

# The Marital Rituals in Chalavadi Community

Geeta S. Atharga<sup>1\*</sup> Prof. R. Sunandammath<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Research Student

<sup>2</sup> Research Guide, Ahilyabai Post Graduation, Research and Extension Centre, Karnataka State Akkamahadevi Women's University, Vijayapur, Karnataka

**Abstract – Marriage, as the most important social institution, is in force in all societies. There is also a religious recognition of the legal institution of marriage, which authorizes male and female marriage, and for legalizing children born to that partner. All religions have rules about marriage. A wedding is held in accordance with these rules. According to Hinduism, marriage is an important ritual and is regarded as the sacred bond that God made. There is a belief in the Hindus that a human will not get salvation without marriage. There is also a belief that if the girl is not married, though she got an appropriate age, she will be regarded as a stigma attached to the clan and she will become a path to hell to her family. It is said that the man without a woman in his life, will be like oil poured into the sand, and that the life of a woman without a man will be like the words written in water. According to Hinduism, both man and woman can attain peace if both of them cooperate with each other like the leading light in the path and like the two wings of a bird which helps to fly. Like all castes, wedding is a very important ritual in the community.**

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**Table 1: The Marital Status of a woman in the Chalavadi Community:**

Sl. No.	The Marital status of chalavadi woman	Numbers	Percentage
1	Unmarried	11	2.2%
2	Married	356	71.2%
3	Widows	68	13.6%
4	Divorcees	5	1%
5	Devadasis	51	10.2%
6	Husband abandoned	9	1.8%
	Total	500	100

From the above Table : 1 and also in the picture, the marital status of the chalavadi women is explained. About 73.2% of the women are married and 3% are unmarried. The number of divorcees is 1%, while the women abandoned by their husband are about 18%. About 10.2% women are devadasis. In this system, the women have to live with opprobrium or a black mark and they have to live with a stigma of losing the security and recognition that comes with the marital status. The children born to devadasi women have no recognition or inheritance from their biological father. These women are more exploited because of their caste and poverty.

## Child Marriages:

Child marriages are very common in chalavadi community. In olden days, there was a system of arranging marriages in their early childhood, when both, the bride and the bridegroom were in their infant stage. They were sleeping in their cradles,

unknown of their life's most important decision has been taken. There was also a system of marrying their nieces or engaging the boy to a girl in his relations. If there were too many children in a family, the marriages were arranged in groups. Now a days, though the number of child marriages have decreased, but today also, in the villages, marriages occur in their early childhood. In ancient times, the marriage age of both, the boy and the girl was very small, but, now, the age of boy has increased to an appropriate limit, but the age of a girl is still below the limit.

**Table 2: Wedding Age of Chalavadi Women:**

Sl. No.	Marriage age of Chalavadi women	Numbers	Percentage
1	5 to 10	20	4%
2	10 to 15	121	24.2%
3	15 to 18	247	49.4%
4	Over 18	97	19.4%
5	Not Applicable	15	3%
	Total	500	100

Table 2 shown is the marriage age of the chalavadi women. Of the total 500 women interviewed, about one-quarter of all women, 77.6 percent are married before the age of 18. This implies that child marriage takes place in large numbers. 28 per cent of marriages take place under the age of 15. Females carry the burden of corporate responsibility at the age of attaining education, which is a key indicator of human development.

They have to take the responsibility of carrying a child in the age of playing and reading. From a very early age, women are found to be in the chores of outside and also in the family.

The chalavadi community has its own way-of-life regarding marriage. Wedding rituals have changed over time to time, but can be identified as different from Vedic rituals.

**Engagement ceremony with the bride:**

Parents of the groom take their elder people or their relatives and neighbors with them to determine the bride. It is believed that no ominous events should take place when leaving for the good deed. "Bullock, cat, dog, hoof, shovel, hoodie or an empty vessel feel bad omens" (Dalit Life & Culture: Folklore Studies by Arjun Golasangi, 2000, Devadasi Vimochana samstha, Athani, Page No. 58). Thus, if the crow flies in front of them, it is considered a good indicator, only if the crow flies left to right. If a person carries a full vessel in front of them, this will also be a good omen. Even today also, they follow these false superstitions. They are going to see a girl and to test her. They test her whether she is a virgin or not! The adorned maiden sits on a wooden seat or a rug. Concerning the beliefs about the examining of a bride, an old woman named Chennavva believes that "if the middle finger is larger than the former finger, and also the next one, she will leave her husband and will run away with her boyfriend! Or she will have an extra marital relation.. Similarly, the last little finger should be raised to full ground, otherwise she will not stayed in her husband's house! and sometimes they will overhaul the clothes to see whether there is a syncline in her chest (cleavage within the breasts). This is known as syncline testing. There should not be a syncline, if, there they find, it is believed that she will kill her husband in future! They will look at the face and check whether she has the dimple chin. It is believed that if she has dimple chin, her husband will die first! Also, there is a belief that there should be no stains on the thighs. And also there is a belief that the right hand up to the wrist must be three times long to the length of the girl's height from her foot up to her nose and the forearm should be made three times as long as it is upright and tucked at the tip of the nose and held up to the scalp..." These false beliefs are still in practice. After all these tests, they will tell the family of the bride that they will inform the result after some days. But, there is no such test for males!

Does she live with her husband based on body marks in the name of Bridal test? does the dangers her husband is going to face will be told by these features of the girl? Does she leave her husband and have sex with someone else will be predicted by these features? It is the influence of Vedic tradition that emphasizes female maturity and sanctity.

"The wedding was taking place at the groom's house. At the wedding, the woman paid vadhu dakshina. In the time of marriage, she will be paid for millet, paddy and also bear the expenses of the marriage. The bride was given the bridal garments, and also gold as the elders said. The marriage was going to celebrate in front of a bamboo pillar, which is worn a white dhoti and placed in the wedding pavilion. In the presence of the eldest of their caste, the mangalya dharana takes place. After that, they were playing a number of games related to their respective professions. In ancient times, the people were enjoying the non-vegetarian food. (Page No.188-189, Woman: Backward Class and Multifaceted Patriarchy, R. Sunandamma, Niradari, S. D. Saraswati, kavi Prakashana, 2014).

Such tradition was practiced in the chalavadi community. The bride was given some amount of money as vadhu dakshina in the wedding. At the time of the wedding, the bride-to-be paid the amount of at least Rs. 200 to Rs. 500 as vadhu dakshina. No matter how poor he was, he had to pay some amount of money. It was an honor paid to the girl. As the time changed, the dowry system was disappeared. Now a days, the bride groom himself has to be paid varadakshina. The chalavadi community as hired by the upper-caste for their works, leaving behind their original practices, and following their culture also. "When the marriage begins to be arranged with the intervention of a Brahmin priest, the rituals of the marriage system has been changed." The dowry system has been implemented in the chalavadi community also.

**Table-3 Dowry habits among chalavadi community**

SL. No.	About the dowry system	Number	Percentage
1.	Located	333	66.6%

Details on dowry are given in Table 3 and figure above. About 500 women were asked some questions. The 66.6% of women said that there is a dowry system. Not only the rich, but the poor people also have to pay dowry and spend a big sum of money on the marriages. The cost of educating the girl, and also giving the dowry has become a burden on them and it becomes difficult to get married if the girl becomes adult or gained age. So, the people are arranging the marriage of their girls in a very young age.

In the past, in the chalavadi community, the wedding ceremony was held for five days. The groom's household was providing the bride with everything she needed for the wedding. "One or two days before the mangalakshate, one or two of the brothers of the parents of the bride or a couple (couples) will bring in white ganjiparasa, sarees, turmeric ritual saree, udiyakki stuff, bangles for the bride and money for the wedding." This is called as

giving enpatla ritual. Those who have taken Enpatla means oil saree to the bride are called as Mummanagya. Prior to the turmeric treatment, the bride has to be dressed in a garment cloth given to her. The blouse made from this giant sari has no clothes on the sleeve. This was called a parry-free dumpster. Many of the experts say that the myth behind this is that the tailor prepared the blouse in a hurry without sleeves. So, even now the brides wear the blouse without sleeves. But now, it is not in force.

#### **Elimination of the evil:**

After the turmeric is applied to the bride, she will be removed out of the house. On the way to the groom's house at 12 o'clock, the elimination of the evil will take place. This ritual is performed by widows. In this ritual, in olden days, the bride will be made undressed, the sacred thread will be put together and wrapped around her in four corners, singing a Saturn stripping song and unloading Shani by a comb. This will be done only for brides. There is a rule that the muttaide means the women who have husbands must not participate in this ritual and also have to see this ritual. This practice is still performed in weddings. But the bride is not in the naked state. She will be in half naked position. After taking out the Saturn, the bride will take a bath and will be taken inside the house. The song sung in this celebration is as follows:

From where you have come... you have pearls in your hair

Your lap is also filled with pearls..

on your shoulders, you wore a beautiful shawl..

wearing the beautiful shawl, please come to our home..

to take out the nails from your fingers, from your feet,  
you want us...

you come to our home with pearl in your hair..

wearing a beautiful shawl on your shoulders,

come to our home today...

you must come to our home today..

the evil must be taken out from your scalp..

from your nails on the fingers... from the feet...

the evil must be taken out from your eyes..

The ladies, with singing this song, take out the evil which will be wrapped in yarn surrounding her hair, hand nail, foot nail, tooth, ear and back.

The rituals for the wedding day are -

**Doing for the Elderly:** This celebration, held at the bridegroom's house, is performed in honor of the elders. They will call the elders of galli and sacrifice the sheep and goat in the name of the elders who died. This ritual is called the docking. They will serve meat to the people of galli and the barons. Then the next tasks will be carried out by the orders of the elders of galli. The ritual of making elders is done at the bride's house. But on this occasion, the meat does not cook, the dessert cooks. Vedic rituals can be seen in the process of cleaning the house after a meat meal.

#### **Doing naivedya to the God:**

Four or two days before marriage, the sheep will be sacrificed to the God in the name of Kuladevata.

**Pendal:** Pendal will be built in front of the groom's house. The milk barge was first planted in the place of the pendal. Some leaves of hulageri plant are used for pendal. All the other wood used except the shrishaila wood for the pendal. After planting the bamboo pillar, a coconut covered in a red cloth will be tied to the pillar. Now a day, it has become customary to listen to the calendar to put the pendal.

#### **Making a jagalikatte:**

A jagalikatte will be put on the right side of the house adjacent to the pendal. From the ground at a height of about a foot, hard mud will be put to make the surface hard. Then the jagalikatte will be besmeared with cowdung. After that poles will be planted in all the four corners. He writes a picture on the walls which are besmeared with limestone. Bracelets will be tied to each pillar. Now the lime and red mud coated jagalikatte is ready. It is also called jagalikatte.

#### **Grinding stone worship:**

Five days before the wedding, the grinding stone will be worshipped. Five measured cups of wheat or corn will be mixed with turmeric roots. Some of the ladies with good fortune will grind it and sieve. They make rotis and puddings from this powder. Bettel Leaf, betel nut, turmeric, holy rice will be put in a new cloth and tied to the handle of the grinder and the flint. They worship the grinding stone, the Onake, the grinding stones, and the Lord. On this occasion, they worship the god with singing a song as below.

We are putting sandalwood paste on the grinding stone in our house...

We are giving naivedya of small banana

We put sandalwood paste on the grinding stone and the mortar

We put peeled banana in front of this god..

Suvvi baa... suvvi baa..

Sending Sacred rice or Mangalakshate: All the relatives and neighbors will be given rice kernels prepared during the ritual of grinding stone worship. Also, they send Mangalakshate to their neighbors with their relatives and invite them for the wedding ceremony. All this work is performed in the leadership of one of the neighborhood elders. Now a days, they are also inviting the people by giving invitation cards.

Face to face meeting of the brides' relatives: The people of the brides' side are stayed in a temple, home or school. Mummungya informs the news of the arrival of these people to the bridegroom's side. The people of the bride's side will face the people of the bridegroom's side by singing songs and beating the drums or blowing the bandsets.

#### Bringing kalashas:

Five sacred women from the wedding party will go to the potter's house. The potter will fill water in those pots. They worship these pots with Vibhuti, saffron. They will give betel leaves, betel nut to the potter and carry the pots on the heads of the sacred women. These pots will be placed on the jagalikkatte and worship.

#### Suragi encircling:

In another pendal, in front of the house of the bridegroom, four corners are marked with a mortar, and they place the vessels made up of bronze or mud on each mark. Sacred women and married men sit there and put their hands on each of them. In the middle, the unmarried girl from the family who is called as kalashagitti means girl with kalasha, will sit. Then an experienced man with a string from the mug filled with turmeric water begins to encircle left to right. On the other side, the people will continue to sing songs relating to this ritual. The bridegroom and the bride both will put the mangalakshate from a betel leaf from their hands in each kalasha from left to right. The mother or aunt behind the bridegroom is carrying water in the vessel and continuing to put the water. And they are called as the water carriers. Now the bride and bridegroom will take bath, put on new clothes. The suvasini women or muttaides will do aarati to both the bride and bridegroom and put the turmeric thread from left hand from the right hand and right to the left. This is called as take off the evil sights. Then the yarn is wrapped around them without touching the ground. There are two types of suragi. One is outside suragi and the another one is inside suragi. After going through this twice, they will go to the temple of God, carrying the bride. If the

groom or the bride circles inside the suragi, it is the inner suragi. If they circulate outside, that is called as outside suragi. This differs from one state to another. After this ritual there will be a dinner also.

#### The Akshataropane:

The marriage will be celebrated in two ways. Akshataropane in front of the god. It is placed before the house goddess or devara mane. Another is divine akshataropane. It takes place in the pendal in front of the jagalikkatte. The bride and groom sit opposite on the jagalikkatte. One sacred cloth will be there in between their faces. After giving the akshatas to all the invitees, the bridegroom will tie the mangalya or sacred thread in the neck of the bride. People will sprinkle akshatas on them. The dinner program begins for all the invitees.

#### The programmes after the marriage ceremony:

After the marriage, there remained so many rituals. Those are like this:

Unloading the pendal: On the fifth or ninth day of marriage, the unloading will be done. They put saffron, vibhuti on the pillar and perform puja with agarbattis. They do naivedya of puddings to the pendal. Five suvasini women and some children begin to descend the pendal. Once the pendal is unpacked, all its woodwork is put together. The wood must not be used as firewood. There is a belief that if used for a fire, there occurs some evil in the house of marriage.

#### Untie of Basinga:

This is the symbol of a bride and bridegroom which will be tied on the forehead. The untie of the Basinga programme will be practiced after unloading the pendal. To untie Basinga, the bride and groom will be send together. Or the groom will be accompanied with another person to the nearest river, after untying the basing, they tie the basinga in a new white cloth and leave it in the river. After that, they will take bath, go to the nearest temple and worship. There is a Folk song about Basinga -

The brother who gives this Basinga

Give him a hanging stage..

Give him fertile field and garden..

Bless him with good words..

When he was bringing the basing, rain came and

The basing sprouted like a garden

The child of our town became a shelter to the poor people..



(Dalitara baduku mattu sanskruti: Folklore studies. Arjuna Golasangi, 2000, Devdasi Liberation Institute, Athani, p-74).

### **Arrival of the New Bride:**

After marriage, the bride groom's relatives welcome the bride to their house. This is called as the arrival of the bride. They will decide the date after looking at the hindu calendar or the panchanga and book a good day. They then carry enough rotis and variety of eatables and some sacred things for the bride. They will give all these eatables to the neighbors of the bride and will take the permission to take the bride with them. The bride's parents bring new clothes for their daughter. They also cook her favorite dishes. On the day of her departure to her husband's house, one of her brother in law or her sister in law will wash her feet and bow down to her. The daughter in law will be believed as Goddess Lakshmi. So the people of her whole family will bow to her. After these rituals, her parents say some good words to the daughter. "You have live like a precious pearl in your in law's house

If they feed you late, you have to dine peacefully

Oh my darling daughter, you have to bring name and fame to your parents!

Oh my newly wedded bride, we will say you some good words!

Please listen to your in laws..

Don't even say single word in opponent to your in laws.."

(This song was sung by Siddavva Gudimani in the field work.)

The parents will say some moral words to their daughter

### **Re Marriage or Uduki Wedding:**

In the Chalwadi community, are marriage system called Uduki is in existence. If the husband or wife dies after marriage or they are divorcees, they are allowed to marry again with someone else. But this wedding is not as formal and celebratory as the first wedding. Instead, in the presence of the elders of the galli, as they both agree, new clothes will be given to both of them, and the marriage ceremony will be held in a small room or in a temple for these two and a meal will be arranged for some people. This is called Uduki. The important point to note here is that the husband may have a wife from the first marriage, but the wife must have no other relationship from her first marriage. But, if, they have children from the former relationship, the children must be raised together. The widow will marry only if she agrees to another marriage. There will not be any pressure on her. In

this system, the woman will not be considered as sacred or pure. She has no any significance in the marriages, or any good functions, any rituals, no right to participate in the celebrations. But there are no restrictions for the remarrying husband. He can participate in all rituals, practices and activities as before. The first marriage for a married woman is considered final. Such a woman is not allowed to participate in any activity if her husband gave her divorce, or he died. But, there are no restrictions on husbands. To see such women in the early morning will be considered as a bad omen. Overall, she can only be an audience for all the good occasions.

Marriage plays an important and crucial role in the status of a woman. Marriage is mandatory for females in the chalavadi community. Here are some of the marital status of the women are discussed.

### **SUMMARY**

Marriage is compulsory for females and also is enforce in childhood. In the past, there was a system of giving vadhu dakshina or dowry to the bride was in practice. But that system was reverted and giving dowry to the bridegroom came in to practice. This has a negative impact on the education of the girl and child marriage came into practice.

Devadasi practice among the chalavadi community is also in effect, which has led to sexual exploitation and stigmatization of females and has had a fatal impact on the authenticity of children. The dependence of children on the mother and non-existence of father's responsibility has caused them to fall into financial distress.

Vedic influence can be seen when observing the wedding rituals of the chalavadis. Marriage is compulsory for a woman. Social recognition for a woman can only be obtained by marriage, her physical existence, including the physical attributes of the woman, should be for the benefit of her husband. She must be pure from all the bad spirits. In the Vedic tradition, influences of beliefs can be seen in the rituals of marriages. The divorcees and the widows are not allowed to participate in the Rituals. The wedding ceremony is still performed in the leadership of the elders of the community and the whole community will be involved. Overall, in a society where the hierarchical caste system is dominant, lower-caste females are more likely to be caught in double repression of caste and patriarchy.

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**Corresponding Author**

**Geeta S. Atharga\***

Research Student