



THE SACRED SOLEMNISATION AND THE ANGUISH WITHIN

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Abstract

The marriage is an important sacred institution. The present paper endeavours to look into the marriage system prevalent in the Idu Mishmi society of Arunachal Pradesh. The paper intends to discuss the predicament prevalent in the marriage system and the changes that have affected it with the changing times. The paper finds that the marriage system in the tribal society of the one considered hereunder is unique in itself, going through varied rituals and taboos. Further, one also finds that the marriage system is one of the chief reasons for disputes in the society.

Keywords- *Anna, Yaku Ango, Abeya, Idu Mishmi, Achimi*

The Introduction

The Idu Mishmi tribe is one of the prominent tribal societies located in Arunachal Pradesh. It is a society of a few thousand. The members of this society are closely knit with one another through a close cohesion derived from blood relations. However, the society, as of today, is facing dwindling cultural practices, particularly in the field of linguistics and traditional attire.

This tribe follows an animistic form of religion and is coupled with rich shamanistic rituals for various forms of occasions. These rituals play a vital role in the society starting from the very cradle to beyond the graveyard. Shamanism is the institution that has helped the society preserve what it has, through the means of oral narration of its history.

The Objective

Marriage is a sacred social institution that has been recognised for many decades in human society. It is a union of two persons which also serves as the foundation of the family. Being legally and socially sanctioned, it empowers the couple with love, bond, compassion, and a desire to share the pain and joy of one another through eternity. The present study endeavours to understand one such marriage system amongst the Idu Mishmi tribe of Arunachal Pradesh.

The present scholarly paper would help to understand the means, modes, and controversies thereto related as regards the marriage of this small tribal community. The paper will analyse the trend that was prevalent in the past and the changes that have occurred in the recent past, after a passage of numerous years.

The significance of the present paper, therefore, is in understanding and documenting the rituals and taboos around the marriage system of the Idu Mishmi society, then and now.

The Inquiry

The present study is a library-based study. And therefore, it relies upon the studies that have been conducted in the recent past in the forms of books, theses, research articles, dissertations, etc. The paper therefore endeavours to analyse the conclusions that have been drawn by the various researchers in their studies.

The study therefore has not undertaken a study of the primary sample but has confined itself to the secondary data, in order to understand the complexion of the marriage in society as a whole. Hence, the paper has supplied with the varied controversies, the rituals, the myths, the alternatives, and the alterations that have shaped society in terms of their marriage processes.

The Knot Before

Generally, the marriage amongst Idu Mishmi is performed with the person who is Achimi (non-relative). The task of finding such Achimi is often tasked to Abeya (the negotiator). He, the Abeya, plays a vital role in the marriage system both before and after the marriage. He is the one who negotiates with the family of the bride for the marriage proposal and also is the one who has to perform the negotiation between the family of the married couple in the future, if any resentment occasions later.

The marriage system of Idu Mishmi is very conservative and therefore often witnesses elopement (Thrutuga) amongst the desiring couples. Elopement is so done as the society does not permit the marriage of those related to one another through being one of the same clan, which is more particularly known as the *Aana* system. Such blood relations are traced from both the maternal and paternal sides. The disagreement for the marriage can occasion from both sides of the male and female. However, the refusal towards the marriage may also occasion from only one side of the family also.

One of the early ways to perform marriage was through Yaku Ango (abduction), wherein the bride was abducted from her parents. Such abduction was at occasions supported by the families of the bride but opposed by the bride herself.

As the society is bound by strict rules, before any marriage, the society tries to perform Ayuthru (Search of genealogy) so as to ascertain if the parties wanting to marry are related to one another through blood relation or not. If the marriage is performed, and later on it is found that despite the earlier Ayuthru, due to inadvertence the married couples were related through bloodline, then despite having been married, yet the society may cause them to part their ways.

When such circumstances occur, the community tries to resolve the issue through a system of negotiation headed by Anya-si machi heta (head of the clan). Whereupon, if the parties don't agree upon the parting of ways, then Achinu (compensation) is offered to the family of such other party usually in the form of Sha (Mithun) and Eli (Pig).

The Knot After

The marriage complexities can arise even after Bripa (After marriage). The dispute over Aawe (divorce) sought from the side of husband or wife represents one of the controversial topics. An unusual controversy arises from the dispute on *Asome Bri* (widow marriage), wherein the remarriage of the widow is caused because Idu Mishmi believe that after the death of husband, her husband's brother has the right to remarry with the widow. *Asome Bri* was a form of emotional support to the widow. The controversy arises if the widow does not want to marry such person, rather she wants to remarry with the man who is not related to her husband's side. In such case the bride price has to be paid to the living family members of the deceased husband.

The other complexity with the marriage was in relation to *Apo* (slavery). Although this system is as of today mostly redundant, it used to be one of the main sticking points in the bygone era. The marriage between the *Aho* (rich) and *Apo* was restricted. It was taboo to marry into the slave family. Some documents suggest that marriage to *Apo* would lead the person marrying them to be labelled as *Apo*. The practice also assumes that the offspring of such persons would be *Apo*. Hence, it was a kind of caste system embedded in society.

Additionally, there was great prevalence of polygamy in the Idu Mishmi society. To have more than one wife was a showcase of one's wealth and prosperity. The society considered such a person to be of great capacity.

The Innocence

One of the traditional practices in this society, which is to a limited extent prevalent today, is a system of *Aasei* (Proof of innocence) wherein, in order to prove the innocence of oneself, one had to pick up the boiled stone. The belief was that since the ritual had been performed by *Igu* (Priest), the innocent would remain unharmed by the act of picking up the stone, whereas the guilty would have to face the brunt of blisters on his hand.

This system of *Aasei* was also practiced by the parties in the marriage to show their innocence from the blame cast on the suspicion of infidelity. The marriage was ended through this practice, rather than going through the legal process. And usually, the divorce of the parties would often lead to the kid being given in the possession of the husband.

The New Dawn

With the advent of modernity, the system of marriage has gone through certain changes. The number of practices of *Yaku Ango* (abduction) has gradually dwindled down. However, the practice of *Thrutuga* (elopement) still is prevalent in society. This is particularly due to the existence of the *Aana* system, whereupon a conservative notion of blood relation is cast upon the desiring couples.

In the marriage system among the Idu Mishmi, a predominant role is played by *Abeya* (Negotiator), who has to arrange for the proposal as well as negotiate the dispute whenever resentment arises in the future between the married couple. And therefore, as a respect for their significant role, *Abeya* is remunerated handsomely by the family of the groom. However, if the marriage is unsuccessful, the brunt of criticism has to be faced by such *Abeya* as the family of the bride presumes that the marriage to the groom was accepted on the basis of the assertion of such a negotiator that the groom was of respectable obedience, benevolent, and sincere.

Further, the marriage today has gone through a sea change, as the majority of the people of society, particularly the young, have stuck to the statutory norms of the land and thus have avoided polygamous marriages while also resisting abduction and other forms of unlawful acts that are not permitted under the law of the land.

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