velar plosive /g/ and aspirated alveolar plosive /t^h/ and it becomes back high-mid vowel /o/ between aspirated alveolar plosive /t^h/ and front close vowel /i/ in Sonowal Kachari corresponds with the back close vowel /u/ in Bodo.

35. *saŋ*: a bamboo shelf

The noun *saŋ* in Assamese is *saŋ*.

In Bodo it is *saŋ*.

The noun *saŋ* (a bamboo shelf) is the same for Sonowal Kachari, Bodo and Assamese.

36. *saŋsali*: naughty girl

The noun *saŋsali* in Assamese is *dustə*.

In Bodo it is *sonsol*.

In Dimasa it is *hamyaba*.

37. *zoru*: a rope

The noun *zoru* in Assamese is *rosi*.

In Bodo it is *zidun*.

In Dimasa it is *wadu*.

38. *tokoiya*: *tokoiya* is a piece of cloth which the Sonowal Kachari women use to tie on their head.

39. *tip^hai*: a fireplace

The noun *tip^hai* in Assamese is *zuihal*.

In Bodo it is *odab*.

40. *tikura*: in front

The noun *tikura* in Assamese is *agot*.

In Bodo it is *sigan*.

In Dimasa it is *saganha*.

41. *t^hila*: a lid

The noun *t^hila* in Assamese is *takoni*.

In Bodo it is *d^hakuun*.

In Dimasa it is *baglab*.

42. *tagoz*: strength

The noun *tagoz* in Assamese is *bol*.

In Bodo it is *bulu*.

43. *t^hareŋ*: a stem

The noun *t^hareŋ* in Assamese is *t^hari*.

In Bodo it is *t^hanai*.

The noun *t^hareŋ* in Sonowal Kachari corresponds with *t^hari* in Assamese and *t^hanai* in Bodo. The front high-mid vowel /e/ in Sonowal Kachari after the alveolar trill /r/ corresponds with the front close vowel /i/ in Assamese and the velar nasal /ŋ/ is added at the end of the noun in Sonowal Kachari.

44. *d^hɔŋali*: smoke

The noun *d^hɔŋali* in Assamese is *d^huŋa*.

In Bodo it is *uk^hundui*.

In Dimasa it is *waikudi*.

45. *noŋla*: a bar of a gateway

The noun *noŋla* in Assamese is *noŋɔla*.

In Bodo it is *soloŋk^ha*.

The noun *noŋla* in Sonowal Kachari corresponds with *noŋɔla* in Assamese. The back open- mid vowel /ɔ/ is deleted between the velar nasal /ŋ/ and the alveolar lateral /l/ in Sonowal Kachari.

46. *nihoni*: rice water

The noun *nihoni* in Assamese is *b^hator mar*.

In Bodo it is *k^ham mar*.

47. *nimolou*: rice grown from the seedling

The noun *nimolou* in Assamese is *kɔt^{hi}ya d^han*.

In Bodo it is *gu^{thi}ya*.

48. *potuwa*: banana leaf

The noun *potuwa* in Assamese is *kɔlpat*.

In Bodo it is *t^halir bilai*.

In Dimasa it is *lai*

49. *p^hutsai*: ash

The noun *p^hutsai* in Assamese is *sai*.

In Bodo it is *hangar*.

In Dimasa it is *tapla*.

50. *bailuŋ*: a priest

The noun *bailuŋ* in Assamese is *puzari*.

In Bodo it is *douri*.

In Dimasa it is *hojai*.

51. *bik^ha*: liver

The noun *bik^ha* in Assamese is *kɔliza*.

In Bodo it is *bik^ha*.

The word for liver in both Sonowal Kachari and Bodo is the same: *bik^ha*.

52. *b^habuki*: a pot used to keep wine

The noun *b^habuki* in Assamese is *kɔloh*.

In Bodo it is *k^holo*.

53. *b^hamuk*: spring

The noun *b^hamuk* in Assamese is *nizora*.

In Bodo it is *duimu*.

54. *b^huruli*: wind

The noun *b^huruli* in Assamese is *bɔtah*.

In Bodo it is *bar*.

In Dimasa it is *bar*.

55. *b^heu*: paddyfield

The noun *b^heu* in Assamese is *pɔt^har*.

In Bodo it is *dubli*.

In Dimasa it is *mayliŋ*.

56. *mudoi*: a trader

The noun *mudoi* in Assamese is *bepari*.

In Bodo it is *p^halaŋgi*.

57. *luŋ*: road

The noun *luŋ* in Assamese is *rasta*.

In Bodo it is *lama*.

In Dimasa it is *lama*.

58. *hoson- kha* (M), *hoson- khi* (F): deer

The noun *hoson-kha/ hoson-khi* in Assamese is *hɔrin*.

In Bodo it is *muɪ*.

In Dimasa it is *mirimsha*.

59. *ha*: land

The noun *ha* in Assamese is *mati*.

In Bodo it is *ha*.

In Dimasa it is *ha*.

Here, we can see that the noun *ha* is the same for Sonowal Kachari, Bodo and Dimasa.

60. *habuki*: a great storm which is named *Bɔrdɔisila* (in Assamese)

The noun *habuki* in Assamese is *bɔrdɔisila*.

In Bodo it is *bar-dui-sik^hula*.

61. *hiluk*: jungle

The noun *hiluk* in Assamese is *bɔn*.

In Bodo it is *hagrama*.

62. *hulaŋ*: long pointed thorn

The noun *hulaŋ* in Assamese is *kait*.

In Bodo it is *su*.

63. *hedali*: roof of a house

The noun *hedali* in Assamese is *ghɔr hal*.

In Bodo it is *uk^hum*.

Thus, a total of 63 nouns in Sonowal Kachari are listed above along with a gloss and its Assamese, Bodo and Dimasa counterparts.

5.8. Summary

From the collections of above data, it was found out that:

- i. The unaspirated alveolar plosive /k/ in Sonowal Kachari corresponds with the aspirated alveolar plosive /k^h/ in Bodo.

For example: Sonowal Kachari Bodo Gloss

okoŋa ok^hora impudent

keteŋa- keteŋ k^heteŋ- teŋ lean, all skin and bone

komoni k^hamani work

kaŋkrai k^haŋk^hrai crab

- ii. The unaspirated alveolar plosive /p/ in Sonowal Kachari corresponds with the aspirated bilabial plosive /p^h/ in Bodo.

Examples: Sonowal Kachari Bodo Gloss

sapraŋ sap^hra a flat or round piece

pak^hori p^hak^hri colourful

ok^hapu ok^hap^hur moon

- iii. The glottal fricative /h/ in Sonowal Kachari corresponds with the alveolar trill /r/ in Bodo.

Example: Sonowal Kachari Bodo Gloss

k^hahau- bihau k^harau- birau not feeling good in mind

- iv. The bilabial plosive /p/ in Sonowal Kachari corresponds with the bilabial plosive /b/ in Bodo.

Example: Sonowal Kachari Bodo Gloss

lut^hup- tup lut^hub- t^hub plumpy

- v. The front high-mid vowel /e/ in Sonowal Kachari either in initial position or the final position corresponds with the front open vowel /a/ in Bodo, but not in the midial position.

Example:	<u>Sonowal Kachari</u>	<u>Bodo</u>	<u>Gloss</u>
	abe- zabe	aba- zaba	saying meaningless words
	elai- et ^h ani	alai- at ^h ani	incivility

- vi. Also, the back high-mid vowel /o/ in Sonowal Kachari corresponds with the front open vowel /a/ in Bodo.

Example:	<u>Sonowal Kachari</u>	<u>Bodo</u>	<u>Gloss</u>
	komoni	k ^h amani	work
	ok ^h roŋ	ok ^h raŋ	sky

- vii. The front open vowel /a/ in Sonowal Kachari corresponds with the back close vowel /u/ in Bodo.

Example:	<u>Sonowal Kachari</u>	<u>Bodo</u>	<u>Gloss</u>
	at ^h an	at ^h un	gender

Some of the adjectives, verbs and nouns in Sonowal Kachari are the same as Bodo and Dimasa. Following are the examples:

<u>Sonowal Kachari</u>	<u>Bodo/ Dimasa</u>	<u>Gloss</u>
k ^h eŋ- k ^h eŋ	k ^h eŋ- k ^h eŋ (Bodo)	to speak harshly and with anger
hereŋ- reŋ	hereŋ- reŋ (Bodo)	not dense

thiliŋ- thalaŋ	thiliŋ- thalaŋ (Bodo)	turning to this and that side
k ^h ant ^h al	k ^h ant ^h al (Bodo)	jackfruit
bik ^h a	bik ^h a (Bodo)	liver
saŋ	saŋ (Bodo)	a bamboo shelf
ha	ha (Bodo & Dimasa)	land
kaŋkrai	kaŋkrai (Dimasa)	crab

All the above-mentioned list of Sonowal Kachari words can be of great help for further research, because they may be lost in a few years from now. A language lost completely can never be retrieved. Therefore, this thesis is a small attempt to collect and record the existing Sonowal Kachari words for further use and research.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

6.0. Introduction

This chapter deals with research findings, recommendations and further scope of research on Sonowal Kachari. This research work focused on the reclamation of the extinct language on the basis of the words, etc. the older generation people within the community remember till now. The aim of the research was to identify and document the indigenous belief system, knowledge and culture of the community and thereby try to identify some of the words which are likely to belong to Sonowal Kachari. The aim of the research was also to create awareness about the importance of preserving the tribal culture of the ethnic groups like the Sonowal Kacharis who have already lost their ancestral language.

6.1. Findings

The Sonowal Kacharis have a unique culture of their own. The Sonowal Kachari is a patriarchal, patrilocal and patrilineal society and they live in joint families.

One of their oldest folk songs, *Haidang Geet* mention the names of the seven major clans and the sub-clans. It was found that although *Haidang Geet* mentions the name of seven clans, only three clans are presently accepted by common consent. They are:

Ujani Kusia: *Ujani* means the upper part of a stream and *Kusia* may be the name of the area. Probably those groups of people who were residing in the upper part of the stream in Kusia were known as *Ujani Kusia*.

Namoni Kusia: *Namoni* means the lower part of a river or a country. So, those groups of people who were settling in the lower part of *Kusia*, probably got the name *Namoni Kusia*.

Dhuliyal: These groups of people might have also got their name from the place of settlement like any other clans, which is still unclear to the researcher.

The family tree of the Sonowal Kacharis include seven major *khels* (clans) which are divided into fourteen *bongshas* (sub-clans) and the *bongshas* are again sub-divided into several *pariyals* (families). It is worth mentioning that the Haidang Geet was recorded in a written format only in the year 1946 (Borah, B. et al. 2013: 251). It is possible that as the folk song was transmitted orally without being recorded in a written format until 1946, it might have lost its original form.

Granary is an indispensable part of every Sonowal Kachari home. Every house in the village contains a granary and is generally respectfully termed as *Lakhimi ghor* (Lakshmi's house). They have the tradition of conducting various rituals and customs relating to birth and death. They perform various pujas in the name of various gods and goddesses. They were originally the followers of Lord Shiba whom they address as *khiring khiring bathow* (Sri Lord Shiba). They have a specific place for worship called *sal* (temple) for worshipping Lord Shiba that is known as *bathow sal* (Lord Shiba temple). And they still continue to hold sacrificial worship to their traditional deities.

The Sonowal Kacharis are exceedingly rich in folk music and folk literature. They have a good collection of folk songs scattered in their community. The folk songs are divided into *geet* and *naam* according to their characteristics and topics. The *geet* is sung by the men, whereas the *naam* is sung by the women.

During the field study, it came to the researcher's notice that many people of the community want to identify themselves as members of the Sonowal Kachari community. But the sad part of the story is that they couldn't retain their ancestral language. It was found that

although they have shifted to the Assamese language, they speak a dialectal form of Assamese with a lot of phonological changes. Example:

<u>Sonowal Kachari</u>	<u>Assamese</u>	<u>Gloss</u>
ket ^h al	kət ^h al	jackfruit
gud ^h oli	gəd ^h uli	evening

Also, the velar nasal /ŋ/ is a very prominent sound in the negation. It was observed that almost all the negative forms of the verbs spoken by the Sonowal Kachari speakers end with the velar nasal sound. For example:

<u>Sonowal Kachari</u>	<u>Assamese</u>	<u>Gloss</u>
nezaŋ	na-za-i	NEG-go-3p (does not go)
nek ^h aŋ	na-k ^h a-o	NEG-eat-1p (does not eat)
noloŋ	no-lo-i	NEG-take-3p (does not take)
nokoroŋ	no-kor-e	NEG-do-3p (does not do)

Here, it can be seen that all the negative forms of verbs in Sonowal Kachari end in the velar nasal and vowel alteration can also be seen in other words.

Sonowal Kachari has the same first-person singular pronoun *aŋ* as Bodo and Dimasa. Both Sonowal Kachari and Dimasa have the same first-person plural pronoun, *jiŋ* whereas it is *zuŋ* in Bodo. The third-person singular pronoun in both Sonowal Kachari and Dimasa are the same, i.e., *bo* but *bi* in Bodo. Some similarity in terms of personal pronouns between the Sonowal Kachari, Dimasa and Bodo was noticed. It was also found that Sonowal Kachari shares similarities in body part words and kinship terms with Bodo and Dimasa. The following examples are illustrative:

<u>Sonowal Kachari</u>	<u>Bodo</u>	<u>Gloss</u>
salai	salai	tongue
udui	udui	belly
ai	ai	mother
ada	ada	elder brother

<u>Sonowal Kachari</u>	<u>Dimasa</u>	<u>Gloss</u>
muk ^h aŋ	muk ^h aŋ	face
yasi	yasi	finger
ada	ada	elder brother

6.2. Sonowal Kachari: What Led their Language to Death?

The Sonowal Kacharis with a population of around 3 lakhs residing predominantly in the upper parts of Assam in the districts of Lakhimpur, Dhemaji, Tinsukia, Dibrugarh, Sibsagar, Golaghat and Jorhat survive presently only as a community. They have completely lost their language and presently the members of the community speak the Assamese language. The question arises, what happened to their language, what are the causes that led their language to death? There can be many reasons. The Sonowals share a close affinity with the Boros in terms of their tradition, culture and religion etc. In that manner, they should have had a close similarity with the Bodo language. But such similarities in the language cannot be found anymore. In the mouthpiece of the Sonowal Kacharis *Darpan*, Jagat Chandra Hazarika wrote an article entitled, *Sonowal Kachari luptyaprai* (nearly extinct) *bhasa* (language) *udharaa'r* (rescue) *prahongikota* (relevance) *aru* (and) *eiya* (its) *prayijaniyata* (necessity) [The relevance and its importance of rescuing the nearly extinct language, Sonowal Kachari],

where he tried to discuss the importance of reviving the language and gave some examples of how some very few native words are still being heard among the Sonowal Kachari speakers. For example, in the following sentence:

*ou lowamukha **monabili** hol, **giding-gadang** kui nethakbe, za za mahare **ningaise***

The words like *monabili* (night), *giding-gadang* (roaming here and there), *ningaise*, (calling) are Kachari words. However, such words cannot be heard among the younger generations anymore.

Probably, the Sonowal Kacharis couldn't realise the importance of their own language and started speaking the Assamese language, which had a greater advantage than other minor languages in Assam. It is possible that they had a negative attitude towards their own language and started speaking the dominant language Assamese and gradually forgot their own language to the extent of losing it completely. Political reasons can also be one of the factors for their language loss. The arrival of the Tai Ahoms and the subsequent battles and power struggles with the Kacharis may have weakened the social structure of the Sonowals. As a result, the Sonowals along with the other tribes probably had to learn Assamese after the Ahom king made it the official language during their rule. Though Assamese was primarily used as the lingua franca of the Ahom kingdom, later it may have engulfed the local languages and gradually took the place of the mother tongue of the Sonowals. Also, due to the geographical location of settlers, they could have lost their language. They were alienated by the geographical location from other Kachari tribes and lived among the majority Assamese group. As a result, they got assimilated with them in every way which resulted in their assimilation of the language as well and they lost their language. Although exact reasons for their loss of language cannot be determined, these can be some of the probable reasons why they lost their language.

6.3. Limitations of the research

As research is a continuous process and no research can be complete in itself, the present research too has its limitations. This thesis does not pretend to be exhaustive but offers a small contribution in reclaiming a language that has not been documented before. There is a lot more room for studying the language.

Due to certain restrictions imposed by the society, the researcher could not witness in person and record all the rituals and pujas that the Sonowal Kacharis observe and the animal sacrifices that they offer, which would have been a treasure for the present research and an added value for future researchers. As the language does not have any speaker left who knows and speaks the language fluently, the researcher had to rely heavily on the metadata given by some native well-wishers of the language and the data given by a few rememberers of the language. In future, the researcher would like to collaborate with the community leaders and scholars who would like to carry out research on Sonowal Kachari and try her best to cover all those aspects that the present research could not deal with.

6.4. Recommendations

- Measures should be taken by the expert and the leaders of the group to promote awareness of the real consequences of losing a language among the members of this community. Every member of the community should consider their language as their identity as loss of language leads to a lost world.
- The government should make a scheme for researching and documenting this language. Still, there are enough rooms left to discover more Sonowal Kachari words least it gets too late. Government should instil the desire among the arising linguists to carry on further research in this language by providing adequate financial assistance.
- Sensitize the community members to use the native words.

- Signboards using Sonowal Kachari words should be used.

6.5. Summary

This chapter tries to bring to light some of the probable reasons how the Sonowal Kacharis have lost their language. It also admits some of the limitations of the present work. It concludes by recommending some steps to be taken by linguists and by the government to keep this tribe's tradition alive and revive the Sonowal Kachari language.

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Appendix

Some snaps of field work



Bhoral ghor (granary). An indispensable part of Sonowal Kachari household.



Khoka (a fishing device)



A picture taken along with the Sonowal Kachari women.



Informant: Bhaben Sonowal



Sonowal Kachari woman weaving cloth.



Baitho mandir at Dhemaji district.



Informant: Nandeswar Kachari



Baitho mandir at Tinsukia



Informant: Jagat Hazarika



Sonowal Kachari men

Reclamation of Sonowal Kachari: An Extinct Tibeto- Burman Language

by Jenny Merry Daimari

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An Ethnolinguistic Study of Sonowal Kachari

Jenny Merry Daimari

PhD, Centre for Endangered Languages and Mother Tongue Studies

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Abstract

This paper attempts to provide an ethnolinguistic profile of Sonowal Kachari, a language once spoken in Assam. The Sonowal Kachari belongs to the Mongoloid race of people. They are predominantly found in the districts of Lakhimpur, Dhemaji, Tinsukia, Dibrugarh, Sibsagar, Goalpara and Jorhat districts of Upper Assam. The total population of the area under the jurisdiction of Sonowal Kachari Autonomous Council, which comprises of 450 villages according to Survey of India Census Report, 2011 is about 3,12,656. The Sonowals share close affinity with the Boros and Dimasas in terms of religion, deities and clan structure. The arrival of the Tai Ahoms and the subsequent battles and power struggles with the Kacharis weakened the social structure of the Sonowals. As a result, the Sonowals along with other tribes most probably had to learn Assamese after the Ahom king made it the official court language during their rule. Though Assamese was primarily used as the lingua franca of the Ahom kingdom, later it engulfed the local languages and gradually became the mother tongue of the Sonowals.

The present paper would examine the historical evolution of Sonowal Kachari's identity as well as about their language and culture. The study is based on the fieldwork conducted in the districts of Sivasagar, Dhemaji and Tinsukia districts of Assam. Data has been collected through interviews, questionnaire, participant observation as well as relevant literature of this area.

Keywords: ethnolinguistic, Sonowal Kachari, historical evolution, Assam.

Ethnic profile of the Sonowal Kacharis of Assam

- *Jenny Merry Daimari*, PhD Scholar, Centre for Endangered Languages and Mother Tongue Studies,
University of Hyderabad.

The present paper, Ethnic Profile of the Sonowal Kacharis of Assam is studied through field study carried out in the districts of Dhemaji, Namrup and Tinsukia districts of Assam. The total population of the Sonowal Kacharis according to the Survey of India Census Report 2001, is about 2,35,881. The Sonowal Kacharis have completely lost their language and presently the members of the community speak the Assamese language. The study depicts the origin, culture, physical appearance, dress pattern, religion and festivals, and rituals and customs of the Sonowal Kacharis. They have a patriarchal family structure in which the father is the head and the inheritance of property is through the male line. The Sonowal Kachari tribe, though with time is subjected to the changing economic, political and religious conditions, yet it maintains its traditional culture.

Keywords : Sonowal Kachari, Mongoloid, khiring khiring bathow, haidang huchari, Bihu, baitho puja.

Introduction :

The Sonowal Kachari belongs to the Mongoloid racial group of people. They are one of the tribes of Assam who belong to the family of the Bodo tribe. They are predominantly found in the districts of Lakhimpur, Dhemaji, Tinsukia, Dibrugarh, Sibsagar, Golaghat, and Jorhat of Upper Assam. The total population of the Sonowal Kachari according to the Survey of India Census Report, 2001, is about 2, 35,881.

This paper is an attempt to throw light on the origin, culture, physical appearance, dress pattern, religion and festivals, and rituals and customs of the Sonowal Kacharis.

Origin of the Sonowal Kachari tribe :

To track the origin of the term 'Sonowal' or to know how this group of people came to be known as 'Sonowal' is difficult. Like many other tribal communities, the Sonowal Kacharis too does not have a written record and therefore the origin of the tribe lies obscure and we have rely on their folktales, legends and traditions to trace the origin of the tribe.

Over the period of time, different scholars have attempted to give their views regarding the origin of the term 'Sonowal.' L. A. Waddel (1901: 38) remarks that, "The Sonowal or Sodial are mostly gold washers in the Lakhimpur district in upper Assam." In his view, the gold washers of Sadiya always displayed superior ability in gold collection, and those groups of people associated with the task of collecting gold came to be known as Sonowals. However, this theory is rejected by most of the Sonowals on the ground that no folk tales or songs of the Sonowal Kachari speak of this profession whereas some other scholars speculated that they were the same group of Kachari people such as Dimasa and Boro. They later came to be known by different names due to geographical separation, which eventually led to developing different cultures though the core remained the same. According to other schol-

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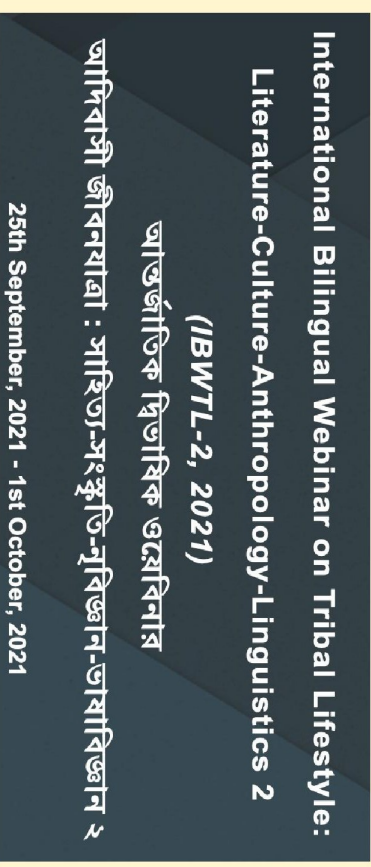
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Month & Year: April, 2016
Semester: II

S.No	Regn.No.	Name of the Student	Course No. Credits - 4	Course No. Credits - 4	Course No. Credits - 4
			HL - 811	HL-812	HL-813
1	15HLP01	JENNY MERRY DAIMARI	PASS	PASS	PASS
2	15HLP02	RAHAMAT SHAIKH	PASS	PASS	PASS

Course No. Title of the Course

HL- 811 Advance Topics in Sociolinguistics
HL- 812 Technologies for Language Documentation
HL- 813 Topic Related Supervisor (Monograph) (Project Report)

Dated: 13.05.2016

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Dr. N. Ram
Controller of Examinations 13-5-16

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