

## Striking Similarities between Certain Marriage Customs as found in *Nāradasmṛti* and in Bodo community.

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### Abstract:

*Marriage is an essential social organization. Its type and purpose changes as indicated by change in culture. For the most part, Marriage is a religious holy observance in which a man and a woman are bound in a lasting relationship for physical, social and profound motivation behind sexual delight, reproduction and perception of Dharma. All religious rites of all communities follow some religious code of conduct and moral principles according to Dharmasāstras. Bodo community is not differ from that. This paper will highlight the similarities between certain marriage customs as found in Nāradasmṛti and in Bodo community.*

**Key Words:** Marriage, Nāradasmṛti, Bodo community, Dharmasāstra

### (I) Introduction:

Marriage is a very important institution in human society which permits man and woman in family life i.e., husband and wife. The Sanskrit word used to mean marriage is *Vivāha*. This word comes from *vi-vah-ghañ*, which means to bear or carry off<sup>1</sup>. It is the most important among the sixteen Saṁskāras of Hindu. Through this *Saṁskāra*, one who has completed the sacrificial bath or *Brahmacaryāśrama*, enters into *Gārhasthyāśrama*. This is the only sacrament meant for woman.

From the Vedic period marriage is familiar in the society. According to the *R̥gveda*, the purpose of marriage is to enable a man, to be a householder performs sacrifices to the gods and procreate children. The different types of marriage are very commonly referred to in the *Smṛti* period. Like all other *Smṛtis*, Nārada discusses about marriage in detail.

### (II) Objective of the Study

To study the similarities between certain marriage customs as found in *Nāradasmṛti* and in Bodo community.

### (III) Methodology

The data are collected mainly from primary and secondary sources. The people who have knowledge on the traditional marriage of Bodo have been consulted. Secondary data are collected from available written records, books, journals, magazines and Wikipedia etc.

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<sup>1</sup> A Sanskrit English Dictionary, Monier Williams, New Delhi, 1984, under the word *vivāha*.

**(IV) Marriage system in Nāradasmṛti:**

According to Nārada, an ideal marriage, the caste of the bridegroom and bride should be the same. It has been considered desirable for all the Varnas<sup>2</sup>. A son born of the marriage between same castes is called *auraṣa*. Nārada mentions about marriage in the fourth chapter called *Strīpuṅsaṅyogaḥ* of his *smṛti*. Nārada describes in the first part of this chapter about the characteristics of marriage, the first one is *varaṇa* and the second is *pāṇigrahaṇa*.

The different forms of marriage are mentioned in connection with different castes. Nārada also describes hyper famous marriages between persons belonging to different castes, though such marriages are considered as inferior to the marriages within the same caste. Boys of higher castes may marry girls belonging to the lower caste. It is referred to as anuloma. For example Nārada says if the Brāhmaṇas marry girls of other three castes it is called anulomya. On the other hand, boys of lower castes marry girls belonging to higher caste is called pratiloma<sup>3</sup>. Nārada prohibits marriage between same *gotra* and same *pravara* to seven generations from the father's side and five generations from mother's side<sup>4</sup>.

**(V) Forms of marriage in the Nāradasmṛti:**

Narada mentions eight traditional forms of marriage for four varṇas. These are –*Brāhma*, *Prājāpatya*, *Ārṣa*, *Daiva*, *Gāndharva*, *Āsura*, *Rākṣasa* and *Paiśāca*<sup>5</sup>.

- i) **Brāhma** : In this form of marriage father of the girl himself invites and received with honour the bridegroom and gives his daughter decking with ornaments.
- ii) **Prājāpatya**: The *Prājāpatya* form, the father of the maiden while giving her in marriage, addresses the bridegroom with the following words--- '*Saha dharma carati*' i.e., performs your religious duties together with her.
- iii) **Ārṣa** : In this form the bridegroom presents the bride's father or any other person who has authority over her with bull, cloth, and cow. These are not given as the value of the bride but it is the rule of Śāstras.
- iv) **Daiva** : This form while performing a sacrifice if a father gives away his daughter to the officiating priest it is known as the *Daiva* form of marriage.
- v) **Gāndharva**: According to the desire of both parties i.e., the maiden and a man, their union is known as *Gāndharva* form of marriage. According to Nārada this is *Sādhāraṇa* or normal form in the sense that it is not offence that the willing union of a maiden and a man.
- vi) **Āsura**: In this form of marriage the father of bride takes price (*śulka*) from the bridegroom. This price is considered as the value of bride.
- vii) **Rākṣasa** : In this form of marriage the girl is forcibly carried away against her will from her father's house. When a man forcibly abducts a maiden, it is known as a *Rākṣasa* marriage.

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<sup>2</sup> Nāradasmṛti, 4.4

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 4.5,6

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 4.7

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 4.38,39

- viii) ***Paiśāca*** : Sexual intercourse with a maiden during the sleep or while she is unconscious is called *Paiśāca* form of marriage. It is considered the worst form. The maiden may be sleeping woman or frantic<sup>6</sup>.

#### **(VI) Marriage system of Bodo Community:**

Bodo is the name and language of a community. They have a place with Tibeto-Barman language family. They have wealthy in culture, language and writing. As a matter of fact Bodos are exogamy in culture. In Bodo community marriage plays an imperative role to build up a family. The marriage is celebrated by social order in Bodo society. Bodo marriage is a religious ceremony in which a man and a woman are bound in a permanent relationship for physical, social and profound motivation behind sexual joy, reproduction and perception of *Dharma*. In Bodo society, exogamy, endogamy and polygamy marriages are seen.

The Bodo equivalent word to mean marriage is “Hābā”. The word conjugates from *hā* and *bā*. *Hā* means the ground or the world and *Bā* means to carry on back. Entirely, it means to take the world on the back i.e., to take burden of conjugal life<sup>7</sup>.

Bodos have six forms of marriage, these are:

- i. ***Hāvā gaulāu*** (Arrange marriage )
- ii. ***Khārcan haināya*** (Girls flee away)
- iii. ***Gorjiyā lākhināya*** (Obtaining Girl by Service)
- iv. ***Dañkhā hāvanāya*** (Widow Re-Marriage)
- v. ***Vaunānai hāvā khālāmanāya*** (Marriage by Capture)
- vi. ***Daunakhār lānnāya*** (Elopment)

#### **i. *Hābā gaulāu* (Arrange Marriage):**

This marriage comes first in Bodo marriage. Generally, this marriage is solemnized by the standard social traditions. As per this arrangement of marriage the bride is chosen by the guardians of the bridegroom and afterward the marriage is settled after exchange. In earlier days, this sort of marriage was solemnized just at the place of bridegroom, now a day's marriage is likewise solemnized at the place of bride. This kind of marriage is viewed as a normal and decent marriage in Bodo society.

#### **ii. *Khārcan haināya* (Girls flee away):**

In this form of marriage, the bride goes into the place of groom before the completion of the marriage in case of mutual understanding between the bride and bridegroom occurs, and furthermore sometimes

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<sup>6</sup> *Nāradasmr̥ti* 4. 40-43

<sup>7</sup> Narzary Bhupen, Boḍo Samājat vivāha Paddhati , *Asomar Vibhinna Janagoṣṭhir Vivāh Paddhati* p.19

understanding between bride and bridegroom's family. It is not a regular form of marriage. The consent of bride's parents is not taken much into consideration.

**iii. *Gorjiyā lākhināya* (Obtaining girl by service)**

It is celebrated at the bride's house. Basically one who has no son brings a male person to his/her house and solemnizes the marriage with his/her daughter. Though this marriage system is affirmed by the society, it is found very rare in Bodo community. In this marriage, bridegroom enters in bride's house as son-in-law.

**iv. *Dañkhā hābanāya* (Widow Re-Marriage)**

In this marriage the maiden is widow. On the off chance that a man lives in the widow's home as her better half, at that point the general public remembers them as a couple in the wake of solemnizing their marriage with some social principles. It is an unpredictable sort of marriage.

A widow and widower would re be able to wed with any individual who is not related with him/her. If a widow weds second time she may or may not loss the authority on the property of her deceased husband. If she has child, her child is constantly qualified for getting the father's property. Widow re-marriage is allowed in Bodo society. Widow is permitted to re wed with her husband's relatives as well. In spite of the fact that the widow marriage is permitted in Bodo society, there are a few limitations which are followed strictly. A widower can re-wed his perished wife's younger sister but not elder sister, whom he is obliged expectedly to respect in the light of a mother. Similarly, a widow would re be able to wed her expired husband's younger brother, but she is not permitted to re wed her expired husband's elder brother. Though, this kind of marriage is approved by the society yet this arrangement of marriage is exceptional in Bodo community.

**v. *Vaunānai hābā khālāmanāya* (marriage by capture):**

In this form of marriage, the bride is taken forcefully from parent's home and the marriage happens. This form of marriage isn't affirmed by society. It is an irregular marriage. This form of marriage was predominant in the ancient days however present Bodo society has disposed of this form of marriage. Law considers this marriage as a crime.

**vi. *Daunakhār lānnāya* (Elopment):**

This sort of marriage isn't socially endorsed, however only from time to time this kind of marriage happens in Bodo society. Both boy and girl flee to far off place and live marital life. Understanding between bride and bridegroom is enough in this type of marriage.

**(VII) Stages of Bodo Marriage:**

The entire system of a Bodo marriage can be divided into three stages (a) Pre marriage (Selection of bride) (b) Proper marriage and (c) Post marriage.

**(a)Pre Marriage (Selection of Bride)**

Generally, pre marriage is only performed in arranged marriage. In Bodo society arrange marriage is a respectable and high standard marriage. In this ceremony the parent of the bridegroom with some elder members of the village has to carry a pair of bracelets (*Asanshuri Jorase*), a pair of one rupee (coin), a pair of areca nuts, a pair of betel leaves and a pair of rice beer bottles to the house of the bride and explain the purpose of their visit to the parents of the bride. After explaining the purpose of their visit the members of the bridegroom leave these things at the house of the bride. Within a week from the date of the first approach of the bridegroom party, if the parents of the bride do not return the pair of bracelets and a pair of one rupee (coin) then it is understood by the parents of the bridegroom that the parents of the bride is agree with their proposal. If the parents of the bride are agreed then after a few days the parents of both the families sit together along with village headman and some elder members of the family for the final settlement of marriage. Before marriage, a ceremony is observed according to their traditional custom. For this purpose the parent of the bridegroom visit the house of bride with some elder members of the village. The bridegroom party carries two bottle of rice beer, a bundle of areca nuts and betel leaves to the bride's house. This ceremony is called "*Goi Khāonāi*"<sup>8</sup> After some weeks or months another ceremony is performed by the bridegroom's party according to their traditional custom. This ceremony is called "*Bibān lāngnāi*". For the ceremony two earthen pitchers full of rice beer, areca nuts and betel leaves are brought to the house of the bride. In Bodo marriage system four females play important role, who are called *Vairāthī*. Among them two are called *Garh vairāthī* (married woman) and other two *Āithā* (unmarried girl). *Bārlāñphā* (a dancing man who dance like the wave)<sup>9</sup> No widow or widower is allowed to perform the role of *Bārlāñphā* and *Vairāthī*.. The god praises there is Bāthow.

**(b)Proper marriage:**

According to Bodo society, proper marriage is divided into some division. Any kind of marriage needs to follow any one system to celebrate the ceremony. These are: (a) *Hāthāsuni* marriage (b) *Brahma* Marriage (c) *Bāthow* marriage. In these three separate systems some rites and rituals are observed which are essential in marriage. *Hāthāsuni* marriage is the traditional marriage form of Bodos. As a ritual the brides prepares meal and offered it to the god Bāthow. They performed this marriage in the house of the bridegroom<sup>10</sup>. This stage is celebrated all the forms of Bodo marriage except widow marriage and the form of girls obtaining by service marriage. *Brahma* Marriage is performed with Vedic rites associated with some traditional customs and rituals. In this marriage the guardian of the bride offers mixed corn to the fire by chanting some mantras. This marriage is performed by *Purohita*. Vedic mantras are chanted in Bodo language. Another types of marriage is *Bāthow* marriage. This marriage system is more similar to *Hāthāsuni* and *Brahma* marriage. There exists one kind of priest like *Brahma* marriage called *Gouthāri*. This marriage is celebrated in bride's house<sup>11</sup>.

<sup>8</sup> Devi Premalata, *Social and Religious Institution of Bodos*, p.97

<sup>9</sup> *Brahma, A Study in Cultural Haritage of the Bodos*, p. 15

<sup>10</sup> Narzary, *op.cit.*, p.20

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid*.p.27

**(c) Post marriage:**

After the marriage ceremony Bodos perform *āthmangalā* on the eight day from the day of wedding. This is performed at the bride's house.

**(VIII) Similarities between *Nāradasmr̥ti* and Bodos in the Marriage Customs:**

From the above discussion it is observed that the eight forms of marriages of *Nāradasmr̥ti* are similar to four forms of Bodo marriages. The first form of marriage is *Hābā goulāu* is as like as the *Prājāpatya* form of *Nāradasmr̥ti*. In earlier days *Hābā goulāu* was solemnized only at the house of bridegroom but now a days this marriage is also solemnized at the house of bride influenced by the Hindu Dharmaśāstras. *Daunkhār laññāya* or elopement form of marriage is a kind of marriage much similar to Aryan *Gāndharva* framework. It is also mentions by Nārada as *Gāndharva*. *Vaunānoi hābā khālāmanāya* or marriage by capture is almost similar to the *Paiśāsa* form of *Nāradasmr̥ti*. *Vaunānoi hābā khālāmanāya* i.e., marriage by capture is the *Rākṣasa* form of marriage. This form is not allowed by the Bodo society. Like Nārada's *Āsura* form of marriage the father of bride takes money from bridegroom as her price in Bodo marriage system also. This system is called as *sāvri jānāya*<sup>12</sup>. *Dankhā hābanāya* i.e., **widow re-marriage** is also existed in the Nārada's time. There is some text found in the *Nāradasmr̥ti* related to widow marriage. Nārada says in the context of remarriage of a woman as –

*asatsu devareṣu strī bāndhvairyā pradīyate/*

*savarṇāya sapiṇḍāya sāvri jānāya prakīrtitā// Nāradasmr̥ti , 4.48*

i.e., when a woman (after her husband's death) has been given by her relatives to a *sapiṇḍa* of the same *varṇa*, on failure of a *devar* (husband's younger brother), she is the third kind of *Punarbhū strī*. And other one it is said by Nārada as when a widow rejects her *devars* (husband's younger brother) and other relations and unites with another person through passion, she is the second type of *Svairiṇi*<sup>13</sup>.

Like Nārada, the Bodo people also consider a marriage as standard or great in which the bride and bridegroom belongs to same caste. In the traditional marriage of Bodo when the bride is about to be taken away from the house of her parent, the old women and her relatives console the bride with the following folk song:-

*“Dagabswi aywi dagabswi Oma gidira Boro khurmani, Phisa hinjaoa malaini. Nepal, Gongernw horakhwi Harsa houanw horakhwi Raijw janw Boro houanwsw hordwng<sup>14</sup>”*

<sup>12</sup> Narzary, *op.cit.*, p.22

<sup>13</sup> *Nāradasmr̥ti*, 4.50,80,81

<sup>14</sup> Narzary, *op.cit.*,p.74

(English translation: Do not weep, do not weep dear, the big pig is for kith and kins, a grown up girl is for other. You have neither been given to a *Nepali* or *Bhutia* nor to an outcast but to a Bodo youth to lead a proper family life.)<sup>15</sup>

**(IX) Conclusion :**

From the above discussion we came to know that marriage is a social institution. All kinds of marriage need to fulfill the social ceremonies. Although, these marriages are celebrated in accordance with the norms of the society yet some of them are not socially accepted by both Nārada and the Bodos. Traditionally, *hāthāsuni* , which is celebrated in the arrange marriage is the most respectable and socially recognized marriage in the Bodo society like Nārada's *Prājāpatya*. . Before and after marriage proper pre and post marriage ceremonies are performed as the completion of the rituals of marriage in Bodo community. Nārada only mentions about pre and proper marriage as *varaṇa* and *paṇigrahaṇa*. The marriage system of both Nārada and Bodo community is almost same.

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid