Moanaro Ao

Photo Essay – Traditions of India

Marriages in Nagaland

Moanaro Ao – a highly qualified professional from IIT – who is also a newly wed Bride from Nagaland, explains how Christian marriages in her state are still deeply rooted in local tradition. The article is illustrated with images from her own wedding

Bride and Groom getting ready for the Ceremony

Nagaland is a state of 16 major tribes. Marriage in Nagaland is centered around many interesting beliefs, facts and principles that are rooted deep within the tribal people of the state. All tribes follow different traditional morals of marriage. They follow exogamous principles – which mean the people of same clan do not marry each other. As far as the marriages of Nagaland are concerned, the different tribes have different beliefs and morals, which they maintain with dedication and commitment.

Driving to the Church

After the coming of Christianity to Nagaland, marriage takes place in the Church. Before marriage, the boy and the girl get engaged with the consent of the parents and the Church elders. The date of marriage is fixed during the engagement. During courtship the boy and the girl and their respective parents has to live a clean and prayerful life.

(L) Groom Arrives with Red carpet Laid on the Hill (R) Bride Arrives with Bridesmaid from

Besides that in case of Ao tribe if the boy and the girl belong to different village, they follow a tradition in which the girl is adopted by a known family from the boy's village. This gives security as well as new family. Everything in life whether it be a good name or shame will be borne by the new family. The girl also makes a new girl friend (called *tembar* in Ao) with whom she will keep the relationship

as the closest friend in good and in bad times forever till death departs them. All these arrangements are made by the boy’s parents and the ceremony is done few days before the wedding according to the convenience. The new friend becomes her bridesmaid on the day of marriage.

(L) Holy Vows

(R) Outside The Church

On the day of Marriage, the Bride and the groom take vows in the presence of the family, relatives, Church elders and friends. The ceremony is ministered by the Pastor of that particular Church. After the solemnisation, everyone go to the groom’s residence for the feast and bless the newly wed.

(L) Procession going down the hilly terrain

(R) Reception Committee

Some of the useful old tradition is still maintained though there is a total modernisation in the lifestyle of Nagas in this century.

My husband, Mr. Supong and I got married on 05-03-09 at Chuchuyimbang BaptistChurch – Moanaro Ao