

Decline of Sergamathang -Kothkin (Cross-Cousin Marriage) Among Sharchop Community in Eastern Bhutan: A Case Study of People visiting Deorali Gumpa, Gangtok, Sikkim, India

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Abstract: *The Sharchop (meaning “Easterner”), are an indo-mongoloid people who have migrated from Assam or possible from Burma during the past 1000 years. Van Driem (1993) indicates the Sharchop and the closely related aboriginal Monpa (Menba) are the descendants of the plurality ethnicity of bhutan and the principal pre-Tibetan (pre-Dzongkha) people of that country. The Sharchop comprises most of the population of eastern Bhutan. Although long the biggest single ethnic group in Bhutan, the Sharchop have largely assimilated into the Tibetan-Ngalop culture. The people of eastern bhutan claim their descents from “Lhasey Tsangma” Tibetan (Price) and speaking tshangkhal prefers cousin endogamy in which cross-cousin shares sexual relationships and marital union. Sergamathang, literary golden cousin is a Tsangla word for the daughter of one’s mother’s brother or father’s sister. The custom of cross-cousin marriage in Eastern Bhutan was Tibetan origin in nature. Most Sharchops follows Tibetan Buddhism with some elements of Bon. They traditionally practiced slash- burn and Tsheri agriculture, planning dry rice crops for three or four years until the soil is exhausted. This work tries to find out how this customs of cross-cousin originated, why people of that community prefer Cross-cousins marriages, and factor that led to decline of cross-cousin marriage which was popular once upon a time.*

Keywords: Sergamathang, Kothkin, tradition, social stigma, stages of marriage

1. Introduction

Although knowledge of prehistoric Bhutan has yet to emerge through archeological study, stone tools and weapons, remnants of large stone structures, and megaliths that may have been used for boundary markers or rituals provide evidence of civilization as early as 2000BC. (Rashmi, 2007)

Pre history evidences shows that the mountain valleys of Bhutan have been inhabited for several thousand years. The Bhutanese believe the Lhopu (a small tribe in southwest Bhutan who speak a Tibeto-Burma languages) to be the aboriginal inhabitants of the country, who were subsequently displaced by the arrival of Tibetans of Mongolian descents. The others consider the identification was too narrow, and suggest that various other tribes represent the aboriginal people. The Ngalops, the ethnic group that comprises the majority of the population concentrated in the central and western valley, are clearly related to Tibetans to the north sharing physical, linguistic and cultural traits, indicating that some unknown time in the past a significant migration of Tibetans arrived over the Himalayan mountain passes to established the base of the present population. Historian have theorized that the state of Lhomon literally (“south darkness”, or Monyul “Dark land” a reference to Monpa- the aboriginal people of Bhutan) may have existed between 500 BC and 600AD. (Rashmi, 2007)

After 17th century, bhutan¹ came to be known as Drukylul or the land of peaceful thunder dragon. ‘Druk’, a name is derived from the Drukpa Kagyu School, One of the Vijrayana Buddhism. Yul means “land of thunder dragon”, which can be seen on its national flag. According to historian Bhutan may have been derived from the Sanskrit word. Bhu –uttan, meaning “high land “or the head of India

when looked at the country from Indian plains. Another Sanskrit derivation Bhutsant means land which is the end of Tibet or the tail of Tibet when look down to the country from the Tibetan plateau. Capital of Bhutan is Thimphu. Bhutan is predominantly a Buddhist country. The seed of Buddhism was sown in Bhutan in the 17th century when the 33rd Tibetan king, Songtsen Gampo ordered the established a monasteries in the Himalayan region to subdue the evil the spirits and to spread Buddhism. Out of the 108 monasteries which were to be built, two major ones were built in Bhutan. Buddhism came to Bhutan in its original form when Guru Padmasambhava, popularly known as Guru Rinpoche or the precious master visited the country in 747 AD. Guru laid the foundation for the community of lamas (Buddhist teacher) in Bhutan, and firmly established the Vijrayana form of Buddhism imbued with tantric practices. In the succeeding two centuries Buddhism gained considerable adherents in the country. In 1616 when Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyal¹ a leader of Drukpa Kagyu school of Buddhism from Tibet came to bhutan and he taught Buddhism throughout western bhutan. So slowly it spread all over Bhutan. (Wangchuck, 2008)

The first writing on marriage appeared only in this century. Tenzin Dorji [2002] wrote a paper on a marriage custom of Brokpa, an ethnic group in the eastern Bhutan. His was

¹ Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyal was born at Ralung, Tibet as the son of Drukpa Linage and was enthroned as Eighteenth Drukpa or throne holder and “hereditary prince” of traditional Drukpa seat and estate of Ralung (Ralung monastery in Tibet). That time there was problem regarding the holding of throne in Ralung so he moved to western Bhutan. He builds so many monastery and Dzongs (1627 he build Simtokha Dzong). He unified Bhutan as a nation state, created a distinctly Bhutanese cultural identity.

followed by Lham Dorji's [2004] monograph on serga mathang (cross-cousin marriage custom) of eastern Bhutan, chung nyen (childhood engagement custom) of Brokpa, and ngen zhung, a typical marriage custom in central Bhutan where a man offers three years of labour as bride-service. (Dorji, 2010)

The purpose of this qualitative study based on interpretivism will be to explore the factors that helped towards decline of cross-cousin to marry in "Shar chop" community in eastern Bhutan.

2. Problem Statement

- a) Biologically unproductive
- b) Illegal (Royal court of law)
- c) Social stigma

2.1 Central Research Question

How marriage among the cross-cousins came into existence in *shar chop* community

Sub questions

What discourages cross-cousins to marry?

How does different generations perceive towards cross-cousins marriage?

3. Methodology

On the basis of the above objectives, this research is primarily based on the secondary sources of data collection. The research is also depending on primary data collection through narrative interview with the people (lamas who have knowledge's about the use of artifacts in the marriage traditions and on the basis of interview schedules. The respondents will be selected through random sampling. Unstructured questionnaire were also used during the interview.

4. Literature Review

Most important precondition before writing any research as a guideline for the researcher in the course of doing this work. A literature review is designed to identify related research, to set the current research project within a conceptual and theoretical context. You will be able to learn a lot from the literature review which helps you to determine what necessary tradeoffs are, help to find measurement instruments. And finally it helps you to anticipate common problems and you can use experience of other researchers to avoid unnecessary traps and pitfalls. Thus, for this I have gone through some of the articles and books which were helpful in understanding cross-cousin marriages in Bhutan among the Shar chop community (Eastern Bhutan)

According to Levi-Strauss's alliance theory, there are two different structural "models" of marriage exchange. Either the women of ego's group are offered "explicitly defined" by social institution. Levi-Strauss model try to explain for cross-cousin marriage, that is sister-exchange, dual organization and rules of exogamy. Marriage rules over the

times create the social structures, as marriages are primarily forged between groups and not just between the two individual involved. Because of these rules they are able to create relationship which must be balanced through the "repayment" of wives, that in this generation or in the next generation. Exogamy therefore helps in promoting intergroup alliance and serves to form social network in the society. Element structures are based on positive marriage rules that specify who a person must marry, while complex system specifies negative marriage rules (whom one must not marry).

The exchange within elementary structure is called generalized exchange by Levi-Strauss, which means man can only marry either his mother's brother's daughter (matrilateral cross-cousin) or his father's sister's daughter (patrilateral cross-cousin marriage). From structural perspectives, matrilateral cross-cousin marriage is superior to its patrilateral counterparts. He has proposed again third kind of structure between element and complex structures, which he called as semi- complex or the Crow- Omaha system. This structure contains so many negative marriage rules which are found amongst societies such as the Crow and Omaha native Indians in America. Descent theory and alliance theory are two different sides of the same coin: the former emphasizing bonds of consanguinity (kinship by blood), the later stressing bonds of affinity (kinship by law or choice) (Scheffler, H. 1970)

5. Case Study: Dani Marriage Patterns

Dani marriage patterns reflect a pervasive moiety structure and a system of polygyny based on bride wealth payments. Dani are being divided into two patrilineal divisions, or moieties, named Wida and Waiji, Wida man or women is forbidden to marry or have sexual relations with that of Wida members of the opposite sex and they must marry from the opposite moiety. Dani men are allowed to marry more than once wife but women are restricted to a single husband. Heider's carried out census 1963 and found significant amount of polygyny (adult males had two or more wives.

However from the women's perspectives the rates was much higher, as 70% of wives were involved in polygynous marriages. He have found that most multiple marriages involves two or three wives, that was one case in which it was recorded man was married to nine womens. Polygyny among the Dani is based on an unequal age of marriage between the sexes. Almost all the women are married shortly after puberty and may even perform a wedding ceremony before then, sexual relation are allowed only several years after the initial rites.

Men, however waits many years after maturity before marriages but allows almost all males to get married during the course of their lifetimes. Bride payments in Dani marriage are different. The Dani system of polygyny is supported by the process of accumulating wealth in different forms, like pigs, shells, and stone valuables and in turn, closely integrated into the male ranking or "Big man" system. Thus both wives and the objects though which they acquired stands as a sign of male status. But he have

mentioned that the actual exchange of bridge payments takes place on a complex form which is spread over a numbers of transactions between the husband's and wife's family during the course of marriages.

6. Possible Origins of Sergamathang Marriage Customs

Sex and marriage between man and his sister in Bhutan are regarded as incestuous, but relation between cross-cousin shows variation. Certain community prefers cross-cousin marriage while other community considers it a social taboo. The people of eastern bhutan claiming their descents from 'Lhasey Tsangma' (Tibetan Prince) and speaking Tshanglakha prefers cousin endogamy in which cross-cousin shares sexual relationships and marital union. Sergamathang, literary golden cousin is a Tsangla word for the daughter of one's mother's brother or father's sister. It suggests that marrying one's female cross-cousin (mathang) is like amassing a coveted gold. In contrarily, parallel cousins are regarded equal to children of the same parents and are not allowed to marry. This incest rule however holds for even the cross cousins in the western Bhutan. In other word people in western Bhutan they do not get married with their cross cousins as they consider as brothers and sisters. (Dorji, 2003)

7. Result and Discussion

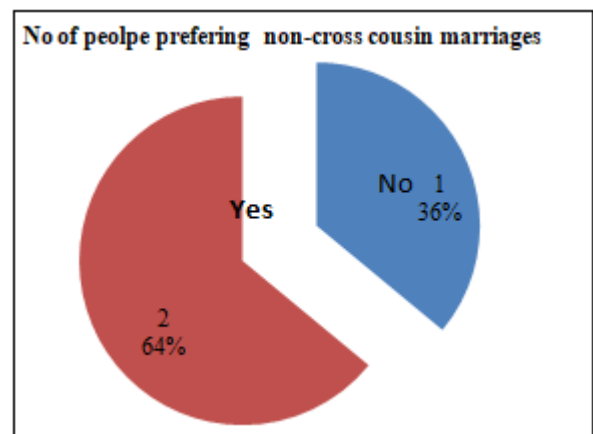
The custom of cross-cousin marriage in Eastern Bhutan was Tibetan origin in nature. The Tshangla people belief that they are the ancestors of prince Tsangma. According to one my respondent there was King Trisong Detsen in Tibet and he had son Mutitshenpo (also known as Mulitshenpo). He had three sons namely Ngadag Thrilrepa, Langdrama and Lhatshe tsangma. Langdarma was very different among the two, he was jealous of his brother; he wanted over throw his brother from the throne. So he made conspiracy with is secretary to kill his brother. So for that reason he asked his younger brother to go to Bhutan for religious tour. But secretary told him that people will not accept you. But despite his advice he finally decided to assassinate his brother. Langdrama declared himself as king of Tibet. Lhatse tsangma headed to bhutan and finally came to Paro (western bhutan) after so many months as there was no road so they had to walk crossing mountains and rivers. The news about his elder brother's assassination was given by the traders (because earlier there was trade between bhutan and Tibet). Because this reason he was forced to stay in Bhutan. Later people of Eastern Bhutan welcome him and he shifted and arrived at Jamkhar later this name was derived from him. But he told people that he will stay until they agreed to build palace/ house for him which is called Khar in their common dialect. So in order to fight against his brother his was in need of army so that reason he married so many wives. And after that he suggested his children to get married among the cross cousins. So because of this reason cross- cousin marriage is practiced in eastern Bhutan.

Rural people in eastern Bhutan particular about the matrimonial alliances, they favour cousin endogamy, which is a bonding factor for communal identity and social

organization. In a Sharchop society, marriages among the cross-cousins are considered as ideal and remain entangled in the web of social structure. The popularity of such alliances can be associated with various social, cultural and economic advantages. However there are many cases of non-cousin marriage showing diversion from the social custom. Such breach in custom can be attributed to many contingencies such as availability of cross-cousins, consideration of family advantages and increasing doubts cast on Sergamathang concepts as a social impediment on moral and educational background, and liberal ideas of love and individual choice. That whose spouse choice is influenced by new attitude prefers match selection based on romance, intimacy and compatibility. Social status, wealth and value of the immediate cousins no longer incline them to marry their cousins.

People who are in favour cross cousin marriages.

No. of people interviewed	50
No. of people preferring cross- cousin marriages	18
No. of people preferring non-cross- cousin marriages	32
Total	50



Data indicates that the number of cross and non-cross cousin marriages collected from 50 respondents visiting Deoral Gumpa. This shows that more number of people are in favour of non-cousins. From there I came to a conclusion that people who leave in remote villages, where there are no modern facilities like road, health, schools etc are more in favour of cross- cousin marriages. On other hand we can say that those who are isolated they adopt that. But there is more preference for non-cross cousin marriages in those area where is there is availability of basis modern amenities in the villages such as road, dispensaries, schools etc. which gave them more choice of selection of partners outside their villages. According to some of respondents they said that they prefer cross-cousin marriages because they cannot trust the people who are outside their villages. And another reason they pointed out that these days there is more divorce case because of more choice in selection of partners. Earlier they have to marry among their relatives so they always had to give a second thought before getting divorce as they their parents are brother's and sisters'. Another reason for preferring cross-cousin marriage among them is because of geographical isolation that they were facing as there was no modern amenities like what we have today. One of my respondent told that even among his family there was cross-cousin marriage and they came to realized that it is not good

to marry within their own cousins. This is because both my sister's child are abnormal.

There are no written and reliable oral sources explaining the historical beginning of this marital custom. The best choice now is to explain its origin based on assumptions. Tsangla people believe that their ancestors were the leaders of six ruling clans, the descents of prince Tsangma (g Tsangma), and the son of Tibetan king Thrisong Detsen (Khri lDe-Srong-brtsan). Possibly, this tradition began among these clans to uphold and perpetuate their lineages. Physically and cultural isolation of one village from another could have encouraged marriages within the same kinship group thereby evolving endogamy tradition. Absence of cousin endogamy in western Bhutan today may raise some doubts on if physical barriers had influenced such custom, but the social stigma imposed on cross-cousin marriages in these parts of the country seems to have been introduced recently. Terminologically, there is no restriction on cross cousin marriages. (Dorji, 2003)

A similar kin term Azha for both maternal uncle and father in-law in western Bhutan suggests cross cousin marriages was practices in the past. A saying in Dzongkha, "Azha gi Bhum Tshawo gi thop" (nephew is entitled to maternal uncle's daughter) shows that it existed once.

In the past, there were different noble families like Dung, Ponpo, Khoche and Choje holding social, economic and religious superiority over the commoners, marriage between them and the commoners were rare. The noble families married among them to uphold purity of their lineages. So, customs of Sergamathang marriage might have evolved from these noble families. (Dorji, 2003)

8. Forms of Cross Cousin Marriages

There are three forms of cross cousin marriages. In matrilineal cross cousins marriages a man marries his mother's sister's daughter. In patrilineal cross cousins marriage a man marries his father's sister's daughter. In bilateral cross cousin marriages, a man marries woman who is both a mother's brother's daughter and father's sister's daughter. This is considered as the best marriage among the three forms. However, it normally takes place in certain social situation of arranged marriage when two men exchange their sisters. Such marital relationship is common in pastoral societies of Brokpa of Merak and Sekteng. They believe that it would contribute towards increasing their herd size and remain their property within themselves. (Dorji, 2003)

The presence of cross cousin marriages in its various forms has been one of the special importances to the structuralist anthropologist, Claude Levi-Strauss, and his formulation of alliance theory (Levi-Strauss 1969). He views marriage as a form of exchange that simultaneously expresses differences between groups and unites them into coherent social system. He has mentioned three different forms of cross cousin marriages. Bilateral, Matrilineal and Patrilineal form of cross cousin marriages.

In Tshangla community mother's brother is term as Ajang Ngama Rinpoche meaning precious maternal uncle and his Nephews (Tshowo) have to please him by fulfilling his wish, which is normally achieved by marrying his daughter. Social convention is that marriages of Nephews must not be carried out in defiance of the wishes of their maternal uncles who are treated equal to the real parents. Going against their wishes is said to result in unhappy livelihood of the Nephews. Maternal uncle's preference for Nephew-daughter marriage therefore serves as set of rights and duties for Nephew to marry their cousins. Matrilocal rule that requires man to join his spouses' family as Magpa (husband) is common. This rule physically removes them from maternal uncles if Nephew marries the outsider, thereby depriving them of respect and services that they normally receive from their Nephew living close by. Some believe that Ajang therefore encourages marriages within one's kinship to ensure that his Tshowo are not isolated from him. The social obligation of Nephew's for their maternal uncles promotes mutual affective ties between them and this may be the cause for higher incidence of matrilineal cross-kin alliance. (Dorji, 2003)

9. Stages of Marriages

Marriages can be either be proposed by the parents of the boy, if is an arranged marriage, or the boy can propose directly to the girl he likes. If the girl accepts, the boy can inform his parents that he would like to marry. When the parents look for a bride, the questions that arise are; is the girl good in weaving? How good is she at house management? How hospitable she is to guests?

In eastern Bhutan among the Sharchop community the selection of partners is mostly decided by the parents and elders. According to one of respondent there are several stages involved during the marriages.

9.1 LONG CHANG: it is the term used by the Tibetans, in Sharchop community they popularly called as Phuenmay which means commonly known as to ask the hand of the girl. Before going they will decide which day and date is appropriate. The parents of groom go to see the bride's. Then there they will discuss with her parents. That time groom's parent takes Ara, meats etc according to their ability which is known as Tendrel-ga tang. If both the party agree to mutual concern and if they are willing to marry than they carry out the second steps.

9.2 TSEL- JUR/ (MATCHING OF HOROSCOPE): then groom's parents will go to Astrologer to see which day good to carry out marriage and see what groom and bride have to do before they gets married. They will also see whether their horoscope matches or not. This is called matching of kham. Astrologer will also decide what bridge is suppose to do as soon as she reach groom's house, what colors really suits them to leave their long life. According to their horoscope Astrologer will whether they have to leave before or afternoon.

In traditional Bhutanese society it is very important to see the converging signs between partners. Even in the business partnership converging signs of the members are considered

important. Modern Bhutanese may not give so much importance to this aspect. If the signs of both couples are matching, their life together will be lasting, peaceful, and prosperous. Therefore following suggestion is given;

- If both partners are Rat, they will have fewer children but enjoy abundant wealth
- If both are Ox they will live prosperous life
- If both are Tiger they will live a life of poverty
- If both are Hares it will be just a average life
- If both are Dragon the matching will be excellent
- If both are Snake, it will be just average
- If both are Horse they have just enough to live on
- If both are Sheep, they will have to ration their food carefully
- If both are Monkey, they life together will be excellent
- If both are Rooster they will have problem with children and wealth
- If both are Dogs they will have natural harmony for good life
- If both are Boars, they will have just enough to live on.

Among the marrying couples the opposing Los are the worst. In the case of other the ill fates will be compensated by converging signs of mystical marks and elements.

9.3 NAMA LALAY GA NONG: where groom goes to get bride. Bride is will accompanied by her friend called as Bagroo (helping hand) and that will be decide by Astrologer according to Lo, (age of the girl). Even the colour of horse that she rides or vehicle is told by the Astrologer. As soon as the *Nama (Bride)* arrives at her husband's (*groom*) house she is considered as important because all the responsibility will be given to her and they call her as Ngaka Abi. She will do or touch the things as directed by the Astrologer; she will be touching fire or water that depends according to her Kham and Lo.

9.4 NENGI TSENDREL: here they come together to celebrate ceremony. At this time both groom and bride will seat on black dhan (black carpet) if not on red one. The significance is that black colour don't change and it remain forever. That is usually for the long life. *Yudung* is written on the carpet that is used by the groom and bride. They say that as Dzurwa- Mawa-ga Tagtshen, which means no change in their relation. During this ceremony lama will perform several rites and rituals likes Tshgup nad Nanggup is being performed during that time. Tshgup is for long live and Nanggup is for the prosperity of property in their family (coming of wealth in the family). Both these rites and rituals performed at groom's house.

9.5 OFFERING OF KHARDAR: this is the end of the marriages ceremony. Khaddar is first offered by lamas, parents and followed by others according to the rank. At the end of the day serve feat to guests.

BRIDE PRICE: in eastern Bhutan the concept of bride price or dowry is not prevalent. But some daughter is given with cash and kind depending up on the parent's willingness. Sometimes parent's gives cattle's and other belongings. If she is having enough wealth and property in husband house they will not give and vice-versa.

10. Factors Responsible for Decline of Cross-Cousin Marriages

According to one of respondent are several factors responsible for decline of cross-cousin marriages in eastern Bhutan. The preferences of selection of mates have changed with the passage of time and space.

- 1) *Industrialization:* The cross-cousin marriage was most suited in agricultural families. Bhutan today is on the way to industrialization, with the establishment of new factories in urban areas workers from the villages migrate to the cities and towns for better opportunities and find their mates there.
- 2) *Extension of transport and communications:* As we know that there were difficulties of transport and communication in ancient times which compelled them to marry within villages (endogamous marriage). Now with the advent of transport and communication they came out of isolation and made them easier to travel around the world.
- 3) *Impact of the West:* Bhutan has seen greatly influenced in social outlook by Western thought and ideology. Our modern laws relating to marriage and divorce have been enacted on western pattern. Our education is entirely foreign in outlook and approach. We have begun to look at family as a partnership not as sacrament. Our views especially of the young men and women on sex and family relations have undergone a tremendous change. The influence of individualism has made deep inroads in the Bhutanese outlook.
- 4) *Medical reasoning:* Medical doctors and other laboratory evidence show that children born out of cross-cousin marriage are producing physically and mentally defective children than that of non-cousins.
- 5) *Role of government:* After knowing the fact, government has now started prohibiting cross-cousin marriages. They even consider marriage among relative is against the morality. They encourage exogamous marriage rather than endogamy.
- 6) *Role of education:* Education plays important role in shaping the ideology of an individual in the society at large. The young and educated people they always prefer non-cousin marriage or exogamous marriages. They feel that the customs of cross-cousin marriage is an out dated fashion which brings shame on them.

11. Theoretical Explanation

Functionalist perspectives on Cross-Cousin Marriage

Functionalist seeks to describe the different parts of the society and their relationship through the organic analogy. The organic analogy compared the different parts of a society to the organs of a living organism. The organism was able to live, reproduce and function through the organized system of its several parts and organs, like biological organism, a society was able to maintain its solidarity through different parts interacting together. In other words we can say that different institutions are interdependent to each other. Institution such as religion, kinship, marriages, family and the economy were the organs and individuals were the cells in this social organism. Functionalist analyses examine the social significance of the phenomena that is

function they serve to maintain the society as a whole. Malinowski suggested that individuals have physiological needs (reproduction, food, shelter) and that social institutions exist to meet these needs. There are also culturally derived needs and four basic "instrumental needs" (economics, social control, education, and political organization), that requires institutional devices. Each institution has personal, a charter, a set of norms or rules, activities, material apparatus (technology), and a function. Malinowski argued that uniform psychological responses are correlates of physiological needs. He argued that satisfaction of these needs transformed the cultural instrumental activity into an acquired drive through psychological reinforcement.

From Functionalist view cross-cousin marriages helps to maintain kinship solidarity. Cross cousin marriage among the kins will avoid the family conflicts and directly or indirectly help in having the sense of well feeling among them. It also helps in overcoming family crises whenever it is necessary. Whenever there is marriages among the cousins that means property will be circulating within their family which in other words helps in increasing solidarity. Malinowski has seen functionalism from individualistic perspective or we can say that they are doing this types of marriages for individual satisfaction. He have seen functionalism from micro perspectives. Malinowski regarded social structures, institutions and values are regarded as functional responses created to satisfy individual physiological needs such as hunger, shelter etc. and such needs of individual's leads to the creation of cultural elements and social institutions which in turn guides our needs and desires. But in contrast to that Redcliff Brown has seen functionalism from macro perspectives. He said that they do cross-cousin marriages for societal needs as a whole in spite of individual needs. He has mentioned that how joking and avoidance relationship play important role in maintaining solidarity in the family. Relationship between brother in-law and sister in-law is that of joking and relation between father in-law and daughter in-law is that of avoidance to restrict the sexual behavior between the two so as to bring down the conflict within the family. If these rules are not there in the society, because of sexual potential it leads to family conflict and that leads to destruction of solidarity in the family. Because of this interaction it led to emotion. So this helps in reducing crimes in the society as such.

Levi-struss has seen kinship as universal principles which regulate the society as a whole. Kinship is like grammatical principles which are interrelated to each other, without one we cannot understand the whole. In kinship words like father, mother, wife, husband, uncle etc. are like grammatical principles which govern the kinship structure. So kinship is rules that govern the society because without this kinship structure we cannot understand what society is actually, how society is functioning. Role performance and role interaction is impossible without kinship structure. Every society has different unique methods to social structure. Cross-cousin marriage is good for Sharcho community but it may be bad for other community like Ngalop and Nepalese, this is what Durkheim called as normal and pathological. He mentioned that what may be

considered pathological in a particular society may be normal for others.

12. Conclusion

Although this marriage customs was dominated in the past, it is more or less in retreat now. Modern legal concepts and medical reasons are already raising doubts among the people against these traditional values. Legal precepts contrived recently to prohibit incestuous marriages of any form; including cross-cousins marriages might induce moral questions against close kin alliances as more and more rural people became aware of such rule. Medical reasoning has produced that close kin marriages has the greater chance of producing physically and mentally defective children as comparing to that of marriages among the non-cousins. They found that children of non-cousin are physically and mentally doing better than that of kin marriages which encouraged people to shun blood marriages. One of my respondent told that even among his family there was cross-cousin marriage and they came to realized that it is not good to marry within their own cousins. This is because both my sister's child are abnormal. Most of the educated people started considering "Sergamathang" customs as outmoded and moral shame with dire medical outcomes. Now even the government of Bhutan is trying its level best to stop kin marriages as this has brought so much negative impacts on the individual. Now because of modern education system educated people always prefer marriages based mutual affection, love story and romance. The prevalence of cross cousin marriages may drop even more significantly when such medical questions became clear and when educated people make aware of the consequence of the cross-cousin marriages among the rural societies.

Because of the development of transport and communication, education, health and other facilities in the country. The trend of rural-urban migration, particularly among the younger generations to seek better opportunities in urban areas has brought departure to this matrimonial customs. This is because the prospects of meeting their cousin in urban area are less. Earlier they were practicing because of isolation; there were no facilities as such to them. There are more opportunities to seek mates of their own choice in the urban areas. Gradually the opening of isolates villages to towns and other villages, and easy mobility for the rural people made it easier to seek marriages outside one's social and physical boundaries. Thereby decreasing cases of cross-cousin marriages that are common in closed and isolated communities.

However, today, with the Bhutanese having travelled far and wide and because of impact of education, urbanization and other socio-economic factors. We have witness cultural diffusion that has taken place in Bhutanese marriage customs. There was change from the cousin endogamy to cousin exogamy one. From arranged marriage to marriage by elopement (love marriage). And finally from polyandry to monogamy exemplifies the changes that have occurred in the society through the passage of time and from generation to generation.

Sergamathang custom is still practiced to varying degree in eastern Bhutan. People are increasingly of view that marriages based on individual choice are better and lasting. The idea of cousin marriage is not so compelling now with the trend of rural migration, rapid orientation of rural people to new ideas, and transformation of a traditional joint family system into a nucleated ones. Socio-economic advantages related to cross cousin marriages are significant enough for smaller social groups to keep this tradition going but the outside influences are strong enough to determine the existence of this custom.

13. Limitation of Study

Although the above procedures were helpful for the collection of data and information yet there was some limitation while collecting the information and data under field study. The main hurdles during my field study were as follows.

- 1) There were so much of communication problems during my interview.
- 2) As most of my respondents were illiterate and monks so they were not so aware about the topic that I have chosen.
- 3) Especially the female respondents were hesitating to speak frankly, which resulted problem in collection of information.
- 4) Since there was no ample secondary data for the topic that I have chosen.
- 5) Time constraint.

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