



# Continuity and Change in the Marriage Rituals among the Tripuri Tribe of Tripura: A Socio- Cultural Analysis

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**Abstract:** Marriage is an important social institution in Tripuri society. This paper examines the continuity and change in marriage rituals and the marital system. Some traditional practices are still followed, such as Wathop worship performed by the Ochai, the use of the Bedi with Chanduwa cloth, and the wearing of traditional attire like Rignai and Risa during the ceremony. In the past, marriages were mainly arranged by elders through a mediator known as Raibai. Old marriage customs like child marriage, apprenticeship of a bridegroom, marriage by capture, marriage by exchange, and marriage by purchase were very common. Now people do not follow most of these marriage customs. As time went on, factors like education became more widespread, and people moving to cities began to change how society thought about marriage. The influence of Bengali culture also played a role in shaping these perspectives. More and more people have started to convert to Christianity. Now love marriages have become more common and socially accepted. Some traditional rituals have been simplified, and Christian marriage ceremonies are now followed by a section of the community. Even with these changes, many old customs and indigenous practices are still maintained.

**Keywords:** Tripuri Marriage, Socio-Cultural, Continuity, Change, Social Institution.

## 1.Introduction:

Marriage is a partnership between two people that is recognized by society and holds an important place in community life. It is a sacred bond connected with cultural values, religious beliefs, and community traditions. In Tripura, the Tripuri tribe is the largest tribal group. They were among the first inhabitants of this area. As per the 2001 Census, the population of the Tripuri tribe was 543,843, making them the largest tribal group in the state. The daily life of the Tripuri people is closely linked to their customs, faith, and clan system, and these also shape their marriage practices. Marriage shows what the Tripuri community values and who they are. Over the years, changes in society and culture have impacted some of these traditions. This paper looks at how Tripuri marriage rituals have stayed the same and changed over time from a cultural viewpoint.

## 2.Objectives of the study:

- To study the traditional marriage rituals of the Tripuri tribe.
- To find out which marriage practices have continued over time.
- To understand the changes in marriage rituals caused by social, cultural, or religious factors.
- To explore how these marriage practices reflect the values and identity of the Tripuri community.
- To see how modern influences like education, city life, and conversion to Christianity have affected marriage traditions among the Tripuri people.

## 3. Research Questions :

1. Which marriage rituals of the Tripuri community are traditional, and what is their cultural importance?
2. In Tripuri marriage ceremonies, how have the functions of Ochai (priest) and Raibai (marriage broker) been transformed over time?
3. Which social and cultural factors have contributed to the changes or disappearance of Tripuri marriage rituals?
4. What are the changes in the event of child marriage and other traditional forms of marriage like capture and purchase marriages in the Tripuri community, and what are the reasons?

## 4.Methodology :

In the research paper both the primary and secondary sources are used. Primary sources included interviews and first-hand observations of marriage practices in the Tripuri community. Interviews were conducted with Budhi Charan Debbarma (70) and his wife Suna Lakshi Debbarma(65) who have had experience and knowledge on the traditional Tripuri marriage rituals. Interviews were also held with Suresh Debbarma (67), Bishalakshi Debbarma (60) and Boyar Debbarma (30) who gave useful information on marriage customs that have remained and changed over time.

Secondary sources include research articles, census reports and other documents on Tripuri society and culture. These sources helped to support and compare the findings that were obtained from the primary data.

**5.Continuity of Traditional Tripuri Marriage Rituals:** Many traditional Tripuri marriage rituals are still followed today. They show how the Tripuri community has kept its culture and spiritual practices alive over time.

The Ochai (priest) plays an important role in Tripuri marriage rituals. The Ochai also chants the traditional mantras for the bride and groom and performs the main worship, such as the Lampra Owathop. The Ochai is responsible for seeking divine blessings and ensuring that the marriage is conducted according to the customary laws. Even today, many families invite the Ochai to do the wedding ceremony, showing the continued importance of traditional religious authority.

During the wedding, the bride and groom stand in front of Lampra Wathop. The Ochai (Tripuri priest) first blesses them by sprinkling sacred water on their foreheads. After this, parents and other elders also give their blessings to the couple for a happy married life. According to interviews with elder members of the community, this ritual is still widely observed, highlighting the continuity of Tripuri cultural and spiritual traditions.

The Bedi serves as the venue for the Tripuri wedding. It has a cloth covering and is constructed of Bamboo. The Bedi is the site of all the major rites. The bride and groom consider it to be a sacred location. According to elders, the Bedi is still constructed and used in most traditional weddings, demonstrating continuity of this ceremonial practice.

Traditional attire also remains an important element of marriage ceremonies. The bride will wear Rignai and Risa and the groom will wear traditional clothing too. Traditional clothing is a representation of ethnic identity. Many families make sure that at least part of the wedding ceremony is conducted in traditional clothing. According to interviews with Bishalakshi Debbarma (60) and Boyar Debbarma (30), even in urban weddings, families ensure that the bride and groom wear at least part of the traditional attire, maintaining cultural continuity and ethnic identity.

The roles of Aya and Ayajwk continue to be maintained in many households. Aya is responsible for helping the groom while Ayajwk helps the bride during the wedding ceremony particularly when dressing and performing the rituals. They remain close to the couple in order to direct them through the rituals. This practice is still carried out by numerous Tripuri households preserving the continuity of ceremonial roles.

Elders bless the bride and groom by placing their hands on their heads for a prosperous married life. This tradition is still practiced in modern weddings and reflects respect for the elders and family authority.

**6.Change in Tripuri Marriage Rituals :** While many traditional Tripuri marriage rituals continue, some practices have changed over time.

The decline in the importance of Raibai in Tripuri marriages is clearly visible today. Earlier the Raibai, who is like a marriage broker was really important for arranging and finalising marriages with the help of Koksungma and Koksungmung. These days families usually talk to each other directly to arrange marriages or they are okay, with love marriages, which means the old way of using a Raibai to help with marriages is not as popular as it used to be. The role of the Raibai is decreasing because people now prefer to make their own decisions regarding marriage arrangements.

Another important change is the decline of child marriage (Sikla Sogya Kaimani). Sikla Sogya Kaimani is a term used for child marriages among the Tripuri tribes of India. In the past, elders of the family usually arranged marriages for children based on family traditions and cultural practices. Over time, child marriage has decreased a lot because of education and increased awareness of laws against it. Nowadays, child marriages mostly happen only in some remote villages. This change shows how the Tripuri community is adapting to modern values and legal norms.

There is also a decline in traditional types of Tripuri marriage. Historically, there were several different types of marriage for the Tripuri community; for example, "Nok kaisa Kaimung" was a way for parents to marry off their children without paying a bride-price by exchanging the children. "Phuisai Tubuma" involved the groom or groom's family giving money to the bride's family as a price for her; marriage by capture "Koklam Kwrwi Kaimung" was an example of one where minimal religious rites were performed, with god only being worshipped as part of the wedding ceremony. All of these types of marriage were once standard in Tripuri and are now fairly uncommon, as people are adopting modern practices, laws and changing social attitudes toward marriage.

At the same time, love marriage (Hamjaklai Kaijakmami) has increased among the Tripuri in recent years. Earlier, most marriages were arranged by families through elders or a Raibai, but Today, many young people choose their life partners, reflecting greater personal freedom and changing social values.

Bride service marriage (Chamari Ompa) is another old tradition that is found within Tripuri marriages. In this arrangement, the future husband comes to the bride's parent's house to stay and work before and/or after marriage. The purpose of this custom is for the husband to prove himself able and responsible to provide for the family. While it was once a common practice, this custom is slowly losing popularity within present day society.

Traditionally invitation rituals such as Khum Phunkma (a village invitation custom) was an essential part of Tripuri wedding customs wherein betel leaf, areca nut, and flowers were offered directly by the bride and groom's parents to each household in the village, starting from the Chokdori's house. Today, however, the Khum Phunkma custom has been losing popularity due to the increased use of printed invitation cards and mobile connections for the formal invitation process.

Changes in the Tripuri marriage system have also occurred due to the influence of Bengali culture and Christianity. The influence of Bengali society resulted in various changes to the marriage system, including the use of printed invitation cards, the adoption of some of their wedding traditions, and an increase in the variety of clothing worn during marriage ceremonies. When Christianity spread, many Tripuri people started having church weddings and following Christian practices. Christian weddings focus more on prayers and blessings in church than on traditional worship. Church weddings often use printed invitation cards, music, and ceremonies influenced by Christianity instead of older local customs. These influences have contributed significantly to the transformation of traditional Tripuri marriage practices.

## 7. Conclusion:

Marriage customs among Tripuris combine both traditional and contemporary practices. The Tripuri marriage customs are a mixture of both evolving and old traditions as seen in the roles of the Ochai (priest), worship of Lampra Wathop, the Bedi altar, traditional dress, and blessings from the elders among other important practices that have kept the culture alive. On the other hand, forms of child marriage, marriage by exchange, and bride service are on the decline due to education, urban life, and changing social values. Bengali cultural influences and Christianity have also affected the dress, invitations, and some rituals. Respect, community involvement, and ritual purity are still practiced, and therefore Tripuri marriage continues to be a living cultural practice.

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