

## CHANGING NOTIONS OF MARRIAGE PAYMENTS AMONG THE SAVARA, ANDHRA PRADESH

SHARMA VENKATESWARA BHALLAMUDI\*

### ABSTRACT

Widespread prevalence of divorces and remarriages of both men and women is reported among the tribal communities in and outside India. However, significant attention on marriage payments in such cases has not been paid. The scholars have extensively dealt with the bride price paid to the parents or to the kin of the bride at the time of her first marriage and the significance of such a payment has been extensively dealt with. However, it is not clear whether transactions of cash and kind during remarriages are considered as bride-price on par with the first marriage. This paper especially focuses on the payments made by Savara men if they acquire mates through remarriage of married women. It primarily attempts to examine the extent to which the payments made by the man to the former husband (or his kinsmen) of his new wife in such cases is similar to or different from the bride-price paid at the time of a woman's first marriage. Secondly, the paper examines the frequency of such marriages among the Savara, the changing notions surrounding such payments and their impacts on the Savara social organisation, particularly the position of women in it.

**Keywords:** *Divorce, remarriage, bride price, oli, moganalu.*

History reveals that in societies all over the world, wherever marriages are arranged by the kin of the groom and bride they have been accompanied by some kind of payments at some point (Sambe et al 2013). The two principal variants of these marriage payments are bride-price (payment made by the groom's kin to bride's kin) and dowry (payment made by the bride's kin to groom's kin). Either or both of them are found in many contemporary societies and among different social groups in the same society (Anderson 2007). Scholars have noted that certain sections of some societies have gradually shifted from bride-price to dowry and

---

\* Professor, Department of Anthropology, University of Hyderabad, Hyderabad. E-mail: sharmabhallamudi@gmail.com



have analysed the factors that contributed to this shift (Bradford 1985; Hughes 1985; Anderson 2007).

These systems of marriage payments have attracted the attention of economists, demographers and scholars of other social science disciplines (Anderson 2007; Ekong 1992; Bhat et al 1999). However, anthropological studies appear to have paid greater attention to bride-price or bride wealth than to dowry and have examined various aspects of the issue from different perspectives. For instance, anthropologists have produced accounts on the frequency with which this cultural practice has occurred in different societies (Murdock 1967); how payments of bride-price have varied in different societies (Mulder 1995, Dekker and Hans 2002); social and demographic features associated with the bride-price (Murdock 1967, Goody 1973); and the criteria followed for fixing the bride-price (Kressler 1977, Bianquis 1996) along with other aspects like who receives the payment of the bride-price and in which phases it is paid.

Murdock (1967) found that bride-price is present in two-thirds of all preindustrial societies. Bride-price or bride wealth as the mechanism of validation of customary marriages is reported to be a common practice in many African societies (Goody 1973) as well as Indian communities (Vidyarthi and Rai 1976, Mann 1996, Bhasin 2007). Anthropologists have also discussed bride-price in relation to the legality of marriage (Anyebe 1985; Radcliffe-Brown 1987). In addition, anthropological focus has sought to explain why this cultural practice exists in certain societies. Ethnographic material from different societies was used to explore the probable functions of this practice. Such studies highlighted the role bride-price plays in stabilising the family alliance (Wegh 2003). It was assumed that it “operated beneficially to give formal recognition to marriages and protect wives against abuse, stabilise the partnership and to join the two families together” (Sambe et al 2013: 65). There are differing opinions on the actual route of such stabilisation. While some argue that the purpose of this custom is to compensate the bride's kin for the loss of a working member, others rationalise bride-price as the compensation for the loss of the bride's child-bearing potential. Bride-price is also seen as something that helps furnish the home; that which gives value to the woman in her husband's house and brings honour to the bride and her family (Anderson 2007). However, Leach (1961) counter argues in regard to the functional explanation of unilateral descent and the stabilising role of the bride-price based on his field work among the Kachin sub-tribes in the Burmese highlands. Kressel (1977) has more strongly argued with several explanations as to why the explanations cited earlier are not tenable for more than one reason. Many scholars have addressed issues related to bride-price or bride wealth specific to the tribal communities of India in different contexts (Berreman, 1962, Kusum Kumar 1973, Randeria and Visaria 1984, Das 1989, Fudong 2018). These studies apprise us on the variations existing in the practice of bride-price as well as the cultural explanations for the practice provided by the members of the communities along

with other aspects. The continuity and change in regards to the practice of bride-price is another area of interest to anthropologists (Mann 1996).

Though literature on the acquisition of mates in tribal societies indicates a significant prevalence of divorces and remarriages of both men and women, attention on marriage payments in such cases has been limited. It is not clear whether transactions of cash and kind during remarriages are considered as bride-price on par with the first marriage. This paper especially focuses on the payments made by a Savara man if he acquires a mate through a remarriage of a married woman. It primarily attempts to examine the extent to which the payments made by the man to the former husband (or his kinsmen) of his new wife in such cases is similar to or different from the bride-price paid at the time of a woman's first marriage. Secondly, the paper examines the frequency of such marriages among the Savara, the changing notions surrounding such payments and their impacts on the Savara social organisation, particularly the position of women in it. The theoretical implications of this paper are in regard to the understanding of the institution of marriage, family and kinship and also for a critical examination of how the women's freedom is confronted in a subtle way through a gradual shift to new moral connotations in case of divorce and marriage.

#### **THE SAVARA OF ANDHRA PRADESH, INDIA: BRIEF ACCOUNT OF DISTRIBUTION, FAMILY AND MARRIAGE**

The Savara tribe predominantly inhabit Srikakulam and Vizianagaram districts of Andhra Pradesh as well as the neighbouring state of Odisha in India. Their presence is also recorded in the states of Madhya Pradesh, West Bengal, Tripura, Bihar and Assam. Having a total population of 1,22,979, Savara is one of the 35 tribal communities that are categorised as Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group (PvTG) in Andhra Pradesh. Savaras have their own language which belongs to the Kol-Munda group of Austro-Asiatic family. Grieson (1906) holds that it is closely related to Kharia and Juang, although it differs from them in some important characteristics.

The Savara social organisation is based on two important principles – *biranda* and *guda*. *Biranda* refers to the domestic unit, constituted by all members living together, usually belonging to 2–3 different generations. *Guda* refers to Savara settlement consisting of 10–30 *birinda* (Sharma 1991). In the absence of named lineages and clans, Savaras identify only two groups as far as marriage is considered: marriageable and non-marriageable groups. In this context, marriageable group consists of people with whom one cannot trace common ancestry along the male line. Since it is difficult to trace common ancestry in the absence of named lineages and clans, they consider it safe and appropriate to marry those that definitely belong to marriageable category. Thus, Father's Sister's

Daughter (FZD), Mother's Brother's Daughter (MBD), and Sister's Daughter (ZD) who belong to marriageable category are preferred spouses (Suryanarayana 1978<sup>1</sup>). This is particularly true in the case of all marriages by negotiation, called *fankoi* in Savara. If, for any reason, cross cousin marriage is not possible, a thorough verification is made to establish that the girl does indeed belong to marriageable category by examining the marriages of the girl's cousins and aunts with men who are related to the potential groom as brothers and uncles (Sharma 2018)

An enduring union of a man and a woman for the purpose of sexual gratification is termed *sirrung* (marriage) by the Savara. This union may or may not have social recognition depending on whether any norms are violated. In certain cases, social recognition for a live-in relationship of a man and woman may come only after their elopement is legitimised by the members of the community. Marriage may take place after a formal negotiation by the family elders or it may be post facto approved after a boy and girl elope with mutual consent.

The rules of marriage are simple: a) endogamy at the level of tribe; b) Marriage with man/woman in marriageable category of kin alone (not in *kakun-kakin* relationship<sup>2</sup>). Thus, the union between a man and a woman that does not constitute *ersi* (incestuous relationship) gets social approval, irrespective of whether it is arranged by the parents of the groom and the bride or not. Polygyny is also accepted and sometimes receives the support of first wife if she is barren or suffers from some illness as well as when the couple has had no male child. Widow remarriage is very much socially accepted among the Savaras. In fact, levirate and sororate are prescriptive. The levirate marriages in some cases result in polygamous families too when the woman marries her deceased husband's brother who is already married.<sup>3</sup>

#### **OLI AND MOGANALU MARRIAGES**

The Savara men as well as women do not hesitate to reveal whether their marriage was a *moganalupelli* or *olipelli*. *Olipelli* refers to the first marriage of a woman, which is normally an arranged marriage through negotiations. For the man whom she is marrying, it may not necessarily be the first marriage. If it is not his first marriage as well, it is normally not an arranged marriage. Marriage negotiations, if any, are initiated by the parents of the groom who visit the girl's parents and offer liquor. If the girl's parents accept the liquor then or in subsequent

<sup>1</sup> Suryanarayana (1978) observed that there is a shift from Mundari system of kinship to Dravidian system in case of Savaras.

<sup>2</sup> Brother-sister relationship. For details of who is considered to be what in this relationship, see Sharma (2018).

<sup>3</sup> Among the Savara, the woman need not marry the younger brother to the deceased husband in a levirate marriage.

visits, the proposal is considered accepted. Subsequently, the girl's parents are given a token bride-price, which is called '*oli*'. Thus, the marriage of a man or woman negotiated through the payment of *oli* is called as *olipelli*. If a married woman, for any reason, desires to break her marriage and marry another man of her liking, the new husband has to make a marriage payment, referred to as *moganal*, to the former husband of the woman. Such a marriage based on the payment of *moganal* amount is called *moganalupelli*.

The norms in regard to the payment of *oli* and *moganal* are however not that simple. The actual practice of these customs includes diverse interpretations depending on specific cases. For instance, in case of a proposal for marriage by negotiation, the parents of the girl may accept it with or without the consent of their daughter. If the girl disagrees with the decision of her father and elopes with another boy of her liking before the earlier agreed upon marriage, it is considered '*tappu*' (misdeed). The parents of the boy that she was supposed to marry can demand a sort of compensation amount, which is also treated as *moganal*. In another context, if an unmarried woman elopes with a man who is already married, there may not be any payment of *oli*. In the case of a village studied, a woman, Ramulamma, married Eenathu who had earlier married her elder sister and had had two children from this marriage. In this case of sororal polygamy, the payment of *oli* for Ramulamma's marriage was not insisted upon. The marriage of a man (married or unmarried) with a widowed woman may require *moganal* payment if she had earlier refused a levirate marriage.

Payments of *moganal* as such are not always limited to 'elopement' of a man and woman with mutual consent to marry. Often, a woman who desires to end her engagement or marriage with a man may simply 'escape' from her parent's home or her own home (if she is married) and just join the family of the person she wishes to marry. In such cases, her intentions to marry someone in that family is 'discovered' by her unpreparedness to go back to her parents' family or to her home. Of course this is more of a social drama as the intentions of the woman, particularly if it is a case of breaking of engagement, are made known to the boy and his parents in some way or the other, either by the girl herself or by her close kin.

While less frequent, polygamy is socially approved among the Savara, even though the number of spouses do not normally exceed two in such cases. In case of plural marriage of a man, at least one marriage is *moganalupelli*. This is because his age at the time of second marriage may usually be 30–40 years, and hence, reducing the likelihood to obtain an *olipilla* (virgin girl). Serial monogamy is, however, not infrequent among the Savaras. The data obtained from 197 persons of 56 households in the year 1984<sup>4</sup> with regard to the number of times each person got married shows that 29.1% of men and 35.1% of women had married twice. A

---

<sup>4</sup> Data obtained in 1994 was verified in my subsequent field visits in 2012 and 2018 to the same Savara settlement. Out of the 197 persons, 169 are still surviving as on December 2019. Even if data pertaining to these living subjects is taken into consideration, the trends are same.

significant percentage (5.0%) also reported to have married more than twice. The data indicates that a second marriage is common for the Savaras. All 197 persons, for whom data on marriage was obtained, married a combined 261 times. Sex-specific analysis shows that women marry for the second time more often than the men. In the survey, a total of 103 men were reported to have married 143 times altogether. On the other hand, 94 women reported to have gotten married 138 times. The frequency of divorce and remarriage of women among the Savara thus indicated that marriage by *moganalu* was frequent.

### ***OLI AND MOGANALU PAYMENTS***

The payment of *oli* is more of a symbolic act among the Savaras. It is usually a cash payment of Rs. 5 to Rs. 100, received by the father of the girl. The amount is of course paid in the presence of the lineal kinsmen of the girl's father, and there is hardly any negotiation in regards to the amount to be paid. The parents of the boy offer the payment according to their affordability and also ready availability of cash. In most cases, as the boy's father pays *oli* to the family of his sister or brother-in law, who are the preferred alliance, it is transacted in a mirthful manner.

In contrast, the payment of *moganalu* is not a hassle free transaction. It involves a lot of social drama, charged atmosphere, show of strength, negotiations, moral blame game, investment of time and energy and also some determination to settle the 'issue'. In case of elopement of a married woman with a man (married or unmarried), they usually elope to a predetermined place, usually to a distant kin of the man living in a nearby village. Soon, the news of elopement spreads in the village of the man and woman, and the exact place where they are living temporarily will also be known to their kinsmen in about three to seven days. The husband of the woman and his family members discuss the issue but there will be little publicity about this from their side. The days following this would see the husband openly expressing his psychological acceptance of the divorce by way of repeated verbal abuses to the woman, her parents, and brothers in a drunken state. These hostile emotions would recede as days pass by.

Meanwhile, after living together for some time, the eloped couple would receive social acceptance as husband and wife in the village where they are currently living. This, along with assurances that aggression on the part of the former husband and his kinsmen has abated, may prompt the new couple to return to the man's native village. Of course, this time lapse is also dependent on whether or not the man is already married. In case the man was married to another woman earlier, ensuring the acceptance of the first wife to his polygamy and overcoming the resistance from her family members to his second marriage also influence the delay in return. Once they decide to return to the man's native village, some of his

kin may give them shelter for some time while the new couple make preparations for setting up their own house.

During the same time, the action for obtaining *moganalū* is initiated by the woman's former husband. His parents initiate discussions with their lineal kinsmen and members of the *guda* to fix a date to visit the parents of the new husband and demand *moganalū*. Once the date is fixed, it is conveyed to the family members of the current husband through some common kin. On the appointed day, the former husband and his family members mobilise as many members of their *guda* as possible and go to the village where the couple is currently living. Once they reach the village, the group will wait outside the village and send messages to the family members of the woman. After making them wait for considerable time, the new husband's family members reach where the former husband is waiting along with members of his kingroup and *guda*. Here, there is some show of strength from both sides; some members of the former husband's group make provocative remarks in regard to the conduct and character of the woman and her family members. That marks the beginning of arguments and counter arguments from the members of both the groups in regard to the 'justification' for the woman to elope and also on how the expenses incurred by the woman's former's husband's family at the time of her previous marriage can be compensated. The social drama enacted by members of both parties in this context is directed towards the expression of *guda* solidarity and reflects unwillingness by either party to accept the proposals made for the settlement of the issue. Soon, the elderly members take control of the situation and settle for some 'reasonable' *moganalū* amount to be paid to the woman's former husband<sup>5</sup>.

The amount of *moganalū* is often fixed based on the marriage expenses. However, this may not always be the only consideration. Along with the character of the woman's former husband, his relationship with any other woman and his intentions regarding a polygamous marriage, factors like whom did the woman marry subsequently may also be matters of consideration. For instance, if the woman marries a close lineal kin of the former husband, the *moganalū* amount may be reduced and may not even be demanded. Out of the total *moganalū* amount received by the parents of the former husband of the woman, substantial portion would be spent on serving liquor to the members who accompanied the group to demand *moganalū*. Very often, the new husband's *biranda* also arranges a feast in their village to legitimise the woman's remarriage with a member of their *biranda*. The feast, equivalent to a marriage, is arranged at any time, sometimes early or as late as after the birth of the children. In any case this is considered as a debt.

---

<sup>5</sup> Some cases where the settlements could not be made in one day and cases where the parties failed to reach a compromise, and cases in police stations were also reported in the field.

### **MOGANALU AND LINEAGE SOLIDARITY**

Among the Savaras, the solidarity of lineages is expressed on many occasions, and life cycle rituals offer a good opportunity for the expression and maintenance of such solidarity. Attending the ritual without fail and contributing their services for different kinds of works relating to the organisation of such events are two ways in which lifecycle rituals affirm the cohesiveness of lineages. Often, the heads of *birandas* who are related by a known/demonstrable common descent feel that they should collectively raise funds for meeting the expenditure of life cycle rituals conducted in any of their *birandas*. Such reciprocal exchanges of labour and food are common among *birandas* of the same lineage.

In case of *moganalupelli*, the lineage members of the jilted husband display their lineage solidarity in demanding a high *moganal* amount. Thus, at the occasion of *moganal* settlement, at least one member from each *biranda* whose heads trace a common descent with the man is demanding *moganal* payment joins the group. The members of the lineage of the new husband try to demonstrate their unity by attempting to drive down the *moganal* amount as low as possible as well as by uniting to raise the required fund for the payment of *moganal*. A woman joining their *biranda*, which would ensure her procreative capacity to grow the lineage, is seen as a matter of pride by the lineage members.

### **THE COST OF MOGANALU: THEN AND NOW**

*Moganal* marriages have always been considered to be expensive by the Savaras. During the 1980s, while the bride-price used to be Rs. 5 to Rs. 100, *moganal* payments ranged between Rs. 3,000 to Rs. 10,000 now. The average payment made by 20 Savara men for their *moganal* marriage during that period was around Rs. 4,500. The women remarried mostly due to disagreements with their former husband's polygamy. As most women entered *moganal* marriages with closely related members of their former husband then, the actual amount of *moganal* paid is slightly less. The following cases collected in my fieldwork in 1984 in a Savara village illustrate this practice.

Buddadu's wife, Laxmi eloped and married Gangaiah, who was earlier married to Bodamma. Bodamma had married Ganganiah, after divorcing Lambothu because of his second marriage with Bangaramma. Bangaramma married Lambothu who was a cousin of her former husband. Sanyasi when he (Sanyasi and Bangaramma's first husband) married his elder brother's wife in a levirate marriage. Buddadu too remarried Chinammi who lost her husband a few months prior to Laxmi's divorce from Buddadu.

Levirate marriages, particularly when a young woman is widowed by the death of her husband, have reduced among the Savara now. A considerable



decrease can also be seen in the practice of polygamy now. The restudy of a Savara village after 30 years by the present author in 2012 showed a 50% reduction in polygamy. This also resulted in fewer cases of remarriages of women on account of divorces, disagreements about co-wife status and the subsequent cases of serial monogamy for both men and women. Recent cases show that widowed and divorced Savara women now preferred marriages with members outside the lineage of her former husband. In such cases, there is also a preference to marry men of other *guda*. This trend has led to an increase in *moganal* payment.

#### CURRENT NOTIONS OF *OLI* AND *MOGANALU*

The payment of *oli* is being continued even today in the case of marriages by negotiation, though it remains symbolic as far as the actual payment is concerned. There are however, some changes in regard to feasts and exchange of gifts related to arranged marriages. The current practice is that the marriage is arranged at the groom's place. The marriage is attended by all the members of the groom's *guda*, their relatives living near and far and also friends from the neighbouring villages. The bride's kin are cordially welcomed at the time of marriage, and courtesies are extended to impress them. The feast, liquor and entertainment programmes may cost up to one lakh in many cases. Unlike earlier times, the groom's relatives visit the bride's place the next day for a similar feast. Thus, economic burden on the bride's side has also increased. Furthermore, there is an increase in the trend of *sari*, which includes presentation of gifts to the bride at the time of marriage by her parents/brothers. Gifts like fridge, TV, motor bike and other household items and furnishings are also part of gifts these days. There is some element of public display involved in this practice, as all members of the groom's *guda* know who has given which gift. There are no compulsions in regard to these gifts, yet it depends on the economic status of the bride's as well as groom's family.

The perception of *moganal* by the members of the community has also changed over time. *Moganal* payments are now being considered as *tappu* (misdeed) payments or *danda* (fines). The amount has considerably been increased in many *gudas* over the years. During my fieldwork in December 2018, at least three cases were prominently talked and reported to me in many villages in Kusumipanchayat<sup>6</sup>. In these three cases of *moganalupelli*, reported over the last one and half years, the *moganal* payment ranged from Rs. 1.5 lakh to Rs. 3.5 lakh. Upon enquiring why these three cases were so widely known to the members of many villages, I was told that it is precisely because the amount is extraordinarily high that they were well known. The discussions on these cases with men of different age groups also revealed a general concern about this trend of change.

<sup>6</sup> Panchayat is an administrative unit comprising about 15-20 villages in tribal areas.

Data shows that the average *moganal* amount paid by 24 men during the last three years was around Rs. 15,000, ranging from Rs. 8000 to Rs. 24,000<sup>7</sup>.

### DISCUSSION

The current trends in regard to *olipelli* reveal a general inclination among the Savara community to imitate the practices of the Hindu caste groups in the region. The gifts being offered to the bride clearly reflect this. The menu of the feasts arranged by both groom's side and bride's side, the distribution of printed wedding invitation cards, and the musical programmes on the evening of the marriage day at the groom's place are some other trends in this direction. Of course not every *olipelli* is organised on the same scale. However, over all, the expenditure on *olipelli* has increased as minimum expectations have increased and there is a perceived association between the honour and pride of the *guda* and extra expenditure on feast and gifts. The Savaras have also benefitted from the shift to horticulture, which was introduced about three decades ago in this area by Government agencies. The savings from horticulture has helped many Savara families to diversify their economies and acquire land from Jatapu men for settled cultivation in plains either by sale or mortgage. The improved economic status and the increased cash flow in their economy have hence enabled many Savara families in meeting the increased expenditures on marriage as well as other life cycle rituals.

The bride-price paid in the *olipelli* has very little to do with the stability of marriage. Since polygamy is socially approved, the men need not formally divorce their wives even if they wish to remarry. Theoretically, the man's polygamy does not result in the dissolution of marriage; it is his wife's remarriage on account of his polygamy that is leading to instability in marriages. As long as the woman continues to feel that she and her children are being supported by her husband, she too finds no reason to break her marriage. In the absence of such a feeling of spousal support, women do not hesitate to break the marriage and remarry with a hope to get a husband who can assure her security and care. Consequently, the high frequency of divorces initiated by women do not reflect any low value placed on marriage itself as the high frequency of remarriages of divorced and widowed women among the Savara reflects the value placed by the women on marriage for a meaningful social life, particularly during their old age. Divorce and remarriage at the same time are not happy experiences as the predominant desire is to have one husband for the rest of her life. Stable marriages are possible when the man feels the moral obligation for taking care of his wife with – to use the phrases used by

---

<sup>7</sup> The data in this regard was collected in four *gudas* in Kusumi *Panchayat* and the marriages referred to the cases which they could recollect and they included marriages of their kin in their *gudas* and also of their close kin living in other *gudas*.

the informants – “love”, “respect”, “dignity”, “independence” and “not inconveniencing her with too much labour”. The gifts and marriage expenses incurred by the bride’s parents and family members is thus thought to act as a moral pressure on the groom to ensure a stable marriage, which essentially also means monogamy for the man. The changes in Savara marriages are towards the prevention of divorce and remarriage.

As far as women are concerned, marriage results in provision of labour, sexual and procreative services to the husband’s *biranda*. The bride-price is paid as a symbol of conferring the rights over these services to the husband and his *biranda*. The prescription of levirate marriage is to ensure that the man enjoys these rights through some social adjustment as long as he is alive.

The *moganalū* amount paid in cases of the remarriage of a married woman is considered both as marriage payment as well as *danda* (punishment) simultaneously. It is a marriage payment similar to *oli* because the rights over the woman acquired by the first husband through payment of *oli* are transferred to the new husband. The levirate prescription is an automatic transfer of these rights of a woman’s first husband to his representative in the same *biranda*. In case the woman marries a close kin of her former husband, the *moganalū* amount is reduced as she still provides some services to her former husband’s lineage members if not to his own *biranda*. After the *moganalū* payment is received, the former husband of the woman of course loses his right to a levirate marriage acquired at the time of marriage through *oli* payment. The children born to the woman from her remarriage belong to the lineage of the current husband. The former husband(s) of the woman has(ve) no claim over them. The children born to her of her former husband(s) similarly belong to him/them and the current husband has no claim over them.

*Moganalū* payment is considered as ‘compensation’ by Elwin (1955) in his work on Savara religion. Thus he writes, “a woman who leaves her husband must do so for another man, not for other reasons. The new husband must, then, compensate the previous husband” (1958: 58). This observation perhaps lays emphasis on the sexual services of the woman to a man. Savara men marry in order for certain rights and services besides of course the sexual services from the women so married. Marriage confers certain rights to the man, to his *biranda* and to his *guda*. These rights acquired through the marriage are however not permanent as the woman can break the marriage and choose another man of her community to provide similar services. But this right of woman to break a marriage is exercised only when she finds a man who is prepared to exercise his right to marry her with due payments to her former husband.

Thus, *Moganalū* is a tool for legitimising the marriage as well as establishing that the children born to the woman after remarriage belong to his lineage. Precisely because of this, paternity is recognised only after *moganalū* payment, though in some cases after post-facto approval. This recognition is necessary for him to pass on his property to the children born of this new marriage. This recognition is necessary for the man too, if he has to depend on his children during

his old age or if he is unfortunately, chronically ill or disabled later in life. These considerations establish the similarity between *oli* and *moganalalu* payments.

It is difficult to comment on how *moganalalu* payment is a *danda* (fine/compensation) in Savara society though such a view is expressed widely in current times. If it is to be considered as *danda*, the question is how a man is found guilty and fined when the marriage is completely on the initiative of a woman and with no proof of any active support of the man with whom she finally eloped. The woman may be blamed for her 'immoral' act, but the fine is levied on the man with whom she eloped. The paradox is that a man is morally correct in not refusing to a married woman's wish to elope with him, but he is also responsible for payment of fine on her behalf for her misconduct.

The *moganalalu* payment shares the features of *danda* (fine) paid for the resolution of disputes in the Savara community by the traditional political functionaries. *Moganalalu*, from this perspective, is to settle the dispute in regard to the allegations made by a woman on her husband. No Savara man readily accepts divorce even when he has plans to marry another woman for any reason. The claim of divorce by a woman for any reason except the sexual impotence of the man is not entertained easily by the community. In fact, on some occasions, the woman when childless makes such serious allegation of sexual impotency of the husband. This allegation complicates the man's prospects of a remarriage after the divorce from the current wife is accepted. Sometimes, when the man is already in a relationship with another woman that he is planning to remarry, he may accept the dissolution of marriage but make false allegations that his wife has eloped with gold ornaments purchased with his savings. Consequently, there are claims and counter claims, bitter arguments, threats, involvement of political functionaries of Savara society and arbitration in case of *moganalalu* payments. In some difficult cases, the dispute is taken to police for settlement.

#### CHANGING NOTIONS OF MOGANALU PAYMENT

The three cases reported in December 2018 wherein the *moganalalu* amount exceeded 1.5 Lakh and interviews with many Savara men do indicate that there is a perceptible change in the notion of *moganalalu*. There is an effort in the Savara society to treat elopement of married or engaged women as cases of grave *tappu* (sin). There is a move to discourage this by imposing large fines on men who are part of such a misdeed. It is a paradox that in many *moganalalu* marriages, the men are not blamed as they did not take the initiative. In fact, it is also said that if a woman escapes from her house and expresses desire to live with another man, he cannot refuse her proposal. This is because the refusal to accept the proposal may reflect poorly on his (and his kinsmen's) calibre to earn and pay *moganalalu* as well as cast into doubt his masculinity. In view of this, increasing *moganalalu* amount is

not to punish the man, but to control and discourage the woman as she has to consider whether or not her lover can pay the *moganal* amount.

A key agent of this change witnessed in the Savara society is a tribe-level organisation for political unity – the *Savara Ikya Vedika*. This association was formed and managed by the active participation of Savara men. It provided a platform for this “reform” in the Savara society. In conjecture with such internal factors, we can also see other factors promoting a sort of mainstreaming of Savara Society. The change in the religious faith of a substantial section of the Savaras<sup>8</sup> appears to be a key factor. The remarkable shift from *podu*<sup>9</sup> (shifting cultivation) to horticulture by the Savaras during the last 30 years and the consequent economic benefits have also helped the Savaras widen their social networks and access formal education for their children. These changes have also directly and indirectly contributed to the process of mainstreaming of Savara society in different ways.

The changes in the way the Savaras perceive *moganal* definitely have implications for the Savara social organisation and the location of the women within it in regards to their independence and freedom to make decisions. The freedom that the Savara women have previously enjoyed in regards to divorce and remarriage is under severe threat. It is apparent that the Savara women not only had such freedom in theory, but could also execute this freedom quite often in the Savara society. The tolerance to polygamy and levirate marriages, simultaneous to the restrictions on divorce and remarriage, probably will have serious impacts on women in these circumstances. How the Savara women would react to this situation is difficult to fathom. Perhaps, an increase in marriages with men of other castes and tribes could be one consequence. Changes in the gender roles that would strengthen monogamy could be another consequence as polygamy is an important trigger for the divorce and remarriage of women.

#### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The author is very thankful to his colleagues in the Department of Anthropology, University of Hyderabad, Prof. N. Sudhakar Rao and Dr. George Tharakan for their comments on the draft of the paper and for providing some insights in regard to the critical examination of the data. He also sincerely acknowledges the help rendered by Ms. Gopika Padmakumar and Mrs. B. Sri Lakshmi in improving the presentation and language editing. Of course, the author admits that the paper would not have been possible without many key informants in the Savara community. He is grateful to all of them for their involvement and time.

---

<sup>8</sup> A large population of the Savara community in this part of the country currently claim Christian religion. Some owe allegiance to *Akshara Brahma* which is a reformist Savara religion.

<sup>9</sup> Shifting cultivation (slash and burn cultivation) of some cereal, millets and vegetables on the hill slopes essentially during the monsoon.

## REFERENCES

- ANDERSON, S. (2007). The Economics of Dowry and Brideprice. *The Journal of Economic Perspectives*, pp.151–174.
- ANYEBE, A. P. (1985). *Customary Law: The War Without Arms*. Enugu: Fourth Dimension Publishers.
- BERREMAN, G. D. (1962). Pahari Polyandry: A Comparison. *American Anthropological Association*, pp. 60–75; Vol.64; Issue No:1.
- BHASIN, V. (2007). Status of Tribal Women in India. *Studies on Home and Community Science*, pp. 1–16.
- BHAT, P. N., & SHIVA, S. H. (Volume 53, 1999 – Issue 2). Demography of Bride Price and Dowry: Causes and consequences of the Indian marriage squeeze. *Population Studies: A Journal of Demography*, pp. 129–148.
- BIANQUIS, T. (1996). The Family in Arab Islam. In A. Burguiere, C. Klapisch-Zuber, M. Segalen, & F. Zonabend, *A History of the Family*. Vol. 1 of *Distant Worlds, Ancient Worlds*, ed (pp. 601–647). Cambridge: Polity Press.
- BRADFORD, N. J. (1985). From Bridewealth to Groom – Fee: Transformed Marriage Customs and Socio-Economic Polarisation Amongst Lingayats. *Sage Journals*.
- DAS, S. T. (1989, 3 Vols.). *Life Style: Indian Tribes: Locational Practice*. New Delhi: Gyan Publishing co.
- DEKKER, M., & HANS, H. (2002). Bridewealth and Household Security in Rural Zimbabwe. *Journal of African Economics*, pp. 114–145.
- EKONG, J. M. (1992). Bridewealth, women and reproduction in Sub-Saharan Africa: A theoretical overview. Bonn: HolosVerlag.
- ELWIN, Verrier. (1955). *The Religion of an Indian Tribe*. Bombay, Oxford University Press.
- FUDONG, M. S. (2018). Marriage and Money: Bride Price and Status of Lepcha Women of Sikkim and North Bengal, India. *The Institution of Engineers* (pp. 33–35). Mumbai: Conference World.
- GOODY, J. (1973). Bridewealth and Dowry in Africa and Eurasia. In J. Goody, Stanley, & J. Tambiah, *Bridewealth and Dowry* (pp. 1–58). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- GRIERSON, S. G. (1906). *The Pisaca Languages of North-Western India*. London: The Royal Asiatic Society.
- HOOGEVEEN, H. (2002). Bride wealth and Household Security in Rural Zimbabwe. *Journal of African Economics*, pp. 114–145.
- HUGHES, D. O. (1985). From Brideprice to Dowry in Mediterranean Europe. In M. A. Kaplan, *The Marriage Bargain: Women and Dowries in European History* (pp. 13–58). New York: Havorth Press.
- KRESSEL, M. G. (1977). Brideprice Reconsidered. *Current Anthropology*, pp. 441–458.
- KUMAR, K. (1973). Marriages in Tribal India. *Journal of the Indian Law Institute*, pp. 638–644.
- LEACH, E. R. (1961). *Rethinking Anthropology*. London: University of London, Athlone Press.
- MANN, R. S. (1996). *Aspects of Indian Social Anthropology*. New Delhi: Concept Pub. Company.
- MULDER, M. B. (1995). Bridewealth and its Correlates: Quantifying Changes Over Time. *Current Anthropology*, pp.573–603.
- MURDOCK, G. P. (1967). *Ethnographic Atlas*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press.
- RADCLIFFE-BROWN, A., & Forde, C. D. [1950], (1987). Introduction: In *African Systems of Kinship and Marriage*. London: KPI in association with the International African Institute.
- RANDERIA, S., & VISARIA, L. (1984). Sociology of Bride-Price and Dowry. *Economic and Political Weekly*, pp. 648–652.
- SAMBE, N., AVANGER, M. Y., & AGBA, S. A. (2013). The Effects of High Bride – Price on Marital Stability. *IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, pp. 65–70.

- 
- SHARMA, B. V. (1991). Response to Formal Education among the Savara: An Ethnographic Study. Hyderabad: Unpublished Ph.D Thesis, University of Hyderabad.
- SHARMA, B. V. (2018). The Context of Changes in Family, Marriage and Kinship among the Savara of Andhra Pradesh. *The Eastern Anthropologist*, pp. 241–262.
- SURYANARAYANA, M. (1978). Family, Marriage and Kinship among the Savara. Visakhapatnam: Unpublished Ph.D thesis, Andhra University.
- VIDYARTHI, L. P., & RAI, B. K. (1976). *The Tribal Culture of India*. New Delhi: Concept Pub. Company.
- WEGH, S. F. (2003). *Between Continuity and Change: Tiv Concept of Tradition and Modernity*. Enugu: SNAAP Press Ltd.

