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MARRAGE SYSTEMS OF MADIA GOND IN BHAMRAGAD : A SOCIOLOGICAL STUDY



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Introduction :-

Madia Gonds or Madia are one of the endogamous gond tribe living in Chandrapur and Gadchiroli district of Maharashtra and Bastar division of Chattisgad. Madia Gonds have been granted the status of primitive tribe by the Government of Maharashtra under its affirmative action or reservation programme Madia, Though distinct, do not form a separate tribe. They belong to the larger Gond tribe which spreads through Gondwana (Deogaonkar 1982). According to Lyall (1867), the Madia of Gadchiroli in Maharashtra district or found in the same localities as Gond proper and their dialects are almost identical. The Madia who live in Abjuhmad hills or known as Bada Madia. They live in perpetual isolation away from any contact with the modern world. In the present study we shall examine the marital status, the types of marriage, age at marriage, divorce and remarriage.

Objective :-

The main objectives of the study were obviously. 1. To obtain correct and precise knowledge about Madia marriage systems, divorce and status of women.

Research Methodology :-

The need for study, for understanding marriage system and status of women of the Madia has been discussed in details of the methodology and procedures followed during the field work in the area of Bhamragad Laheri Hills and analysis has been presented. Few villages are taken as sample villages the methods of sampling used is stratified sampling method. A sample of 12 villages were selected by the quota sampling for the different strata. From these villages 50% households were selected for the detailed study by the methods of simple random sampling.

Marriage System in Madia Gond

a. Marital Status

Marriage is a social institution determined by culture which admits men and women to family life. Mujumdar (1985) defines marriage as "a socially sanctioned union of male and female, or as a secondary institution devised by society to sanction the union and mating of male and female for purposes of a) establishing a house-

hold, b) entering into sex relations, c) procreating, and d) providing care for the offspring. According to this definition in almost all the societies one or the other form of marriage exists. The incidence of married persons is higher among females and lower among males. As regards the unmarried persons the males are much more than females. It is due to the dowry or bride price.

It is observed that the average age of marriage among the Madias goes to indicate the practice of early marriage. They preferred to marry after the age of 16 but before 20 years. The marriageable age for the girl begins with the starting of menstruation. It is supported by Naik (1963) who observed the Abujmaharias in Bastar. The widow problem amongst the Madias does not exist both among the males and females up to the age of 40. There are no restrictions on the marriages of a widower or a widow in the Madias. But widow marriages do not take place up to this age due to old age and loss of reproductive power.

b. Age at marriage

It is a general tendency among the Madias that every boy and girl is expected to enter the matrimonial state when he or she attains puberty. As this stage their parents think of getting them married. It is a general custom, that girls marry at an earlier age than boys. It was very difficult to determine the age when marriage takes place. The respondents could not tell the actual age of marriage. This was due to their ignorance and illiteracy. Madia informant gave me the age at first marriage of Madias by calculating the age of a man by his physical make up and capacity to handle his household work. The age of marriage for a girl depends on her physical capacity to fetch a full big pot of water from the river and do the household work. Madia generally determines the age of girls' marriage with her breast changes. Now a days, my informant told me that, there are no hard and fast rules for determining the age of marriage. Child marriage is common among the Madias. Analysis of the age of first marriage and present age of the married males and females indicates this. Table No. 1 indicates the age at first marriage of the sample married males and females by their present age.

TABLE 1 Age at first marriage and present age of married males & females

Age of first marriage	Below 25		Present age		76 & above			
			26-50	51-75				
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
Below 10 -	2.65	-	9.28	-	14.28	-	81.35	-
11-15	2.31	78.04	7.52	65.45	29.43	63.92	48.26	16.72
16-20	43.28	19.31	78.41	25.27	52.12	21.80	51.74	1.93
21-25	51.24	-	9.24	-	18.45	-	-	-
26 & above	3.49	-	14.83	-	-	-	-	-

The Table shows that the trend in age at marriage shows gradual increase. Among those who married after 25 there is none who is above 50 years of age which means they belong to the younger generation. A similar trend is not visible in the case of female marriage, there is no marriage among those below 10 years. The female marriage takes place among the madias between the age 10-14. We find no Madia women remaining unmarried after 20 years of age. Dr. Sachchidananda (1964) remarks that the tribal societies marry at comparatively higher age is not supported by him. He observed that among ' the Madias' the largest number of boys marry after they are 21.

c. Form of Marriage

Among several primitive tribes of India, marriage is a simple affair where the marriage ceremonies perform. All the marriage formalities and ceremonies of the tribals are organised after environmental conditions i.e. excessive Mohua wine drink, nonveg feast, payment of bride price and dances. The parents try to find suitable girl for their sons. Ability of the girl to do household work and her health are taken into consideration. In the selection of family on the choice of marriage partner various limitations are also considered with a view to understand the proper position of the family and a Gaita or Pujari family are considered.

Taking into consideration the above facts the different forms of marriage among the Madias according to primitive custom are found in this tribal tract Five specific way of selecting life parterres have been found among the madia tribes. 1 Marriage by Mutual agreement 2. Marriage by exchange 3. Marriage by service 4. Marriage by elopement 5. Marriage by capture

d. Polygamy

Polygamy means marriages. In polygamous families the males, wives number from 2 to 5 (Doshi, 1978). Multitude of wives increases a man's social importance and reputation in the villages. However it was found that the polygamy is now becoming extinct among the Madias. Polyandry, the actual marriage of several men to women (Hoebel, 1979) is absent among the Madias. We notice at Laheri only one case where a Patel (Yeoda Bogami, 52) had four wives.

The Madia may have several wives at the same time. Table No. 3 Polygamy is practiced especially by Patil or Pujari of the village. Generally economic reasons preventing poor men for supporting more than one wife. The main reasons for taking a second wife as expressed by the Madia are the ill health of the first wife. The bareness of the wife, attraction for female youth and taste of variety and for enhancement of social status. The following Table shows the classification of the causes of the incident of polygamous marriages in the area.

TABLE No. 3.

Classification of the causes of the incidents of polygamous marriages.

Reasons	Number of	Percentage
Ill health of the first wife	3	13.64
The bareness of the wife.	5	22.73
Attraction for female youth and taste of variety.	1	4.54
Enhancement of social status.	4	18.18
Working force in farm and in jungle.	9	40.91
Total	22	100.00

Source : Field survey

In the data collected, there were 22 instances of bigamous marriages. 13.64 percent marriages were due to the ill health of the first wife. In 5 cases (22.73%) out of 22 the reason for taking a second wife is the barrenness of the wife is a sufficient reason for having another wife in addition to the former one. Only one case (4.54%) out of 22 found in the sample where a man married a young girl when his first wife has grown old and ugly. Another reason for the second wife is the attraction for female youth and taste of variety. in four cases there were multitude of wives. The reason for taking a number of wives is the increase of a man's social importance and reputation. A Madia expressed that a man having a greater number of wives wields a greater influence in the village. In the data these were 9 cases (40.91%) in which additional wives produce wealth through their labour in the field. For this reason a Madias marry a second girl or widow considering more or less a faithful and permanent labour.

e. Divorce and Remarriage

The Hindu Shasta's regarded marriage a bond never indissoluble in life. To Hindu law there was no such thing as divorce. Divorce may take due to various reasons such as bad nature, hereditary disease and cruel behavior of either partner. Divorce is not com-

mon among the Madias. The percentage of divorced for both the sexes is almost negligible. Dr. Elwin (1950) pointed out the percentage of divorced in Madia is 2.4. He states that divorce is rare but is available to either husband or wife. There is no restriction against the remarriage of the widows among the Madias. Widow marriage is allowed. They can marry any person they like. Generally widows are not accepted with her issues to the house of new husband. The bride price of dowry in a remarriage is very low. In a widow remarriage the detailed ceremonies are not performed. Widow remarriages take place up to proper age. I have not found in the study that the Madia women remarries.

f. The status of Women and family decisions

The status of women among the Madia is equal to that of men in their daily social life. Madia women always take part in the economic activities of the family. She is given the light work. Husband and wife work both in the field during the time of sowing,

harvesting and other agricultural operations. Men and women participate equally in social, cultural, economic and ritual fields. The husband takes decision in consultation with his wife. We find a mutual respect between husband and wife.

Conclusion :-

The Madia Marriage is a simple affair and it does not involve life long bond between the couple. In olden days Pre-Puberty marriage was common but now a days this has been disappeared. Polygamy is practiced but it is very rare. There is a system of Dowry or bride price among the madias divorce is very common and remarriage is also easy among the madias. The polygamy is now becoming extinct among the madias polygamy is totally absent widow marriages take place up to the proper age. The status of women among the madia society is equal to that of men in their daily social life generally the husband takes his decision in consultation with his wife. We find a mutual respect between husband and wife.

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