

Ritual Of Marriages In Manipuri Society

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Abstract :

Marriage is very important ceremony of every bodies life, marriage is social recognition given by the society to live together a matured girl and boy to share every part of the society with a view to extension of their ideas of family maintenance. The Rituals of marriages in Manipuris society is observed today changing tremendously with a heavy expensive way chosen by the people of the today, which misleading to in some cases specially to poor peoples

Keywords:- Marriage, Heiching Kharai, Sanamahi, Domestic Deity, Kujaba, Groom.

Ordinarily there can not be marriage between a girl and youth belonging to the same yek (salai). A formal traditional marriage has certain stages to pass through. Informal talks between the parents of the boy and girl reached a Waroipot is held in token of the agreement to give the bride. This is the first stage of the marriage. Then comes Heiching Kharai (seven kinds of fruits, of which Heikru is a must, are. placed in a Kharai, a carrier made of thin bamboo pieces) is taken by the price for the bride which is considered to be a flower in full bloom. The body's parents took along with the Heiching Kharai certain other preparation of sweets and fruits meant for the domestic deity Sanamahi, local deities and the general public attending function. All these things are placed at the yard of the bride's residence. The bride's father and then the immediate seven ancestors and offerings are made to them. The father of the groom handed over the Heichingkharai certain other preparations of sweets and fruits. meant for the domestic deity Sanamahi, local deities and the general public attending function. All these things are placed at the yard of the bride's residence. The bride's father and the father of the groom prayed to the supreme ultimate ancestor first and then the immediate seven ancestors and offerings are made to them. The father of the groom handed over the Heiching Kharai to the father of the bride as the price of the bride which is conceived a blooming flower. Except the Heiching Kharai content and the preparation meant for the domestic deity, all other things brought by the groom's party are distributed among the people and general public attending the function. This stage marks the recognition of the agreement for marriage, the groom is given formal invitation for the marriage ritualistic preparations are made both at the bride. As these rituals are to be performed on the marriage, the marriage can not be held during the ritually unclean period of either family. The ritual for the marriage will be performed with all traditional for militias at the residence of the groom. The groom will pray to the ultimate ancestor and the immediate seven ancestors under ritualistic formalities. Then he shall pray to his parents. Then accompanied with a number of preparations of fruits and sweets meant for Apokpa (Ancestral deity), Lamlai (Local deities), Chengluk Nungshang (a basketful of rice) meant for Lord Sanamahi, and other articles, the groom party shall start for the marriage place. While all other things brought by the groom's party are received normally by the bride's party, Apokpa's preparation and chengluk

Nungshang shall be taken inside the bride house at the place of Lord Sanamahi. At the marriage place, there will be a seat prepared with ritualistic formalities for the supreme ultimate Ancastor. Uttering appro hymns by the maiba, there will be prayers and worships to the primal deities of fire, water, air, sky, earth, the Laipunathous and Lairmurahs. Lainingthou Sanamahi and Iputhow Pakhangba and also to the seven immediate ancestor~ for the welfare and long life of the marrying groom and bride. On a seat prepared specially for the occasion, the groom shall sit attended by an expert. The father of bride will make ritualistic observance on the groom first with the assistance of a maiba and then on bride. The bride will also be taken out in the marriage place making her. Seat near the groom on his North Eastern side. Both the groom and bride will be sanctified ritually. The hands of the bride up and that of the groom below are tied up seven strands of sacred thread. On the hands of the tied the Kujapot (which normally consists of rice, bunch of plaintan fruits bearing even number, fruits having good .smell, wearing clothes for the groom who is sitting just opposite to the groom, Exchange of gift between the two families will be made. While this Kujaba rituals is in progress, two females from the side of the groom and one female from the side of bride will perform the ritual of Mitan Nga Thamba (sending off fishes representing the groom and the bride narrating ancient divine legend of the creation of living beings in which Ngamu (Leta fish) gave acceptance to represent human beings at their critical hour of life. Three fishes are sent off: one toward off the evils, the other to represent the groom and still another to represent the bride. In doing so, there will be a burning candle. The movement of the fishes representing the groom and the bride is closely watched by the women performing the ritual. If they swilti together peacefully, a peaceful life of the couple is anticipated. In the list of articles presented by the bride's father as dowry for his daughter, a Tangkhul Naga clothes called "Lriroom" is a must. This is significant of the close cultural affinity between the hill and the plain peoples since time immemorial. This is the traditional belief of the Meeteis that the bride Leimarel, who will procreate living beings in a way the groom is taken to be the sun and the bride as earth. Just as the earth revolves round the sun, the bride goes round the groom seven times. On completion of the each round, the bride throws flowers on the head of the groom. When the seventy round is over garland of kundo flowers which are placed by the side of the bride on the neck of the groom. When the bride takes her sent by the side of the groom, the groom again offers a garland on the neck of the bride. The cloth of the groom and the bride are tied together at the corner. Let by the bride, the groom enter the house of the bride, where presentation of sweets and betel nuts are given by the, relatives of the bride and the groom with blessings for their long life and prosperity. Then, the couple prayed to the domestic deities Sanamahi and Leimarel and also the parents of the bride. The marriage is over by offering prayer and worship to the salai ancestors of the bride and the groom. The bride was taken to the groom's house where she is welcomed by her mother in - law embracing her by the arms. Then the bride prayed and worshiped the domestic deities Sanamahi and Leimarel of her husband's house. With all these traditional formalities being followed, the marriage is over on the side of the bride's parents. The preparation for Apokpa (Ancestral Deity) is opened and the Ancestral Deity is prayed and worshipped. The offerings to the local deities are also made. The Chengluk Nungshang is however kept intact for five days at the palace of Lainingthou Sanamahi. The same ritualistic observance for Apokpa (Ancestral Deity) and Lamlai (local deities) is done at the residence of the groom also. The ChenglukNungshang kept

at the phung a Lairu of the bride's residence for five days was then opened in the presence of three or five women of the groom by the members of the bride contents are duly observed to read the future of the couple. On the sixth day, a grand feast was arranged by the parents of the bride in which both the parties that of the bride and the groom participate.

RITES AND RITUALS OF DEATH :- Since the early primitive stage there had been rituals observed in connection with death of an individual. King Kangha observed the ritual by organism a grand feast held in honour of the supreme ultimate Ancestor for his death forefathers. This was a time when the deaths were thrown only to be taken by a divinely bird kakyen Meengamba in the land of the deaths. Kangb' s future generations began to bury their deaths in a specified place called Mongfam (The place for burial of deaths). From the cultural traditions and what has been said in the Puyas and chronicles, cremation was little known to the Meeteis Pamheiba Larei Lathup bears evidence for the collection of bones of the dead forefathers of the Meeteis from their graves, and throwing down the bones into the Ningthi River of the present Myanmar. Confirming this T.C. Hodson in his book the Meitheis wrote, "It is well known that up to the advent of Hinduism, the dead were buried, and the chronicles mention the enactment by Hageman of a rule that the dead were to be buried outside the enclosures of the houses. Garib Newaz ordered the Manipuri' s to exhume the bodies of their ancestors, which they formerly used to bury in side their compounds. At a later date in his reign in the year 1724, Garib Newaz exhumed the bones of his ancestors and cremated them on the bank of the Engthe (chindwia) river, and from that time ordered his subjects to burn their dead" Sri Atombapu Sharma also expressed the same view in his word Pakhangha, Further in the foot note of Cheitharol Kumbaba, the editor gives four kinds of disposing the dead body as it was found prevalent in this land, before the reign of pamheiba (Garib Newaz). He makes reference to Sagok Faunlen Puya. They were; that in air, that in the water, that in the earth and that in the fire of the four, only burning had been allowed by king Pamheiba as he became Hindu. The disposal of the dead body in the air, and water were used, in the early primitive days. The disposal in the earth, and that in the fire were used, when the people became cultured and civilized. Thus of the four, we can observes the two latter forms of disposing the dead. In case of burial, certain provisions are .made for the dead bed sheet, worm cloth, food etc. A funeral ditch is dug and in it, is placed gold piece and silver disc. On the northern side of the ditch, a pot of water, flower, Tairel (Kind of tree) leaves etc. ritualistic things are placed. Then, the dead body placed in the Kai (wooden preparation for placing the corpse) is buried by the kinsmen and relatives of the dead individual with prayer and worship to the supreme ultimate ancestor. In case of cremation, the pyre is made by piling up seven layers of fire woods that represent the seven yek (salais) of Meeteis. Unlike that of Hindus, there is no canopy hanging high over the pyre and no. ritual of going round seven times by the kinsmen and relatives of the dead. Immediately on death or little earlier than the actual death of the person, the person is laid on banana leaf in a hut called Khangpok sang, prepared specially for stay of the person for some time waiting for death. The attending Maiba under traditional formalities shall sit by the side of the dying person until the person actually dies. He will do all the traditional formalities to declare the death of the individual. Here also a Kai is generally prepared to place the corpse. The dead body shall be deathbed well

and dressed in the reverse order of the living world, fire taken in a pot will be there as the initiating fire for burning the dead. The Kai and the hut and other ritualistic things will be taken to the place where the cremation pyre is prepared. From the place of khangpoksang, the hut where the dead rests for a while in the south eastern middle of the courtyard to the place of the pyre, sacred thread or pieces of cloth will be thrown. This is considered to be the way for tracing the previous abode of the dead. Unlike the Meetei Hindu system, the early Meetei believed in the return of the departed soul in the family in his rebirth. The funeral song of the Meeteis clearly speak of the appeal made by the relatives and kinsman to the departed soul for its return in the next life in the family. -All these events for disposing the dead in cremation took place to the accompaniment of funeral songs which are sung as homage to the supreme ultimate ancestor for the peaceful union and stay of the departed soul in the heavenly abode. The Kai is placed on the, prey and the kindling fire is set by the nearest kinsmen and relatives. On completion of the burning, the holy name of the supreme ultimate as Hung Ning is uttered on the grave of the individual for his peaceful stay and union with the supreme ultimate Being. The people who attended the cremation took bath and were sanctified by Tairel leaves. The Manipuris observe the rite of Ashthi Sanchay as is done by the Hindus on the third day or fifth day. They have however, the observance of the rite of Chupsa Moithem on the thirteenth day. It is a rite, observed by the kinsman and relatives of the dead in which the supreme ultimate self is prayed and worshipped by all to give a new birth to the departed one. The Meeteis knew two things called Nongtaiba means union of the soul in the human body with "Nong" -The supreme ultimate being, and "Leitaiba" means union of the dead body with "Lei", The earth. This rite and the tradition of the Manipuri is observed for a number of days. In a week there are, seven days. On the seventh day there is this rite of Chupsa Moithem. On this day, there is the tradition of writing off the dead and writing up the new births in the sage still another rite is observed by Meeteis according to the number of months in a year. As there are twelve months in a year, 'on completion of twelve months, there is the observance of the rite of phiroi (The last rite for the dead individuals).

In connection with unnatural death which the khunai (society) of the Meetei abhor, there is the observance of a rite called chupsaba. Death in a foreign land, death outside the residential 'premise by accident, death by committed suicide, death by drowning, death by burning etc. were considered sinful and unnatural. Chupsaba is observed for them. In observing this rite the supreme lord Tengpanba Mapu' and other important deities like "Salaibi" the nine "Laipungthons" and other deities are prayed with due offerings so that such undesirable deaths do not occur in the clan in future. All the male members of the clan in future. All the male members of the clan used to attend the observance. The piba is the main performance.

Besides the above rites and rituals connected with birth, marriage and death of an individual the Meeteis observed certain other rites and rituals for their long life and prosperity, and also for protection against evils. Phoukouba (ritual for calling the deity of paddy for prayer), Nongkouba (the ritual for calling rain), Sangkaba (ritual for inauguration of house), U-hongba (dedication ceremony for roads) etc. are few instances. In all these functions, there is the prayer given to the appropriate deity for the purpose. Along with prayers offerings are made to the deities under traditional

formalities to protect against natural calamities caused by the wind, fire water etc. and also by wild animals the Meeteis observed certain rites following their age of old tradition.

As a measure to get peaceful undisturbed life, the Meeteis used to pray and worship Lord Sanamahi which is believed to reside in the south western corner of their house. If Lord Sanamahi 's place is disturbed or something unclean is done to Sanamahi, traditionally it is believed that there is no peace in the family and odds always rule the family in such cases. The Sanamahi used to go out of the house as he has no proper place to stay. In such cases, the Meetei believe in a wild nature of Lord Sanamahi expressed in terms of Sanamahi Apaiba (Sanamahi which normally should stay in the house starts moving and creating troubles to members in the family). To appease Lord sanamahi there is the ritual Sanamahi khurumba (prayer to Lord Sanamahi for peaceful life in the family). At such critical time, the members in the family used to worship their ancestors specifically for the purpose of blessing the members in the family not to get further troubles in life. This is called Apokpa khurumba (Ancestor worship), which is different from the ancestral ritual. All these thing are done according to traditional formalities that have been handed down to posterity by ,the divinely forefathers. Sanamahi Apoiba khurumba and Apokpa khurumpa as mentioned here, are thus naturally different from general worship of Lord Sanamahi and Apokpa (The ancestor). Cultic requairernents are by the maibaand the victims arranged the articles as told by the Maiba. Still another kind of deity is observed by the Meeteis aimed to propitiate a-particular species of evil doers. This is known as "Hingehabi chakthak". Hingchabis (The giantess **in** literal meaning) gives trouble to man causing stiff pains etc. to the human body. **In** such cases, by way of narrating the divine, traditional legend of their particulars and requesting not to hurt human beings if the human being offers her food, the maiba representing the victim, offers food to the gaintness, Hingchabi. The food normally given is a dry fish, or a Ngakra fish (Magur) or a fruit. The strangeness of this is that the spirit of the Hingchafi used to possess a woman. Then such woman is said to te be Hingchabi Changba (possessed by Hingchabi).

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