

Celestial World Influence on the Social System of Abujh Marias of Chhattisgarh

SAMIRA DASGUPTA[†]

AG-44, Salt Lake, Sector-II, Kolkata 700091, West Bengal
E-mail: bhabbinimay@yahoo.com

KEYWORDS: Abujh Maria. Social system. Celestial world influence. Bastar. Chhattisgarh.

ABSTRACT: The Abujh Maria or Hill Mariai is one of the Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group (PVTG, formerly identified as PTG, primitive tribal group) of Chhattisgarh, chiefly confined in Abujh-marh hills of undivided Bastar district. They are divided into number of *kata* (clan like social group) who are exogamous and groups of such *katta* are under a *pen* deity of exogamous nature (a phratry like social group) who possess a defined territory in the terrestrial life. And the progeny of a particular *katta* under a *pen* practice their sustenance activity in the same area. Abujh Marias are *penda* (slash and burn) cultivators. The celestial belief system among the Abujh Marias is deeply enmeshed in their life and practicing livelihood. The present paper discusses the influence of supreme authority of their celestial world in their daily livelihood activities and life.

INTRODUCTION

The Abujh Maria (also spelt as Abuj Maria), is a lesser known tribal community living in the Abujh-marh hill tracts of the present State of Chhattisgarh. Etymologically the word Abuj-marh or Abujh-marh means unknown hills and thus the people of the area are called Abujh or Abuj Maria. The name Abujh Maria is probably been given to them by the outsiders. They generally introduce or prefer to introduce themselves as *metakoitor*. The word *meta* means hills and the term *koitor* is used by all the Gond people as their generic name. Generally the *koitor* are of two types — the *metakoitor* and the *dorkoitor*. The people who live in the hilly tracts or *meta bhum* are called *metakoitor*, and those who live on the plains or low land are called *dorkoitor*. As the Abujh Maria live in the hilly tracts, they are *metakoitor*. Kurup ('63) wrote that the word Abujh

means 'rustic' and in Gondi 'marh' means hills. So Abujh Marias are the rustic people living in the hills.

The whole of Abujh-marh area is covered with extensive ranges of hills and with peaks varying from 2200 to 3160 feet in height (Kurup,'63). For the administration of these tribal areas of the district it was divided into some *parganas*. Each and every *pargana* was headed and controlled by a headman who was called as *pargana manjhi*. Each *pargana* has some villages under its control. Again every village is headed by a headman called as *patel* or *manjhi*. There are some Abujh Maria inhabited *parganas*, viz, Chote Dongar, Farsal, Mangnar, Nurbhum, Bardal, Tapalibhum, Padalibhum, Hukkagotal etc. The present field work carried out in Chote Dongar *pargana* villages only. It is also reported that Abujh Marias have a moiety social organization (Jay,'70; Elliot,1856) while, Grigson ('91, reprinted) gave his opinion in favour of phratry organization.

[†] Assistant Anthropologist, Retired
Anthropological Survey of India, Kolkata

The Abujh-marh hills is situated in the north-western part of Bastar district (undivided) of Chhattishgarh. Undivided Bastar district was the largest district of Chhattishgarh with a total area of 39,114 sq. km with maximum number of tribal population. About 72% of the total population of the district are of tribal origin. The Abujh-marh area of the district is an extensive hilly terrain of 3900 km. It is bounded by Antagarh tehsil in the north which is a plain land.

On the south of the hills there is Indravati river, on the east is the Narayanpur tehsil and on the west the hilly tract is bounded by Kotri river. The Abujh Marias are distributed in 236 villages of which 189 villages are under Narayanpur tehsil, 39 villages are under Bijapur tehsil, and 8 villages are under



Figure 1: Map of Bastar district (not to scale)

Source: Agarwal, P. C., 1979.



Figure 2: Topographical features of Bastar district

Dantewada tehsil. The Abujh Maria population is 19250 persons as per 1981 Census of India (cf. Sarkar and Dasgupta, 2000). Village-wise demographic account of Abujh Maria as per 1981 Census of India is given in Table 1.

Abujh-marh area is covered extensively with hills and hillocks, with streams and dense forest. Abujh Maria culture is nourished within the undisturbed ecosystem. The area is very remote and secluded, ill communicated and also is declared as restricted area by the State Government. It is reported that they belong to Proto-Australoid group and their dialect is under Dravidian family. They speak Gondi.

Economic Life of Abujh Maria

Traditionally the people are *penda* (slash-and-burn or shifting hill cultivation) cultivators. As they inhabit the hilly terrain, full of jungle, *penda* is the

TABLE 1
*Village-wise demographic distribution of Abujh Maria in different tehsils of Bastar district
 (Census of India, 1981)*

Tehsil	Name of the village	Total population of the village			Abujh Maria population		Others	
		Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Male	Female
<i>A. Narayanpur tehsil</i>								
1.	Kodhur	37	30	67	37	30	—	—
2.	Tekamets	17	19	36	17	19	—	—
3.	Mangebada (Musfarsi)	8	5	13	8	5	—	—
4.	Kathor	14	14	28	14	14	—	—
5.	Pareyadi	12	14	26	12	14	—	—
6.	Orchapar	9	10	19	9	10	—	—
7.	Kumchal	Full village is deserted						
8.	Palemeta	Full village is deserted						
9.	Kongoli	28	27	55	28	27	—	—
10.	Gamandli	27	33	60	27	33	—	—
11.	Hikonar	26	20	46	26	27	—	—
12.	Kader	9	10	19	9	10	—	—
13.	Gumchur	26	27	53	26	27	—	—
14.	Turko	34	38	72	34	38	—	—
15.	Tumeradi	32	28	60	32	28	—	—
16.	Bheradeda	Full village is deserted						
17.	Maskur	58	49	107	57	49	1	—
18.	Hiranginar	19	147	33	19	14	—	—
19.	Horadi	32	32	64	32	32	—	—
20.	Kanchchapal	49	46	95	49	46	—	—
21.	Kanagaon	73	68	141	69	63	4	5
22.	Garawahi	21	17	38	21	17	—	—
23.	Guner	8	10	18	8	10	—	—
24.	Toke	51	64	115	51	64	—	—
25.	Markur	6	6	12	6	6	—	—
26.	Sargipal	36	36	72	36	36	—	—
27.	Palahur	13	9	22	13	9	—	—
28.	Kundla	60	61	121	60	61	—	—
29.	Jetwar	30	31	61	30	31	—	—
30.	Vogan	20	25	45	20	25	—	—
31.	Tarobeda	20	24	44	20	24	—	—
32.	Maspi	20	14	34	20	14	—	—
33.	Gomeh	58	56	114	57	56	1	—
34.	Adnar	101	99	200	101	99	—	—
35.	Malmeta	61	57	118	61	57	—	—
36.	Vellar	13	21	34	13	21	—	—
37.	Rawanadi	4	5	9	4	5	—	—
38.	Hamokal	33	40	73	33	40	—	—
39.	Marsulnapa	47	41	88	45	38	2	3
40.	Tarogonda	18	18	36	18	18	—	—
41.	Chotebarekot	16	20	36	16	20	—	—
42.	Konjey	44	47	91	44	47	—	—
43.	Darangar	11	11	22	11	11	—	—
44.	Kormokoro	26	23	49	26	23	—	—
45.	Koroskoro	Full village is deserted						
46.	Ranikarke	24	34	58	24	34	—	—
47.	Koronar	29	32	6	29	32	—	—
48.	Kongey	49	51	100	48	51	1	—
49.	Kangur	41	32	73	41	32	—	—
50.	Jharawahi	21	19	40	21	19	—	—
51.	Bornirpi	19	17	36	19	17	—	—

contd.

Tehsil	Name of the village	Total population of the village			Abujh Maria population		Others	
		Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Male	Female
52.	Kurusnar (Belmori)			Full village is deserted				
53.	Hechekuti	17	22	39	17	22	–	–
54.	Binagunda	28	35	63	28	35	–	–
55.	Garpa	21	27	48	18	22	3	–
56.	Markabera	16	17	33	16	17	–	–
57.	Warapenda	40	34	74	40	34	–	–
58.	Tahakadond	49	41	90	49	41	–	–
59.	Motechnadi	16	19	35	16	19	–	–
60.	Goredapadar (Korenar)			Full village is deserted				
61.	Bondom			Full village is deserted				
62.	Karkabera	24	17	41	24	17	–	–
63.	Palahur	26	33	59	26	33	1	–
64.	Dhuma			Full village is deserted				
65.	Ousebeda	43	32	75	43	32	–	–
66.	Kasturmeta	47	51	98	41	43	6	5
67.	Padamkot	52	60	112	52	60	–	–
68.	Burungmar (Kodenar)			Full village is deserted				
69.	Oksmarka			Full village is deserted				
70.	Kutul	144	131	275	132	110	12	21
71.	Nelangur	53	47	100	53	47	–	–
72.	Kumnar	9	7	16	9	7	–	–
73.	Alnar	10	10	20	10	10	–	–
74.	Ahenar	33	31	64	33	31	–	–
75.	Kokameta*	355	369	724	274	287	12	14
76.	Korenar	13	17	30	11	13	2	4
77.	Wasing	39	38	77	22	17	17	21
78.	Gongla	15	19	34	15	19	–	–
79.	Becha	48	43	91	36	34	12	9
80.	Murnar	70	72	142	69	71	1	1
81.	Orchakorai	10	8	18	10	8	–	–
82.	Irkhatti	88	99	187	88	99	–	–
83.	Irpanar	18	25	43	18	25	–	–
84.	Jharawahi	109	111	220	101	104	8	7
85.	Dhunta	43	57	100	36	49	7	8
86.	Haltanar	74	71	145	74	71	–	–
87.	Garmunjur	2	2	4	2	2	–	–
88.	Mahakanar	5	3	8	5	3	–	–
89.	Dondribera	7	9	16	7	9	–	–
90.	Orcha	227	204	431	188	172	–	–
91.	Gudari	100	93	193	100	93	–	–
92.	Markabera	45	34	79	45	34	–	–
93.	Juwara	151	137	288	149	131	–	–
94.	Kodkanar	34	26	60	34	26	–	–
95.	Taronar	18	14	32	14	11	–	–
96.	Taranar (Gardebera)	9	4	13	6	1	–	–
97.	Nednar	48	33	81	48	33	–	–
98.	Nerameta (Bipdiya)	29	37	66	26	32	–	–
99.	Hikpar	24	32	56	15	19	–	–
100.	Okpar (Brehabera)	46	32	78	31	24	–	–
101.	Torokur (Badur)	14	19	33	14	19	–	–
102.	Mohandi	17	16	33	17	16	–	–
103.	Kodoli	13	15	28	13	15	–	–
104.	Kurusnar (Khargaon)	60	64	124	59	64	–	–
105.	Geulapadar	24	38	62	24	38	–	–
106.	Kumnar	24	25	49	24	25	–	–

contd.

Tehsil	Name of the village	Total population of the village			Abujh Maria population		Others	
		Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Male	Female
107.	Kornar (Ghorigaon)	15	12	27	15	12	–	–
108.	Kandari	63	65	128	63	65	–	–
109.	Alwar	21	17	38	21	17	–	–
110.	Gumiapal (Munjbera)	Full village is deserted						
111.	Kodeliar	60	65	125	60	65	–	–
112.	Kornar	49	42	91	49	42	–	–
113.	Ghattakal	36	50	86	36	50	–	–
114.	Gurdai	88	103	191	88	103	–	–
115.	Dumnar	24	25	49	24	25	–	–
116.	Gunter (Wayenger)	19	14	33	19	14	–	–
117.	Moksanli	62	55	117	62	55	–	–
118.	Asnar	90	95	185	89	95	1	–
119.	Rainar (Bhatbeda)	69	63	132	69	63	–	–
120.	Mandali	41	39	80	41	39	–	–
121.	KondaKoti	19	31	50	19	31	–	–
122.	Harbel	72	68	140	72	68	–	–
123.	Donderbera	87	81	168	87	81	–	–
124.	Ader	95	102	197	95	102	–	–
125.	Kudmel	168	154	322	168	154	–	–
126.	Kalmanar	44	45	89	42	44	–	–
127.	Kutulnar	50	52	102	46	47	–	–
128.	Karkanar	39	39	78	39	39	–	–
129.	Kotengar	28	24	52	26	23	–	–
130.	Kangali	32	40	72	32	40	–	–
131.	Acheli	Full village is deserted						
132.	Irpanar	Full village is deserted						
133.	Adimpar	23	27	50	23	27	–	–
134.	Kahakori	14	16	30	14	16	–	–
135.	Khodpar	35	44	79	35	44	–	–
136.	Gumarka	99	87	186	99	87	–	–
137.	Dhurbeda	47	49	96	47	49	–	–
138.	Rashbeda	57	52	109	57	50	–	–
139.	Mathbeda	65	51	116	65	51	–	–
140.	Mechebeda	26	21	47	26	21	–	–
141.	Gattakal	46	56	102	46	56	–	–
142.	Dhoubey	62	68	130	62	68	–	–
143.	Metabeda	37	28	65	37	28	–	–
144.	Koyamata	55	59	114	55	59	–	–
145.	Kortamarka	42	38	81	42	39	–	–
146.	Nelnar	75	77	152	75	77	–	–
147.	Kostari	5	5	10	5	5	–	–
148.	Gomagal	89	77	166	89	77	–	–
149.	Kokapar	46	49	95	46	49	–	–
150.	Chalcher	133	158	291	(All are Dandami Maria)			
151.	Idnar	14	22	36	14	22	–	–
152.	Barehtondabeda	53	59	112	53	59	–	–
153.	Chotetondabeda	38	38	76	38	38	–	–
154.	Jabgonda	130	124	254	(All are Dandami Maria)			
155.	Koduli	85	85	170	(All are Dandami Maria)			
156.	Bhotia	19	17	36	19	17	–	–
157.	Tonindogra	29	39	68	29	39	–	–
158.	Katurbeda	30	35	65	21	29	–	–
159.	Hitulwar	26	29	55	23	26	–	–
160.	Barehberkot	16	21	37	16	21	–	–
161.	Brehbeda	32	32	64	32	32	–	–

contd.

Tehsil	Name of the village	Total population of the village			Abujh Maria population		Others	
		Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Male	Female
162.	Motentoda	28	23	51	28	23	—	—
163.	Metanar (Matahanar)	21	20	41	21	20	—	—
164.	Botor	6	4	10	6	4	—	—
165.	Gandawar	14	11	25	14	11	—	—
166.	Godelmarka	20	20	40	20	20	—	—
167.	Gumaradi (Gomadhari)	19	29	48	19	29	—	—
168.	Balehbeda (Balehmeta)	21	26	47	21	26	—	—
169.	Murhapadar	26	34	60	20	25	—	—
170.	Khorehpar			Full village is deserted				
171.	Garbeda (Harimarka)	3	2	5	3	2	—	—
172.	Moyanteleh	16	11	27	16	11	—	—
173.	Palehmeta			Full village is deserted				
174.	Neskar			Full village is deserted				
175.	Chindpur	11	17	28	11	17	—	—
176.	Orchameta	67	69	136	66	69	—	—
177.	Bhangobheriya			Full village is deserted				
178.	MajhiKhutni	31	29	60	21	29	—	—
179.	Khelahbeda			Full village is deserted				
180.	Nariya			Full village is deserted				
181.	Kotoli	6	5	11	5	4	—	—
182.	HuchachaKot	47	34	81	33	25	—	—
183.	Koburhur	6	9	15	6	9	—	—
184.	Musparsi	46	25	71	41	17	—	—
185.	Krohogerah	17	24	41	17	24	—	—
186.	Korchgaon	29	19	47	29	19	—	—
187.	Harimarka	2	1	3	2	1	—	—
188.	Rengabeda	6	3	9	6	3	—	—
189.	Hikmeta	5	11	16	5	11		
<i>B. Bijapur tehsil</i>								
190.	Jatnur	145	123	268	126	122	—	—
191.	Dwalur	53	36	89	53	36	—	—
192.	Padmeta	34	42	76	34	42	—	—
193.	Dodimarka	51	42	93	51	42	—	—
194.	Boter	46	42	88	46	42	—	—
195.	Talwara	16	12	29	16	12	—	—
196.	Karangul	50	54	104	50	54	—	—
197.	Murumwade	91	78	169	91	78	—	—
198.	Gudehkot	23	19	42	23	19	—	—
199.	Lanka	82	94	176			Fully Dandami Maria Village	
200.	Rekawaya	29	21	50	29	21	—	—
201.	Tahakawada	24	26	50	24	26	—	—
202.	Lekhwada	62	58	120	62	58	—	—
203.	Adesmeta	87	84	171	87	84	—	—
204.	Komhu	51	49	100	51	49	—	—
205.	Behlar			Full village is deserted				
206.	Ponchawada	44	57	101	44	57	—	—
207.	Korowaya	6	8	14	6	8	—	—
208.	Hitul	236	250	486	231	248	—	—
209.	Khalhaza	33	30	63	33	30	—	—
210.	Alwada	30	25	55	30	25	—	—
211.	Pindiyakot	312	294	606	242	231	—	—
212.	Ghot	23	29	52	23	29	—	—
213.	Duseli			Full village is deserted				
214.	Dunge	487	425	912	475	411	—	—
215.	Betehkal	30	28	58	30	28	—	—
216.	Rotar	69	55	124	69	55	—	—

contd.

Tehsil	Name of the village	Total population of the village			Abujh Maria population		Others	
		Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Male	Female
217.	Ringabeda			Full village is deserted			–	–
218.	Aderh			Full village is deserted			–	–
219.	Nendurkurch	41	42	83	41	42	–	–
220.	Bhatbeda	10	3	13	10	3	–	–
221.	Tarnar	30	28	58	30	28	–	–
222.	Otanghi			Full village is deserted				
223.	Mungari	17	22	39	17	22	–	–
224.	Gawari	4	4	8	4	4	–	–
225.	Modambade	27	24	51	27	24	–	–
226.	Mohonar	17	17	34	17	17	–	–
227.	Kuyeh	28	23	51	28	23	–	–
228.	Thultuli	112	126	238	112	126	–	–
<i>C. Dantewada</i>								
229.	Hikul	99	96	165	99	96	–	–
230.	Pindekapal	49	70	119	49	70	–	–
231.	Toyenar	115	125	240	115	125	–	–
232.	Paralnar	61	62	123	61	62	–	–
233.	Tahkawada	41	42	83	41	42	–	–
234.	Kodokal	25	25	50	25	25	–	–
235.	Handawade	227	209	436	203	186	–	–
236.	Hitawada	297	279	576	293	275	–	–

Note: *It is a mixed village of other tribal group like Bison Horn Maria or Dandami Maria

most suitable and easy process of cultivation. Till date they have been practicing *penda* as their primary source of earning. They produce various types of cereals and millets such as *kolha*, *kosra* etc. Along with *penda*, now-a-days they are engaged in settled plough cultivation. Even then *penda* is the most preferred type of cultivation by them (Sarkar and Dasgupta, 2000). Rice is the chief crop from plough cultivation. As they live in the forest surrounding, they get plenty of forest products which are very important in their day to day life. *Mahua* is an important item grown abundantly in their locality. *Mahua* tree is important in their life and culture. They collect the flower for their own consumption. They prepare some sweet dish from this flower. They also extract liquor from the flower which is an essential item in their life cycle rituals, and in their religious festivals and in all formal and informal gatherings. It is believed that their ancestors and deities are never satisfied without receiving the offering of *mahua* liquor. The excess quantity of this flower is either stored for future use, or sold or exchanged with cereals and pulses if it is required. They are not allowed to eat any new *mahua* flower without performing a ritual —*Irupu Pandum*. The seed of *mahua* flower, locally known as *dorior tora* is also easily available item to them. They use it as cooking media, to light lamp and also to massage

the body and head. Next to *mahua*, mango tree is another important item which grows in their locality and in surrounding jungles. It is one of their chief food items used in their cooking. Similarly tamarind tree is commonly found in their area and is an important ingredient in cooking. All these three items grow both in their locality and also in the surrounding jungles. Except these there are plenty of other food items they collect from jungle. They collect various types roots, fruits, tubers, shoots, flowers, seeds, honey, leaves, leafy vegetables for cash earning. They get seasonal edible items from the forest such as *putu* or mushroom, *basta* or young bamboo shoots etc. They generally sell tamarind and *phooljharu* (locally available broom stick) for earning cash by which they purchase salt, clothes and other essential items. *Salfi* or *sulphi* is another favorite juice. To them right from birth till death of an individual *mahua* liquor and *sulphi* juice have special importance for them. After completion of pollution period, both after birth and death, *mahua* liquor is important to feed the relatives and friends. In marriages also the guests are entertained with liquor, *pej* and *landa*. It is observed that in their locality *salfi* trees grow abundantly and naturally their addiction towards *salfi* juice cannot be ignored. Side by side they have got some palm trees in their vicinity but they are less in

number and they do not have any attraction towards its juice. Whereas in the Dorla belt of south Bastar the palm trees grow abundantly and *salfi* grows in lesser number in comparison with palm tree. Palm tree and its juice have special importance in the life and culture of the Dorla. Their addiction towards palm juice is similar to the addiction of *salfi* juice of Abujh Maria people. Therefore, natural environment has a dominant role in determining their norms, customs and behaviour pattern of the people of the area.

Influence of Celestial World on Abujh Maria

The Abujh Maria society is very unique and interesting in both of its structure and function. Right from the origin of Abujh Maria society, they have various types of folk-stories, tales and myths. They believe that the almighty Bhagwan, to please his wife, created two sets of brothers and sisters named Nelariya and Nelire and Bumeriya and Bumire, and put them to live in the hills and forests of this area long-long back. As time passed, their children grew up. Nelariya was married to Bumire and Bumariya was married to Nelire. Gradually they got children and formed two sets of social groups (Dasgupta and Sarkar, 2003, 2005).

Each of these two groups is exogamous in nature and tied by *dadabhai* or *bhaiband* or consanguine

relationship that is, tied by non-marital ties. They are not allowed to marry within the group and have to do it outside their won social group that is with another group, members of which are referred by them as *akomama* or *saga* or relatives through marital ties or in a word affinal relatives.

The present study was conducted in the village Orcha and Ader of the Chote Dongar Pargana of the Abujh Marh. Each of these two villages has its respective *pen* deity. In Ader the *pen* deity is *karmaikolamutte*, and in Orcha the *pen* deity is *Pirtin Dewan*. He is also known as *Wikir Kunga* or *Hunga Muiitto* and is popularly known as *Dewan Dokra*. Among several myths, there is a myth about *Dewan Dokra*'s family, his relatives, ancestors and friends. They believe that he is *Pat Raja*'s son and married with *Karmaikolamutte* (see genealogical chart, Figure 3).

The above genealogical chart shows that Pat Raja – the oldest deity of the Abujh Marh area, married Pat Rani and brought her to his own place at the Mohonar village of the Mangnar Pargana. His wife belongs to Dandami Maria(or Bison Horn Maria) group. Pat Rani's borther's name is Modia who is the presiding deity of Kekhami Katta of Dandami Maria group of Ghotpal. There are several stories which tell that in ancient days the Abujh Maria and the Dandami

Informant : (a) Tonderamusendi, vill. Orcha, Male, 75
 (b) Koriya Jodi, vill. Ader, Male, 70
 (c) Senior Male members of Gudai Village

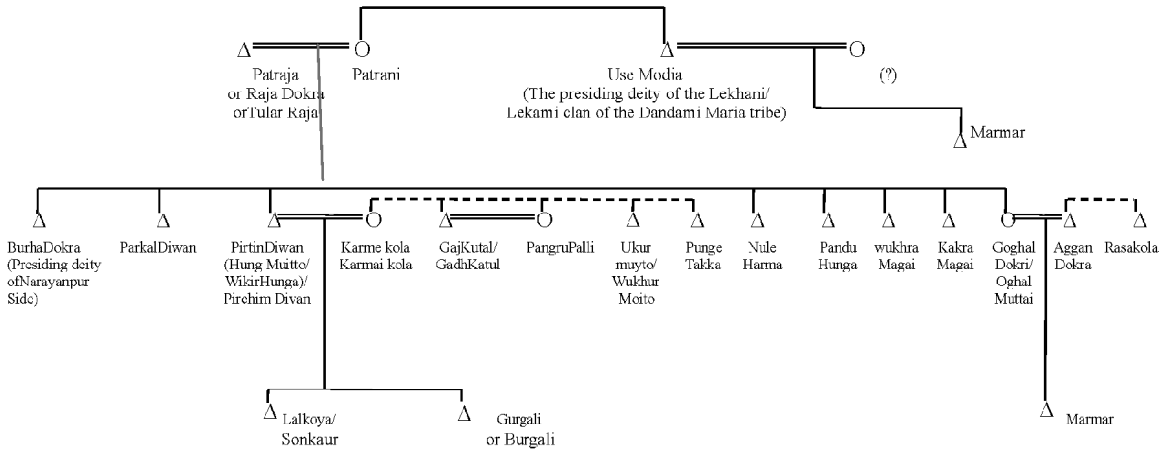


Figure 3: Genealogy of Patraja – The Supreme Authority in the Celestial World

Note: The above genealogical data was collected during 1994-1996.

Maria used to have marital relationship but afterwards due to some disputes between the two groups they were separated and stopped to have any such marital alliance (Dasgupta and Sarkar, 2003).

The community is endogamous with a number of exogamous phratries. Each of the phratry has some smaller groups or clans locally known as *katta*. The *kattas* of each phratry is *dadabhai* or *saga* (consanguineal kins) with each other with a *bhaiband* tie.

They are prohibited to have any marital relationship with a person of brother clan. Marriage can be solemnized in the *kattas* of other phratries which are known as wife's clan i.e. *akomama* (*ako* means mother's and *mama* means brother). Their clans are named after some animals, fruits, flowers, birds, fishes, generally available in their locality. Each of the clan has its own deity locally known as *pen*. They worship their *pens*, and trace their descent from their respective *pens*. Furthermore, in their celestial world the *pen* deities are again having genealogical relations; marriage within *dadabhai* relations of *pen* deity is tabooed. Descent is traced through father. They are patri-potestal. Among them monogamy is the rule, polygyny is also allowed. They prefer to practice cross-cousin marriage. Generally they prefer to arrange marriage from a nearby village due to physical inaccessibility or difficulty to travel to a long distance. Another reason for the preference of cross-cousin marriage (or *dudhlotana*) is due to bride price system. In cross-cousin marriage one has to return the bride-price which is taken by him in his marriage. Automatically the bride price becomes less. *Pendul* or marriage by negotiation is the rule but love marriages are also not uncommon. They also practice *lamareh* (marriage by service), *aeohundi* (junior levirate), *vitte* (marriage by elopement), *koheberdan* (marriage by exchange), *koyeyari* (junior sororate), widow marriage etc. Divorce is allowed but not encouraged in the society.

To adjust with their natural environment, automatically their life has adopted various measures which have penetrated into their culture.

Habitation in an uncertain environment creates a feeling of helplessness in their mind. To overcome such a feeling they have taken support of the Supreme authority in his various forms, very much adjusting

with their natural environment. The deities live in jungles, in hills, rivers, streams, in winds and even in some trees. Sun is believed as the supreme authority. Moon is his wife and the Stars are their children. Sun gives light and warmth in the earth which ultimately have created life in the earth. So he is regarded as the supreme authority. *Tallur Muttey* is their mother goddess. She is the deity of their *bhum* or land. As they get their food from land, the *bhum* is regarded as their mother and she is recognized as *Tallur Muttey*. Among their other deities their ancestors and *pens* are also highly regarded. After the death of a person his or her soul is taken back to their own houses and established in the separate chamber known as *hanalkatla*. Their ancestors are always thought as their protectors. On each and every ritual and festival, they must give special offerings to their ancestors. Their ancestors and *pens* are worshipped before starting of cultivation and after harvest. At the new rice eating ceremony they firstly offer the newly harvested crops and cereals to their ancestors and *pens*. Similarly in the case of season's first fruit eating ceremonies of *mahua* and mango fruits, they first offer those to their ancestors and *pens*. Their *pens* have very important position in their life. They control the whole group of people and their society by their religious orders. Sometimes the *pens* order through dreams, sometimes through possessions etc. Their *pens* are genealogically related. Among their *pen* deities *Anga Deo*, *Deven Dokra*, *Paika Deo*, *Budha Deo*, *Raja Dokra* etc. are very important. *Kaksar* is their chief festival performed in the month of June just before monsoon. It is their annual worship when all the clan deities, *Tallur Muttey*, and other deities including *Danteswari Mata* are worshipped. It is a festival through which they offer thanks to their clan deities and other deities after harvesting of *urad* (*Phaseolus radiatus*). They are allowed to take it only after offering it to the clan deities and their ancestors. They have a belief that if they have any new thing such as flowers, fruits, cereals and grains, and if they do not offer it to their deities, then they may have to face many types of danger, particularly the attack of tigers.

The seat of clan god is known as *pen-rawar*. It is a special shed made under some big tree where they are not allowed to cut any tree. They are not allowed to cut many other trees for various social, economic

and religious reasons like *mahua*, *aonla* (for their sustenance activities), *sal* (economic purpose), *aden* (religious purpose) etc.

Abujh Marias are shifting hill cultivators. They cultivate land by slash-and-burn method and after cultivation of a land for consecutive four years they shift to another patch of land in the Abujh-marh hills. It is believed that the land in the Abujh-marh hills is under the control of their *pen* deities who are thought to be the actual owners. Then the land is mythically divided by the *pens* among the *kattas* under their control and those are ultimately owned by the Abujh Maria progenies of those *kattas*. Therefore, the Abujh Maria territory has been demarcated in terms of *pen* whose affiliation with the *kattas* is more or less clear and obvious. Each *pen* has one or more villages under his or her control or has a particular territory, and the members of the said *pen* enjoy the right to utilize the land, in which their economic need for sustenance is operating and in view of maintenance of sustenance, the *kattas* under a *pen* (which Grigson referred to as phratry, cf. Grigson, '91) of a particular area or a territory of Abujh-marh, act as a corporate group.

DISCUSSION

Under each of these *pens* there are a number of *kattas* which directly control the Abujh Maria people and their society at their terrestrial world and in this way communion between celestial and terrestrial world is maintained. These *kattas* are again exogamous in nature with two types of relatives – *dadabhai* and *akomama* and their agnatic relationship is traced under the banner of their own *pen* and known as *dadabhai* group and thereby marriage within such group is strictly prohibited (Dasgupta and Sarkar, 2005).

In this context it may be observed that among the Lalung of Assam (Syam Chaudhuri and Das, '73) similar exogamous sister clusters play a significant

role in the social organization and also in their economic life. The Lalung term for such sister clusters is *mahari*. Incidentally, any such nomenclature is absent among the Abujh Maria territory. In the absence of detail data of the total Abujh-marh territory each exogamous *katta* can be termed as exogamous band cluster.

In the case of Abujh Maria the author are naturally interested in highlighting the '*katta-pen*' relationship where it is found that each *katta* is affiliated to one *pen* or the other. At the same time the Abujh-marh hills are also marked out in terms of *katta* and *pen*. This has reminded the author of a cognitive relationship between the *katta* and the *pen* (that is the terrestrial world and the celestial world) in the organization of the Abujh-marh society.

REFERENCES CITED

- Agarwal, P. C. 1979. *Human Geography of Bastar*. Garga Brothers: Allahabad.
- Dasgupta, Samira and Amitabha Sarkar 2003. A new dimension of social organization of Abujh Maria of Tribal Bastar: Communion between Celestial and Terrestrial Life. *Journal of Indian Anthropological Society*, 38: 41-54.
- 2005. *Reflection of Ethno-Science : Study on the Abujh Maria*. Mittal Publications: New Delhi.
- Elliot, C. 1856. Deputy Commissioner's notes. *Unpublished manuscript. Jagdalpur Collector's Office Record Room, Bastar District (Undivided)*. (Document Index: XXXVIII, Office Head Quarter and Tashil. No. 25, 25/1).
- Grigson, Sir Wildfried 1991. *The Maria Gonds of Bastar*, (reprinted). Oxford University Press: New Delhi.
- Jay, Edward, J. 1970. *A Tribal Village of Middle India*, Memoir No.21. Anthropological Survey of India: Calcutta.
- Kurup, A. M. 1963. People of the unknown hills. *Vanyajati*, X: 8-41.
- Sarkar, Amitabha and Samira Dasgupta 2000. *Ethno-Ecology of Indian Tribes: Diversity in Cultural Adaptation*. Rawat Publications: Jaipur.
- Syam Chaudhuri, N. K. and M. M. Das 1973. *The Lalung Society: A Theme for Analytical Ethnography*, Anthropological Survey of India: Calcutta.

