CHAPTER-V

Role of Kin in Socio-religious Occasion

This chapter is a supplement to the previous one. The roles and function of different kin in various socio-religious occasions are mainly discussed here with an analytical approach. I include here the role and function of kin performed in different rites of passage. I advertently avoided the beliefs and customs while narrating the performances and activities of the kin in various sacrament rites. The closeness of relationship among the jñati, kutum and attiya class of kinsman are also created through the performance of these rites. Birth, marriage and death are the three decisive moments of life cycle met in each and every family. The need for kin are then realised. Their participation gives a picture of social network of role relation and also helps one to understand the rights and duties of the kin towards each other.

Among the Hindus the sacrament rites and norms are referred as Samskars. The term sanskriti (culture) is derived from samskar, meaning ritual performance. In the different rites of passage the samskars (set of norms and values) are performed. In the Hindu sastra, samskar are dasabidha (ten in number). These ten samskars are performed for eholok (this world) where as Sraddha (funeral ceremony) is performed for parolok (other world) i.e. for the dead person. In course of time most of these samskars are either becoming obsolete or are not observed today. I have included an analytic attempt to discuss only the performed sacrament rites of today and briefly mentioned the name of the obsolete one, as heard from both the castes under study. While carrying out the work I have noticed that most of the Samskars are either not existing or present in a truncated manner among the lower Bagdi caste as compared to Brahman under study. Refer figure 5.1.
DASABIDHA: SAMASKAR OF THE BRAHMAN

SASTRIYA ACHAR

Birth

Marriage

Death

BEFORE

AFTER

1. GARBHADHAN
2. PUMSAVAN
3. SWANTONAYAN
4. KARNAVEOH
5. CHURAKARAN
6. UPANAYAN

MAYLI OF STRI ACHAR

Birth

Marriage

Before

PANCHMRIT

SADH

Other samaskar, vide sociogram

Figure No. 51: FLOW CHART SHOWING DASABIDHA SAMASKAR OF THE BRAHMAN
I. RITES RELATED TO BIRTH:

A. BRAHMAN

Whatever rites followed in relation to birth are performed mostly for the first issue. All rites are not performed in true sense for the second or subsequent issue. Secondly there is also variation in performance of rites from a male to a female child.

The wife is treated with care and enough precautions are taken when the first sign of pregnancy is obvious. Due attention is paid in respect of food and nutrition in accordance with financial status. The reason is very simple. Every one hopes that the first child would be a son and so she is treated with greatest consideration. Above all if she delivers a male child her position in the family is assured as she has brought he bangsadhar (male line of descent). Both among the urban and rural Brahman the child is delivered in the hospital. No dai (mid-wife) was found to handle the delivery of a Brahman family under study. In sequential order, the different rites performed before and after birth with special emphasis about the participation and role played by the kin has been discussed below.

(i) Rites performed before birth:

No ceremony is observed till the fifth month of the pregnancy. However among the Brahman garbhadham, pumsavan, simantonnyan are the three rites in the Dasabidha samekar, which is found to be contextually obsolete. They say that it is written in the panjika (almanac) and in the purohit darpan (Textual norms and customs of the Hindu Sastra). Panchamrita and
Figure No. 5'2: SOCIOGRAM SHOWING PARTICIPATION OF KINSMAN IN RITES PERFORMED BY THE BRAHMAN BEFORE BIRTH
Sadhbhakhan are the two rites performed in detail by the Brahman under study. Refer figure 5.2.

PANCHAMRITA :

It means Pancha (Five) Amrita (nectar). The ceremony is performed in the fifth month of the pregnancy. The date is fixed from the Panjika (almanac). Here the pregnant women is given five amrita (nectar) i.e. doi (curd) dudh (milk) ghee (clarified butter) modhu (honey) and chini (sugar) in front of house deity by her evasuri (mother-in-law). Then she mixes them and offer her bouma (daughter-in-law) to drink it. Some offer their bouma a new saree which she is supposed to wear on the ceremony. The rice-pudding known as payes is served in front of her alongwith five varieties of delicious food including fish and vegetables. Five married women who have already (eostri) delivered a child and a small boy accompany her while eating. These women are mainly jnati, like husband's kaxma (father's younger brother's wife), jethima (father's elder brother's wife) or ja (husband's brother's wife). Among the rural Brahman some neighbouring gram attiya only the female are also invited on this occasion. This is performed only for the first issue with the desire to have a son.

SADH :

This ceremony takes place in the seventh month of the pregnancy. Some also do it in the ninth month. But in case of threatened early delivery most people prefer to perform this on seventh month. Sadh means wish, desire. It is the desire of pregnant women to have delicious food item and to fulfill her desire to have a healthy male child. For the first issue this occasion is celebrated with grandeur. The ceremony emphasizes biological union of husband and wife and resultant product thereby. It is repeated on each pregnancy of the woman. On this occasion the pregnant is presented a saree by her parents-
in-law and she eats her afternoon meal with her jnati, attiya and kutum with seven varieties of items which include vegetables, fish and sweet. Her mother-in-law first puts the food in her mouth taking all the cooked items one by one served in front of her. Thereafter one male child is fed by the pregnant woman, then she takes the food from the female jnati, attiya, and kutum present on the occasion. The invited bless her with dhan-durba (paddy & grass) and give her saree or piece of cloth as a token of blessings. All of them pray for normal and safe delivery of the child and expects the child to be a son. On this occasion invited are mostly female. Among the rural Brahman, the female gram attiya are also invited. In absence of husband's mother the Sadh-bhakhan is performed by some elderly female jnati like husband's kakima or jethima. After the Sadh ceremony is performed in her in-law's house, Sadh is offered to the pregnant woman by her mother followed by other elderly women who are her nearest and dearest kin.

As we observe these samskar and rites related to birth process as performed in Brahman family both rural and urban, it is clearly evident that all these are intended for the well being of the child as well as for the desire of a male baby. The female kin mostly the svasuri (mother-in-law) plays active role in rites like Panchamrita and Sadh-bhakhan. The All other scriptural rites which are very private in nature, and supposed to be performed by husband. These are virtually absent with changing pattern of life style in this era of modernisation. With the breaking down of joint family system today's modern husband and wife living in a nuclear family are either unaware of all these rites and their concept or left with no time to abide by these rites. Secondly with the glow of scientific education these rites and their concepts donot convince them at all. As a result they donot feel any urge to follow them. Lastly financial constraints donot allow many of the families to perform these samskar with grandeur, they are meant
Figure No. 5'3: SOCIOGRAM SHOWING PARTICIPATION OF KINSMAN IN RITES PERFORMED BY THE BRAHMAN AFTER BIRTH
to be performed of. They often do not perform them or follow them in a brief manner.

(ii) Rites performed after birth:

Among the rural Brahman till today there is a separate hut or room where the new born baby and the mother are kept till the asuch (pollution period) is over (twenty one days for the girl and one month for the boy). It is said as sutikagriha (labour room). But among the urban Brahman due to lack of accommodation the baby and the mother are kept in a separate bed and after the pollution period is over the total used clothes are washed and then used again.

Here also most of the rites are performed for the male issue. Only few of them are performed for female child. The associated rites and dasabidha samaskar are performed with an idea to infuse the good qualities of human life (manus janma) so that he can attain the maturity in true sense. However many of the rites are contextually obsolete in this era as they leave no meaning today, therefore no longer performed now. Two of the dasabidha samskar like jatakarma and nishkraman are found to be obsolete. This is because the delivery of the child now a days takes place in the hospital as I have already mentioned in the preceding para. These two samskars are performed as soon as the child is born (jatakarma) and when the child is first taken out of the house itself (nishkraman). So, the question of performing these rites do not arise. The following associated rites have been performed by the rural and urban Brahman under study is discussed below in sequential order (by age). Refer figure 5'3.

(1) SETERA PUJO - On the sixth day after birth of the child the mother is given a bath with hair washed and nails cut. The mother is made to wear a new saree or a freshly washed one; and the baby a new dress. Then some bandhu (friends),
para attiya (neighbours, friends) are offered with a Pan-Supari (Betel leaf & areca nut) and sweets; worship of goddess Sasthi is the main event of this ceremony, and done for the well being of the child. This Puja is performed both for male and female child.

(2) ATKALAI - This ceremony is observed to be performed only among the rural Brahman under study. The neighbouring children are called and sweets, eight varieties of parched Kalais (gram seed), toys are distributed among them. It is performed only for male child and distribution is made either by grand-father or the father of the new born son.

(3) NATTA - On the ninth day of the child's birth this rite is performed. This is performed for both the male and the female child. It has been found to be observed only among the rural Brahman. On this occasion the mother is allowed to sit with her child in front of the door of the sutikagrīna (labour room). This is the first step of the child's contact with the sunlight. The Urban Brahman do not perform such rite. Here generally the old woman of the family takes the child and sit outside.

(4) NAM KARAN - It means the name giving ceremony and take place on tenth or twelfth day of the birth. It is one of the dasbidha samskar. In front of house hold deity a firm pyre is made with sand and bricks. Then Pat-kathi (jute-sticks) are burnt in it alongwith ghee (clarified butter) and khai (puffed rice). Then hundred and eight bel pata (apple-wood leaf) is burnt one by one enchanting hundred and eight name alongwith.Name with which the flame of the fire rises at highest level is selected for the child. This whole ceremony is performed by the mama (mother's brother) of the child. Mama firstly chooses the hundred eight name keeping in view the date and
day of birth of the child, and the father's and mother's name as well. Generally he fixes two names one Dak Nam (by which child is called on) and the other Bhalo-Nam (the name by which he is recognised at School, College, Services and also among friends). A child is also given a third name which begins with the alphabet in accordance with the zodiac sign. This is the name which is kept by the astrologer who makes his thikuji/qusti (horoscope). The ceremony is celebrated for the first issue, that too if it is a male child. For other issue rituals are performed in same way but the celebration is avoided. Among the urban the process of Namkaran is not so elaborate. Here also the rites of Namkaran is performed by mama (Mother's brother) on the same day when Sasthi Puja is done. Through discussion and consultation with all other family members, the Dak-Nam and Bhalo-Nam are fixed. However urban Brahmans were seen to perform on the same day of Anna prasan to be discussed later.

(5) SASTHI PUJO : - On the twenty first day in case of a girl and one month in case of a boy, the mother comes out of the sutikagriha (labour room) in case of a rural Brahman and out of the used bed in case of a urban Brahman, she then anoints herself with mustard oil, turmeric and saha, wears a new cloth. The same is followed for the baby and performed by the elder female member in the family. Then the total house is sprinkled with cowdung and water which ends the pollution period; the mother and the child are free to move at any part of the house. The rural Brahman besmears the floor of the hut with cowdung and water. (if the floor is made of mud). Then an offering is made to goddess Sasthi for the well being of the child. Thus it ends the first month of the infant's life.

If the child is a son, the rites of the sixth, eighth ninth, twenty first or thirtieth days are performed with much
care and glamour and more especially if the first child is a son.

6) **ANNAPRASAN OR MUKHE BHAT** - The ceremony symbolise the first feeding of the rice and performed on the even month i.e. sixth and eighth month for a boy and on the odd month i.e. seventh and ninth month for a girl. It is another *dasbidha samaskar*. The ceremony performed with the main idea to introduce the child to all *jnati*, *attiya*, and *kutum* classes of kin. The urban Brahman celebrate this function with grandeur. They print invitation card and call their guests on the occasion. However it has been noticed, that urban Brahman celebrate the occasion with the grandeur for the first child, be it a son or a daughter, on the contrary the rural Brahman perform the ceremony with less grandeur for female child and some even avoid the ceremony totally for a girl child; in lieu they prefer to go to a holy place and feed the child with rice. But in any of the cases *mama* (mother's brother) feeds the child first. If mother does not have any brother then *dadmasay* (mother's father) or mother's *jethtuto/khurtuto* (father's brother's son) *bhai* feeds the child. In this occasion all the nearest *attiya*, *jnati* and *kutum* of both husband and wife are invited. Rural Brahman invites their *gram attiya* and *para attiya, bandhu* etc. The number of inviteds depends on the financial abilities of the family.

7) **CHUDAKARAN** - Is one of the *dasbidha samaskar* supposed to be performed in the third year or in any odd year subsequent to it and done only for a boy. But in any case it should be performed before *Upanayan* (holy thread ceremony) for the Brahman. On this occasion the boy is shaved of his hair leaving behind a bunch of hair in the middle, termed as *tiki* or *sikha*. It looks a *chuda* (helmet) hence the samaskar is called *chudakaran*. This rite is done for the long life and well being of the child.
The operation of shaving is actually done by a barber in presence of a pu'rohit (priest) who utters holy mantra specified for the occasion. There is no particular function of kin except the person concerned, i.e., the napit (barber) and pu'rohit (priest). Sometime jnatis are invited for an afternoon meal. Among the urban Brahman this samaskar is obsolete, however the Brahman who are engaged in priestly profession, follow this samaskar.

8) VIDYA ARAMBHA/HATE KHADI - The ceremony marks the beginning of child's study performed after completion of five years of child's age. But these days child goes to school at early age even at the age of three, hence among the urban Brahman this ceremony is performed on the third year of the child. This samaskar is performed by Brahman pu'rohit (priest) who in front of Saraswati (goddess of learning) writes Bengali alphabet on the ground/slate slab with a chalk, and the child is made to over-write. The whole activities signify Vidya-arambha with the blessing of devi Saraswati (Goddess of learning) and thereafter the child is permitted to go to school. The child's thakurdada (father's father) or dadamasay (Mother's father) or jetha (father's elder brother) or kaka (father's younger brother) takes the initiative. This is done both for boy and girl. But it has been observed that among the rural Brahman the ceremony is hardly performed for a girl child.

9) KARNAVED OR KANPHUTA - Another dasbidha samaskar is karnaved (ear-piercing). Among the rural Brahman this ceremony is very important and is associated only with the son. The daughter's ear is pierced without any ceremony. The ceremony is almost the same as marriage except that there is no bride. All the jnati, attiya and kutum are called and served either with lunch or dinner. The gram-attiya, bandhu also parti-
icipate in this ceremony. It takes place at any age after two but before Upanayan (holy thread). Among the urban Brahman this ceremony is avoided.

10) **UPANAYAN (HOLY THREAD)** - This function takes place between five to fifteen years of boy's age. Either rural or urban Brahman a boy must have a poita (holy thread). It is one of the important daśbidha samskar. Every Brahman has to perform this rite. Here again through series of customs, the ceremony is performed; however I am avoiding the description of customs and belief in detail, as they are not my interest of discussion. As the participation and involvement of kin is concerned, all the close attiya, jnati & kutum take active participation in the various function like adhibash, sradh, visit to the idols, etc. A grand feast is given to attiya, jnati, kutum, bandhu and gram attiya. Presents to the boy are offered by the inviteds as a token of love and blessings.

It is observed while carrying out studies that the samskar or rites of urban and rural Brahman are almost similar. The main difference lies at the degree of celebration. Obviously the urban Brahman being more rich celebrate the occasion with more glitter.

The urban Brahman being more educated, more modern and more practical either eliminated or briefed many occasion like atkalsai, Namkaran, Chudakaran, Karnavedh, nishkraman and jatakarma.

**D. THE BAGDI**

The Bagdi are the localised endogamous caste, and they bind the members in a network of kin-tie. Each house (separated nuclear unit arising from joint family) are found to include members who are agnatically related to each other. They
may share same premises or may reside in different para (neighbourhood) or even in different village altogether. These members are found to participate in important ritual activities like marriage and birth and in the crisis period such as in the event of death. Only the participation and function of the kin in different socio-religious and ritual activities are discussed in this section.

To start with the rites in relation to process of birth I have already mentioned earlier that the lower Bagdi Caste are unaware of the most scriptural rites as described in dasabidha samskar of Hindu shastra. They are not aware of these samaskar and ritual ceremony as they are ignorant of the concept and idea behind this rites. They are illiterate and never allowed to read and learn Hindu shastra (script) and were kept oppressed by the higher castes and were made to work as labourer. Secondly, they being always economically suppressed, cannot afford to have the luxury of celebrating the rites in relation to birth process which appear to them a natural phenomenon, and donot require a samaskar to be performed for its smooth occurrence. Lastly the Brahman and other higher castes perform the rite in connection with birth for well-being of the child. The Bagdi being an endo-gamous community believe that the child who is coming, is one of them; thereupon its well-being is granted. No Samskar is required for its well-being. In connection with birth the Bagdi celebrate one ritual ceremony which they refer as Sadh, the meaning of it is quite different to that of the Brahman. They perform it only when the pregnancy become obvious i.e. three months and call their nearest and dearest kin. The idea of celebration is to inform his kin about the pregnancy in order to welcome the child who is coming and going to be one of them in the near future. While discussing the various associated dasabidha Samskar and rites in relation to birth I have mentioned that lower Bagdi Caste are ignorant of most of the rites as described in Hindu dasabidha samskar. On the eighth day of the
DASABIDHA SAMASKAR OF THE BAGDI

Sastrīya achar

Birth Marriage Death

BIBAH SRADHA

Before After

Meyli or stri achar

Birth Marriage

sadh(before)

*other samaskar, vide sociogram

Figure No.5: FLOW CHART SHOWING DASABIDHA SAMASKAR OF THE BAGDI
birth of the child the sasthi-puja is performed followed by function known as Att-kalai, when eight varieties of peas and pulses either fried or water soaked are served to invited children of the deiji (agnatic kin) and gram deiji (village agnate). Refer figure 5'5 and 5'6.

During the fifth or sixth month Mukhe-bhat, rice feeding ceremony is performed. It is performed before the child's teeth come out when the mama (mother's brother) feeds the child with rice mixed with milk. This rice and milk mixture is then added to the food prepared for the invited guest and served thereafter. The invited guests are mostly deiji (agnatic kin), neighbours, kutum (uterine and affinal kin), the bandhu (friends), belonging to the other sub caste, gram deiji (village kin) and the dharamdeiji (ritual kin). However my informant explained me that the celebration of mukhebhat are not always performed in each family for each child.

Most of them go to their village shrine, and offer rice mixed with milk to the deity, then the mama (mother's brother) feeds the child with the prasad (offering of rice to the god) and thereafter the prasad is served to the nearest agnatic kin (deiji) residing in the same village. The main reason of performing this function in low profile is the low economic status of the Bagdi. Secondly in most of the family the Mukhebhat (rice feeding ceremony) ceremony is customarily performed only for the first male child.

Thus, after the discussion it is clear that the Bagdi perform less rites and samskar in contrast to the Brahman when asked, the Bagdi are unaware of most of the rites. They do not even know the meaning or have any clear concept about them. The reason may be due to profound ignorance about the Hindu sastras,
Figure No. 5: SOCIOGRAM SHOWING PARTICIPATION OF KINSMAN IN RITES PERFORMED BY THE BAGDI AT BIRTH, MARRIAGE AND DEATH

- Day of marriage
- next day

\[ A = \text{bride's house, } B = \text{groom's house.} \]
Secondly if they know the rites, then also the economic instability do not allow them to perform. Thirdly this is an important mark of difference among the Brahman and Bagdi. From time immemorial the Brahman occupy the foremost position in performing the various ritualistic activities. The Hindu Sastras are laid only for them as they are considered to be the religious caste and hence occupy the topmost position in the caste hierarchy. Some of the dasbidha samskar like Upanayan, Chudakaran, Karnavedh is performed only by the Brahman. A Brahman has to have a sacred thread. But the Bagdi occupying the lower most position are not allowed by the Brahman itself to perform all the Samskaras. This is the structure of Hindu society.

The Bagdi perform only one dasbidha samskar related to birth i.e. annaprasan; Sadh bhakhan is another rite associated to birth and performed by the Bagdi. On the contrary the Brahman performs many Samskar and rites related to birth; Namkaran, Annaprasan, Churakaran, Karnavedh, Upanayan are some of the dasbidha samskar performed by the Brahman. Other rites like Panchamrita, Sadh-bhakhan, Setera pujo, Attkalai, Natta, Sasthi pujo, Hate khadi are performed by the Brahman for the well being of the child. All the rites are not followed in true sense for second or subsequent issue like panchamrita, namkaran and annaprasan. Then, there is a variation of rites for the male and female child as churakaran, Karnavedh, Natta, Attkalai, Namkaran, Upanayan is performed only for the male child. On the other hand since the Bagdi perform only two rites, they repeat it for every issue be it a girl or a boy depending upon the financial status of the concerned person. Moreover, in the process of time most of the rites have become obsolete or not observed today. Finally, it is interesting to note that many of the samaskars or rites are amalgamated and performed together in one occasion, such as namkaran is performed on the day of annaprasan, vidyaramba is initiated by hate khadi on the day of saraswati puja, Karnavedh, Churakaran on the day of Upanayan and Upanayan on the day of...
marriage. The reason behind this might be modernisation which made people more busy and cannot perform all the rites on separate days. Secondly they can not afford to perform many rites so frequently.

I have further noticed that through the performance of these sacrament rites a close network of relation is established among the jnati, kutum and attiya class of kinsman of the Brahman and deiji of the Bagdi. Secondly, the involvement of kin in various rites shows his importance, existence, rights and duties towards each other in the family. In the annaprasan ceremony the presence of mama (mother's brother) is very important. He is the person to feed the child with rice for the first time. This is same for the Bagdi too. Then again in panchamrita and sadh, the sasuri (husband's mother) plays a very important role. She performs all the customs associated to it. This shows her love for son's wife, care and desire to extend the family. It is her duty and right towards her bouma (son's wife). On the eighth day of poutra's (son's son) birth, the grandfather tries to share his happiness by distributing sweets among the neighbouring children. It is his right and duty. In the upanayan and annaprasan a grand feast is given where the attiya, jnati and kutum are invited. Here the aim is to inform the one's own people about the inclusion of new member in the family and that of son's attainment of maturity.

Secondly, it is not possible for the attiya, jnati, kutum and deiji of the Brahman and Bagdi who stay in distant places to visit each other regularly. This sort of participation helps them to meet each other, may be after a long period of time. Hence the lost relationship is traced, which in fact becomes memorable and once again come close to each other.
Among the Bengali Brahman under study the marriage can be classified into two broad divisions, Sastriya rites and Meyeli achar (rituals observed by the women folk). The Sastriya rites performed are Kusandika (oblation), Laja homa (fried rice oblation), Saptapadi gaman (seven steps going together), Pani grahan (accepting hands of bride), Dhriti homa (oblation of holding) and Chaturthi homa (fourth oblation). However these Samskar are performed by the purohit (priest). I am interested in finding the participation of the kin in the marriage and only the Meyeli achar has been taken into account. Although the Sastriya rites are same throughout the Brahman caste but the Meyeli achar have the endless variation.

They vary from region to region and from caste to caste and even from group to group within the same region. As I have worked among the East Bengal Rarhi Brahman, only their Meyeli achar associated with marriage has been included in this section. Only the difference of participating kin's activities and roles have been recorded so as to make the differentiation between the rural and urban Brahman. The similar approach has been initiated for the lower Bagdi caste as under study. The rites below have been discussed in order of sequence as they come in a marriage ceremony (figure 56).

(A) BRAHMAN

(1) MANGALACHARAN:

As soon as the negotiated marriage is finalized and there is no chance of refusal from either side, from the bridegrooms house, a purohit (priest), his guardian like
"Only Rural Brahman

'o'-day of marriage
't'&'t'- respective day after 'o'
'-' before 'o'

Figure No.5'6: SOCIOGRAM SHOWING PARTICIPATION OF KINSMAN IN RITES PERFORMED BY THE BRAHMAN AT MARRIAGE
baba (father), ma (mother) borobon (elder sister) bhognipati (sister's husband), jetha/jethi (father's brother/ his wife), piso/pisemasay (father's sister/husband) maa/mami (mother's brother/wife) go to the bride's house. On this day, the Biyer din (date of the marriage) and Lagna (time) is fixed in concurrence of both sides. On that day the bride's parents call the available jnatis, attiyas, kutums and bandhu to witness the auspicious occasion. The rural Brahman invite their gram-attiya and para-attiya on this day. This ritual marks the settlement of the marriage.

(2) PAN KHILI:

After the Mangalacharan is over, or some good day on the basis of almanac first at the house of groom then the bride, Pan-khili ceremony is performed. This ritual is marked by singing folk songs by the family women comprising of the jnatis, attiyas and the bandhu. No male member is found to participate on this occasion. The children are also seen to participate in this ritual. This ritual is featured by offering pan (betel leaf) with supari (areca-nut) chun (slacked lime) and pan masala (other ingredients, added with betel leaf) to the god and goddesses and then to the invited married women.

(3) ADHIBAS:

The day prior to the marriage is termed as Adhibas, when a series of Sastriya and Meyeli achar ceremonies are performed, both at bride's and groom's place. Presents of toilet clothes, mustard oil and turmeric paste touched by the groom are sent from bridegroom's house to bride's place. The male member usually the jnati type of kin of the groom take those articles. Meanwhile the unmarried girl and the married women whose husbands are alive go to the nearby pond
or river to fetch water in an earthen pitcher (Kalsi). These women are mostly jnati, attiya and kutum in urban set up, where as in cases of rural Brahman the gram and para attiya i.e. the women of the neighbourhood take much of initiative in performing these ceremonies. After collection of water the women folk return to the bride's residence and besmear her with the paste of mustard oil and turmeric sent from the groom's house followed by pouring of collected water. Before that the barber comes and does her nail cutting and token hair cutting. Similar nature of Meyeli achar takes place at groom's place too; but performed in a very brief manner in case of urban Brahman.

(4) DHADI MANGAL:

This is the ceremony performed both at bride's and groom's place on the day of marriage at early morning before the sunrise. The doi (Curd) Chira (beaten rice), Khoi (puffed rice) and some misti (sweets) are offered to the house deities and then taken by the bride and the groom along with their bhai (brother), bon (sister) and other jnati, attiya and kutum classes of kin.

(5) Vidhi Sradha:

On the marriage day, in the morning this is performed by bride's and groom's baba (father) in their respective home. This is to make all the ancestor upto Naypurush (nine descendants of ancestor) aware about the marriage and seek their blessing. In absence of father or otherwise, this ritual may be performed by any male jnati of bride/groom like borodada/choto bhai (elder brother/younger brother), kaka (father's younger brother), or jetha (father's elder brother).
On the day of the marriage the mother of the bride accompanied by other jnati, attiya, kutum, bandhu of the family go from door to door of the neighbours with a pitcher and a winnowing fan. The housewives pour water in the pitcher; some durba (grass with three blades), little sinduz (vermilion) and some grains of paddy. These all she accepts as a token of blessings for her daughter's happiness of post marital life, then five women of the jnati, attiya and emni attiya poured water and other items over the head of the bride. Then in the evening some women and the girl of the family decorate bride with ornaments, facial make-up, gorgeous saree and a mukut (crown made of Indian cork) on her head. After completion of bridal decoration she is made to sit on a place where she acknowledges the guests and accepts the gift. In urban set up, influences of modernisation is often seen, like bridal decoration is often performed by professionals. Sometimes it is also noticed that both bride and groom refuse to accept gift from the guests.

On the wedding day the bridegroom along with the jnati, attiya, kutum, bandhu starts for the bride's house. Among the rural Brahman gram-attiya and para-attiya are also included. Except ma (mother) any one can go. However the number of persons accompanied by the bridegroom depends on the economic condition of the bride as well as the groom, since one way travelling expenditure is carried by each. If the groom and bride's house is near by then all the members of the borjatri return home on the same night leaving some bandhu and a jnati with the bor (groom) at bride's place.
This ceremony is performed by the bride's mother and, in absence of mother, by kakima (bride's younger brother's wife) or jethima (bride's elder brother's wife) or by any elderly female jnati of the bride. This ceremony marks the acceptance of the groom at bride's house. The other female jnati, attiya and kutum, those who are eyo-stri (married) also take part in this ceremony.

After the baron, the groom is taken to the place where the marriage ceremony is to be performed. Bride's ma-baba (mother-father) give him some gold item like chain or ring and now a days wrist watch as a token of blessing. He then wears the clothes given by bride's parents. Then the bride is brought in front of the groom with her face covered with two betel leaves. She is seated on a flat wooden seat called piri carried by two or four persons like mama (mother's brother) and bhai/dada (brother) of the bride. Then the sat-pake ghera (move seven time around the groom), mala badal (exchange of garland), subhadrishti or mukhachandrrika (exchange of looks) are sequentially performed. All this are done in presence of jnati, kutum, attiya, bandhu and gram attiya (among the rural Brahman) of the bride and the groom. The persons who have joking relationship with the bride and the groom take active part during these ceremonies. Now some vedic rituals are performed by the purohit (priest). Among the rural Brahman kulopurohit (priest of the clan) is seen to perform the vedic rituals during marriage.

It is done by the baba (father), jetha (father's elder brother) kaka (father's younger brother) mama (mother's brother)
of the bride. If the father is not alive the daughter is brought in maternal house, then mama does the Sampradan.

(11) **SAJYA - TOLAN** :

On the following morning after the marriage is over, another set of rituals are performed. In Sajya tolan the unmarried girls and married women of the family comprising of the jnati, attiya and kutum take active part. In this they demand money for cleaning and dressing the used bed. This ritual marks the ceremony when the girl is given away to the bridegroom.

(12) **BASI - BIYE** :

It marks the ceremonial putting of the vermilion on the parting of the hair of the bride by the bridegroom (sindur dan). Here playing with the gold ring of the groom in a hand-made small pond is held by the women of the family. This very day, towards evening the bridegroom returns to his house with the bride.

(13) **KANAYA - VIDAY** :

This is the last ceremony to be observed in the bride's house. The bride is made to sit on mother's lap and any jnati from groom's house give the mother a new saree and seek permission to let her daughter to move to her husband's house. The daughter then meets all jnati, attiya, kutum of her family present there and bids good-bye to all.

(14) **KAL - RATRI** :

The couple do not see each other's face on this night. As soon as she reaches her in-laws' house and the svasuri (mother-in-law) receives her and the jnatis, attiya, sees her face and bless her, she is separated from her husband for that night.
BOU - BHAT :

As the name suggest it is the ceremony when the bride is supposed to cook or touch the cooked food which is ultimately accepted by all the jnati, attiya, kutum, bandhu i.e. all the guests invited on that occasion. This ceremony is generally performed during the lunch time and is supplemented by another ritual called Bhat-kapor when husband offers a plate of rice and new saree and make the statement in front of Einsman that from this day he has taken the responsibility of her food and clothe. Thus the Bou-bhat ceremony signifies the acceptance of the bride to be a jnati and her incorporation in to her husband's kul.

After the male members and the children completing their meal the bride join the women kin for food, and by this way she receives an introduction to her family. Among the rural Brahman the active participation of gram and para attiya is observed on this occasion.

(16) PHUL - SAJYA :

It is the last ritual ceremony of the marriage held on the same evening of the Bou bhat and usually preceded by feast.

On this occasion the bed of the newly wed couple is decorated with flowers by both male and female members of the family belonging to younger generation. The bride as well is decorated with flower ornaments by the female kin of the family who are mostly of same age group as that of the bride. From the bride's house her parental jnati, attiya, kutum and bandhu bring presents of toilet, clothes, shoes, sweets and flowers known as tattwa on the occasion of phul sajya.

Among the rural Brahman under study similar nature of participation of kin in this occasion is observed.
DIRA GAMAN:

Among the urban Brahman after marriage second time the bridegroom goes to bride's house within the period of ten days. Since he goes for the second time the function is termed as *Dira Gamon* (second arrival). This is also known as *Dasa Mangal* or *Chat-urtha Mangal*. The bridegroom stays merrily with his wife's brother and sisters and gets acquainted with rest of the *jnati*, *attiya* of the bride. The similar custom occurs among the rural Brahman.

Thus, on the occasion of marriage the *jnati* as well as the *attiya* of the bride and the bridegroom are very important. The only person of importance for the ritual of *sampradan* ceremony from *matrikulis* mother's brother who often takes initiative in many other activities. The *kutum* do not have any particular role to play but their presence grace the occasion. The quantum of related and unrelated kin depends on the economic condition of both the bride's and the groom's family. There is no remarkable variation of *meyeli achar* and participation of kin among the rural and urban Brahman under study. The rural Brahman include the *gram attiya* and *para attiya* more than the other relatives who stays in distant places whom they often can not afford to call, vis-a-vis these relatives even though invited can not join such occasion from far off place due to financial constraints. But some time it has been noticed that inspite of low economic status people are compelled to invite large number of guest to keep up the family prestige.

BAGDI

Here also only the participating members of the related and unrelated kin i.e. the *deiji*, *kutum* and *gram deiji* and
dharam deiji in the marriage ceremony have been accounted. The Sagdi show much interest on gram and dharam deiji. They are not kin but treated more than the kin. Here their participation is more than one's own deiji and kutum who stay at distant places. Moreover the meyeli achar in marriage is less as compared to Brahmans under study. Same as the case of aastriya ritual. This may be due to their lack of knowledge about Sastr- as, and profound illiteracy. The function and role played by kin and pseudo-kin members in different stages of marriage is stated below in order of sequence. Refer figure 5’6.

1. **PANPATRA** :

   It means finalization of marriage negotiation and occurs at bride's house. Agnatic and uterine kin of the bride participate. Among uterine kin of the bride, mama (bride's mother's brother) if any one is available should be present on this occasion. His blessing is very important, and among the agnatic kin bride's jetha (father's elder brother) must be present. Unrelated kin as dharam and gramdeiji (ritual and village kin) are invited, the neighbours belonging to other subcastes or castes also participate. Pradhan gives his final consent for the marriage.

2. **BOR-JATRI** :

   Wedding procession of the groom's party go to bride's house on the marriage day. The number of the participation of the invited guests depends on the economic condition of the groom as well the bride's house. The bride's house has to entertain the whole party with food and accommodation. Inviteds includes the agnatic, uterine, affinal kin of the groom's parents and the groom himself i.e. the deijis and the kutum and also the unrelated ritual and village kin, as well as the unrelated neighbours.
3. BARON:

It means the acceptance of the groom in the bride's house just after his arrival. Bride's mother (groom's svasuri) and female elder deiji as kakima, jethima, and uterine kutum, like mami, masi all accept the groom by sprinkling water with the mango leaves and offering him milk and sweets before entering the house.

4. MANPATRA:

It is offered to the pradhan of groom's village. Pradhan is leader of the dal (caste structure unit of the Bagdi at the village level) and his function is socio-ritual. Pradhan who accompany the groom from his village to bride's house is offered by the bride's father, an earthen pot filled with rice, two banana, a betel leaf, with areca nut and dakshina (ritual payment) for the permission to commence the wedding.

5. HASTA BANDHAN:

Bride's left hand and groom's right hand are tied with a gamccha (towel). In front of bride's and groom's father, then pradhan of groom's village ask whether bride's father has fulfilled the demand of the groom, on the basis of the answer, the priest would tie their hand. The whole marriage is then performed by the priest in front of all. The next day the groom returns to his village with the bride and his agnatic and uterine kin.

6. HATEHARI:

This symbolise reception party in the groom's house. All the deiji (agnatic kin), kutum (uterine and affinal kin) of the groom is invited along with the pradhan of the groom's village, the gram deiji (village agnates), dharam deiji (ritual kin). The bride serves food to the invited guests and the pradhan is served first.
Thus from the above discussion it is quite evident that the marriage function in case of the Bagdi is very brief and simple. The marriage ceremony is basically based on the meyeli achar. The sastriya rituals are performed mostly by the priest. The father of the bride and the groom play a major role in the wedding ceremonies and above all the Pradhan of the village does play a very important role.

Secondly the total marriage depends on the consent of the Pradhan (head) of the village. The presence and absence of the kin who stay in distant places depend on the economic status. The deiji staying in the same village take active part. The gram and the dharam deiji also involve themselves as actual kin in such occasions. In absence of father, the senior most male member of the bansa (lineage) performs the task. The total strength of invited agnatic, uterine and the affinal kin depends upon the economic condition of the family.

Therefore, the rites associated to marriage of the Bagdi and urban and rural Brahman show that the total ceremony is divided into two parts sastriya (scriptual) and meyeli achar (women custom). Only the women custom have been discussed in details to see the participation of the kin. In sastriya ritual the main function is of the Brahman purohit (priest) and so it has been purposefully avoided.

The Bagdi-marriage is very simple and brief whereas the Brahman's marriage involves many customs and lasts for at least ten days altogether. In Bagdi marriage father of the bride and the groom holds a very important position. Secondly the total marriage depends on the consent of the Pradhan (head) of the village. The presence and absence of the kin who stays in distant place depend on the economic status. The
deiji staying in the same village takes active part. The gram and the dharam deiji also involve themselves as actual kin in such occasions.

Among the Brahman, jnati's and attiya's participation in some stages of marriage is very important. There is no particular function of the kutum but they have to be invited to keep up the family pride. From matrikul (mother's clan), mama (mother's brother) takes initiative in many activities but among the Bagdi he does not play any important role during marriage. But he has to be invited. Above all, for both the Brahman and Bagdi the number of invitation of the kin depends on economic position of the family. But now-a-days among the urban Brahman it has been noticed that people are compelled to invite large number of guest, in order to keep up the family prestige though economically incompatible.

III. RITES RELATED TO MRITYU/MARAN (DEATH):

A. BRAHMAN:

There is however no variation in rites associated to death among the urban and rural Brahman. In this section the role and function of the participating related kin and unrelated kin members during the mourning period and Sradha (funeral ceremony) have been taken into account (Figure 5'7).

After the death of a person, some kin man or person of the same caste remain close to the dead man and keep touching his body. The gram and para attiya too are included in case of rural Brahman. The son of the deceased person or his near relatives or known person of his own caste remove the body to the cremation ground. However no man outside the caste is allowed to touch the dead body. The chele (son) of the deceased usually put the fire into the mouth. In absence of chele, only jnatis can lit the fire.
Figure No.57: SOCIOGRAM SHOWING PARTICIPATION OF KINSMAN IN RITES
PERFORMED BY THE BRAHMAN AFTER DEATH
Among the sons, the eldest if not present the youngest has the right to light the fire. After cremation the sons are made to wear new borderless dhoti and white thread or a piece of cloth around the collar with a piece of iron attached, during the whole mourning period. The mourning period lasts for ten days among the Brahman. The widow is made to wear a white saree with or without a border after her sons return from the cremation ground. This dress she wears for the rest of her life. She is not allowed to wear anything of red colour. During the first four days when father dies the mother and son and when mother dies father and son cannot take rice or any cooked food. They subsist on fruits and milk. All the kin can eat cooked food but no fish or meat is allowed till the period of mourning is over. On the fifth day, the mother or father or eldest son can cook only atap chal (sun-dried rice) with ghee (clarified butter) in an earthen vessel and eat only once before the sun set. The unmarried daughters eat same food and observe the total mourning period as she is in the same bangsa. But she cannot have the food cooked in earthen vessel by her brother or mother. She cooks and eats separately. For a married daughter the period of mourning is for three days. On the fourth day she calls a napit (barber), cuts her nails, takes a fresh bath, put sindur (vermilion) and oil in her hair and wears a new saree if affordable or otherwise a washed saree. Then she offers water to the departed soul, by enchanting the mantras. On the ninth day, the total family of the deceased person including all his jnatis call a barber, shave the beard, cut the nails, bathe and wear washed clothes. The chele (son) is supposed to shave his head too and wear a new dhoti. The male jnatis are also supposed to have hair cut.

On the next day, those who assisted in the cremation are given a feast.
On the eleventh day, the Sradha is performed. This is performed by the person who has lit the fire to the mouth of the deceased. However, a large number of people, all the kinsman and nikat attiya, jnati, kutum, gram attiya, para attiya are fed. No meat or fish is allowed on this occasion. Brahman pandits are also invited, number being odd as seven or nine or eleven and are well fed with care and paid with a Gita, pieces of silver and some token money as dakshina. The dakshina amount depends on the economic status of the family. After the Sradh is over in the night the borochele or meye cook the food that is liked mostly by the deceased person and carry to a remote area with a light burning. This food is offered to the departed soul. If the person is childless, the bou or bor or any jnati offers the food. The next day all the jnatis are invited and the eldest of the jnati gives the permission to the family members to eat the fish and all jnati and other relative then sit together and have their afternoon meal.

The chele (son) are not supposed to have meal in anybody's house being invited in any occasion. They can accept invitation only after one year. He can not eat cooked items outside except jnati till one year. After completion of one year chele performs a yearly Sradh known as Batsarik. Then he has no restriction and continue his normal life. The days are usual again without any restriction.

B. BAGDI :

The Sradha ceremony among the Bagdi is performed by the boro chele (eldest son) of the sansar (family) if the death of his parents occur. In absence of son his brother's son will
perform the purificatory rites. During the seven days for female and nine days for male known as chunch, i.e. the pollution period, the sons have to cook habishyi i.e. to cook his own food and eat it before sunset. The eldest son and his brother have to perform all the activities on the Sradha ceremony as directed by the priests. The pollution period is observed by each and every member of the goosthi (agnatic localised lineage). After the end of the pollution period the day before the Sradha ceremony, the son shave and cut the hairs. Other female members of the house also cut their nails and have purificatory bath. The houses and utensils are cleaned. The other members of the goosthi too have purificatory bath and clean the house (figure 5'6).

When the death occurs pradhan of the village plays an active part. He helps in cutting the wood for the funeral pyre and joins the funeral procession to the Samsanghat (cremation ground). He takes a leading role for conducting various ritual functions which are performed during cremation and on the day of the Sradha ceremony, the pradhan, eats first cooked rice, before any other invited guests are served. This marks the end of pollution period. Then all the invited agnatic uterine and affinal kin are served by the sons. The neighbours belonging to the same or different sub caste, gram deiji (village agnates) and dharam deiji (ritual kins) are invited on this occasion.

The kutum (ulerine and affinal kin) of the deceased also observe the pollution period by eating only rice and vegetable cooked. As the period is over they clean the house and have purificatory bath, which marks the end of restriction. My informant further explained, that mama (mother's brother) holds a very important status among them, though a kutum he is mostly treated as a deiji. When he and his wife dies, his bhagne (sister's son) and bhagni (sister's daughter) observe chunch i.e. pollutory restriction for three days and also perform purificatory rites after the pollution period is over.
They cook habishyi. (cook his own food and eat before sunset) during the chunch period.

He finally added that the number of invited, related and unrelated members depends on the economic condition of the family, but the deiji (agnatic kin) are almost all invited, since all are supposed to observe the pollution period.

Therefore the rites associated to death in some respect varies among the Bagdi and Brahman. For the Bagdi the total mourning period in case of male is nine days and female is seven days. But among the Brahman for both male and female the total pollution period lasts for ten days. This period is called chunch among Bagdis and termed asouch among the Brahman. The pollution period is observed by the jnatis and nikat attiyas (near relatives) in case of Brahman and among the Bagdi by the members of the goosthi (agnatic localised kin), deiji and also the kutum. Brahman kutum do not observe any pollution period but they are invited during Sradha ritual. For both the Brahman and the Bagdi the mama (mother's brother) plays an active role in the rites associated to death. During the Sradha occasion the number of invited guest depends on the economic position of the family. The Bagdi put more importance in calling the deijis who stay nearby in the same village. The members of the bansa who stay in distant places are also informed but they rarely join the deceased family, as the financial constraints do not permit them to visit from distant places.

IV. RELIGIOUS OCCASION

The religious occasion has been divided into two: communal and regular. Regular, which occurs frequently and
the participating kin is the self, who perform the puja. Communal which occurs once in a year where a mass participation is required. On this occasion all the kin meet each other. The information about regular religious occasion has been taken from female ego as they perform more puja than the male. But the communal religious festival which occurs once in a year is arranged in a broad scale by an association or club or an institution. However, here I have only accounted the function and participation of the kin on such occasion avoiding the total activities and ritual celebration performed during these function.

A. BRAHMAN :

The Brahman are by nature religious caste. So "baro mase tero parban" i.e. in twelve month there are thirteen festivals, is a common say. However, the rural Brahman perform regular puja more commonly than the urban Brahman. This is due to the influence of modernization and westernization in urban class.

(i) COMMUNAL RELIGIOUS OCCASION :

These are universally celebrated traditional religious festival. All the government institution, educational centre, nongovernment office remain closed on these religious occasions. Here only the participation of kin has been looked into to find out the values behind each festival among the urban and rural Brahmans.
The most important communal religious festival is Durga Puja, held in autumn according to the almanac. This festival is not only celebrated by the Brahman alone but by the total Bengali speaking community. In rural areas i.e. in villages it is still seen to be patronised by the zamindar or landlords and was participated by all section of people. Besides the zamindar, the clubs also organize the festival with public subscription in rural area as practised in urban area.

Each and every member in the family is gifted with new clothes by the head of the family. Secondly, the jnati and the nikat attiya (near relatives), present new clothes to their attiya, jnati and kutum on this occasion. Among the rural people under study, it has been noticed that they buy new clothes only once in a year and it is on this occasion. Specially the children receive large number of new dresses from the jnati, attiya and kutum.

During this occasion the bhai/bon (brother/sister) who live in distant places come to their parental houses and meet each other. During Durga Puja grand cultural functions are arranged in towns as well as villages like jatra (theatre), song, musical dance programme, fairs, etc. which are actively participated by all members of the family.

After the immersion of the image the day is celebrated as vijaya dasami and the celebration period continues
till the Kalipuja. The younger kin touch the feet of the elder to receive blessings and good wishes. The bandhus, among the urban Brahman visit the known person's home and embrace each other. They are treated with sweets. Among the rural Brahman similar customs are followed by the para and gram atriya. Those kin who stay outside are blessed through letter. This is not only religious but vital socio-cultural festival. The Vijaya dasami celebration marks the sign of unity and integrity in the society. Secondly this occasion brings all the distantly located relative closer, whom they do not meet very often. The Durga Puja celebration in the life of Bengalis plays an important role.

2. **KALI PUJA OR SHYAMA PUJA**

After three weeks of Durga puja, Kali puja is celebrated according to the almanac. It is again not only celebrated among the people under study but every Bengali Hindu participates in this religious occasion. The value behind this occasion is to drive away the mischievous spirits of darkness by illuminating the lamps and grand display of crackers.

No such specific participation of the kin is found. The Stri (wife) offers a puja in the pandals for the good of all the members of her family. The children and elder enjoy the festive occasion by burning crackers.

3. **SARASWATI PUJA**

The goddess of learning is worshipped on this occasion. It is a communal as well as individual festival. All the educational institute including dance, and musical
institution worship the goddess Saraswati. It is held on the last Week of January or middle of February based on the date of almanac. Every Hindu whose children are getting education, performs this puja. The ma (mother) along with her children participate in this puja.

4. GANESH PUJA :

This is also a communal religious festival. In the urban area this puja is celebrated. It is organised with public subscription. The business community generally perform this puja and all the members of the house actively participate.

They send the prasad (food offered to god) to the bandhu/bandhav who stays in the para (neighbourhood). Among the rural Brahman only those person who are businessmen perform this puja. Only two houses were seen to celebrate this puja in rural area under study.

5. JAGADHATRI PUJA :

This is also communal religious festival, held after Kali puja. Only one or two club organize this puja. No particular participation of kin is noted. In rural area jagadhatri puja was not celebrated in the place under study. This difference shows that the celebration of jagadhatri puja is not popular among the Bengali as a whole. They said that in fact this puja is considered to be the starter of communal religious festival among the Hindus. Before which all the religious festival occur in respectable family only.
6. **BASANTI PUJA** :

This is also one of the communal puja performed by the Brahman under study. Basanti is another form of goddess Durga. It is celebrated in the month of Chaitra-Baisakh (March-April). The date is fixed in the almanac. In Jaynagar two club organize this puja every year, At Barasat only one club performs Basanti Puja. No particular participation of kin is noticed. The organizer itself arrange all the work and the people visit idol in the evening with the friends and family members.

7. **AKSHAY TRITIA** :

This I have included in the communal category because it is celebrated in many temples but also by the shopkeepers. It is an auspicious day. The shopkeepers offer puja to lord Ganesh on this day and begin another business account for the new year. The date is as in the month of Baisakh-Jaistha (May).

8. **JANMASTAMI** :

This is held in the month of Sravan-Bhadra (August-September) and the date is as in the almanac. It is the birthday of lord Krishna. It is celebrated in temple where lord Krishna is worshipped. The elder female member of the house keep fast. The Brahman believe that every woman should once in their life perform the Janmastami puja.
9. JHULAN

Celebrated in the month of Sravan (August). This is actually festive of young boys and girls. They prepare a jhula (swing) for lord Krishna and Radha and offer them sweets. At Jaynagar a big mela (fair) is organized on this occasion.

10. BISWAKARMA PUJA

The Brahman say that Biswakarma is the god of implements. In Jaynagar there are many small workshops like cobbler shop etc. Secondly, it is a great festival for the rickshaw puller. This festive is wide spread at Barasat also. It is celebrated in the last day of the month of Bhadra (17th September) every year. In fact the communal festival starts from Biswakarma puja, for the year. No particular participation of kin is noted except that the owner of the factory, workshop, keeps fast till the puja is performed.

11. DOL JATRA

It is celebrated in the month of Chaitra (March). Each and every member besmear with abir (colour). Actually it is a colourful festive of not only the Brahman but the total Indian society. At Jaynagar there is a temple of Radha-Ballav Jew where on this occasion a great fair is organized. Here the Brahman take active part along with the other castes. They offer sweets to lord Krishna on this occasion.

12. CHARAK PUJA

This is held on the last day of Chaitra (mid of April). It has been observed only from Jaynagar. A big fair is organised.
No particular kin participation is noted. It is celebrated communally.

13. **RATHA JATRA**

This is celebrated in the month of *Asar* (May-June). It is associated with lord *Jagannath*. He is seated in a chariot pulled all over the places. Particular kin participation is not noted.

14. **GOSTHA MELA**

It is celebrated in the temple of *Radha-Ballav* every year on the first day of *Baisakh* (14th April). Here again a great mela (fair) is organised by the committee members of the temple and active participation of huge mass is seen. Lord *Radha Krishna* is offered on this occasion. This has not been observed at Barasat.

(ii) **REGULAR RELIGIOUS OCCASION**

(1) **LAKSHMI PUJA**

Every thursday, the married women just at the dusk perform this puja. *Lakshmi* is considered as the goddess of wealth. After puja she exchanges vermillion with other married women. Among the rural *Brahman* joint family all the married women of the family sit together and read the *Lakshmir Panchali* (the story behind performing this puja in a rhythmic manner). Individual housewife of the urban *Brahman* do this puja.

It is also celebrated communally on the date based on an almanac organised with public subscription. This occurs on the full moon day and called as *Kojagari Lakshmi puja*. On the same day both rural as well as urban *Brahman* perform this puja in their respective house. The married women of the house
keep fast till the puja is over and then distribute the Prasad among the bandhu-bandheb (friends) attiya, jnati and kutum who stay near by. The rural Brahman include the gram and para attiya and celebrate this occasion joyously.

(2) SATYANARAYAN BRATA :

This puja is performed on Saturday along with the Sani-puja or separately for the peace, long life and to drive away illness from the family. Usually, the house-wife perform this puja. When it is organised on a large scale, jnati, attiya and kutum who stay near by are also invited. The rural Brahman perform more frequently than the urban Brahman who have rather become atheist by the influence and effect of modernization. Secondly, for the rural Brahman this sort of celebration acts as a social get-together which the urban Brahman do not bother as they remain busy most of the time.

(3) SANTOSHI PUJA :

Some people believe in spontaneity of goddess Santoshi and there by they pray to her for fulfilment of some of their desires. As a mark of this, about sixteen fridays are observed and when the desire is fulfilled they call five boys and some children, give them sweets and fruits and stop performing the puja further. This is called as Ujjapan (completion) This is performed by both the rural and urban Brahman.

(4) SIV - RATRI :

This occurs on the new moon night in February or March. The unmarried girls, married girls and unmarried or married boys perform this puja. It is mainly performed by the married girls for the well being of their husband and the unmarried
girl to get a husband like lord Shiva. In rural area fairs are organized as Shiv-ratri mela.

(5) **MANGAL CHANDI BRATA** :

The offerings to goddess of good wishes and well being is made by the housewife (Stri) for the safety of the family. This brata is more often seen among the rural than the urban Brahman. This is done on Tuesday.

(6) **SANI - PUJA** :

The god of better living and safe life is offered every Saturday by the housewife (Stri). Some time many attiya, para and gram attiya are invited during this puja, when it is arranged in a large scale.

(7) **KARTICK - PUJA** :

This is held on the last day of the month of Kartick (17th Nov.) every year. It was found to be celebrated among the rural Brahman under study. It is associated with the raising of good quality of paddy harvest, the female member of the family takes active part in organising this puja.

(8) **MAKAR- SANKARANTI OR POUHS PARVAN** :

It is celebrated on the last day of Poush (14th January) On this day the male member of the family take a dip in the Ganges river known as Tarpan. It is done in order to offer water and remember the ancestors. They offer sweets and pray for the well being of the family in front of their house deity. It is celebrated both among the rural and urban Brahman.
Figure No. 5'8: SOCIOGRAM SHOWING KIN PARTICIPATION OF BRAHMAN & BAGDI ON REGULAR RELIGIOUS OCCASIONS.

* based on almanac
Moreover regular offering is made to the respective Guru of the individual like Ram Krishna, Baba Loknath, Anukul Thakur, Ram Thakur, etc. by the people under study (refer fig 518).

B. **BAGDI**: 

The Bagdi are the Hindu, localised, endogamous, lower caste. But they are very pious. Ritual activities are seen to be performed by all. The joint participation in various religious occasions by the individual is very much noted. The unrelated kin designated as the gram and dharam deiji are the first ones to participate in such occasions. Not only the Bagdi but the other caste of the same ritual status is also seen to participate. This joint participation proves the 'intra' and 'inter' caste kinship relationship.

Here in this section an attempt has been made to show the participation of kin in various religions occasions.

A. **(i) COMMUNAL RELIGIOUS OCCASION**:

The communal religious occasion among the Bagdi are Durga puja, Kali puja, or Shyama puja, and Saraswati puja. It is performed in similar way as the Brahman. These are organized by the club with public subscription in their para (neighbourhood). The Bagdi however go to same para (neighbourhood) to play the drums during these occasions. All the members of the family participate in such occasions. Since the detail is similar to Brahmans, repetition is avoided.
(ii) **REGULAR RELIGIOUS OCCASIONS** :

They are quite different from the Brahman. A detailed account with the participating kin has been discussed here.

1. **GOLA - PUJA** :

It is performed on the first day of Baisakh (April) and offering is to goddess Lakshmi (goddess of wealth) by the village Brahman priest; prasad (food and fruits offered during puja) is distributed to the members of the sansar (family) and closely related agnatic kin. But sometime the puja is performed in the house of the senior most member of the bansa (lineage) and all the members of the related sansar (family) participate and bring cooked food and fruits as a mark of offering for the puja.

2. **RANNA - PUJA** :

It is performed on the last day of the month of Bhadra (August-September). Its goddess is Manasa (goddess of snakes); the seniormost female member of the sansar (family) on the day prior to the puja day cleans the house. Next day she makes offerings to the goddess Manasa and then go for cooking. Almost all the daijis are invited on this occasion. The number depends on the economic status of the family. The female leaves the cooked food overnight and then the next day she distributes among the invited of the house. The members of the bansa (lineage) are invited, even those who are not in good terms are also invited in order to protect every member from the snake bite. The idea behind this worship is to keep all kin group safe.
3. **LAKSHMI - BARALAKSHMI**

The puja is performed on the night of Kali puja in the month of Kartick (October-November) and based on almanac. Lakshmi (goddess of wealth) is to be worshipped and Baralakshmi (goddess of poverty and misfortune) is to be driven away. The main part of the puja is performed by the head of the family. An image of Baralakshmi is made with cow-dung wrapped with a rag and placed on a kula (winnowing fan). The head of the family places the winnowing fan on his head and along with the other agnatic kin take it away to the outskirt of the village where the image of the Baralakshmi is burnt. They return home and make offering to the Lakshmi idol made of pituli (rice flour paste). After which Brahman priest worship the deity of goddess Lakshmi. The members of the sanse (lineage) visit each other's house and are served with prasad (offering of sweets and fruits to god).

4. **BONAI**

She is the goddess of harvest and the celebration is performed in the last three days of Pousa (December-January). A pali (a dome like structure where grains are stocked) is made and filled with rice. A pirah (small wooden plank) is placed below it. The pali represents the goddess Bonai which is then kept in the centre of the courtyard and is worshipped by female head of the house for the consecutive three days with
with fruits and sweets. On the fourth day i.e. 1st day **Magh** (mid January) the *pali* is taken to the village pond. They also take *all* the offering made to the god on this day. The senior most member of the family offer these sweets one by one to the spirit of common ancestors. After which they return home, distribute sweets and visit each other's house. The visitors are also agnatically related members.

5. **MARAR – SANKRANTI/ POUSH – PARBAN** :

The Bagdi celebrate this occasion similarly like Brahmans. The difference in observance is that they make sweets and offer to the god, then distribute among the *deijis* and *gram deiji*.

6. **CHARAK – PUJA** :

It is celebrated on the last day of **Chaitra** (mid April) Each and every female member of the family make offering to lord **Shiva** in the village shrine.

7. **GAZAN** :

It is held on the day of **Shiva-ratri**, i.e. in the month of **Phalgun** (February-March). The boys dress up like **Shiva**, **Parvati** and sing and dance. This occasion continues for three days. The females make offerings to lord **Shiva** in all the three days.
However in their respective home, they daily pray and make offering to Kali, Laksñmi Durga and Shiva. This is performed by the women folk of the family. Refer Figure 5.8.

Thus, through these various ritual occasion the agnates keep close contact and co-operation with each other. However, it is seen that the affinal or uterine kin do not participate in individual ritual occasion but if they happen to be present, they too co-operate and visit each others.

Therefore, the religious occasion of the people under study have been analysed in two parts communal and regular. Among the Brahman, during communal religious festivals especially in Durga puja, the members who stay outside come to their parental home and a sort of get-together of the family members are held once in a year. But among the Bagdi this sort of get-together is not noticed. It is also an important festival for them but not necessarily they should come to their agnates on such occasion. This is again due to low economic condition which do not permit them to move form one place to another. The communal festival like Ganesh and Jagadhistri puja is not at all performed by the Bagdi. Another important point is that the Bagdi in this communal festival play drums and are paid by the organiser. But if they play the drums in their own para (neighbourhood) puja they do not accept any remuneration. They are given good amount of prasad (food offered to god) so that they do not have to eat in their own house. However the regular religious occasions are different among the Bagdi and the Brahman. The rural Brahman and Bagdi perform regular religious occasion more often than the urban Brahman. The reason behind this is that through these occasion they keep close contact and co-operate with each other. Among the Bagdi affinal and uterine kin do not participate in such religious functions.
but the other classes of kin including deijis, dharam deijis and gram deijis who live close to each other in the same area or village are seen to participate and cooperate each other. Among the rural Brahman attiyas, jnatis, kutums who live close to each other are the participants in the various religious occasion. The gram attiyas and para attiyas participate more frequently than the attiya jnati and kutum. The Bagdi do not have any particular guru like the Brahman, so they generally do not worship any such guru unlike the practices seen among the higher caste. But various observance of regular religious occasion prove that Bagdis also believe in ritualistic activities which establishes that they are also a part of the Hindu society.

Hence the total discussion portrays a thorough picture of the participating kin and their individual role and function in different rites associated to birth, marriage and death of an individual along with the religious occasion.