

Marriage Customs of Bodos of Assam

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Abstract: *Bodos* is ethnic group of people living in Assam. They are majority of the people living in non hills sides of Assam. The *Bodos* are belongs to the larger Mongoloid group. Marriage has been defined as a union between a man and women such that children born to the women are recognized legitimate of spring of both parents. Marriage creates new social relationship and reciprocal rights between the spouses, between each and the kin of the other and establishes that will be the rights and status of the children when they are born. Every society has recognized procedures for creating such relationships and rights, and for making it known that they have been created. There are a few system of marriage of the Aryans which are akin to the *Bodo* marriage system. And here we try to discuss the marriage of the *Bodos*.

Keywords: Assam, tribes, marriage, social, Bodo, ethnic.

1. INTRODUCTION:

The Bodos are a race of the Mongolian people who are described to be the inhabitants of a country north of the Himalayas and West of China. This land is known as *bod*. The word *Bod* is supposed to mean a homeland.

The Bodos are numerically and sociologically one of the most important tribes of the North-Eastern India, particularly Assam. While they are spread all over the plains of lower Assam and contiguous areas of North Bengal, they have intimate family ties with many other tribes living in other parts.

2. AIM AND SCOPE OF THE STUDIES:

- I) The main purpose of this paper is to discuss the marriage process of the *Bodos* in particularly.
- II) Attempt will be made to discuss the various customs, social norms, etc. associated with their marriage.

3. METHODOLOGY:

This research paper was analytical and descriptive methods as per the need of the content.

4. THE SYSTEM OF MARRIAGE OF THE BODOS:

As with many other societies the marriage ceremony is the most important ceremony in the life cycle of the *Bodos*. Marriage is called *Haba*, by the *Bodos*. In *Bodo* language *Ha* means soil or earth and *ba* means to bear the soil or the responsibility of the earth on the back. It is interesting to note that Sanskrit word for marriage *bivaha* also has a similar etymological meaning. Finally, after marriage a person enters into a circle of great responsibility.

4.1 Different types of Marriage:

The *Bodos* have as many as six different of marriage. There are given below:

- i) *Sangnanoi lainal haba* (Marriage according to standard practices)
- ii) *Gorjia Lakhinal haba*
- iii) *Kharsonnai haba*
- iv) *Bonanoi lainai haba*
- v) *Donkhar langnai haba*
- vi) *Dongkha habanai haba*.

Sangnanoi lainal haba:

This marriage is solemnized according to the standard social customs. According to this system of marriage the bride is selected by the parents of the bridegroom and then the marriage is settled after negotiation. In earlier days this sort of marriage was solemnized at the house of the bridegroom only. Now a day, the marriage is solemnized at the house of the bride also. This type of marriage is regarded as a regular marriage.

Gorjia Lakhinal haba :

It is solemnized at the house of the bride. It may be called a marriage by service, because the bridegroom has to give his service at the house of the bride before the marriage. This system is in vogue among the non *Bodos* in Assamese. It is called *Ghorjia*. This type of marriage is regarded as an irregular marriage. This system of marriage is rare in the present *Bodo* Society.

Kharsonnai haba:

In this marriage the bride enters into the house of the bridegroom before the settlement of the marriage. It is possible if there is mutual understanding between the

bridegroom and the bride. The consent of the parents of the bride is not taken into consideration much. This is also an irregular marriage.

Bonanoi lainai haba:

According to this system of marriage the bride is forcefully taken away from the house of the bride to the house of the bridegroom and then the marriage is solemnized. This system of marriage was prevalent in the earlier days. It is not a socially approved system of marriage in the present's marriage of the society.

Donkhar langnai haba:

Although not approved socially, sometimes these types of marriage takes place in the *Bodo* society. This is the marriage by elopement of both the bride and bridegroom. This type of marriage is akin to the *Gandharva* system of marriage of the Aryans. The mutual understanding between the bride and bridegroom is enough for this type of marriage.

Dongkha habanai haba:

This system of marriage is approved by the *Bodo* society. In this marriage the bride is a widow. If a man lives in the house of a widow as her husband then they are recognized as husband and wife by the society. However, they have to regularize their marriage according to the social customs called *Dongkha habanai* . This type of marriage is very rare in the *Bodo* society.

4.2 The stage of the Bodo marriage:

The entire proceeding of a *Bodo* marriage can be divided into three stages.

- a. The first is the pre-marriage preparation centering round the selection of the bride.
- b. The second is the marriage proper
- c. The third one of these post marriage rites.
- d. Pre-marriage preparation centering round the selection of the bride. When a boy becomes marriage worthy the parents have consultation with trusted relatives and friends and start pre-preparation.
- e. The most important part of the pre-marriage preparation is the selection of the bride the *Bodo* parents are very particular about making the right choice. After making preliminary inquiries about the prospective brides, a party sets out to the house of the girl with a view to finding out the suitability of both the bride and her house hold.

4.3 Selection of the bride and settlement of the marriage:

The party must consist either of the five or three members only. The members of the bridegroom party carry a pair of silver bracelets, a pair of silver one rupee coins, a pair of areca nuts, betel leaves and a pair of rice-beer bottles to the house of the bride at the time of settlement. The members of the bridegroom party leave these things at the house of the bride. The parents of the bridegroom explain the purpose of the visit indirectly before the parents of the bride.

4.4 Belief about female chastity in the Bodo society: premarital and marital chastity:

As a rule the young people of the *Bodo* society especially in the villages, lead pure lives before the marriage. In cases where there are several girls in a family who are unmarried and one of them is suspected of having broken the law of chastity, the following plan for detecting the offender is sometimes adopted.

The whole family gathers in the evening around the sacred *Siju* tree (*Euphorbia splendens*) which is often to be seen growing in the court-yard surrounding by a fence of split bamboo. At the foot of this revered tree a quantity of rice, called *Mairang* is solemnly buried and allowed to remain there over night. Early next morning this rice is carefully disinterred, and a certain quantity given to each grow-up-girl to be masticated. The offender, under the pressure of the fear of imminent detection, is unable to masticate her portion of rice, the faculty of recreating saliva falling her in her terror of discovery and disgrace.

She is then made to disclose the name of her paramour, whom *Kachari* public opinion compels to marry his victim forth with, the bride price being in his case considerably enhanced as some slight compensation to the girl's parents for the injury done to the honors of the family.

5. CONCLUSION:

This discussion gives a brief overview of the marriage system of the Bodos. Different types of marriage and different social customs and beliefs associated with marriage were highlighted.

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