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[From *Current Science* Vol. 1, April 1933, Page 318]**THE MALERS AND THE MALPAHARIAS OF THE RAJMAHAL HILLS**

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THE Malers of the Rajmahal Hills occupy the north-eastern portion of the district of the Santal Perganas. They live on the slopes of the hills and are still in a very primitive condition. The Malpaharias, who belong to the same ethnic stock but live on the plain lands, are at present much Hinduised as a result of their intercourse with the neighbouring people. They occupy the southern portion of the Santal Perganas. In the course of my investigations among these tribes I discovered that the place (Pakur-Godda area) where these two cultures meet shows a curious intermixture of manners and customs.

The Malers have no clans, no exogamous divisions. Marriage is controlled by kinship and there cannot be any marriage with anybody falling within the kindred groups. These people can trace their blood groups, however, only up to the third generation. In collecting genealogies I often failed to secure the name of the informant's own grandfather, and among the Malpaharias in more than one instance I failed to secure their father's name even. Both the Malers and the Malpaharias have got a small patrilineal family which usually consist of their wives and children and in recent years a few joint families have sprung up among the latter, after the Hindus. The Malpaharias, also, have adopted the clan system, although this is not universal among all the Malpaharias. The clan system is not met with among the Malpaharias of the Pakur-Godda area, where they are living as close neighbours of the Malers. Here, I also discovered a few instances of intermarriages between the two groups. The Malpaharias of dumka only present the clan system and these have been taken mostly from the Hindu titles of castes. A few words also have been taken from the maler language—the Malto. The Malpaharias are at present classed within the Bengali-speaking people. The following are the names of the eleven clans of the Malpaharias that I was able to collect:— (1) Singh, (2) Kumar, (3) Arhi, (4) Derhi, (5) Grihi, (6) Manjhi, (7) Pujhor, (8) Rai, (9) Ghuns, (10) Pator, (11) Daloi.

The Derhi and Pujhor function as priests; the Derhi functions in the aboriginal worships while the Pujhor in the Hindu ones. The occupational basis is

practically non-existent but in one of the genealogies that I collected I found a man describing himself as belonging to three clans. His father was a Singh, so he is a Singh; he is a Derhi and a Pujhor because he worships both the tribal and the Hindu deities.

Marriage among the Malpaharias is permitted both inside and outside the above clans. Their clans very rarely play an important part in the choice of mates although I have always found them cognisant of the exogamy of the Santal and Hindu clans. As among the Malers, the Malpaharias control their marriage according to the prohibited degrees of relationship¹. The prohibited relations include the paternal uncle, maternal uncle, paternal aunt and maternal aunt and their children.

A study of the kinship system of the two tribes reveals some features of dual organization. The classificatory system is fairly widespread. There is a great deal of difference in the kinship terms of the two people—the Malers retain Malto words, whereas the other has Bengali terms, but there are traits of similarity in the kinship system as a whole among both. Evidence for dual organization may be seen in the use of the same terms for father's elder brother and mother's elder sister's husband (Pipo) and their wives (Peni); and father's younger brother and mother's younger sister's husband (Dada) and their wives (Kale) among the Malers. Among the Malpaharias we find it true of only the above first pair of relatives although the terms Jetha (father's elder brother) and Jethi (father's elder brother's wife) are both borrowed from Bengali; the father's younger brother and his wife are called Kaka and kaki, respectively, and the mother's younger sister and her husband Moshi and Mosha, respectively. The differentiation between the elder and younger brother of sister of either parents seems to be a recent one among the Malers, probably due to their contact with the Bengalis. It appears that the Malers and the Malpaharias belong to the same race and culture although at first sight they seem to be widely disconnected.

¹Risley, H. H., "The Tribes and Castes of Bengal," Calcutta, 1891, Vol. I, Introduction, p. xlix.