

# Manipuri Marriage System: A study of Goudia Vaishnavism Manipuris in Barak Valley

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## ABSTRACT

Barak Valley is located in the southern most part of the state of Assam. It comprises the present three districts of Assam, namely, Cachar, Karimganj and Hailakandi. Various causes and circumstances intervened in the Manipuri settlement in the Barak Valley that took place in different periods of History. Therefore it can be rightly mention that due to many factors, the Manipuri people in Barak Valley migrated from their native land Manipur and settled in this Valley in different period. At present there are about 195 Manipuri villages in the Valley. They are settled in different parts of the Valley about the population of 2.5 lacs above (approx). They have been preserving and maintaining their distinctive Socio-cultural identity.

Marriage is in many respects, the important social institution in every society be it primitive or civilized. Each society has its own marriage system. Manipuri societies of the Barak Valley also have their own elaborate marriage system. For them marriage means the sacred and ceremonial of the woman with a man with the proper religious rites. In Manipuri society, the term marriage is known as "Luhongba" which is a synthesis of two words- "Lu" and "Hongba". The term "Lu" means "Head" and "Hongba" means "Change". In this term meaning is that the girls' surname, clan and tradition change to the male tradition. The Manipuris of Barak Valley basically perform their marriage ceremonies according to the Hindu religion of Goudia Vaishnavism. But they are still practices of their traditional marriage system.. In this paper I try to analyse the marriage system of Goudia Vaishnavism Manipuri in the Barak Valley

## Keywords

Barak Valley, Manipuri, Marriage System etc

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## Introduction

Barak Valley is located in the southern most part of the state of Assam. It comprises the present three districts of Assam, namely, Cachar, Karimganj and Hailakandi. Various causes and circumstances intervened in the Manipuri settlement in the Barak Valley that took place in different periods of History. It is a historical fact that, when the Burmese invaded Manipur during 1819-1826(Chahi Taret Khuntakpa), a great deal of migration and settlement of the Manipuris took place in the Barak Valley. However, if we look at the pages of history, it is revealed that, the migration and settlement of Manipuri in the valley started much earlier.

In the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the intensity of the migration from Manipuri had increased rapidly due to various reasons and became a regular feature until the year 1891. During these periods, there were various rivalries on each occasion of the change of ruler in Manipur. Consequently, those who opposed the king were forced to take refuge in the Barak Valley. After the king Garibniwaz there were internal wars between the kings' the descendants that gave the Burmises the opportunity to invade Manipur. As a result, with the exception of a few, most of the princes who ascended the throne of Manipur after King Garibniwaz occasionally took refuge in the Valley. These made Bark Valley the political asylum of the princes of Manipuri. In fact, from 1758 to 1826 A.D., the Burmese conquered Manipur several times. As a result, during these periods a large numbers of migration of the Manipuries into the Bark Valley took place and a several colonies of Manipuri immigrants grew rapidly in different parts of the Barak Valley and Many other places in the North Eastern region.

Therefore it can be rightly mention that due to many factors, the Manipuri people in Barak Valley migrated from their native land Manipur and settled in this Valley in different period. At present there are about 195 Manipuri villages in the Valley. They are settled in different parts of the Valley about the population of 2.5 lacs above (approx). They have been preserving and maintaining their distinctive Socio-cultural identity.

## Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the paper is-

1. To highlight of the Manipuri Marriage system.
2. To analyse the background of the marriage system of Gudia Vaishnavism Manipuri.
3. To analyse the socio-cultural tradition of Barak Valleys' Manipuries.

## Methodology of the Study

The present study is basically base on primary and secondary data. As well as to collect the data from eminent persons were exclusively interviewed. And also observed various marriage ceremonies of the Manipuris in the valley. In addition to these various secondary sources like books, journals, seminar papers etc.

## Marriage:

Marriage is an institution that admits men and women to family life. This institution has social recognition and a religious section. The meaning of marriage differs from person to person and from moment to moment. But there is

a popular belief that marriages are made in heaven and celebrated on earth. It is true in many ways, because it is a special bond shared between souls, who marry after promising to be partners' for life. It is the mental, physical and spiritual union of two souls. It brings significant stability and substance to the human relationship, which would otherwise be incomplete. It is through marriage that culture and civilization are transferred from one generation to other which helps the human race to prosper. The society as a whole is benefitted by marriage, because it is the foundation of the family, which in turn is the fundamental building block of society.

### Manipuri marriage and its kinds:

Marriage is in many respects, the important social institution in every society be it primitive or civilized. Each society has its own marriage system. Manipuri societies of the Barak Valley also have their own elaborate marriage system. For them marriage means the sacred and ceremonial of the woman with a man with the proper religious rites. In Manipuri society, the term marriage is known as "Luhongba" which is a synthesis of two words- "Lu" and "Hongba". The term "Lu" means "Head" and "Hongba" means "Change". In this term meaning is that the girls' surname, clan and tradition change to the male tradition.

The Manipuris of Barak Valley basically perform their marriage ceremonies according to the Hindu religion of Goudia Vaishnavism. But they are still practices of their traditional marriage system. In the Manipuri society of Barak Valley there are three forms of marriage. They are:

1. Ahal lamal yanaraga luhongba(Marriage through engagement).
2. Keinyakatpa.
3. Chellaga amuk Luhongba/Chelhong(Love marriage).

In the above form of marriage first one means Marriage through engagement is the most prestigious form of marriage.

#### 1. Ahal lamal yanaraga luhongba(Marriage through engagement):

It is the most common form of marriage among the Manipuris of Barak Valley. In this form of marriage, the interested male party will first propose the female party following some customary laws. If both the parties agree to the proposal the marriage date will be set.

#### 2. Keinyakatpa:

In this form of marriage both lovers make decision to become life partners and leave their respective homes. After receiving the news, the elderly from both sides in a very simple function will declare that both man and woman are husband and wife. In the early days if the man and woman left their houses, they were known as "Chenba" in Manipuri. In this form of marriage no marriage ceremony is performed.

#### 3. Chellaga amuk Luhongba/Chelhong(Love marriage):

Now a day in this form of marriage has been performed in the Manipuri society of Barak Valley. It also gains popularity among the Manipuris of the Valley. In the earlier days, this form of marriage was not even dreamt of. Today this form of marriage is almost similar to the first form of marriage.

#### Manipuri Marriage System:

In the above mention of the form of marriage "marriage through engagement" is the most common form of marriage among the Manipuris of Bark Valley. In general, Manipuri marriage systems consists of six stages. They are – "Mou Yengba/Hainaba", "Dari Kaba/ Manggol Kaba", "Yathang Thaba", "Waroipot Puba", "Heijingpot Puba/Haija -Pot" and "Luhongba(Ceremony of Wedding)".

**Mou Yengba/Hainaba** is the preliminary stage, where the interested male parents first approach to the female party. If both parties agree and found suitable according to the Yek theory, match of kuthi, and match of day of birth form the astrological point of view. After that both parties set another date for the next formality- Dari Kaba/ Manggol Kaba.

**Dari Kaba/ Manggol Kaba** is the second preliminary stage, on this day male party bring some gifts of fruits and other items to the female house. And the female party has share the kuthi with the parents of male, then both the parties set another date for next formality- Yathang Thaba.

**Yathang Thaba** is the ceremonial agreement and consent for the marriage of the female family. This function is performing in the females' home. In this ritual the eldest male member of the bride and grooms' family together with some relatives arrived to the brides' house. Both the parties made negotiation and agreement regarding the date of the next procedure-Waroipot Puba.

**Waroipot Puba** is the forth stages of Manipuri marriage. In the Manipuri society of Barak Valley this particular ceremony is also called *Heikat-Leikat Puba*. In fact, Waroipot Puba was also practiced in this valley in the early days. As for the elaborate marriage arrangement this is actually the ceremonial agreement and the final establishment of the two parties. In this ceremony the brides' and grooms' family with friend and relatives approach the girls house with fruits, sweets and other things that will be offered to *Sanamahi*, the God of the girls' house femaly.

**Heijingpot Puba/Haija -Pot** is the ceremony that can be called as the first part of the ceremonial marriage of the Manipuris. This is the important stage of the marriage. Through this function of marriage is made herself known to all. In this rite parents, relatives, friends and guests' of the bride and groom gather at the bride house with seven varieties of fruits, clothes and Kabok(parched rice) in decorated baskets called "Phingairuk" and "Heijing Kharai". One phingairuk contains fruits for ancestors' deities and another for *Lamlai*(Local deities). On this occasion special clothes and gold ornaments for the bride are also brought. Today different types of sweets are also included in the baskets. Once all these baskets have been placed in their respective places, the bride and the grooms'

father of the couple pray together to the supreme ancestors. After the completing of these formalities, an older Brahmin asks to reason for the arrangement, at which times the formal announcement of marriage between the daughter and son is announce by the father of the bride and groom. In this way, in front of the public gathering, the ceremonial recognition of the marriage is carried out. Then the elderly male relatives bow down to each other. Finally the Kabok and sweets in the baskets are distributed to them, intended for the general public.

### Manipuri Wedding Ceremony:

In the Manipuri marriage the ritual preparation is carried out both in the residence of groom and the bride on the day of the marriage. So marriage cannot take place during the ritually impure period of either family. *Nata Sankirtana* plays an important role in Manipuri marriage ceremony. Both the bride and the groom promise each other in front of *Nata Sankirtana* as they believe that *Nata Sankirtana* itself is a great sacrifice.

It is observed that the *Nata Sankirtana* performed in any other occasion has a number of differences from the marriage ceremony. Generally, in the house of the bride the wedding pendals are constructed. In this also certain rules and regulations must be strictly followed. A '*Kunja*' must be built by a decorative hand following the rules. In the middle of the marriage pendal, seat for the bride groom is arranged by *Sambhasa* and *Sebaris* in the specific stage of the *Sankirtana*.

The sequential order of the Manipuri wedding ceremony are Bor-Barton/Piba Lei-Langba, Bor-Puja and Bor-Yatra, Keina Puja, The Groom entry in the Mandop, Lei Koiba, Lei Pareng Huknaba, Kangsubi Lannaba. The rite of Kangsubi Lannaba is the end part of the Manipuri marriage ceremony.

### Conclusion:

Marriage is an institution that admits men and women to family life. This institution has social recognition and religious sanction. It brings significant stability and substance to human relationship, which would otherwise incomplete. Manipuri marriage system of Barak Valley has been developed completely in accordance with the traditional marriage system. The system of Manipuri marriage is assimilated culture of Hinduism.

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