



Family and Marriage among the Tai Khamti of Arunachal Pradesh: A Study on Social Changes and Continuity

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ABSTRACT

The North-Eastern region of the Indian sub-continent marks the amalgamation of populations and cultures belonging to different ethnic communities that reflect location-specific distinct ways of life but, tend to co-exist peacefully preserving their unique traditions. The state of Arunachal Pradesh shelters a total of twenty-six major tribes and around a hundred sub-tribes, each one of them reflecting a unique cultural tradition. Although most of these tribes inhabit the rural areas of the state devoid of many modern facilities, yet the growing need for better employment, the urge for improving socio-economic conditions has led to migration either temporary or permanent to the urban centres and over years contributed to the loosening of the traditional culture structure. The spread of modern education also bears an impact on the traditional values and beliefs among these tribes. With this in consideration, the present study aims to understand the nature of changes in the institution of marriage and family of the Tai Khamti tribe of Arunachal Pradesh. This study highlights the ongoing process of urbanisation, acculturation, and modernisation among the tribe which has affected their core institutions over years.

Introduction

The dynamic nature of society has long been established and thus society is transforming both in its structure and functioning. Given the unprecedented frequency of change, the study of social change holds more justification than evaluating the society itself. The main thrust of village studies has been confined to the traditional social structure. However, with the passage of time, migration and assimilation have become prominent. Thus village studies focusing on any traditional society should ponder upon the changes brought about in the social life. The concept of 'change' relates to social continuity and hence the tradition and structure underlying any society couples to initiate a change process (Gupta, 2005). Any analysis of change thus evaluates social structures and traditions, where the historic construction is attributed by the traditional framework and the existing processes are stressed by the structural part (Gupta, 2005). Talking about change, it can be a by-product of multiple forces like modernisation, industrialisation, and innovations, all leading to a varied way of life. Therefore, it is not feasible to designate a single force associated with the change in society. Further, change originating in any sphere soon leads to associated transformations in the other areas within the social system. This establishes the vital aspect of social structure where various traits are interlinked and thus a shift in one of these introduce change to its interrelated parts. In turn, changes in the peripheral traits create waves of change in the entire system leading to the alterations in more rigid structures in due courses, with the impact getting weaker as it reaches the core (Ramya & Ramjuk, 2018). This

very nature of culture dynamicity provides a framework to understand and evaluate the various forms of a particular culture across time. As discussed above, in any culture, tradition refers to the last phase of socio-cultural life while modernity denotes the contemporary structure and values with fewer or observable changes. Every society has a culture and it is ever-changing and the underlying process of change leads to internal adjustments with the time that remains essential for any culture to maintain its continuity. This relationship between the traditional and modern present hurdles and integrating the two phases becomes difficult as the forces of changes neither snap the relationship with the past nor does the process of continuity allows elements within the culture structure to remain static. Given such a situation, referring to the past as irrelevant and the contemporary as better adapted can become obsolete as both phases bear latent functions and marked events. Changes leading to a modern form of culture hold a significant impact on social life and its associated practices that affect the culture core in both rural and urban societies. Society being dynamic, it changes slowly under the pressure of both internal and external factors. However, not all traits in a social group follow a simultaneous path to change. In any social group, the core traits hold higher resistance to the forces of change than the marginal ones. The values governing any society remain crucial towards accepting or rejecting the change process. Hence, societies that are tradition-bound tend to be more rigid towards change and present challenges to new ideas and innovations. From the social change perspective, it would be interesting to mention that drastic changes in the social structure have always been considered harmful to society. This is because the social system is unable to adjust in itself and its cultural roots are torn apart. Thus tradition forms a buffer and prevents the destruction of old values and enables the social system to maintain its structure. In other words, social change is gradual and any sudden forces may lead to shattering its internal dynamics. Moreover, evaluating the concept of social change needs constant understanding that change is closely associated with continuity and both these concepts are intertwined in the social sense. Any study on social change can only be justified by drawing a legitimate comparison with the traditional. What continues today is in concurrence with the image of the past and the rest is tuned with the changed pattern. The concept of continuity and change has often been critical with different scholars looking at it from multiple dimensions. However, the common view of the concept corresponds to the comparison between the present and the past or relates to the evaluation of any changes either towards progress or decline. Pienyu (2017) stated, "Continuity and Change signify tradition and modernity. Tradition and modernity are expressions of values that seek to explain the process of social and cultural transformation at different stages of development". In the modern world, evaluating the relevance of tradition and modernity can become difficult as individuals struggle to distinguish the traditional values and its modern forms. The concept of change and continuity is itself a diachronic process that brings in alterations in any culture by a social mechanism (Behera, 2016). Social change occurs at both 'macrostructures' and 'microstructures'; thus any structural change process leading to transformations in 'macrostructures' bears the tendency to eventually influence the 'microstructures'. For instance, urbanisation and industrialisation spill over its influence on family structures and marriage traditions. The 'spread-effect' of changes in the higher structures corresponds to the transformation originating in the microstructure. However, such alterations in the microstructures can also be brought through endogenous forces of change.

Based on the above discussion, it is essential to understand the underlying dynamics of the traditional and the modern. While examining these dynamics, it is necessary to analyse the process of change and its influence on the core institutions. Such core institutions often remain intact but their underlying components do changes while incorporating forces of transformations across the period. Such an analysis is essential to highlight the process of adaptation to the change process. To understand change and continuity in social traits the present paper looks at the core institutions of family and marriage from different historical periods. In the Indian context, the family has been the basic and integral part of any larger social system because of the role it plays in the generation of human

capital resources and the power that is vested in it to influence individual, household, and community behaviour (Sriram, 1993). It remains a homogenous unit that reflects strong coping mechanisms and acts as the line of defence, securing the survival, health, education, development, and protection of its members. The interpersonal relationship shared by its members forming a wider network of roles has drawn the attention of social scientists from multiple disciplines. It is also a major source of nurturance, emotional bonding and socialisation, and a link between continuity and change. It has the major potential to provide stability and support when there are problems. Similarly, marriage is an equally important socially approved institution. The relationships shared within the institutions of marriage are defined and sanctioned by custom and law. Marriage regulates the division of labour and legitimates inheritance and succession and thus it is more than a means of sexual gratification that set forth a mechanism that guarantees a continuation of the family itself. Marital practices and their importance have been analysed across various cultures and their social context has been highlighted through various definitions. Edward Westermarck (1921) defined marriage as “A more or less durable connection between male and female, lasting beyond the mere act of propagation till after the birth of the offspring”. Radcliffe Brown’s (1950) definition, states “marriage as an alliance between two kins based on the common interest that is marriage itself”. Considering the importance of family and marriage in the social order, this paper attempts to measure the nature and extent of change that has occurred in the two important social institutions. As rural India is becoming increasingly important as a source of change, this study on social institutions will unmistakably reflect signs of new kinds of transformation.

Methods of the study

This study was conducted in the Namsai district of Arunachal Pradesh which is dominated by the Tai Khamti tribe of the Buddhist faith. They are the only followers of Theravada Buddhism in the entire Indian sub-continent and have been practicing their ancient religion despite the growing influence of Christianity in the territory. The present study was explorative combining ethnographic methods along with analytical procedures. The secondary data collection began with a review of books published in the study group. Article and notes published in both regional and English languages were collected through online and offline sources. In course of the fieldwork, the district libraries of Namsai and Lohit in Arunachal Pradesh provided immense material that helped to locate the traditional family and marriage systems.

For the study, six Tai Khamti villages were randomly selected, namely, Chowkham, Momong, Lathow, Kherem, Nalung, and Gunanagar. The prominent method applied during the study was participatory observation supplemented by case studies to get an in-depth and holistic picture of the family and marriage structures. The initial stage of the study began by closely observing the daily life of the Tai Khamti people and interacting with prominent members of the sample villages. This was followed by a household census survey that was beneficial to structure the data based on demographic values. Informal interviews and discussions were conducted which helped in identifying respondents who were later consulted for semi-structured interviews. From among the respondents, individuals between the age group 70 and 85 were identified and oral histories were collected through informal meetings. Semi-structured interviews were conducted among 62 families consisting of 350 individuals among whom 184 were residents of rural areas while 166 were urban residents. During the study, a keen observation was made on the pattern of interaction, social relationships, family attitudes, and social sanctions that helped to cross-check the data collected through interviews. The snowball sampling method was much helpful throughout the study. Data was collected in the form of scribbled notes and recorders were used whenever possible.

Objectives

To understand the traditional Tai Khamti family structure and marriage customs.

To analyse the level of changes in the institutions of family and marriage.

To evaluate the factors affecting the core institutions and study the prevailing cultural practices.

Results

Family structure

Within the Tai Khamti social organisation, the family was considered as the basic and vital unit that regulated behaviour, attitudes, relationships, and the social order at large. It was a by-product of either marriage relationships or drawn through decent ties. By tradition, family among the Tai Khamti has been patrilocal, patriarchal, and patrilineal and tends to regulate the economic and religious spheres. The basic family composition consisted of a man, his wife, and their unmarried children. This was a form of a rather modern grouping where the individuals occupied a single house with an undivided kitchen. Traditionally the tribe practiced a joint family system driven by the need for labour as agriculture was the primary economic activity then. Even in present-day families, members shared duties both in the household and agricultural sectors. Nuclear families were extended comprising of unmarried brothers and sisters. However such extended families were scarce and most of the newly married couples were found to settle at their own individual house rather than taking shelter with the groom's parents which were a preferred tradition among the tribe. A gradual change could be observed in the composition of family units across the tribe. Nuclear families had become prominent as individuals were driven by their natural tendency to gain authority as the family head.

Table 1: Family Types among the Sample Group

Family Type	Total Number
Nuclear	52
Joint	6
Extended	4

Joint families usually consisted of parents, their sons, daughter-in-law, and their children. In many cases, newly married sons had built up their own houses within the parental compound but still maintained a common dining space. Common dining was also regular in extended families where the widowed daughter and her children took shelter in the former's paternal house. The modern ideologies of family planning had been minimal among the tribe as members were still reluctant to participate in the family planning program. The Tai Khamti followed a patrilineal descent and hence descent was traced through the father's line. It was found that members from the same lineage groups followed a tradition of extending help in multiple situations involving economic activities, organising religious ceremonies, or providing financial assistance. Murdock (1949) stated that "a rule of descent affiliates an individual at birth with a particular group of relatives with whom he is especially intimate and from whom he can expect certain kinds of services which he cannot demand from any other kinsmen". Among the Tai Khamti, the patrilineal descent system made men the legal owners of the parental property. Any of the male members in a family could make their claim to the father's property. However, in cases where the son was not in contact with the family and stays in distant palaces, his claim to the property was marginalised. In the earliest times, the Tai Khamti followed a tradition of passing a part of the parental property to the married daughters as a token of love. However, such a system has been regulated by the village councils in the present day due to the growing instances of inter-community marriages. Respondents narrated how members of the neighbouring caste

groups have started marrying Tai Khamti girls to claim authority over their ancestral property. The Tai Khamti followed a similar rule of descent and inheritance for an adopted child. Adoption was socially sanctioned among the tribe and in situations like the death of children or in case of lack of a potential heir to parental property; any individual can opt for adoption. However, it was remarkable that the members preferred to adopt from within the community, and outsiders were not readily accepted. The general belief regarding such preference related to the fact that adopting children from within the community made the socialisation process much easier. Adoption could be observed where brothers shared their child and such practices were readily accepted by the villagers. Such traditions symbolised social support and even made parenting less worrisome for childless couples. Co-operation and mutual support is the key to any successful family. Among the Tai Khamti, the family has been an institution for the division of labour. Each member either male or female was ascertained with their respective duties and responsibilities. The division of labour was based on the idea of hard work and soft work. Female members were more comfortable in household activities like child-rearing, cooking. However, they were not restricted to their routine activities and often helped the male folks in agricultural activities. The male members were more absorbed in the economic activities that varied between agriculture, timbering, salaried jobs, or entrepreneurial activities. Flexibility did exist, like duties shared between the male and female members. In many instance, female members agreed to the fact that at times of illness and social ceremonies their male folks do help them in the kitchen activities. Children were taught to obey their elders and entrusted with household duties based on their age. Such labour division formed a part of their traditional methods of child socialisation. However, a gradual change in gender roles could be observed in the present-day Tai Khamti society. Today, there is not much division of labour between the male and female and both perform each others' work. With the spread of opportunities for higher education and emerging platform to showcase individual talents, the stereotypic gender roles have loosened. It was common in many households where servants had been entrusted with household duties and the agricultural activities were looked upon by wage labourers. Marketing activities that were largely considered as a male duty were now taken up by females as the restrictions and taboos associated with the movement of female members had loosened across time. Free movement of female folk was only regulated during the time of pregnancy when the women were kept under the guidance of the family members and were forbidden from involving in activities that would create complications during childbirth. For instance, during pregnancy, a woman was forbidden from crossing over a rope which was used for tying cattle considering it to be inauspicious. Despite the decline of rigid social norms concerning women, yet the female folk still cling to their traditional customs associated with family obligation and social conduct. The present-day Tai Khamti society hardly regulates the interaction of unmarried girls and boys despite the traditional norms of maintaining a strict gap among opposite sex through the system of the dormitory. Similarly, the marriage alliance was highly valued by the members and the instances of divorce were nonexistent among the tribe.

By tradition, the Tai Khamti had been patriarchal and thus the male authority in every family was normal. A thin line of male dominance was still present among the tribe in affairs associated with inheritance and visiting public spaces. However, the male authority hardly hindered the freedom of the female members. The present-day Tai Khamti society has seen female representatives in village councils and, even in family affairs the opinion of the female members was duly addressed. The female members in every Khamti society enjoyed social, cultural, and individual freedom. Unlike traditional society, female respondents agreed upon the fact that they were free to choose their profession and make choices in terms of marriage relationships, dressing, and leisure activities. In the absence of male heads, the females were entitled to their parental property. The Tai Khamti society had been following traditional dispute resolution methods associated with inheritance. In case when a person left behind two wives along with their children, the village council could bring the parties involved into a consensus

unless the party solved the issue within themselves. The obligation towards the elders' still signified the nature of a woman within the tribe. In the household, the daughter-in-law and father-in-law shared a relationship of affection and respect. However, in the case of mother-in-law, a more of an authoritative relationship still prevailed, wherein a new bride had to pass a phase to understand the duties and obligations of her new family under the guidance of her mother-in-law. However such authority did not undermine the choice of the new bride and restricted her daily activities. The daughter-in-law was granted equal status as her fellow members and remained free to explore her choices. This sense of belonging helped her to better adjust to her husband's family. Among the Tai Khamti, kinship was a vital factor that played a significant role in the family unit. Both cognates and affinities received equivalent status within the household. Because of the patriarchal structure, the birth of the male child was usually welcomed despite such preferences were negated by the members. The family had been the main agency of child socialisation among the tribe. Socialisation guaranteed the maintenance of social order and strengthened the structure of society. Any newborn was gradually habituated to the activities of the family from the age of one to two years. The Tai Khamti believed that a male child was a better learner than a female one, and it was during this stage that a thin line of gender differentiation was imposed through variations in games and household activities. In the case of a female child, she was more associated with her mother and thus took up experiences from the kitchen activities and other household tasks. A male child, on the other hand, was free to roam and more involved in duties that he experienced from his father. In the case of boys, he would visit the forest with his father or go fishing and even helped in the fields. The primary stage of socialisation continued until the child was free to blend with the large crowd of a village.

A family cannot be separated from society when it comes to child socialisation. Among the Tai Khamti, it could be observed that a child was never restricted from merging into the public gatherings and he or she was made free to mingle with any of the villagers irrespective of gender or age. The traditional segregation of males and females through the dormitory system had long vanished. It was the society as a whole that stimulated the process of socialisation and the aged sections of the community played a vital role in the whole process. Followed by the primary socialisation, a child entered a more structured and formalised phase where he or she pursued education and continued until an adult choose to involve in income-generating activities. This traditional phase of child socialisation had seen transformations over the years. As the process of urbanisation had initiated the spread of boarding schools and in such cases children were deprived of their traditional socialisation process and were more inclined towards modernity. The loosening of established methods could also be noticed with the change in the economic status of families that bore a large impact on the whole process that ultimately affected the behaviour of a child. Today, the role of the family to teach the younger ones has shifted to educational and religious institutions.

Marriage and cultural practices

Traditionally the Tai Khamti practiced polygamy and it was socially sanctioned; however, such practices have become irrelevant today and monogamy was a widely accepted marriage form. In the early Tai Khamti society, a cross-cousin was the most preferred mate for marriage and both mother's brother's daughter and father's sister's daughter were considered for marital ties. Even today such preference did exist, yet it didn't restrict individuals from choosing a mate of their own. By tradition, the Tai Khamti practiced three main forms of marriage that included marriage by love (*hakkon*), marriage by capture (*onlak*), and marriage by service (*khonkhoi*) (Behera, 1994). In the present day, marriage relationships were established either through love or arranged by the respective families. The early traditions of service and capture had become nonexistent. The Khamti marriage ritual involved a process of financial agreement wherein the groom had to pay a price to the bride's family. The idea

behind the practice of the brideprice was that her parents were losing a working hand and the money had to be deposited to compensate for the loss. Even today such practices are widely popular and like the early periods, the brideprice was fixed based on the norms laid down in the holy book 'Thamasaat Sangyase'. Unlike many other societies where the girl's consent was hardly entertained in case of marriage, the Tai Khamti have been following the practice of consulting the bride and her choice was given due attention. However, a vast change in the age of marriage and choosing their mates could be observed in today's society. Respondents narrated that in the earliest times girls were married off between the ages of 15-18 years as an unmarried female was associated with the concept of purity. Such beliefs compelled the woman to marry whether they liked it or not. Such traditions had been discarded over the years. At marriage, the bride had to bring gifts (*Khung-um*) and the necessary goods required for her daily activities (Behera, 1994). Behera (1994) observed that the marriage ties among the Tai Khamti were much flexible in comparison to the orthodox Hindu society. Since the early days, the tribe had the practice of divorce (*fakon*), though these were rarely practiced and not appreciated by the community. The families involved in the process of divorce had to follow socially governed norms and at times the village council might come into work. The divorce rules were still operating today and the tribe hardly visited the modern judiciary but rather solved such issues within the village council. Their established traditional laws governed the rights that a wife bore on her husband's property and socially accepted norms were given preference rather than modern laws. Traditionally, the Tai Khamti followed strict restrictions and by rule, marriage within the same clan was prohibited. Even today such restriction continues and both the rural and urban residents considered such rules essential for the integrity of the tribe. However inter-community marriages have crept in, which was nonexistent in early times. Among the Tai Khamti, marriage restrictions were widely followed as they consulted their manuscripts in any ceremonies of this kind. For example, marriage was strictly forbidden during the *Vassavasa* or *Khau Wa* ceremony which was celebrated from the mid of July to the mid of October. Any individual who was found to violate this rule could be penalised and even made outcaste. Clan exogamy and tribal endogamy were the established rules of marriage. They avoided the marriage relationship with Mother's sister's daughter. In ancient times these rules of mate selection were strictly followed by the members. The breach of such rules was considered as an act of disrespecting their culture and often faced fines and punishments; however, in recent times, a greater flexibility has been granted to the new generations. Social support has been keen on any Tai Khamti marriage since the earliest periods. Family and clan members extended every possible help in course of organising such ceremonies. They would involve in negotiations and help the groom financially to pay the brideprice and even extended physical help in making arrangements.

The arranged marriage process had been elaborate involving negotiations between the two families involved. Specified individuals, known as *Kotoki* or *Chao Pat Chao* (messenger) acted as a middleman between the bride and groom and he was usually selected based on the fact that he couldn't be related to either of the families. By tradition, *Kotoki* was the first person to visit the bride's family along with a few female members from the groom's side. They carried a basket of sweets known as *Khong Paak* as a token of respect. After negotiations with the bride's parents and securing their approval the *Kotoki* revisited the bride's place to formally conduct the engagement or *Pong Phaak*. In course of this visit, the groom's family was required to carry a basket of betel nut, steamed rice (*Tupula Bhat*), and dry fish (*PA Haeng*). This ritual was followed by the practice of negotiating the brideprice or *Huka*. Traditionally the Tai Khamti followed a remarkable practice, where each of the members of the bride's family bore a specific price, and the marriage was finalised once the price was payed by the groom. However today such rigid norms have been diluted and the brideprice was practiced more in order to keep the tradition alive. The earliest Tai Khamti society used their indigenous numbers to arrive at the brideprice negotiations. The prevalent rate was one hundred and forty rupees or *Choilung*. In the present day, the groom's family would give a larger amount as a sign of affection and to reveal their economic status.

On the first day of the Tai Khamti arranged marriage, members from the groom's family visited the bride's place to bring the bride. Elaborate arrangements were made for food and merriment at the bride's place. The bride's maternal uncle played a vital role in course of the whole ceremony and he escorted her to the groom's place after receiving a formal invitation from the groom's members. Once the two parties arrived at the groom's place, they sat together to exchange material goods. Traditionally the groom's family had to provide a set of bullocks to the bride's side and in return, the bride's family offered the groom a cow. In recent times such negotiations were hardly existent and the ritual was carried out through cash transactions that ranged between ten to fifty thousand depending on the economic condition of the families involved. Even today, the bride used to go back to her parental home on the first day of the marriage and it was on the second day that the groom's family members revisited her to bring her back to her new home. On this day, a specified individual known as *Teiko* accompanied the groom's families and carried an umbrella, which was similar to one noticed in any Hindu caste marriage in India. At the bride's place, the newly married couple seek blessing from the *Bhikkus* (Monk) and the village elders. By tradition, the village elders tie a sacred band on the hands of the couple that signified their union. Such a practice was still prevalent in today's Khamti society and the members highly valued it. Once the rituals at the brides' place end, her family members accompanied her to the groom's place. In the earliest times, the bride was accompanied by her maternal uncle who would dress like a warrior or wear a golden crown. Today such rituals have been less visible; however, they still followed the manuscript of marriage or *Fi* to ascertain the time when the newly married couple could enter the groom's house. Modern traditions have crept into the Khamti marriage ceremonies wherein young girls from the bride's side would demand gifts from the groom before letting them enter their home. Such gifts were generally distributed in the form of cash. Respondents believed that these traditions were not indigenous and have been a result of assimilation with caste populations.

In the present day Tai Khamti society, marriage by elopement (*Pai Pin Hun*) has become the preferred form of marriage. Respondents agreed upon the fact that marriage by elopement was widely practiced as arranged marriages often consumed much time and effort and also bore high financial costs. In this type of marriage, traditional rituals and negotiations were hardly followed. In common the couples would elope and take shelter in one of their relatives' house and during this period the boy's parents were made aware. His parents had to take the consent of the girl's family regarding their marriage. After receiving the consent the boy would bring back the girl to his paternal home where a feast was organised to formally recognise their union. In many cases, the groom would arrange the feast based on his ease and financial condition and hence need not follow any specified norms. The flexibility involved in this kind of marriage had made it more preferable among the younger generation and gradually it has become a socially approved form.

Table 2: Marital Status of the Sample Group

Gender	Male	Female	Total
Married	143	125	268
Unmarried	42	36	78
Separated		1	1
Widow/Widower		3	3

Discussion

It is apparent from the discussion that with the advent of modernisation, the core institutions of marriage and family have seen a gradual change among the Tai Khamti. The transition from tradition to modernity is vital for the progress of any society and it is always difficult to ascertain

the benefits and shortcomings of both periods. In the Tai Khamti society, the spread of education has loosened the indigenous methods of child socialisation and formalised education and boarding schools have restricted their association with the society at large. However, with the spread of education women have become enthusiasts to pursue higher education and opt for the profession of their choices rather than being strictly involved in the household's activities. The division of labour has become flexible where both man and woman take up each other's jobs, yet the traditional norms and taboos associated with women's movement at times of pregnancy has remained rigid till today. As discussed in the introductory section, not all traits in a culture change simultaneous and few tend to maintain their original form. As time passed more and more individuals have taken up government jobs and in due course encounters with outsiders have led to the introduction of traditions that are not indigenous to the tribe. The practice of making negotiations at marriage has been reduced to cash transactions which were earlier carried out through material goods. The very nature of the marriage form has seen vital change and rigid customs associated with arranged marriage have been gradually replaced by marriages where the bride and groom could give prominence to their choices. There has been a shift in the mindset concerning marriage. In the earliest society, an unmarried girl was observed from the standpoint of purity and hence she was married off whether she liked it or not. However today the consent of the girl is duly considered and woman is free to select their mate. The economic condition plays a vital role in the institution of marriage in the present day Khamti society. Marriage ceremonies and gift-giving are determined by the financial status, unlike the traditional society where the roles of social norms were given dominance. The negotiations between the traditional and modernity are well exposed in the Tai Khamti society. Despite changes in family structures and roles, social support and clan ties are still well established which can be easily noticed in course of marriage ceremonies. The rapid spread of nuclear families has hardly affected the socially approved obligation towards elders and respect towards in-laws. The balance between tradition and modernity is composed of their social order. The tribe practiced polygamy and had vivid laws that governed divorce. In modern-day polygamous marriage has become nonexistent, yet the indigenous rules of divorce still hold strong within the society and members seek the help of the village council in crucial matters rather than consulting the modern judicial system. With time, the rules of inheritance have also seen noted changes. Traditionally men were the preferred heirs to the parental property and the married daughters were given a certain share as a token of love. In the present scenario, the tribe has regulated the passing down of parental property to their daughters due to growing instances of property annexation by outsiders through conducting marriage with the Tai Khamti girls. Today, marriage is still regarded as the basic and necessary unit to maintain the social order, and hence the frequency of individuals being unmarried by choice is relatively low. What have changed are the goals of marriage and it can be easily observed among the educated generation and the urban residents. The old mindset of having a larger family for households labour has been replaced by the growing preference for smaller families. In the case of marriage, the older notions of marriage for procreation and following the societal order have been overshadowed by marriages driven by the notions of self-fulfilment.

Conclusion

In the present times, human society has been experiencing the forces of globalisation which have brought in multiple changes within traditional societies and their cultural structures. Thus to address the survival of the local traditions it has become essential to initiate an in-depth discussion on the indigenous values and their modern forms. The present-day Tai Khamti society stands at the crossroads of traditional and modern cultures locked in a negotiation. Traditional practices like dormitories and child marriage have been abolished while elaborately arranged marriages

and joint families have been gradually minimised. Among the study group, the family, however, continues to be the basic social unit and follows patriarchy. But changes were also visible in the fields of inheritance, age of marriage, marriage norms, etc. The transition from tradition to modernity has introduced a better access to education allowing a woman to pursue her desired profession. Today choice is driven by self-satisfaction rather than governed by the rigid norms of the society that provides ease of life and flexibility to adjust with the changing times.

Pienyu (2017) states “Modernity implies rationality, liberal spirit and plurality of opinion, autonomy, secular ethics and respect for the private world of the individual. Such modern values are contradictory to the traditional rituals and practices involving the community at large and its customary rules”. In the case of the Tai Khamti, the course of negotiation between adopting the modern values and following the traditional norms, the members seemed to restrict any radical change. In other words, the nature of changes in the social order of Tai Khamti was more of a linear pattern keeping a balance between tradition and modernity. Taking the case of Tai Khamti, it has become essential to structure and formulate tools that can be applied to address and strengthen the indigenous traditions and enable them to survive in global times. The rich cultural heritage, either tangible or intangible in the form of music, folktales, rituals, etc can be utilised to establish a proper framework of analysis. An in-depth analysis of the core social institutions like family, marriage, religion can be beneficial to highlight the nature of continuity and change in social orders and address the connection between the tradition and modernity of different societies subjected to the forces of globalisation. The family has been recognised as a basic unit of any society and is a link between individuals and the community. Investigations on the family and marriage and the nature of their changes have been limited. Sonawat (2001) states, “There seems to be a general paucity of applied family research in India. Thus it is important to deliberate whether these studies can be considered applied in nature-applied research is oriented towards an outcome, rather than concepts and it begins on the premise of usefulness and application”. Based on her observation, it can be concluded that any research addressing the issues concerning family should be bound under a common purview which would help in influencing and formulating family planning policies in the coming periods.

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