

## **AN ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY ON TRADITIONAL MARIETAL RITUALS & PRACTICES AMONG BHUMIJ TRIBE OF BANKURA DISTRICT, WEST BENGAL, INDIA**

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### **ABSTRACT:**

Marriage is the physical, mental and spiritual union of two souls. It brings significant stability and substance to human relationships. Every ethnic community follows their own traditional marietal rituals and practices. Any ethnographic study of a ethnic group is incomplete without the knowledge of marietal practices of that community. So, the main objectives of the present study is to find out the types of marriages which was held among this Bhumij tribes. Also o find out the rules of marriage of this village. Know about the detail description about Bhumij traditional marriage rituals and practices. And also to find out the step by step marital rituals practices of this tribal population- from Pre-marital rituals to the Post-marital rituals practices. Mainly case study method is used for primary data collection. Case study method is very much useful for collect a very detail data from a particular individual. This method is very much applicable for this present study. Another method is observation method. It is simply used when primary data were collected. Observation method also very much applicable for this study. The Bhumij tribe of Barameytala village mainly practice the arrange marriage system, and their rules of marriage is *Endogamy*. The people only marry their insider's member. This way they maintain their social unity and tribal purity. After study on their details of marital ritual practices, it is clear that till now they practices their own traditional rituals and this such unique rituals are followed by generations after generations.

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**INTRODUCTION:**

Marriage is a relation of man and woman which is recognized by custom or law and involves certain rights and duties both in the case of the parties entering the union.

It is said that marriages are made in heaven and celebrated on earth. The popular belief is true to many extent, because it is a special bond shared between two souls, who tie the wedding knot after promising to be companions for a lifetime. It is the physical, mental and spiritual union of two souls. It brings significant stability and substance to human relationships, which is otherwise incomplete. It plays a crucial role in transferring the culture and civilization from one generation to the other, so that the human race is prospered. The institution of marriage is beneficial to the society as a whole, because it is the foundation of the family, which in turn is the fundamental building block of the society.

While the concept of marriage remains the same across the globe, the way of solemnizing it differs extensively. Different laws have been formulated to legalize the ceremony, which proves to be an important turning point in one's life. Apart from the laws of marriages, the rituals following during the ceremony are in total contrast to each other. Something that is seen in the western countries cannot be witnessed in other nations in the developing world, primarily due to the contrast in the lifestyle and religious beliefs. One of the prime reasons for the paramount status of marriage is that it is the license for two individuals to live together in a society, without much limitations. Coming to the subcontinent of India, marriage encompasses a number of meanings, apart from being a legalized way of uniting two people. It bears a lot of social significance. This is primarily because in India, marriage has been considered a way to bring the families of two individuals closer. Since the ancient times, marriages have been celebrated as ceremonious occasions, just like the religious festivals, wherein a number of rituals and customs are followed. A number of ceremonies are observed before, during and after wedding. The key to successful marriage is love, understanding, mutual respect, trust, commitment and togetherness. While many couples are able to find all the key ingredients in their marital relationships, others find one element or more lacking in their bond. This gives rise to consequences that are not always expected, or desired. This is a reason why a number of couples face adverse consequences, like divorce. One of the visible reasons why married couples find marriage as an

intimidating bond is that they face a number of problems, while being in the relationship. Lack of trust, mutual respect, love and understanding contribute to the deterioration of the bond.

### **LITERATURE REVIEW:**

There are many works were done in anthropological literature based on marital rituals or marriage practices in different tribal group. One of such example is that study on Bodo tribe reveals that, Bodo are exogamy in culture. In Bodo community marriage takes an important role to establish a family. The marriage is celebrated by social order in Bodo society. In this study it focused on the marriage system among Bodo society. (P.Brahma 2017). Another study based on a very uncommon marriage, consanguineous marriages in rural Tamil Nadu. Consanguineous marriages were common particularly in the south India. In this context, it was important to have population based studies on the prevalence of consanguineous marriages and the pregnancy outcomes of consanguineous marriages. This study has been carried out to estimate the prevalence of consanguineous marriages and its types among women aged between 15 and 49 years and to assess the association between consanguineous marriage and pregnancy outcome. This study found that the prevalence of consanguineous marriages is comparatively higher in south India. Pregnancy outcomes such as abortions, stillbirths, congenital anomaly, and neonatal and infant deaths were found to be more common in consanguineous marriages. Consanguinity should be discouraged by giving health education to the public about the adverse effects of interrelated marriages (M. Saleem, 2015). Another paper reveals that with the help of secondary data, tries to find out the role of new mediator that is matrimonial advertisements in selecting mate,(Dr. M. Hundal, 2015).

### **METHODOLOGY:**

Mainly case study method is used for primary data collection. Case study method is very much useful for collect a very detail data from a particular individual. This method is very much applicable for this present study. Another method is observation method. It is simply used when primary data were collected. Observation method also very much applicable for this study.

### **OBJECTIVES OF PRESENT STUDY:**

1. To find out the types of marriages which was held among this Bhumij tribes.
2. To find out the rules of marriage of this village.
3. To find out the detail description about the Bhumij traditional marriage rituals and practices.
4. To find out the step by step marital rituals practices of this tribal population- from Pre-marital rituals to the Post-marital rituals practices.

### **Types of marriage practices among the bhumij tribe of barameytala village:**

There are several types of marriage held on Barametyala village, these are given below-

1. Arrange Marriage
2. Love Marriage
3. Widow Marriage
4. Marriage by elopement
5. Marriage by Capture:

But till now it is very popular in this village is the Arrange marriage. Widow marriage was not seen.

### **Rules of marriage practices among the bhumij tribal group:**

In this village mainly in Bhumij tribal community their rules of marriage is Endogamy.

Endogamy:

Hoebel (1958) defined it as 'the social rule' that requires a person to marry to within a culturally defined group of which he is a member. It is much less common in exogamy. By endogamy a society trends to maintain the sense of unity within the group.

In Barametyala village the Bhumij people mainly marry their own culturally defined group. They do not marry out siders. So, their rules of marriage is endogamy.

In this village mainly arrange marriage is seen, this type of marriage rituals are described below:-

**PRE-MARITAL RITUALS:*****Negotiation:***

In this village each father of groom had been found to search their daughter-in-law himself. If he manages to find a girl who meets his son's quality and of same family stander, directly approach to her father. If father of bride and other members of that family agreed then they invite his son to their house. Next one day the son himself and his friends and brother-in-law goes to see the bride at her house. If the groom and the bride likes each other then they say to their father about their liking. Then the father of groom comes with 1-21 members of their family to the house of the bride. In this particular day the father of groom asks many questions about her home making skills, handcraft, cooking etc. Next the father of groom invites all the bride's family members at his house. In response one day the father of bride come with 1-21 members of his family to the house of groom. In the noon they have lunch in this house with preparation of fishes, meat and others.

Meanwhile later in the absence of groom and bride a meeting is arranged by two their fathers to decide the bride price, this is also called "Kaneya Pan". The "Kaneya Pan" has been fixed rupees 250-500. The bride price is fixed on the depend of the economic condition of the bride's father. If the father of bride is very poor then the father of groom give him Rs.500 as a "Kaneya Pan". Without bride price the marriage will be ceased.

***Enumeration of Marriage:***

On this day Brahmin come and enumerate to find similarity with the bride and groom 'Rashi' and 'Gotras'(clan). the enumerate starts off with the first latter of name e.g. Dolgobinda( groom) and Arati(bride), it will be –

*Da* = Gemini

*Aa* = Aries

***Varna Kut:***

It will enumerate with the help of book 'Panjika'. In this day verification about the 'Varna' is also occurred. In Bhumij tribal community there are four 'Varna' is present these are- Brahmin,

Kshatriya, Vaishya, Sudra. This enumeration is called as “Varna Kut”. Before the marriage this “Varna Kut” also occur. Without this Enumeration marriage can not happen. The rules of this system is-

Always the Varna of groom has to be high with the Varna of bride. If the groom is low Varna and the bride is high varna then the marriagelife of them not happy. so, it will be rejected. If the groom is Bramni Varna or Kshatriya Varna and bride is Sudra Varna then it will be very happy family and it is called “Raj-Jotak”. If the bride is Vaishya and the groom is Sudra Varna then it will also be rejected. If the enumeration matches then the day comes about the “Kaneya Pan”.

***The day of giving “Kaneya Pan”:***

Next one day from groom family 3 members come to bride’s house for “Kaneya Pan”. Around the “Tulsi Mancha” there are some designs which locally known as ‘Alpana’ and spread the water of cow-dung. In this spot bride price is given to the father of bride. From bride’s family a bronze tray is kept beside the “Tulsi Mancha” which consists of a earthen lamp, paddy and grasses, this tray is called “Uthhan Thala”. When groom’s family give the amount then it will be called “Pan Basano Holo”. The members of groom’s family one by one come to the beside of ‘Tulsi Mancha’ and subjugation the ‘Tulsi mancha’. From bride’s family 3 women including two married and one unmarried has also subjugate to the ‘Tulsi Mancha’. The groom’s member says to the bride’s member that the bride price to be given you and you will be count it. The 3 women count it and says with joking that it will be less or more or this amount is rejected. Groom’s family give 1-5 k.g. sweet into this tray, 3 women take this tray on their head and sparkling the water around of “Tulsi mancha” 3 times and then they enter the main room. After some time sweets distributed among all members. In this day the marriage date is fixed with the help of ‘Panjika’. The family of groom gives 3-11 saree to the bride’s family.

***The day of Ashirbad:***

The day of Ashirbad comes before 4-5 days from the day of marriage with the help of ‘Panjika’. At first the family of groom come to the bride’s family and the senior member of groom blesses the bride with the paddy, grasses, and gives the drop of sandal to her forehead and gives gift about their capacity like silver jingling anklet, silver earrings, or seldom gift of gold of those

particular things is common. Next one day the family of bride come house of groom and they also blesses with this same things and gives a ring as blessing and they takes some food in this house.

***Adhivas:***

The previous day of marriage ceremony barber comes and cuts the nails and to apply an ointment of lac-dye to the women. Then all take bath. This way they believe that their body become pure. The bride and groom also cut their nails by barber and then they take bath after that they take food. This previous day of marriage is called as- Adhivas.

***Gay-Holud Ceremony:***

Earlier days the 'Gay-Holud' ceremony start before three days of marriage. And this is occurred at the time of evening. It is another very important ritual of the marriage but now this system has changed. This ceremony is occurred on the marriage day in 3 times. This way Gay-Holud ceremony is held.

**RITUALS ON THE DAY OF MARRIAGE:**

Tea and break first is served in the morning. than rituals starts. Firstly three women two married and one unmarried help the groom to take him bath properly. These three ladies along with others go to the nearest holy water. the sister-in-law of the groom takes him into the pond and with the help of others they make him bath. Before this the soil beside the pond is worshipped. After worshipping the pond itself the groom's mother offers oil, vermilion and myrobalam and turmeric to the pond and says "mother let water is given". Here the priest of 'Garam devta' is presented. The priest fasts along with groom's mother, aunts, father and other closest relatives. Even water is not allowed to drink. Laya the priest of 'Garam devta', hits the pond thrice with sward. this ritual is called "Jal Kata". The groom is bathed just at that time of third hit when at the very same time everyone fills the earthen pitcher together. There after the groom is taken to the home covering his face with betel leaf and his sister-in-law helps him to move towards home. Then the groom wears new dress. The same ritual follows at the place of bride.

***First time of Gay-Holud Ceremony:***

During this time the groom is touched with mustard oil and turmeric and the same mustard oil and turmeric is sent along with the accessories to the bride's house followed by the rituals. In that gift accessories turmeric gladdened saree is must. two individuals carry them to the bride's place before evening.

Laya worships the "Garam devta" and offer with devotion. After this the representatives of groom's family tie "9 Khi"( nine times )around a tree with non-twisted thread this is known as "Aapaka suta" and the quantity of this thread is 1 'pari'. in case of bride it is takes '7 Khi'(seven times). Here music is played and groom's father never presence there. those three pitchers which is carried at the time of groom's bath are kept filled with water and is covered with white saree and red border. Then laya picks up soil thrice with the help of the sword and puts it on the saree of groom's mother, and he keeps this soil tied at the end of her saree which is called "Shidhe Mati" and this is the main amulet of "Garam devta". Then the women together brings those pitchers under 'Chadna-Tala' which they called their rural term as "Chhamra-Tala" Then the sacred thread is tie around the "Chhamra-Tala". After this when the filled pitchers are kept down then it remains not covered anymore. From Tulsi Tala the Laya takes the holy soil for the groom's mother to tie in her end of the saree. This soil is termed as the sacred soil of "Bastu Devta" which is "Ghat Bari". The laya worships the throne of the Tulsi Mancha.

***Aiburovat:***

There after the groom consumes the rice along with other ingredients the very last time before his marriage which is termed 'Aiburovat'. When he is having his meal 'Nit bor' also have meal alongside. The meal is stuffed with five kind of vegetables along with rice and pulse with the assistance of women. the relatives and family members have their meal afterword. The same ritual is held in the bride's house too. But parents and aunts of either bride or groom have nothing. After this the ritual of wearing royal dress is held.

***Second & Third Time Gay-Holud Ceremony:***

In the evening water is sprinkled on the groom and he is marched toward Chhamra-tala and then he sits on the mat made by date leaves which is called 'Talai' or 'Chatai'thus the ritual of holy

turmeric is done in second time which is called “Gay Holud Ceremony”. Then he is marched towards the room with sprinkling of water again. Then the same ritual of “Gay-Holud” is done third time and the groom is headed toward his room with the sprinkling of water similarly second time. the groom’s brother-in-law (Jamaibabu) has to go through the same ritual and usually sit along through the same ritual and usually sit alongside. Then the groom is worn royal dress includes Dhoti, Punjabi and he wears sandal on his forehead.

The ritual of “Gay-Holud” is done thrice at bride’s place with the turmeric sent by the groom’s family. the younger sister of the bride becomes ‘Nit Kone’ as per ritual. then the bride wears the turmeric gladdened saree comes from the groom’s house.

Then the groom is brought to ‘Chhamra-Tala’ and the priest tie mango leaf around his wrist like ‘Rakhi’. then three women come with winnowing tray that means “kula” and the mortar and the pestle touches it to the forehead of the groom. then they put mustard oil on the groom’s forehead and it rools down on the ‘Kalo biri’ and betal leaf. the priest crushes this Biri Kalai and betel leaf with the help of pestle on mortar itself. The crushed semi-liquid is put the four sides of ‘Chhamra-Tala’ and it is done with three go. Three women take part this typical ritual where the first lady open the cover the 2<sup>nd</sup> lady put the paste inside and the 3<sup>rd</sup> one covers it back that is how the whole system rotates thrice in the same manner. The groom moves with them according to the ritual.

### ***Nannimukh Shradhha:***

It is done at the evening by the groom’s father for their ancestors. The forefathers are informed that the marriage is being done under auspicious witness of you. The family priest is done this ritual. All the rituals are done with the filled pitchers, which are kept at the “chhamra-tala”. The ritual as “Nannimukh Shradhha” is done with sesame, barley, ghee, molasses, perched rice, sunned rice, ripe banana, sweets, honey, soil of the Ganges, parboiled rice etc. The same custom is taken place at bride’s house by his father.

***The rituals of taking “Basudhara”:***

To get this custom done the groom is taken to the on lap. A piece of white saree clad with turmeric is set on the wall with the help of chunk of cow-dung. The piece of cloth is tucked against the wall with the help of cowrie as nail. There the groom makes his head down and ghee is poured upon him and the pouring ghee is taken by mother and aunts in their new saree. This ritual is termed as “Basudhara”. Meanwhile the groom chews mango leaf and molasses together and bring it out which mother and aunts consume. The same custom is held in the bride’s house. As per of ritual the groom takes rice before going out of the house. At the time of final departure for marriage a mat is placed on the elevated place at the entrance of the door and there the groom and his mother sit together back to back. Then a person gives the rice to the groom’s hand and when it is filled then the groom puts this to the edge of his mother’s saree. This is done in two times. On the third time he puts rice and myrobalam to his mother’s saree. Mother askto her son, ‘Where are you going?’, it is held three time and her son also says- ‘I am going for bring your servant’. Then he goes and do not look to his mother, and ride on a car. This time the instrumentalist also go with the groom.

**THE MAIN MARRIAGE RITUALS:**

When the groom reach the house of the bride then all mother-in-law welcome to the groom with sweets and water, this is called ‘Borke Chuano’. Then they also welcome to this groom with paddy and grasses. 11 sarees come from the groom’s house for mother’s-in-law and all aunts, mother wear this saree. They welcome to this groom with betel leaf and sweets. Then the groom washes their legs with water. Then the brother-in-law for taking “Shala Dhoti”. This is also called “Shala Kacha Dhoti” or “Shala Dhoti Lot”. The brother-in-law rounds the groom in three times and they drag this dhoti with forcibly then mutual embracing is held. The groom wraps this dhoti on the head of the brother –in-law this is wrapped as the dhoti touch the floor. Then exchange of garland is held, this garland is made of potato and bringal. then they all take sweets and betel leaf. The groom comes to the “Chhamra-Tala” on the lap of the brother-in-law. The bride sits on leaf of Shal tree and covers her face with betel leaf and she comes to the “Chhhamra-Tala” on the lap of her sister-in-law. The priest starts the marriage ritual. The bride round around the groom with covers her eyes and then the “Shubhodrishti” is held. Which garland is present on their neck at the time of ‘gay-Holud’ this garland is exchanged that time

this is called “Malabadal”. This garland is made of Arabian Jashmine or Sunplant or Swallow wort. Atfirst the bride gives this garland to the groom’s neck and then groom dose the same. It is held in three times.

Then the bride goes her house. After that the maternal uncle welcomes the groom and donate some items like gold ring, dhoti, plate of white brass, other utensils etc. Then the bride comes to the “chhamra-tala’ and groom holds the little finger of bride and sit her on the left side. After “Malabadal”, the hands of the groom and bride tie with a piece of cloth, which smear turmeric water, and also nutmeg. At that time the priest remembers the ‘Pancha Sati’ and tie this, it is called “Hasta Bandhan”. This piece of cloth is tie with the groom’s cloth. This is opened after “Priti Bhoj”.

Then the priest says the Mantras and the groom put the vermilion which is placed on nut-cracker, to the forehead of the bride. This ritual is called “Sidurdan”. The priest give a drop of vermilion on the throat of the groom with his middle finger of the left hand. Then priest says to the bride to says a mantra that is-“Tama Hridi Mama, Mama Hridi Taba”. It is said 3 times by the bride and also by the groom. The groom also says that , ‘Today I takes oath to all the responsibility of this bride and i forbear all the fault of the bride’. Then he puts the veil on her face and this is not open at any time.

Then the priest makes a pit on sacrificial fire with ghee and it place on sand. The bride take a winnowing tray, it is called “Bachadali”, with full of perched rice and a pestle is placed in front of the bride’s foot. The groom holds the bride’s hand and shake this tray this way the perched rice falls into the fire, on that time the bride kicks the pestle on her foot at just time. It is done only three times. this pit is called “Lajh Hom Jagya”. Then they also take the drop of ash on their forehead. After marriage is finished then the mother brings her edge of the saree with full of rice, myrobalam, paisa and give these to her daughter’s edge of saree, and the plate is given to the groom. They do not awake in “Basar”. Then marriage is complete the groom and bride take food and all relatives also take food.

**ON THE NEXT DAY OF MARRIAGE:*****“Bandhani Pan”:***

At dawn the “Bandhani Pan” or the blessing ritual is started. At first the mother and father bring rice, paisa and they subjugate their daughter and son-in-law and give them all these things. Then they welcome their daughter and son-in-law and eat then flattened rice and sweets. Then other aged members bless them. They give them many utensils, this way they get 40-42 pieces of utensils. At the time of their departure the mother asks to her daughter- ‘Where are you going’, then her daughter says I work as servant or maid-servant to my in-law’s house. A mat is placed on the elevated place at the entrance of the

turmeric and go to Baguli Bandh. all the females take bath of them. The groom and bride smear oil and soap each other. There also a play of hide and seek is done with a pot.

After finishing their bath for rituals of “Kshatriya” the groom throws an arrow with the help of bow and the bride picks this arrow. It is done in three times. They call the bow and arrow as “Karbansh”. When the bride picks the last arrow, the groom says that ‘What is die?’ the bride says –bird is dead. Then they go back to their house and the bride washes the legs of her mother-in-law.

At noon many types of food is arranged and the bride gives the rice and ‘Payesh’ to all the relatives. In the evening the bride’s mother comes with other relatives. The groom’s mother and bride’s mother exchange one garland which is made of potato and bringal with each other, it is only a joke. After this a long cloth is placed between them, they see on(through) this then they wash their legs with each other. Then betel leaf, sweets are taken from each other. They also give vermilion on their forehead it is done also exchange wise. Then the groom’s mother drags forcibly the bride’s mother to eat the food. This time is called “Priti Bhoj” celebration. If the bride’s mother does not come this day then she does not come till 6<sup>th</sup> months. Then they all take food. This day they come to their house with their daughter and son-in-law.

**POST MARIETAL RITUAL:**

On the 3<sup>rd</sup> day after the day of marriage, in the morning “Chhamra-Tala” which consists with leaf of Shal tree and ‘Chamra Rope’ which is made of hay rope and leaf of mango tree all are

immersed to the water this is called “Chhamra Dari Vasan”. It is held in the bride’s house. The “Chhamra-tala” is made of four bamboo sticks which is placed in four corner and it tie with rope. ‘Shidha’ branch, ‘Mahua’ branch, branch of Shal tree is placed in four corner of this. Then they make 7 place where 4 earthen small pots are placed in four corner along with 3 earthen pots, which are full of ‘Birikalai’ and betel leaf. It is also covered with another veiling. On the next day of marriage which is called “Priti Bhoj”, this day this “Chhamra “ rope immerse is kept on that time at groom’s house. Inside of “Chhamra-Tala” branch of Mohua tree, branch of Shal tree also buried into the soil along with gold, silver and myrobalam. all this ingredients are immersed to the water. This day the bride-groom stay there and next day they back to their house. On that day after immersion is held the bride and groom take some food and return the groom’s house. This way all the marriage ritual is held.

### **CONCLUSIONS:**

It is concluded that the Bhumij tribe of Barameytala village mainly practice the arrange marriage system, and their rules of marriage is *Endogamy*. The people only marry their insider’s member. This way they maintain their social unity and tribal purity. After study on their details of marital ritual practices, it is clear that till now they practices their own traditional rituals and this such unique rituals are followed by generations after generations.

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