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CHANGING DYNAMICS OF KINSHIP AND MARRIAGE: IMPLICATIONS OF MINING AMONG THE MARIA OF BASTAR

Introduction

Discerning the complexities of kinship systems of various pre-industrial societies dominated anthropological investigations in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Since then it continued to engage the attention of anthropologists till about 1970s when it was seriously challenged by studies reflecting on gender and political economy. Kinship was seen not only as nodal point of tribal societies but also a principle of social organization among these communities. A turning point in kinship studies was brought about by David Schneider (1984) who highlighted the western anthropologists' ethnocentric biases and their inability to distinguish between various facets of kinship structures in the pre-industrial societies. While tracing the trajectory of kinship studies in India, Uberoi (1993) observes that development in this particular field of study has followed the changing paradigms and concerns of anthropology and sociology in the west. Of late the feminist theorists brought a fresh perspective to anthropological investigation. Special attention began to be focused on the household as site of production and reproduction (Uberoi, 1993). Work of Collier and Yanagisako (1987) established the relationship between kinship and gender. They pointed out that gender asymmetries were crucial to the understanding of kinship systems cross-culturally. Differential positions of the various kin need to be understood in a relative perspective so as to have a complete picture of the society being studied.

The study explores the changing kinship boundaries and their implications on the social life of Maria, a central Indian tribe. It traces the emergence of newer structures in the domain of kinship and affinity. All such changes are explained on the basis of infusion of other cultures from outside the region into the studied area. The industrial policy and administrative decisions have been instrumental in creating new matrimonial alliances leading to formation and consolidation of new family norms, rules of residence and kinship obligations. Maria women of Bastar have entered into wedlock

with men from other tribes, castes and region which have not only affected the traditional kinship boundaries but have created new boundaries beyond the Maria society.

Background

Maria traditionally inhabit the inaccessible areas in Dantewada district of Chattishgarh State. Historically speaking, south Bastar is a land which remained unexplored³ for a long period of time. It is pre-dominantly occupied by the Maria, who lived a life of relative seclusion, within their own cultural norms and patterns. Bailadila range of mountains⁴ which is situated in the south of Bastar was hunting and foraging ground of the local tribals, as the thickly spread-out forest was the home of the wild animals like Sambhar, Bison, Double-horned antelope, etc.. Other than the blacksmiths, who dug out iron ore with their own indigenous method and made tools with their traditional technology, no one explored the vast expanse of iron wealth. In fact, only after the project, conducted by the Geology Department of the Government of Colonial India, was known the mineral content of that region.

In 1938, H. Crookshank (cited from Crookshank 1963), Superintending Geologist, Geological Survey of India published his work, *The Iron Ores of the Bailadila Range, Bastar State*. In 1963, another manuscript for the Memoirs of the Geological Survey of India, volume 87 was prepared by him. These popularized the rich iron ore reserves of this area. He had identified the principal ore deposits and numbered them. These deposits are, till date identified by these numbers only. Iron being an important resource in that area, government of India decided to extract iron ore to its benefit and export them abroad and in turn, earn good revenue. Accordingly, Indian Bureau of Mines began exploring and in 1963, National Mineral Development Corporation Limited (NMDC) took over from them.

The Bailadila range of hills was developed for the first time, by setting up a mine at Deposit-14 which went into production in 1968. In fact, the first township was set up at the base of the Bailadila hills where Deposit 14 is located, in the village named Kirandul. The colony which was set up near the mining area was named as Kailashnagar. After Kirandul, another township (named Bachel) has been set up at village Bade Bachel at the base of the hill where deposit 5 is located and the colony near the mining area was named Akashnagar.

It was not an easy task as dense forest extended over the entire Bailadila range of mountains which is the reservoir of iron ore. These forests and the valleys in between the mountains and hillocks were the home of ferocious animals and tribals respectively. The tribals practiced step cultivation along the slopes of the mountains. Forests were used by the tribals for foraging. Before actually starting the extraction work, roads needed to be built to reach

the deposits of iron ore. Clearing of the forest land, blasting of the mountains, construction of the roads, etc., were some of the initial works which were leased out to many small contractors who in turn hired local labour to fulfill these jobs. Slowly and slowly, the tribals came forward to work under the contractors. Maximum number of them came from the villages of Molesnar, Kilepal, Poro Kameli, Dugeli, and Dhurli. The number of women who came to work was much more than the number of men. The lure of cash money made the poor tribals work as per the terms of the contractors.

Gradually the area got cleared, road construction work started and the first mining camp, made by NMDC, was opened at Bhansi. When the actual mining work started, more skilled labourers and technical staff were required, who mostly came from outside Bastar, especially from the states of Kerela, Andhra Pradesh, and other districts of Madhya Pradesh. Initially, due to tough living conditions, only men from the outside world ventured into that area. These men were either unmarried or came here leaving their families (wives and children) back home. Therefore, Maria women were employed by these men for doing various domestic chores like cooking, washing, etc.

The lifestyle of these outsiders which included their clothes, shoes, sun-cap and usage of luxury items like soap, oil, powder, fancy plastic combs, dark glasses, mirrors, shaving set, wrist watches, etc. aroused curiosity among the local people, especially the women. When these contractors got familiarized with the local surroundings and the native way of life, they shifted out into their own camps or make-shift houses and with them shifted many tribal girls to attend to their daily household chores. Slowly these men won the confidence of the girls by giving them small gifts like, colourful *bindis*, bangles, cheap synthetic sarees, etc. Maria society does not prohibit pre-marital sexual relationships; therefore, such a pattern of relationship did not prohibit the Maria women, many of whom were even married, to come closer to the outside men. Gradually, they were enticed into a sexual relation with them. In the late 60s and 70s, many of these couples were forcefully married by the order of the district commissioner (Srivastava, 1990). Only few of these marriages sustained and they settled in and around that area.

This present work is situated in Bade Bachel and Bachel. Standard social science methods of data collection like ethnographic method, observation and case study methods were used. All those people who were actually affected by those marriages that took place in late 60's and early 70's and others who could give relevant information have become old and some of them have even died, therefore it became difficult to understand the sequence of events that took place at the onset of industrialization in this area.. Present generation of the youth seemed unaffected by these marriages as either it was long before their birth or they were too young at that time. But this does not imply that they are completely unaware of the happenings then as some definitive impressions could be deciphered from their avoidance of the subject. Therefore

it was thought essential to capture some of the case studies. This paper is based on case studies of inter-community marriages.

Principles of Descent

Traditionally the Maria are divided into various patrilineal clans locally called *jati*. Social relationships have been broadly categorized into agnatic kinship and affinal kinship. Individuals of extended households are usually related by agnatic kinship. Those individuals having no actual genealogical connection but believe to have descended from a common one, are members of the same clan. After marriage, women take up their husbands' clan names as their own. The Maria are divided into seventeen clans (see table 1). Every clan has its own deity, a *pen*. The clan deity usually resides in the place or temples earmarked for them. On important ceremonial and ritual occasion, the *pen* moves out of the temple and undertakes a ceremonial ride among the devotees. *Angdev* is the moving idol of the *pen*. The names of various clan gods (*pen*) and their places of worship have been given below.

The Maria clans are unilineal descent groups. All the clans have a name and each member of the same clan worship the same clan God (*Pen*). It is believed that all the members of a clan are related to one another agnatically, that is, they are the descendants of a common male ancestor. There is a tendency for clan members to form clusters of households around the same area, though there is no strict ruling regarding this. In other words, members of the same clan may set up their households in a place other than the area inhabited by their clan members.

The ritual boundary of each clan is strictly demarcated wherein the clan members gather twice a year to worship their clan God. Besides these clan rituals they also partake (as clan members) in other village rituals and functions where generally the senior members of the clan participate. Such rituals reinforce the relationship among the clan members. There are occasions when clan members, distributed over different villages, assemble together to worship the clan deity. For example, the *Karti/Karve* group gather twice a year at Madari (Kirandul village) to worship *Angdev*, represented in the form of wooden logs of 4.5 feet length with peacock feather attached to it, once in March and another time during October-November (Diwali). One or two members from every lineage will participate. Nearly 150 to 200 persons assemble. Persons from nearly 50 to 70 villages participate in the two-day long (sometimes one day) worship and feast. Members carry their own utensils and cook food for themselves. Other than this ritual function, the clans do not have any economic function in terms of common property holding.

Kutum is a smaller unit and can be equated with lineage. It also has territorial affiliation or operates according to the territorial principle. If one of the persons moves out and settles down at another place he will, over a



period of time, establish a separate *kutum* of his own. Thus *kutum* also functions according to, and therefore is subjected to, the principle of segmentation. Patrilineal ties help to maintain the *kutum* solidarity. *Kutum* supplies agricultural work force and takes up active role in land management. Every *kutum* comprises six to eight domestic groups or *maipila*. Every *maipila* has its own land. After marriage, the son takes his share of the produce and cooks food separately. However, the cultivation process is marked with inter-family reciprocity and co-operative labour. Whenever an emergency situation arises, a man seeks help from his family members such as, father, son or brother, failing which he approaches other members of the wider kin circle such as, father's brother, father's brother's son and all those members of the patrilineal clan who stay in the same village. In case, he is unable to gain much from them, he approaches other clan members from outside the village. When all such sources are exhausted, he takes the help of an affine - his

mother's brother or any other member of his clan who is staying in the same village or neighbouring villages. Such behaviour shows strong preference for patrilineal kin over the affines in seeking help. For example, Prabhu Tamo had fallen seriously ill during the harvesting season of rice in the year 2002. His two minor sons and wife could not do anything to help him. His own brother had gone to Punjab to work there on daily wages. Therefore, he called upon his father's elder brother's son for help. He also could not provide him support. Then he sought help from his other kin who also refused citing some work. Ultimately he had to ask his maternal uncle's son to harvest his produce.

Inheritance

Generally, after marriage of the sons, father divides his land equitably among all his sons and himself, but he still remains the owner of the land. The residence remains patrilocal and the son at times co-operates in his father's agricultural activities. When the married son and his father share the same agricultural land and maintain a common granary, the son's wife cooperates with his mother and sisters (her mother-in-law and sister-in-law) in household work and also in gathering and cooking food. Usually, she cooks on a different hearth, but during ritual observances she would cook on the same hearth as her husband's natal family.

The *patta* of the land is usually in the name of the father, that is, the head of the household who is also the legal and jural owner. In his lifetime, if the father has divided his land among his sons then after his death the land is re-registered in the names of his sons. After dividing the land amongst his sons, he keeps a share for himself. Whosoever (it is usually the eldest son) looks after him in his old age, gets the portion of the land owned by him after his death. In case, the land has not been divided among the sons, the name of the eldest brother is registered as the owner of the land. After his name, his mother's name is also mentioned so that she is looked after well by her sons. The land is divided almost equitably among the sons with the eldest son getting a little more of the share.

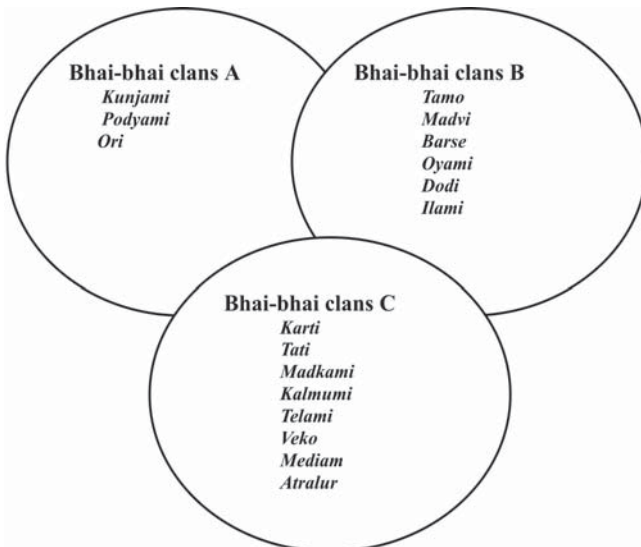
So as to make their lineage a corporate entity, Maria do not allow their property to go out of their lineage. As a result, a girl child has no claim over her father's property, though she might have a share in her husband's property after his death so that her sons look after her in her old age. Movable property is also given to the brothers. Gold, silver, cow, buffalo, etc., are divided among the brothers. But if they want they can give a share to the sisters. If the mother wants she can give her personal jewellery to her daughters. If a man does not have a son, then in his old age, he takes the help of his brothers or their sons in lieu of which, he gives his land to them. Since the land is not supposed to go out of the lineage, son-in-law cannot inherit the property of his father-in-law.

Kinship and Affinity

As stated earlier, the Maria society is divided into several patrilineal exogamous clans. Each clan has specified marriageable clans. The clans function exogamously following the preferential rule of marriage. The Maria men prefer to marry either their mother’s brother’s daughter or their father’s sister’s daughter. Many a times both are the same. Thus, the marriage system among Maria is based on the preferential rule for the bilateral cross cousin. The cross cousins are not always the actual cross cousins but could also be the classificatory cross cousins. Thus, the choice is exercised within a broader category of relatives. The Maria kin terms corroborate the practice of bilateral cross cousin marriage. For example, mother’s brother, wife’s father and father’s sister’s husband - all are called by a single term *mama*. This term is again used in a classificatory sense.

Clan system among the Maria exhibits the properties of segmentation and grouping. Certain clans are grouped together on the basis of extended kinship relation, especially, that of the fraternal type. They believe that originally they were brothers and now though the actual relationship can not be traced, yet they do remember that they were brothers. The members of these clans use the term *bhai-bhai* to designate others of the same group. Traditionally marriage was strictly prohibited among such groups. The following figure shows the grouping of different clans on the basis of a collective sense of fraternity as opposed to those groupings (*saga*) with whom they can have matrimonial relations.

Figure 1: Clan groupings based on marriage preferences and prohibition



Source: Village census conducted by the researcher

Above picture depicts three groups (A, B, C) of bhai-bhai clans. All the clans within a single circle are agnatically as well as consanguinally related. Each group can inter marry with the other group but cannot intra marry within the group as they have *bhai-bhai* relation among themselves. Members of clans of one group can marry into clans of other groups as they are characterized by *saga* relations. For example, Kunjami from group A cannot marry Podyami and Ori of group A but can marry any clan from group B and C.

The relatives could be divided into *dadaltamur* and *mamalbato* (affines). In the local parlance, the *dadal* refers to elder brother and *tamur* refers to younger brother. Thus, they are *bhai bhai*. *Mama* refers to wife's father, mother's brother and also father's sister's husband. *Bato* refers to wife's brother, sister's husband, mother's brother's son and also father's sister's son and therefore, the term *mamalbato*.

For example, in the case of *Madvi* the clans namely, (i) *Tamo*, (ii) *Barse*, (iii) *Oyami*, (iv) *Dodi* and (v) *Ilami* are kin or *dadaltamur* to one another. Marriage is strictly prohibited among them. On the other hand, for *Madvi*, the *mamalbato* clans are, (i) *Karti*, (ii) *Tati*, (iii) *Madkami*, (iv) *Kalmumi*, (v) *Telami*, (vi) *Mediam*, (vii) *Lekami*, (viii) *Kunjami*, (ix) *Podyami*, (x) *Kowasi*.

Conjugal right and sexual autonomy

A woman after marriage moves out of her natal family and becomes a member of her husband's family. A husband has absolute jural rights over his wife's domestic, economic, sexual, and reproductive activities. In case a woman shows adultery than she might have to face divorce and the man with whom she has extra-marital relation might have to face serious punishment. Many a times, a major fight ensues and many murders are committed on this ground.

Case 1

In Patelpara⁵, one Maria woman named Pakli was killed by her husband, Hiru. They had a five year old daughter and a one year old son. He suspected her to be having an affair with a Maria man named Daasru, with whom she was friendly before her marriage. Initially, before this incident occurred, Hiru had warned Pakli of the consequences, three or four times, but she did not listen. Then one day, he caught both of them in a compromising position and that too, in an inebriated state himself. He lost his mind and attacked both of them with a sickle. Daasru managed to run away, but Pakli could not save herself. Eventually, Hiru throttled her. This happened in October, 1996.

Case 2

In Manjhipara⁶, a Maria girl named Aaitu, used to work in a nursery. She was married to Suklu of Chalkipara. They were married for 2 years and

they had no child. Suklu thought of a second marriage, so that he could have at least one male child. Meanwhile, at the nursery Aaitu fell in love with Devaa, another Maria man and she got pregnant by him. When this matter was disclosed to Suklu, he flew into rage and killed Devaa. Aaitu, out of fear, committed suicide by burning herself in July 1998.

In both the above cases, it can be seen that adultery by woman is a serious punishable act. Even if a woman does not get killed, she has to face divorce, or she would have to put up with a serious kind of fight with her husband. A woman's natal family can not interfere in her married life. But in case, a woman has separated after quarrelling with her husband, or if a woman becomes a widow or gets divorced then she can always go back to her natal family, but in all the cases, she would have to leave her children behind in her husband's family. A woman has no right on her children.

Relationship between husband and wife is asymmetrical and she is considered subordinate in most spheres of domestic affairs as well as extra domestic affairs. Man is head of the household. Most of the decisions regarding management and sale of property; matters pertaining to agriculture and trade, household income and expenditure, clan and family disputes, repairing of house and maintenance, etc. are taken by him. Woman takes an active part in household chores.

Implication of inter-community marriages

Taking the people, who had a firsthand experience, down their memory lane, seemed rather difficult as there were bitter memories to be revealed. Extremity of bitterness could be ascertained from the acutely anxiety ridden faces whenever these topics were broached. Venom would start coming out of their mouth as some people had not only lost daughters and sisters to the outside-men but also had the misfortune of losing their wives. Jealousy and disdain was definitely very much there for those men. In some extreme cases, some men murdered their wives and would-be wives (FZD, MBD). Many a times, police intervention was sought. It was a hotly debated issue in all the villages and the *siyan*⁷ and the *patels* sat in regular meetings, to discuss, how to curb the behaviour of their women. The commissioner of Bastar in late 1960s was alarmed by this rampant sexual abuse of these tribal women by the contractors, the staff of NMDC, and other tribal men. He ordered all these men to marry⁸ the woman they were cohabiting with. All these marriages were performed by force in late 60's and early 70's.

Initially, when the women joined the workforce, the Maria men enjoyed the money earned by their women. But, slowly when the Maria women got attracted to the outsider men, there was widespread contempt among the Maria men. They tried to stop their women by warning them of dire consequences, but it was too late and many of the women went ahead

and started staying with these outside-men. They had children from these alliances.

Though the Maria men were angry with their women (most of the men considered these women dead), yet some of them were bothered about the future of these women. Since the matrimonial alliances were forced on these couples, in most cases, it did not last very long. Therefore it did not provide any solution to the macabre social problem. Most of these women were deserted along with their children. Though this infuriated the Maria men further, they could not accept these women back into their society as, it was felt, they have violated Maria customs and social sanctions of marrying outside Maria society. So, these destitute women were put up in a makeshift ashram in an officer's hostel in Kirandul, from where they were shifted to an ashram named Nari Niketan in Dantewada. There were too many women to be accommodated. Later on, some other ashrams came up in the area like Mata Rukmini Kanyashram in Dantewada, which is run by a Delhi based organisation and Banvasi Chetna Ashram in Kamalnar (approximately 30 kms. from Dantewada). Kanyashram is a boarding school meant for female children of the deserted women. Banvasi Chetna Ashram runs a school as well as trains them in carpentry, stitching, electrical works, etc.

This paper deals with four case studies of Maria women marrying outside their tribe into other caste and tribal communities in the post-industrialisation era. Out of the four case studies, two of them are marriages held in late 1960s or early 1970 and two are more recent ones. Earlier case studies represent those Maria who were naïve and were taken in by the outside men. Recent ones represent those cases wherein the Maria were exposed to the 'other' culture from their birth and they chose to break away from traditional customs.

Case 3

Mr. Rana Pal⁹ is a 66 years old man who retired from N.M.D.C. in January 1996. He originally belonged to Lahore in Pakistan. He came to India at the time of partition at the age of about 17 years. He had come with his entire family consisting of parents, brothers, sisters, uncles, etc. When they came to India, they settled in Rohtak district in Haryana where the camps were set up for the migrant Indians. From that time onwards, it was a long journey of struggle. He took up various jobs from 1949. In that year he was in a Government service where he used to get Rs. 75/- per month which was later raised to Rs. 105/-. During those days it was a very big amount which is hardly comparable to the present salary structure. After that he worked in various places and in April, 1967 he came to Bastar and during that time, ore was being taken out from Deposit No. 14. So, he stayed at Kailash Nagar¹⁰ for 6 months. Then in 1968, he came to work in Deposit No.5 so he stayed in Aakash Nagar¹¹. During those days, NMDC used to employ its own labourers.

Mr. Pal had quite a few labourers working with him; one of them was Paiké Lekami, a Maria girl. She belonged to Molesnar. Her father Bhutto Lekami was an agriculturist. Like many of her contemporaries she had come to work in the mining area as a wage labourer. She was about 14 to 15 years old when she came to work. Besides working in the mining area she used to cook and do other household jobs. They started staying together from the year 1968. Meanwhile she became pregnant and due to the pressures of the then Deputy Commissioner, he married her in 1971. A son was born to them in the same year in May. Unfortunately their only son from this marriage is mentally retarded.

Prior to this marriage Mr. Pal had a wife who was staying with his parents in Faridabad district of Haryana. His first marriage had taken place when he was 19 years old. He had three sons and two daughters from this marriage. Due to the precarious living conditions, he did not bring his family with him when he came to work in Bailadila. He maintained regular contact with his family in Faridabad. His second wife knew about the existence of his first wife but his other family members, including his first wife, were not aware of the existence of his second wife. Over the years he had managed to conceal this information. Only his third son knew about it as he used to come to Bailadila and spend some days with his father.

In 1991, he suffered from septicemia which was serious and was critically ill. He was shifted to Hyderabad where he was treated. It took about a year for him to get cured. He was so ill that, at that time his first wife and her children had to be informed and it was then that the existence of Paiké was disclosed. Apparently, not many tears were shed though it is hard to believe that a wife could have pardoned so many years of deceit so easily. Probably Wig's near-fatal illness had lessened her remorse. Unfortunately, in the same year his first wife expired.

Mr. Pal has rechristened Paiké as Sita after marriage. Looking at her it is difficult to distinguish her from any other Hindu women. She wears clothes, ornaments and other accessories as that of mainstream culture. She speaks Hindi without a trace of Maria accent. Food habits in the household are also like her husband's. Rituals that are followed are primarily of the Hindu religion. Paiké has completely given up her Maria identity and has got assimilated into the Hindu way of life. After many years of agony, she has been able to reestablish contact with her natal family. She visits them sometimes and her brothers also come to her place once in a while. Other than this no other ritual or social responsibility is taken by her.

Case 4

Ungobai is about 55 years of age and belongs to the village Molesnar. When asked about her clan she said "*Hum log Lekami hai*" (She belonged to

the clan Lekami). She is the daughter of Sheru Lekami. She started working in 1962, when she was about 15 years of age, in the Bhansi base camp. She worked there for about 2 to 3 years on a wage of Rs. 7.50 per week in Bhansi. From there she moved to Kirandul where she was getting Rs. 10 per week as wage for about 6 years. While in Bhansi she had a daughter with a Muslim who was a driver with NMDC. He did not stay with her for long. She came across a Maharastrian while working in Kirandul, with whom she has another daughter and that person also did not stay with her for long. Then she started staying in the hostel meant for destitute women.

Ungo moved to Dantewada Ashram from the hostel in Kirandul. Then she moved to Dhurli and then finally to Bacheli. All through, she had worked as a cook in the hostels at a salary of Rs. 100 per month which later rose to Rs. 150/- per month. She came to Bacheli in the year 1977-78 and worked as a peon as well as a cook in a school. It was during this time she started staying with Kumharan.

Kumharan is a 56 years old man who belonged to the Kollam district of Kerala. His father Shivraman was an agriculturist. Kumharan holds a diploma in Civil Engineering. In the year 1960 he had started working for Heavy Engineering Corporation Ltd. in Bihar. He came to Bacheli in 1971 and started his business as a contractor in civil construction works. Besides working as a contractor he has devotedly looked after the well being of his natal family comprising his father and two sisters. One sister is older to him and the other is younger to him. In 1972 and 1973 both his brothers-in-law expired one by one and the responsibility of his two sisters and their children came upon him. His elder sister has 4 sons and 4 daughters and younger sister has 2 sons and 1 daughter. Kumharan gave education to all of them and got them married off successfully. This whole process of bringing up his nieces and nephews left him no time to think about himself.

Kumharan and Ungo never got married legally. Both of them are very forthcoming and they did not hide this fact from the author. Kumharan has accepted her two daughters and has got the eldest daughter married. Though her elder daughter does not stay with them, yet Kumharan has kept her grand children with him to give them good education. Though Ungo has learned to cook the kind of food taken by Kumharan and also learned some of his rituals, yet Kumharan feels that it is difficult to make Maria deviate from their own form of culture.

Case 5

Bheemo Karma is a mechanic-cum-operator (MCO) at the screening plant at Akashnagar. He is 52 years of age. His natal village is at Dugeli. He had studied till IV. He has been working with NMDC for the past 32 years. He had joined as a wage labourer at Deposit 5 (Bacheli). In the beginning, he worked for 5 years at a wage of Rs. 2.50 per day. He worked hard and served

the company diligently and therefore, he was absorbed as a permanent employee. Today, he is drawing a salary of Rs. 8000 per month.

His wife is from the village Bade Kameli. He has 3 sons and 1 daughter. His eldest son, Ram has studied till Ist and had refused to study after that and at present he is a *khalasi* at the mines at Kirandul. He goes to work for about 3 to 3 and 1/2 weeks and takes leave whenever he requires. Second son, Chandra has studied till B.A. and he is also working as a *khalasi* at Kirandul. Third son has done B.A. and B.Ed. and is looking for a job in a school. His daughter, Ritu has studied till fourth and has passed typing in both Hindi and English.

Ritu has married a Christian boy and settled in Bilaspur in Madhya Pradesh. Both parents-in-law of Ritu had worked for NMDC. Ritu and her husband, Vicky were neighbours at the official quarters at Akashnagar. Ram has married Vijay Laxmi whose natal village is in Andhra Pradesh, but her parents are settled in Dantewada as her father has a petty business in Dantewada. Chandra has married a Christian girl named Suchitra who is a relative of Vicky.

Ram has a son aged 8 years and a daughter aged 6 years in classes 2 and nursery respectively. Chandra has a son aged 9 years and he is in class 3.

Bheemo Karma insists on following Hindu customs of marriage, wherein, engagement ceremony and taking seven sacred turns around the fire with ritual offerings are very essential. Chandra and Ritu have married their respective spouses, legally in the court.

Case 6

Sheetal Ram Tamo is of 51 years. He has been serving NMDC for the last 25 years. Presently, he is working as tyre-fitter and drawing a salary of Rs. 6000/- (approx.) per month. His wife Begia, who belonged to Madkami clan before her marriage, is of 46 years. She worked as wage labourer in NMDC for long, then she got a chance to work as a mid wife in Apollo hospital in Bachel. She was there for about 8 years and then she has left that job and prefers to stay at home. Both of them feel that, it is not necessary for her to work anymore as both their children are settled and they have a comfortable life with a television, a cooler, a sofa set, a fridge, etc..

Sheetal Ram has a daughter named Tina, who is 23 years and a son named Ritesh, who is 21 years of age. Tina has studied till 8th and is now married to B. C. Karma. Ritesh has studied till 12th. Both Tina and Ritesh have studied from Kendriya Vidyalaya (Central School), Bachel. Ritesh is presently employed with NMDC for the last 3 years, drawing a salary of Rs. 3000/- per month (approx.). He is working as a *khalasi* at the screening plant.

All of them speak Hindi at home. Tina does not know Gondi (her native language) but Ritesh knows as he has lots of friends and many of them are his own tribesmen. Therefore, he knows Gondi.

Sheetal Ram still maintains contact with his natal village, Kameli, on some ritual occasion. His children rarely visit Kameli. Begia does maintain ritual and social contact with her husband's as well as her own natal family.

Concluding analysis

Differences in the gender relations contribute in shaping the contours of family and kinship in a given society (Dube, 1997). There is a subtle sense of equality among Maria men and women¹² as the women are more proactively involved in economic activities like farming, liquor making, etc., selling of farm produce, brooms, liquor, etc, is also done by women and they are able to hide a little amount of money from their men and spend it on themselves. But the women are not free to exercise right over their own sexuality as far as having a physically intimate relationship with men from other societies is concerned. However, with men from their own community, pre-marital sexual relations are not restricted. Since these women (case 3 and 4) had married outside the society, they had been debarred from the society. Hence the kinship ties and obligations have been severed from both sides. Neither the Maria women nor the Maria men have any ritual and social obligation towards each other.

The influence of the Maria culture is limited to women only in the new conjugal unit. Since she has no ties with her natal family, therefore she is unable to derive any support from her kin which otherwise provides a huge support (Palriwala and Risseeuw, 1996). The other partner in this unit is a man from the 'outside' world. They have different cultural backgrounds. Patriarchal hegemony is relatively less in Kerela (case 4) as compared to Punjab (case 3) where it is pronounced (Sharma, 1993). In case 3, identity of the Maria woman has been completely moulded into a Punjabi but in case 4, it is not so. Similarly, religious beliefs and practices followed in the household or the food that is cooked everyday or the dress that is worn by these Maria women follow a similar trend. As far as children in these households are concerned, case 4 does not have any offspring of their union and in case 3, the child is differently-abled.

The non-Maria men who also have their kinship network in their respective home towns do not encourage their wives (Maria) and children to visit them. However, at the time of emergency, such as illness and health care and other contingent situations, they rely on their consanguines more than affines. This practice has led to extension of ever widening horizon of the Maria kinship boundaries with new symbols and meanings. The local Maria women are continuously negotiating to evolve new cultural strategies to cope up with the changing scenario.

With the development of modern infrastructural facilities like staff quarters¹³, schools, hospitals, markets, etc., developing around Bachel, families of the employees of the mining industry moved into the area. Many of the Maria men who got employment in NMDC, also shifted to the staff quarters, leaving the village house. Uninhibited world of Maria gradually became constricted with forced external agencies and impetus from within which was influenced with intermixing with different cultures.

Aligning themselves with the 'outside' world was the biggest challenge for these Maria men (case 5 and 6) who got the job with NMDC, initially. They had to learn a new language, wear different set of clothes, unlearn some of the Maria sensibilities of social behavior and relearn the art of negotiation in everyday social life. Since they struggled with their identity to fit themselves in the broader frame of the 'outsiders', therefore they sent their children to formal school with an idea towards securing an employment either in mining or in some other sector. Definitely, agriculture did not seem to be an option for them as their forefathers.

These Maria families have undergone other changes as well due to the cultural exposure of these people. Many of the kin terms are done away with and are replaced with terms from the mainstream culture. For example, father and mother instead of being referred to as *baa* and *yayo* respectively are referred to as *papa* and *mummy*. Kinship obligations are not so binding on the new generation Maria and the changes in their relationships within the family has had an effect on their relationship with the society at large. Many of them do not either follow the preferential rule of marriage or marry within the community. Some (case 5) have even married into other religions.

Broad network of family among the Maria has collapsed and is now restricted to the conjugal unit or extended at the most, to the nearest kin, i.e., brother, wife's brother, etc. The whole gamut of bilateral and parallel cross cousins is not there at times of grief and happiness. It is the neighbourhood which is defining relations and it is within this network Maria operates his everyday life. Neither do these people visit their natal villages nor do their kin from the villages visit them. There is a distinct possibility that they do not share an amicable bond.

Inter-community marriages have brought out several changes in the manner in which the Maria maintain and recognize the kinship obligations. Unfortunately, much of the Maria cultural identity has been eroded as they have not learnt the language and are not able to appreciate any of the Maria cultural values. They do not celebrate the festivals of the Maria which are celebrated with every crop cycle. Ritual space and sacred beliefs are also oriented towards caste mode of worship. On important festivals and cultural events they are shy of wearing the beautiful head-gear from which is derived the name of the tribe, Bison-horn Maria. In future, it remains to be seen

whether Maria society at large, is able to withstand the pressures of the 'outside' culture and maintain its identity with dignity and fervor.

Table 1
Name and Location of Various Clan Deities

S. No.	Clan	Clan deity	Place
1.	<i>Tamo</i>	<i>Nangalgunda</i>	Tomirgonda (Bijapur district)
2.	<i>Madvi</i>	<i>Handalkosa</i>	Koriras village
3.	<i>Barse</i>	<i>Engal, Madta, Engal Ungo Fulungo.</i>	Gamawada village
4.	<i>Oyami</i>	<i>Godikama</i>	Gondori (Bijapur district)
5.	<i>Dodi</i>	<i>Edeveli</i>	Purangal (Bijapur district)
6.	<i>Ilami</i>	<i>Idvar, Barval</i>	Eled (Bijapur district)
7.	<i>Karti</i>	<i>Atum Kutum Bhumidiyal</i>	Madari (Kirandul village)
8.	<i>Tati</i>	<i>Engal Hadmal</i>	Tikanpal village
9.	<i>Madkami</i>	<i>Edma Raj</i>	Vidgal Village
10.	<i>Kalmumi</i>	<i>Engal Ungal Sonungal</i>	Dugeli Village
11.	<i>Telami</i>	<i>Udumadam Dhanigal Bhima</i>	Bhansi Village
12.	<i>Mediam</i>	<i>Pinmala, Jadka mala</i>	Palnar (Near Kirandul village)
13.	<i>Kunjami</i>	<i>Mehsunga</i>	Bhansi Village
14.	<i>Podyami</i>	<i>Kash, Edma</i>	Gumori Village
15.	<i>Veko</i>	<i>Pal Ando</i>	Paneda (Near Gidam village)
16.	<i>Ori</i>	<i>Bade Edma</i>	Mardonpal (Near Jagdalpur)
17.	<i>Atralur</i>	<i>Oosed Mitor (God) Turdokri (Goddess)</i>	Gotum (Near Gidam village)

Source: Village census conducted by the researcher.

NOTES

1. The present paper is based on the author's fieldwork, for various periods of time during the years 1996 to 2002, during her PhD research. This work was conducted in the southern part of Bastar division of Chattishgarh State. South Bastar has Bailadila range of hills where iron ore was extracted and this affected the lives of the local people there.
2. Referred to as Maria hereafter in the text. This section of the Maria tribe is known for their traditional head gear made of the horns of a Bison and hence popularly called Bison-horn Maria by the colonial anthropologists and administrators.
3. The Bailadila hills on the west, the Tekanpalli hills on the south, the Tangri Dongri hills on the north-west and the Indravati river on the north have provided quite difficult barriers to communication.
4. This is the mountain range where the iron ore deposits are located and mining activity is going on.
5. One of the hamlets of village Bade Bachel.

6. One of the hamlets of village Bade Bacheli.
7. Elderly men of the village who take part in decision making process.
8. According to Srivastava (1990), "beginning 1971, 255 women with their masters or keepers were listed and they were asked to marry each other under the auspices of district administrator, collector and tribal leaders".
9. All names in the text have been changed to maintain secrecy about their identity.
10. It is the township set up near deposit 14.
11. It is the township set up near deposit 5.
12. These men and women are residing in the villages and are not employed in the mining industry.
13. These are provided by NMDC to its employees. They are having occupants from all over India, so intermixing of culture is very much prevalent here.

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