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## **Rites and Rituals accompanying the Marriage of the Jolhas**

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### **Abstract**

*Being a part of the tea Community of Assam the Jolhas are considered as a subject of importance in the History of the land as well as the broader Assamese society. They have been living in Assam for more than one and a half century i.e. from 1840 A.D. as they were brought by the British to work in Tea Garden as laobourers along with other tea garden workers. They are living here in the land by maintaining a particular ethnic identity in Assam in the field of Culture, Economy, Polity, Religion etc. In this paper an attempt has been made to discuss about the rite and rituals related to the Marriage ceremony of these Jolha people. Primary data is proved to be helpful in articulating this paper. Personal interview and field study method is adopted to prepare this paper.*

Key word : Jolha, Marriage, Tea , Assa

### **Introduction**

The rituals and ceremonies accompanying the marriages in any society have a strong connection with the religious order and the society. Basically the traditions of a marriage ceremony instituted by the religious beliefs and practices found in a society. In Indian societies, the rites and rituals are also influenced by the other groups of people as most of the societies in India are basically heterogeneous. Likewise the Jolha people of Assam follow some distinctive rituals and ceremonies which are associated with their religion Islam and also with Jolha society as well as the broader Assamese society. The Jolhaisa tea community of Assam were brought to the land during the British regime who have become an integral part not only of the tea community but also the Assamese Muslim society and broader Assamese society too. They have been living in Assam for more than 180 years i.e. from 1840 A.D, maintaining their ethnic identity to some extent but they are hardly able to draw any attention of learned person, scholar and popular media of the land as well. Though in the process of acculturation, they have lost most of their ethnic feature and by embracing the language, culture and religious rites and rituals of the host society they contributed a lot in forming a broader Assamese society.



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### **Objective of the Study :**

This paper is an attempt to articulate an overall vision of the rites and rituals related to the marriage ceremony of the Jolhas

### **Methodology :**

To prepare the paper regarding the ceremonies and rituals marriage among the Jolhas of Assam, both primary and secondary data has been collected from field. Secondary information has been collected from some published and unpublished materials that focused on these people to some extent. The data was collected from personal interview method through the designed schedule in four Jolha inhabited Tea and Ex-Tea area of Assam viz. Keihang Tea Estate ( Tinisukia District), Sarupathar ( Golaghat), Gotonga Tea Estate (Golaghat).

### **Rites of Marriage ceremony:**

#### **Juron**

*Juron* is the first ceremony of the marriage among the Jolhas. *Juron* or the ring ceremony is usually observed before marriage maintaining a long gap between the two. On the day of *Juron* some members of respective family and the society goes to the brides place with a ring and other articles like dress materials, cosmetics etc. for the bride. The source person informed that it was the tradition of the Jolhas to give red dress materials and even the Thrushel for hair had to be red in colour, which is no more a tradition of the people, instead, they select dress of various colour for the bride. It is worth mentioning here that, there was a tradition among the Jolha women to wear *Aphson* (one type of *Sindoor* i.e. orange or golden in colour) on their head like their Hindu counterpart. But in process of coming under the Islamic rule and regulation in Assam this practice is no more exist among them. Even then, some respondents told the researcher, they used to give *Aphson* along with the other articles of *Juron*, respecting the tradition but they don't use it anymore. On the very same day, the date of marriage is fixed and sometime they do it in some other convenient day. The amount of '*Mahr*' (also known as *Mohorona* among the Muslims of Assamese society) is often finalized in presence of the *Zamat* (members of the concerned local Masjid) and also



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the elder members of both respective family. However, it is to be noted that traditionally, the bridegroom cannot visit the bride's house on the day of the *Juron* (ring ceremony), but in the present scenario, it become very common among the Jolhas like other societies of Assam that the bridegroom along with his two or more friends goes to bride's house and formally introduce himself to bride and bride's kith and kin.

### **Logon Diya**

*Logon Diya* is another practice observed three to five days before marriage. On the day of *Logon Diya*, the near relatives of the bridegroom, basically the male members goes to brides place with a Logon of *Haldi* (turmeric powder), *Methi* (one type of spices), *Mehendi*, *Tel* (mustard oil), looking glass, comb, *Kaiol*, nine red bangles made of glass materials, *Aphson*, a cotton *Saree* and other related garments for the bride. It is also customary to bring back half of the *Haldi*, *Methi* and *Tel* for the use of the bridegroom. The bride, after wearing the *Saree*, spread the paste of *Haldi* and *Methi* and also the *Tel* over her body parts with the help of the relative women. This custom has to be repeated three times before *Nikah*. The *Saree*, adorned with *Haldi* and *Tel* is brought back to the bridegroom's place by the bride and is generally used by the married or unmarried sister-in-law of the bride after a wash by herself.

### **Nikah**

*Nikah* is the prime and basic event of performing a marriage in Islam through which two person are tied up together for the rest of life. The date of *Nikah* is finalize with mutual understanding of both the party on the day of *Juron* or some other suitable day of their convenience. Initially, the *Nikah* was observed on night, but it is not done today. On the day of *Nikah*, the bridegroom along with his relatives, friends, and the members of the respective *Zamat* (assembled members of the local Masjid)) come to the brides place. It is customary for the elder members or the father of the bride to ask the elder members or the father



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of the bridegroom about the reason behind their presence in their place and the bridegroom's party has to answer the same.

After that an aged person nominated from brides side , who is considered as *VakilBaap* (Vakil-advocate, Baap-father)with two elderly witness from both side ask the bride first about her formal consent regarding her Nikah with the bridegroom. If the bride doesn't answer first time the whole procedure is repeated for three times. The bride was asked that if she is agreed to marry the bridegroom on the amount of *Mahr* promised by the bridegroom. After the consent of the bride before the Vakil and the witness, they asked the bridegroom about his consent regarding marriage before the Zamat. After the consent of the bridegroom the Nikah is declared to be approved by the society and after that a *Duah*(prayer) is held among the people present there for a happy and prosperous married life of the newly wedded couple. A feast is arranged from the bride's side for the people assembled to attend the *Nikah*.

### **DuwarDega**

*DuwarDega* (Duwar- door, Dega- to cross) is another custom observed after one day or more after the *Nikah* is performed. It can be compared with the 'Gharutha' of their other Muslim counterpart of Assamese society. It is also known as 'DuwarLenga'in place to place. Usually the very next day of *Nikah* both the bride and bridegroom comes to brides house and returned back on the same day.

### **Athmongola**

*Athmongolais* observed on the eighth day and sometimes in 10/12 days after the marriage. The day of *Athmongola* is fixed according to their own convenience and there are no hard and fast rules for that. For performing this custom, the newly wedded couple visit bride's house.



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## **Li-aan**

It can be said the last customary practice of a marriage among the Jolhas. They called it *Li-aan* as through this practice the parents of the bride formally goes to daughter's new home to invite her formally to stay in her parents place for a period of 10 to 20 days. They also invited the parents and other members of the family of the bridegroom to their place to bring back their *Putohu*(daughter-in-law).

## **Rituals accompanying Marriage:**

The rituals and other customs related to the Marriage of any society are important as well as enjoyable in all means. The Jolhas also have some rituals and customs regarding marriage, but it is worth mentioning here that most of those are not being practiced by them in present day scenario. The other practices are also varied from place to place or tea to ex tea people.

## **AmloKhowa**

During the study we come across some elder persons of Kehang Tea Estate of Tinsukia District made us to know about a marriage related rituals known as *AmloKhowa* which is also supported by some other aged source persons that they come across this ritual when they were very young. It was basically observed before the start of the bridegroom towards bride's place for the *Nikah*. Usually the mother of the bridegroom asked her son to sit on her lap she took a little water from a *Bodna*(one type of water carrier) with mango leaf on her palm and made her son to drink the water from her palm and then she asked her son,

“*KahanJahi Beta?*” (Son, where are you going?)

“*Tor LoureenAnekJahi*”. (To bring your servant), the son answered. Then she permits her son, the bridegroom to go out of home.( Begum, A :Personal Interview :17<sup>th</sup> February,2011)



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## **GhorBhorai**

There are two types of the custom of *GhorBhorai* (Ghor-home, bhorai-to fulfill) exists among the Jolhas which come to the knowledge of the researcher during field observation. This custom is related to the bride only.

It was noticed during observation that when the bride leaves her parents house with the bridegroom to start a new life, she is asked to throw handful of *Chaal*(rice) towards her back and the members of the family closed the door of the main entrance of the house through which the bride stepped out. They believe that through this custom the prosperity of the house wouldn't go out with the daughter.

There was another custom of *GhorBhorai* but not practiced in each and every Jolha inhabited area. For this, some amount of *Haldi* (turmeric powder), *DudhGhah*(one type of grass known as *Dubori Bon* in Assamese), five *Sikka* (one rupee and twenty five paisa) and a little amount of *Chaal* (rice) tied on the tip of the *Saree*of the bride which she bring with her to her in laws place and give it to her Sister- in- Law. The belief behind this is that through this custom the Daughter- in- law brings prosperity to their home.( Begum, A :Personal Interview :17<sup>th</sup> February,2011)

## **Chumaan**

*Chumaan*was basically observed in the bridegroom's place after *Nikah*. It was a tradition of the Jolha people to give gifts to the bride and bridegroom on the day of *Chumaan*. In some places it was also observed in bridegroom's place under the *Maruwa*(In Assamese it is known as *Robha*). On the day of *Chumaan*, the ladies present on the occasion sung *Saadigeet* (songs related to marriage) and threw *Chaal* (rice) on both the bride and the bridegroom ( Begum, A :Personal Interview :17<sup>th</sup> February,2011)

## **Neota**

*Neota* was another ritual prevailed among the Jolhas of both tea and ex tea people. It was a custom among them that when they got invitation for a marriage they usually visited the



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respective family, who organize the marriage, with a Dori (A round basket made of bamboo or cane, which is known as *Pasi* or *Khorahi* in Assamese) which contain Chaal (rice), Daal, Tel (oil), dress materials and such type of essential items for marriage covered with a *FitapareeSaree* (A MarcinSaree with coloured boarder). They got the Dori back from the host with some of the articles. This was known as Neota Diya among the Jolhas. This shows the feelings of the people to each other and how they care and help each other. Now a days the near relatives gives the essential articles for the bride or the bridegroom after a discussion with the parents. The traditional touch of *Neota Diya* and *Chumaan* is no more found among the Jolhas( Ali,O: Personal Interview: 17<sup>th</sup> February,2011)

### **Shadigeet and Notuwa Dance**

Like *Biyanam* of Assamese society, *Shadigeet* (Shadi-marriage, Geet-song) were sung by the ladies assembled for the occasion of the marriage ceremony. But coming under the influence of Islam they cut off themselves from these type of customs and tradition which was prevailed among their Hindu counterpart thereafter. The *ShadiGeets* were collected from Anar Begum, Oriumghat, Harupothar, Golaghat on 7<sup>th</sup> July,2013 and Osiron Begum, Kehang Tea Estate, Tinsukia on 16<sup>th</sup> June,2013 through personal interview. Some example of *Shadigeet* are-

*“Jawa re GohumakeUbton*

*RaiSorichaKe Tel*

*BetiBoithol Re Ubton”*

[The daughter or the bridegroom sits to spread *Ubton* or the paste of the articles of ‘Logon’ including oil over her body part]

*“Ghara se BaharaBhail ,Maya Mora*

*Biha Maya Logon ChumaiHo*

*Logon NiharaBhail*



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*Hate Gulala, MukhePaan*

*Logon NiharaBhail, Mai Ho*

*Logon NiharaBhail”*

[The bride will go out of home as ‘Logon’ has come. With *Mehendion* her hand and *Pan* in her mouth she is having her ‘Logon’].

One more tradition of the Jolhas which was no more prevailed in their society was *Notuwadance*. This dance was performed during marriage only. The men folk participated in the *Notuwadance* with *Dhal* ( Shield) and *Tarwal*( Sword) and danced only on instrumental music in front of Bridegroom party while proceeding towards brides home. This dance is even now popular among their Hindu counterpart.

There are some other rites and rituals and also some customs which are not known by some particular name but they observed in a customary way. For example, on the day of *Athmongola*, the bridegroom acted like he is offended with his in-laws and it was customary to break the offend of bridegroom offering some special present to him. He was also asked to pull up the special bamboo post of the *Shamra*(*Robha* or *pandal* of the bride’s place) which was strongly tied with the ground and the Bridegroom had to prove his strength before the members of bride’s party. In the same way, the bride, after coming to her husband’s place, acted like she is offended with her in-Laws and they tried their best to break her offend by offering precious items to their *Putohu* (daughter-in-Law). There was another custom where the bridegroom was asked to find out the bride and the members of the bridegroom family make the bride to hide somewhere in their home. But these customs are not found among them.( Begum, A :Personal Interview :17<sup>th</sup> February,2011). Instead of these, some other customs which is observed in Assamese society entered in their culture viz. to find out a ring from water or mud, wash feet of both bride and bridegroom while entering the home and demanding some amount for the same etc.





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## Conclusion

In the process of acculturation the Jolhas have lost most of their traditional practices regarding all aspect of Cultural life. It is also happened domineering instruction of the religion. Pushing back their traditional practices like *Chuman, Notuwa Dance, Shadigeet* etc. in the dark, they adopted the practices that exist among their Muslim counterpart of the Assamese society. They observe the traditions like *Athmongola, Juron* before marriage like the Assamese society. Thus, they have lost some of their cultural activities and at the same time, they also contributed a lot in making of a larger Assamese society by embracing the rites, cultural features of the host society . In fine ,it can be stated that it is a micro level study based on the rites and rituals of marriage among the Jolhas of Assam, particularly of Upper Brahmaputra Valley from traditional point of view. More micro level study are to be conduct in field to bring out a full description of these ethnic people with due stress on change and continuity.

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