

Customary Marriage Practice among the Juang PVTG, Odisha

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Abstract: Anthropologically the tribal communities in India have a special set of people with their unique traditions, cultures, and practices. Marriage as an institution is recognized by all the tribes and societies in all over India, there are different ways of acquiring a mate or selection of mating in tribal society. Odisha occupies a unique position in the ethnographic map of India for having the large number of tribal communities and the Juang tribe is one of the most Vulnerable Populations. The Juang is one of the identified vulnerable populations inhabiting in the Gonasika hill of Keonjhar district of Odisha state. The Juang inhabits the contiguous hill ranges of high peaks extending from west Keonjhar to Pallahara or Dhenkanal and its adjoining areas which cover in the central hill belt of India. This paper discuss about the socio-cultural and the customary practices among the Juang tribe of the Keonjhar district, Odisha. The Juang Marriage is endogamous, but exogamous at the village level. Originally Juang villages are uniclans and the matrimonial relations can be established with the *bandhu khillis*, while with the *kutumbas* marriage is strictly prohibited. They have various forms of marriage and during the *Pus Punei* (Full moon day of month of February) marriage function has been started. Among the Juang bride price is prevalence among them and marriage plays a distinct role in the socio-cultural life of the Juang people. The marriage practice is partially changes because of the modernisation and impact of media and telecommunication.

Keywords: Juang, PVTG, marriage, culture, social system

Introduction

Anthropologically the tribal communities in India have a special set of people with their unique traditions, cultures, and practices. They have their own way of living style in different socio-cultural and eco-geographical settings. Marriage as an institution is recognized by all the tribes and societies in all over India, there are different ways of acquiring a mate or selection of mating in tribal society. The tribal marriages are

accompanied with certain unique customs and practices as compared to Hindu marriage system and own other religions practices. Marriage is not only unites two persons of opposite sex but also two social groups in the wider context in our society. Marriage is a social institution determined by culture and it is based on the complex of social norms. Comparatively in general, the tribal women enjoy better status in their society because they play a decisive role in the family, society and economy. However the ideological devaluation of women's contribution and reorientation of gender and sex have brought about concomitant and drastic changes in the status of women in tribal communities (Balgir 2009).

Odisha occupies a unique position in the ethnographic map of India for having the large number of tribal communities. Although they are found in all the districts of the state, yet more than half of the total strength are found in the districts of Koraput, Rayagada, Navarangapur, Malkangiri, Kalahandi, Nuapara, Kandhamal, Bauda, Keonjhar, Mayurbhanj and Sunderghara. Out of 64 Scheduled Tribal communities in Odisha, 13 are Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Populations (PVTGs) and the Juang tribe is one of the most Vulnerable Populations. The Juang is one of the identified vulnerable populations inhabiting in the Keonjhar district of Odisha state. The Juang inhabits the contiguous hill ranges of high peaks extending from west Keonjhar to Pallahara or Dhenkanal and its adjoining areas which cover in the central hill belt of India. The tribe belongs to Proto-Australoid racial stock. The community can be broadly divided in to two sections i.e, the hill Juangs and the plain Juangs. The hill Juangs inhabit the hill ranges of Keonjhar and Pallahara where as the plain Juang are distributed in the plains of Dhenkanal and Keonjhar district. While the hill Juangs still practice the shifting cultivation, the Juangs are living in plain area and they have adopted settled agriculture. The Juang classify themselves in to two sections, such as the *thantias* (hill Juang) and the *bhagudia's* (plain Juang). *Thantias* are those who live in their own habitat called Juang *pirha* located in Gonasika hills and the *bhagudia's* who have fled away from the home land.

Juang means simply *man* as per the Juang dialect. Their neighbours call them as *Pattua* meaning the wearer of leave plates which has been their dress pattern since long back. The Juang refers to themselves *patrasavar* tribe whose members used to associate themselves with leaves. The Juang villages are mostly homogeneous, generally located at the foot of the hills or in the valley surrounded by forests. Some settlements are also situated in the plains. Each village at present is a set of scattered houses and frequent change of the village site is a unique feature of Juang settlement pattern. The villages are mostly uniclans in nature for which marrying within the clan village is considered

as incestuous there by indicating the practice of both clan as well as village exogamy.

The Scheduled Tribes of Keonjhar district which totals 4,99,657 in 1981 census increased to 5,95,184 in 1991 census thus registering a growth of 11.90 per cent in a decade (1981-1991). As per 1991 census there were 46 Scheduled Tribes in the district. Out of these the principal tribes were Bathudi, Bhuyan, Bhumij, Gond, Ho, Juang, Kharwar, Kisan, Kolha, Kora, Munda, Oraon, Santal, Saora, Sabar and Sounti. These sixteen tribes constitute 96.12 per cent of the total tribal population of the district. The total population of Juang PVTGs of Odisha is 47095 and out of these, the Male number is 23093 and the Female number is 24002 and the sex ratio 1039.36 as per based on 2011 census.

Methodology

The Anthropological research methodology and field techniques are applied for the collection of data in the current study. The researcher adopted a suitable empirical method of data collection for the ethnographic study which includes a field study, interviews with different age group people, data collection from different sources (primary as well as secondary sources). The researcher collected the information from both hill and plain area people of the same region.

Objectives

1. To study about the socio- cultural profile of the Juang tribe of the Keonjhar district.
2. To know the customary practices among the Juang tribe of the Keonjhar district, Odisha.

Discussion

Anthropologically, the Juang carry a distinct and primitive past. The Juang claims themselves to be the most ancient tribe of the world. In spite of their modern ways of living, many aboriginal practices are still prevalent among them.

Most of the Juang settlements are more or less permanent in nature. But sometimes individual families shift their house sites when they are facing the scarcity of land around the settlement to feed their growing population. The Juang village consists of a number of household surrounding by agricultural feeds and postures.

The dormitory house is situated in each and every Juang village. In the Juang language they call it *mandaghara/majang* (youth dormitory house). At present the *mandaghara* is only for boys. But before then it was also for girls. The *mandaghara* as

they call *majang* (boy's dormitory house) is for boys and *selanki* (girl's dormitory house) is for girls. The unmarried boys sleep in the dormitory house at night. The Juang feel that the dormitory house is a sacred place for them. They use the dormitory house as a guest house for the other *bandhu* village people, as a store room for storing food grains and also a village panchayat to discuss everything there. The village property like paddy is kept in the dormitory. The musical instrument *changu* (drum) is also a part of their instrument. At night the boys practice *changu* and enjoy the *changu* dance with girls.

The life course of the Juang is full of joy and sorrow, ups and down and adjustment and difference. They mainly marry to procreate and propagate the Juang population in the society. After marriage a Juang woman expects a child irrespective of gender bias.

Rites-de-passage for Girls to be *Selanki*

Every Juang girl, after attaining her puberty is called a “*Selanki*” but before becoming a full-fledged *Selan* she cannot take part in some of the activities of the formal *Selanki*. For example, she cannot make gift to *Bandhu* boys and cannot get a share of the gift which the *Bandhu Kangerki* makes to the village *Selanki*. She also cannot accompany the *Selanki* when they pay formal dancing visits to their *Bandhu* villages. No big ritual is performed for a girl to step in to the status of a formal *Selan*. When a girl wants to be a *Selan* she asks the older *Selanki* and they give a share of the gift of their *Bandhu Kangerki* to her. It is after eating this, that a girl assumes the status of a formal *Selan* (S.C. Mohanty, 1994).

Marriage Practices among the Juang (*Kania*)

Juang is a most vibrant primitive people who are living on the hilltop region of Gonasika hills of Keonjhar districts of Odisha state. Marriage for the Juang is endogamous, but exogamous at the village level. Originally Juang villages are uniclans villages. All the villages believe in a common ancestor. They treat each other as brothers and sisters and marriages among themselves are considered incestuous tabooed. Matrimonial relations can be established with the *bandhu khillis*, while with the *kutumbas* marriage is strictly prohibited. Child marriage is quite uncommon, and the Juang marry when both the partners are fully adults. The boys usually marry after eighteen years and girls after the age of sixteen. Marriages are performed after harvest and before rains set in. The negotiations start around the time of *pupupunei* (full Moon day) which is celebrated during in the months January to June and July. During this period they celebrate the marriage function with other traditional rituals. In these periods, they do not have work load for their agricultural field and almost all have food for them. They can enjoy full of fun and folic in this season.

Marital Status among the Juang in the Study Area

Sl. No.	Villages Name	Duarsuni			Phulbadi			Talabali			Upperbali			Bhudhighar			Guptaganga		
		M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T
1	Unmarried	86 (56.2)	46 (39.3)	127 (47.0)	69 (58.5)	58 (52.3)	128 (55.9)	49 (59.0)	33 (41.8)	82 (50.6)	43 (46.7)	46 (47.9)	89 (47.3)	65 (56.6)	63 (51.2)	123 (51.7)	88 (51.2)	77 (49.0)	165 (50.2)
2	Married	66 (43.1)	66 (56.4)	132 (48.9)	46 (39.0)	46 (41.1)	92 (40.2)	34 (41.0)	34 (43.0)	68 (42.0)	41 (44.6)	41 (42.7)	82 (43.6)	46 (40.0)	46 (37.4)	92 (38.7)	67 (39.0)	68 (43.3)	135 (41.0)
3	Divorce	0	2 (1.7)	2 (0.7)	0	1 (0.9)	1 (0.4)	0	1 (1.3)	1 (0.6)	1 (1.1)	0	1 (0.5)	0	0	0	4 (2.3)	2 (1.3)	6 (1.8)
4	Widow	0	8 (6.8)	8 (3.0)	0	6 (5.4)	6 (2.6)	0	11 (13.9)	11 (6.8)	0	13 (13.5)	13 (6.9)	0	14 (11.4)	14 (5.9)	0	10 (6.4)	10 (3.0)
5	Widower	1 (0.7)	0	1 (0.4)	2 (1.7)	0	2 (0.9)	1 (1.2)	0	1 (0.6)	3 (3.3)	0	3 (1.6)	4 (3.5)	0	4 (1.7)	13 (7.6)	0	13 (4.0)
Total		153 (100)	117 (100)	270 (100)	118 (100)	111 (100)	229 (100)	83 (100)	79 (100)	162 (100)	92 (100)	96 (100)	188 (100)	115 (100)	123 (100)	238 (100)	172 (100)	157 (100)	329 (100)

Note: The figure in the parenthesis denotes percentage to the total, Sources: Based on empirical data collected by 2010-2011

This table briefly analyses the marital status among the Juang tribes in the area under study. The study has been carried out the year of 2010-11. This table particularly discusses about the unmarried, married, divorce, widow and widower. In this table the researcher gives the marital status of the male and female population village wise. In Duarsuni village the 127 people (47.0 per cent) are unmarried and out of these 86 (56.2 per cent) are males and 46 (39.3 per cent) are females member. As per the married status out of the total population 132 (48.9 per cent) married people 66 (43.1 per cent) are males and 66 (56.4 per cent) are females. There are only 2 (11.7 per cent) divorce they are females. There are 8 (6.8 per cent) widows and 1 (0.4 per cent) widower in this village. In Phulbadi village the unmarried population is 128 (55.9 per cent) and out of these 69 (58.5 per cent) are males and 58 (52.3 per cent) are females. The total married population is 92 (40.2 per cent) and 46 (39.0 per cent) are males, 46 (41.1 per cent) are females, 1 (0.9 per cent) is a divorce, 6 (5.4 per cent) are widows and 2 (1.7 per cent) are widowers is in this village. In Talabali village the total unmarried population is 82 (50.6 per cent) and out of these 49 (59.0 per cent) is male and 33 (41.8 per cent) is the female, 68 (42.0 per cent) is the total married population and 34 (41.0 per cent) are males and 34 (43.0 per cent) are females, 1 (0.6 per cent) is the divorce in female, 11 (13.6 per cent) are widows and 1 (0.6 per cent) is a widower in this village. In Upperbali village the total unmarried population is 89 (47.3 per cent) and out of these 43 (46.7 per cent) are males and 46 (47.3 per cent) are females. The total married population is 82 (43.6 per cent), and out of these 41 (44.6 per cent) are males and 41 (42.7 per cent) are females. There is 1 (1.1 per cent) divorce a man, the widows are 13 (13.5 per cent) and the widowers are 3 (3.3 per cent) in number. In Bhudhighar village 123 (51.7 per cent) is the total unmarried population and out of these 65 (56.6 per cent) are males and 63 (51.2 per cent) are females. The married population is 92 (38.7 per cent) and out of these 46 (40.0 per cent) are males and 46 (37.4 per cent) are females in number. There are 14 (11.4 per cent) widows and 4 (3.5 per cent) widower in that village. In Guptaganga the unmarried population is 165 (50.2 per cent) and out of these 88 (51.2 per cent) are males and 77 (49.0 per cent) are females. The total marital status is 135 (41.0 per cent) and 67 (39.0 per cent) are males and 68 (43.3 per cent) are females. The divorce rate is 6 (1.8 per cent) in total and 4 (2.3 per cent) are males and 2 (1.3 per cent) are females. The widows are 10 (6.4 per cent) and the widowers are 13 (7.6 per cent) in that village.

Table shows that in Bhudhighar village, there is no divorce and in Guptaganga village the divorce rate is high compared to that in the other four villages. The number of widow and widowers is high in the Bhudhighar, Upperbali and Talabali villages. The married and unmarried rate is almost average in all villages in all the present study.

Marriage is monogamy and after the death of the first wife one may marry again. Sometimes they ll prefer to marry polygamy and it's also practicing among them. In case, the first wife proves to be barren; one can to have a second wife. A person marrying for the second time during the life time of his first wife is also occasionally encountered. Cross cousin marriages are not common and no of sorrorate marriage and exchange marriage is very rare in Juang society.

The language of Juang tribe locally the marriage is known as *kania*. The following forms of marriage are prevalent among the Juang and present days they are somehow following thus kind of practises;

1. *Dhalipala kania* –Love marriage with elopement
2. *Ghicha kania*-Marriage by capture
3. *Phulkushi kania*-Love with arranged marriage
4. *Amlsare kania*- Love with arranged marriage by mango
5. *Kadlesare kania*- Love with arranged marriage by mud
6. *Mangi kania*-Marriage by negotiation
7. *Randi kania*-Widow remarriage

Forms of *dharipala* and *ghicha* marriage are common forms in Juang society. Love marriage with arrangement (*phulkusi*) is just in the name s in the memory of the Juang. *Mangi kania* is the most recent form of marriage which has been adopted forms the caste Hindu people. Very recently in certain cases of *mangi* forms of marriage a Brahmin is invited to act as a priest and oraniganised the marriage function.This is called *Mukut kania* since the bridal pairs wear crowns made of flowers like the caste people wearing during the time of marriage ceremony. *Mukut kania* is still unfamiliar to the hill dwellers, but on plains some Juangs have adopted it to elevate their social status. Only a few rich families in the plain area can afford to conduct *mukut kania*.

Each forms of marriage are slightly a variant of the *mangi* form of marriage but all these are somewhat similar to each other.

Dharipala Kania (Love marriage with elopement)

If a boy likes a girl of certain village he goes to her village and consults with her about their marriage. Both escape and come to the boy's village. The girl is left in the outskirts of the village of the body and the boy goes and informs his elder brothers wife (own or classificatory) to bring her. The ladies bring her home, and kiss the chin and forehead of the boy and the girl with the turmeric powder. Other rites are performed as in the *mangi* form of marriage.

Ghicha Kania (Marriage by Capture)

In this form of marriage the girl's parents and the villagers are consulted the presence of the village head. After they express their willingness the girls is captured by the boy and his friends either from the forest when she goes to pluck leaves or from the stream while taking bath or while fetching water or from of market or fair, or on her visit to the boy village or some other villages for dancing purposes.

Phulkhusi Kania (Love with Arranged Marriage)

The boy of a certain village goes to the *Bandhu* village for *changu* (musical instrument) dance. There the boy puts some flowers on the bun of his desired girl and drags her while dancing. The girl escapes. In *ghicha* the boy with his friends capture the girls with a group and in *ghicha* the girl's parents are consulted prior to the capture. In *phulkushi*, on the other hand, the girl's parents are not consulted beforehand and the girl is gagged not by the boy's friends as a group, but by the boy alone. After the girl escapes, the boy comes back to his village and informs his parents and the villagers. After few days the women and girls of the girl's village bring her to the boy's village for marriage.

Am Lesare Kania (Love with Arranged Marriage by Throwing Mango)

This cases both the boy and a girl may like each other. One day the boy splashes mango-juice at the girl in the forest and manages to get one of her ornaments. The girl escapes and goes back home. Her mother says, "You were with such and such boy and you have lost your ornament. Why didn't you go with him"? Then the village women and the other girls of her village bring her to the boy's village for marriage.

Kada Lesare Kania (Love with Arranged Marriage by Mud)

This is also one form of marriage and the same type as *am-lesare*, but in this form the boy splashes mud at the girl instead of mango. .

Mangi Kania (Marriage by Negotiation)

This is the form of *Mangi kania* or marriage by negotiation, through two *khandrias* (middle men) from the groom's party goes to the girl's parent's house. They assemble in a *darabar* (*pirha*) and say, "We have come to take a small chicken or a nice fruit from our village". The villagers ask "To whom the chicken belongs"? The *khandirias* say the name of the girl's father. The villagers say "We shall ask him and tell you". Then the

khandarias go back. In this way they come for five or six times to the girl's village till the proposal is finalised. In Juang area they bring rice and liquor with them, and these are supplied to them by the groom's family. But here and in this area, the *khandarias* are fed by the girl's family on every visit.

Bride Wealth/ Bride Price

Marriage lays in economic strain among the Juang people. Contribution from the relatives and the close kins is so negligible that the parents start hoarding crops and the cash for five years or more till they are able to amass considerable amount for financing the marriage. A considerable amount is spent in feast. Other expenditure includes bride wealth paid to the bride's relatives, cloth for the bride, groom and other relatives.

The items and the amount of bride wealth are the same for all types of marriages, which are paid within one year or two year after the marriage except in *dharipala* (marriage by elopement) in which they are paid after five to ten years when the marriage partners accumulate enough amount for the purpose. The following the items are part as bride wealth paid in Juang marriage.

- One bullock for the bride's father.
- One bullock for her father's younger brother.
- One bullock for her mother's brother.
- Three rupees and about 12 pai rice (25kg rice) for the *khandarias* (middle man).
- About 7 ½ *khandi* (100kg) of rice for *bala jau* (good quality rice).
- (10-12 kg) of rice powder and a goat for the bride's villager's when they have leave after the marriage.

The table, represent the type of marriages among in the Juang the study villages. There are seven types of marriages in their society and also they are practising these seven types of marriages. In the study area the researcher has found that there are 59 love marriages with elopement, 42 marriages by capture, 51 love with arrange marriages, 35 love with arranged marriages by mango, 29 love with arranged marriages by mud, 47 marriages by negotiation and 7 widow marriages . In the Juang society they prefer to have marriage love and it happens that the boy and girl fall in love with each other during the time of any village function and ritual or when they go to the other village as a guest.

Types of Marriages among the Juang in the Study Area

Sl. No.	Types of Marriages	No. of Marriages
1	Love marriage with elopement	59 (21.9)
2	Marriage by capture	42 (15.6)
3	Love with arranged marriage	51 (18.9)
4	Love with arranged marriage (by mango)	35 (13.0)
5	Love with arranged marriage (by mud)	29 (10.7)
6	Marriage by negotiation	47 (17.4)
7	Widow Marriage	7 (2.6)
Total		270 (100)

Note: The figure in the parenthesis denotes percentage to the total

Sources: Primary data collected from field year 2010-2011

Conclusion

The marriage ceremony among the Juang community is an individual family function, everybody in the village participates in it, especially the young girls and women participated actively and take part in dance and sing together with food and drinks. Thus, marriage plays a distinct role in the socio-cultural life of the Juang people. Present days of our society changes from simple to complex, some changes are seen in its marriage rules and types though the primary function remains the same. Even though they follow tribe endogamy, these days they are prefer to marriages from outside their tribe. One of the major reason for Juang male for performing these various kinds of marriage there female sex ratio is high comparative male.

Now they have been greatly influenced by Hinduism, their practice of animism is unabated. They have undergone with perceptible changes due to influence of education, development interventions, Hinduisation and modernization. The unique culture of the Juang at the age at marriage has undergone changes under the influence of modernization. The educated Juang both boys and girls are adopted the new methods of marriage system and preferred to marry young age group which has crossed the blind faiths and rituals of the own community. Among the Juang modern youth preference love marriage is also increasing day by day. Comparatively earlier days, widow re-

marriage is also not a social stigma in people of Junag community. The divorce rate is low among these groups. Because of these practices, they improved their economic standard of living, developing consciousness; cultural contact and education together play an important role in their changing perception of marriage.

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