

Marriage Types and Rituals of Adi Tribe of Lower Diabang Valley District Arunachal Pradesh

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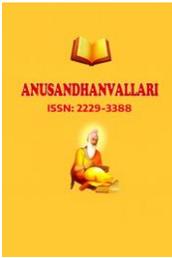
Abstract

The paper discusses the marriage systems used by the Adi tribe and the marriage rituals. The Adi are a large indigenous tribe of Arunachal Pradesh that have their origin of Abotani and fall under the subgroup the Abotani sub group the name Abor Origin referring to their identity as the wild man. The common name Adi that denotes hill people and has subgroups of Padams Minyongs Milangs, Pasis. Boris, Bokars, Tangams, Shimongs. Ashings, Karkos, Pailibos Ramos Panges and Komkars. The other groups have four sub-tribes which is Galos Pailibos, Ramos and Bokars. Adi population is mostly confined in the East Siang Lower Dibang valley Upper Siang Siang Shi- Yomi parts of Lohit and Namsai district. The key area of study is Lower Dibang valley district. The Adis have traditionally adhered to the native Donyi- polo faith whereby Donyi means Sun and Polo means Moon that symbolize as the supreme cosmic powers. This belief system influences rituals of marriage between the Adis; it shows their values social structure. However, in the recent times due to the spread of Christianity some new norms of marriage have been introduced among a segment of the tribe on the basis of Christian norms. The paper draws attention to the persistence of marriage ceremonies in traditional manner as well as transformations that have occurred in Adi society as a result of religious conversion.

Keywords: Adi Marriage Rituals Donyi Polo, Arunachal Pradesh.

Introduction

Marriage is a very important social institution that has been in existence among the human societies since times immemorial. It gives physical relationship between men and women social recognition and defines rights and liabilities about family life reproduction and social continuity. Marriage has been characterized in different aspects by scholars. According to Westernmarck (1921), marriage was a socially or legally authorized association between a man or women and another man and woman with particular privileges and obligations to the spouses and to the kids. Likewise Notes, and Queries, in Anthropology (1951), equated marriage to a union that sanctioned offspring within a socially acceptable structure whereas Murdock (1949), stressed that marriage was a component of family system that includes sharing residence economic co-operation and procreation. According to Gillin and Gillin the marriage is a method of creating a family of procreation which is accepted by society. Hence marriage is a ceremony through which two human beings declare their union legal and legal in front of the society.



Twenty seven (27) significant tribes are found in Arunachal Pradesh, where the Adi tribe is one of the largest indigenous groups. The Adis are a part of the Tani group that includes the Apatani Galo Nyishi, and Tagin tribes that are all descendants of a common ancestor Abotani. The Adis are distributed mostly in the East Siang Upper Siang West Siang Siang Lower Dibang Valley and some areas of the Lohit district. The Adis are traditionally known as dwellers of hills or mountains are of Mongoloid descent and have a rich cultural heritage which is reflected in myths legends folklore and practices. Adi mythology has it that Tani or Abotani is considered to be the offspring of humankind.

Monogamy is the socially desirable type of marriage in the Adi society polygamy is uncommon and is not encouraged in this society. Clan exogamy is highly upheld and breaking of the same is a punishable social crime. The Adis have different types of marriage which are arranged marriage, love marriage and exchange marriage. As a social form of organization they are mostly patriarchal and patrilineal and the descent is followed through the male line. The family is more of nuclear but there are joint families. The lowest societal unit is referred to as Rutum and the father is the leader of the family and this is where he is in charge of financial and family welfare.

There are also social institutions that are well established in Adi society. The youth dormitory system is significant in terms of socialization whereby *Mushup* (boys), and *Rasheng* (girls), are still used as recreation and passing of the culture. Also there is the *Kebang*, which is the traditional village council that consists of village elders as an important institution of governance conflict resolution and control of social life. Collectively these institutions influence the practice in marriage and strengthen the socio-cultural structure under which marriage is practiced by the Adi tribe.

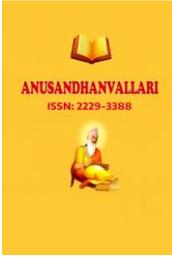
Objective of the study

The main aim of the research is to observe and record the different forms of marriage among the Adi tribe of the Lower Dibang Valley district Arunachal Pradesh. The paper particularly dwells on the Adi tribe that has been living in this part so that to learn the current pattern of marriage and their socio cultural relevance.

Research Methodology

The district of Lower Dibang Valley district was used in this study particularly in the Adi tribe living in the area in the district of Arunachal Pradesh. The research is founded on the primary and secondary data. The researcher used primary data collection by way of conducting extensive field visits whereby the researcher was able to record the types of marriage and the rituals related to marriage. Such approaches allowed the researcher to acquire personal information on the old and new changes in marriage practices.

The secondary data were based on books academic journals research articles and other internet sources that are related to the topic to enrich the field data and to get a wider perspective of the area of study and the available literature on the topic.



Area of the Study

The field work was carried out in the Lower Dibang Valley, district of Arunachal Pradesh which has Roing as its district headquarter. It occupies a land area of about 3900 square kilometers. The 2011 census of India shows that the entire population of the district is 54080. The Adi and Idu (Mishmi), tribes are the major inhabitants in the district. The study area was the Lower Dibang Valley district due to the high representation of the Adi community that forms the major concern of the current study.

Marriage among the Adi Tribe

The most common and acceptable type of marriage in the Adi society is monogamy. The situation of polygamy is very few and discouraged. Breaking of clan regulations is taken to be a serious crime. Thus, the strictness of the clan exogamy is observed. Adi community has many different types of marriage such as arranged marriage, love marriage, marriage by elopement, levirate marriage, sororate marriage, probationary marriage, child marriage and exchange marriage (Ape) (Roy 1997).

Arranged marriage (*Ane abu tombinam*).

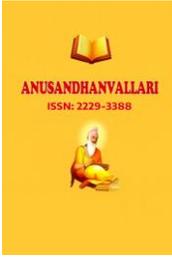
This type of marriage is considered to be the best and the socialized type of marriage. Under this system the parent of the groom or the person who is mediating gets to the family of the bride and negotiates the marriage. When the proposal is accepted the groom family presents *Kepel* a mixture of local rice beer (*Apong*), squirrels (*Lippo*), and ginger (*Takey*), to the parents of the bride as a sign of their cooperation. This ceremony legitimizes the involvement. After this the groom goes to the house of the bride in a ceremony called *Makbo Ginam*. Four or five years after the bride move on from her parent's home and moves to a place where her husband lives.

Love marriage (*Mirik Sunam*)

Love marriage is now becoming very popular especially among the young people. In this instance the two couples make known their decision to get married to their parents. Under the parental consent *Kepel* is given up by the family of the groom to that of the bride and then the marriage is solemnized and the couple is then socially accepted as husband and wife in the event where parental consent is not provided but the couple still goes ahead to marry. Nonetheless this reconciling process usually takes time especially once a child is born and they are both accepted by the families.

Elopement marriage (*Duknyok Bosunam*).

Marriage by elopement is the marriage that is created without the consent of parents. Such marriages though socially disapproved do occur and with time they could be accepted through reconciliation.



Levirate or Remarriage of Widows.

Adi society refers to a woman whose husband is dead as *Mika Meeyeng*. In the case of natural death the widowhood is termed as *Mika Meeyang*, where the widow is not remarried within three years. When the death occurs untimely or unnaturally which is known as *Telang Meeyang*, the mourning period is five years since it is believed that the spirit of the dead one is still near the remaining spouse at the period.

In Adi society Widow Remarriage is accepted and it is a tradition that is done through levirate marriage where the widow marries one of her dead husband brothers regardless of their age with the consent of the clan elders. The individual who takes care of the widow is referred to as a *Meeyang Kana* whom in most cases is staying in her home. The widows used to be prohibited to remarry beyond the family or clan of the husband and failure to do so meant that a traditional compensation fee was paid known as *Nyamdum*. Marriage is done between levirates without exchanging any *kepel* or other marriage rituals. In case of a widow refusing to remarry she still lives in the household of her husband administers the family property and takes care of her children thus being respected and acknowledged by the clan.

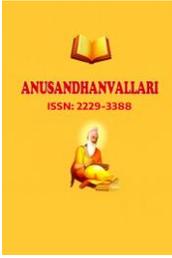
Sororate Marriage

The cultural society where the man marries a sister of his wife is known as sororate marriage that is not very common in the Adi society. Sororate polygamy is very infrequent and only observed in specific circumstances e.g. childlessness or death of spouse mainly to secure the continuation of the lineage and child-care. These marriages initiates with direct consent of the woman and her parents and generally not carried out with a lot of marriage ceremonies but more of a practical view than a ritual.

Child marriage

Child marriage used to be an ancient custom in the high society of Adi society; and it was quite often done against the will of the children. The practice was also meant to obtain brides at an early age belonging to respectable clans and marry them exclusively. It took place in three forms and they were between two pre- pubescent children between a boy child and pubescent girls and the most common between a girls child and a young man.

Betrothal was closed by means of payment of *Nyameng Kepel* (bride price), and was regarded as binding where engagements took a maximum of five years. Even though a marriage relationship could be broken through mutual rejection patriarchy limited the right of choice by women. The girl could not do much to object to this unless they paid compensation (*Nyamdum*) and when violated they received a fine (*Yopot Ajeng*), a matter controlled by the *Dolung Kebang* (village council). These rituals are gendered forms of power relations in the Adi society (Roy 1960).



Exchange marriage (*Ape*)

The exchange marriage which is locally referred to as *Ape* is one of the most unique forms of traditional marriages among the Adis. This practice is more often practiced in the past among the rich families where sisters are exchanged between two men hence creating a mutual marriage alliance between the families. An offer to such marriage is usually initiated by the family of the bride especially when a family has a marriageable daughter and yet has no means or social capital to offer to get a wife to her son.

Exchange marriage is also manifested in traditional youth dormitory system wherein alliances can be started by interactions amid the *Rasheng* (girls dormitory), and *Mushup* (boys dormitory). In cases where both parties are of suitable marriageable age the marriages will be conducted in tandem where in the case maturity is not attained the marriages will be postponed. Although *ape* was aimed to strengthen kinship relationships and guarantee the continuity of the lineage it was sometimes compulsory and deprived individuals of the choice which proved to be unethical.

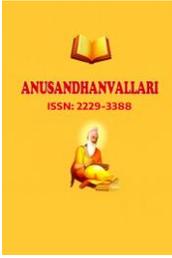
Conclusion

The research on marriage type and rituals of the Adi tribe of lower dibang valley district Arunachal Pradesh it is understood that the marriage in the Adis is not simply a personal union but it is a socio-cultural institution of survival that regulates the kinship relations social organization and continuity in the community. The result indicates that monogamy is the most common type of marriages and that polygamy is also a rare occurrence that is discouraged in society. Clan exogamy and the importance of customary law are strictly followed and this highlights the importance of a collective nature of marital alliances in Adi society.

Types of marriage: arranged marriage (*Ane abu tobinam*), love marriage (*Mirik sunam*), elopement (*Duknyok bosunam*), levirate and sororate marriage child marriage and exchange marriage (*Ape*). It indicates the flexibility of Adi marital arrangements to social economic and demographic factors. *Kepel* and *Makbo Ginam* are some rituals that emphasize the role of reciprocity alliances and ritual sanction in the legitimization of marriages. The *Kebang* still important institutions that control marriages and conflict resolution.

At the same time the study has pointed the significant shifts in marriage patterns through education modernization and conversion to religion and specifically the role of Christianity which has brought the simplification of rituals and more focus on the individual choice. Child marriage and exchange marriage are no more and rather love marriages are more accepted and widespread. Therefore marriage among the Adis of Lower Dibang Valley is dynamic in the sense that the traditional practices do not override the changing social values.

This study contributes to a better understanding of indigenous marriage systems and emphasizes the need to document and preserve traditional knowledge while recognizing ongoing transformations within tribal societies.



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