



Research Paper

Marriage among *Pangals* in Manipur: Ideals and Practices

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ABSTRACT: Muslims across the globe have been baselessly believed to have practiced marriage homogenously as they are strictly bound to the basic tenets of Islam embodied in the *Sahria'h*. However, this paper makes an attempt to explore the ideal and real practices of marriage among *Pangal* community, a Muslim community largely inhabiting in north-east part of India. The study found marriage among *Pangals* as composed of two aspects, one is the Islamic and the other is the one not related to Islam but which are related to customs and traditions and being shaped by immediate environment i.e., accultured from *Meitei's* customs. So, the marriage customs and patterns among people of this community is a complex affair against the Islamic prescriptions of simple affair of performance of *nikah* and payment of *mehr*.

KEYWORDS: Marriage, Muslims, *Pangals*, *Nikah*, Manipur and *Meitei/Meetei*

I. INTRODUCTION

Marriage is one of the important social institutions which provides a legal sanction to sexual relationship between an adult male and female and consequently, initiates the formation of family, another important social institution, which forms the basic unit of society. Every society has its own ways of legalizing marriage of couples which comprise of religious rituals, local customs and traditions. These rituals or customs are usually performed publicly so that the society can stand witness to the marital relationship.

Muslims in India also have their own rituals and procedures followed for solemnizing marriage and legalizing marital relationship, most aspects of which are based on *Sharia'h* (Islamic law) derived from Quran and *Hadiths*¹. Among the many misconceptions about Muslims in India because of the belief or claim that they are being controlled greatly by Islamic law, polygyny is one, the practice of which has been criticised by many as it victimizes and makes women weak and defenseless. These critics blame Islam for ruling polygyny as valid among Muslims although the claim may not hold true empirically. These baseless beliefs and claims pop up because of the paucity of dependable sociological data about social institutions, religious beliefs and attitudes and values of Muslims in India (Ahmad, 1976). This tendency to describe Muslim social institutions in terms of stated Islamic ideals to accept the ideal position as a statement of fact without bothering to look at the empirical reality can be corrected by considerable empirical research focusing on various aspects of several Muslim communities scattered in different parts of the country. It is against this backdrop that the present study makes an attempt to examine the ideals of marriage prescribed in *Sharia'h* and the actual practices, patterns and nature of marriage among a Muslim community called by the name '*Pangals*' or '*Meitei-Pangals*' inhabiting in Manipur, a north-eastern state of India. The study also tries to demonstrate how the customs and practices of marriage of *Meitei*² community impact upon the structure and functioning of various institutions of marriage among *Pangal* community since socio-cultural life including the customs and practices related to marriage are a result of interaction of the community with the geography, ecology and history of the region which has a decisive influence.

II. PANGALS – THE COMMUNITY

Pangals who are also known by another name '*Meitei-Pangals*' is one of the ethnic groups in Manipur primarily residing in valley regions in modern-day Manipur. They practice Islam as their religion and speak Manipuri as their primary language. So, they are basically Manipuri speaking Muslims (Khan, 2012). Muslims including *Pangals* and others who follow Islam constitute 8.4 per cent of the total population of Manipur³. People of this ethnic group mostly reside in the villages of the valley districts in Manipur albeit, small

localities in Imphal city like Golapti, Hatta and Mantripukhri have also been increasingly concentrated by people belonging to this community.

Pangals in Manipur are grouped into *shageis* (clans) which are today numbered at more than fifty and the members of a *shagei* are related by blood. A *shagei* is composed of many families. The social life of *Pangals* is more or less the same with *Meiteis/Meeteis*; what distinguishes *Pangals* from *Meiteis/Meeties* is the religion⁴ they follow. *Pangals* are also organised into *singlup*, a closely knit group of the members of a *shagei or shageis*, for the purpose of executing various activities on auspicious occasions like wedding or death rituals or a feast. The members of a *singlup* are bound together in mutual assistance, and feed and house kins and relatives coming from distant areas (Shah,1994).. Although *Shari'ah* doesn't prohibit, *Pangals* refrain from marrying within the same *shagei* as such relationship is viewed as taboo, and the Kings (of Manipur) also forbade all such practices and punished the violators. Every *Pangal* village is like a united body having the spirit of mutual help in ups and downs of life on the occasions like marriage, where every villager, in an endeavour to help the family in which wedding is taking place, contributes in cash and kind, besides helping in making the marriage arrangements (Choudhury,1989).

III. METHODS AND MATERIALS

The present study uses both secondary and primary sources of data. Laws related to marriage in Islam form the Secondary data and collected from sources like books, journals, encyclopaedias of Islam as well as Quran and *Hadiths* on the basis of which jurists make the Muslim Personal Law(MPL). Primary data were collected from *Pangals* residing in the state of Manipur, India using interview technique to ascertain the actual customs and traditions related to marriage practised by them and also to find out to what extent the marriage practices of this community conform to or deviate from the ideals of marriage prescribed in *Sharia'h*.

IV. MARRIAGE IN ISLAM

Why do people get married? The answers may be many stressing on different aspects like emotional, religious, psychological and economic etc. Islam does not stress on only one aspect. It suggests that marriage is the most powerful shield against the allurements of sight; and the source of psychological satisfaction for both man and woman(Ashraf, 2006). In Islam, marriage is not only a union for the satisfaction of sexual needs, but essentially a social contract with wide and varied responsibilities and duties but which can be broken any time if the relationship of the husband and the wife becomes so toxic that they can no longer live together in peace and happiness (Khan,2010). An unhappy marriage in which there is constant quarrel, indeed, serves no purpose. Thus, the goal of marriage is to enjoy each other, become a pious family and a sound society. The Quran specifically refers to marriage as '*Mithaqun Gahalitun*' which means a strong agreement (Navaid,2009). So, marriage in Islam is purely a contractual agreement between the husband and the wife (wives), devoid of the sacramental significance found in other religions like Hinduism(Madan, 1989). The significance of the civil contract of marriage in Islam is an authorization of sexual intercourse and the procreation of children between husband and wife, as well as fulfilment of human nature as created by God.

Marriage in one form or another is practiced in all societies by all communities. Islam is a strong advocate of marriage and considers it as a moral safeguard as well as social building block through which families are established which in turn supply members for the continuity of our society. Sexual intercourse outside marriage is prohibited in Islam. In Islam, contrary to Christianity, marriage is not antithetic to the love for and worship of God(Ashraf, 2006). Instead of an obstacle, marriage is regarded as an asset in acquiring spiritual perfection. Thus, Islam neither condemns marriage nor does it allows sexual relation freely. It urges us to control and regulate our desires, and marriage acts as an outlet for physical needs and regulates it as well. Considering the benefits and merits of marriage, Islam recommends everyone to get married as one of the *hadiths* says "marriage is my way and *Sunnah*⁵ and those who does not act upon my *Sunnah* is not my follower." Yet another *Hadith* says "marry so your number increases." As of another view marriage in Islam is obligatory except for some individuals(Khan, 2010). Thus, there are different views among different sects⁶ and schools of thought⁷ of Islam in relation to marriage ranging from recommendatory to obligatory but depending upon the financial and physical health of individuals. For instance, marriage is obligatory if a man has the means to easily pay *mehr*⁸, and maintain a wife and children and is healthy.

4.1 Prohibition in marriage

Islam leaves no space for any loophole in the procedure for marriage as it provides definite limit of who to marry and who not to marry. Under *Sharia'h*, marriages between men and women standing in a certain relationship to one another are prohibited. These prohibited degrees are either of a permanent nature or are temporary. The permanently prohibited females for a man on marriage prescribed in Islam include his mother, his step-mother, his grandmother, his daughter, his sister (whether full, consanguine or uterine), his father's sister, his mother's sister, his brother's daughter, his foster mother, his foster mother's sister, his foster sister, his

sister's daughter, his wife's mother, his step-daughter (i.e., a daughter by a former husband of a woman has married if the marriage has been consummated) and his real son's wife (Ashraf, 2006 & Khan, 2010).

Other prohibitions prescribed in Islam are (*Ibid.*)–

1. A man must not marry a woman who is already married. However, this impediment is removed immediately if the marriage is dissolved either by the death of her former husband, or by divorce followed by completion of the period of 'iddat'⁹.
2. A man must not marry a woman during her 'iddat.
3. A Muslim woman may not marry a non-Muslim man.

4.2 Marriage proposal

There are certain procedures or ways of sending marriage proposal in Islam as sanctioned by *Sharia'h*. To begin with, as and when a man wants to marry, has satisfied himself about a woman, he sends proposal of marriage either to the woman or her parents or guardians and other men are forbidden to make a similar proposal to the same woman till he gives up the matter or has been rejected (Ashraf, 2006). The marriage proposal after its acceptance is tied to an agreement with the stipulated *mehr* through the social contract called *nikah*¹⁰. The marriage is publicized by the presence of two witnesses in case of *Sunni* law and the solemnization of the marriage with a grant feast called *walimah*¹¹ in Arabic hosted by the groom's side. A man has the liberty to choose his wife so does a woman to choose her husband and it is only after both the prospecting groom and bride give their consent to *nikah* the marriage becomes valid.

4.3 Polygyny

In Islam, polygyny which provides that a man may marry more than one wife at a time, is permitted although not encouraged provided the number of wives never exceeds four at any particular time and the men should do justice to all their wives (Husain & Hasnian, 1988). One of the verses of the holy Quran which says, "You will never be able to do justice among women" delineates why Islam sanctions polygyny but doesn't encourage doing so. Thus, Islam doesn't like the idea of a man marrying more than one wife, except during war time or other circumstances when the number of women becomes too great and many of them can find no husband. As matter of fact, the permission to marry more than one wife was given at a time when the Muslims were engaged in fighting a long series of wars with the non-believers of Islam in Mecca. Therefore polygyny is not a rule but an exception (Khan, 2010). This is contrary to the misconceptions many people have that Islam encourages a Muslim man to have more than one wife.

Thus, marriage in Islam is an institution which holds a great importance. Islam recommends Muslim men to marry with the attainment of puberty or whenever the individuals feel ready, financially and emotionally. Marriage according to Islam is to be performed in a simple way fulfilling five conditions- (i) consent of the bride and the groom to the *nikah* (ii) performance of *nikah* (iii) payment of *mehr* (iv) two witnesses at the time of *nikah* with at least one man (in case of *Sunni* only) (v) solemnisation of marriage or *walimah* feast to publicise the marriage (it should never be kept secret as this can lead to suspicion and troubles within the community). However, several Muslim communities in India practice numerous traditions and customs starting from the sending of marriage proposal to post-wedding ceremonies. They seem to follow many rules and customs beside the Islamic regulations related to marriage.

4.4 Nikah

Nikah which is the first ceremony of marriage in Islam is the matrimonial contract between a bride and a bridegroom with the payment of stipulated *mehr* according to *Sharia'h*. It is performed either in bride's residence or groom's or mosque¹². For the performance of *nikah*, the prospecting bride and groom are asked if they accept this new relationship, and on the reply being given affirmatively, the *nikah* ceremony is properly concluded. After this *khutba* (sermon) consisting of verses from holy Quran is recited by the priest in the presence of friends and relatives of both the parties before announcing the marriage itself. At the conclusion of sermon, announcement is made that such and such a man and such and such a woman have accepted each other as husband and wife. It is recommended that some sweets are distributed before the audience disperses.

4.5 Mehr

Mehr is a free gift to wife by husband which is either a sum of money or other form of property like jewellery or any other valuable asset to which the wife becomes entitled by marriage (Ashraf, 2006 & Khan, 2010). It is regarded as the provision, according to the status of the wife, for the upkeep of the house and for the provision of the dowry (Husain & Hasnian, 1988). Islam has made *mehr* legally obligatory on the part of the husband to safeguard and strengthen the economic position of women after marriage. There is no fixed amount as such to be paid as *mehr* and its upto the parties concerned as it can be as low as possible or as high as parties may desire (Navaid, 2009).

4.6 Walimah

Walimah is one of the factors contributing to the publicity of marriage as per requirement of Islam. It is a feast given by the husband after the *nikah*. *Walimah* is essentially interchangeable with English terms such as : wedding reception or celebration. Similarly, *walimah* is generally interchangeable with other languages/cultural terms that essentially mean to assemble for the purposes of celebrating a marriage. Scholars have different view on what the correct time of *walimah* is. The timing varies by culture and opinion. There is consensus among scholars that a *walimah* is the meal provided after *nikah*. However, they differ as to the exact time that the *walimah* should be observed. According to *Maliki ullemas*, it is preferable to provide this feast when the couple present in the occasion, with actual consummation occurring after the *walimah*. The *Hanafi ullemas* have preferred the view that a *walimah* should be held after consummation of the *nikah*. Although, it is permissible for a man to host a *walimah* immediately after his *nikah*, before consummation of the marriage yet, to host the *walimah* on the day after the marriage has been consummated is actually the proper sunnah procedure since all the *Walimahs* of prophet Mohammad were conducted in this manner(Ashraf, 2006).

V. PRACTICE OF MARRIAGE AMONG PANGALS

Marriage and family life is an aspect of *Pangal* community which is influenced, to a larger extent, by *Meitei* society as in the past they came into contact with this majority local community and the process of social interaction started resulting into cultural diffusion and adaptation. Moreover, *Pangals* are the products of mixed marriage that took place between Muslim men and *Meitei* women. Hence, some of the culture, customs and traditions of *Meitei* are incorporated in the social life of *Pangals* during social interaction. The adoption of some of the customs and traditions of *Meities* related to marriage by *Pangals* is obvious and some of these are contrary to the preaching of Islam. Thus, understanding the practice of marriage among *Pangals* in Manipur requires examining the influence of Islam on the one hand and the pervasive influence of *Meitei* culture on the other hand. These two factors have acted steadily throughout centuries and consequently *Pangals* emerged as a distinct Muslim community different from its counterpart in other parts of the country and the world. So, in this section, I would look into the actual marriage customs and traditions that are being practised by *Pangals* and bring out the customs that abide by the norms prescribed in *Sharia'h* and the customs which had been acculturated from *Meiteis*.

5.1 Marriage proposal

Although *Sharia'h* prescribes norms for sending marriage proposal, *Pangal* community has its own way of doing it. The prospecting groom's party sends the proposal through family friends or relatives of the prospecting bride's family. As a practice, when one becomes the age to get married, the parents start looking and extracting information about the potential partners available in the village or neighbouring localities through kinsmen residing in the village. However, in contrary to the prescription of *Sharia'h*, sending of proposal to the same prospecting bride by other men is acceptable among *Pangals*. Once there is a signal that the proposal will be accepted, a group of people of prospecting groom's family mostly comprising of the mother, father's sisters, father's brothers' wives and sisters-in-law or married sisters if any pays a visit with prior intimation to the prospecting bride's family about the visit and carrying delicious food items like apple, orange, coconut, varieties of sweet items, betel leaf and nuts etc. They are greeted at the prospecting bride's house by a similar group of the family.

In regards to preference of choice of mate, common people and many scholars around the world are of the view that Muslims prefer cross- cousin and parallel-cousin as their potential marriage partner, for this type of marriage is adaptive within the Islamic context (Korotayev,2000; Eglar, 1965 & Rosenfled, 1975). Under the Islamic law as discussed earlier, marriage between man and woman standing in a certain relationship to one another is prohibited. Except the women prohibited to marry permanently and temporarily, a Muslim man can marry any woman irrespective of caste, creed, national, race etc. However, among *Pangals* parallel cousin marriage is considered as taboo, while cross- cousin marriage occur in exceptional cases when the prospecting couple fall in love and elope or arranged by parents of both sides. Reasons for this prohibition lie on the dwelling pattern of married brothers on the one side and the influence of *Meitei's* traditions and norms on the other side. As a practice, in Manipur among almost all communities, after getting married the youngest son stays in the parental house while his elder brothers construct new houses beside his, sometimes with common courtyard. The children of these brothers are brought up as if of a family which leads them to treat each other as brothers and sisters. Thus, marriage with a father's brother's daughter (FBD) would be perceived as equivalent to marriage with a sister (Korotayev *et. al.*, 1990). The prohibition is further extended to clan members as *Pangal* community practise clan exogamy. They perceive that all members of a clan are descendants of a common ancestor which leads them to recognise all members of their clan as incestuous to intermarry with, like FBD. This practice of clan exogamy was acculturated from *Meiteis'* practice of (*yek thoknaba*) prohibition of marriage between individuals of opposite sex belonging to certain *yumnak* (clan).

5.2 Elopement

Marriage not after formal matching but elopement (*Chenba*) is widely practised as a tradition and socially accepted, although unwanted and discouraged since recent decades, among *Pangals*¹³. Elopement generally takes place after the prospecting couple have been seeing each other for quite some time and decide to get married, irrespective of whether their parents agree to their decision or not. Sometimes, elopement results from the disapproval of their relationship by parents of either of the sides or both. So, to escape from being separated, the two lovers elope and remain in hiding somewhere until parents of both sides nod to their marriage. Since elopement is an un-Islamic act, *nikah* is performed before they consummate the relationship to make it Islamic. In many cases, when parents of either or both sides don't agree to their relationship *nikah* is performed according to Islamic law by hiring a priest or *Imam* in some place where they are hiding¹⁴ without their parents being informed. Generally, parents of both sides, avoiding confrontations, recognize and agree to their *nikah*, except in some cases, and talks are started between the parents of the prospective bride and the groom for fixing a date of marriage ceremony marking the union of the couple. Moreover, in Manipur the separation of daughter after she has been eloped is perceived as the decrease of her credentials for marriage. So, in order to prevent from being reduced to the status of separated or divorced, parents have no ways but to agree to the *nikah*. At times, elopement of married women also takes place among *Pangals* although is considered as a serious offence and monetary penalty is imposed to the man who resort to this act. However, incidences of elopement of both unmarried and married women among *Pangals* have come down as a result of the efforts of *Tablighi Jama'at* movement.

5.3 Polygyny

Although the *Sharia'h* permits a Muslim man (does not make obligatory) to marry four wives at a time, the practice of polygyny is rare among *Pangals* and the extent of practice is practically more or less the same with *Meiteis* (Ahmed, 2011). The factors for becoming polygynist are social like inability of the first wife to bear children, uncooperative behaviour of the first wife which forces the husband to marry a second wife and obviously a love affair of the husband which ends up in second marriage. Thus, there is nothing speciality of religion in matters of polygyny, although very rare, among *Pangals*.

5.4 Marriage Payments

Among the marriage payments discussed by anthropologists, dower (*mehr*) is the only one prescribed by *Sharia'h* as obligatory on the part of the groom to give to the prospecting wife (wives) the amount¹⁵ of which is usually fixed before *nikah*. Usually among *Pangals*, *mehr* is paid in full or partial in gold as groom's family give jewellery like ear-rings, necklace, finger-rings and bangles made of gold to the bride before *nikah* or the solemnisation of *nikah*. However, *mehr* may not be paid depending upon the agreement between the two families although the amount of *mehr* is fixed and mentioned in the *nikahnama* (marriage contract document) which is to be paid in case the marriage is annulled by pronouncing divorce. In Manipur, *mehr*¹⁶ is not paid mostly in two types of matches, firstly the match where the groom is from a family of modest economic but high social status, and the bride from a family of high economic but low social status; and secondly the match where both the groom and the bride are from low economic and social status family. To affect such a marriage, the bride's family offer the groom that they will not claim any *mehr*. In the first type of match, in addition to the marriage contract without payment of *mehr*, the bride's family offer the groom the incentive of a large marriage gifts (*awunpot*). The functions of these gifts in this form of marriage are obvious. The groom acquires wealth; the bride acquires a husband of high prestige, without, however, - since the dowry accompanies her- suffering a decrement in her standard of living; and the bride's parents acquire social, to add to their high economic, prestige.

Beside *mehr*, *Pangal* community practises the tradition of giving another marriage payment called 'bride price' which they called by the name '*nupi maral*'. It is the payment given before the solemnisation of marriage to the bride's parents by the groom's parents the amount of which is usually calculated in terms of gold quantity but paid in cash. The bride's parents have the full right to use this amount for buying marriage gifts and in preparing other arrangements for marriage ceremony. Because of this nature of usage of the amount and to avoid negative connotation involved in 'bride price', today they replace the term by '*luhong sel*' the literal meaning of which is 'money for marriage ceremony'. In case of elopement, before the *nikah* is performed, the father of the groom along with some respected elders from his locality (*mohalla*) pay a visit and sit together with the father of the bride along with a similar group from his village at the residence of the latter for negotiating the amount of *mehr* as well as 'bride price'. If agreement is achieved, the 'bride price' can then be paid in instalments- mostly half at the time of the *nikah* and the other half before the marriage ceremony ensuring that it will be made use in preparing marriage gifts for the bride. *Mehr* amount is also agreed, to be given in the form of gold jewellery before the ceremony so that the bride can decorate herself in neck, ears and fingers as necklace, earrings and rings respectively. In case the bride's parents don't agree to the relationship

while the prospecting bride has the determination to marry the boy with whom she eloped, the amount of 'bride price' demanded may be very high which may be in tenths of lakhs of rupees as a sign of anger and a means to discourage the prospecting groom and his parents to go ahead with the relationship. But, when the relationship couldn't be broken, the anger comes down so as the 'bride price' and hence wedding ceremony takes place. However, as in case of *mehr*, 'bride price' may not be demanded by the bride family if both the families have the highest likings to the marriage; or the groom's family is poor but liked by the bride's parents; or both the groom's and bride's families are rich.

5.5 Miscellaneous customs

The traditions and customs associated with marriage among *Pangals* can be divided into those before and after performance of *nikah*. Engagement (*Mou Thiba Changba*) (Ahmed, 2011) is a ceremony where groom's parents party¹⁷ along with varieties of eatables well packed come to the bride's residence on a date fixed by mutual agreement between the two parties. On this day, groom's parents bring gifts usually garments of different types like *lehenga*¹⁸, *rani phi*¹⁹, *salwar suits*²⁰, *mayek naibi phanek*²¹, shoes and others for the bride. Gold jewellery like necklace, ear-rings, bangles and finger-rings are also brought by the groom's parents to decorate the bride on the day. In case of elopement, the news of elopement is given to the parents of the woman through the tradition of '*nupi haidokpa chatpa*' in which the father of the prospecting groom along with two-three elderly men from the locality visit the house of the woman's parents as soon as possible and discuss the amount of *mehr* and 'bride price' if the woman's parents agreed to the relationship. In the next step, date of marriage ceremony is fixed through the tradition of '*luhongba numit tamba*' in which parents of the prospecting groom along with some relatives pay a visit to the prospecting bride's house to discuss and come up with a mutually agreed date for wedding ceremony.

Among other customs related with marriage practised by *Pangals*, moonlight dance (*thabal chongba*) is one which is a slow folk dance performed by the bride and her peers (*gaiya*) at her residence after the feast provided in the evening before the wedding day, although the wider practice of this tradition has come down due to rapid process of Islamisation of *Pangals'* culture by the *Tablighi Jama'at* movement and the local priest (*Ullemas*). Another unique customs of *Pangals* is the special feast arranged at the residence of both the groom and the bride in the morning hours ranging from 9 to 10.30 o'clock on the day of wedding. Friends and relatives are invited separately by the bride's and the groom's family to attend to the feast arranged by respective inviters. And in the afternoon, groom along his peers (*gaiya*) and relatives start the procession which in local dialect is termed as '*Bor* (groom) *Shanba*' to bring the bride to his home. But, in the case of *walimah* the arrangement of feast is done only at the residence of the groom where invitees are from both sides.

At the time of solemnising marriage, villagers, particularly of the same *shagei* (clan) help the groom's or bride's family by contributing either in cash or kind like clothes, utensils set, furniture, and many other items the bride is supposed to carry as dowry in her in-laws home. The name of the persons along with the items or amount of the cash they contributed are recorded by the receivers, for they have to give back the same amount of money or item at the time of marriage of the family of the contributors. So, among *Pangal* community, a marriage doesn't become a family occasion but a village occasion where all the villagers actively involve themselves in the preparation and the performance of various marriage customs and traditions.

After few days of the marriage, the visit of the bride along with her husband to her paternal home as a custom which they called '*hinam hanba*' is practiced usually on the third day after the marriage. The newlywed couple are also invited to specially prepared meals by relatives and friends, the custom of which is called '*Chakouba*', in days, weeks, or months that followed the marriage. This custom serves as an opportunity for the newly married couple to interact and get familiar with one another.

VI. CONCLUSION

Based on the discussions made, marriage among *Pangals* can be seen as composed of two aspects, one is the Islamic and the other is the one not related to Islam. From the *sharia'h* point of view, they satisfy the Islamic requirements of performance of *nikah*, fixing of *mehr*, prohibited degree of marriage, presence of two witnesses at the time of performance of *nikah*. However, in addition to the prohibition of marriage with people coming in certain relationship, they abide by many customary restrictions like marrying between parallel-cousins and clan members. Thus, many marriage customs which sometimes overshadow the importance attached to Islamic practices are practiced extensively by *Pangals* in Manipur. These customs and traditions have mostly been shaped by the immediate environment as the customs like dowry (*awunpot*), superstitious beliefs regarding the fixing of marriage date, '*hinam hanba*', elopement (*chenba*), practice of clan exogamy and the prohibition of parallel cousin marriage; the marriage attires like white turban (*koiyet*) for groom and the *potloi* (a special attire for bride) have been accultured from *Meitei's* customs. So, the marriage customs and patterns among *Pangals* is a complex affair against the Islamic prescriptions of simple affair of performance of *nikah* and payment of *mehr*.

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Notes:

- ¹ Sayings of Prophet Mohammad peace be upon him (PBUH).
- ² *Meitei* is a majority local community inhabiting together with *Pangals* in valley region of Manipur.
- ³ Census of India, (Registrar General and Census Commissioner of India,2011).
- ⁴ *Meiteis/Meeteis* follow either Hinduism or *Sanamahism* or Christianity since recent times.
- ⁵ Example of Prophet Mohammad PBUH as incorporated in the recognized *Hadiths*.
- ⁶ In Islam, there are two sects i.e., *Sunni* and *Shia*.
- ⁷ There are four schools of thought in *Sunni* Islam law i.e., *Hanafi*, *Malki*, *Shafii* and *Hanbali*.
- ⁸ Amount of money or kind to be paid by the groom to the bride at the time of marriage which remain her property as security in the marriage and she can spend as she wishes.
- ⁹ In Islam, *Iddat* is a period which is usually three months a woman must observe after the death of her husband or after a divorce during which she cannot marry a man.
- ¹⁰ It is an Arabic term which has been invariably translated as marriage.
- ¹¹ '*Walimah*' is derived from '*awlam*', which in literal translation means "to assemble" and is used to describe an assembly or a party celebrating major life events. In Islam *walimah* is so called because it is an occasion where the bride and the groom assemble and unite. *Walimah* is essentially interchangeable with English terms such as: wedding reception or celebration. Similarly, *walimah* is generally interchangeable with other languages/cultural terms that essentially mean to assemble for the purposes of celebrating a marriage.
- ¹² Performance of *nikah* in mosque is considered as *Sunnah*. For details see Shahid Ashraf, *Family Culture in Islam*. (New Delhi: Anmol Publications Pvt. Ltd.,2006).
- ¹³ Farooque Ahmed, *Manipuri Muslims: Historical Perspective 615-2000 CE*, (New Delhi: Pharos Media,2011). He claims that 80 per cent of marriage Muslims in Manipur is through Elopement.
- ¹⁴ When the prospective couple faces objections from their parents, they generally hide in a house of a relative or friend. For details see Ahmed (2011), p-99; Ahmed, Farooque (2011), p-82-84.
- ¹⁵ Amount of *mehr* among *Pangals* is usually calculated in terms of the quantity of gold in the unit of *tolla*.
- ¹⁶ *Pangals* in Manipur pronounce *Mehr* as *mohorna*.
- ¹⁷ The prospecting groom is not a part of the visiting team.
- ¹⁸ A form of ankle-length skirt worn by women in South Asia that is often elaborately embroidered with beads, shisha mirror, or other ornaments or a two-piece garment consisting of this skirt and a choli.

- ¹⁹ *Rani phi* which means “cloth of Rani” is a traditional cloth usually bright and vibrant featuring vivid colours and bold motifs used to wrap around the upper body by women in Manipur.
- ²⁰ A pair of loose-fitting trousers tapering to a narrow fit around ankles, worn in south Asia, often with a kameez.
- ²¹ It is a variant of *phanek* which is just like a sarong or a wrap-around skirt, hand-woven on loin looms using cotton, silk and other synthetic fabrics.