

## Social Organisation & Institution of Marriage Among Jagdalpur Murias: A Socio-Cultural Study

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### Abstract

Murias are one of the prominent Scheduled Tribes in Chhattisgarh, mostly found in Bastar district. They have a unique institution of marriage due to which they hold a specific position from other Adivasi groups. The objective of this paper is to scientifically explore the various aspects of Muria marriage in the interface of modern and urban life style. The data was collected through primary fieldwork. This paper also looks at the impact of changes in behavioural pattern on the institution of marriage as well as culture. Methodologically, this paper is based on primary data collective through structured schedule, focus group discussion, personal interview and observation of Muria rites, rituals, customs and systems followed during the marriage and narrative interpretations of community elders and leaders. Apart from observation, this description constitutes thorough corroboration and analysis of data.

In the context of various sociological approaches, this paper deals with marriage institution among the Jagdalpur Murias in Lohandiguda tehsil of Bastar as a case of investigation. Lohandiguda tehsil has the highest density of Muria population than any other tehsil in Bastar, and this was reason to select it as research field. The study found that though Murias still follow most of the traditional aspects in their marriage ceremonies, it has been influenced by non-Adivasi systems and cultures. Academically this paper attains relevance in understanding the cultural context of Adivasi groups and critical interface with modernity.

**KEYWORDS:** Muria, Adivasi, Marriage, Culture, Bastar.

### Introduction

Adivasi<sup>1</sup> is the collective term for the indigenous people of mainland South Asia. In India, the official term used to denote them is 'Scheduled Tribe', mandatorily applied to all those social groups that are enlisted as per the presidential order. Perhaps the closest terminology in English language would be 'tribe'. In this paper 'Adivasi' is the operational terminology used keeping in view the subjectivity character of the social

<sup>1</sup> Adivasi is the conglomerate term used to denote indigenous people in mainland India. Officially they are termed as Scheduled Tribes, however most of Scheduled Tribe groups address themselves as Adivasis and take pride in this term. It is formed by joining two words; *Adi* meaning ancient or First and *Vasi* the inhabitants. It means the first inhabitants or the First Nations. In this paper, the term Adivasi is used interchange with tribe, tribes, tribal, Scheduled Tribe and ST.

group. The term tribe was introduced during the British period more for administrative convenience. The term 'Scheduled Tribe' first appeared in the Constitution of India. Article 366 (25) defines as 'such tribes of tribal communities or parts of or groups within such tribes or tribal communities as are deemed under Article 342 to be Scheduled Tribes for the purpose of this Constitution' (GoI 1950: 235) Article 342 (GoI 1950: 211) prescribes the procedure to be followed in the matter of specification of listing any social group as Scheduled Tribes.

Adivasi groups across India have been a subject of interest among sociologists and anthropologists for multitudes of reasons. While many theoretical propositions evolved over the course of the past nearly 200 years it has undergone severe changes. Many Adivasi scholars of late have challenged the very premises of colonial researches and researchers. In India Adivasis are often referred in terms of what they are perhaps not. They do not fall into the framework of religious groups. Historically they did not practice a religion that had written texts like any other institutionalised religions. Nor did they have the cutting edge of class division as in a capitalistic society. The term Adivasi is applied with a sense of pride and distinctiveness that separates them from non-Adivasi. It is a term which refers to the entire thesis of belongingness to the land, which perhaps could be the hilly and forest tracts – often referred by the mainstream as uncivilised and uncultured zones. However many Adivasi and indigenous scholars have challenged this theoretical and political position time and again.

Manelbaum (1972) points that Adivasi life revolves around the principals of kinship. Kinship is not simply a principle of social organisation; it is a principle of inheritance, division of labour and distribution of power and privileges. Mostly tribal societies are small in scale. They possess a morality, religion and worldview of their own, corresponding to their social realities and relations. Sahlins (1961) opines that tribal society has a segmentary system, which has relations on a small scale. Thus they enjoy autonomy and are independent of each other in a given region. Bose (1971) attempted to highlight Adivasi economy and the roots of tribal separatist movements. He notes the absorption of tribes into the Hindu caste system. Interestingly he was comfortable with this absorption of Adivasis into Hindu fold. Thus the validity of his findings are also subject to challenges as he was more interested to place the Adivasis as Hindus and as champions of Hindutva ideology, which could never be an independent opinion as a cultural anthropologist. Certainly the present day Adivasi researcher would not cherish this prescription of Bose.

Though all tribes are not same, it is difficult to draw too many sharp distinctions amongst different tribes. They share many common features and characteristics such as shared history and culture. But one thing that has a common acknowledgement amongst all scholars on all tribes across India is that of economic exploitation, social marginalisation by non-Adivasis across regions. Some Adivasi groups like Bhils, Gonds and Santhals are large in size spread over extensive territories; many tribes are too small and at the verge of extinction. Relatively smaller groups like Mundas, Tharus, Oraons and Santhals have turned to settled cultivation while few others like Baigas, Marias, have continued with jhum (shifting) patterns of cultivation. Some of the Adivasis turned to urban spaces

where they almost lost their identity and turned at par with untouchable castes as slave tribes, while a few remained as hunters and gatherers in hilly forest tracks. Thus there has remained a tension between the Adivasis and non-Adivasis over several centuries in the past. In many cases, the real owners of the land were ousted or overthrown as garbage. Slowly it turned out to be individual based than community enterprise, particularly in the hands of the upper caste. Consequently they controlled the agrarian economy for centuries to come. Thus the tension between the resourceful and resourceless, powerful and powerless, have and have not continues till today particularly in the Adivasi contexts (George 2003).

### **Objectives**

The objectives of this paper could be summed as follows

1. To understand the marriage customs and systems among Jagdalpur Muria Adivasis of Bastar.
2. To sociologically interpret the institution of marriage of Jagdalpur Muria.

### **Methodology**

This paper is written based on the finding of primary survey during the PhD work of the first author, while the two others contributed to the backgrounder as well as interpretation of data. The fieldwork was done in seven villages of Lohandiguda tehsil namely Alnar, Chindgoan, Chitrakot, Gadiya, Takraguda, Taragoan and Sadra for a period of six months. Lohandiguda tehsil has the highest density of Muria population due to which it was selected for field investigation. A network of guides and informants, local interpretators and methods of snowballing were also applied. In all there were 202 men and 202 female respondents on whom a critically structured schedule was administered. Apart from this, the researcher also took personal interviews of community elders, focus group discussions and applied the tools and techniques of both participant and semi-participant observation. The data that emerged from the fieldwork was corroborated with secondary sources like books, papers and reports. The data that evolved from the field were of sociological and anthropological nature, which were narrative interpreted. These data has been analysed further to have more focussed discussion in this paper applying filtration and keyword techniques.

### **The Murias of Bastar**

Murias are one of the social groups that underwent such phases of historical shifts and turmoil, particularly from the report of Glasford in 1862 till the last of Elwin in series of colonial anthropologists and the later entry of Indian scholars. Whatever the case may, the Murias are one of the prominent tribes of Bastar region in Chhattisgarh for their appearance, attire, attraction and unique culture. Most of the studies surrounding the Murias have been more focussed on Gotul than addressing the difference in culture among those who do not strictly follow the Gotul culture and their institutions.

Grigson (1938: 42-49) categorises them into three sub-sections based on geo-cultural differences and patterns as – Jagdalpur Muria, Jhoria Muria and Gotul Muria. Elwin (1947: 12-16) noted that those who have been referred as Jagdalpur Muria by Grigson (1938) are also known as Raja Muria. He studied and wrote extensively on Muria life. Though he corroborates to the findings of Grigson, but also disagrees on the existence of

Jhoria. Raja Murias are relatively hardworking and better off than other social groups. They no longer speak Gondi language, rather speak Halbi. It may not be so appropriate as Grigson (1938: 43) notes the totemistic organisation are weaker and the old rules of exogamy are breaking down. Rather one could observe a much stronger totemic organisation in the current context among the Murias of Jagdalpur area. These totems revolve around their ancestry.

### **Jagdalpur Murias of Bastar**

According to Elwin (1947: 14) the word 'Muria' is used in Bastar to refer to indigenous people (he used the term aboriginals<sup>2</sup>). The name Muria has been derived from the term 'Mur' which means the Palash tree or 'from Mur' which means 'the root.' There is no apparent reason why Muria should be named after a Palash tree, which is neither a totem, nor specially honoured by them, nor even common in the territory. But the derivation of the word 'from Mur' meaning 'a root' has much to comment it. Mur may also mean permanent as in Mur podor – a permanent or a regular name as opposed to a nickname. The Muria in contrast to Hill Maria have permanent settlements.

There are many social contrasts among the Jagdalpur Murias with that of their other segments. Jagdalpur Murias do have any social interaction such as inter-dining and marriage with Gotul Muria and Jhoria Muria. Jagdalpur Muria considers other Murias of lower degree primarily due to their connection with the royal family in Jagdalpur. It is due to this connection that they are also known as Raja Muria. Social organisations are different among the Jagdalpur Muria when compared with Gotul and Jhoria Murias. Though all the three resemble in their looks and features, they do not share a common bond among each other. Their languages are different. While Gotul and Jhoria Muria speak Gondi or a form of Gondi, Jagdalpur Muria speaks Halbi. While Gondi falls broadly in the proto-Dravidian language family, Halbi is an offshoot of the Indo-Aryan family. Their songs, dances, costumes and musical instruments are different in many ways. While Gotul and Jhoria Muria still follow a strict form of Adivasi religion, Jagdalpur Murias have incorporated some Hindu gods and goddesses in their faith order and festivals.

Based on the current study, it could be stated that Jagdalpur Muria do not follow the marriage institution of Gotul and therefore they are much different in their cultural patterns related with marriage. Besides, the birth and death ceremonies and rituals are also different among them while compared with that of the other Murias. The population is mostly concentrated within Bastar, Bakawand, Lohandiguda, Tokapal, Darbha and Jagdalpur tehsils of Bastar district. Interestingly they find it non-problematic to have social exchange of marriage and inter-dining with Bhatra and Halba tribes who are considered of higher degree in the social ladder. They do not have social interaction with any of the other sub-tribes of Gonds other than these.

### **Customs, Rituals and Traditions of marriage among Jagdalpur Muria**

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<sup>2</sup> The term aboriginal is discouraged in this paper since it has been scientifically contested by many indigenous scholars.

Marriage is an important institution in the life of Jagdalpur Murias. It is important to facilitate the social organisation and kinship among the Murias. George (2015: 209-10) says unless the indigenous young men and women marry and have children they are not fully eligible to worship the ancestors nor does the family organisation and kinship among them remains intact. While Elwin (1947) suggests various ways and types of marriage among Murias, Gell (1992) reports a higher degree of marital breakdown. Further she mentions that with the Muria a young bride is expected to run – and keep running – away from her husband; and he is expected to show his commitment by fetching her back. But if she does it too often, or if he does not like her, he may just let her moulder in her maike. However among Murias, marriage is an important institution for which mutual engagement between boy and girl is important in the pre-marriage stage.

During the fieldwork all the 402 respondents corresponded to the fact that the boys and girls are allowed to meet each other before the marriage is proposed. Some respondents even said that boys and girls meet each other at first through some social ceremonies and once they like each other, the boy would ask his parents to finalise the marriage. Remarriage for men or women is not a taboo among Murias, particularly in case of widows, widowers, divorce and deserted women. During fieldwork, the researcher observed cases of polygamy too.

### Marriage and Omens

During the data collection, notion on omens were raised. Murias strongly believe in omens particularly while going for a marriage proposal. More than having a view of the good omens, Murias consider it more important not to come across any bad omens. In the initial proposal round, family members avoid any sort of bad omens while starting from the home. In order to avoid any such bad omens they would leave their homes as early as possible much before the dawn and much before anyone is awake. To get more minute ideas, it was put across the community elders during personal interview. According to the respondents there are three good omens considered as prosperous while leaving for a marriage. They are –

- i) A woman de-husking the paddy;
- ii) A cow feeding the calf;
- iii) A filled pot.

Similarly there are four main bad omens.

- i) Someone carrying an empty pot to fetch water;
- ii) A woman combing hair;
- iii) A snake crosses their path or if seen on the way;
- iv) Anyone found brooming on the way

**Table-1 Omens during marriage**

Particulars	Yes	No	Total
Good Omens	346	56	402
Bad Omens	363	39	402
Source: Primary Survey			

From the data collected during the fieldwork 86.07 percent of the total respondents believe in good omens while 13.93 percent do not believe in good omens. Similarly 90.30 percent respondents believe in bad omens while 9.70 percent respondents do not believe in any bad omens. Interestingly the ones who do not believe in good and bad omens are those who are educated ones. In all 9.70 percent of respondents do not believe in any omens. Almost those who do not believe in either good or bad omens are young men and women, who had gone to attain school or university level education.

In case if any of these have been seen during the first trip, the family members return back and the proposal is not taken forward any further. If these are not seen then they go ahead. There are certain specific markers for both good and bad omens, which is a distance of one to one and half kilometers from the home of both groom and bride.

**Types of Marriage**

There are many types of marriage among the Murias of Jagdalpur. Many authors have already written about Muria marriage system (Elwin 1947; Baghel 2018). The fieldwork gave insights of four important types of marriages. These are mangin, udharia, paitu and lumsena. Each of the marriages have it’s own socio-cultural patterns and importance. Table-3 gives a brief on how the respondents reacted to the question on what type of marriage did they have in life.

**Table-2 Custom of Marriage Proposal**

Particulars	Men	Women	Total
Proposed by groom’s family	201	201	402
Total	201	201	402
Source: Primary Survey			

The customary practice is boy’s family takes proposal to the girl’s family. While raising the question all 402 respondent as shown in table-2 said that the custom is to take the proposal from the boy’s side to the girl’s family. The girl’s side remains the deciding point – whether to accept or reject the proposal. From table-3, 73.88 percent of respondents follow the mangin marriage, followed by 19.66 percent of udharia, 4.22 percent lamsena and 2.24 percent paitu.

**Table-3 Types of Marriage**

Particulars	No. of respondents	Percentage of respondents
Mangin	297	73.88
Udharia	79	19.66
Paitu	9	2.24
Lamsena	17	4.22
Total	402	100
Source: Primary Survey		

### **Mangin marriage**

Mangin marriage is that marriage in which both the parents of bride and groom agree to get their children married. The family members of the boy go to girl's house and request her parents to permit them to take her as bride for their son. They propose in a formal way before the family members and elders of the possible bride. Generally the boy's family members and elders go to the girl's home with the proposal. The girl is identified either through a mediator or the boy would see the girl in some social functions after which they would have liked each other.

### **Udharia marriage**

When a boy and a girl fall in love with each other they flee away which is known as udharia. This is a popular form of marriage among Murias, though in lesser number than mangin. This is a form of a marriage in which there is love and mutual understanding between the two. Sometimes both of them inform their parents yet they do not agree for the marriage. At times it is also seen that the boy and girl get desperate even when the mahalakari is underway then also they flee and decide to be together ahead of pre-determined marriage date. Before fleeing the boy would assure that once she with him, he would take care of her and also of the situation later on.

### **Paitu marriage**

In Paitu marriage the girl forcefully enters the house of the boy after which she would not go back to her home. There would be a backgrounder to this where the boy and girl have been in love for a while. However the boy is not willing to take her home due to social opposition. In such case she would enter the house suddenly and would stay in the boy's house as his wife. Later the family members officiate it as in the case of udharia too.

### **Lamsena marriage**

This is a form of marriage where the boy would stay and serve at the house of the girl's parents for a specific period of time ranging between six months to two years. Sometimes the period gets extended depending upon the girl's father or the girl herself. After that he would earn his wife in this format. This type of marriage has reduced over time. Yet it happens where in most of the cases the boy has to ensure that all things needed for the marriage are produced by him in advance.

### **The Mahalakari**

The fieldwork revealed many concurrent aspects of the marriage. Based on the personal interview, focus group discussions and observation, the data that were collected from seven villages gives these details about the marriage process. The entire process right from first journey till the day of marriage is known as mahalakari. In all there are seven customary mahalakari followed prior to the marriage. However there are some changes in these patterns due to huge financial over-burden on groom's family. In order to avoid any such bad omens the family members leave the home before dawn. Once they reach the girl's home, they would sit outside and wait for the girl's father to come out. In the meantime someone will inform the girl's father about the arrival of some people.

After a while the girl's father would come and ask them the reason for their arrival. The boy's father would humbly respond, 'we heard that a beautiful flower has blossomed in your garden. We would like to decorate our pugree with it.' The girl's father will ask, 'Would you keep it decorated even when the flower loses its fragrance?' The boy's father would reply, 'Yes!' The girl's father would check with the group if they saw any bad omens on the way. If the answer is no, then he would ask again, 'did you see any good omens?' If the answer is yes, then it is very good and if the answer is no still it is not bad. It does not matter whether they have seen any good omens, but what matters is the bad omen. After this the girl's father would go back inside and inform the family members about the proposal.

The girl's father would send a word across all family members to assemble abruptly. When they assemble the father would explain that a proposal for his daughter has come. If everyone agrees to it, then he would seek the opinion of the girl before taking the final call. The girl is entirely free to give her opinion. If she says 'no' then the father would immediately go back and inform the guests that 'flower is not willing to be plucked.' If she says 'yes' then the father would go out and welcome them inside 'come inside the house.' It means that the girl's family and the girl had accepted the proposal. Then the boy's father would give the tribute of mahua,<sup>3</sup> puffed rice, jaggery and other things. Girl's family members wash the feet of the guests and welcome them inside. The mahua is offered first to the pitar devs<sup>4</sup> after which it is served to the guests and also shared by the girl's family elders. With this the marriage is fixed and the guest return back to their village. Thereby the first mahalakari ends which is known as the shubmahala.

Similar processes of offerings for the girl's family involve in all remaining six mahalakari too with a difference in offerings they take for the family. Each of the mahalakari has a specific meaning and sense too. The second mahalakari is to introduce all the family members of the boy's and girl's side in the village which is more or less known as samdhimilan. Third mahalakari is to ensure no change of mind of two families in which the elders of both sides play a key role. During this round, family elders and village priests from both sides meet. In the fourth mahalakari those family members who could not participate in the previous ones will join. In the fifth mahalakari boy's relatives from nearby villages go to meet the girl's family. The girl's family also invites their relatives from nearby villages. In the sixth and seventh boy's family members from far away village joins and the same is reciprocated from the girl's end too.

The seven rounds of mahalakari over a period of one year after which the marriage gets officiated. In each of these mahalakaris, specific types of tributes are taken ranging from paddy, dal, salt, goat, pig, horse gram, etc. with specific measurements. These tributes are apart from what has been mentioned in the first one. Mahua is a compulsory tribute in every mahalakari. Some of the elders are of the opinion that too many rounds of mahalakari is putting a lot of financial burden on the boy's family. Therefore these days the seven round has been curtailed to three rounds only. Another reason is that excessive delay in marriage causes other social problems too. In either case of third or seventh the

<sup>3</sup> A kind of liquor made out of Mahua flower.

<sup>4</sup> The family deities or tutelary gods, who are revered high and considered very important among Murias.

date of marriage is fixed in the last mahalakari. Many cases have come to the front where the boy and girl had fled showing their impatience to wait for a year, which has been a major cause of concern among the elders.

### **Marriage and Marriage Rites**

The field observation by researcher provides more insights into customary rites and rituals of Jagdalpur Muria marriages. As per the tradition the girl is taken on the day of marriage to the boy's house and married there unlike in other Hindu social groups. Technically there is no notion of barat (pre-marriage procession) for marriage. In a few cases where there is an adoption of Hindu patterns, specifically in wealthy families it goes the other way around. These are very rare. During the last mahalakari the parents fix date of marriage. Mahalakari is also counted as part of the marriage rites. Marriage rituals such as mandokalin, haldi thechna, mando mahalakari, taking the girl to boy's house, jodi tel, deedhapani, tel utarni, chaur marni, chaur tipsi, and pehla tikan.

1. **Erection of Mando:** A traditional mando<sup>5</sup> is erected and preparations are made for the marriage. This is the traditional mandap (temporary tend like setting) erected for the marriage ceremony by Murias through a series of traditional processes by the community priest. The day of erection of the mando is known as mando ka din. The entire process of erection of the mando to decorating it in the traditional manner and preparing for marriage is known as mando mahalakari.
2. **Haldi thechna:** It is cultural way of making turmeric paste for the mando, gods and goddesses, groom and bride and for other purposes. Once it is applied on the mando, a portion of it is taken to the girl's house and a similar mando is erected there too where the turmeric paste brought from the boy's house is applied.
3. **Taking the girl to boy's house:** Following the haldi thechna at girl's house, her relatives bring the girl to the boy's house for remaining marriage.
4. **Jodi tel:** In this both the bride and groom sit in mando and all family members apply turmeric on them. There are drumming, songs and dance during this.
5. **Deedhapani:** In deedhapani also known as maypani bride's mother brings water from the river or pond, which is hung in a mud pot near mando until the marriage gets over.
6. **Tel untarani:** In this, turmeric and oil from top to bottom of bride and groom are reversed.
7. **Chaur marni:** While elders swing the bride and groom, groom's mother gives rice to groom and bride's mother give the same to the groom. Both groom and bride throw on each other this is known as chaur marni.
8. **Chaur tipsi:** In chaur tipsi both groom and bride sit on a mat and a small pot filled with rice is kept between them. They play a game by sliding the kondi buch towards each other. A competition goes on between the two unless one wins. Then the bride sits on the groom's lap. He lets her hair loose and gently beat her with love. Similarly the groom sits on her lap and she would also beat him the same way. This indicates that hereinafter the childhood is over and henceforth you both have to respect each other.

<sup>5</sup> Mando is the lith like structure erected at the centre of the courtyard from a mahua and sal branch along with their leaves and other leaves.

9. Dancing around the mando: Once chaur tipsi gets over, elderly women lift the groom and young girls lift the bride and they dance around the mando throwing both upwards while they dance in a circle in anticlockwise direction.

These rites have not just social importance, but cultural factors play a big role in it. In fact it takes the current generation to the deep history and culture of Muria social life. Once these rites get over one after another the community priest conducts the marriage in a traditional manner and finishes it. Drumming, music and dance go unstoppably which remains the key to attain blessings from all ancestors to the newly wedded couple. The couple would visit all sanctum sanatoriums and community shrines seeking blessings from the ancestral spirits and others gods and goddesses in the village. After that a feast is arranged for the guests and family members on both the sides.

### **Dowry, Gifts and Marriage expenses**

Dowry is a very popular system among all Indian marriages, particularly in Hindu society. However in the traditional Muria marriage there is no system of dowry among the Jagdalpur Murais as seen in the mainstream India. On the contrary the bride’s family take care of all marriage expenses at every stage. But in a few cases, there seems an adoption of outside culture due to excessive cultural interaction with external world. Table-4 provides further details where all respondents have dismissed any scope of dowry being given to groom’s family by the bride’s family.

**Table-4 Custom of Dowry in Muria Marriage**

<b>Is there a system of dowry to groom’s family?</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Total</b>
Men respondents	-	201	201
Women respondents	-	201	201
Total	-	402	402
Source: Primary Survey			

During fieldwork observation, it was also found that the groom and his family would have to make several types of appeasement to satisfy the bride and her family. Mostly series of mahalakaris are conducted with the objective to keep a constant track of what is going on at the other end; whether at any point of time the girl or her family members have any sort of a different thought. Further it also engages in an investigation about the girl if she has any sort of links with any other men during the given timeframe. So mahalakari is also to keep the girl and her family engaged throughout the phase until the marriage gets officiated. Every time a mahalakari occurs, it also incurs a thick expense; however none regret it. The arrangement of lamsena has been a means whereby the boy would stay at the house of the girl and work for a pre-determined period. In either way, the groom has to earn the bride.

**Table-5 Muria Marriage Expenses**

<b>Who bears marriage expenses?</b>	<b>Bride’s Family</b>	<b>Groom’s Family</b>	<b>Shared by</b>	<b>Total</b>

			<b>both</b>	
Men respondents	-	173	28	201
Women respondents	-	143	58	201
Total	-	316	86	402
Source: Primary Survey				

Table-5 gives a clear picture of who is responsible for marriage expenses. According to the field data, in terms of marriage expenditure, 78.61 percent of respondents say that it is born by the groom's family, while 21.39 percent opines both the sides share expenses though in small ratio by the brides' family. Among the total male respondents, 86.07 percent said that groom's family meets expenses, whereas 13.93 percent said both sides share it. Similarly among the total female respondents, 71.14 percent said that groom's family meets expenses, whereas 28.86 percent said both sides share it. Of the entire respondents, 43.03 percent men and 35.57 percent women respondents respectively noted that the groom's family bore the entire marriage expenses. In a similar pattern among the entire respondents, 6.96 percent men and 14.43 percent women respectively referred that both parties share expenses.

Gifts to the newly wedded are completely voluntary. There is no expectation for gifts during the marriage. Field observations however show that giving gifts to the bride and groom is becoming a common practice. These gifts range from traditional such as household useable things like kitchen utensils, mud vessels, wooden cots, bicycle, etc. to modern ones like wristwatch, hotpot, etc. Close relatives also provide ornaments. These are things that would help the newly wedded couple to start their life without any hindrances.

**Table-6 Categorywise Total Marriage Expenses**

Total marriage expenses	Respondents	Percent
Less than 10000	153	38.06
10000 to 30000	133	33.08
30000 and above	116	28.86
Total	402	100
Source: Primary Survey		

In the Muria case, a clear calculation of expenses is very difficult. Generally they do not calculate the expenses incurred at personal level such as labour for production, cost of things, that are self-produced gathered and collected. For instance paddy, rice, mahua, puffed rice, dal and horse gram are usually self-produced. Many families rear goats, pigs and hatch chicken for the same. This constitutes the major chunk of the tributes during mahalakari. However the costs of these are hardly accounted. Further they may not have ever thought of keeping a chronological account of expenses.

Table-6 gives clear details in categorywise patterns of expenditure. Of the total respondents 153 (38.06%) most of them have been married more than 20 years ago, when the expenditures have been limited and also that lamsena marriage was much popular.

The second batch of 133 (33.08%) have been married between the 5 and 20 years while the remains 116 (28.86%) have got married more recently in the last five years. With inflation rate going very high over the period of past three decades, a cost affective comparative assessment may point out that the expenses incurred at present are perhaps lesser than what was spend in those decades.

### **Conclusion**

The above discussion provides clear insights on many aspects of Jagdalpur Muria marriage and their institutions. Based on field data and research observations, a few aspects could be summed up. The strength of Muria marriage institution lies in the cultural patterns that evolved over time through engaging in various rites, rituals, customs, systems and practices. The institution of marriage seems to have evolved over several millenniums with many shifts, however not deterring from the fundamental core. All forms of tutelary, village and community gods and goddesses are central from initiation to completion of any marriage. Without their blessings nothing would be in proper order. Similarly mati (soil) represents earth and is the main representative of Adivasi history and culture, which is remembered and revered as part of Muria ancestry. This relates to what George (2015: 262) says culture originates from its history, its traditions, shared history, shared stories, shared wisdom and most importantly the evolution of Earth spirituality. These are two important and core aspects of Muria marriage. Drumming, music and dancing constitute a major part of any cultural ceremony. For Murias, baja is a symbol of culture and an epitome of expression of community strength and power.

The interactive process through institution of marriage provides insights on element of higher beings versus lower beings. Though this is a classical philosophical postulation of Hindu caste society, certain elements are found in here too. Having no objection to inter-tribe marriage with Bhatra and Halba as well as dismissal of marriage with Gotul and Jhoria Muria, and Madia tribes as well as other tribes living in Bastar arises new set of inter-tribal theoretical dichotomies of higher-lower being. The former set of tribes speak Gondi speakers while the later speaks Halbi. Probably the Jagdalpur Muria considers Halbi as a language of elite groups which others than these tribes is interestingly spoken by some of the slightly dominant caste groups too while Gondi is perhaps understood as one of the languages of lesser humans. Therefore one could make out that commonality of language also indicates the common standard of one's social status which permits them to have a better level of social interaction, interface and inter-connect. Since they have been always more closer to Jagdalpur town and the king's palace by virtue of being part of court, they find themselves of higher social importance and privilege than others. Thus they refer to each other as Raja Muria than Jagdalpur Muria either. These factors also reflect in the marriage and alliance making process.

Based on the above factors the interface with other Murias such as Gotul and Jhoria Murias has been entirely abandoned as they are considered as lower social groups. One could clearly observe some adoption of Hindu culture and elements to some level. Despite all these external cultural intrusion and influences, they have been able to keep their ancestral history, social system and institution of marriage well intact. The absence

of dowry, respect for women and fertility cult certainly keeps the notion of tribalism alive. These aspects provides clear insight of women's space vis-à-vis modern patriarchy and it's interface with Muria culture. Beyond the physical and sexual acceptance, marriage turns out to be an institution of socialisation, learning, education and engagement with ancestry and a symbol of creation.

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