

Marriage Rituals Practiced Among Tadvi Bhil Tribe of Jalgaon, Maharashtra

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How to cite this article:

Mohini Jagdish Gawai / Marriage Rituals Practiced Among Tadvi Bhil Tribe of Jalgaon, Maharashtra. Indian J Res Anthropol 2020;6(2):79–85.

Abstract

This paper is based on Tadvi Bhil tribe's marriage rituals practices in Jalgaon district of Maharashtra. This paper is an outcome of the fieldnotes like methodological notes, descriptive notes and analytical notes. It is an ethnographic study; an attempt has been made to understand and interpret the contextual and symbolic meanings of the Tadvi Bhil marriage rituals practiced. The methods like Boldhana, Futane, Nivtya, Bajarand lagnavidhiare pre-marriage practices which are described in details gives the idea and thought of the traditional belief system in Tadvi Bhil. The purpose of marriage in Tadvi culture is the creation of family. The central event in the Tadvi tribe is wedding the 'nikah'. There is inclusion of some new rites in marriage method of Tadvi Bhil after conversion to Islam, once the tika method is over nikah a method starts which is done by Qazi. Tadvi's marriage is a combination of Tribal rites and Islamic rites, which is found in this piece of research, explains various expressions of Tadvi Bhil towards marriage institution.

Keywords: Marriage; Rituals; Tribe; Conversion; Islam; Belief; Tradition and customs.

Introduction

We call marriage an arrangement that always stand in relationships to other social, political and economic conditions . Marriage is a fundamental social institution studied by anthropologists because it is usually through the marital union that alliances are forged between groups and social solidarity is built up . Marriage is one of the institutions which is commonly found in all types of societies only the difference lies in the pattern of marriage. Across time and space there is huge diversity in the form and patterns of marriage. Fuentes (1998) and Mc Gee (1896) both of them views that marriage is human invention and is

enormously variable. McGee (1896) reveals that humankind's enormous capacity for variability is in its social arrangements like polygyny, tribal endogamy, descent, patriarchy, land tenure and concubinage. The pioneer anthropologists like Malinowski and Radcliffe Brown defines marriage as the 'Principle of legitimacy'. Notes and queries on anthropology define marriage as a union between a man and woman such that children born to the woman are the recognized legitimate offspring of both partners. In Indian society marriage institution holds a pivotal importance compared to other institutions. There are people of various socio-cultural context found all over the world where marriage stands as an interim source of continuum

progeny. This particular paper focuses on the marriage rituals practiced among TadviBhil tribe of Maharashtra. Tadvi Bhil tribe of Maharashtra is the one of the sub-tribes of Bhil tribe. Bhils are found in various parts of India like Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Gujarat.

Tadvi Bhil Tribe of Maharashtra is considered to be converted to Islam during the times of Aurangzeb. This research work has been carried out in the Jalgaon district of Maharashtra by selecting some of the Tadvi residential hamlets those are as follows as Tidya, Andharmali, Mohamandali, Chichati, Nhavi, Savkhede, Janori, Yaval, Faizpur, and Savda. This study is based on a qualitative method and initiated with snowball sampling method. Research methods like participant observation, interview, focus group discussion are used to gather the ethnographic data. This paper is an outcome of the fieldnotes like methodological notes, descriptive notes and analytical notes. It is an ethnographic study; an attempt has made to understand and interpret the contextual and symbolic meanings of the TadviBhil marriage rituals practiced. The qualitative data described in this study is completely the primary data that researcher has collected from the field directly. Keeping in mind the ethical issues, special kind of permission availed before actively participating in the social and cultural activities of Tadvi community. Tadvi acquire mate most probably by the method of negotiation and monogamy type of marriage is very peculiar among Tadvi. There are various types of mate acquiring methods followed by Tadvi Bhil and those are fufu-maamvivaḥ is cross cousin marriage, devar-bhavajvivaḥ is marrying deceased elder brother's wife, jija-saalivivaḥ marrying deceased elder sister's husband, sata-lota vivaḥ exchange of females, sahapalayanvivaḥ is love marriage, apaharanvivaḥ is elopement method, sanmativivaḥ is arranged marriage. The scholars like T.B Naik, Doshi, Mann, Daniel Alexander and few more discussed about Bhils lifestyle and their ethnography around several districts. But discussion about marriage ritual practice among Tadvi Bhil tribe is no-where found and so this is the first most study on marriage institution of TadviBhil tribe. In Tadvi Bhil tribe endogamy is maintained. Marriages won't happen among father's clan or blood relations. Thus, a Tadvi Bhil belongs to the Soyanke clan cannot marry his children into same clan.

Once the marriage is fixed the following rituals and customs are followed those are in 5 phases; Boldhana, Futane, Nivtya, Bajarand lagnavidhi.

Boldhana

In Boldhanaceremony two families meet at girl's home on decided dates. In this meeting each other clan names are confirmed. The main aim of this event is the confirmations of each other surname, once it is found that both the surnames differ then further talks are proceeds regarding marriage. In case both the surnames are same then the middle person (the one who introduce girl's family to the boy's family or vice versa) has to answer for the mistake and then disputes takes place. Once the marriage is fixed then the girl is given some amount of money by boy's family as a sign or symbol of acceptance, which is called as 'bolni'. Hence, this overall rite is called as Boldhana or 'baatpakkiholi' in Tadvi dialect. In earlier days panchayat's role was very important, and they use to investigate the details like about the property of boy's family and his means of livelihood and earnings. Panchayat is considered as having more status than head of the household but nowadays, they do not interfere in boldhana practice.

Futane

After 'Boldhana' both the families decide the day to distribute sweets called 'futane' (sugar white balls). On this day all elder's males are being invited at girl's home for this rite and some ornaments like ring, silver anklet called 'todaya' is given to the girl. 'Futane' distribution is done by boy's family. Boy's family is gracefully treated with feast by girl's family. On the same day marriage date is fixed by the concern of family members, earlier this work was forwarded by the Brahmin or Hindu priest. Then the next step is called as 'Nivtya', it means invitation.

Nivtya

'Nivtya' means it is a ritual of invitation. Once the marriage date is fixed, both the families visit their respective relatives' villages and invite them by giving Turmeric coated Jowar seeds and says in Tadvi as 'ye jo r bho' or ye jobahin' it means do come for marriage. Here 'Bho' stands for male and 'bahin' stands for female.

Baajaar

By giving respect to elders and children the clothes require for marriage is purchased together by the both families in the nearby market. For this both the families contribute same amount of money

and purchase clothes for bride, bridegroom, their parents, grandparents and clothes for bride's younger brother.

Marriage preparation: The marriage home is well decorated with Chuna (scaled lime) and Geru (brick red coloured mud). The painting is done without using brush or any other tool; it is done by fingers and mostly pictures resembles nature like peacock, birds, trees, flowers, branches, hills, river, mountain, valley, sky, clouds, sun, moon, rain and so on. It is Tadvi's tradition to paint walls at the time of marriage, fair and festivals, usually in Diwali festival girls decorate their house's outside wall by making various types of houses on wall and still it is in very basic form. Tadvi's art is not commercialised as other tribal art. Sometimes Tadvi people mix Turmeric with Chunathen it turns into red colour and then they make the foot prints of peacock. It is a taboo among Tadvi that foot prints of peacock is a symbol of best wishes and brings happiness and well-being for everyone. Even the footprints of peacock are given marriage invitation by dropping turmeric coated jowar seeds and it is considered as invitation reached. So, the painting of peacock footprints has significance and that's why it is drawn in belief as a blissful ritual. Such type of painting is visible in only remote areas of Tadvi.

Lagnavidhi (marriage process)

Earlier in Tadvi Bhil marriage related work starts from 7-8 days before the marriage. Mostly females use to gather the marriage house and they use to clean the food grains like rice, wheat, jowar as the household members worries about the guest coming for marriage shouldn't find scarce food at home. So, the care is taken and preparation is done from earlier. All women like guests, relatives, neighbour use to sing various songs while cleaning food grains and grinding them into flour. All women gather together share their songs and enjoy this moment by exchanging their thoughts through song medium. At this place Tadvi woman feel free to joking, laughing and gossiping.

Wedding ceremonial occasion is carried out in these three days which has special importance Mandav din/ Haldicha Diwas, Shaadicha din and Manlas din.

Mandav din: Bride groom's mandav is made from nine thunya (bamboo) and bride's pendol of 12 Bamboo (khamb). The thunya are the Saagwan's wood or Pipri's wood. The mandav's top layer is covered by Jamun's leaves. If Jamun's leaves are not available then Pipri's leaves are used

for this purpose. Tooran is made up of mango's branch or leaves. Weddings usually are carried out in summer months, so jamun's or mango leaves are used to create cold environment. According to Tadvi people the speciality of these trees is that they always remain green. So as the newly forming relation will remain fresh as tree. The one who removes the Mandav is given jaggery, dry-coconut and groundnuts in honour as a Tadvi custom. The bridegroom invites the Gram daivatt, Khandoba, Hanuman, Mariaai, Munjoba, Pir by offering Paan and Supari (beetle leaves and erica nut).

They tie mango leaves into a garland form called as 'tooran' at relatives home before the pendol is built in front of wedding house. A special kind of dal is prepared as a tradition dal-curry named as yelala-belala dal. This is made by mixture of urd dal and gram dal along with jowar bhakri (bread) and ambadi's leafy vegetable curry is prepared. The number of bamboos (thunya) used to build the pendol at bride's place and bridegroom's place differ. It is decided that 9 bamboos pendol is made for bridegroom house and 12 bamboos at bride's premises. It is because at bride's place number of people coming for marriage is always more than people coming at bride groom's home even, the marriage ceremony takes place at bride's place so the pendol is built big accordingly, as compared to bridegroom's pendol. At the right side of pendol one special flag is tied; it contains one red cloth in which turmeric coated jowar seeds are kept, one onion and few branches of mango leaves are tied to it. All these items are packed in red cloth and tied on bamboo. This all activity is a part of Tadvi rite. In India bamboo is considered a symbol of fertility so the wedding canopy is supported by bamboo poles and mango tree also symbolises the fertility. Since bamboo is fast-growing, strong, flexible, it holds the pendol in strong stormy weather and its flexible nature helps the pendol from destroying. It is considered that, as the bamboo is strong the newly wed relationship will also grow strong and long-lasting.

ChudaBharne (bangles wearing ritual/ programme)

Kasaar (manyaar) is given respect on this day and he/she is called to sell bangles to all of the female guests came for marriage. Tadvi women are fond of colourful bangles and associate it with the sign of married woman called suvasini. Here the Kasaar by herself/himself help the female guests to wear the bangles as per their respective choices. This kind of tradition is commonly found in Maharashtra.

HandyaBasna

Before haldi ceremony few women from family initially, buy small mud made pots they call it asbadgalote at the same time a big pot is also purchased which is called as bemathan. While this activity some women recite various Tadvi traditional songs. But recently it is seen, as said by one of the respondents that this tradition of singing song is vanishing. Suvashinimeans a married woman whose husband is alive. Especially for the above occasion around 4-5 women are choosen, among them the loota(small round shaped water container)and pots are distributed.

Devhalya

Devhalya is the Palm and fingerprints of both the hands. Itmeans god/goddess has arrived for marriage. At wedding homesuvasini women dip her hand in wet turmeric solution and then pat her palms on the wall of wedding house. Naivedya is given to the devhahyla,it means whatever food is cooked for the haldi ceremony is first offered to the God which is called as naivedya. It is mandatory to offer the food firstly to devhahyla and the care is taken thatno one should taste this food earlier. The food prepared is usually the yelai-belali dal, ambadiveggi, jowar bhakri and jaggery.

Goisoyni

This progamme's task is basically inviting the ancestors and god/goddess for the wedding ceremony through the process called goisiyni. In this suvasinisare given 4 suup i.e. (the traditional pat used for cleaning food grains) made up of bamboo's sticks called kabadya, 1basket made up of sticks called as tokri and 2 combs. After this, all suvasinitake wheat grains in one container called sher; for the first time they take saavasher(1.25gms), then they take aadijsher (2.5 gms) or paachsher (5gms) and put this in a tokri. Then from this tokri, each woman takes one fist of wheat in their own suup. While all these processes are happening meanwhile some women sings songs. Usually the song mention below is sung at this occasion. This is the wedding invitation song sung by Tadvi women while tying the tokris with thread in goisoyniprogramme.

'NiyeNiyeGavlangahuchisooy v nivtayev

Niyenyegavlangahuchisooy v

(any name of head of family they call) ghar soy
v nivtayev'

In the same way they call the deceased family member and invite PirPaigambar also, by reciting the above invitation song.

Bemathan

It means digging a big pot at wedding house pendol- which encloses turmeric coated jowar seeds called nivte inside the pot and the same pot is covered with the turmeric coated muslin cloth. This rite is conducted at both the houses (bride and bridegroom's house). At boy's house and girl's house this rite is performed by married couples. At bridegroom's house his kaka/uncle (father's brother) and kaki/aunt (father's brother's wife) or elder brother and his wife performs this rite. At bride's house it is carried out by bride's elder sister and her husband. This method is called as Bemathan.

Haldiceremony and its types of celebration

Haldi ceremony takes place according to the clan like inSooyankeclan adhasoliya type of haldiceremony is followed. AdhaSoliya means when sun rises haldi is applied, JapaSoliya means after sunsets haldi is applied, Tara Soliya means when stars appear in the sky. Haldiceremony is again followed byustaniand aasodihaldi. In ghatte clan ustanihaldi ceremony is seen. It means after sunsets; all the guests have their haldi's feast and then haldiapplyingceremony starts. In Jamankerclan aasodihaldi ceremony is followed. First, they make sit the bride groom over the wooden flat short table (Paat) in front of devahahyla. His head is covered with the new cloth or handkerchief and then they place copper vessel filled with water in bridegroom's hand and some copper coins are immersed in it and cover it with beetel leaves. Then a specific song called 'tellimbu' song is sung by Tadvi women.

In Ghatte Clan after singing song5 ghagri (mud pot) is surrounded by turmeric coated thread bysuvasini and they make sit bridegroom in a tokri, they put water from copper vessel on bemathan and put 1nanhora(coin) in it. Bridegroom sits on paat and suvasini fill the bemathanwith water. Entertainment andmischievous part of the ceremony lies here,some of the family members make effigy of bridegroom's mother- in- law with the help of wet mud. This effigy is made sit on the other paatand she is removed by bridegroom with the help of stick. When bridegroom stands in pendol two suvasinistands in front of bridegroom and two at his back. Bridegroom carries chappatisor

bhakri (Indian bread) made of jowar or wheat while standing. These chappatis are moved to front ladies and then it is given to the ladies standing at back.

In Jamankar clan asodihaldi ceremony takes place meanwhile, the ceremony named 'mandavgumphan' also takes place. The members of bridegroom's family like father, mother, elder brother and his wife they take 9 or 7 rounds with cotton thread or ambadi thread and make a web around mandav. This is called as mandavgumphan. It signifies the shield of protection to the family. After this suvasinitakes the bridegroom for bathing. Once bathing is over suvasinistarts applying haldi to the bridegroom from right hand and then apply haldion the whole body. Suvasini women enjoys and have fun of this moment by teasing the bridegroom joyfully.

Dejkaari

Dejkari is the bridegroom's nearby person, carry bride's haldiceremony clothes and money, and visits to bride's home then only bride's haldiceremony starts. Tadvi people resident of Khandesh region do not remove the haldi till marriage gets over, they apply haldi from haldiday to marriage day. Once the haldi is applied all family, friends' relatives hug the bride or bridegroom and give their blessing and good wishes.

JaanvaasGhar

Bridegroom is supposed to stay one night at relative's place before marriage. While going bridegroom is taken with band baaja and everyone dance and go to relative's residence. On the marriage day while passing from village roads if any river, valley comes on the way, green trees (hivrachi) are seen on the way then marriage invitation is given to them. The whole barati (guest) stops at hanuman mandir at this place mostly a well is found so the guest, family friends access water from it. Janvaasa is given at this time to bridegroom he eats some food stuffs like sevayee, karanjee, laddoo (sweets) and then again continue for the journey by taking horse seat till marriage mandav.

Tika and Nikahmethod

Tadvi marriage takes place through tika and nikah method without any Hindu priest involvement. Bridegroom is welcome through aarti at the pendol entrance. The aarti plate consists of turmeric coated jowar seeds are called asnevte and includes

diya. At this moment teenager girls like bride's sisters tease bridegroom by pouring water on him and have fun of this moment. This is a kind of jija-saali joking relationship. The bridegroom is asked to sit near devhahaylaat bride's home. Here gaathjodhabandhane ceremony takes place bridegroom is said to sit in topli and bride in supda. After this suvasini from bride side perform the ritual oovalni that is aarti. Oovalni (arti) is done in front of devhahyla at the presence of bride and bridegroom. After this bride and bridegroom carry out oovalni (aarti) of devhahylait is called as tika method, for this ritual Tadvi do not approach any religious specialist. Once the rite is over the topli and supda are brought at bridegroom's house and this is how the tika method is completed. Since Tadvi Bhil tribe converted to Islam the wedding is called as nikah. The wedding ceremony is known as Nikah, is officiated by the Maulvi, a priest also called as Qazi also. Tribal wedding customs are their specific traditions and practices those are practiced in wedding ceremony. The purpose of marriage in Tadvi culture is the creation of family. The central event in the Tadvi tribe is wedding the nikah. There is inclusion of some new rites in marriage method of Tadvi Bhil after conversion to Islam, once the tika method is over nikah a method starts which is done by Qazi. Islam's five kalam are read and then with the presence of the lawyer -e - mutlak and gawah's, bridegroom and bride acceptance of marriage is declared. Now at many places nikah method is performed first and then tika method. This is called as Nikah-tika method but recently few changes are occurring like at few Tadvi hamlet tika method is ignored.

Meher

During nikah meher is given to bride as the form of bride-price. Meher is the amount of money starts from 501 or 1011 is given to bride through bridegroom during nikah. Once the meher is given friends, relatives and family comes to meet newly wed couple and give them best wishes. After that guest are provided with betel and nuts (paan- supari). The guests arrived for marriage give their token of love by giving them gifts. The announcement of gifts given by relatives and guests to the bridegroom and bride is called as wagh. Once the aaheris given and announcement is over, bride's father gives silver ornaments to bridegroom like chandikakada, munda topi and uparnebhet. After this bride's uncle stand and give salaamito the guests by expressing his thanks for their presence, love and blessings.

Kayas

While vidayimostly the honour is given to the elders (old people) in the form of return gift aaher is given. Lugadd is the traditional Marathi navvari saree wore by old women in marriage and it is given as aaher (return gift). Bride and bridegroom's aarti is performed by married women with one fourth jowar roti and water which is generally performed ritual by Tadvi in Maharashtra in consideration of removal of negative energy which may cause harm to the couple in various forms like lack of happiness in their married life.

Waaghi

Manlasget together takes place for the announcement of gifts presented to the bride and bridegroom. Who has given which gift to newly wed couple their names are announced so that everyone gets inform.

Varnikasi

In Varnikasi methodsuvasiniperform the aarti of newly wed by using 1/4 jowar bhakri and water. Then arti is followed by bride's parents in the same way for three times. After this all the relatives meet the married couple and give their best wishes to them. Then bride groom picks the toran made up of thunyaand keep it over the mandap. It is called as mandavmodala(breaking pendol). It signifies that marriage ceremony is completed.

Saalami

Bridegroom gives salami to the bride's family member and proceeds to his home. Both the married couple are welcome with the song sung by suvasiniat bridegroom's pendol, here aarti is done by suvasini at the entrance of pendol. The specific place where the tooran is tied newly weds couple is welcome from same place to enter into the house. After this newly married couple is asked to sit near devhahyla and aarti is done by bride groom's parents and they feed food to the newly married couple and vice versa. The family bow themselves before devahlya and pay their obeisance. After this haldiremoving ceremony starts later on bridegroom pick up his bride and enter into the home. Once everyone enters home entertainment starts, games are played between newly weds like chichorya game and maachigame is played. Next day manlasceremony takes place at bridegroom's house; the declaration of given gifts to newly-wed.

Then salami is given to elders in home. The very next ceremony is the Khari feast which is given to the family friends and relatives, especially non-veg food is prepared and then bride is taken to paanvaatha. Paanvatha is the common place from where all villagers fetch the water; bride is taken to this place so that she can come every day to this place to fetch water for household purposes. After coming from this place bride is asked to give salami to the elders and then she proceeds for her parent home. In this way marriage ceremonies get completed.

Saajoni dance

On Maharivaja'sbeat saajonidance is played. Now most of them like the usual band baaja, so the traditional music and beat played by Mahar (Scheduled caste people of Maharashtra)people is replaced at some places. This dance is performed at every Tadvi village after the haldi ceremony.

Cultural identity reflects in the marriage rituals but due to the influence of dominant cultures, changes are seen in the parent culture and it becomes difficult to recognize theparent culture. Due to conversion to Islam there are changes seen in some tribal wedding practices but more than anything subtracting from tribal culture it seems addition of new rites (Islamic) in former culture it can be said that assimilation process is seen through total modification inTadvi's first name and with addition of new cultural rites (religious rites and faith in it) so, acculturation process is noted.

Peculiar marriage pattern of Tadvi Bhil is by negotiation and elopement. Capture takes place during Holifestival in night time and then elopement is carried out by male runaway by taking the female and crosses the village boundary and then the next morning such kind of act is accepted for marriage, later on marriage is carried out following all the rites and rituals in a Tadvi traditional way and nikah method. Relatives and friends giving gifts at marriage has functional and symbolic meanings as both the couple endure new phase of life through particular rites. Most probably household items like vessels, bed, cupboard, Refrigerator, Television, mixer grinder, etc are given by friends. Tadvi Bhil believes that marriage forms the basis of starting a family where procreation is the main objective and it continues the survival of human race. Marriage makes a new chain of relationship between spouses and their families. The marriage rituals vary from place to place but it holds a special place for everyone with the respect to their culture and

religion. In this way Tadvi marriage ritual practices are unique and has special features which describes Tadvi Bhil Traditional culture which flourishes day by day.

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