

B.V. Sharma

**THE CONTEXT OF CHANGE IN FAMILY, MARRIAGE
AND KINSHIP AMONG THE SAVARA OF
ANDHRA PRADESH**

The paper attempts to examine the circumstances under which changes have occurred in the institutions of family, marriage and kinship among the Savara, a tribe inhabiting the Eastern Ghats of India and recognized as Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group (PvTG) by the State. The Savara known for the distinct feature of absence of named lineages or clans have adopted lineage pattern of the neighbouring Jatapu community and this is noted as a significant change. The effect of language and economic integration of the tribe on this transformation is examined. It is argued that the kinship terminology that guided identification of marriageable category of kin from non-marriageable category was not sufficient in the changed scenario and hence the adoption of named lineages was necessary. With regards to the change in the marriage pattern, present paper especially deals with the question of the increased serial monogamy of men and women and now the same is seen as a form of protest of women against polygyny.

The changes in the fundamental principles on which the society is organized, more specifically in the aspects of family, marriage and kinship, are difficult to register. These changes can be appropriately comprehended only through in depth anthropological field work and comparison of data at two different points of time with a long time interval. This paper based on such methodological strategy reports that record the substantial changes among the Savara of Srikakulam district of Andhra Pradesh, India.

The paper firstly emphasizes that adoption of horticulture (cashew) has necessitated their linguistic integration i.e. adoption of regional language to efficiently deal with the cashew economy. This linguistic integration paved way for further diversification of livelihoods and through such consequences reinforced economic integration. The mutual influence of economic and linguistic integration on each another enhanced opportunities for better educational attainments¹ participation in developmental activities, and women empowerment. These changing contexts in the last 30-40 years seem to have

B.V. SHARMA, Professor, Department of Anthropology, School of Social Sciences, University of Hyderabad, Hyderabad, *E-mail: sharmabhallamudi@gmail.com*

triggered substantial changes in the demographic and social composition of the Savara villages and in their institutions of family, marriage, kinship and religion.

The reinterpretations by the Savara with regards to rules relating to incest taboo have given rise to marriages that were not acceptable earlier. The advantages of named lineages in the context of widened marital networks and non-adherence to the rule of village endogamy, has resulted in important changes in the social organization of the Savara. While polygyny is socially acceptable even today, its acceptance is very shallow. This superficial acceptability leads to an unsettled tension between the genders and causes changes in the genealogical compositions of families due to divorce and remarriage of women frequently.

The ethnographic facts presented in the paper highlight that changes in the economy inevitably lead not only to important changes in demographic structures of the community and genealogical compositions of the individual domestic units, but also to alterations in the cognitive characters of the community. These changes occur first by formation of many side-shoots to economic changes which get strengthened through reinforcement effects of one another.

Population and distribution of the Savaras

The Savara Tribe inhabits the Srikakulam district of Andhra Pradesh, India. They are not only found in other adjoining districts of Andhra Pradesh, but they are also present in the states of Odisha, Madhya Pradesh, West Bengal, Tripura, Bihar and Assam². Savara is one of the 31 tribal communities and one that is considered as a PVTG in Andhra Pradesh. Their total population in Andhra Pradesh is 1,37,613; out of which their population in Srikakulam district accounts for 76.04% of the total Savara Population in the State and 3.81% of the total state tribal population. Savara have their own language which is included in the KolMunda group of Austro-Asiatic family. Grierson (1906) felt that it is closely related to Kharia and Juang, though, in some important characteristics, differed from them. The Savara of Seethampeta Mandal in Srikakulam district claim that they are '*KondaSavara*' and the elderly Savara in Manapuram village in 1986 also identified themselves as Bhima Savara citing folklore that they are descendants of Lord Bhima³.

The study village and its founders

This paper is based on fieldwork in a Savaravillage, Manapuram which is located at about 45kms from the district headquarters (Srikakulam) beside the road connecting two semi urban centres namely Seethampeta and Veeraghatam. In fact, the village was established as a sort of rehabilitation of the Savara to encourage settled cultivation and to wean them from the *podu*⁴ cultivation. Initially, 5-6 families who trace common ancestry to the forefathers

of Jammi Naidu settled in the present location around 1975. Subsequently, Mangulu who is related to Jammi Naidu as an affine joined them along with his brothers and parallel cousins. Gradually, some other families related to both Jammi Naidu and Mangulu migrated to this village with the consent of the founder of the village, Jammi Naidu. Thus, in 1986, all the families in the village were either 'blood relatives' of Jammi Naidu or Mangulu; and as such the two groups shared affinal relationship. Jammi Naidu was the founder and the senior most member of the village had the dual roles of the 'head'⁵ of the village and the head priest of the village. He controlled the *podu* lands and also other common property resources of the village. One of the important tasks accomplished by these founders was fixing of their village boundary, including the forest area that comprises many tamarind trees and other trees that are of great significance for their religious life and livelihood. Mangulu too was considered as an able leader to negotiate with outsiders on all matters including the developmental activities and so dealt with matters of community welfare in close coordination with Naidu.

Number of *birinda*

Biranda refers to a household and this is the most significant unit of social organization of the Savara in the absence of named lineages and clans⁶. In 1985-86, Manapuram had 38 *birinda*. In 2012, the total number of *birinda* increased to 71. This gradual increase in *birinda* is largely due to in-migrations of families related to the ones already settled in Manapuram. New *birinda* also came into existence on account of breakdown of joint and extended families. At least 60% -70% of the increase in the *birinda* can be attributed to this phenomenon. A few years after the establishment of the village (and by 1986), two non-Savara families migrated to the village: a) *a muli* (blacksmith) and b) *a savukar* (trader). In 1983, a voluntary organization by name Girijana Seva Sangham with its headquarters in Manapuram was established by the Brothers of St. Gabriel. Interestingly, no non Savara family migrated to this village during the period 1986-2012, whereas, the *muli* family and the Missionary team have relocated during the same period.

Significant socio-cultural changes in the village

Profound changes in the social institutions of family, marriage and kinship are noticed in Manapuram village. These changes are perhaps not very peculiar to Manapuram alone; other Savara villages too in Seethampeta mandal of Srikakulam district may have undergone similar transformation. Prior to the description of these changes, a brief note on principles of social organization of Savara as stated by the early scholars is not out of place, keeping in view the controversy surrounding the principles of social organization.

The earlier accounts on social organization of Savara varied with regard to the units of social organization. Sitapati (1941) considered the extended

family as the basic unit of social organization and noted that there are no lineages or clans amongst them. He, however, observed that the Savara practice village exogamy to avoid 'incestuous marital relations' as they consider that man and woman of the same village stand in the relationship of brother and sister and belong to the same extended family (1943: 4). Hanumantha Rao (1972) similarly observed that there are no exogamous division's equivalent to lineages or clans among the Savara of Andhra Pradesh. He claimed that family is the sole unit of social organization among these sections (1972: 63). Though he did not find village exogamy in his study villages, on the basis of other evidences, he felt that this was practiced earlier. Singh (1984) who worked among the Soara in Orissa too claimed that they have no exogamous totemic clans, no phratries, and no moieties. The main exogamous unit was identified to be extended family of 2-3 generations, which the Savara call *biranda* (1984: 20). Suryanarayana (1978), whose work specially focussed on marriage, family and kinship among the Savara in Seethampeta Block of Andhra Pradesh, however, tried to demonstrate the poly segmentary lineage system among the Savara and noted 'maximal lineages, major segment and minimal lineages'. The basis for this observation of three levels of lineages was participation of kin among the *kulammarangi* (patrilineal descent group of men and their children) in different rituals. He concluded that the two important principles on which the social organization of the Savara is based are: *biranda* and *guda*. *Biranda* refers to the domestic unit. All the members living together and usually belonging to 2-3 different generations constitute one *biranda*. The *birinda* is named after the senior most male member to whom all the members excepting those who join the group by marriage trace their descent. *Guda* refers to Savara settlement consisting of 10-30 *birinda*. The unmarried boys and girls of different *birinda* in a *guda* usually share *kakun-kakin* (brother-sister) relationship and hence are not permitted to marry. The Savara, thus, first identify as belonging to Xand Y*guda* and then to Aand B*birinda*. The members of each *birinda* are united and opposed to other *birinda* within the *guda* and at the same time all the members of a *guda* are united and opposed to other *guda*. So the unity of members and their identity operate both at the level of *birinda* and *guda* for different purposes and in different circumstances. Sharma (1992) contested the observations of Suryanarayana on the operation of the poly segmentary lineage system based on his fieldwork but noted that '*birinda* and *guda* operate as important units of social organization.

Embracing the practice of 'intiperu' (surnames) and appearance of clan groups among the Savara

In the absence of named lineages and clans, Savara identify only two groups as far as marriage is considered: marriageable and non-marriageable group⁷. Marriageable category consists of all those with whom one cannot trace common ancestry through the male line. Since it is difficult for them to know common ancestry in the absence of named lineages and clans, they

consider it safe and appropriate to marry one who is definitely known to belong to marriageable category. Thus, FZD (Father's Sister's Daughter) MBD (Mother's Brother's Daughter) and ZD (Sister's Daughter) are kin in marriageable category and marriage with them is preferable. To avoid any suspicion of shared ancestry, Savara go by a two-step verification process. The verification isto know that the woman belongs to marriageable category. The first step is:

1. Whether any one of his siblings or agnatic cousins married a woman of a particular *birandato* which the woman proposed for marriage belongs;
2. Whether any one of his siblings or agnatic cousins married a woman of other *biranda* whose head is related as an agnatic kin to the head of the *biranda* to which the woman proposed to be married belongs.

The second step of verification is:

3. Whether one's father or his agnatic uncles married any woman of a particular *birinda* to which the woman proposed for marriage belongs to;
4. Whether one's father or his agnatic uncles married any woman of other *biranda* whose head is agnatic kin of the head of *biranda* to which the woman proposed to be married belongs.

Incestuous relationships are called *ersi* and considered as sin. The union of a man with the following amounts to *ersi*:

- a) With mother
- b) With sister
- c) With daughter
- d) With a brother's daughter
- e) With a father's mother; and
- f) With a father's brother's wife

The union of a man with the following relatives is also disapproved, but tolerated:

- a) With a step mother
- b) With a step mother's daughter
- c) With a step daughter; and
- d) With a daughter-in-law.

The union of a man with his mother's sister is socially approved in case she is also related to one as FZD. Thus if a man has married his sister's

daughter, his son may marry his mother's sister as she is also related to him as FZD. The mother's sister's daughter may not be approved for marriage as the mother's sister would have married his agnatic kin.

Changes in the social construction of *ersi*

The changes in the social construction with regard to incestuous relationships in any society are hard to come by, as it forms the core culture of any community. Among the Savara too, there are hardly any changes in this regard. However, Savara community has been in intensive contact with Jatapu tribal community which has more or less similar construction with regards to incestuous relationships as the Savara. The members of Savara community also showed the inclination to increase the scale of its interactions in different areas - economic, political, social and cultural - with the Jatapus. Hence, it is reasonable to expect adoption of norms of this neighbouring community as additions to what exists, if not as replacements for what is existing.

Among the Savara, the adoption of new norms, or at least advocacy of new interpretations of what is existing, is noticed with regards to *ersi*. What was disapproved but tolerated is now no more tolerable. Thus, the relationship of man with step daughter, step mother, step mother's daughter and daughter-in-law are strictly forbidden now. Similarly, the marriage of mother's sister even when a woman is related as FZD is seen as morally demeaning. This change is again due to their contact with the Jatapu who are assimilated into Hindu society.

Acceptance of practice of *intiperu* (surname)

During the author's first phase of field work in Manapuram in 1986, the *birinda*⁸ had no specific name. The name of the head of the *birinda* was used to refer to it for the sake of identification. There was no specific mention of surname by the Savara men and women⁹. All of them used 'Savara' for the 'surname'. Yet there was no confusion among them with regards to who stands in marriageable relation with whom within their village or in other neighbouring villages whose women and men they married. By 2012, all the 71 *birinda* explicitly stated the 'surname' during the census of village¹⁰. Six *birinda* names have been listed; the *birinda* with 'surnames' of Biddika and Arika comprised 32 and 29, respectively. Arika was claimed by all the *birinda* whose heads and late Mr. Jammi Naidu¹¹ traced a common ancestor, while Biddika was claimed by all the *birinda* whose heads and late Mr. Mangulu¹² traced a common ancestor. There were also three *birinda* with Biddika surname, but the heads of those *birinda* could not establish that they were agnatic kin of Mr. Mangulu. The *birinda* which claimed other surnames (Kondagorre, Nimmaka and Mellaka) are the ones who have migrated to the village relatively recently.

Interestingly, all these surnames are the clan names of the neighbouring Jatapu¹³ tribe. These names have recently been adopted by the Savara of Manapuram as well as other Savara living in other villages in Seethampeta mandal of Srikakulam district. Adoption of a surname has served many purposes for the Savara, as the informants say. Firstly, it is considered a superior custom. Secondly, the Savara men and women no longer strictly follow the preferential rules of marriage. The proposals of marriages come from unrelated Savara families living at far off places. On the other hand, families are migrating from one village to another rather frequently and proposals of marriage come from these migrant families too. The identification with a surname helps to easily settle the issue of marriageable and non-marriageable groups¹⁴. This practical utility of surname is perhaps recognized after living in proximity with the Jatapu tribe¹⁵. At the same time, it is also observed that at least in case of one marriage a man his wife identified as belonging to Biddika clan. The woman in fact in this case claimed two clan identities: Arika in her in-laws village and Biddika in her natal village. This suggests that the operation of exogamy of newly adopted 'clan' system in Manapuram is not fool proof and marriages of boys and girls of different villages but claiming the same clan identity do not result in social disapproval. The clan names adopted by the Savara families in a village primarily depended upon the numerically dominant clans in the neighbouring Jatapu settlements. Thus, if more number of families in a particular Jatapu settlement identified as Biddika clan, the families in the neighbouring Savara village preferred that clan name. The families who shared affinal relationship with them and numerically less in number would then naturally choose another clan name of the neighbouring Jatapu settlement. The adoption of *intiperu* is thus evolving and has not yet been recognized as a principle category for organization of social relationships among the Savara.

Adoption of surnames: The role of school teachers and other development functionaries

The role played by the executives of the Government and non-government development programmes and the teachers in tribal villages in the adoption of surnames of the Jatapu tribe are no less. In the absence of surnames for Savara, the teachers felt some difficulty in appropriate identification of students in the class as well as their parents. The practice of naming children among the Savara according to the day on which the child is born¹⁶ complicated the situation for the teachers at the time of enrolment as well as at the time of distribution of monetary and non-monetary incentives to children enrolled in schools. This resulted in encouraging the use of surnames for the Savara children, often giving a surname of other Jatapu children studying in the same school. The executives of the Government and non-government development programmes too faced a similar difficulty when entering the details of beneficiaries of different tribal development schemes implemented by them in their records. They also found

it useful to promote surnames for the Savara for their own needs of appropriate identification.

Changes in the *Birinda* composition

The possibility of change in the genealogical composition of the Savara *birinda* is not merely due to birth and death of members or the marriage and divorce of its members. The members of one *birinda*, even the unmarried, may leave a *birinda* and join another whose head is agnatically related to him. A couple living with one of their married sons may leave that *birinda* and join another married son's *birinda*. In some cases, a man may join *birinda* of one married son and his wife may join another married son. This flexibility offered to the members thus leads to changes in the number of different family types in a Savara village very frequently. The typical case of Mangulu's *birinda* in Manapuram will illustrate how the genealogical composition of *birindas* changes among the Savara.

At the time of migration to Manapuram, Mangulu's *birinda* was nuclear type comprising his wife and three of his unmarried sons. After a few months, when his widowed mother-in-law (who is also his father's sister) joined his *birinda*, it turned into nuclear extended type. Later, all his three sons got married and continued to live in the same *birinda* and thus made the *birinda* a lineally extended joint family. In the meanwhile, Mangulu's younger brother passed away and both his children who were unmarried at that time joined his *birinda*. Sometime later, his youngest son's wife divorced her husband and left his *birinda*. A few years later, his eldest son died. The widow of the eldest son of Mangulu subsequently married her husband's younger brother who was already married (Levirate marriage). This led to his first wife divorcing him and leaving Mangulu's *birinda*. A few years later, one of Mangulu's younger brother's sons (who joined his *birinda* earlier) got married and established his own nuclear family. The other son of his younger brother too, after a few months, left his *birinda* and joined the *birinda* of his other younger brother. Then in a few years, Mangulu's mother-in-law, Mangulu and his wife died leaving the *birinda* a fraternal extended family. Soon Mangulu's youngest son too passed away. After her husband's death, Mangulu's daughter-in-law and her unmarried sons left the fraternal extended family and established their nuclear family. That change turned Mangulu's elder son's family also into a nuclear family.

The general trend among the Savara is that a nuclear family transforms into a joint family when the sons get married and continue to live with their parents. This is so because, among the Savara, the married sons are not expected to establish their own *birinda* till the youngest brother gets married or till the death of one of their parents. Most often, the nuclear families are extended due to the joining of kin of the head of the *birinda*.

The data on genealogical composition of families in Manapuram collected in the years 1986 and 2012 reveal important transformation in the institution of family. The increase in number of nuclear families by 2012 is evident. Some increase is due to migration of some families to Manapuram with a nuclear structure. However, the proportion of joint families has not greatly reduced. The increase in the proportion of nuclear families thus appears to be largely due to reduced number of compound families formed on account of polygynous marriages and also due to natural course of development cycle of family rather than breaking up of joint families. The lineally extended joint families in Savara community do not remain 'joint' forever. Once the parents die, or the youngest brother gets married, all the married brothers, many a time, establish their independent *birinda*. Fraternal extended families are possible, but rare, and are dependent on the choice of the married siblings. However, the endurance of joint families was much greater earlier, which may have increased their proportion to the total *birinda* in the village keeping view the number of children to a couple and also the age gap between the eldest and the youngest.

Extension of *birinda* due to *kinnarsing* type of marriage

Kinnarsing is marriage by service among the Savara. This type of marriage is arranged in the mutual interest of a man and the family of a woman. When a couple has only one daughter (or rarely when they have only daughters and no son), they look for *kinnarsing* marriage for their only daughter (usually for the youngest daughter, in case they have only daughters). These marriages, from the point of view of parents of the girl, are primarily to make arrangement for their care in their old age. From the point of view of the man, it is primarily to overcome the difficulties of meeting the expenses of marriage, including the payment of *oli* or payment of *moganal*. In such marriages, the man proposed to be married is expected to live with the family of his fiancée for two or more years. The marriage of the boy and the girl is formally arranged after parents are satisfied with the services, and the conduct of the boy is satisfactory to them¹⁷. Further, the parents expect the daughter and son-in-law to continue to live with them, take care of their property, if any, and also to look after them until death. Thus, *kinnarsing* marriages provide exceptions to the rules of patrilocal residence and inheritance of property through male line among the Savara.

The *kinnarsing* marriage may on the one hand bring in some prestige and honour and a greater sense of security to the woman, but on the other hand, it is considered a little derogatory for the man and may also bring on a sense of diffidence in the man as he may not be given importance in the decision making of the *birinda*. Kinnarsing is opted when the boy is an orphan or when his both of biological parents have remarried after divorce.

A change in the attitude and practice in regard to *kinnarsing* is noticed in Manapuram. In 1986, only two cases of such marriages were enumerated in the 38 *birinda* present then. In 2012, the cases of *kinnarsing* marriages have increased to eight¹⁸. This increase, though not considerable, appears to be dissimilar to the trend in other Savara villages. The cases of men who left Manapuram village for *kinnarsing* are surely far less during the same period. Thus it needs to be related to the relatively greater degree of economic and linguistic integration of Manapuram village than many other Savara settlements and also to the relative affluence of Savara families in the village.

Changes in the institution of Marriage

The union of a man and woman for the purpose of sexual gratification and which is enduring is termed *sirrung* (marriage) by the Savara¹⁹. This union may get social recognition or may not get social recognition for flouting of some norms. In some cases the social recognition may come only after some time when a man's and woman's live-in-relationship after their elopement is legitimized by the members of the community. Marriage may take place after a formal negotiation by the family elders, or it may be post facto approved after a boy and girl elope with mutual consent. Elopement of a boy with married women is also finally given consent by the society but with some reluctance and after collection of some *danda*(fine).

The rules of marriage are simple: a) endogamy at the level of tribe; b) marriage with only man/woman in marriageable category of kin (not in *kakun-kakin* relationship). Thus, the union of man with a woman which does not constitute *ersi*²⁰ gets social approval, irrespective of whether it is arranged by the parents of the groom and the bride or not. As mentioned earlier, marriage with MBD and FZD are practiced frequently following the rules of preferential marriage. When a man has a choice between MBD and FZD, the latter is preferred. However, the rule of preferential marriage is revoked mostly in case of first marriage of man.

Polygyny is also accepted; it receives the support of first wife when she is barren or suffers from some illness and occasionally when the couple has no male child. In some cases, a woman accepts her husband's second marriage (polygyny), but establishes a separate *birinda* for herself and her children with her husband's support. In 1986, six men reported polygyny in Manapuram and in one case, the co-wives of a man continued to live together after the death of their common husband. In all the six cases of polygyny reported then the second marriage of the men, except in one case, was with a divorcee or a widowed woman. In the case of Eenathu, his wife Rajamma encouraged her sister Ramamma to get married to Eenathu after they had two daughters. Thus, this is a case of sororal polygamy in the village. On the other hand, Venkanna established a polygynous family since his first wife Dummi did not conceive. Similarly, Govinda married Sumbhari first and later Bangaramma, for the

reason that Sumbhari did not conceive even five years after their marriage.

That polygyny was socially acceptable in 2012 in Manapuram is evident from three such cases. All the men who reported polygyny in 1986 died, and so all the three cases in 2012 are fresh cases not reported in 1986. Out of these three, one got married a second time on the pretext that his wife was barren. Two others married a second time since the women were interested in them and their first wives did not vehemently oppose. One of these two, in fact said that he had the support of his wife as she was older to him by 6-7 years and was not able to cope with the work. He had three children and was 45 years old when he married a divorcee who was 30 years old then. All the three got married after living with their first wives for more than 10 years. Interestingly, in 2012, out of the three cases of polygyny, in two cases the second marriage of the men was with women for whom it was their first marriage. In one other case, the marriage was with a woman who had married once earlier.

When the men go for a second marriage with the intention of a polygynous family, in many cases, the first wife of the man feels upset, but tolerates for some time and waits for the opportunity for elopement with another man (married or unmarried) which results in settlement of her divorce from her first husband and approval of remarriage with another. If this woman's remarriage²¹ is with a married man, it may again trigger one more or a series of divorces and remarriages too. Thus, cases of polygyny in many instances finally lead to serial monogamy among the Savara. To illustrate the point: Buddadu's wife Laxmi eloped and married Gangaiah who was earlier married to Bodamma, who married Ganganiah having divorced Lambothu because of his second marriage with Bangaramma. In fact Bangaramma married Lambothu who is a cousin of her former husband. Sanyasi when he (Sanyasi and Bangaramma's first husband) married his elder brother's wife in a levirate marriage. Buddadu too remarried Chinammi who lost her husband a few months prior to Laxmi's divorce from Buddadu.

Polygynous families in Manapuram thus, in many cases, turned out to be transitory in nature. The longevity of these families depended on the opportunity factor for the first wife of the person. The more time the woman took for her elopement with another man, the longer the polygynous family survived. The survival time depended on the age of the woman, age of the children born to her, the social support she received from her parents and other such factors. However, the social approval of this family is also clear from the fact that even in case of polygyny, the man is entitled *tomoganalu* if the wife elopes with another person.

Divorce and remarriage

Marriage of divorced is not at all deplorable in Savara community. However, women do not normally divorce men for the reasons that they are violent, addicted to liquor or for other similar reasons. They can however

strongly demand for divorce on the ground that the husband is impotent. When women desire divorce, they just wait for an opportunity. As and when she finds someone more caring than her present husband, she may propose her marriage with him, and if he agrees, she will elope with him one day. The formal social recognition to this marriage is given when her husband or husband's parents agree to pay the *danda* and *moganalu*²² to her first husband's family. As explained before, women often seek divorce on account of second marriage of the husband. But interestingly, they often marry a married man and thus force other women to seek divorce and remarry. In any case, divorce and remarriage are quite frequent in Savara community. In Manapuram, 18 heads of *Birinda*²³ (25.3%) out of 71, reported to have married more than once in 2012. Heads of the remaining *birinda* except one, either reported to have married only once or remained unmarried. If we exclude the heads of *birinda* under the age of 30 years, the men who reported to have married twice among the heads of *birinda* constitute 32.6%. Out of those who married more than once, 2 men reported to have married thrice and one reported to have married 5 times. Spouses of the heads of many *birinda* (13 out of 71, i.e. 18.3%) also reported to have married more than once.

In 1986, the divorce and remarriage of both men and women was even more frequent. As many as 29.85% of ever married men and 40 % of ever married women reported to have married more than once at the time of field work. As such, a decline in the percentage of women marrying more than once can be noticed by 2012.

Preferential marriage

In all cases of marriage by negotiation, called *fankoi* in Savara, the marriage of MBD, FZD and ZD are preferred among the Savara like in many other tribal communities in India. In the absence of named lineages and clans, kinship terminology by itself acts as sufficient mechanism to identify the marriageable and non-marriageable categories among the kin and this also results in preference for cross cousin marriage and uncle-niece marriage. The right of the man over the FZD and MBD is clearly asserted when the woman elopes with any other distant kin or other Savara man. The families of the cross cousins of the woman demand *danda* and stop the social recognition to that union till the *danda* is paid.

Data collected for 73 marriages in 2012 in Manapuram revealed that, 25 (34.2%) marriages were with cross cousins. Out of these 25, 15 were with FZD (60%) and 10 were with MBD (40%). Nine cases of uncle-niece marriages were recorded but the men and women in all these cases were above 34 years. The data, however, shows a general laxity with regards to the norms of preferential marriage during the last 30 years among the Savara. In 1986, as many as 66.27% of men while marrying for the first time married a cross cousin or elder sister's daughter. Another 8.1% of them married a woman related

as Father's- sister's-son's- daughter (FZSD) and Mother's- Brother's- Son's- Daughter (MBSD). In 1986, FZD marriages constituted 26.74%, of all marriages, while the MBD marriages and ZD marriages accounted for 18.60% and 8.1%, respectively. The cases of ZD and MBD very much overlapped too. The cases of marriage with distant kin increased to 53.5% from 47.56% in 1986. The marriage between man and woman of two successive generations as in the case of marriage with one's own sister's daughter or marriage with FZSD/MBSD became less frequent in 2012.

Widow Remarriage

Widow remarriage among the Savara is widely accepted. In fact levirate and sororate are prescriptive and in some cases result in polygynous families too. Levirate was strictly a prescriptive marriage in 1986 and the woman had to accept it. The case of a recent levirate marriage in Manapuram in 1986 is that of Mr.Sanyasi (son of Mangulu). He married the wife of his elder brother who died without any child. Sanyansi was actually earlier married to his Father's sister's daughter. In 1986, two cases of polygyny on account of levirate marriages are recorded in Manapuram.

That the prescription of levirate marriage was not working well in 2012 is apparent from the case of Thikkamma. Thikkamma married her MBD and had three children with him before he died in 2011 when she was about 30 years old. She should have married any of her husband's two brothers- one elder and one younger to her husband. But she refused that and decided to live with her children separately in the same village²⁴.

However, widow remarriage after attaining the age of 35 years or so is considered a little problematic. If the woman has grown -up sons by that age, she feels socially secure and so would rather prefer to live with her son. Only if she has no sons, she has to consider a remarriage. In case a widowed woman has to remarry a married man, the man must agree for the payment of *danda* and *moganal*.

Widow remarriage appears to be less favoured among the Savara in recent times. This may be partly due to changed morals, moral pressure, particularly from the children, and also the reluctance for polygyny among the women. Further, payments of *danda* and *moganal* are not nominal in the current times and so the men may be hesitant for widow remarriage.

The data on marital status in 1986 and 2012 too confirms the lesser acceptance of widow remarriage now. Only 7 were reported widowed in 1986 out of the total population. In 2012, the widowed and widowers constituted 2.8% and 15.1%, respectively. The general explanation for this rise in percent of widows was that the women feel more secure now than they did before. Marriage was considered by them earlier more for reasons of economic as well as social security.

Marriage with non-Savara

The rule of endogamy at the level of tribe was strictly followed until recently in Manapuram and at least in all the neighbouring villages of Manapuram. However, four members (all men) of Manapuram were found to have married non-Savara in the 2012 restudy. Savara Addayya who married a caste Hindu woman from a neighbouring village is one who has progressed economically and also politically in Manapuram²⁵. His marriage with the Hindu woman was actually the second marriage for him (and first marriage for his second wife). There was little resistance to his marriage with this woman since he did not have children with his first wife²⁶. Arika Singaiah (aged 35 years), Arika Asma Rao (aged 23 years) and Biddika Ramesh (aged 23 years²⁷) were the other Savara men who married non-Savara women. All of them married women belonging to Jatapu community and all these marriages were elopement cases and were first marriages for both the boys and their spouses. The social recognition to these marriages was granted after the boy's parents paid the *danda* to the community.

Since the Savara spoke their own language and were not fluent in the regional language (Telugu) till recently, the chances of courtship of Savara men and women with Jatapu tribes' men or women, or other caste Hindus were bleak. The distance maintained by non-Savara men and women from the Savara may have facilitated the Savara to maintain strict tribal endogamy. The socio-economic and political advancement of some section of Savara and particularly their gradual linguistic integration²⁸ seems to be paving the way for some slackening with regards to adherence to the rule of tribal endogamy.

What is interesting to note is that not even a single case of marriage of a Savara woman with a non-Savara man was reported even in 2012. This could be because of 'right' of cross cousins of the woman for marriage among the Savara. If a woman gets married, the Savara community responds seriously and a fine in the form of *moganal* is demanded. The fear of huge demand of *moganal* may be discouraging these marriages. Some Savara men in Manapuram also shared their impression that the non-Savara feel that the Savara women do not bear 'good character'²⁹ and so avoid proposals of marriage with Savara women.

The Savara women on the other hand reasoned that Savara girls are afraid that if they get married to non-Savara and if they have to divorce for any reason, they will not get any support from their community members. However, if they marry their own community men, they will have social support and they can even remarry someone whom they like.

Adoption of Christianity and interreligious marriages

Savara of Manapuram strictly followed 'Savara' religion. With deities of 21 orders, celebration of about 12 festivals at the level of village, and another

12 at the level of *birinda* that mark the community recognition of the life cycle events, and regular conduct of rituals and sacrifices for appeasement of dead ancestors, the Savara religion is very complex. The religious specialists had significant role in the Savara society as they were part of decision making in all matters – matters relating to economic activities, health care, marriage negotiation, administration of law and justice and all others. The founder of the village, Naidu was the religious head of Manapuram and the villagers used to organize all religious activities under his guidance and supervision. Religious homogeneity was one important characteristic of Manapuram in 1986.

Many members in Manapuram started adopting Christian religion (*matam*) since 2000 or so. By 2012, substantial members had adopted Christianity. The *birinda* which have reported one or more members following Christian faith are 31 in number, constituting 43% of the total *birinda*³⁰. Two churches were constructed for different denominations. The local Savara men were trained to run the affairs of the churches. The church organizers claimed that about one third of the population of Manapuram had adopted Christianity. In 2012, about 30-40 members were observed to be attending the church more or less regularly for prayers on Sundays.

It is noted that in the case of many *birinda*, not all members converted to Christianity. In some cases, a man followed Christianity while his spouse claimed to be a follower of Savara religion. The most interesting aspect in this regard is that Arika Papanna the eldest son of Arika Naidu was to inherit the position of Savara religious head priest of Manapuram after his father's death. However, Papanna and his wife took to Christianity. So his younger brother, Sumburu who lives in the joint family along with Papanna's family, inherited this position.

The adoption of Christian religion has not given rise to a sense of community based on common religion among the Savara yet in order to regulate marriage prescribing endogamy for those who have adopted Christianity, or for that matter, to allow marriages with other castes and tribes which have adopted Christianity during the same time or before. Religion is not a consideration in negotiating marriages rather, a person's identity as Savarais important for marriage. The roots of this identity lie in descent traced, language spoken, food habits and values cherished.

Discussion and Conclusion

The dynamics of tribal societies of India has greatly attracted the attention of many scholars. Peasantization and the processes of economic and political integration of tribal societies with the rural societies were reported by them, besides explaining the assertion of tribal identity, class formation, social stratification, and social mobility (Vidyarthi and Upadhyay 1980; Singh

1984, Kattakayam 1983; Mann and Mann 1989; Pfeffer and Behara, 1997, Chacko 2005, Anima Sharma 2005, Baral 2006; Chantia A, Misra P 2009, Longkumer 2009). Such issues were dealt with in their synchronic studies and sometimes referred to earlier studies on the same tribes and in the same region.

Though there are a number of recent publications on the changing family structures in India with an attention on rise of nuclear families (Niranjan *et al.*, 1998; Gregory.S 2009; Mayank Pradhan 2011), focussed studies on tribal communities seem to be few. The few studies conducted in tribal societies too gave priority mostly to observation of changes in family types and family compositions; shift from extended families to nuclear families and a decline of polygamous families. Similarly, in the case of marriage, changes in regard to age at marriage, changes in acquiring of mates, marriage payments etc. were reported (Chacko 2005). Changes in the fundamental principles on which the institutions of family, marriage and kinship are organized are slow to register. But the changes in these aspects also explain the adoptive responses of the community and also highlight the strength of the forces operating in the community. Studies of changes in norms relating to incestuous relationships, clan exogamy or adoption of new systems for regulation of marriage alliances among the tribals in India were very exceptional. Significant changes in the institutions of family, marriage and kinship are however particularly reported more often for the tribes in North East India (Das, 1962; Majumdar 1972; Raha M.K and P.C Coomer. 1987; Sikdar 2009; Marak 2012). Marak (2012) made a note that certain tribal communities in North East India, namely the Koch Hajong Rabha and Lalung are at different levels of sanskritisation, and make an interesting example of cultures undergoing change. Sikdar (2009) observed that changes in the Garo marriage is due to the infusion of cultures of other tribes and castes, besides the adoption of Christianity and attainment of higher educational levels.

Certain PVTGs in Eastern India are rapidly transforming in the recent years. The shift to horticulture and settled cultivation coupled with increased opportunities for other livelihoods, better educational attainments, religious syncretism and greater exposure to mass media altered the traditional institutional norms and arrangements. This paper is an attempt to report socio-cultural changes with specific reference to the institutions of family, marriage and kinship among the Savara, based on study of a village at regular time intervals³¹ during a total period of about 30 years by the author.

The paper firstly identifies that of relaxing the norms of preferential marriages, as well as norms of incestuous relationships is a major change. The adoption of named lineages from their contact with Jatapu is pointed out as one other significant change. It is argued that the kinship terminology that guided identification of marriageable category of kin from non-marriageable category is not sufficient in the changed scenario. Further, it is pointed out

that the economic integration of the Savara facilitated the rapid linguistic integration of them which paved way for the adoption of named lineages as well as new religious faiths in recent times.

Polygyny is socially acceptable among the Savara, though its practice was reported to be limited. In the present days, this socially acceptable practice is perhaps being 'silently protested by women by breaking the marital ties and eloping with other man of their choice. The increased frequency of marriage of divorced women with married men through moganalu payment and also resulting in an increased incidence of serial monogamy for many men and women is important to note. The unacceptability of the status of 'elder wife' for the savara women today is also evident from the fact that there is an increase in the number of widowed women in the village. This essentially reflects that the norm of levirate is also not being practiced now. This shows that widow remarriage has come down.

Changes with regards to genealogical composition of the domestic units of the Savara are significant. The increase in the proportion of nuclear families comprising one married couple and their children is evident, but it is not so much due to breaking of joint families. The reduced number of compound families formed on account of polygynous marriages, and also due to natural course of the development cycle of family contributed to this change. Extended nuclear families through the joining of the son-in-law have slightly increased in this village. The relatively greater degree of economic and linguistic integration and also the relative affluence of Savara families in the village appear to contribute to this trend.

Table 1
Distribution of *birinda* by surnames

| Sl No | Surname of the <i>birinda</i> | Number | % |
|-------|-------------------------------|--------|-------|
| 1 | Biddika | 32 | 45.00 |
| 2 | Arika | 29 | 40.84 |
| 3 | Kondagorre | 6 | 8.45 |
| 4 | Nimmaka | 2 | 2.91 |
| 5 | Mellaka | 1 | 1.40 |
| 6 | Kuringi | 1 | 1.40 |
| | Total | 71 | 100.0 |

Source: Field work during the year 2012

Table 2
Distribution of *birinda* according to the genealogical composition

| Family Types | 2012 | | 1986 | |
|---------------------------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| | Number | % | Number | % |
| Nuclear Families ³² | 50 | 70.42 | 22 | 57.89 |
| Joint families ³³ | 15 | 21.13 | 9 | 23.68 |
| Compound families ³⁴ | 3 | 4.23 | 6 | 15.79 |
| Other families | 3 | 4.23 | 1 | 2.63 |
| Total | 71 | 100.00 | 38 | 100.00 |

Table 3
Distribution of population by marital status in Manapuram in 1986 and 2012

| Marital Status | 2012 | | | 1986 | | |
|----------------|------|--------|-------|------|--------|-------|
| | Male | Female | Total | Male | Female | Total |
| Married | 73 | 74 | 147 | 48 | 47 | 95 |
| Widowed | 4 | 21 | 25 | 3 | 4 | 7 |
| Divorced | 1 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 4 | 4 |
| Unmarried | 82 | 45 | 127 | 31 | 29 | 60 |
| Total | 160 | 141 | 301 | 82 | 84 | 166 |

NOTES

1. One of the main reasons for the high drop out of Savara children was medium of instruction in the regional language (Sharma 1992)
2. They are called by slightly different names as Soara, Sabara, etc. outside Andhra Pradesh.
3. See Sharma (1992)
4. Shifting cultivation/slash and burn cultivation.
5. In fact the suffix 'naidu' is title in recognition of his status as head man of the village.
6. See Sharma (1992)
7. The Author not aware of any names to these groups by the Savara themselves.
8. 38 in total
9. The school records as well as the records in the Mandal Development Office too confirm this observation.
10. A revisit to the village in 1990 itself revealed the adoption of surnames by the Savara of this village. Out of the 59 *birinda* enumerated in that year, the *birinda* with *Arika* and *Biddika* surnames comprised 27 and 24, respectively. The others were, Kondagorrey (4), Tadangi (1), Melleka (1), Nimmaka (1) and Palaka (1).
11. Considered as founder of the village.

12. Considered as co-founder of the village along with Late Jammi Naidu.
13. Jatapu and Saavara have been living in the same ecological niche for quite long in this region. Jatapu tribesmen who speak a corrupt form of Telugu lived at the foot of the hills whereas the Savara lived on the hill slopes. The Jatapu too practised *podu* cultivation, but are a more acculturated tribe and claim to be part of Hindu society. They also consider themselves superior to Savara on the basis that they do not eat meat of the *nallabakkalu* (he/she buffaloes) which the Savara do.
14. The two step verification process is now being thought to be too cumbersome.
15. The Savara and the Jatapu tribesmen have been living together for many years. Many Savara families will have special friendship (*nestarikam*) with Jatapu families. Such families will also extend fictitious kinship to each other and resort to kin terms of Savara/Jatapu.
16. The practice among the Savara was to give names to children according to the day on which he/she is born. Hence the same names of Addayya/Adamma, Sumburu/Sumbri, Buddadu/Buddamma, Mangadu/Mangi, Lakkaiah/Lakki, Sukki/Sukkamma and Bangaru/Bangari repeatedly occurred in the school. Often the names of the parents of different children as well as the names of the children were same and it created confusion in regard to who received the incentive and who did not. It is to overcome this confusion that, surnames were encouraged.
17. The live-in relationship of the man and woman is for all practical purposes socially recognized as relationship of husband and wife. The man and woman may have premarital relationships too. If the woman elopes with another man of her liking, the man with whom she was in live-in relationship is entitled to *mogalanu / danda* too.
18. This increase is substantial considering that the number of such cases was only seven in three Savara villages in 1986 in 94 *birinda*.
19. For details of acquisition of mates among the Savara, please see Sharma (1992) and Sunitha (2012).
20. Refer to shared ancestry described earlier.
21. Marriage among the Savara involves a bride price called *oli* if the marriage is the first marriage for the woman, and *mogalanu* if the marriage is with a woman who is already married to someone else before.
22. Marriage of a married women by a man by payment of 'fine' to the members of former husband's lineage/*guda*
23. Senior most male member of *birinda* was taken as the head of *birinda*, even though in some cases, the women were actually heading the *birinda* for some reason or other.
24. Many of the villagers of Manapuram however, think that her refusal to reject levirate was her relationship with Shiva, a non-Savara and assumption that she would soon elope with him.
25. He was elected as member of ZillaParishad Territorial Constituency (ZPTC).
26. This case is interesting, because he and his first wife were blaming each other for her infertility. So he claimed that he married a second time to prove his fertility. He subsequently had a son with his second wife. But at least some of the villagers felt that the son was born due to extramarital relationship of his wife. However, his first wife was also happy about the birth of a son to him and in fact she treats him very affectionately and takes care of his needs. She expects that he will take care of her in her old age.

27. Approximate age at the time of field work in 2012.
28. The Savara language was spoken by all members of the study village in 1986 with typical Savara accent and the older women particularly were not able to speak any other language. In 2012, everyone knew the regional language (Telugu) in Manapuram along with Savara language. However, many children and young men and women preferred to speak in Telugu outside their habitation. As their contacts with outsiders and the interactions with Telugu speaking people increased on various accounts, the Savara language was mostly restricted to their private spaces by all except a few elderly men and women. In fact, by 2012 some Savara men, including one of the prominent leaders of the village, married Telugu speaking women, flouting the tribal endogamy rule. This has resulted in a complete shift to Telugu in these *birindas*.
29. This is said because of the impression that all Savara women drink liquor and also have pre-marital relationships.
30. Mahalakshmi (2013).
31. The tribal village was first studied in 1986 for my Doctoral work. Then it was visited for a duration of one month in each 2004 and 2012.
32. Includes nuclear extended and sub nuclear families.
33. Includes joint extended families of all types – fraternal extended and lineally extended type.
34. Compound families due to plural marriage of a man.

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