



# MARRIAGE FIELD DYNAMICS AMONG THE APATANI TRIBE OF ARUNACHAL PRADESH

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**Abstract:** Marriage is a pivotal social institution that operates within both spatial and symbolic boundaries. The concept of the "marriage field" refers to the distance between a bride's natal home and her marital residence, influence. This study attempts to understand the impacts of determinants in the marriage field within the Apatani community in Arunachal Pradesh, focusing on how traditional values interact with modern changes. The study has a sample size of 100 individuals from old Ziro, assessing factors such as age, education, socio-economic status, occupation, and cultural norms to understand evolving marriage patterns in the community. The findings indicate that age, education, and socio-economic status significantly influence marriage distances. Educated individuals, wealthier families marry beyond local communities to enhance social capital and economic standing. The study shows how the Apatani community is negotiating the shifts in marriage fields. The traditional norms such as tribal endogamy and clan-based exogamy still shape marriage practices. However, a more diverse marriage networks is seen among younger generations. The marriage field concept thus offers a valuable framework for understanding the spatial and symbolic dimensions of marriage in rural and indigenous societies.

**Keywords:** *Marriage field, Apatani community, Arunachal Pradesh, socio-economic status, education, cultural norms, modernity, traditional practices, inter-tribal marriages*

## I. Introduction:

Marriage, in its various forms, stands as one of the most universal and fundamental social institutions across human societies. It is an enduring cultural practice that serves as a primary means for the regulation of family structures, creation of social bonds, and transmission of cultural values. Marriage is often perceived as a matter of love or personal choice, but sociologist terms it as a system where men and women take on specific role which is socially sanctioned and culturally organized. This institution involves the formal union of individuals, usually of opposite sexes, to form a household, form a family, and share economic, emotional, and social responsibilities. The union of marriage is not isolated to the two individuals it involves their respective communities creating social relations.

The term "marriage field" has been developed as a sociological concept to capture the spatial and social dimensions of marriage alliances. It refers to the network of relationships and the territorial boundaries within which individuals seek marriage, with the distance between the bride's natal home and the location where she marries. The concept of the marriage field is crucial for understanding the role of geography in social relations, especially in rural and indigenous communities where the geographic distance between individuals and potential marriage partners plays a significant role in the formation of family networks. The marriage field is not merely a physical measure it also encompasses the socio-cultural and economic factors that determine the potential marriage partners available within a given territorial space. This

concept also extends to the community level, examining how the marriage field influences social cohesion, economic exchange, and cultural preservation within the larger social structure.

Many societies, of Arunachal Pradesh, have deeply rooted practices concerning who marries whom, under what conditions, and within what geographical space. These geographical implications are particularly important in the study of rural and indigenous communities where mobility is limited, with social interactions predominantly occurring within a defined territorial space. In rural communities, the marriage field often functions as a means of preserving local social structures. By limiting the marriage distance, communities maintain strong ties of kinship, inheritance, and economic cooperation. The spatial limitation helps in local social cohesion, facilitating the exchange of resources, labour, and support systems. Marriage field is not only influenced by geography, Social and economic factors such as status of families, caste, occupation, and educational background also play a significant role in shaping the distances and patterns of marriage. In urbanized and industrialized setup, with higher mobility, the concept of the marriage field may become lenient and less geographically defined. However, even in urban settings, the social networks that form the marriage field remain important, as individuals continue to depend on social connections and cultural norms when selecting marriage partners.

## II. Statement of the Problem:

Marriage, as a social institution, is a dynamic, phenomenon that changes across time, space, and socio-cultural situations. As societies undergo transitions due to modernization, urbanization, or exposure to global influences the patterns and practices surrounding marriage also transform. In this transformation, one of the most measurable aspects is the *marriage field* a spatial dimension that defines where marital alliances are typically formed in relation to the natal home of the bride or groom. This concept provides insights into patterns of mobility, spatial networks of kinship, and the interaction between social structure and spatial behaviour. Marriage field is inherently local and subjective shaped by the unique cultural, economic, and environmental factors of a specific community. It varies not only between societies but also within them, across different time periods and socio-economic strata.

Traditionally, marriage fields were relatively localized. Most individuals married within or close to their own village or region, reinforcing social cohesion and preserving customary practices. However, with the advent of modern education, infrastructural development, and changing occupational structures, the spatial extent of marriage fields has expanded in many parts of the world. Urbanization, improved transportation networks, increased literacy, and broader exposure to the outside world have enabled and, in many cases, encouraged people to seek marriage partners from distant area. In rural and tribal societies, where customary norms often maintain strong influence, the transformation of marriage fields is more complex. On one hand, these societies may exhibit resilience in preserving traditional marriage norms, favouring intra-community or intra-village marriages. On the other hand, socio-economic changes such as increased access to education, outmigration for employment, or government development initiatives may disrupt these patterns, leading to a reconfiguration of the marriage field. Thus, the marriage field becomes a crucial indicator of broader social transformations taking place in these communities.

The Apatanis residing in the Ziro Valley has an intricate social structure; they maintain a relatively self-contained and cohesive society. Marriage among the Apatani has traditionally followed certain community-based norms and rituals, including preferences for endogamy, lineage considerations, and the influence of clan affiliations. However, in recent decades, significant changes have been observed due to modern development and growing exposure which is altering the social fabric of the community. The problem, therefore, lies in understanding the extent and pattern of change in the marriage field of the Apatani community.

This study, therefore, seeks to explore and analyse the dynamics of the marriage field within the Apatani community. Specifically, it aims to investigate the relationship between marriage distance and factors such as age, education, occupational structure, and socio-economic status. The study attempts to find how marriage practices among the Apatani have evolved and what are the factors driving these changes in a rapidly changing world.

### III. Literature Review:

The study of marriage systems within indigenous communities has long been a focal point in the fields of anthropology, sociology, and cultural studies. Within the context of the Apatani community in Arunachal Pradesh, a range of scholarly works has explored various aspects of their marriage practices, socio-economic changes, and kinship dynamics.

*S. D. Choudhury (1981)* stated that liberal sexual norms of Apatani society, where premarital relationships are socially accepted and individuals have considerable freedom in choosing their spouses.

*T. K. Bhattacharjee (1992)* emphasizes on the existence of restrictions in Apatani marriages, such as prohibitions against patrilateral and matrilateral cross-cousin marriage and the strict enforcement of clan exogamy.

*K.S. Singh (1995)*, points out that while monogamy is the norm, polygamy is allowed. Marriage negotiations are more common among wealthier families, though love marriages are prevalent. Post-marriage, residence is patrilocal, and inheritance practices favor male offspring.

*T. Kani (1993)* offers a detailed account of Apatani marital customs, highlighting both the freedom and boundaries within the community. He discusses sanctioned sexual relationships and sacredness attached to them, along with strict prohibitions against marriage between specific class groups (e.g., Gyuchii and Gyuttii) and near relatives.

*P.C. Dutta & D.K. Duarah (1990)* emphasizes on the clan exogamous and tribe endogamous nature of Apatani marriages. Children from premarital relations are considered legitimate, and while inheritance favors the eldest male child, property distribution is somewhat flexible.

*M.V. Katoch (1979)* described the Apatani marriage field as a system wherein marriage choices were not solely based on romantic or individual preferences but were deeply embedded in the community's social fabric. In his context, the concept of the "marriage field" represented a defined social space within which individuals could seek marital partners. Marriage alliances were influenced by factors such as kinship ties, clan affiliations, and territorial proximity, often involving complex systems of negotiation and exchange.

*N. P. Sinha (1988)* emphasized the role of kinship and the reciprocal exchange of resources in shaping marital ties in tribal societies. He suggested that while traditional marriage systems in Arunachal Pradesh were largely stable, they were also vulnerable to external socio-economic pressures, such as land disputes and shifting power dynamics in the region.

*R.S. Thungon (2000)*, in his study of tribal societies in Arunachal Pradesh, suggested that modern educational and occupational structures were playing an increasingly significant role in altering traditional social norms. Access to education and urban centers, were beginning to challenge the rigid territorial and kinship-based rules that once governed their marital choices.

*T. N. Riba (2011)* comprehends that the younger generation's exposure to modern education, urban lifestyles, and the changing economic environment were influencing their approach to marriage. Increasing number of educated individuals were migrating for work and forming marriages outside traditional boundaries, both in terms of social status and geographical distance. This migration, leads to departure from traditional norms and represented a form of socio-cultural revision.

*B. R. Tiwari (2005)* states that as young people from the Apatani community left their villages for education and employment opportunities, they brought back new ideas about marriage, family, and social organization. This has led to a gradual transformation in the way marriage is conceptualized, moving away from a local, kin-based approach to one that accommodates external influences, including regional and national norms. He also noted that migration patterns in the Apatani community were causing changes in the geographical distance between marriage partners. As individuals became more mobile, traditional restrictions on marriage distance began to loosen, leading to inter-community marriages and the blending of social and cultural identities.

*P.D. Datta (2013)* highlighted that women in the Apatani community, who were traditionally restricted to domestic and agricultural roles, were increasingly becoming part of the formal education system and participating in the workforce. This shift is not only empowering women but also reshaping the community's marriage dynamics. According to Datta, women's increased access to education and employment gave them more support in making marital decisions, including greater freedom in choosing partners outside their immediate locality.

*S. Tamang (2019)* have explored the evolving marriage distance in the Apatani community. The traditional idea of "marriage field," which once emphasized local proximity and clan affiliation, was being replaced by new patterns of marriage distance that were increasingly influenced by educational and occupational opportunities. These new trends reflect broader shifts in the social structure of the Apatani community, where external factors such as employment opportunities in urban centers and exposure to national and global cultures are starting to play a dominant role in shaping the marriage landscape. He also emphasized that while many older members of the community still adhered to traditional marriage practices, younger generations were more open to inter-community and inter-region marriages. This trend was found among individuals who had received higher education or had moved to cities for work.

*Nanda (1986) and Kharat (2015)* highlight how marriage systems are tightly linked to territorial boundaries and kinship structures. The Apatani community, known for its distinct agricultural practices and traditional rituals, provides a fascinating example of how marriage systems are embedded within the local ecology and social organization.

*Ghosh (2013) and Tiwari (2018)* have documented how modern educational advancements, changes in occupational structures, and shifts in economic resources have affected marriage patterns in tribal and rural areas. In many indigenous communities, the traditional pattern of marrying within a local area has been disrupted by increasing access to education and migration to urban centers, leading to longer marriage distances and the dissolution of the customary geographical boundaries that once defined marriage fields.

*Mohan & Sharma, (2007)* various factors such as rising educational levels, the introduction of wage labor, and access to modern communication networks are increasingly influencing marital decisions. Educational attainment, in particular, is a significant factor that affects marriage choices; education often leads to delayed marriages and changes in the social stratification of marriage, where individuals from higher educational backgrounds may seek partners from different socio-economic strata.

*Nandy (2019) and Rai (2020)* have highlighted how occupation shifts from traditional agricultural work to more diversified livelihoods (e.g., government employment, business, and service sectors) have led to changes in both marriage practices and social hierarchies. The Apatani community, traditionally dependent on agriculture and local handicrafts, has seen an increase in occupational diversity, influencing marriage practices and kinship relations, particularly concerning marriage distance and social status.

*Ghosh & Roy, (2022)* the geographical space between marriage partners has been impacted by socio-economic changes, including increased mobility due to improved transportation and communication infrastructure, are leading to longer marriage distances.

*Tiwari, (2020)* While traditional marriage systems, especially those governing marriage distance, once ensured the preservation of kinship ties and the regulation of social roles, modern influences have caused these boundaries to blur. Increased access to education, migration for work, and the globalized media are all contributing to a broader set of marriage choices and dismantling the local marriage restrictions. The younger generations are more likely to seek spouses from outside the traditional marriage field, reflecting a shift toward greater individual choice and less reliance on kin-based selection mechanisms.

*Kharat (2015)* have focused specifically on the Apatani community and their marriage practices. Their studies have provided valuable insights into the traditional understanding of marriage fields, where local social norms, kinship, and territorial boundaries have governed the selection of partners. However, these

studies have also noted the gradual transformation of these practices due to external influences like urbanization and economic changes.

#### IV. Objectives of the Study:

- To analyse the spatial and social dimensions of the Apatani marriage field.
- To trace the transformation of marriage patterns over time in response to socio-economic and cultural shifts.
- To identify key determinants influencing the marriage field, including education, literacy, social status, economic conditions, occupational structures, and inter-tribal marriages.

#### V. Database and Methodology:

To investigate the dynamics of the marriage field in the Apatani community, with a focus on old Ziro area primary data was gathered through Structured Questionnaires, Administered to 100 married couples. Semi-structured Interviews were conducted with elders, local leaders, and younger members to understand generational perspectives on marriage choices and customs. Secondary data were collected from Published ethnographic and sociological studies, academic articles and government reports relevant to marriage systems, socio-economic changes, and indigenous practices.

#### VI. The Apatani Community:

The Apatani community, one of the prominent indigenous tribes of Arunachal Pradesh, is established in the Ziro Valley located in the Lower Subansiri district. The community is known for its harmonious relationship with nature, distinctive agricultural practices, and a rich social and ritual life that continues to evolve while maintaining strong traditional roots (*Bhowmik, 2008; Elwin, 1958*). The Apatani's trace their ancestry to a common legendary forefather, Abotani, a central figure in the oral traditions of many tribes across Arunachal Pradesh. This shared lineage fosters a strong sense of kinship and tribal unity. As per oral narratives, the Apatanis migrated from northern regions beyond the Khru and Kime Rivers. These accounts are supported by archaeological findings, such as Neolithic sites at Parsiparlo and Raga Circle, and historical remains in the Talley Valley, indicating an ancient and sustained human settlement in and around the Ziro Valley (*Dutta Choudhury, 1978; Singh, 1995*). These discoveries substantiate the Apatani community's long presence and gradual southward migration, which laid the foundation for their present cultural and territorial identity. The Apatani's belong to the Tibeto-Mongoloid ethnic stock and speak a language classified under the Tani group of the Sino-Tibetan language family. Their dialect shares linguistic features with other tribes in Arunachal Pradesh but remains unique to their cultural setting.

Traditionally, the Apatani followed an indigenous belief system known as Danyi-Piilo, which emphasizes nature worship. The sun (Danyi) and the moon (Piilo) are revered as sacred entities, and religious life revolves around rituals, seasonal festivals, and the performance of animal sacrifices to appease spirits believed to influence human well-being. The community attributes misfortunes to the actions of malevolent spirits, and rituals are conducted by priests (locally called Nyibu) to restore spiritual balance (*Taniang, 2010*). In recent decades, Christianity has also gained followers among the Apatani, largely due to missionary outreach. This introduced religious plurality, Danyi-Piilo remains culturally significant, especially during communal ceremonies and ancestral rites. Apatani society is patriarchal, with descent and inheritance passing through male lineage. The community maintains a dual-class system comprising the Gyuchii and Gyuttii classes. These are not economic strata but ritual and social groupings that guide marriage, ritual participation, and kinship behavior (*Takhe Kani, 2004*). Members of both classes live in cooperation and mutual respect; however, inter-class marriage is culturally restricted.

**Table 1: Determinants of Marriage Field of Apatani**

Category	Key Features	Influence On Marriage Field	Apatani Context
Physical Features	Mountains, hills, forests, poor terrain and connectivity	Restricts geographical reach of matrimonial alliances, promotes territorial endogamy	Marriages usually within nearby villages due to physical inaccessibility in the olden days.
Accessibility	Roads, communication networks, proximity to towns	Enhances interaction between communities, expands potential partner networks	Improved roads in Itanagar-Naharlagun region increasing inter-village marriages
Endogamy/Exogamy	Clan-based exogamy, tribe-based endogamy	Defines strict cultural boundaries for partner selection	Apatani practice exogamy within clans but endogamy within the tribe

<b>Language and Ethnicity</b>	Dialectal diversity, ethnic identity, shared customs	Linguistic and cultural differences act as barriers to inter-tribal marriages	Limited marriage outside Apatani due to linguistic/cultural differences
<b>Religion</b>	Tribal beliefs (e.g., Danyi-Piilo), Christianity	Religious rigidity can restrict inter-faith marriages	marriages are not rare between Danyi-Piilo and Christian
<b>Social Organization</b>	Traditional authority of elders, clan councils	Elders regulate match-making; modern trends challenge traditional authority	Youth influence growing due to education, but elders still play a key role
<b>Urbanization &amp; Modernization</b>	Exposure to cities, new social values, delayed marriages	Expands social networks, encourages inter-group marriages, increases autonomy in partner choice	Some Apatani's marry outside community during higher education in cities

The basic unit of Apatani family consists of parents and their unmarried children. Upon marriage, individuals typically establish independent households, with land inheritance serving as the basis for economic sustenance. Parents commonly provide land or housing materials to sons upon their marriage. In line with customary practices, the youngest son often stays with his aging parents and inherits the parental home and a larger share of land in recognition of his support and care (*Bordoloi et al., 1980*). Marriage in Apatani society is considered a socially regulated institution, guided by several customary rules that shape acceptable marital alliances. Individuals are expected to marry within their own class either Gyuchii or Gyuttii as well as within specific clan groupings. These practices help maintain the community's social structure and uphold ritual purity. The Apatanis generally avoid both patrilineal and matrilineal cross-cousin marriages, which are considered inappropriate and are socially discouraged. While monogamy is the prevalent norm, polygamy is permitted under particular circumstances such as infertility or childlessness, though such instances are rare and closely regulated within the community. Marriage ceremonies blend traditional elements such as gift exchanges, community feasts, and elders' blessings. While modern influences like education and exposure to urban cultures have led to changes such as the simplification of rituals and greater individual choice the cultural importance of marriage remains deeply rooted in Apatani values.

## VII. Marriage Field of the Apatani Community:

The concept of the "marriage field" refers to an individual's or group's average marriage distance between a bride's natal home and the place where she got married. For this study, a sample of 100 individuals were selected to investigate and determine the marriage field, providing an understanding of the average marriage distance within the Apatani community.

### VII.1 Analytical Interpretation of Age Group at the Time of Marriage:

Marriage is a pivotal social institution among the Apatani community of Arunachal Pradesh. The spatial dimensions of the "marriage field" have undergone notable shifts over time. Table 2 shows the relationship between the age group at the time of marriage and the average geographical marriage distance among 100 individuals. This analysis not only reveals intergenerational change but also provides insight into broader socio-cultural transformations within the community. The most striking aspect of the data is the very strong positive correlation ( $r = 0.996$ ) between age group and average marriage distance, indicating that as age at marriage increases, the marriage field tends to expand significantly.

#### VII.1.2 Marriage at Age 15–20 and Marriage Field:

In the first age category marriage age at 15 to 20 years 30 individuals (30% of the total) these couples were married for more than 40-50 years and the average geographical marriage distance of just 4 kilometers. This pattern reflects a relatively conservative social environment where marriages were arranged or initiated within close geographical proximity. The short distance suggests that marital alliances during this age range are bound by customary norms such as clan and class endogamy, avoidance of cross-cousin marriages, and the reliance on local kin networks. This age group represents individuals who married before the influence of modernization significantly penetrated the Ziro Valley. During that period, village endogamy or inter-village marriages within a short marriage field were more common. The role of parents and elders in choosing spouses, limitations in travel, and a strong adherence to traditional customs contributed to a more localized marriage field.

**Table 2: Determinants of Marriage Field with Average Distance and Correlation Coefficients (N = 100)**

Variable/ Determinant	Category	No. Of Persons	%	Avg. Geographical Marriage Distance (Km)	Correlation Coefficient (R)
Age group at the time of marriage	15–20	30	30%	4	0.996 (Very strong positive)
	20–25	32	32%	6	
	Above 25	38	38%	10	
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100%</b>		
Education Level	Illiterate	10	10%	2	0.508 (Moderate positive)
	Up to Primary	14	14%	4	
	Up to Middle	10	10%	4	
	Up to Secondary	14	14%	5	
	Up to Hr. Secondary	16	16%	6	
	Graduate	20	20%	7	
	Post-Graduate	16	16%	16	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100%</b>			
Socio-Economic Status	Low	24	24%	3	0.846 (Strong positive)
	Middle	36	36%	5	
	High	40	40%	11	
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100%</b>		
Occupational Structure	Cultivators	20	20%	3	0.800 (Strong positive)
	Casual Labour	10	10%	4	
	Government Services	36	36%	11	
	Self-employed	20	20%	3	
	Private Services	14	14%	5	
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100%</b>		

### VII.1.3 Marriage at Age 20–25 and Marriage Field:

The second category individuals married at age between 20-25 accounts for 32 individuals, or 32% of the sample. Most of the individuals falling within this group were married for 20 or more years. The average marriage distance is 6 kilometers, marking a transitional phase in the community's marriage patterns. This shift represents a generation that began to experience the early effects of education, occupational diversification, and growing exposure to the outside world. The modest increase in average distance is due to loosening of rigid traditional norms without a complete break from cultural expectations. This group reflects the balancing point between traditional marital norms and emerging personal choice. As youth began to engage in higher education or employment opportunities in nearby urban centers like Itanagar or Naharlagun, their social networks widened the scope of marriage partners. Additionally, improved roads, communication technologies, and the influence of external institutions like schools and churches contributed to expanding the community's social interactions beyond the immediate vicinity. Although still influenced by clan endogamy and community expectations, marriages in this age began to reflect an individual's growing autonomy. It also shows that a generational shift where marriages started occurring slightly later, giving individuals more time to explore options outside their immediate localities.

### VII.1.4 Marriage above Age 25 and Marriage Field:

The most significant change is evident among those who married above the age of 25. This group comprises 38 individuals 38% of the sample and it records the highest average geographical marriage distance of 10 kilometers. The couples in this age group were youngest in terms of married life. The marriage distance in this category confirms a clear intergenerational expansion in marriage fields. Individuals marrying later in life appear are likely to seek spouses beyond traditional territorial limits.

This category shows the most recent generation that has been influenced by modern education, professional aspirations, and greater social mobility. The expansion in the marriage field signifies a weakening of traditional geographic and social boundaries in choosing partners. It also reflects the increasing importance of individual preference, compatibility, and mutual consent in marital decisions, as opposed to strictly adhering to lineage and locality-based choices. The higher age of marriage in this group is associated with greater maturity and economic independence; it has enabled the individuals to explore marital options

beyond their native village. In some cases, it also includes individuals who delayed marriage for educational or career reasons, and subsequently expanded their search radius for suitable partners.

### **VII.1.5 Correlation Interpretation of Age Group at the Time of Marriage and Marriage Field:**

The correlation coefficient of  $r = 0.996$  denotes a very strong positive relationship at the age of marriage and the geographical extent of the marriage field. The older individual at the time of marriage has greater possibility of marrying someone from a more distant location. This high correlation highlights a broader intergenerational shift in Apatani society a shift from rigid, geographically confined marriages toward more flexible and expansive patterns that reflect changing values, aspirations, and lifestyle patterns. It also suggests that age at marriage may serve as a proxy for exposure to modern influences and changing socio-economic contexts.

## **VII.2 Analytical Interpretation of Educational Level and Marriage Field:**

Education plays a transformative role in shaping individual perspectives, social practices, and institutional norms. The educational advancement among the Apatani is gradually influencing marital choices, particularly in terms of the geographical extent of the marriage field. The data in table 2 shows how varying educational levels correlate with average geographical marriage distances among a sample of 100 individuals. With a moderate positive correlation coefficient ( $r = 0.508$ ) between education level and marriage distance, the data reveals a steady trend wherein individuals with higher educational qualifications tend to marry over greater distances. This trend reflects both a social transition and an expansion in the boundaries of traditional marriage norms.

### **VII.2.1 Low Educational and Marriage Field:**

This category has 20 illiterate individuals (10% of the sample) have the shortest average marriage distance just 2 kilometers. Similarly, those with education up to primary (14%) and middle level (10%) have an average marriage distance of 4 kilometers. The figure shows a strong adherence to traditional marriage norms, where community expectations, kinship networks, and village-level affiliations play a crucial role in determining marital alliances. The localized marriage field in these groups is a product of limited exposure, mobility, and social interaction beyond their immediate environment. In traditional Apatani society, marriage was not only a familial affair but a community-regulated institution, where elders arranged alliances within close-knit villages or among familiar clans. Individuals with little or no education follow such patterns due to limited alternatives and stronger social obligations.

### **VII.2.2 Secondary and Higher Secondary Education Level and Marriage Field:**

This education level up to secondary (14%) and higher secondary (16%) shows a gradual widening of the marriage field. In this group the average marriage distance rises to 5 and 6 kilometers. This category indicates a transitional phase in which individuals gain access to wider social networks, through schooling in larger towns like Ziro, Hapoli, or even Itanagar. The educational experiences have introduced individuals to a broader peer group, and fostered inter-village friendships, providing increased autonomy in personal decisions including marriage. This group represents a generation that is beginning to balance traditional values with the early influences of modernization. Marriage decisions are still influenced by family and community norms, but the selection of partners is no longer confined strictly within immediate proximity. As these individuals acquire secondary or higher secondary education, they become better equipped to engage with new ideas, build broader social networks, and assert more autonomy in choosing a spouse.

### **VII.2.3 Graduate and Post-Graduate Education Level and Marriage Field:**

The most intense shift in marriage field is observed among graduate (20%) and post-graduate (16%). The category Graduates exhibit an average marriage distance of 7 kilometers, while post-graduates show the highest average distance at 16 kilometers. This shift clearly suggests that higher educational correlates with a significant expansion in the marriage field. In this group, the impact of education has led to greater decision-making autonomy, reducing dependence on familial or clan-based matchmaking.

The post-graduate group, with an average marriage distance of 16 kilometers, characterizes a clear departure from traditional marriage practices. Most of the individuals in this group is expected to engage in love marriages, cross-village alliances, and even inter-community unions. However, this change still faces some

resistance from older generations. The result in this group signals to a growing acceptance of diverse marital choices among the educated youth.

#### **VII.2.4 Correlation Interpretation of Educational Level and Marriage Field:**

The correlation coefficient of  $r = 0.508$  suggests a moderate positive relationship between educational achievement and geographical marriage distance. This shows that, education is not only the determinant of marriage field expansion, other factors such as age at marriage, occupational status, socio-economic conditions, and family dynamics influences the distance over which marriage occurs. However, education appears to serve as a gateway to social mobility, not only in terms of employment and status but also in reshaping traditional marital norms and enabling individuals to marry beyond the village boundaries. Education is contributing to the evolution of the Apatani marriage system, making it more flexible, inclusive, and adaptive to modern realities.

#### **VII.3 Socio-Economic Status and Marriage Field:**

The institution of marriage in the Apatani community, like in many other indigenous societies, has traditionally been deeply rooted in customary practices, kinship networks, and village-level affiliations. However, as the community experiences gradual socio-economic transformations due to education, occupational diversification, and infrastructural development, the dynamics of marriage are also evolving. The data in table 2 shows how socio-economic status (SES) influences this marriage field, showing a strong positive correlation ( $r = 0.846$ ) between higher socio-economic status and longer marriage distances.

##### **VII.3.1 Low Socio-Economic Status and Marriage Field:**

Among the 100 individuals surveyed, 24 persons (24%) fall into the low socio-economic group. These individuals report an average marriage distance of just 3 kilometers, indicating a marriage field confined to immediate or nearby villages. This pattern reflects the influence of traditional kinship norms, spatial immobility, and limited access to socio-economic resources among the lower SES group. In this group marriage alliances are typically organized within well-known social circles, often involving close community ties. The low economic earnings and occupational limitations restrict both social mobility and the practical possibility of inter-village alliances. Moreover, limited exposure to urban centers or higher education reduces the chances of developing external social networks, thereby reinforcing localized marital practices.

##### **VII.3.2 Middle Socio-Economic Status and Marriage Field:**

The middle-income group, comprising 36 individuals (36%), shows an average marriage distance of 5 kilometers. This group represents a transitional phase where traditional norms are beginning to loosen under the influence of moderate economic growth and changing social aspirations. The individuals in this group are mostly engaged in semi-skilled jobs, small businesses and government services, providing them with a wider but still community-centric social network. The increase in marriage distance in this group reflects both opportunity and constraint. Marriages within this group are found in the different segments of the Ziro Valley and adjacent villages, but rarely to far-flung and cross-regional areas. Nevertheless, the data suggests that improved socio-economic conditions do play a role in expanding the spatial boundaries of the marriage field.

##### **VII.3.3 High Socio-Economic Status and Marriage Field:**

The most notable deviation from traditional norms is observed in the high SES group, which includes 40 individuals (40%) with an average marriage distance of 11 kilometers. This segment of the population is engaged in professional, administrative, or entrepreneurial roles and often holds higher educational qualifications. The individuals in this group have studied or worked in urban centers such as Itanagar, Naharlagun, or even cities outside Arunachal Pradesh, thereby building broader and more diverse social networks. For this group, the marriage field is not merely a spatial phenomenon but also reflects ideological and aspirational shifts. Greater financial independence and exposure to multiple cultural settings allow them to explore alliances based on compatibility, shared interests, and educational parity rather than merely kinship or village ties. This group also engages in inter-village and occasionally inter-community marriages, especially when such unions are facilitated by education or occupational platforms. The longer marriage distance among high SES individuals is thus representative of enhanced mobility both physically and socially.

### **VII.3.4 Correlation Interpretation of Socio-Economic Status and Marriage Field:**

The correlation coefficient ( $r = 0.846$ ) indicates a strong positive relationship between socio-economic status and geographical marriage distance. This suggests that the improvement in socio-economic status in this group has led to marry partners from outside their immediate village or lineage network. The strength of this correlation highlights the influence of material conditions, occupational status, and access to resources on marriage choices within the Apatani community. In this category, both men and women are more empowered to make their own choices, resulting in a rise in love marriages or mutual-consent alliances. However, it's important to note that while high SES enables freedom of choice, cultural norms such as clan and class endogamy still exert considerable influence, especially among the older generation.

### **VII.4 Occupational Structure and Marriage Field:**

The institution of marriage among the Apatani community has traditionally been governed by cultural norms, lineage boundaries, and localized social networks. However, with increasing socio-economic mobility and diversification of occupational structures, especially in recent decades, the dynamics of the marriage field are undergoing noticeable transformations. With a correlation coefficient of 0.800, the findings demonstrate a strong positive relationship between occupation type and the spatial extent of marriage, highlighting occupational mobility as a significant determinant in marital behavior.

#### **VII.4.1 Cultivators and Marriage Field:**

Among the sample population of 100 individuals, 20 persons (20%) are engaged in cultivation. This group records an average marriage distance of just 3 kilometers, indicating a preference for intra-village or nearby alliances. For cultivators, the localized marriage field aligns with longstanding socio-cultural norms that emphasize kinship proximity, landholding continuity, and village cohesion. In this group, economic and social life is tightly interwoven within the community. Marrying locally not only preserves the social reliability but also ensures cooperation in agricultural labor and ritual obligations.

#### **VII.4.2 Casual Labour Marriage Field:**

The casual labor category, though numerically smaller with 10 individuals (10%), demonstrates a slight increase in the average marriage distance to 4 kilometers. While casual laborers are typically from economically vulnerable backgrounds and lack stable income or social mobility, their work may occasionally require movement across villages or towns, offering limited exposure to broader social environments.

#### **VII.4.3 Government Service Holders and Marriage Field:**

The major deviation from traditional marriage patterns is observed among individuals engaged in government services, comprising the largest group with 36 persons (36%). This group records an average marriage distance of 11 kilometers, exceeding all other occupational groups. People in this category often marry outside their own village or clan for several reasons. They have better education and income, which helps them connect with a wider circle of people. Their jobs often require them to move around the Arunachal Pradesh, giving them more chances to meet potential partners. These individuals also tend to look for partners with similar education, social status, and lifestyle goals, rather than just focusing on finding someone nearby. As a result, arranged marriages in this group often consider factors like job, education, and shared values. This shows how the Apatani community is changing, with traditional marriage practices adjusting to new social and economic conditions.

#### **VII.4.4 Self-Employed Individuals and Marriage Field:**

The 20% of the surveyed population falls under the self-employed category, with an average marriage distance of 3 kilometers. Despite engaging in trades or small businesses, many of them operate within their own villages or local markets, and their social networks remain embedded in traditional settings. Unlike salaried jobs that often necessitate geographic relocation and wider interaction, self-employment does not expand the marriage field significantly. Thus, their marital alliances still tend to be localized, governed by lineage, clan rules, and village familiarity. However, it is worth noting that as self-employment diversifies especially among youth engaged in technology, services, or entrepreneurial activities the future may see an increasing marriage distance even within this group.

#### VII.4.5 Private Service Sector and Marriage Field:

The private service sector, representing 14 individuals (14%) of the sample, shows an average marriage distance of 5 kilometers, representing a moderate extension of the marriage field. This occupational category includes roles in education, healthcare, hospitality and small retailers. People of this group work in semi-urban or urban areas and have moderate exposure to external communities. This group demonstrates greater marriage mobility than cultivators or self-employed individuals. Their marriage decisions often balance traditional expectations with modern preferences, including lifestyle compatibility and career considerations.

#### VII.4.6 Correlation Interpretation of Occupational Structure and Marriage Field:

The correlation coefficient ( $r = 0.800$ ) between occupational structure and marriage distance is statistically significant, indicating a strong positive relationship. This suggests that occupational diversification and upward mobility are critical in expanding the marriage field. As individuals move from primary sector job to service-oriented professions, they gain not only economic mobility but also social exposure, enhancing their ability to negotiate marriage across wider geographical and cultural boundaries.

This occupational influence on marital choice reveals a broader socio-cultural transformation within the Apatani community where traditional clan and village-centered marriage systems are gradually giving way to preferences shaped by economic independence, career mobility, and aspirational values.

### VIII. Result and Conclusion:

The analysis of marriage field among the Apatani community shows a clear shift from traditional patterns based on lineage and locality to more modern influences shaped by age, education, socio-economic status, and occupation. Older individuals, those with higher education, and those in better economic and professional positions tend to marry farther from home, reflecting greater autonomy and broader social exposure. In contrast, early marriages, limited education, lower income, and agricultural occupations are associated with more localized marital choices. These trends highlight a cultural transformation within the community, where modern aspirations increasingly influence marriage practices, expanding the spatial and social boundaries of alliances while traditional norms continue to persist among certain groups.

The table given below (Table: 3) shows the final result of Determinants Influencing the Expansion and Restriction of the Marriage Field among the Apatanis.

**Table 3: Result of Determinants Influencing the Expansion and Restriction of the Marriage Field in Apatani**

Determinant	Definition/Scope	Influence On Marriage Field	Observed Trends	Result
<b>Education</b>	Schooling, literacy, higher education	Increases awareness and openness to broader marriage choices	Educated Apatanis more likely to engage in inter-village or inter-tribal marriages	Education expands the marriage field significantly; higher educational attainment correlates with greater marriage distance.
<b>Caste and Social Stratification</b>	Lineage prestige, clan hierarchy, social honor	Limits marriage to perceived equals; avoids alliances seen as inferior	Prestigious families avoid marriages into economically or socially "lower" families	Acts as a restrictive factor; social prestige and honor-bound customs still regulate marriage within defined social boundaries.
<b>Economic Status</b>	Wealth level (poor, average, wealthy), land ownership	Wealthier families prefer status-equal or improving alliances	Marriage alliances often negotiated to maintain or enhance economic standing	Strongly expands the marriage field; economically secure families can access and negotiate distant or socially prestigious matches.
<b>Migration and Mobility</b>	Outmigration for work or study	Exposes individuals to diverse communities; increases chances of inter-ethnic marriages	Apatani youth working outside may return with non-local spouses	Facilitates expansion of the marriage field by enhancing interaction with diverse communities and promoting

				inter-community marriages.
<b>Political Factors</b>	Scheduled Tribe (ST) status, local leadership, social capital	Influences desirability as marriage partners; inter-group marriages may risk benefits	Families avoid alliances that could affect ST privileges or local reputation	Acts as a limiting factor; political considerations and community standing continue to regulate marriage choices within acceptable bounds.

### ACKNOWLEDGMENT:

The author extends heartfelt gratitude to the people of Old Ziro for their warm response and willingness to participate in the interviews. Sincere thanks are also owed to the Principal and faculty of Binni Yanga Government Women's College, Lekhi, Naharlagun, Arunachal Pradesh, for their constant support and encouragement. A special note of appreciation goes to Dr. T. Nai for her invaluable assistance and dedication in helping collect the field data for this study.

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