Introduction:

Marriage is an institution and mechanism for formation of social group. It fosters social relationship with others and acts for the perpetuation of human kinds. Besides sex gratification, the need for the care and rearing of children and also the transmission of culture constitute further important motives of marriage institution. The nature of marital bond is basically the same everywhere. The marital bond found among the tribes of India is found to bring together, not just two individuals, but two families even kindred and villages. It is a tool meant to secure for individual satisfaction of a highly personal character, but a social mechanism designed to create solidarity.

The Constitution (Orissa) Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Order (Amendment) 1976 enlisted 62 tribal communities and Gadaba tribal community is one of the prominent tribes among them. The Gadaba is one of the primordial and colorful tribes of Odisha, classified as speakers of Mundari or Kolarian language. In Odisha, they are distributed mostly in seven different districts viz. Koraput, Kalganidi, Sundergarh, Ganjam, Sambalpur, Mayurbhanj and Phulbani. However, Koraput has the highest Gadaba population among the districts. The present paper is based on the data collected from a sample of 300 households from the semiliguda, Pottangi and Nandapur blocks of Koraput district.

So far as the marriage rule is concerned in Gadaba society, they follow incest taboo strictly like other society. Clan exogamy and tribe endogamy are given very much importance. In no way the Gadaba would marry someone from his own clan. The establishment of love and the attitude to marry is sensitive and emotional among the hill tribes of Koraput and the same holds good to the Gadabas also. Gadabas marry not for physical relation but to establish a relationship based on love and affection. These sanctions are reinforced by the tradition of their society and the sacred rituals which do not allow adultery or divorce with the fear of possible supernatural disasters.

The dormitory system of the younger unmarried girls where they spend the night in the company of an old lady in the village prevails. From this dormitory (Dhangidi Bhasa) the younger girls learn the basic element of family, marriage and culture. From this they just prepare themselves for their future family and married life.

Selection of Mates: Past and Present:

The norm of the Gadaba tribe generally implies that marriages in present times should
follow the standards set up by marriages in the past. Marriages between groups who consider each other as bhai are not permissible. Even marriages are not permissible among the groups called Charu bhai (Ritual brothers within the village), moiter (ritual brothers of the family settled outside the village) or panjia bhai (ritual brothers of the village status group settled outside such village). One can marry the children of his mamu or phupha, but cannot marry the children of mausi or chacha.

So far as the marriage rule relating to mate selection is concerned in Gadaba society, they follow incest taboo strictly like other society. Clan exogamy, phratry exogamy and tribe endogamy are given very much importance. The Gadaba social organization revolves round six different phratries. They are (1) Macha (fish), (2) Naga (Cobra), (3) Bagha (Tiger), (4) Hanuman (Monkey), (5) Bhalu (Bear), (6) Surya (Sun). The phratry is locally called Bonsh and consists of a group of persons of both sexes – a woman assuming her husband’s group on her marriage and is characterized by patrilineal descent. The phratry is said to be the largest exogamous unit and no marriage takes place among the members belonging to the same phratry.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phratry</th>
<th>Clan</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Macha (Fish)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mundagadia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Khamidia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Kodiri</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Gotatia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pakula</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Naga (Cobra)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Deulapadina</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bileipadina</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Totapadina</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bagha (Tiger)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Girem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Solepadia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bandhapadisa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pamia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Barilipadisa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tikiripadisa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hanuman (Monkey)</td>
<td>Anamalia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surya (Sun)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is thus clear from the above fact that phratry is the largest exogamous unit. It regulates marriage system in Gadaba society. The dominant
phratry of the particular village holds all important socio-political and religious offices of the village. Likewise each clan is also an exogamous unit. Marriage within the same clan is also prohibited. In no way the Gadaba would marry someone from his own clan.

**Traditional forms of Gadaba Marriage:**

**Marriage by negotiation (Ludiringnaie):**

It is customary in Gadaba society for a boy to marry the daughter of his maternal uncle as the first choice. This only happens when the maternal uncle has a son for marriage with the niece. The marriage settled by parents or guardians of boy and girl is called ‘Ludiringnaie’. Before the marriage is settled between two families, it is customary that both families should have different clan. At a standard marriage the negotiator (the raibadia) is summoned, who is commissioned to go to the bride’s house with some gift.

The marriage is mostly settled during third week of January to second week of February month (Magha masa); Wednesday or Friday is chosen as the auspicious day for the purpose. The marriage takes place during March-April (Chaitra) or April - May (Baisakh). Before marriage is settled, the opinion of the boy and girl is also taken. The parent convinces their daughter saying they are well off. Then the groom’s father and mother visit the bride’s house. They start on Tuesday with one garia full Pendum, about 4 to 5 kgs of cooked rice, vegetables, salt and oil. They accompany the Naik and Challan (of the same village) to girl’s house. The food and gift is handed over to the girl’s family by bridegroom’s parents. The boy’s parents, Naik and Challan enjoy dinner with the girl’s family. At about 9 O’clock night drinks are served to the guests. The marriage date is fixed with the help of dissari.

The departure of the groom and party is known earlier to the villagers. Thus, all of them stay on the verandah. No one goes to forest for wood or to river. The use of phawda on lands is forbidden before the departure of the groom and party.

They have the custom of bride price. The Raiebadia hands over the bride price to the Naik of the bride’s village and who in turn hands it over to the father of the girl or to his eldest son, but not to ladies. The bride price may vary from 50 rupees to five hundred rupees, depends on the financial conditions of the groom’s family. Generally 5 to 10 puti (40 k.g.) paddy or 2 bags of rice, three goats (two adult bucks, one female doe), 5 Kauri loads of Pendum (load carried on shoulders), new cloth, vegetables and common salt are also presented. On the marriage day some thirty or forty boys and girls from the groom’s village visit the bride’s village. The reception at bride’s village is very warm. There is a good bit of singing and dancing. The groom’s party is then given a grand feast.

The ceremonial bath with turmeric mixed hot water is given to the boy by sister-in-laws, village friends of the bride and other relations. Then the groom is dressed with new clothes. Gadaba marriage has some similarities with Hindu marriage rituals. Like Hindu the relatives also offer the doob (grass) to the couple which signifies the signs of blessing for prolificacy and immortality. The guests are entertained with grand feast of rice, mutton and served with pendum and wine. Then by 9.00 PM, the groom returns to his village with the bride.

After the marriage the Raiebadia first sing songs relating to couple, marriage and then others follow it. The groom on reaching the village enters into his best friend’s house or elder brother’s
house. *Tika* is given to the bride and she is taken to groom’s house by presenting new clothes to wear.

Arranged marriages of Gadaba set the standards but they are certainly not the only honorable forms of wedding. Besides arranged marriage, there are also other types of marriages which are discussed below.

**Marriage by capture (*Ann Ringnaie)*:**

This kind of marriage was very common and is seldom seen in these days. The boys who are not rich and cannot meet the marriage ceremony expenses or fall in love with a girl, but the family of the girl does not approve it, the boy gets married by capturing the girl. In the process the boy arranges his friends and captures the girl at weekly market, kidnap the girl and marry her. Marriage by capture is organized also when a girl pretends to refuse to marry the boy who likes her. The boy with the help of his friends literally captures the girls when she is in the market, in a festive place, in jungle or working in the field. The girl is then kept secretly in someone’s house till the marriage is ritually sanctioned. The *raibedia* is then commissioned to go and informs the bride’s parents who come to the groom and give their daughter’s hand to that particular groom. After that the girl is taken to the boy’s house. New sari is given to her. Cooked bamboo shoot and rice are served to them. *Pendum* is served to all friends who come to look the boy and girl.

**Marriage by service (*Simandhi Denka Baielie Ludki Nangien)*:**

It is also otherwise known as *Ghar Juain*, it is relatively local Hindu term. The situation of such marriage appears when the bridegroom is poor and cannot afford the bride price or when the bride is only child to the family and has landed property and the father-in-law wishes to have a *Ghar Juain*. In the former case a maximum of 3 years of service period is given to the bridegroom so as to live and work for the father-in-laws family. After three years of service they are married and are separated to live independently. If the father-in-law wishes, he can even ask them to live independently before the completion of the service period. The *Ghar juain* has no right to have a second wife, if the first wife is surviving.

**Marriage by Elopement (*Udulia vivah)*:**

In this marriage a couple in love simply run away. Their parents then search them, trace them and finally bring them back. Thereupon the relationship is ritually sanctioned.

In Gadaba society men can marry other people’s wives. It may happen when a married women, for some reason does not want to stay with her man and search for a new man. So, among Gadabas both men and women have choice to change the spouse if situation forced to do so.

**Divorce:**

The divorce (*Atrobedani*) is a special right fully bestowed in both sex equally in Gadaba tribe. Barrenness in some cases, bad behaviour, serious health problems, laziness and not working at home are the common reasons of divorce by husband to his wife. On the other hand, drinking of excessive alcohol, idleness, wife beating, affair with other women, disease problems, bad
behaviours by mother-in-law and family members attribute divorce by women to men.

The society allows one to two wives or many to a man. It depends on the importance, wealth and fame of the person concerned in their society. When a person gets second wife, then the family members of the first wife come and demand a cow, ten to twenty rupees for pendum for the act. They demand for the better care of their daughter. When the groom agreed to this, they returned to their village. Sometimes they do quarrel between them with blaming each other, express their anger for other, abuse and beat each other, which then leads to the process of divorce.

If a man divorces his wife, then he loses his right to take back the bride price which he had paid for his marriage. The divorce is given in presence of village panchayat. The ladies are allowed equally to participate, if required, in the process of divorce. They loudly shout and put-forth their reasonings for justice or against injustice. The bride’s family members including ladies participate. The panchayat always tries to evade divorce and argue with both the parties to compromise and keep up the marriage tie. In case the efforts fail, then the panchayat asks the man, if he wants to divorce his wife and if he is still willing after the argument and consolation by all elders, then divorce takes place. The wife demands for divorce. The husband pours water on her folded hands and divorce takes place.

When the lady wants to divorce her husband, she leaves with her only clothes. She leaves behind all her ornaments, before going to her parent’s house. She does not return in spite of several visits of her husband to the family. In case she remains with her parents, then the parents pay back the bride price in coins and in case she goes to love with another man, then the second husband shall have to return the bride price of the lady to her first husband.

The lady after divorce can retain her clothes but ornaments get divided between two families. The divorced lady can take small children with her and sons of above 6 years of age are left with the husband. If no one is there to take care of the son at home of the divorced husband, then he can allow the divorced wife to keep the son with her. If the young son has lived with his mother after divorce, then the husband reserved the right to take him back once he is 6 years. An elderly person can marry a young lady. But the reverse is a rare event. A married person cannot marry by capturing a woman. If an unmarried girl of the village gets pregnant, then the panchayat in public asks her to name the person. The person concerned is allowed to give evidence against it as lie. If the man is found guilty and is married then the he will be fined heavily by the panchayat.

The widow (Randi young) remarriage is allowed in the Gadaba society depending on the goodness of the family. She can be married to the younger brother of her deceased husband. If a widow remarries to any other person, in that event the family of the deceased husband gets a cow or two hundred rupees. It is lower bride price.

Changes in Marriage and Divorce:

When a society changes from simple to complex, some changes are seen in its marriage rules and types though the primary function remains the same. Eventhough they follow tribe endogamy, these days some of them are going for marriages outside their tribe. However the marriage outside the tribal community is very limited. Except some educated sections of the society, the Gadaba in general retain tribe endogamy. A young Gadaba, who brings a non-Gadaba bride, evokes negative sanction. It puts
him and his family in a state of ex-communication with rest of the society. For restoring his original status he has to undergo purification ceremony and giving a communal feast. A Gadaba girl who marries outside Gadaba fold creates a state of pollution for her family which can be removed only after undergoing purification ceremony. A feast to the village community has to follow it. Till now a marriage with a Dom (an untouchable caste) is not approved by them and a person marrying a Dom is driven out of the community.

The clan and phratry exogamy is still honoured and an exception to this has not been reported during the present survey. The impact of neighbouring Hindu caste communities has also immensely influenced the Gadaba and there are many instances of Ludiringnaie (marriage by negotiation) which is thought to be more fashionable and prestigious. Adoption of some of the new custom of Hindus like marriage precession with light, sound system and crackers and sumptuous dinner for the invitees has caused spending of heavy expenditure for Gadabas in recent days.

Some aged Gadaba people have replied that in earlier days a wife’s need was ‘clothes to her body, food to live, oil for her head’. But due to the impact of urbanization and industrialization process the material need of Gadaba society has been increased. Day by day they become materialistic in their attitude. It has been observed that while choosing a suitable groom, the girls and their family members are attracted to Gadabas young men who are in Government job, or have good business. They believe that a well to do Gadaba groom can provide a better life to a girl than a hand to mouth man. At a marriage, the groom has to give some wealth in the form of animals, rice, liquor, vegetable and money to the bride’s people. By the transfer of this wealth, Gadaba society approves the marriage. Previously the bride wealth was very less. It was even less than 100 rupees. But the bride price has increased a lot and these days it varies from Rs.2000/- to Rs.5000/- each and even more.

Modern love marriage among the Gadaba youth is also increasing. Like earlier days, widow re-marriage is also not a social stigma in recent Gadaba society. The deserted, separated, widow or widower can get married without any difficulty in their society even today. The divorce rate is low among these groups. Their improved economic standard, growing consciousness, cultural contact and education together play an important role in their changing perception of marriage.

In the present study it has been observed that, out of 178 married people nobody is divorced (see table 5.4). One significant fact recorded from the field is that among sample respondents, no spouse is found to be divorced. In the era of modernization also they are able to maintain a strong bond between the husband and wife. As a result divorce is not seen in their community.

The symbols of marriage are two large necklaces and a number of large bracelets. But recently due to the influence of Hinduism married women have started to put sindur (vermilion) on their forehead.

Levirate and sorrorate type of marriages, quite prevalent in earlier Gadaba society, are losing their importance these days. Previously, it was compulsory for the husband’s brother to demand money when his brother’s wife goes for a second marriage elsewhere after the death of her husband. The findings of the present work shows widows going for second marriage elsewhere and the
The demand of money is not given importance as it was before. The better off Gadabas do not demand this money at all. These new impacts have removed some of the prevailing social evils and have brought flexibility in marital ties.

### Table - 1

**Ways of acquiring mates:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of the Blocks</th>
<th>Marriage by negotiation</th>
<th>Marriage by services</th>
<th>Marriage by elopement /love</th>
<th>Marriage by Capture</th>
<th>Others</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pottangi</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>02</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>01</td>
<td>00</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nandapur</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>03</td>
<td>07</td>
<td>01</td>
<td>00</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semiliguda</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>00</td>
<td>00</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>254</strong></td>
<td><strong>05</strong></td>
<td><strong>39</strong></td>
<td><strong>02</strong></td>
<td><strong>00</strong></td>
<td><strong>300</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(84.67%)</td>
<td>(1.67%)</td>
<td>(13%)</td>
<td>(0.66%)</td>
<td>(0%)</td>
<td>(100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: Field Study, 2009)

Data regarding the ways of acquiring mates indicates that marriage by the negotiation is the most preferred form of acquiring mates (84.67%) as shown in table -1. This is a departure from the previous dominant practice of marriage by capture (Das Connel: 1992).

### Table - 2

**Prevalence of tribe endogamy:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of the Block</th>
<th>Tribe endogamy</th>
<th>Tribe exogamy</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pottangi</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nandapur</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semiliguda</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>269</strong></td>
<td><strong>31</strong></td>
<td><strong>300</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: Field Study, 2009)

Tribe endogamy is the most dominant form of marriage practiced among the Gadabas of Koraput district. But even though the Gadaba society prescribe for the norm of tribe endogamy, in the present study some of the respondents have shown their liberal views for acceptance of tribe exogamy. The table -2 depicts that 269 respondents (89.67%) want to retain tribe endogamy. But however, the rest 31 respondents (10.33%) remark that they do not want to restrict their marriage within the tribe. They express their liberal attitude to marry outside the tribe.
**Conclusion:**

Marriage as an institution is very important in the social structure of Gadaba society has gone through several changes in the course of its changing socio-cultural history. However it is not a complete transformation of the system rather it is a perfect blend of change and continuity. Some of the important rituals during the celebration of marriage are still followed and has maintained the sanctity of cultural traits of Gadaba society. Even in the era of modernization and globalization, one can well observe the prevalence of numerous traditional values and rites associated with the institution of marriage which has strengthened the bond of family and kinship.

**References :**


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