CHAPTER III

KINSHIP, MARRIAGE AND FAMILY

The study of social organization of a community involves understanding of an individual and group behavior in a specific social context. In a simple society, to a great extent the individual and collective behaviors are conditioned by the kinship structure (Goody, 1971). Kinship provides the basic framework of a society. The kinship structure provides principles for interpersonal relationships, individual duties and obligations. The study of kinship has occupied the center stage of anthropological research for a long time (Bhandari, 1992).

In the study of Riang society, the structure and dynamics of the institution of kinship has taken into account. The rules of marriage, marriage ritual and divorce are all connected to the kinship structure. The present chapter highlights the social life patterns of Riangs. The social institution that holds together and promotes Riang worldview finds its expression in kinship, marriage and family. The study about the social system of Riangs is very intriguing and reveals their profound connectedness with the environment they live in. The expressions of these relationships are analyzed and presented in this chapter. This chapter is an attempt to understand the dynamics of Riang kinship, marriage and family.
3.1 Clan (*DaphaorPanji*) Organization:

The Riang are a patriarchal people tracing down their consanguineal link through male line. The Riangs are divided into several clans known as (*DaphaorPanji*). Clan is an unilineal descent group. The members regard each other to be kinsmen. There are 14 clans in Riang society. The members belong to the clan by birth, the women who are married to the men of a particular clan also become members of their husband’s clan. The girls among the children will remain as members of their father’s clan only until marriage. Each clan is divided into a smaller kinship based unit called lineage (*Sandai*). Lineage is the extension of the family unit.

The Riang accommodate a number of consanguineal kin group units called *panji* (clan), based on the rule of patrilineal descent. The clan structure (*panji-haro*) seemingly assumes the form of a bisection of the community having two segments of *Molsoi* and *Meska* from each of which the other sub clans (*haroothuda*) have developed (Mukherjee, 1959). *Sandai* is patrilineal group. Mukherjee (1959) gives the impression that *Molsoi* and *Meska* are the major clans, have exerted enormous stabilizing influence on the Riang clan structure. The structure has developed along patrilineal line, but the affiliation of *Raikchak* and *Charkhis*ub clans to *Meska* has been achieved through matriliney’. Gan Chaudhuri (1983) argues that the structure as stated by Mukherjee is empirically not observed in any study. Deviating from the earlier study of Mukherjee (1959), Gan Chaudhuri suggests the existence of twelve clans, namely, *Changpreng, Charkhi, Malsoi, Meska, Musa, Noukham, Oairem, Raikchak, Tam-Yak-Cha, Tooimoiafa and Yakstam* (Bera, 2010). The interviews with the village elders revealed that there are only 12 clans. Field study revealed that there is no clan structure in any village and the traditional clans are mixed and have all ritual practices same for everyone.
The interesting feature of clan is that it is not the social unit, which regulates marriage; neither does it play any role in the mode of ownership, chieftainship and priesthood. The social unit, which plays vital role in the kinship behavior, is *sandai* (broadly defined lineage) patriarchal and patrilineal group. The Riang kinship system embodies two basic concepts – *sandai* (lineage) and *houchu*, (bilateral descent group) which broadly refer to agnates and affines. It is also contemplated here that all consanguineal kins not necessarily belong to *sandai* and all *houchu* members are not affines. The *sandai* encompasses persons of the father’s agnatic lineage group comprising primarily two ascending and two descending generations from the ego. It also includes collaterals like a man’s father’s father and his brothers and their children, his father and father’s brothers and their children, his brothers, his own and brother’s children and their grandchildren.

In classifying the relatives as *houchu*, the principle of bilateral reckoning has been employed. The concept of *houchu* includes some of the relatives on the father’s side and most of the relatives on the mother’s side, who are affinal kin in the general sense. Affiliation to a clan though signifies consanguinity in a general sense because of the belief in common descent, in reality all the clansmen are regarded as *sandai*. Invariably the *sandai* must be of the same clan, whereas the *houchu* may be of the same clan or a different clan.

The youth of the present day are not aware of the clansystem. They contested that Riang is a clan therefore they liked to be known as Bru instead of Riang. Youth had no hierarchical thinking regards to the clan even though a few expressed a higher standing for *meska*, a clan. There was no relationship between clan and ritual practices. All the clans have similar rituals. It was clear from the interview that the young are more open to change and was not willing to spend time learning their age-old practices and ethos. By
and large the clan endogamy is not considered as the youth did not pay attention to these issues of their society. In the urban areas they had more chances to come in contact with the outside world and have their own choice of partners. Youth is more open to the present day situations and the mixture.

### 3.2. Riang Kinship Terms

It is evident that in the Riang terminological system, there are several kin who are either referred to or addressed with a common term. Broadly speaking, the kinship system can be classified as ‘classificatory system’ (Murdock, 1949). This also corroborates with the study of Bera (2010). Riang's kinship system can be compared to the Eskimo system of terminology which is rare and used by Anglo-American cultures and by a number of hunting and gathering peoples. In this Eskimo system or lineal system of terminology, the nuclear family specifically identifies the mother, father, brother and sister, while merging together all other relatives such as paternal and maternal uncles, aunts, and cousins without differentiating among them. One’s father is distinguished from his father’s brother (mama) but one’s father’s brother is not distinguished from his mother’s brother (mama). However, the elder ones (Aiung) are distinguished from the younger brother (mama) from fathers and mothers side. In the case of fathers elder sister and mothers elder sister are distinguished from father’s younger sister and mother’s younger sister by the use of separate terms such as aiung burai, atai respectively. One calls all the elder sons and daughters of his aunts and uncles as ata and abi. The younger cousin brother and sister are called by the terms, phayong and hanao. It provides separate and distinct terms for each member of the nuclear family as revealed in the list below.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English</th>
<th>Riang</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FFF  (Father’s Father’s Father)</td>
<td>Aiung</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MFF  (Mother’s Father’s Father)</td>
<td>Aiung</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FF   (Father’s Father)</td>
<td>Achu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MF   (Mother’s Father)</td>
<td>Achu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FM(Father’s Mother)</td>
<td>Achoi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MM   (Mother’s Mother)</td>
<td>Achoi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father</td>
<td>Apa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother</td>
<td>Amo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F Eb (Father’s Elder Brother)</td>
<td>Aiung</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M Eb (Mother’s Elder Brother)</td>
<td>Aiung</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F Esh (Father’s Elder Sister’s Husband)</td>
<td>Aiung</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M Esh(Mother’s Elder Sister’s Husband)</td>
<td>Aiung</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M Ebw(Mother’s Elder Brother’s Wife)</td>
<td>Aiung Burai</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F Ebw (Father’s Elder Brother’s Wife)</td>
<td>Aiung Burai</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F Es (Father’s Elder Sister)</td>
<td>Aiung Burai</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M Es (Mother’s Elder Sister)</td>
<td>Aiung Burai</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F Ys (Father’s Younger Sister)</td>
<td>Atai</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MYs (Mother’s Younger Sister)</td>
<td>Atai</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F Ybw (Father’s Younger Brother’s Wife)</td>
<td>Atai</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M Y BW (Mother’s Younger Brother’s Wife)</td>
<td>Atai</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F Yb (Father’s Younger Brother)</td>
<td>Mama</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M Yb (Mother’s Younger Brother)</td>
<td>Mama</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F Ysh, (Father’s Younger Sister’s Husband)</td>
<td>Mama</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M Ysh (Mother’s Younger Sister’s Husband)</td>
<td>Mama</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Father In Law  
Mother In Law  
Step Mother  
ElderBrother  
Younger Brother  
Elder Sister  
Younger Sister  
E BW (ElderBrother’s Wife)  
Y BW (Younger Brother’s Wife)  
E SH (Elder Sister’s Husband)  
Y SH (Younger Sister’s Husband)  
Wife  
W Eb (Wife’s Elder Brother)  
W Ebw (Wife’s Elder Brother’s Wife)  
W Yb (Wife’s Younger Brother)  
W Ybw (Wife’s Younger Brother’s Wife)  
W Es (Wife’s Elder Sister)  
W Esh (Wife’s Elder Sister’s Husband)  
W Ys (Wife’s Younger Sister)  
W Ysh (Wife’s Younger Sister’s Husband)  
Husband  
H Eb (Husband’s Elder Brother)  
H Ebw (Husband’s Elder Brother’s Wife)  
H Yb (Husband’s Younger Brother)  
H Ybw (Husband’s Younger Brother’s Wife)
Among the Riangs, in the ego’s first ascending generation the father’s elder brother and mother’s elder brother are addressed by the same term *aiung*. Similarly father’s younger brother and mother’s younger brother are addressed by the same term *mama*. In the second ascending generation ego’s father’s father and ego’s mother’s father

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relationship</th>
<th>Title</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Husband’s Elder Sister</td>
<td>Uaiu, Didi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Husband’s Elder Sister’s Husband</td>
<td>Uaiuh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Husband’s Younger Sister</td>
<td>Prangruanguik</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Husband’s Younger Sister’s Husband</td>
<td>Prangruung</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Son</td>
<td>Sajla</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brother’s Son</td>
<td>Baigna</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elder Sister’s Son</td>
<td>Baigna</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Younger sister’s Son</td>
<td>Yongha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elder Brother’s Daughter</td>
<td>Baigni</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elder Sister’s Daughter</td>
<td>Baigni</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother in Law</td>
<td>Chamai</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father in Law</td>
<td>Chamaiyouh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ego’s Father’s Father</td>
<td>Chamari</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ego’s Mother’s Father</td>
<td>Haingyouh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grandchild</td>
<td>Souh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Great Grandchild</td>
<td>Bora</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Great Great Grandchild</td>
<td>Rasi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Great Great Grandchild’s Child</td>
<td>Rafe</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
are addressed by the same term aiung, similar is the case with ego’s father’s mother and ego’s mother’s mother are addressed by the same term achu. So also ego’s father’s father’s brother and ego’s mother’s father’s brother by the term aiung. These kinship terms have undergone considerable change and today one can see the use of non Riang kinship terms in these relationships. This can perhaps be attributed to their long association with nontribal people especially the Bengali population living in the neighboring villages.

In Riang society the child calls their father Apa and never mentions the name even in reference. Wives would not call their husbands by name. Same was the case with husband too. Whenever occasion demanded to call husband by a wife or wife by a husband, the usual practice was to call after the name of the eldest son or daughter, i.e. father or mother of so and so. Sons or daughter, even after becoming husbands or wives, will considered it disrespectful to utter their parents name. This custom is known as
Teknonymy (Madan and Majumdar, 1956). The system of avoidance is practiced among the Riangs. Avoidance between the father-in-law and daughter-in-law and husbands elder brother. Joking relations between grand parents and children are common. Also, such relation is found between a husband and wife’s younger sister but never between a wife and husband’s elder brother. Children are thoroughly trained to follow the socio-cultural and religious traditions of their family and kinship behavior. Once the learning is over the parents will encourage them to begin a new home on marriage.

3.3. Marriage (Kailaimi)

Marriage (Kailaimi) is established by the human society to control and regulate the sex life. It is closely connected with the institution of family. In fact, family and marriage are complementary to each other. Johnson (1960) defined marriage as a stable relationship in which a man and a woman are socially permitted, without loss of standing in the community, to have children. Marriage is a socially acknowledged and sometimes legally ratified bond between an adult male and an adult female. This type of union is based on two objectives: sexual gratification and procreation with socially sanctioned sex-relationship and economic co-operation.

The sexual-relationship in human society is highly constrained who, when and with whom one can have this relationship is determined by the society. For regulating sexual-relationship, every society has designed and evolved the institution of marriage. Marriage provides legitimacy for sexual relationship between the two particular individuals of complimentary sex and grants legitimacy to the offspring born out of this relationship. Every society from primitive to modern time has had the institution of marriage but its form and nature has changed from time to time, from society to society.
It has different forms and customs among the communities. Likewise the Riang community is marked by some particularities in the institution of marriage.

The three methods of acquiring mate among the Riang are marriage by negotiation (sanglaimi), marriage by elopement (toi/khailaimi) and marriage by service (chamarai khalaimi). The initiative for entering into a martial alliance starts from the boy’s side. According to the Riang customs and traditions there is no fixed age of marriage. Generally the marriage is after the attainment of puberty. Betrothal, known as chhoikhemo, is arranged immediately before the marriage. Initiating marriage proposal is done by the father of the bridegroom to the parents of the bride through a match maker. On a fixed day the matchmaker with parents of the bridegroom and some relatives go to the bride’s house with two bottles of country liquor. If the proposal is accepted then the groom’s party offers some pig and country liquor to all who are present there. Then the day is fixed for a formal betrothal. After the betrothal-meal the date of marriage is fixed and other various matters like items to be given by the bridegroom’s party at the marriage, the years of service to be rendered by the groom to the house of bride’s parents. The service of the bridegroom can be in kind or cash which is also finalized.

Marriage is a ceremony that brings together large number of relatives in a festive mood. Without ceremony no marriage is recognised by the society. If the man and woman live together without marriage rite they have to pay fine of Rs. 1000/-. The marriage ceremony is performed at the house of the bride. Sacred water is poured on the heads of the bride and the groom by the Akchai. This water is collected from the flowing stream. Both the bride and the groom go in procession to collect the water and later the priest blesses the water. A certain quantity of oil, cotton, chilly, salt, ginger, onion, rice, a sickle (dao), a piece of iron, stone and two bottles of liquor are kept on a winnowing fan in front of the bridegroom. In earlier days only cloth representing the bride (arnai) was
kept to the left side of the bride groom symbolically to represent bride. The akchai chants hymns while the articles are kept in front of the groom. This signifies the marriage. A great deal of drinking and dancing is part of the marriage. Akchai (priest) chants religious chants and blessings saying the qualities of the articles kept in the winnowing fan.

The main ceremony called Songruma puja is held during the marriage where one each of a fowl and roster, along with two pure local wine / brew, are offered. When the bride is brought to the groom’s house tichamo is performed at the bridegroom’s house. It is usually performed both on the land and in water by sacrificing two fowls or in some case one goat. This ritual puja is basically for a new couple after marriage. Riang cannot take a second wife, when first one is alive. In such cases he is punishable. Cross cousin marriage is permissible. Marriages involving close relatives, across generations or between persons belonging to the same lineage of father or mother up to second generation are avoided. In case marriage takes place in contravention to social customs, fine has to be paid, as imposed by the village council to enjoy social status.

In the traditional Riang society, the choice of partners was governed by the cultural norms intrinsically connected with and attached to the agriculture and bravery. The choice was made based on a working member would be added to the family. In recent years, the traditional values have been modified and a new value scale based on education assumes precedence in marriage. With the process of transformation, education and economic wealth represent the new scale of value. Since no individual has a preponderant position over the others in the scale, there is a wide range of choice which cuts across traditional personal status to achievement in the society. Thus, the earlier personal status through individual achievement like expertise in hunting or physical beauty and skill in domestic works gradually loss its traditional significance in the choice
of spouse, where a semi-class structure plays more and more significant role. Marriages between members of the educated class and economically well-to-do families result in the formation of a class largely represented by the Government officials of different rank, school teachers, contractors and lower ranks of government officials.

- Kokil Riang, aged 29, teacher at a Government school, from Kalyansing village married a girl from Jagbandu village of Dhalai district. She was Madhyamik failed. During their wedding, his wife brought gifts like television, fridge, steel cupboards, sofa set, and household articles. Kokil said that it was not asked by him but it was the desire of the girl’s parents to send their daughter with things that will help them in setting up their home. Though the trend of bride price is common, he said that these days the gift giving by the girl’s family has become common. It is mostly in the form of things that needed for a house, bike or a car in recent days. It was told that there is no set rule as to what are things to be given. He was asked if he could stay at girl’s house as bride price. He said that since he was gainfully employed the father-in-law did not expect him to serve in their house as a form of bride money.

In the face of this, marriage choice in future is likely to show more emphasis on class line thus creating a class system in a classless society. Owing to the Hindu non-tribal customs and introduction of Christian faith has affected the traditional marriage system and ritual of Riangs. The Christian marriage is administered by an ordained priest; the bride and the bridegroom swear in the name of God that they will remain as husband and wife and never part till death. The Christian marriages are recorded in the Church.
In the present days, bride-price is paid in cash. Bride price becomes simply a formality to the fulfillment of nuptial rites on traditional line. Rural urban migration has also facilitated inter-religious and inter-community marriage among the Riang society. Riangs find ample opportunity to meet with persons belonging to different communities, giving rise to a network of personal, social and economic relationship. As a result, the Riang society has been witnessing many numbers of inter-marriages. This has engendered greater social mobility and change in their outlook. In inter-mixing, social interaction and living together in the same heterogeneously populated urban areas have happened.

It is found among the Riang that marriages were arranged by parents. In some cases the initiative is taken by the bride and groom but later negotiated by the respective families. Researcher also came across marriages by elopement. Riangs who are closer to the towns marry at a later age and it is often arranged by the parents of the respective bride and groom. It is observed that marriage by mutual consent is common among the rural areas. They find their own partners at an early age and leave the school for getting settled. Educated Riang girls normally marry between the age of 20 -25. The researcher met many girls who are interested to pursue their dream job than being tied to the institution of marriage.

In the past two decades it was observed that there are remarkable changes in the patterns of Riang marriage. In many places their marriage customs and rules are very much influenced by the religion and cultures of the neighbourhood as they are in constant contact with the outside world. The researcher has witnessed the cases of marriage of Riang boys with Tripuri, Molsom and Bengali girls. They were love-marriages. These days’ parents allow boys to make their choice of girls by crossing all traditional rules and barriers. These kinds of marriages are treated as a violation in the
community. These days the tribal community is incapable of giving any punishment to the violators, because these kinds of instances are not referred to the traditional court of law for getting punishment. For this reason many of the customary rules and traditional norms are found very much neglected and ignored by the modern educated Riangs. This may be considered as one of the major factors of their social changes.

In the olden days majority of them got married within their own tribe, only in rare cases they marry with others. However, today many take the liberty of the traditional customs and norms. They consider only some of the following factors in selecting the partner like family, economy, beauty, education, job, age and character. There are some people who follow astrology and horoscope in selecting their partner; mostly the young men or women choose their own life partner. This reveals that the influence of modernization upon the Riang people. The field data shows the changes have come in Riang marriage system. In the Rural setting the families go by the familiarity of the known families to choose the marriage partners. They are more tradition bound but a new tendency is emerging. Some are consulting horoscope/astrology to select a partner. Riangs exposed to modernity choose their partners based on their, education, job, physical beauty, and economic status.

Marriages normally are celebrated in bride’s house. Riangs who are settled closer to the town and in town conduct marriage in temples and wedding halls depending on their financial condition. These days the families are dispersed into nuclear family and the relatives are far and wide. The families do not get support and help as they would all come together in earlier days at a village feast and do the work together. The changes are seen in the practice of bride price in both villages. In rural setting the practice is that bride price is paid by service or kind. In urban setting it is paid in cash. People do not
serve the girls’ parents for the years prescribed by them they pay and take the girl to their house.

The principles of marriage in the Riang society are undergoing changes particularly among the youth who have moved to cities for education and for job opportunities. The traditional ritual practices are diminishing in such cases. The researcher in her close association of a non-tribal girl married a Riang boy, wears tribal dress and eats tribal food of the Riang.

- S. Das, a Bengali girl of Narayanpur, village, aged 20, narrated her story. She was 16 year old studying in class nine when she married her classmate D. Riang from Bishnurampara. They fell in love and wanted to marry. In the beginning her parents did not agree as they thought about the simmering tension between the tribals and Bengalis. Parents thought that she would suffer in the Riang family. However as both were determined to marry, the parents agreed. They married two years ago and have a girl child of one year old. She learned the language and can communicate in Kau Bru dialect. She said her father in law and mother in law are happy with her and they take care of her and her child in the absence of her husband. She said she struggled in the beginning as it was altogether different food, language, customs. However she is happy that her in - laws have been so kind accepting her to their family. It was rather easy because of their support. These days her parents are comfortable that she goes to other tribal family. They visit her and she has access to visit them whenever she can. Her husband and family are Christians, hence she adopted
Christianity. She joins her in-laws to church services. Her husband got a job in Tripura State Rifles. She expressed her happiness in marrying him.

Monogamy is the most prevalent type of marriage. But polygyny, sororate and levirate are permissible in the society. Remarriage of divorced and widow are permissible. Marriage between a bachelor and a divorcee woman or between a spinster and a divorced man is called kaklaikalaimi and that between a divorcee woman and a divorced man is called kakloikalaimi. Widow Remarriage is called randirandakalaimi. Marriage of a widower with a spinster is called sockchokbaisikik. A man can marry his elder brother’s widow but not his younger brother’s widow (waiyrao). He can marry his wife’s younger sister but not his wife’s elder sister (waiyrao).

Among the Riang the sandai of the same generation can form halakcham relationship in which children of two male siblings could marry. It is, in other words, paternal parallel cousin marriage. On the other hand cross cousins and the children of two female siblings stood in the halakchaya relationship and hence marriage between them is not possible. Of late, there have been flexibility in marriage rules and hence cousin marriages of all types are taking place. The above principles justify that the Riang, in principle, have family endogamy (extended family) and marriage between the children of two male siblings is the traditional practice based on their particular notion of kinship. The frequency of parallel cousin marriages is declining by generation, partially because of the breakdown of joint households, moreover, largely owing to the waning intensity of the feeling of sandai bonds. What is significant is that parallel cousins are socially very important in the family.
Divorce (*kaklaimi*)

Divorce (*kaklaimi*) is also permissible in the society. If a wife is alive man cannot marry another woman. Before a second marriage he has to divorce the first one. The practice of divorce is rare but not non-existent. Divorce can be sought on the grounds of mutual incompatibility; adultery; unfaithfulness of either of them; carelessness and or habitual negligence of duties. In case the husband is unable to shoulder the responsibilities of work related to *jhum* cultivation, the wife having no alternative may seek divorce. If husband is addicted to alcohol and tortures wife, wife can seek divorce. After hearing from both sides, village head man *Choudhuri* takes a decision and it is final. Judicial divorce is rare. They like to settle it among themselves in the community. Following divorce minor children will go with father or mother as decided by the village council. In case of infant, the custody goes to mother. Grown up children can decide where to reside.

The new religious ethics and principles do not permit the couple to break their promises of living together till death. The oath sworn at the time of their marriage is a reminder. This makes the couple to have a firm commitment during their life time. A complete or permanent separation, though rare, prevails in the Riang society. The practice of divorce is not the monopoly of the male but female may also take recourse to it. There is no social discrimination in the matter of remarriage between men and women. A widower can marry a widow after the ritual known as *Khumshumo*. In case of a divorce a declaration of separation is needed. Remarriage of a widow, a widower or divorcees is permissible.

- Herendra Riang, aged 20, narrated about his father Mr. Riang, aged 46, who lives with his wife and two children in Paharpur village. Herendra aged 20 and his sister, aged 22
studied in Bengali medium up to class nine. Parents worked in *jhum* and fields to manage their livelihood. They cultivated needed food grains for their survival. Two years back his sister fell in love with a boy of neighboring village. She went to boy’s house and stayed for few days. Hence the marriage was arranged. She brought her husband to stay at her natal home. She has a one year old girl child. In recent days his father fell in love with a woman from his own village. She was married after getting a divorce from her husband. Herendra and his sister tried to keep their father and mother together. But his father is in favor of bringing the woman whom he loved. Herendra’s father has been asking his mother to leave the house. However his mother is not interested in divorce, but helpless as her husband has found another woman. He stated that the village council tried to settle the matter as his father was not anymore interested to live with his mother. The village council could do very little in this case.

3.4. Family (*nok-khung*)

Family (*nok-khung*) is made up of individuals having a both affinal and consanguineal kinship relationship. The family is the simplest and the most important primary group in any society. It is the first and the most immediate social environment that the child is exposed to. This family interaction enables the child to develop basic attitudes of life. The nuclear family consists of the husband and wife with or without
children. An extended family consists of persons with more than one generation living together with their relatives. The family is a durable group, fulfilling the basic functions of relationship, procreation maintenance, nurturing and socialization of the children.

According to Nimkoff (1950), family is a more or less durable association of husband and wife with or without child, or of a man or woman alone with children. Family is a group of persons united by ties of marriage, blood or adoption constituting a single household interacting and intercommunicating with each other in their respective social roles of husband and wife, father and mother, son and daughter, brother and sister, creating a common culture. Maclver (1931) seems to think that family is a group defined by sex relationship sufficiently precise and enduring to provide for the procreation and upbringing of children. Families differ considerably from one region to another, one generation to another and from one culture to another.

In the social fabric of Riang society, the family is the nucleus. It is through family that Riang society presents itself biologically and culturally. The Riang family consists of members related to each other by blood, marriage and adoption. In a Riang society, the family has patrilineal continuity, each generation being linked to the next in a genealogical succession through males. The position of father in the family carries the highest authority and his decisions are regarded as final in all matters. The honor, prestige and the success of the family solely depend on him. The Riang have strong feeling of family attachments among themselves. Both husband and wife share the burden of running a family. The husband is the head and decision maker. Most of the family members are dependent on each other for support.

A Riang family usually comprised of grandparents, husband, wife, married or unmarried children and grand-children. Practice of adoption is prevalent in case the couples are barren. In each generation, a man brings his wife to his father’s house. As the
family grows, a new house is built for the additional members. But there is no such established social order that the pattern of family should necessarily be of the joint type. A large family sometimes breaks because of personal clashes. It was also a practice that where there were many members in a family, the eldest son or whoever first entered in the marital stage, establishes a separate household in order to avoid inconveniences such as overcrowding and intolerance. In a Riang family, the bride is introduced to the family traditions and practices mainly by the mother in law. Residence after marriage is patrilocal. A married couple lives with their parents for some years and raises their children to an age and then move out to establish a separate house. The father of the family provides needed resources to begin a new life for their children’s family.

The grown up sons help their father in jhum cultivation, construction of house and other household activities. In the same way, grown up daughters help in cooking, fetching water and collecting firewood. On the event of the death of father the responsibility of the family fall upon the widow, in case of adult sons are not available. The widow will consult the close relatives and takes the burden of overall maintenance of children. In case the son is grown up he takes the responsibility of the whole family including the widowed mother. If son is not of age the close relatives of the sandai on the paternal side assumes the responsibility of taking care of the family, till the child attain adulthood which is known as sandaisowmi.

A Riang family (nok-khung) entails four basic principles which can be interpreted as four functions. They are

- to propagate progeny to have kin.
- to attain virtue.
- to educate children in Riang culture.
- to live amidst paddy and richness.
The above principles adumbrate the basic needs of a Riangok-khung, which are fulfilled through marriage, performance of ritual, enculturation and labor for its perpetuation of nature and abundance in the family. This is so because the traditional Riang as jhumias as solely dependent on nature for their sustenance.

3.5. Inheritance

As a rule of inheritance the family property passes through the line of males and remains confined among the sandai, a man, his sons and brothers, father’s brother’s sons and their grandsons and so on, but exclusively to the exclusion of the women. In the event of a man having no male child, the sandaican bequeath a share to a married daughter living permanently in that family. The rest of the property passes on to the deceased man’s brothers and their children, failing, to distant sandai. On widowhood, a woman is entitled to a very small share of her deceased husband’s property, provides she continues to live in her deceased husband’s family under the care of the sandai and does not remarry. The jhum land can be inherited by an individual as per the customary laws of the Riang in patrilineal line and in this case the general rule of inheritance plays an important role.

Riang society being a patrilineal society, inheritance transmitted in the male line. In the absence of monetary economy, the property of a Riang usually consists of both movable and immovable possessions. The movable property may include musical instruments, different kinds of ornaments, utensils and animals. The immovable properties include Jhum fields, cultivable plots, farms and house site. Women are not allowed to inherit any property except a small share at a time of marriage which they carried with them as a form of bridal items. The gifts she receives during her marriage will be carried along. The gifts like blanket, wine were gifted by the bridegroom’s
relatives. The bride was welcomed by some necklace made of silver coins if they could afford if not any other pearl items to welcome her to the groom’s house. The Riang follow the patrilineal system of inheritance in which the sons inherit the property of the father. The sons also bear the responsibility of looking after their parents.

3.6. Adoption (bisakroirimiorhasaharini)

When a Riang couple does not have a child of their own, adoption of child is done. The Riang believe in the principle of adoption (bisakroirimiothasaharini). The principle of adoption of any boy to any clan through the performance of sandaiharimirite and worship of a female deity Songruma shows the flexibility of family and kinship structure. Bera (2010) reports that, an instance of almost similar type of adoption has been shown by Kandre (1967) in his work among the Yao, a hill tribe inhabiting the southern fringe of the Chinese area. In the event of the adoption among the Riang the adopted son loses all socio-ceremonial ties with his biological parents, his natal sandai and his own kin group owing to his assimilation to the kinship structure of the new family and the new sandai. It is preferred that the boy to be adopted should come from one’s own sandai.

Adoption is recognized in Riang society. It is permitted in the case of barren couple, a maiden, a bachelor or a widower. The economic condition of the adopter is taken into account. The adopter child ceases his relationship with his original parents. If the child leaves the family of his adopted parents he loses the right of inheritance of property of the adoptive parents. A couple having their own child can also adopt children. Adoption is not complete until the ritual Panjihahraino in the presence of relatives and villagers. The boy, after adoption, takes the clan name of the man who adopts him. If the boy is the member of the same clan, no ritual performances are
observed, otherwise *sandaiharimi* is observed in the presence of an assembly of the elderly members of all the clans and the village headman, where the biological father of the boy ceremonially hands over his son to the man who adopts him. Thus the boy being absorbed in the new family becomes the legitimate heir of the man who adopts him. Adoption of child is permitted from another community. An adopted child can marry in his natural father’s clan, but outside the family. An adopted child enjoys equal rights with that of other children of the family. In case he is older to the other children he enjoys the rights due to the eldest son. He enjoys equal rights with rest of the children in his adopted family.

**Bachelors’ Dormitory (Duaingnak)**

It was a custom to have a bachelor’s dormitory (*duaingnak*) in every Riang village. *Duaingnak* now is a defunct institution. The Riang Dormitory was to be constructed at the middle of a village. In design it looked like a dwelling house. All adolescent boys used to stay there under the supervision of an elderly bachelor. The *duaingnak* was the center of all the socio economic and cultural life. At *duaingnak* knowledge and skills were imparted to the young people. These skills included warfare, hunting and fishing techniques and all the other skills necessary for a Riang way of life. The young people were disciplined and trained. Gossiping, singing of follores, story–telling and playing of musical instruments constituted as a part of dormitory life. Riang folklore was handed down from generation to generation. The dormitory was like a camp or an outpost for common defense of a village. It had a great importance in the past. But now the importance has been lost. In the present age most of the youth are staying at hostels, schools and colleges to continue their education. These days one can hardly notice *duaingnak* in any Riang village.
Riang society is undergoing a rapid transformation and this change has a profound effect on their lives. With the passage of time, Riang family has undergone changes. Riang families more than ever are grappling with changes taking place in the field of economics, culture and education. Riang family structures are altered to cater to demands of the time. The existence of age-old primary relationships among the members of the family has been distorted or weakened due to the mobility of the family. The family is fragmented as members stay out of home or village for purpose of studies or employment. The family as a corporate unit of economic production hardly exists, as all members are not equally engaged in the same stream of economic pursuits. They are now engaged in different fields where all pursuits may not be necessarily economic. The possibility of working together in the *jhum* has been reduced do to work at office or at other gainful employment.

From the field observation the researcher found that the Riang prefer to live in nuclear families. This attitude is emerged mainly due to the financial burdens that each family undergoes. The additional reason they offered were related to relationships. In a joint family, there are occasions of tensions caused by womenfolk and it gets worse to the point that they find it difficult to lead a peaceful family life. Hence they prefer to live separately giving less opportunity to have such quarrels. Riangs who get even a small job move to nearby cities in order to provide a better educational choice for their children. Many Riangs expressed that they don’t have enough land to *jhum*, besides *jhum* does not provide enough income and food grains as before to manage the affairs of the family. Riangs are forced to look for a secondary income to survive. Riangs are more and more realizing the need to educate their children. Riangs are willing to make huge sacrifices to educate their young ones. The Riangs who are living at the interior villages do not want
their children to go to jhum. They want then find another source for their livelihood (data based on personal interview).

Socialization happens mostly outside the village as children leave the village at an early age for the sake of education. The age of children leaving the villages are even reduced to (in some cases) three years. The data shows that many children leave their home and stay in a hostel; in a house of a relative or a friend; or live in a rented house to avail the facilities of modern education. There are about 114 children from a very rural setting at hostels which are about 35 kilometers away from their village. Efforts are made by the Government agencies to bring primary education at their door steps but that does not yield the desired result mainly due to lack of committed and trained teachers. Awareness has created a determined choice among the Riangs to educate their children. This has even become a priority for many Riangs. They are willing to send their young ones to hostels cum schools run by Tripura Tribal Area Autonomous District Council (TTAADC) and Christian missionaries.

Semi urban youth prefer to be in cities within the state or in other cities for their education. A few youth were sent abroad by Christian missionaries for their education. Many who have finished their college have found a job with the Government and often they too find a plot in the city to settle down. Traditional way of socialization and religious instruction which are done at home and at village dormitories is been replaced by modern education. Many Riang youth choose professional courses and enter in specialized fields. Many Riangs have gone into service and hospitality sector. Many are able to find a job either within or outside the state. The young people get no opportunity to learn their traditional folklores, stories and even religion. They indulge in entertainment like the rest of the world. In the changed circumstances, the kinship structure stands no exception for perceptible modification. The primary kinship structure,
the kinship including co-operation among the kin groups are observed to have been changing to a certain extent owing to dispersal of its members in different fields and places.

The displacement of family in various places, as a consequence of outside employment in economic pursuits has further weakened the Riang kinship structure and their relationship. With the spread of education and modern value system, there has been a growing individual economic interest. The obligatory kinship duties, intimacy and a sense of belonging to oneness as kin group have undergone deterioration in the changing economic scenario. In the changing face social scenario, bonds of kinship has become less effective and the compulsions of kinship morality is less binding. Many of the youth from the villages are found in cities for education and are getting settled down. The families have become more independent and small.

The status and role of the father, mother and children are very clear in the traditional family. Husband and wife work together in bringing up their children. As wife and mother, women play a major role in running the household, cooking, cleaning, washing and feeding children. The wives also go for gathering firewood, roots and all that is available in the forest. Daughters are also taught the above activities from their young age. During the busy agricultural season when both parents are fully engaged, the daughters are left in charge of the household and they also look after their younger siblings. In the family, father is the most respectable person, whose decision is honoured by all.

The field data shows that people in both the villages prefer to live in nuclear families. People move to cities in search of education for their children and for job. Even in villages nuclear families have become order of the day. The families are small and the average size of the household in both urban and rural is 4.75 and 5. The study reveals
that more and more people desire to have nuclear families. The obligatory kinship duties, intimacy and a sense of belonging to oneness as kin group have declined in the changing economic and social scenario. Bonds of kinship have become less binding so too the moral ethos.

At the family level, the extended family structure has been under a considerable process of breaking down resulting into the formation of smaller units. This has led to the formation of nuclear families. It is evident from the empirical study conducted in several villages. The clan rituals, which could consolidate the members of respective clans, have almost ceased to exist. The intensity of the sandai bond has been lessened and ritual for the animation of relationship among the agnates is not performed these days. The institution of marriage also witnessed changes in the light of the form of marriage. Marriage by capture, intrusion and elopement are superseded by arranged marriages. There is a decline in the frequency of parallel cousin marriage and that has resulted in the weakening of the sandai bond of kinship structure.

The empirical study reveals that Riang family has been witnessing transformation. It is noticed that the joint families are disintegrating into nuclear ones. As a consequence of increase in family size, conflict among brothers and non-availability of land for plough cultivation has weakened the clan and family bounding. The core of sandai relationship is the familial kin form which is slowly disappearing to the transformation that taking place within the community.

The introduction of formal education, employment and new religious practices has weakened the traditional way of Riang marriage and all its original characteristics. Every custom and ritual has become a fusion of tradition and modernity. The spread of education has also brought in new value system that includes a move towards individual freedom and less dependent on the group for decision making. The obligatory kinship
duties, intimacy and a sense of belonging to oneness as kin group are slowly and steadily disappearing. The bond of kinship has become less binding. The process of transition from the old order to the new has set among the Riang with number of developments. The Riang society is no longer static; it has changed and is changing.