

**PROGRESS REPORT FOR THE SCHEME  
“Safeguarding the Intangible Cultural Heritage and  
Diverse Cultural Traditions of India.”**

**Year : 2013-14**

**PART I**

SUBMITTED BY-

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**Title of the research project**

*Study on the customs in the marriage system of the people of various communities of Assam.*

**Targeted time duration for the proposed research- 1 year**

## **Introduction.**

Marriage is an important part of human beings in their social and cultural livelihood. Some canonical and ritual characters are found in marriage system of every communities of the world .With the changing of time a number of filtrations, improvisation and exchange of characteristics in the marriage system is also taken place. Some ritual customs also influence it like we see the binding of society. Some anthropologist describe marriage as “socially sanctioned mating entered into with the assumption of permanency.”

Westermarek writes in his book *History of human Marriage*-“It is not of course impossible that among some people intercours between the sexes may have been promiscuous. But there is not a shred of genuine evidence for the notion that promiscuity even formed a general stage in the history of mankind. ....Although polygamy course among most existing people, and polyandry among some, monogamy is for the most common form of human marriage. It is the form which is generally recognized and permitted. The great majority of people are as a rule monogamous, and other forms of marriage are usually modified in a monogamous direction.”

In some society if two young people of opposite sex had been lovers for some time and had become attracted to each other, they began to consider for marriage. Usually it was the boy who took the initiative and asked the girl whether she was willing to become his wife. If a girl did not please to marrying to her lover or feared for opposition from her parents, she refused his proposal. Sometimes parents arranged marriage to prohibit their unmarried daughter a friendship with a particular. Moreover in some tribal communities the institutions like *Dhangarin bassa* or *Mandarghar*-houses for maiden where they are allowed to occupy without anyone to look after them. A girl determined to hold on to her lover could usually get her way or as a last resort elope with him to a friendly home. Again if someone

forcibly carrying off a girl then the parents had to submit to some terms; and on payment of the usual bride price, at sometimes enhanced the rate as such the parents raised no further objection to the abductor. Now 'Marriage by capture' is rapidly becoming out of vogue. Otherwise in case of marriage contract usually discussed by the parents on mutual settlements paying stipulated price of the prospective bride or her estimated value in cows, pigs, fowls, or drink. Those who were too poor to pay in cash served in her father's house till they have given an equivalent labour.

Howard in his book writes – "In a progressive society monogamy is the natural and usual form of marriage. Other forms of marriage are degradation or retrogression to the primitive conditions. Promiscuity never creates the home, nor engenders those noble sentiments of self-sacrifice and self-denial that have help to uplift human race."

### **Various communities of Assam.**

Assam, the north east part of India is bestowed with all the beauty of nature. It is thought that people live here from the very early days. Migration of people for this land is also usual process due to suitable atmosphere of this area. The land is not at all plains but have up and down with a number of hills and rivers. The mighty Brahmaputra River is flowing through it which makes Assam into one state from the beginning. Due to the fertility of the land and healthy environment with availability of food a number of people select this land to settle down for livelihood. Thus Assam has become to the land of meeting place for various communities, regions, castes and tribes. All these people have difference with each other by their social system and cultural habits. It is also observed that all

these people have special characteristics in their marriage system. Following are few tribes which are mainly found in Assam.

**Ahom** - They generally reside in Upper Assam. One of the largest tribe in population. Ahom ruled Assam for about six hundred years. As if they are distributed to entire Assam but their traditional life and cultures are not properly preserved. Patsako of Sivasagar district is a place where some of the important Ahom cultures one found.

**Karbi** - They mainly reside in Karbi-Anglong. But they are also found in Uttar-Kachar, Marigaon, Nagaon, Golaghat, Sonitpur and Kamrup district.

**Koch Rajbanshi** - They mainly reside in lower Assam but Koch Rajbanshis are also distributed in the districts of Upper Assam. Their traditional costume, music and songs are yet in practice.

**Khamti** - They are of Tai origin. They mainly inhabit in Lohit district of Arunachal Pradesh, but some of them are also found in Lakhimpur and Tinsukia district. Their social life continues traditionally and they are of Buddha religion.

**Tea tribe** - They are migrated to Assam from Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh and North part of Orissa in the reign of British. Specially, they are appointed in tea gardens. As if they are of different tribe and variety to each other in cultural life, but today they are known as tea tribe. They are distributed all over Assam.

**Singpho** - They are found in Margherita of Tinsukia district. Simpho are mainly of Buddha religion. Shapang yang Mannaos is their main festival.

**Tai-phake** - Tai-phake of Tai origin lives in the district of Dibrugarh and Tinsukia. They are of Buddha religion. They entered Assam in 1775 and celebrate all the traditions as earlier.

**Dimasa** - Their main residents are in Uttar Kachar hill district and Karbi-Anglong. Dimasa of Kachari origin ruled the state in past. All the traditional systems are preserved till today.

**Dewori** - Dewori which is a primitive tribe of Assam is mainly seen to live in the districts of Upper Assam.

**Bodo** - One of the main tribe of Assam which is also one of the largest in population. They are distributed in Kokrajhar, Sirang, Baska, Nalbari, Borpeta, Udalguri, Kamrup, Sonitpur, Karbi-Anglong, Dhuburi, Lakhimpur, Dhemaji and Golaghat district of Assam.

**Mattak** - They reside in the districts of Upper Assam. Dibrugarh district is the main place but also distributed in Tinsukia, Sivasagar, Jorhat, Golaghat and Lakhimpur.

**Moran** - They lives in Kakapathar, Doomdoma, Pengari, Bardusma of Tinsukia district.

**Missing** - One of the largest tribe of Assam in population. They one distributed in Dhemaji, Lakhimpur, Dibrugarh, Tinsukia, Sivasagar, Jorhat, Golaghat and Sonitpur. They are culturally very rich.

**Rabha** - They are mostly distributed in lower Assam. One of the largest tribe in population of Assam which has many sub-divisions.

**Thengal Kachari** -This tribe is mainly distributed in Jorhat, Golaghat, Dhemaji, Dibrugarh District of upper Assam and Karbi-Anglong. Some of their traditional customs are yet alive.

Apart from the above caste and communities *Assamese Muslim, Garo, Monipuri, Nepali, Assamese sikh, Marowari, Bengali* lives in Assam with their traditional cultural habits. All this people have their own style of marriage customs and have unique features which is not seen in others.

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## ***Chaklong***-Traditional marriage system of *Tai Ahom*

The *Ahom* community practices a unique type of marriage custom named *Chaklong*. Those who can feel the greatness of the advices included in this system get inspired to follow the healthy advices for the whole life. In their religious scripture *Tai lit mong hunpha* it is written that *Lengdon*, the main deity of *Ahom* has married in the *Chaklong* system.

During the *Ahom* kingdom in Assam it takes 9 days to perform the *Chaklong*. But latter on it is shorted to seven, five and up to 3 days. Today this marriage custom is seen to observe in a single day in some places. *Chaklong* is not performed in case of elopement. Here are the rules and steps of this unique marriage system.

1. ***Joron***- Before the day of commencement of *Chaklong* ornaments and costumes of odd numbers like 3, 5 or 7 are sent to the bride from the bridegroom's family. Bridegroom's mother and few other relatives visited the bride's home with these ornaments, clothing and other gifts and dressed her. They sing traditional marriage songs and in a joyous atmosphere. Bathing material needed in the marriage day for both the bridegroom and the bride is exchanged in that day.
2. ***Nownai***- It is the ceremony of anointing the bridegroom or the bride with ointments preparatory to bathing him or her before marriage. A square bamboo frame of unique design named *Bei* is made for bathing. Body of banana tree and leaves are used in its making. Before the making of the *Bei* an egg, a needle, a chickle, betel nut-betel and a coin of copper is placed under soil of it. Woman collect water in pitcher. The bridegroom or bride is anointed with a mixture of Pulse, Turmeric and Mustard oil. Water in the pitcher is poured from head to the body at first. Then only another water is used for bathing.



3. ***Na purukhar bhoj*** ( a feast)- Before two or three days to the marriage a feast is arranged in both the bride and bridegroom's home as a religious practice. Religious people, priest, relatives are invited to the feast. Before taking the feast both the bride and bridegroom kneel down before the assembled people with betel nut and betel for their blessing and worship the feast in the name of their deity.
4. ***Rikkhan*** or ***Ayukh tola anusthan***-Taking a bamboo scoop with betel nut-betel, Egg, Rice two or three priest prays for long life of the bride and bridegroom in a near pond or river uttering some religious hymn. The bride or the bridegroom is blessed with the fish getting in the scoop taking it on their head uttering the hymn *Chao nuru chao kao aie*.
5. ***Deoban utsav***- Deoban is a ceremony that performed in both the families of bride and bridegroom in the day before marriage day. Here the deities of Ahom like *Lengdon, Langkuri, Lareng, Jaan-sai-hung, Jaa singpha* are prayed with betel nut and betel. Seven bundle of betel nut-betel are sent to the bride's home from the bridegroom. When the prayer in the bride's home take place twelve egg, Rice, honey bee is added with it and the priest uttered the hymn.
6. ***Gathian khunda***- In the night of second day of *Chaklong* older lady, woman, young girls anoint the bride or bridegroom with oil. Five or seven woman with the mother pound the root of *Gathian* tree taking a cloth over the bride or the bridegroom. After that a blaze is drawn on the forehead of them.
7. ***Moving towards bride's home***- After bathing and wearing new traditional dresses of Ahom the bridegroom take blessing from the assembled people. The females sing the wedding songs. After the blessing from parents and other respected persons the bridegroom leaves for bride's home with his relative and friends. The bridegroom wears Dhooti and other traditional

costumes. One of the bridegroom's friend plays the role of his assistant taking an umbrella and other essential things with him.

8. ***Huwaguri tola***- This is the welcoming part of the bridegroom's troupe in the gate of the bride's home by the bride's mother and other family members. Generally the gate is designed with banana tree. Bridegroom's foot is washed by younger girls from the bride's family. The girl is awarded with a gift by the bridegroom. A curtain is maintained in between the bridegroom and the bride's mother. She welcome the bridegroom to the pandal where the altar for Chaklong is designed.
9. ***The altar for Chaklong***- The altar is made in the form of a lotus with seven colors. Dividing this lotus in a geometric way where 101 lights of mustard oil are lighted. Generally the altar is made in 1 or 2 inch height with 61 inch diameter and made of sand. The bridegroom have to take seat in front of it.
10. **The bride to the pandal**---Offering betel nut-betel in a tray for the woman and friends of the bride the bridegroom's family request the bride to come out from home to the altar near the bridegroom. The bride takes seat left to the bridegroom. A curtain is maintained between the two. The priest blesses them and order to remove the curtain. The assembled people uttered as O phura o taara. After that the history of Ahom, seven past generation of both the bridegroom and bride are narrated.
11. The main process of *Chaklong*  
Here both the Tai hymn and its Assamese version is used in the religious marriage custom. Praying for the main priest the father or other representative of the family the bride's father said- Respected Sir, I adopt you as the priest for the marriage of my daughter with Mr..... in the Chaklong role and regulation. Please complete the customs.

The priest says- I Mr..... take the responsibility to complete the marriage customs of *Chaklong* tradition of the marriage on the request of the bride's family. Then the bridegroom and bride kneel down and the people bless them.

The priest utter the hymn in Tai language and the bridegroom follow him taking flower and rice in his hand- "Oh God; Please complete our marriage with a good fortune." Then he offers flowers and Rice to the altar. The bride's father pray to the altar- "O respected God; I put this as gift to the bridegroom".

Taking the right thumb of the bride on the right thumb of the bridegroom, bride's father again says- "Oh God, Taking you as the witness I put the girl as a gift to the bridegroom. Please save them".

The bridegroom says-"I gently take the gift and I will keep it affectionately."

After that they put garlands to each other's neck. The priest blessed them. All attendants through bunch of flower over them and marriage songs are sung.

12.***Hengdaang pradan***- It is the act of giving *Hengdaang* (traditional sword) to the bridegroom. Giving the *Hengdaang* the bride says to the bridegroom- "become eligible to save the land, your family members, and property with this *Hengdaang*". Receiving the *Hengdaang* the bridegroom says-"I will study the history of our nation and will save the pride and respect of the nation. Touching the *Hengdaang* with my hand I promise to save the nation, religion and the land".

13.**Advice of the Priest**- The Priest advises the bride and the bridegroom about the family and social life and also advise how to follow them. These

advices are very helpful for their future family life. After these processes a few merry makings are seen to perform among the assembled people.

Bridegroom's mother welcomes the bride at their home. For the wellbeing of the bridegroom and the bride they pray their adorable deities in the bed room. A feast is arranged in the joyous atmosphere.

The *Chaklong* of Ahom is not only a mere social customs but it is a high level ideology with great philosophy. It inspire people to create awareness about society and the land. The 101 lights at the altar gives a sweet remembrance to the bride and bridegroom. The process of taking promise in the marriage day with a sword in front of 101 lights and in the presence of Priest and people is not seen in any nation of the world.

## **Marriage customs of *Mattak* community**

*Mattak* is an indigenous *Mongloid* tribe lives in Assam even before Pre-Ahom era. Latter they became follower of *Mayamora vaishnava* religion developed by the great *vaishnava* saint *Sri Sri Aniruddha Deva*. But till today a number of folk traditional and religious habits of the tribe are practised. The primitive habit like equality between man and woman in the society are yet preserved in this tribe. There is no strict binding for widow to live the whole life a widow, but she can get married. As if marriage means mating of a man and female for a family life, the puberty attainment of a girl is also observed among the *Mattak* community as a ceremony.

Proving the existence of tribal behavior Elopement and then marriage with the loving partner is also seen among the *Mattak* people. So the ceremony observe in puberty attainment get importance with many traditional habits and merry making.

Two types of marriage system is seen to observe among the *Mattak* community- (i) Marriage after elopement with loving partner (ii) Marriage in traditional customs.

In case of marriage after elopement a systemic process with some ritual habits is followed. After the day of elopement the guardian of that boy go to the girl's home and pray for excuse for the boy' fault with a bundle of betel nut-betel. If the pair between the male and female supposed to be good then there is no objection. After that they discuss to fix a day to assemble with their relatives to make the boy and girl into a companion. In that day with the witness of the scripture of *Mattak* community named *Bhagawata* the marriage get social identity. The bridegroom and the bride kneel down in front of the worshiped old

people called *Bhakata* and they are blessed. A feast is arranged for the assembled people of that day.

Many changes take place in the traditional tribal customs of the *Mattak* community with the influence of *Aryan* culture and *Vaishnavism*. There is no Priest in the marriage system of *Mattak* community and the total process is very simple. *Guru* (Religious teacher), *Bhakata* (worshiped religious man) *Naam*(hymn), *Deo* (*Vaishnava* saint) are the four main necessities for the religious method in a marriage. The social feast that seen to offer today is an additional custom. In *Mattak* society marriage is not performed among the same clan. Girls are not exchanged in between two clans. After searching and proper discussions the bridegroom's family ask the bride's family for the selected girl and pray them with a bundle of betel nut- betel to fix the girl for that bridegroom. After this process the date for the marriage is determined. On that day *Bhakata*, relatives and well-wishers of the bridegroom are asked to assemble and publicly declare the relation and the arrangement. Sometimes in that day the bride is wear a ring by the bridegroom. It is a part of the customs to fix the relation. The day before the day of marriage *Na purukhar hakam*(a religious activity) and a feast with is arranged for the relatives, family members and the neighbour.

Both bridegroom and bride are bathed in their respected home with a mixture of pulse and turmeric under the *Bei* ( A square bamboo frame with banana tree & leaves).The females sing marriage songs, hymn and young boys-girls perform *Bihu* (folk dance-song of Assam) with *Dhol* ( a traditional drum). After that the bridegroom is dressed with *Dhooti*, *Gamusa* (Assamese traditional towel) and traditional Assamese costume. In the same way the bride is also dressed with new costume and ornaments. Taking bless from the *Bhakata* the troupe of bridegroom moves for the bride's home. The bridegroom is accompanied with one umbrella taker, One Javelin taker, One *Hengdaang* (traditional sword) taker

and friends, relatives and well-wishers. When the troupe reach near the gateway of the bride few young people put a false obstruction as a process of merry making. It is solved by offering betel nut-betel. The troupe is welcomed by bride's mother and a young girl from the bride's family washes the foot of the bridegroom. All the members of the troupe take place in front of the *Bhakata* and *Bhagawata*-the main scripture of *Mattak* community. Marriage songs are sung and an atmosphere of joy and merry making is raised. Both bridegroom and the bride kneel down to bride's parents and then all of them come out to assemble in the religious venue with the *Bhakata* and *Bhagawata* under the pandal.

Kneel down in front of the *Bhagawata*, twelve *Vaishnava Bhakata*, blessings and utterance of the name of God are the main customs in the marriage system of *Mattak* community. Here taking the bridegroom and the bride with them their parents kneel down in front of *Bhakata* and *Bhagawata*. The *Gaonburha*(senior *Bhakata*) on behalf of the people assembled utter blessings for them and announce the binding of the marriage. They blessed for a long and happy life as well as advises them for freshness of body and mind, duties as a joint family life, customs and habits to follow and about the relation with the senior and juniors. A bundle of betel nut-betel in a tray named *Sharai* is offered in front of *Bhagawata* and *Bhakata* at that time. After that they all return to the bridegroom's home with the bride.

There is no dowry system in the marriage of *Mattak* community. But today some parents feel that they should give some essential instruments and items with the bride to the bridegroom's home.

## **Marriage customs in *Deuri* community**

*Deuri* is an ancient tribe of Assam. This indigenous tribe follow many unique folk traditional practices and customs from very ancient time.

Marriage is the ceremony which unites a man and woman as husband and wife. It is taken as a very holy bindings by the *Deuries*. Young boys and girls are think to be eligible for marriage when the society think so. A damsel becomes eligible for marriage after *Ego fissa gema* – A traditional habit when a damsel socially wear traditional costume in their breast and waist. Marriage between same clan and with close relatives are taken as a punishable offence among the *Deuri* community. Puberty attainment of a girl is not practiced as a ceremony among them. In the primitive society of *Deuri*, it is seen that some powerful man used to take more than one female as their wife.

After discussing about the clan, family and relations if both the come to the decision for a marriage then parents of the male and other responsible family members approach the parents of the female with some traditional gifts like bundle of betel nut-betel, one pair of costume , a pot of traditional wine. If the parents and the family members of the female agree with the proposal then they take the gift items and pray for an evergreen relation.

As if three methods of marriage system is seen to observe among the *Deuri* community, *Borbiya* means socially mating between man and woman is preferred as the best marriage system. In this case preparation starts before about one month of the day of marriage in both the families. The householder of both the family ask young man and woman of their society to help them in the preparation of marriage activities. Before starting the activities the old man of their community pray for respected deities and worshiped traditional wine for the successful ending of all the activities of the marriage. People are invited and



some of them are asked for some duties in the marriage offering them betel nut-betel.

Starting from the seven days to the marriage day friends of the bride starts to come their home to accompany her. The bride with her friends are invited for a feast by the relatives. In the evening the companions of the bride sing marriage songs taking in front Rice, coconut, betel nut, betel and a light of mustard oil in a traditional basket named *Dhun*.

***Pathoria***- The Prime minister of a marriage

*Pathoria* is the man liable person who guided the religious activities systematically in a marriage system of *Deuri* community. He takes the dress with traditional costume and ornaments. As a representative of the bridegroom or the bride he led them in all the customs.

***Nowani- Bathing***

In the day of marriage both the bride and bridegroom are bathed at their respective home in the morning. Some *Deuri* people arranged the bathing before seven days of the marriage day. A bamboo square framed named *Bei* is made with the help of banana tree, flower and small branches of mango tree.

Marriage songs are sung-

*Kon khanikore beikhan hajale*

*Majat narakhile duni aei*

*Opare rupar soi toleo rupar soi*

*Honare sekura di aei*

-who has made the *Bei* without a *Duni* (a U shaped basket), upper and lower is with Silver covering and golden clot.

After bathing the bride and bridegroom is dressed with traditional costume. The bride's costume, ornaments and other beauty material are gifted by the bridegroom. Now-a-days a ceremony is observed to hand over the gift material and it is called as *Joron*.

## **Journey for the bride's home**

Praying for blessings from the *Bhakata* and other people in front of *Bhagawata* the bridegroom starts journey for the bride's home in a favorable time. The troupe creates a joyous atmosphere with marriage song, *Uruli* (thrilling sound uttered by woman on special occasion) and the concert of *Dhol* (a drum). The troupe of the bridegroom is welcomed by the bride's mother and other member of the family in their gateway.

## **Bridegroom gets the bride as a holy gift**

Both of them are taken to the venue of marriage in front of the *Bhagawata* and other people under the pandal. They are asked to kneel down in front of the altar and the *Bhakata*. Then the father of the bride or his representative socially describe about the ceremony as well as the causes of this assemble. He also elaborate the details of the clan, family of both the bridegroom and the bride. He then announce the marriage between them. Remembering their deities the priest repeat the announcement for three times and all the assembled people approve the marriage after uttering the name of their respective god. The priest blesses both of them and other attendants through flower and rice over them with their blessing. The Priest pray for their mating and future life as well as for their future child and wealth. After that the Priest and other respected senior persons advises both of them about religion, behavior, social life and Philosophy of life.

## **Marriage customs of *Bengalee* community of Assam**

The *Bengalee* community of Assam follows a number of unique traditional habits in their marriage ceremony. The first day is the day of discussion about the relation and then they decide about the date of blessing and marriage. Both the

bride and the bridegroom's name and address are written in a paper and their guardian signed over it. Generally it takes place in bride's home and it is called as *Pati –Patra*.

After the day of *Pati-patra* in a fixed day a troupe from the bridegroom's family go for bride's home to give blessing. They take fish, curd, sweet, costume and ornaments for the bride as a gift with them. In some places the same is observed from the bride's family to the bridegroom's home.

*Adhibash*- It is a ceremony performed in the evening of the day of the marriage day. In that day also gifts of sweet, costume is sent to bride from the family of the bridegroom. Songs are sung in the bridegroom's home-

*Aaj Ramer adhibash*

*Kaal Ramer biye*

*Kone aante jabo Raam*

*Sangi-sathi niye*

-Today is *Adhibash* of Rama. Tomorrow will be the marriage. Rama will go to marry the bride with his friends.

In that day at the bride's home it sings-

*Aajke Sitar Adhibash*

*Swarga theke devotara koro Ashirbad*

*Mayer hater halud diye kore Adhibash*

-Today is *Abhibash* of Sita, God blesses her from the heaven, bride observe the *Abhibash* and bathing with the turmeric given by her mother.

From the morning in the day of marriage a joyous atmosphere raised in the bride's home. A venue is designed in a square with four pitcher, coconut, banana tree and branches of mango tree. It is called as *Sajna*. Some people make other types of altar for that ritual customs. A ritual ceremony in the name of forefathers of both bridegroom and bride is observed in the marriage day. In the afternoon the bride is bathed anointing with turmeric. After that the bride is dressed with ornaments and costumes that get from the bridegroom as a gift. The female sings-

*Hajo hajo kore, kanya kot pore gayana*

*Benarashi na porile biye mone hayna*

---So many pairs of costume she is wearing but without *benarashi* she is not look like a bride.

There is a good fortune and timing for the main customs of a marriage. Before that timing the bridegroom reach the bride's home with his troupe of friends and family members. When they reach at the gate of the bride all are welcomed by the mother of the bride. A sieve designed with a light of mustard oil, rice and flower. Then all of them take their seat under the pandal and the bride's family receive them. The bridegroom and the bride is taken near the altar. The bridegroom stands and the bride moves seven times around him. At that time bride's face is covered with two betel. Completing the movement they put sight to each other and exchange the garland. Both of them are asked to sit near the priest and he uttered hymn believing god and fire as the witness of this mating. Bride's father or his representative placed bride's hand to bridegroom. A knot is bind using both of their cloth. The bridegroom draws a redleak on the forehead of the bride. Some Bengalee do redleak customs after four days of the marriage.

After the completion of these customs both the bridegroom and bride are taken inside the home. Here various types of game, merry making and dance –songs are

performed in a very joyous atmosphere. In this way they all try to cover the night. When the sun rises both the bridegroom and bride are bathed and after that they are moved around a small pond four fourteen times. Here also the bridegroom draws a redleak on the forehead of the bride. They pray to the Sun and their deities. Then they take rest and take lunch for the day.

On the evening of that day the bridegroom return for his home with the bride. It is believed that the bride should not enter in the day light for the first time. Bridegroom's mother welcome them and all the relatives bless them. Thereafter the bride is shown the kitchen and other parts of home.

The day after the marriage day is called as *Kaalratri*. In that day bridegroom and the bride is prohibited to see the face of each other.

*Bau bhat* or *Saturtha mangal* comes after the day of *kaalratri*. A feast is arranged for the relatives and the invited guest. The bride symbolically take part in it's preparation by touching one of the item for that feast.

Today *Bandparty*- a troupe of music concert takes a position in the marriage ceremony of *Bengalee* community of Assam. Headgear is also used by both bridegroom and the bride in their dressing. In this way a number of unique customs are seen to follow by the *Bengalee* community of Assam.

# **FINAL REPORT FOR THE SCHEME**

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**Title of the research project -**

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## **Introduction.**

Marriage is an important part of human beings in their social and cultural livelihood. Some canonical and ritual characters are found in marriage system of every communities of the world .With the changing of time a number of filtrations, improvisation and exchange of characteristics in the marriage system is also taken place. Some ritual customs also influence it like we see the bindings of society. Some anthropologist describe marriage as “socially sanctioned mating entered into with the assumption of permanency.”

Westermarek writes in his book *History of human Marriage*-“It is not of course impossible that among some people intercours between the sexes may have been promiscuous. But there is not a shred of genuine evidence for the notion that promiscuity even formed a general stage in the history of mankind. ....Although polygamy course among most existing people, and polyandry among some, monogamy is for the most common form of human marriage. It is the form which is generally recognized and permitted. The great majority of people are as a rule monogamous, and other forms of marriage are usually modified in a monogamous direction.”

In some societies if two young people of opposite sex had been lovers for some time and had become attracted to each other, they began to consider for marriage. Usually it was the boy who took the initiative and asked the girl whether she was willing to become his wife. If a girl did not please to marrying to her lover or feared for opposition from her parents, she refused his proposal. Sometimes parents arranged marriage to prohibit their unmarried daughter a friendship with a particular. Moreover in some tribal communities the institutions like *Dhangarin bassa* or *Mandarghar*-houses for maiden where they are allowed to occupy without anyone to look after them. A girl determined to hold on to her lover could usually get her way or as a last resort elope with him to a friendly home. Again if someone



forcibly carrying off a girl then the parents had to submit to some terms; and on payment of the usual bride price, at sometimes enhanced the rate as such the parents raised no further objection to the abductor. Now 'Marriage by capture' is rapidly becoming out of vogue. Otherwise in case of marriage contract usually discussed by the parents on mutual settlements paying stipulated price of the prospective bride or her estimated value in cows, pigs, fowls, or drink. Those who were too poor to pay in cash served in her father's house till they have given an equivalent labour.

Howard in his book has written – "In a progressive society monogamy is the natural and usual form of marriage. Other forms of marriage are degradation or retrogression to the primitive conditions. Promiscuity never creates the home, nor engenders those noble sentiments of self-sacrifice and self-denial that have help to uplift human race."

## **Various communities of Assam -**

Assam, the north east part of India is bestowed with all the beauty of nature. It is thought that people live here from the very early days. Migration of people for this land is also usual process due to suitable atmosphere of this area. The land is not at all plains but have up and down with a number of hills and rivers. The mighty Brahmaputra River is flowing through it which makes Assam into one state from the beginning. Due to the fertility of the land and healthy environment with availability of food a number of people select this land to settle down for livelihood. Thus Assam has become to the land of meeting place for various communities, regions, castes and tribes. All these people have difference with each other by their social system and cultural habits. It is also observed that all these people have special characteristics in their marriage system. Following are few tribes which are mainly found in Assam.

**Ahom** - They generally reside in Upper Assam which is One of the largest tribe in population. Ahom ruled Assam for about six hundred years. As if they are distributed to entire Assam but their traditional life and cultures are not properly preserved. Patsako of Sivasagar district is a place where some of the important Ahom cultures one found.

**Karbi** - They mainly reside in Karbi-Anglong. But they are also found in Uttar-Kachar, Marigaon, Nagaon, Golaghat, Sonitpur and Kamrup district.

**Koch Rajbanshi** - They mainly reside in lower Assam but Koch Rajbanshis are also distributed in the districts of Upper Assam. Their traditional costume, music and songs are yet in practice.

**Khamti** - They are of Tai origin. They mainly inhabit in Lohit district of Arunachal Pradesh, but some of them are also found in Lakhimpur

and Tinsukia district. Till today they continues some traditional habits and they follow Buddhaism.

**Tea tribe** - They are migrated to Assam from Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh and North part of Orissa in the reign of British. Specially, they are appointed in tea gardens. As if they are of different tribes and variety to each other in cultural life, but today they are known as tea tribe. They are distributed almost all over Assam.

**Singpho** - They are found in Margherita of Tinsukia district. Simpho are mainly follower of Buddha religion. Shapang yang Mannaos is their main festival.

**Tai-phake** - Tai-phake of Tai origin lives in the district of Dibrugarh and Tinsukia district of Assam. This branch of people are Buddhist in religion. They entered Assam in 1775 and observe all the traditions as earlier.

**Dimasa** - Their main residents are in Uttar Kachar hill district and Karbi-Anglong. Dimasa of Kachari origin ruled the state in past. Their traditional habits are seen to practice till today.

**Dewori** - Dewori which is a primitive tribe of Assam is mainly seen to live in the districts of Upper Assam.

**Bodo** - One of the main tribe of Assam which is also one of the largest in population. They are distributed in Kokrajhar, Sirang, Baska, Nalbari, Borpeta, Udalguri, Kamrup, Sonitpur, Karbi-Anglong, Dhuburi, Lakhimpur, Dhemaji and Golaghat district of Assam.

**Mattak** - They reside in the districts of Upper Assam. Dibrugarh district is their main homeland but also distributed in Tinsukia, Sivasagar, Jorhat, Golaghat and Lakhimpur.

**Moran** - They live in Kakapathar, Doomdoma, Pengari, Bardusma of Tinsukia district.

**Missing** - One of the largest tribes of Assam in population. They are distributed in Dhemaji, Lakhimpur, Dibrugarh, Tinsukia, Sivasagar, Jorhat, Golaghat and Sonitpur. They are culturally very rich.

**Rabha** - They are mostly distributed in lower Assam. One of the largest tribes in population of Assam which has many sub-divisions.

**Thengal Kachari** - This tribe is mainly distributed in Jorhat, Golaghat, Dhemaji, Dibrugarh District of upper Assam and Karbi-Anglong. Some of their traditional customs are yet alive.

Apart from the above caste and communities *Assamese Muslim, Garo, Monipuri, Nepali, Assamese sikh, Marowari, Bengali* live in Assam with their traditional cultural habits. All these tribes and communities have their own style of marriage customs and have unique features which are beautiful but rare to find in others.

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## ***Chaklong***-Traditional marriage system of *Tai Ahom*

The *Ahom* community practises a unique type of marriage system named *Chaklong*. Those who can feel the greatness of the advices included in this system get inspired to follow the healthy advices for the whole life. In their religious scripture *Tai lit mong hunpha* it is written that *Lengdon*, the main deity of *Ahom* has married performing *Chaklong* system of marriage.

During the *Ahom* kingdom in Assam it takes 9 days to perform the *Chaklong*. But latter on it is shorted to seven, five and up to 3 days. Today this marriage system is seen to observe in a single day in some places. *Chaklong* is not performed in case of elopement. Here are the rules and steps of this unique marriage system.

1. ***Joron***- Before the day of commencement of *Chaklong* ornaments and costumes of odd numbers like 3, 5 or 7 are sent to the bride from the bridegroom's family. Bridegroom's mother and few other relatives visited the bride's home with these ornaments, clothing and other gifts and dressed her. They sing traditional marriage songs in a joyous atmosphere. Bathing stuffs needed in the marriage day for both the bridegroom and the bride is exchanged in that day.
2. ***Nownai***- It is the ceremony of anointing the bridegroom or the bride with ointments preparatory to bathing him or her before marriage. A square bamboo frame of unique design named *Bei* is made for bathing. Body of banana tree and leaves are used in its making. Before the making of the *Bei* an egg, a needle, a chickle, betel nut-betel and a coin of copper is placed under soil of it. Woman collect water in pitcher. The bridegroom or bride is anointed with a paste mixture of Pulse, Turmeric and Mustard oil. Water in the pitcher is poured from head to the body at first. Then only more water is used for bathing.

3. ***Na purukhar bhoj*** ( a feast)- Before two or three days to the marriage a feast is arranged in both the bride and bridegroom's home as a religious practice. Religious people, priest, relatives are invited to the feast. Before taking the feast both the bride and bridegroom kneel down before the assembled people offering betelnut-betel for their blessing and worship the feast in the name of their deity.
4. ***Rikkhan*** or ***Ayukh tola anusthan***-Taking a bamboo scoop with betel nut-betel, Egg, Rice two or three priest prays for long life of the bride and bridegroom in a near pond or river uttering some religious hymn. The bride or the bridegroom is blessed using the fish getting in the scoop taking it on their head uttering the hymn *Chao nuru chao kao aie*.
5. ***Deoban utsav***- Deoban is a ceremony that performed in both the families of bride and bridegroom in the day before marriage day. Here the deities of Ahom like *Lengdon, Langkuri, Lareng, Jaan-sai-hung, Jaa singpha* are prayed with betel nut and betel. Seven bundle of betel nut-betel are sent to the bride's home from the bridegroom. When the prayer in the bride's home takes place twelve egg, Rice, honey bee is added with it and the priest uttered the hymn.
6. ***Gathian khunda***- In the night of second day of *Chaklong* older lady, woman, young girls anoint the bride or bridegroom with oil and other stuffs. Five or seven woman with the mother pound the root of *Gathian* tree taking a cloth over the bride or the bridegroom. After that a blaze is drawn on the forehead of them.
7. ***Moving towards bride's home***- After bathing and wearing new traditional dresses of Ahom the bridegroom take blessing from the assembled people. The females sing the marriage songs. After taking blessing from parents and other respected persons the bridegroom leaves for bride's home with a group of his relatives and friends. The bridegroom wears Dhooti and other

traditional costumes. One of the bridegroom's friend plays the role of his close companion taking an umbrella and other essential things with him.

8. ***Huwaguri tola***- This is the welcoming part of the bridegroom's troupe in the gate of the bride's home by the bride's mother and other family members. Generally the gate is designed with banana tree. Bridegroom's foot is washed by younger girls from the bride's family. The bridegroom have to hand over some gift to that girl. A curtain is maintained in between the bridegroom and the bride's mother. She welcomes the bridegroom to the tent where the altar for Chaklong is designed.
9. ***The altar for Chaklong***- The altar is made like a lotus with seven colors. Dividing this lotus in a geometric way where 101 earthen lamps of mustard oil are lighted. Generally the altar is made in 1 or 2 inch height with 61 inch diameter and made of sand. The bridegroom have to take seat in front of it.
10. **The bride to the pandal**---Offering betel nut-betel in a tray for the woman and friends of the bride, the bridegroom's family request the bride to come out from home to the altar near the bridegroom. The bride takes seat left to the bridegroom. A curtain is maintained between the two. The priest blesses them and order to remove the curtain between them. The assembled people uttered as *o phura o taara*. After that the history of Ahom, seven past generation of both the bridegroom and bride are narrated.
11. The main process of Chaklong  
Here both the Tai hymn and its Assamese version is used as the religious marriage custom. Praying for the main priest the father or other representative of the family the bride's father said - Respected Sir, I adopt you as the priest for the marriage of my daughter with Mr.....in the Chaklong role and regulation. Please complete the customs.



The priest says- I Mr..... take the responsibility to complete the marriage customs of *Chaklong* tradition of the marriage on the request of the bride's family. Then the bridegroom and bride kneel down and the assembled people bless them. The priest utter the hymn in Tai language and the bridegroom follow him taking flower and rice in his hand- "Oh God; Please complete our marriage with a good fortune." Then he offers flowers and Rice to the altar. The bride's father pray to the altar- "O respected God; I put this as gift to the bridegroom".

Taking the right thumb of the bride on the right thumb of the bridegroom, bride's father again says- "Oh God, Taking you as the witness I put the girl as a gift to the bridegroom. Please save them".

The bridegroom says-"I gently take the gift and I will keep it affectionately."

After that they exchange garlands to each other's neck. The priest blessed them. All attendants scatter bunch of flower over them and marriage songs are sung.

12.***Hengdaang pradan***- It is the act of giving *Hengdaang* (traditional sword) to the bridegroom. Giving the *Hengdaang* the bride says to the bridegroom- "become eligible to save the land, your family members, and property with this *Hengdaang*". Receiving the *Hengdaang* the bridegroom says-"I will study the history of our nation and will save the pride and respect of the nation. Touching the *Hengdaang* with my hand I promise to save the nation, religion and the land".

13.**Advice of the Priest**- The Priest advises the bride and the bridegroom about the family and social life and also advise how to follow these customs. These advices are very helpful for their future family life. After

these processes a few merry makings are seen to perform among the assembled people.

When the married couple with their companion arrive at the bridegroom's home, Bridegroom's mother welcomes the bride at their home. For the wellbeing of the bridegroom and the bride they pray their adorable deities in their bed room. A feast is arranged in the joyous atmosphere.

The *Chaklong* of Ahom is not only a mere social customs but it keeps a high level ideology with great philosophy. It inspire people to create awareness about society and their own land. The 101 lights at the altar gives a sweet remembrance to the bride and bridegroom. The process of taking oath in the marriage day with a sword in front of 101 lights and in presence of Priest and people is not seen to practise by any nation of the world.

## **Marriage customs of *Mattak* community**

*Mattak* is an indigenous *Mongloid* tribe lives in Assam even before Pre-Ahom era. Latter they became follower of *Mayamora vaishnava* religion introduced by the great *vaishnava* saint *Sri Sri Aniruddha Deva*. But till today a number of folk traditional and religious habits of the tribe are seen to practise. The primitive habit like equality between man and woman in the society are yet preserved in this tribe. There is no strict binding for widow to live the whole life as widow, but she can marry. As if marriage means mating of a man and female for a family life but the puberty attainment of a girl is also observed among the *Mattak* community as a ceremony.

Proving the existence of tribal behavior Elopement and then marriage with the loving partner is also seen among the *Mattak* people. So the ceremony observe in puberty attainment get importance with many traditional habits and merry making.

Two types of marriage system is seen to observe among the *Mattak* community- (i) Marriage after elopement with loving partner (ii) Marriage in traditional customs.

In case of marriage after elopement a systemic process with some ritual habits is followed. After the day of elopement the guardian of that boy go to the girl's home and pray for excuse for the boy's fault offering a bundle of betel nut-betel. If the pair between the male and female supposed to be good then there is no objection. After that they discuss to determine a day to assemble with their relatives to confirm the marriage relation. In that day with the witness of the scripture of *Mattak* community named *Bhagawata* the marriage get social recognition. The bridegroom and the bride kneel down in front of the worshiped old people called *Bhakata* and they are blessed. A feast is arranged for the assembled people of that day.

Many changes take place in the traditional tribal customs of the *Mattak* community with the influence of *Aryan* culture and *Vaishnavism*. There is no Priest in the marriage system of *Mattak* community and the total process is very simple. *Guru* (Religious teacher), *Bhakata* (worshiped religious man) *Naam*(hymn), *Deo* (*Vaishnava* saint) are the four main necessities for the religious method in a marriage. The social feast that seen to offer today is an additional custom. In *Mattak* society marriage is not performed among the same clan. Girls are not exchanged in between two clans. After searching and proper discussions the bridegroom's family ask the bride's family for the selected girl and pray them with a bundle of betel nut- betel to fix the girl for that bridegroom. Then through proper discussion the date for the marriage is determined. On that day *Bhakata*, relatives and well-wishers of the bridegroom are asked to assemble and publicly declare the relation and the arrangement. Sometimes in that day the bridegroom put a ring in bride's finger. It is a part of the customs to fix the relation.

The day before the day of marriage *Na purukhar hakam*(a religious activity) and a feast with is arranged for the relatives, family members and the neighbour. Both bridegroom and bride are bathed in their respective home with a paste of pulse and turmeric under the *Bei* ( A square bamboo frame with banana tree & leaves).The females sing marriage songs, hymn and young boys-girls perform *Bihu* (folk dance-song of Assam) bitting *Dhol* ( a traditional drum). The bridegroom is dressed with *Dhooti*, *Gamusa* (Assamese traditional towel) and traditional Assamese costume. In the same way the bride is also dressed with new costume and ornaments. Taking bless from the *Bhakata* the troupe of bridegroom moves for the bride's home. The bridegroom is accompanied with one umbrella taker, One Javelin taker, One *Hengdaang* (traditional sword) taker and friends, relatives and well-wishers. When the troupe reach near the gateway of the bride few young people put a false obstruction as a process of merry

making. It is solved by offering betel nut-betel. The troupe is welcomed by bride's mother and a young girl from the bride's family washes the feet of the bridegroom. All the members of the troupe take seats in front of the *Bhakata* and *Bhagawata*-the main scripture of *Mattak* community. Marriage songs are sung and an atmosphere of joy and merry making is raised. Both bridegroom and the bride kneel down to bride's parents and then all of them come out to assemble in the religious venue with the *Bhakata* and *Bhagawata* under the pandal. The main customs in the marriage system of *Mattak* community are Kneel down in front of the *Bhagawata*, twelve *Vaishnava Bhakata*, blessings and utterance of the name of God. Here the bridegroom and the bride with their parents kneel down in front of *Bhakata* and *Bhagawata*. The *Gaonburha*(senior *Bhakata*) on behalf of the people assembled utter blessings for them and announce the binding of the marriage. They blessed for a long and happy life as well as advises them for freshness of body and mind, duties as a joint family life, customs and habits to follow and about the relation with the senior and juniors. A bundle of betel nut-betel in a tray named *Sharai* is offered in front of *Bhagawata* and *Bhakata* at that time. After that they all return to the bridegroom's home with the bride. There is no practice dowry system in the marriage of *Mattak* community. But today some parents feel that they should offer some essential instruments and items with the bride to the bridegroom's home.

## Marriage customs in *Deuri* community

*Deuri* is an ancient tribe of Assam. This indigenous tribe follow many unique folk traditional practices and customs from very ancient time.

Marriage is that arrangement which unites a man and woman as husband and wife. It is taken as a very holy bindings by the *Deuries*. Young boys and girls are think to be eligible for marriage when the society think so. A damsel becomes eligible for marriage after *Ego fissa gema* – A traditional habit when a damsel socially wear traditional costume in their breast and waist. Marriage between same clan and with close relatives are taken as a punishable offence among the *Deuri* community. Puberty attainment of a girl is not performed as a ceremony among them. In the primitive society of *Deuri*, it is seen that some powerful man used to take more than one female as their wife.

After discussing about the clan, family and relations if both the come to the decision for a marriage then parents of the male and other responsible family members approach the parents of the female with some traditional gifts like bundle of betel nut-betel, one pair of costume , one pot of traditional wine. If the parents and the family members of the female agree with the proposal then they take the gift items and pray for an evergreen relation.

As if three methods of marriage system is seen to observe among the *Deuri* community, *Borbiya* means socially mating between man and woman is preferred as the best marriage system. In this case preparation starts before about one month of the day of marriage in both the families. The householder of both the family ask young man and woman of their society to help them in the preparation of marriage activities. Before starting the activities old man of their community pray their respected deities offering traditional wine for the successful ending of all the activities of the marriage. People are invited and

some of them are requested to follow some duties in the marriage offering them betel nut-betel.

Starting from the seven days to the marriage day friends of the bride starts to come their home to accompany her. The bride with her friends are invited for a feast by the relatives. In the evening the companions of the bride sing marriage songs taking in front Rice, coconut, betel nut, betel and an earthen lamp of mustard oil taking in a traditional basket named *Dhun*.

### ***Pathoria***- The Prime minister of a marriage

*Pathoria* is the main liable person who guided the religious activities systematically in a marriage system of *Deuri* community. He takes the dress with traditional costume and ornaments. As a representative of the bridegroom or the bride he led them in all the customs of a marriage.

### ***Nowani***- Bathing

In the day of marriage both the bride and bridegroom are bathed at their respective home in the morning. Some *Deuri* people arrange the bathing before seven days of the marriage day. A bamboo square framed named *Bei* is made with the help of banana stem, flower and small branches of mango tree. Marriage songs are sung-

*Kon khanikore beikhan hajale*

*Majat narakhile duni aei*

*Opare rupar soi toleo rupar soi*

*Honare sekura di aei*

-who has made the *Bei* without a *Duni* (a U shaped basket), upper and lower is with Silver covering and golden clot.

After bathing the bride and bridegroom is dressed with traditional costume. The bride's costume, ornaments and other beauty material are gifted by the bridegroom. Now-a-days a ceremony is observed to hand over the gift material and it is called as *Joron*.

## **Journey for the bride's home**

Praying for blessings from the *Bhakata* and other people in front of *Bhagawata* the bridegroom starts journey for the bride's home in a favorable time. The troupe creates a joyous atmosphere with marriage song, *Uruli* (thrilling sound uttered by woman on special occasion) and the concert of *Dhol* (a drum). The troupe of the bridegroom is welcome by the bride's mother and other member of the family in their gateway.

## **Bridegroom gets the bride as a holy gift**

Both of them are taken to the venue of marriage in front of the *Bhagawata* and other people under the pandal. They are asked to kneel down in front of the altar and the *Bhakata*. Then the father of the bride or his representative socially describe about the ceremony as well as the causes of this assemblance. He also elaborate the details of the clan, family of both the bridegroom and the bride. He then announce the marriage between them. Remembering their deities the priest repeat the announcement for three times and all the assembled people approve the marriage after uttering the name of their respective god. The priest blesses both of them and other attendants through flower and rice over them with their blessing. The Priest pray for their mating and future life as well as for their future child and wealth. The Priest and other respected senior persons advises both of them about religion, behavior, social life and Philosophy of life.



## Marriage customs of *Bengalee* community of Assam

The *Bengalee* community of Assam follows a number of unique traditional habits in their marriage ceremony. The first day is the day of discussion about the relation and then they decide about the date of blessing and marriage. Both the bride and the bridegroom's name with address are written in a paper and their guardian sign in it. Generally it takes place in bride's home and it is called as *Pati –Patra*.

After the day of *Pati-patra* in a fixed day a troupe from the bridegroom's family go for bride's home to give blessing. They take fish, curd, sweet, costume and ornaments for the bride as a gift with them. In some places the same is observed from the bride's family to the bridegroom's home.

*Adhibash*- It is a ceremony performed in the evening of the day of the marriage day. In that day also gifts of sweet, costume is sent to bride from the family of the bridegroom. Songs are sung in the bridegroom's home-

*Aaj Ramer adhibash*

*Kaal Ramer biye*

*Kone aante jabo Raam*

*Sangi-sathi niye*

-Today is *Adhibash* of Rama. Tomorrow will be the marriage. Rama will go to marry the bride with his friends.

In that day at the bride's home it sings-

*Aajke Sitar Adhibash*

*Swarga theke devotara koro Ashirbad*

*Mayer hater halud diye kore Adhibash*

-Today is *Abhibash* of *Sita*, God blesses her from the heaven, bride observe the *Abhibash* and bathing with the turmeric given by her mother.

From the morning in the day of marriage a joyous atmosphere raised in the bride's home. A venue is designed in a square with four pitcher, coconut, banana tree and branches of mango tree. It is called as *Sajna*. Some people make other types of altar for that ritual customs. A ritual ceremony in the name of forefathers of both bridegroom and bride is observed in the marriage day. In the afternoon the bride is bathed anointing with turmeric. After that the bride is dressed with ornaments and costumes that get from the bridegroom as a gift. The female sings-

*Hajo hajo kore, kanya kot pore gayana*

*Benarashi na porile biye mone hayna*

---So many pairs of costume she is wearing but without *benarashi* she is not look like a bride.

There is a good fortune and timing for the main customs of a marriage. Before that timing the bridegroom reach the bride's home with his troupe of friends and family members. When they reach at the gate of the bride all are welcome by the mother of the bride. A sieve is designed with an earthen lamp of mustard oil, rice and flower. Then all of them take their seat under the pandal and the bride's family receive them. The bridegroom and the bride seat near the altar. The bridegroom stands and the bride moves seven times around him. At that time bride's face is covered with two betel. Completing the movement they put sight to each other and exchange the garland. Both of them are asked to sit near the priest and he utter hymn believing god and fire as the witness of this mating. Bride's father or his representative placed bride's hand to bridegroom. A knot is bind

using both of their cloth. The bridegroom draws a redleak on the forehead of the bride. Some Bengalee do redleak customs after four days of the marriage.

After the completion of these customs both the bridegroom and bride are taken inside the home. Here various types of game, merry making and dance –songs are performed in a very joyous atmosphere. In this way they all try to cover the night. When the sun rises both the bridegroom and bride are bathed and after that they are moved around a small pond four fourteen times. Here also the bridegroom draws a redleak on the forehead of the bride. They pray the Sun and their other deities. Then they take rest and take lunch for the day.

On the evening of that day the bridegroom return for his home with the bride. It is believed that the bride should not enter at the bridegroom's home in the day light for the first time. Bridegroom's mother welcome them and all the relatives bless them. Thereafter the bride is shown the kitchen and other parts of home.

The day after the marriage day is called as *Kaalratri*. In that day bridegroom and the bride is prohibited to see the face of each other.

*Bau bhat* or *Saturtha mangal* comes after the day of *kaalratri*. A feast is arranged for the relatives and the invited guest. The bride symbolically take part in it's preparation by touching one of the item for that feast.

Today *Bandparty*- a troupe of music concert takes a position in the marriage ceremony of *Bengalee* community of Assam. Headgear is also used by both bridegroom and the bride in their dressing. In this way a number of unique customs are seen to follow by the *Bengalee* community of Assam.

## **Marriage of Sonowal kachari community**

The Sonowal kachari is an indigenous tribe of Assam and they have been living in this land even before Aryan and Dravidians. Like other tribes people of this community also believe that maturity of man and woman is gained only after the marriage. Sonowal kachari people follows some strict rule and regulations in their marriage system from the early days. After proper discussion between the family members of both bride and bridegroom a marriage is finalized. There is no system of handling dowry among the Sonowal kachari people. But exchange of gifts between both the families is seen to practice now-a-days.

Restrictions is maintained between marriage in the following relations- (i) Between the members of the same clan and family, (ii) with father's brother or his son and with mother's sister or her daughter. (iii) With son and daughter of maternal uncle.

Today some Hindu customs are also seen to include in the marriage system of Sonowal kachari tribe. Again in general Sonowal kachari people performs marriage among own tribe but there is no strict prohibition against the marriage with people of other caste and tribes. Widow and widower marriage is also prevalent in Sonowal kachari society.

When the marriage proposal for marriage is accepted then the date is fixed for the ceremony. Some people of the tribe arrange a ring ceremony also. Previous day to the marriage or in morning of the marriage day a small group of selected people from of bridegroom's side visit the bride's home with pair of costume in odd number, ornaments and gifts for the bride with a bunch of betel-betelnut. They anoint and adorn the bride and then the bride kneel down to her parents and other assembled people. This process is called as *Joron*. A ritual ceremony with a feast is arranged in both the bride and bridegroom's home in the name of their forefathers, This *Na purukhia hakam* is observed previous day to the marriage

day. The bridegroom is bathed by a group of damsel and woman maintaining some traditional habits. For this purpose they collect water from nearby pond or river in a *Kolosi*(a small water jar) after worshipping with betel-betelnut and earthen lamp. This process is called *pani-tola*(collection of water) and during this process they sing some traditional songs. The songs related with a marriage is *biya naam* (songs of marriage). Believing God Brahma, God Bishnu, the Heaven, the Earth and the hell as the witness *kolosi* is filled with water with the help of a chicklet. There is a question-answer session in between the mother of the bride and the accompanied woman. They sing as follows-

*swargate jwoli aase thupi thupi tora*

*doibokiye paani tole naache apeswara*

-bunch of stars shining in the heaven, Doiboki collects water and the fairy dances.

The bride or the bridegroom is bathed under *bei* (a bamboo construction with four post) using a paste of turmeric and pulses in a traditional way. Before bathing the bride or the bridegroom is revolved seven times around *bei*.

After taking bless from *bhakata*(vaishnava votary),parents and their respective deities the bridegroom starts the journey with a group of friends and relatives to the bride's home. A group of some selected relations are restricted to accompany this group. Arriving bride's home the group sit outside of the bride's home among the invited guest and other assembled people. The bridegroom show respect to the parents and other close relatives of the bride offering gifts like costume and bunch of betel-betelnut. Representative of bridegroom's side enter to the inside of the bride's home and they request the bride to come out. Under the pandal outside of bride's home marriage songs are sung by the girls and woman wishing a happy married family for the bride and the bridegroom. The bride and the bridegroom kneel down to *bhakata* (vaishnava votary) and other assembled

people wishing for their blessing. One designated person from the society advises the bride and bridegroom about various aspects of family life and also wishes for a happy married life. There is no hard and long process of marriage rule-regulations among the Sonowal kachari people. Both the bride and the bridegroom takes some lunch inside of the bride's home and worship their forefathers. Then they take blessings from bride's parents and move for the bridegroom's home. It is believed that the bride should not look back ward in this journey otherwise all the property of bride's family move with the bride to the bridegroom's home. In the gateway of the bridegroom's home; the bride, the bridegroom and their companion are welcome by the sister of the bridegroom. The bride have to kneel down to the granary, the worshipping altar and the cow hut before entering bridegroom's home. Then both bride and the bridegroom kneel down to bridegroom's parents and other seniors of the family wishing for their blessings. The number of gifts for the relatives of the bridegroom is informed before for that arrangement. No special type of hymns is used in the marriage system of Sonowal kachari community but there is a lecture of morality acts by a wise experienced older man for the newly married couple. A description about a good house wife and family is found in *haidong* songs of sonowal kachari-

*sotal aagar bogori gash paat hereng reng*

*bhal buli bowari aanilo dat hereng hereng reng*

-leaves of the trees are intersperse, we bring her believing as a good mistress but she intersperse the privacy of the family.

*Gandharva bibah* (elopement) – This type of marriage is familiar to the sonowal kachari community. In this case any youth may elope his sweet heart. Permission for this type of marriage from both sides is taken only after elopement followed by the marriage. Socially this marriage gets recognition through proper traditional customs only when both the families agree to do so. Guardians and representative

from the bridegroom's family go to bride's home and request to forgive them for the fault caused by their member. In this way they come to an understanding and make plan for the new married couple.

*Ghar utha* – this is a process followed by a marriage. Here the bride and the bride groom with few companion have to go the bride's home and get introduce to the relative and family members of the bride. It is a compulsory part in case of elopement. In that day a feast is arranged for the relatives, friends and other members of their society. The bride and the bridegroom showed respects to seniors and kneel down with some gifts. In that day the bride's family hand over some essential equipment for the bride and bridegroom. In the same way the bridegroom's family also takes some food and other material to the bride's home. It is a tradition of taking one duck or goose with them as a gift to bride's home.

## **Bodo community marriage**

Bodo community of Assam practise a number marriage system. In Bodo language marriage is termed as *haba*. Ha means the earth and ba means to adopt, that means to adopt or to follow the duties of family life. Bodo people interpret that marriage is a process for mating between man and woman wishing to create new generation so that they can continually carry the universal system.

### ***Haba gaulao-***

In this type of marriage a process of introduction followed by selection is maintained and the relation is finalized when both the family means the bride and the bridegroom's family members agree to do so. Here at first the bridegroom's family approach the bride's family with traditional wine, betel-betelnut and a pair of bracelet. If the bride's family return the bracelet pair it means that the agreement is cancelled. Otherwise they select a favorable date for the marriage.

*Bairathi* is a word closely related with *haba gaulao*. It is a group of four woman without whom the marriage process is almost impossible. *Gara bairathi* is two married woman and *aitha bairathi* is two unmarried woman. These four woman perform main activities of *haba gaulao*. All of them have to wear *dakhana*-the traditional costume for woman. *aitha bairathi* is like the assistant to the bridegroom and they are responsible in preparing the bride with costume and other ornaments. *Barlangfa* is those two people who carries the ritual and other essential things from bridegroom's home to bride's home. Years ago there is a custom named *amakhthang* related to *haba gaulao*. As wine, pork, betel, betelnut, rice, banana are taken to bride's home in the day of marriage by the bridegroom's family. Meat of one pig's head is divided equally into two part for the bride and bridegroom's side. The *barlangfai* dances with the pig's head. Today in place of wine and meat, tea, sugar, milk, betel, betelnut are used. It is seen that today *barkangfai* dances with taking some land or mud as a symbol of the earth. The



dance interpret that like the dance of *barlangfai* it is wished that the newly married couple will live happily carrying the duties of their family life. There are some other traditions after this marriage system-

***Sabri or gaonjaan thaka Janay***- This is a process of taking some amount of money by the bride's parents from the bridegroom for adopting the bride from childhood up to the marriage age. It varies depending upon the demand of the bride's parents, but today it is fixed by the society. Generally two rupees or other symbol of money is taken in this trade. Parents may ask for a pig with money.

***Nirikh bausnaya*** (cut of relation) - Before marriage the parents are the closest relation for the bride but after marriage the bridegroom become the closest to her. *Nirikh bausnaya* is that process where the father of the bride announce the cut of relation in front of the society. For that the leader of bridegroom's side have to hand over some gift and fine to the bride's father. The fee is called *malsa*.

***Bari barsiani rang lanay*** – knowing or unknowingly the girl may done something wrong to the society. For getting excuse from all that fault the bridegroom have to pay fine to the society on behalf of the bride. This is called *bari barsiani rang lanay*.

***Mamai mara Janay*** – The maternal uncle may take fee like the bride's parents. On return the maternal uncle have to gift some property to his niece. He have to invite them to his home after marriage and the maternal uncle must arrange a feast with a pig for selected people in presence of the bride and bridegroom.

***Daunkhar langthay*** (elopement)

If one matured man and woman agree for marriage without informing their parents and family members then they may follow the *daunkhar langthay*. In this case any relative of the male or the female may perform as the mediator for the marriage. Parents are informed only after the marriage. If both the family agree

with the relation then only they proceed their traditional customs of a marriage and the boy and the girl get the permission to live with the family.

### ***Hathasumi-***

This is the oldest and interesting marriage system of Bodo community. *Hatha* is a pot made by the timber of *sam* tree or jack tree. In the day of *hathasumi* the bride has to prepare food after wearing bride's costume. If she is unable to cook for the whole people of the feast then as a symbol the bride is asked to prepare one *hatha* of rice and one *hatha* of vegetable. During these preparations she is helped by other people also. This one *hatha* of rice and one *hatha* of vegetable is taken to *bathauhaali*- the worshiping altar. The bride and the bridegroom kneel down in front of the altar and the priest performs the marriage customs with chanting the hymns. After that all the assembled people take food. The bridegroom and his associate sit in east-south direction of the *bathautholi*. The new bride at first gives food to them. She is supported by some married woman. These married women teach the bride how to distribute food. Here the bride has to follow certain rules and regulations. During this time singing and dancing with *khaam*(drum), *siphung* (flute), *jotha*(cymbal) is accompanied with the feast.

### **Bhahmo marriage system**

With the spread of brahma religion among the Bodo community they start to follow the vedic system of marriage abandoning their own customs. This takes place at the bride's home but in some special circumstances it may perform at bridegroom's home also. Here vedic hymns are chanted in Bodo translations and the marriage is completed.

In this way performing a number of colorful cultural traditions the Bodo community people of Assam observed their marriage and started their family life.

## **Marriage of Tea community**

Tea community is that community which is formed by the people of various tribes that are engaged in tea industry of Assam. They had been coming from Bihar, Orissa, Madhya pradesh , Andhra pradesh during British rule in India to work in newly started tea garden in Assam. The language they use belongs to Astro-asiatic language family. Munda, orau. chautal, gand, bheel,paraja, Oriya, Telenga, Sabar are some of the tribe and caste that forms Tea community.

The word *shadi* is the synonym to the word marriage for Tea community people. For them *Shadi* is the beginning for a new life of one with another, in other means *shadi* is the preparation for reproduction. In this context marriage is a ritual festival with an approach for reproduction. Tea community people are worshiper of non-living. So a number of traditional beliefs are seen to practice in their ritual habits. Nature and living animals have a significant position in their marriage system. In the day of marriage the bridegroom have to observe a mock marriage with a mango tree. Otherwise it is believed that evil may come to bride's married life. This is a delightful celebration in a folkloric manner wishing a prosperity and happiness for the bride.

Traditionally bridegroom's family members visit eligible damsel's home in search of a bride. After proper discussion if both family agree in the proposed relation then they finalise the marriage and find out a favourable date for the ritual customs of the marriage. Some of them also observe a day in the name of ring marriage. In that day the bridegroom's family members visit the bride's home with some stipulated gift for the bride and other family members of her, In that day there is a process named *Suman*, where raw rice, tulsi, earthen lamp, betel-betelnut etc. are placed in a disc in front of the bridegroom sitting among the assembled people dressed in special manner. The bride is wear a ring as a confirmation of the relation. Some marriage songs are sung as follows –

*Pakhree korilo gore baba*

*Bhiriyahi bandh*

*Biriyahi bandh cyrokon*

*Ahara sukhaye gal*

*Pakhree sukhaye gal*

*Kuanwahi chata pari gal*

Through this the bride is advised by the senior woman for her married life. Behaviour in a new home, customs to follow and certain types of favourable advice are described through these songs.

A tent with 5, 7 or 9 post is temporarily constructed for the marriage celebration in both the bride and the bridegroom's home. Mango wood and leaves are vastly use for the decoration. Paddy straw is wrapped in the middle post of the tent. Bow and arrow, an axe and some thread are placed with the altar. Earthen pot filled with paddy, coin is also placed near and enlighten earthen lamp offering betel-betelnut. Red soil is used in making the altar. In the day of marriage people with the bridegroom sit under temporary pandal. All the ritual customs are performed in that place in front of the assembled people. The bridegroom wear white shirt and light yellow colored dhuti. On head he wear a headgear named *maur* and other ornaments in other parts of the body. Some bridegroom uses turban in head. All invited guest takes some gift like cloth, wine, rice etc. for the bride or the bridegroom. Madal, Dhumsa, Sohna, Dhak, Dhol are some of the musical instruments used in a marriage as a means of entertainment. A dancer in warrior's costume accompany the bridegroom in the journey to the bride's home. He dances with sword in the sound and rhythm of musical instruments. The dancer is called as *natuwa* and the dance is *natuwa nritya*. In the gateway in the bride's home a competition between the *natuwa* of bridegroom's side and the bride's side take place. The *natuwa nritya* is a significant dance form practice by the Tea community people.

The bridegroom and the bride sit in front of the altar under the tent in the yard and then the priest starts the ritual customs. Fire is worshiped and it is followed by *sinddradaan*. Here the bridegroom draws red-lead in the bride's forehead hiding under the cloth. The assembled people sprinkle raw rice over them wishing for a happy married life. Some of them completes the marriage taking fire as the witness of the conjugation. After that the pair have to revolve around the fire altar. This is called as *saptapadi* means seven numbers of foot. There is a chapter named *suman*- a ceremony of taking blessings from people of the society. The assembled people offer gifts to the bridegroom and the bride wishing a favourable fortune. Some songs are sung during *suman* which expresses the wishes for happy married life for both the bride and the bridegroom. *suman* is performed in both bridegroom and bride's home. The songs of *suman* in bride's home is tragic and that of bridegroom's home are some witty and humorous. The bride and the bridegroom is welcome by the bridegroom's sister at the gateway of the bridegroom's home. The bride offers gift to bridegroom's sister. After the marriage the bride lives at her mother's home for a few days as a tradition, the bridegroom visit bride's home after few days with some companion and ask the bride to come with him for his home. This chapter is called as *song sara*.

Widow and widower marriage is also seen to practise among Tea community people. This type of marriage is not widely celebrated and is known as *sangi* or *sanghasadi*. In this marriage system of *Munda* tribe the bridegroom's side do not go to bride's home. On the contrary the bride's side go to bridegroom's home to perform the marriage customs. They also enjoy the journey with songs, dances and music on the way to bridegroom's home.

The above description is not a complete description of the marriage customs of tea community people. Different caste and tribes of them follow various rules and regulations in their marriage system. These are some common types of habits in marriage system of tea community people which are prevalent to them.

## Marriage of Rabha community

From the very ancient time Rabha community of Assam observe various unique customs in their marriage system. These customs are seen to vary according to the region or the clan. Among the *Rangdhami* and *Mayotari* clan of Rabha community five types of marriage system were observed in ancient time- (a)*bhori sionkay/thusi sekay* (b) *kaya bhori biokaya* (c) *nok dhangkay/ kay paykay* (d) *dhangakay/ sionkay* (e) *crangsi bhori*

(a)*Bhori sionkay*- This is an interesting type of marriage system in which some of significant folk characters of Rabha community are observed. Here in a fine morning in the month of October-November a group of people with some gifts from bridegroom's family arrive at the home of a mature damsel and approach her for marriage. The group of people draws red lead and anointed with oil in the head of the girl. If the girl have any objection in this relation then she erase the red lead. In this way the group from the bridegroom's side tries three times for a particular girl and ask her to accept the relation.

If the damsel and her guardian agree with the proposed relation then the bridegroom's side offer traditional wine , tobacco and betel-betelnut for the assembled people. They also have to hand over gifts like raw rice, fish, black pulses, a bunch of cotton, ornaments, cloths , some money and a red cock in the name of the new bride. These gifts items are together called as *sitha bandha* or *sitha bundi*. Generally the daughter of the bridegroom's maternal uncle have to carry or hand over these material to the bride. A healthy pair of husband-wife must accompany the bridegroom during the whole process. As a symbol of the confirmation of the marriage the bride weave a pair of cloth for her with the gifted cotton. If the bride's family do not happy with the proposal and disagree with it then the bride's family returns the gift items to the bridegroom in the same day. Otherwise the relation is taken as confirmed. This type of marriage system is

completed in three days. First day is the cleaning of the house and preparation for the marriage. Second day is the marriage day with the customs and a feast for the invited guest. Third day is the *chako paykay rounkay* which is the culmination day of the marriage with a feast.

In the second day a group of people from bridegroom's side attend at the bride's home with some gift and after adorning the bride, she is taken to the bridegroom's home followed by a procession of music, dance and song. The bride have to sit right to the bridegroom in front of the altar called *rontak* at bridegroom's home. The priest utter hymns and kill a pair of cock and hen offering in the name of the god *Risi*. Depending upon the death nature of the cock and the hen the fortune of the bridegroom and the bride is counted. This total process is called as to *thakay*. After this the bridegroom and the bride kneel down in front of the assembled people praying for their blessings. It is followed by a feast where the bride distribute rice to the invited guest wearing a special type of costume. The bride lives at the bridegroom's home on that day but on the next day the bride is sent to her mother's home with her companion for a few days. A feast with traditional wine accompanied by various dance, music and songs taken place. The songs sung in the marriage is called *totekami chay*. The bride and the bridegroom is entered in a new home in a selected favourable date and in this way the total process of this type of marriage ceremony is culminated.

(b) ***Kay biokay/ bhori biokay***- In this type of marriage the bride may be disagree for marriage and hence she may be kidnapped by the youth means the bridegroom and marries her, as ritual process offering a cock in the name of their respective god. But in this case the bridegroom have to pay a large amount of money to the bride's parents and her close relatives as fine at the time of social recognition. This fine is called *rangti kaam*. A marriage feast must be offered for the society. As if this is a one sided marriage system but consent of both the sides is essential for the social recognition.

(c) *nok dhangkay/ kay paykay* – During the *bathau puja* celebration in the spring season the bride and the bridegroom are selected among themselves singing love songs, when both the sides agree they decided to marry and hence to form their family. This is an elopement marriage where the consent of the parents are not counted. For the social recognition of the marriage a pair of cock is sacrificed in the name of their god taking some people as the witness of this conjugation. The married couple have to show respect to their parents and other relatives offering some money, betel-betelnut through proper rules and regulations. If not possible at that time a feast must be offered to the society within three to five years.

(d) *jangay dhangkay/ jangay sionkay* –Here in contrary to taking the bride to the bridegroom's home , the bridegroom is taken to bride's home in a plan to live the bridegroom at bride's home for the future life. All this customs are same to *bhori sionkay* system of marriage. But here all the customs are observed at bride's home. Sithabunda is an essential part in this marriage system. In the day of marriage the bridegroom go to bride's home dressing like a warrior taking a sword in his hand accompanied by a procession with music, song and dance.

(e) *crassing bhori* – widow or widower marriage is prevalent among Rabha community from very ancient times. For this marriage both of them have to take permission from the senior leader of their clan. At first they have to cut their previous relations by offering and sacrificing a pair of cock in the name of god *Risi*. This is called *khoum dibikay*. After this process only they can select their life partner and then can engaged or married. This marriage is termed in relation to the *crasiba* bamboo.

In ancient times all the above five types of marriage is followed by a feast with the meat of cock and hence it was named as *totiokam* or *totekam*. Toti means cock and *tiokam* means head. But today this type of marriage system slowly become obsolete among Rabha community. The marriage system of Rabha community is prevalent as *jora sini* among the new generation of Rabha community.



## Marriage of Karbi community

Karbi people are one of the ancient indigenous community of Assam. According to some researcher they discovered this land – the primitive people of Assam. Most of them live in karbi anglong but some people of this community also live in Kamrup, Nagaon, Sonitpur, Uttar kachar, Morigaon district of Assam and also in Monipur and Arunachal Pradesh. Karbi community is rich in their cultural heritage. They celebrate their various festivals with their resourceful cultural activities.

*Adam assar* is the name of the marriage celebration of karbi people. The total process bears some special characteristics. Marriage is not performed among the same clan or the same family. They follow a brother- sister relation among the same clan or same family. Karbi people generally marries daughter of maternal uncle or relatives to him. The wife do not take the title of his husband after the marriage. Traditional wine *bangkrom* is kept in *bangsin damdam*(dry bottle guard) is an essential item in a marriage of karbi people. It must be offered five times to the bride's father during the total process of marriage. The marriage process is started with *nengpi- nengso kaching ki* where mother from both the sides discuss about the probable relation. The damsel is asked for marriage and if she agrees then *bangkromis* offered to her father. The stage of confirmation of the relation is called *lam- kepatik* when *bangkromis* is offered for the second time. After that a favourable date for the marriage is finalized offering *bangkromis* called *ajo arni kefa*. With *bangkrom*, betel-betelnut some money is also offered to father, mother, other relatives and family members of the bride. In the next morning one cock is sacrificed in the name of their respected deities wishing blessing from him. Then the bride is sent to the bridegroom's home where most of the ritual customs and regulations are performed that observed at bride's home.

After the confirmation of the favourable date for the marriage they search a man for performing the ritual activities of the marriage. This particular man is called as *atamsar* or *tokok* or *borjaul*. Karbi people shows high respect to him. He may be from the same village or from another one. Two *atamsar* from both the sides is the priest of the marriage. In the day of marriage the bridegroom attends at the bride's home with one *atamsar* and sixteen companion. They also carry some essential stuffs to observe the marriage. All are welcomed at the gateway of the bride's home and then only they enter in the boundary of the bride's home. Both the members of the bridegroom's side and the bride's side take seats separately with their own *Atamsar*. After pleasing the bridegroom's companion offering wine, betel-betelnut the process of marriage customs is started. The *atamsar* of the bride side says-

*Hola aasoke*

*Aroma jonsikep- siklo jonsirkep*

*Aapok ansi- aaneng ansi*

*Gangdakongo- paplango*

*Pe-wamsirkep-paplango*

*Pe-wam sirkep-paning sirkep*

*Paching sekongo- pangrakango*

*Paikosi- paphyengsi*

*Pathelo- padingo*

*Mirbaadi singfaro- thelobadiwanghule*

*Nangta mailanbadi*

*Nangne sirokotine- nangpoksidokotine*

*Simsetine-engerimketine*

*Tipli nangbadone- falang nangbadane*

-mother give birth this girl taking nine months in her womb, she is grown up like a flower and as such she attract males, you with your kind heart select her without hate, now I will hand over this valuable property to you.

The *atamsar* of the bridegroom says-

*Asereng dharam nang*

*Tipli nebadtine- falangnebadtine*

*Nenong kangsam- nepok kangsam*

- Really my dear lord, you deliver such a favourable asset to us, my heart and mind definitely get peace.

After this *engkut aahem*( the essential items that previously fixed) is tested. If it is in its true status then the main activity of the marriage *karate kachicrong* is performed. The maternal uncle of both the bride and the bridegroom confirm the relation. The newly married couple is taken indoor of bride's home and they are given lunch in the same disc. At last the bridegroom left the bride's home with the bride and other companion to his own home. In this way the karbi community people observe a marriage.

## Marriage of Missing community

Missing community people follows that type of marriage system which is clan exogenous and tribe endogamous. They prohibit marriage between man and woman of same clan or same title. Marriage among their own community is highly preferred. Monogamy is the recognized marriage system of the community but two or more wives of the same man is also rarely seen. Marriage with the daughter of maternal uncle is also not prohibited. Widow marriage is seen to observe among the missing community people. Observing the costume of a woman we may identify a married or an unmarried. This community people follows four types of marriage system- (a) *midang dahnaam/ midang monam / dah ro midang* (b)*dugla lahnaam* (c)*kumsu-dusula lahnamm* (d) *sola lahnaam*

(a) *midang dahnaam* – The Missing word *Midang* means marriage. For Missing community people marriage is a social celebration. It runs in a number of stages and active participation of almost all the village people is mandatory in a marriage. At first the parents of an eligible youth send a messenger to the selected damsel's home with the proposal of the marriage. The messenger have to carry some traditional wine and a bunch of betel-betelnut. At first the messenger do not socially disclose about the proposal. Depending on the character of the betelnut the damsel's family comes to a decision after proper discussion to the bridegroom's family and if the bridegroom's family gets a positive signal then representative of their family approach the damsel's home asking for her. They openly discuss about the proposal which is followed by some ritual activities. This whole process is called *yamnau tagnaa*. The next stage of the marriage is very interesting in which the boy helps the bride's family in their domestic works for up to maximum five years. It is *magbo dugnaam*, through this custom both the bride and bridegroom get the opportunity to meet and understand each other

as well as other family members of both the sides. Due to lack of time this custom is not prevalent today to the Missing community. In the *yamnau tatprir* stage both the bride and bridegroom's family meet and through discussion they finalise the date for the marriage. The bride's family mention and demand the amount of traditional wine, number of pig and betel-betelnut. The bride and the bridegroom takes blessings from youth boys and girls of their respective village and ask to forgive for their unknown fault to the society. Through this they also pray the youth boys and girls to support them in all the activities of the marriage. The stage is *yahme- mrimbrir kumnam*.

On the day of marriage the bridegroom is anointed and bathed. For this water must collect from nearer river or pond performing some rituals. After bathing the bridegroom have to wear some special type of costume like *ganr ugan*(dhuti), *yambo galang*(shirt), *dagnau*(jewel). After observing some ritual activities and taking blessing from seniors the bridegroom move towards bride's home with a group of selected people. Some uses elephant as the vehicle in this journey. In the gateway of the bride's home they are welcomed by the bride's family member and ask them to come under the marriage pandal. On the other hand the bride is also anointed and bathed following the same rule and regulations as that of bridegroom. She is wear *yamnau galau* (costume of bride) and *daksirih*( jewel). Then the bridegroom and the bride is given lunch together which is followed by taking blessings from the assembled people and some ritual activities are performed. During that time an authorized representative from the bridegroom's side have to assure of taking the responsibilities of the bride. Marriage songs are sung and traditional drum like *dhol* is beaten. The bride and the bridegroom is welcomed by bridegroom's mother at his home. There is no system of handling dowry among the Missing community. In the day of marriage guest and their relatives may give some gift to the bridegroom and the bride as a symbol of blessing. This activity is called *jatak binam* in Missing language.

(b) ***dugla lah naam-*** This is a marriage taking place with elopement. It happens when a love couple get oppose to their relation from their parents and other relatives. A youth boy and a girl may elope with a target of marriage and attend at the boy's home, then at first the parents of the boy sends a representative to the girl's home with a pray to forgive for the fault . They also send some traditional wine and a bunch of betel- betelnut. If the girl's parents agree with the relation then all the assembled people discuss for a favourable day for the ritual activities. In this way the bridegroom's side attend at the bride's home at the fixed date with some essential items like *aapng* (traditional wine), meat, fish and pay some stipulated amount of money as a symbol in front of the society and follows the traditional ritual activities. In this way the marriage get the recognition from the society.

(c) ***kumsu- dosula lahnaam--***It is a simple marriage with taking blessings only. When the family of a marriage aspiring couple is unable to celebrate and to follow the rule and regulations then this short cut marriage is preferred. Here the bridegroom go to the bride's home with his friends and some relatives and in presence of bride's parents, relatives and other senior persons of the society they take blessings from the assembled people and tie in a relation.

(d) ***sola lah naam-*** In this marriage the girl may be kidnapped by someone and performs marriage forcefully or pushing terror to her. Here at first the girl may not agree with the relation but latter on a compromise between them grown up. Due to the expansion of education this type of marriage is not seen to prevalent among the people of Missing community.

## Marriage of Koch Rajbanshi

Koch Rajbanshi is one of the most prominent community of Assam which carries some significant custom and rituals in their living. Many types of marriage system is prevalent among Koch Rajbanshi - (1)*prajapatya* (2) *damdunia* (3) *dhoka* (4)*dhup chaul biya*. All of them *parjapatya bibah* is regarded as the best type of marriage system by the Koch Rajbanshi people.

*Ghatak* is the man who is the mediator between marriage eligible matured male and female. His main duty is to start the discussion for the marriage and coordinate between the two families. In a favourable date the bridegroom's family members go to the damsel's home with an approach for marriage and to see the damsel. If the proposal is accepted by the bride's family then the bridegroom's family pay some stipulated amount of money and paddy with betel –betelnut to them as a traditional habit in the day of date confirmation for the marriage. Generally the bridegroom do not go to the bride's home on that day but in some regions the bridegroom also go with the group for date finalization. As such both the bridegroom and the bride sit in front of the assembled people and the bridegroom draws red lead in the forehead of the bride. Actually in this way half of the customs of the marriage has completed on that day.

Previous day to the marriage day both the bride and bridegroom observe fast. On that day a package of raw rice, oil, cloth, butter is sent to the bride's home from the bridegroom's side. The bride have to perform the ritual and traditional activities wearing the cloth send in the package. *telsarowa* is a process in which both the bride and the bridegroom is anointed in their respective home with oil, butter, turmeric and some other material. After that both are bathed. During that time the friends and relatives of them offer gifts to them with blessings. The bride and the bridegroom takes their stipulated costume and get ready to follow the customs of the marriage.

*Prajapatya bibah* is completed within a night. After arriving at the bride's home the bridegroom and his companion take sit in the yard under the pandal. Here they follow the vaidic customs of marriage. A group of woman from bridegroom's side enter to the bride's home with costume, ornaments and cosmetics for the bride and adorn her with all these. The last main activity of this marriage system is the revolution of seven times around to *bei* (a temporary bamboo structure with four leg) by the married couple. After that the bridegroom show respect to bride's parents, relatives and other senior people offering gifts with betel-betelnut. All the assembled people are pleased offering feast and then the bridegroom's group starts their return journey.

*Athmangala* is an important activity with the marriage system of Koch Rajbanshi people. Eight days from the day of marriage, the married couple go to bride's home with few relatives. With the observation of the customs of that day only a marriage is completed.

***Dam dumiya biya***- when the bride is taken to bridegroom's home in advance and then the marriage is performed then it is called as *dam dumiya biya* by the Koch rajbanshi people. This happens when the bride's parents unable to celebrate the marriage due to poverty or some other unavoidable circumstances. This type of marriage is completed in a short duration. All the marriage rule and regulations or customs of Koch Rajbangsi is not possible to follow in this type of marriage.

***Dhuka bibah***- When a widow wants to marry another man then this type of marriage is arranged. Here senior respected people of the society bless the married couple scattering raw rice and flower over them. With the changing time and condition some customs of this marriage system is changed.

***Dhup chaul bibah***- It is a short cut marriage system that completes in a short duration, when due to some reasons the performance of all the rituals are not



possible to arrange. Here five earthen lamps, raw rice, one round shaped small stone and flower is needed. This stone is not a simple stone but Koch Rajbangsi people believe that it is the weapon of Hindu god Indra. The bridegroom and the bride is blessed by the assembled people scattering raw rice and flower over them.

## Marriage of Tai-phake community

Tai-phake is a small community in Assam which came to this land in 1775 segregating from the great Tai family. Before that they had been living independently in Hukung valley of north Myanmar. Today in Assam this community people with a population of 2000 lives in Naharkatia of dibrugarh district and Margherita, Lido, Jagun of Tinsukia district and their population is about two thousand in Assam. Some of them are also living in Changlang, Lohit and Tirap district of Arunachal Pradesh.

Tai-phake community is culturally very resourceful. Till today they actively observe their own traditional habits in festivals, language, Songs, music. Costume, cooking. In the marriage system most of their customs are reflected as well as in the costume design. Marriage has a very respectable position among Tai-phake community. There are more than ten titles use by the *sarap, hailaung, pomung, satan, maanhai, mangnay, tunten, khen* Tai phake community. They all are taken as different clan. They are- thamaung, weiken etc. Marriage is not performed among the same title or family. Marriage followed by Tai phake community can be mainly divided in two parts- (a) Social marriage (b) Marriage after elopement

(a)**Social marriage**- At first the bridegroom's family approach the bride's family offering tobacco in a small parcel. If the bride's family accept it then the proposal for marriage is taken as accepted. Again if after that the damsel elope with other then it is regarded as an offence and as such the bride's family have to pay fine to the society. Otherwise after getting the consent to the proposal the date for the marriage is discussed and finalized about the arrangement. Traditionally the bridegroom's side have to bear all the expenditure of the marriage. A middle man is employed to coordinate the total arrangement and for communication. Now-a-

days with the change of time and situation the tradition of responsibility of the expenditure at bride's home is not followed but as a symbol of this custom some stuffs are taken for the bride's home.

Tai phake people are Buddhist. They restrict some unique days and months for auspicious acts like marriage and other ritual practices. Thus they do not arrange a marriage in the Assamese month of *Puh* (December-January). Respected person and guest are invited to the marriage offering tobacco wrapped in a special tree leaf *kau-paat*. Calculation of traditional astronomer is a folk belief for Tai phake people and so in advice of him only they finalise a marriage date and special customs to follow in a marriage. A traditional food item called *paa-sum* (fish prepared in acidic taste) is prepared which may be taken as a unique practice of Tai phake. Early morning in the day of marriage the prior act called *yaa-paa-sum* is performed. It is a complex word – *yaa* means to break or to open, *paa* means fish and *sum* means sour. This activity refers to the breaking of fish parcel prepared earlier and keep to start to marriage process with a hope for favour. Liable females of the society do this tradition with guidance of the senior experienced woman. Marriage songs are sung with the opening of *paa sum* parcel and all bless bride and bridegroom for a happy married life. The *paa sum* is divided and make a number of packets wrapping with *kau-paat*. At first one parcel of *paa-sum* is offered in the name of house god. One parcel is taken for the bride's home, some are distributed among the assembled older female and remaining part of *paa-sum* is cooked for the feast. Youths of the society actively engaged in preparation of the feast and distribute it to assembled guest at the bridegroom's home.

Previous day to the marriage or in the morning of the marriage day a group of man and woman go to bride's home with costume, ornaments and cosmetics for the bride and adorn her. The main cloth for the bride is called *Nawat pajung*. After performing all the rituals the group return to bridegroom's home. In the evening another group of dignified representative, relatives and family members

accompany the bridegroom to the bride's home to perform the marriage. The mediator plays an important role in all the activities. After arriving at bride's home the leader of bridegroom's side elaborate the reason of their coming in front of the assembled people of the society and the parents of the bride are asked to begin the ritual process of marriage. If the bride's side have no objection then the bride come out with her companion to the society and takes the seat near the bridegroom. All the dignified senior relatives of bride is showed respects offering some gifts. The bridegroom have to show respect and invoke in the name of their respective god. The domestic god named *Chao- phi naam* and the guardian of the family is worshiped offering the stipulated items in a *sharai*(a package keeps in a tray mounted in a leg). Two package one with 4 boiled eggs and another by 4 raw eggs with *ngun-chay-laung* means rupees 140 and *ngun khau lau* means rupees 17 are offered in *Sharai* to the society. It is regarded as a unique folk-cultural characteristics of Tai phake. Setting one handful of rice together in the bride and bridegroom's hand the parents pray in the name of *chao-phi-naam* for a prosperous married life. The bride's mother wraps purified thread to both the bride and the bridegroom's hand and bless them. The other seniors of the family, relative and assembled people bless them in the same way. Sometimes the bride do not go with the bridegroom to his home, but after completing all the formalities a group of people from the bride's side go to keep the bride at the bridegroom's home. The bridegroom's side helps them in the journey. It is a tradition to arrive at the bridegroom's home in the same day before the midnight. The bride is welcomed at the gateway of the bridegroom and after that god *chao phi naam* is informed about the arrival of a new member to the family. Then the bride is purified and a package of readymade eatable stuffs are offered in the name of the evil powers. As a folk belief in this way they eradicate harmful fortune from the life of married couple. Raw rice is scattered as a process of praying *chao-phi-naam*. All welcome the bride wrapping white thread in her hand and bless for happy fortune.

(b) **Elopement**- when a matured male and female love each other, then they may marry without the consent of one side or both side of the two families. Sometimes this type of marriage is also taken place with the consent of the both families in case of any unexpected problems or crisis. The male side have to convey the information to the damsel's family and the society as early as possible. Thereafter in a favourable day a celebration is arranged as a recognition of the marriage. The bridegroom's side also have to pay fine to the bride's family and the society for their fault. Then they arrange a social marriage performing the mandatory traditional customs and rituals to get the social recognition of the marriage. This customs may be observe at that time or may be within few years.

There is no dowry system prevalent among the Tai-phake community. The bridegroom's side have no right to demand money or other property with the bride in the name of marriage. Widow marriage or widower is not restricted.

Tai-phake is a paternal society. Children do not take the title of their father. There is no role of the religious leader or priest in a marriage. Experienced seniors of the society performs the rituals of marriage. They keep celebration of marriage in high regard and try to respect the customs of it. Tobacco is used to invite people to the marriage. Till today Tai phake people archive some of the most interesting folk cultural traditions of them through which the colorful life of Tai phake could be understood. In this way the significant traditional marriage process of the community bears the identity of Tai phake.