PATRILATERAL CROSS-COUSIN MARRIAGE
AMONG THE PARAIYARS OF SOUTH INDIA

Before introducing the ethnographic data, this article will first
of all aim at showing how a marriage rule works in practice. We
shall then see, following Needham (1962: 115), that patrilateral
cross-cousin marriage entails a weakening of structural groups and
prevents the constitution of corporate units: 'Since it has no sys-
tematic character and does not produce an organic type of solidar-
ity, a society based upon it is always in a precarious position
(ibid.: 7). Furthermore, patrilateral marriages cannot exist alone:
matrilateral unions are combined with them, even if these are con-
sidered by Paraiyars as a secondary preference.

Secondly, this article will attempt to show that even if a
society with patrilateral cross-cousin marriage favours the repeti-
tion of previous marriages, it is not completely averse to the
'multiplication' of new alliances, i.e. the search for new
matrimonial partners. Dumont (1966: 106) has shown that North India,
which forbids cross-cousin marriage, is nevertheless not totally
opposed to the repetition of marriages. Conversely, it is here
possible to argue that South Indian castes, though encouraging the
repetition of former marriages, do not reject the search for new
ones. The theoretical situation is far too ideal. It supposes that
every man has one son and one daughter, and that every young man has
a preferential cousin of about the same age. It also postulates
that all relatives are on good terms and never quarrel, that child-
ren never express their views about their marriages and always
accept their parents' opinion. To forget all this means, as pointed
out by Bourdieu (1980: 59), that one confuses the 'official view' of
an institution with its 'practical existence'.

The Paraiyars of Valghira Manickam

Before proceeding with the analysis, it will be useful to say some-
thing about the Paraiyars among whom fieldwork was conducted in
1981.
    Valghira Manickam is a village near the small town of Devakot-
tai (Ramnad District), 100 km. east of Madurai, Tamil Nadu. The
village is populated by three untouchable communities. The Catholic
Paraiyars, numbering about 450 individuals, form the largest commun-
ity in the village, followed by the Hindu Paraiyars (about 130), and
finally the Hindu Pallars (about 120), who live in a separate hamlet
and will not be dealt with here.
    Among the Paraiyars, there is little difference between Hindus
and Catholics. The two communities do not intermarry (though sexual
ties occur) but friendships between them are very common, people
address each other by kinship terms, they live in the same streets,
eat each other's food etc. On the other hand, their relationship
with the Pallars, who are traditionally held to be superior, is
strained. They try to avoid each other, do not accept food from
each other, and quarrel at times. There are no economic or politic-
al relations between Pallars and Paraiyars, and therefore their re-
lationship is one of mere neighbourhood. Pallars tend to feel sup-
erior and call the Paraiyar hamlet *cēri* (or untouchable quarter),
but the Paraiyars claim not to accept this superiority (Deliège
1985).
    Economically, the Paraiyars are poor. Most of them are land-
less. The main occupations of the villagers are brick-making and
coolie work. Valghira Manickam, being a rather recent settlement,
is not attached to any high-caste village, and people work in dif-
ferent places, including Devakottai town. In spite of their very
limited needs, people usually find it difficult to make ends meet,
and malnutrition, disease and a very high rate of child mortality
are the natural consequences of their economic hardship (Deliège
1983: 702).
    The Paraiyars are the largest untouchable community in Tamil
Nadu. Although they say they can marry any Paraiyar from their own
religion, the Paraiyars of Valghira Manickam seek brides in a very
limited area. The Christians - perhaps surprisingly - appear to be
much more conservative than their Hindu brothers. While many Hin-
dus have left the village to seek new occupations elsewhere, the
Christians stick to their old ones, and socially they follow the
traditional institutions much more closely than the Hindus. As we
shall see later, they conform much more, for instance to the rule of
cross-cousin marriage, and do not venture very far to seek brides.
My sample of the Hindu community was too limited to draw any general
conclusions. Nevertheless, whereas Hindus try to marry in many
different villages, this was not the case for the Christians, whose
marriage circle does not extend beyond ten villages within a radius
of 10 miles of their village: 82% of Catholic marriages take place
between 5 villages, 91% between 8 villages, and nearly half within
the village itself.

Why Marry a Cousin?

The Paraiyars explain the practice of cross-cousin marriage through
the importance of reciprocity: a girl 'given' must be 'returned'.
However, one can also see that the Paraiyars tend to marry their
cousins because they belong to a cultural area (South India) in
which cross-cousin marriage is a widespread rule. The Paraiyars
did not create the institution for themselves: they practise it be-
cause their fathers and forefathers did so. At the same time, each
marriage provides an opportunity not to follow the rule, but to take
a bride from some unrelated family. Thus, if the rule is still fol-
lowed it is because they still see some advantage in it - otherwise
they would abandon the institution, as many castes of Tamil Nadu
have already done (Dumont 1975: 34). It is precisely these advan-
tages - which are more than rationalisations - that can be examined
here. It is true, as Good points out (1981: 110), that there is a
terminological basis to cross-cousin marriage. Yet I am tempted to
say that kinship terminology only defines the categories in which a
boy or a girl must (should) marry; it does not really designate the
actual partner, whereas for the Paraiyars, cross-cousin marriage is
a prescription of particular brides.
    Reciprocity appears to be the theoretical justification for
cross-cousin marriage among the Paraiyars: if I give a daughter to
my relative's son, I am short of a girl, and he must return me one
in the next generation. This is only theoretical because in prac-
tice people do not really calculate the number of girls, and as we
shall see, they will even give several girls to one family without
receiving any in return.
    The importance of family ties and the desire to maintain a
close relationship with one's relatives is an essential reason for
marrying cousins. Alliance here seems to be even more fundamental
than reciprocity. For example, if I give my sister to X in marriage,
she will always keep in contact with my family thereafter; she will
come back to my house. In order to keep this relationship with my
family alive, she will also wish to give her daughter to my own son.
In this case, there is clear reciprocity between the two families,
but if she has a son and no daughter, she will insist on taking my
daughter for her son: the alliance will then be reinforced at the
expense of reciprocity. Quarrels between a husband and his wife
frequently occur at the time of their children's marriages: the
mother wants to marry them to her side, the father to his side. In
other words, patrilateral marriages are not automatic and are always
rivalled by matrilateral possibilities.
    A Paraiyar thus feels more at ease with members of his own
family. This is by no means a purely psychological explanation of
cross-cousin marriage but only the individual, pragmatic aspect of
the theory of alliance. An old man put it in these terms:

    Suppose my daughter is married to my sister's son, and I pay a
    visit to her. I reach their house but there is nobody home;
    the door is locked. But since it is my own sister's house, I
    can go in, take some food and feel at home. On the other hand,
    if my daughter is married to a stranger, in the same situation,

I have to wait outside their house for their return. I cannot
go in, otherwise my daughter would be insulted by her in-laws:
they would say that her father only came here to steal food,
that he wants to spoil them, that he does not respect them etc.
For this reason, it is better to marry close relatives.

The danger of marrying outside the family is that of going into
the unknown and losing some relative: if I do not give my daughter
to her cousin, the latter's family will be vexed, and I will be more
isolated. The question now is to know in which case and how the
rule is followed among the Paraiyars. Is it automatic or compulsory?
What does the rule prescribe exactly?

The Rule of Marriage

Among the Paraiyars, filiation and inheritance are patrilineal,
residence is virilocal. Tamil kinship vocabulary divides relatives
into consanguines and allies (Dumont 1957: 273-81). The termino-
logical structure is thus consistent with the marriage rule, i.e.
it defines the categories of permitted and forbidden spouses. How-
ever, among the Paraiyars, the rule of marriage does much more than
just define a broad category into which one must or must not marry;
for the Paraiyars, it designates an actual partner for one's son or
daughter. In other words, and more practically, when asked about
his son's marriage, a villager will explain that his son must marry
this particular girl ('there, the girl you see down the street'),
most often his real FZD or MBD, and not just any *attai makal*.
    Thus in spite of inconsistencies the terminological structure
and the marriage rule fit together. Various authors have given a
complete list of kinship terms (see Dumont 1975; Beck 1972; Good
1981; Scheffler 1984 etc), and we can content ourselves with a
table of the main Tamil terms (see Table 1).

Table 1: Main Tamil Kinship Terms

			consanguines	affines
generation + 1		M	*appa, aiya*	*māman*
		F	*atta*	*attai*
generation 0	older than Ego	M	*annan*	*maccān*
			accā	*madini*
	younger than Ego	M	*tambi*	*maccunan* (ms) *kulendan* (ws)
		F	*tankaci*	*kulundiyā*
generation -1		M	*makam*	*marumakan*
		F	*makal*	*marumakal*

M = male; F = female; ms = man speaking; ws = woman speaking

        The rule of marriage forbids any marriage with members of one's
father's section, the *Pankali*, whereas it gives 'cross-cousins' as
desirable spouses. For a boy, the ideal form of marriage is to
marry his *attai makal* or FZD. The perfect application of this rule,
as stressed above, is quite impossible.
        In reality, we find more complicated situations, as shown in
Figure 1. From this it is clear that A and B have exchanged women
by combining patrilateral and matrilateral unions. So a2 married
his MBD, a3 married his FZD (who is also his MBD), b1 married his
FZD and b2 his MBD; b1 and b2 have both taken a woman from al (the
latter's sister and daughter respectively) but al has not yet re-
ceived anything from them. Actually, al has only one young son,
who is still too young to get married, and consequently he has not
yet been able to take a girl from family B. So far, B has given
three women to A, who has returned only two. Equilibrium might be
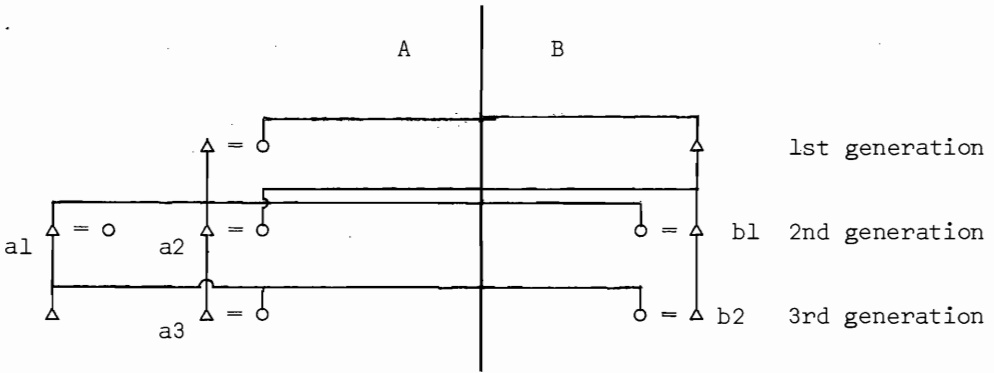established later on.

Figure 1: Exchange of women between two families of Valghira Manickam

        This example also shows clearly that matrilateral unions coexist
with patrilateral ones. When asked about the first preference, a
Paraiyar will always state that a boy should marry his *attai makal*
(FZD), but he will also add that if this union is not possible he
may always marry his *mama makāl*(MBD). Numerous unions testify to
this double choice, as is clear from Table 2. The sample of Hindu
marriages is admittedly rather small, but it seems to me that they
are nevertheless less attached to preferential unions than the
Catholics. Columns 1 and 2 indicate marriages with first cousins
whereas column 3 includes marriages with second cousins. Marriages
with more distant relatives or with strangers are given in column
4, which still includes some preferential unions. For Hindus, pre-
ferential unions only comprise 24% of the marriages whereas 48% of
recent Christian marriages were in accordance with the patrilateral
preference (columns 1, 2, 3). These figures are much higher than
those given by Ghurye (1969: 262), who considered that only 17% of
Tamil marriages respected the rule of preferential union, and they

Table 2: Types of marriage in the communities of Valghira Manickam

	1 FZD	2 MBD	3 Second degree	4 Distant relative	5 Total
Catholics	24	15	7	50	96
Hindus	1	4	2	22	29
Total	25	19	9	72	125

are also higher than those collected by Beck (1972: 253) or Good
(1981: 117).

Furthermore, Table 2 shows that the application of the first
preference (marriage with FZD) is rather feeble, since its occur-
ence is hardly superior to that of the matrilateral form. One is
reminded here of Needham's point that a system based upon patri-
lateral marriage is practically impossible (1962: 115). Similarly,
Dumont has pointed out that South Indian castes which practise
patrilateral unions inevitably have matrilateral unions as well.
Needham has rightly noticed that in a patrilateral system, FZD would
be equivalent to MMBDD and would thus be a matrilateral cousin also.
This holds true among the Paraiyars since as we shall see most re-
latives are bilateral.

Needham goes on to show that patrilateral marriage entails a
structural weakness by preventing the constitution of corporate
groups, since a lineage is both wife-giver and wife-taker *vis-à-vis*
the same partner. As Lévi-Strauss puts it, patrilateral marriages
involve at each generation a reversal of all 'cycles' (1958: 135),
whereas the matrilateral system supposes a global structure of
society (1967: 320). The so-called 'system of generalized exchange'
which results from matrilateral cross-cousin marriage encourages
anisogamy, i.e. status differentiation within a homogenous society
(Deliège 1980: 44). Therefore, parilateral marriages fit in better
with an absence of authority and social hierarchy: here, one family
cannot permanently be inferior to another, since alliances are re-
turned in every generation. This seems to be particularly true of
the Paraiyars of Valghira Manickam, who know of no form of internal
authority or social differentiation. They are incapable of extended
solidarity, and corporate groups do not exist among them. Jealousy,
rivalry and quarrels are constant. It would not be exaggerating to
say that the Paraiyars are totally averse to any form of internal
authority and internal hierarchy (Deliège 1988).

It appears that a strict application of the marriage rule is
impossible. In many cases, the preferential spouse is not avail-
able: some people have no children or only sons, too great an age
difference may separate cousins, etc. If FZD is not available,
then MBD is the second-best choice for a boy's marriage. Besides

the latter's mother has probably insisted for many years on marrying him to her brother's daughter, for she is always keen to keep close contact with her own relatives. Even if FZD is a possible spouse, the boy's mother will try to influence her husband. On the other hand, this insistence is not always necessary, since the 'confusion' resulting from a patrilateral system always involves some sort of 'bilaterality' of relatives: in other words, a man is often related to his wife through both his father's side and his mother's side. Thus it is not uncommon for a man to marry a (classificatory) sister or daughter. This is the case with the marriage of Gnanamuttu, as shown is Figure 2.

Figure 2: Relationship between Gnanamuttu and his wife on his mother's side



Gnanamuttu's wife is the daughter of a classificatory brother (MZS) and she is therefore a 'daughter' to Gnanmuttu. From this point of view, she is forbidden to him, but on his father's side, she is acceptable, as shown in Figure 3.

*Figure 3: Relationship between Gnanamuttu and his wife on his father's side*

According to this figure, Gnanamuttu's wife is his FZD and thus his preferential spouse. Both situations are represented in Figure 4, which shows clearly the bilaterality of Gnanamuttu's marriage.

Figure 4: Bilateral relationship between Gnanamuttu and his wife
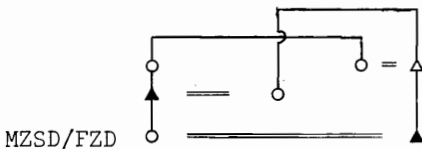
Similar cases occur very frequently in Valghira Manickam, since the
kinship ties resulting from preferntial unions are extremely con-
fused. Another example is given in Figure 5.

Figure 5: Bilateral relationship between Arockyam and his wife

MBD/FZDD
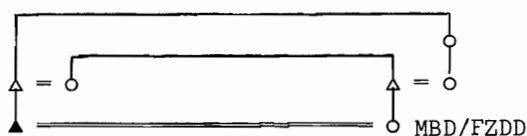
Arockyam's wife is thus his *māma makal* (MBD) on his mother's side
but also *makal* (daughter) on his father's side. Arockyam's mother-
in-law would therefore be his ideal wife (FZD), but she is too old
for him. He took her daughter, who was also his MBD and was thus
acceptable. We can say, therefore, that for the Paraiyars, there
is no essential difference between a matrilateral and a patrilateral
relative. It is often possible to rationalize a marriage with MBD
by pointing out that she is also a patrilateral relative.
      The question now arises whether or not it is compulsory to
marry a cousin. On this matter, the Paraiyars are contradictory:
'we are obliged to marry a close relative, but if we like, we may
also marry someone else'. This could hardly be more confused, but
I pointed out that in particular circumstances, some insisted upon
the fact that such a union is absolutely compulsory, whereas others
saw it as facultative. The Paraiyars are no great theoreticians,
and one should always consider their answers according to the con-
text in which they are made.
      First of all, one must note that the Paraiyars have few means
of enforcing social sanctions. Their lack of unity prevents them
from punishing someone who does not follow a rule. Even inter-
caste marriages – though not frequent – do not lead to ostracism.
The only possible sanction in the case of a 'wrong' marriage is to
cut off all family ties. Here also the punishment is limited, since
the society is so divided that one always finds allies, even within
the family. However, if, for example, parents accept the elopement
of their daughter with some boy, they will become enemies of her
mother's brother, who would normally be entitled to take her for
his son. Paraiyar society as such does not sanction this sort of
thing; only individuals quarrel or 'create problems'. Therefore,
only the force of tradition or the will to preserve family ties
still induce the Paraiyars to marry their cousins.
      We know that patrilateral cross-cousin marriage does not sup-
pose a general arrangement of society but merely unites pairs of
families. In the first generation, the first family stands as wife-
giver but it will become wife-taker in the next. A girl given must
be returned, but among the Paraiyars, once this exchange has been
carried out the obligation to give (or to take) becomes less severe.
This is what Sebastian tells us:

> I took my wife from a family in Naīvayal village. I gave my
> eldest daughter back to my wife's brother's son. Now I have
> done my duty, I can give my other daughters to other people.

Reciprocity, then, supposes at least one exchange. Once a girl re-
ceived has been returned, it is no longer compulsory (or it is 'less
compulsory' the Paraiyars would say) to keep matrimonial ties with
that family. No doubt a man normally likes to continue the rela-
tionship, and his relatives may be vexed if he does not do so, but
it is not compulsory. On the other hand, the Paraiyars insist upon
the fact that if a girl is given to a particular family, she *must*
be returned in the next generation; the *māma* of the girl will be
allowed to come and fetch her if he wishes, because having given
his sister, he must receive a girl back for his son. The maternal
uncle has some means of obtaining his rights. He is always re-
quired to arrange the marriage of his niece; but if the latter is
promised to someone else, he may spread the word that the girl is
his, and the girl's parents will find it difficult to marry her be-
cause other people will be afraid of the maternal uncle's wrath.
Furthermore, if her parents want to arrange a marriage without him,
people will wonder why he is not there and suspect that something
is 'wrong' with her. I know of maternal uncles who were afraid
that their niece would be married to a stranger and so they took
their sister's daughter to their house when the girl was only 8 or
9 years old; she lived in the family and married the son of the
household when she had come of age. If the maternal uncle really
wants his sister's daughter for his son, it will be difficult to
refuse him. Not only will ties with him be cut but it will be hard
to find another spouse for the girl. This case is, however, extreme;
in many cases, if the girl's parents do not want to arrange a pre-
ferential union the maternal uncle will accept their choice, even
if he feels bitter about it ('Is my son not good enough for their
daughter?').
    The fact that cross-cousin marriage also has to be arranged -
with less difficulty, it is true - also shows that it is by no means
automatic and that some free choice is left to the parents and the
youth.

Multiplication of Alliances

Cross-cousin marriage is therefore compulsory only in specific cir-
cumstances. Sometimes it is impossible when, for example, there is
no suitable groom for a bride, or when a couple has no children.
In other words, it means that in certain circumstances, the Parai-
yars wish or have to seek brides among non-related people.
    It fairly frequently happens that there is no suitable relative
for a boy or girl. The Paraiyars are then obliged to find someone
else and thereby create new links. If a boy is much younger than
his *attai makal* and *māma makal*, the latter will be married by the
time he reaches a reasonable age. Of course, he will still marry
someone who is related to him, because kinship ties are very complex,

Figure 6: Relationship between Rayappan and his wife

FFBDD
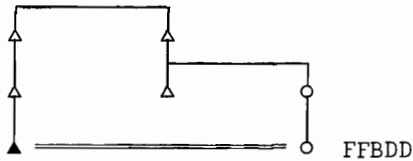
but the Paraiyars do not really consider these unions as preferen-
tial: only the first cousin and to a lesser extent the second cousin
are considered preferential mates. Other relatives are considered
anniyan or 'distant relatives, relatives whom we do not know' (see
Table 2, column 4). In such cases, they say: 'My wife and I are
Paraiyar and thus related but I do not know how: she is *anniyan*'.
The relationship between Rayappan and his wife as shown in Figure
6 is, for example, too remote to be considered preferential.

    Rayappan's wife's mother is his father's sister and his wife
is thus a sort of FZD (in fact FFBDD), but the marriage between
Rayappan and his wife was not conceived as preferential. 'She is
attai makal to me, but not a real one', the husband explained. Thus
their marriage was not arranged by their parents as a preferential
one; having decided on the marriage, it happened that they had a
suitable relationship.

    The rule of preferential marriage itself is not totally opposed
to the search for new alliances. This is clear from the case of
large families: one arranges a marriage on the father's side, another
on the mother's side, and for the marriages of other children one
seeks 'new relatives'. This situation combines the advantages of
preserving the old alliances with those of creating new ties.
Therefore, a father will rarely give two girls to the same family,
i.e. to two 'brothers' (even classificatory). Although it would be
theoretically acceptable, it very rarely happens. I was only able
to collect one instance, which was explained by the physical handi-
cap of a man who was unable to find a wife; he was then given a
preferential cousin, even though his brother was married to his
wife's elder sister. In such cases the second union does not bring
anything to the alliance between the two families, for this has al-
ready been reinforced through the first union. It is thus better to
marry the girl elsewhere, for example on her father's side or to a
stranger. This is how a Hindu father explained his situation. His
wife comes from Kotakutti village, and he has already married two of
his daughters: the eldest had to be returned to her mother's village,
and she then married her MBS. In order to reinforce the relation-
ship with his own family, the father gave his second daughter to his
sister's son. For his third daughter, he will seek outside the
family in order to have new relatives.

    In this way a man extends his family network and becomes more
powerful. If we ask a Paraiyar whether his wife is related to him
when she is not, he will often say, 'Before our marriage, her family
was not related to me, but now they have all become my relatives'.

In some cases, a man may not be willing to arrange a prefer-
ential union for his children. This may entail a dispute with his
relatives, but not always. It may happen that both families agree
to marry the children to 'distant relatives', although there is
often some resentment in such cases. A good example of this was
given to me by a young man who refused to marry his *attai makal*
because she was more educated than him. The parents then say, 'How
can we marry them if they do not want to?' If the couple are not
well matched, another solution will be sought. The relationship
between the two families may grow colder: 'Do they think my daughter
is not good enough for their boy?', 'What do they think they are?',
the girl's father may say. If things get worse, relations may even
be cut, but this is not always the case.
    Sometimes both parties agree not to follow the preferential
rule, but generally speaking, there must be some justification for
doing so (as in the above case), otherwise it will lead to a dispute
between them. This shows that other things being equal, cross-
cousin marriage tends to be compulsory.
    Nevertheless, this does not take the young people's opinions
into account. In fact, the Paraiyars never marry their children
without their consent. If the boy does not like the girl (and vice
versa), they will not be married. Even when a girl must absolutely
be returned, the marriage will not take place if the boy and girl
are strongly opposed to it. 'Such marriages inevitably lead to
failure,' the Paraiyars comment. This of course means that love
marriages are commonly accepted by the Paraiyars. 'We can do no-
thing about it,' they say; 'if a boy has a girl "in his head", we
do not have the power to prevent their marriage'.
    A young Paraiyar will soon earn as much as his father and thus
becomes economically independent (Mandelbaum 1970 I: 48). If the
parents do not want to marry him to the girl he likes, he will
simply elope with her and settle down in a separate hut. A Paraiyar
does not need much money to start a family. Cases of elopement are
numerous in the village, and people can even give the names of those
who are likely to elope soon. When a boy and a girl like each other,
there is little opposition: if they wish to marry, they simply run
away for two or three days and say that they have asked a priest to
bless them. The parents may be quite angry for some time but their
wrath does not last. They soon forgive their children and accept
the new couple. This might not be true of the girl's *māma* (MB),
who had perhaps arranged some other marriage for his niece. He
cannot accept the new union, for he 'has lost his dignity' by pro-
mising the girl to another family. It then sometimes follows that
relations with him will be cut for ever.
    These love marriages are very frequent. I was able to discover
more than 30 cases in the village itself, in both the previous and
the present generation. There must be more, because some are dis-
guised as arranged or even preferential unions. Love marriages are
less prestigious than arranged marriages, but they are nevertheless
commonly accepted, and this lack of 'prestige' has little conse-
quence apart from a reluctance to admit that one's marriage was a
love marriage. Most people think that love cannot be opposed, and
everybody has at least one close relative who was married in such a

way. This clearly shows that a society which on the one hand pre-
scribes a partner through a positive marriage rule may at the same
time leave some freedom to its members in the choice of spouse.
These two apparently contradictory aspects nevertheless coexist, and
and both occur very frequently. Strangely enough, they are even
reconciled in the few cases where young men have eloped with their
preferential cousins, though their families did not get on well to-
gether.

A system of matrilateral cross-cousin marriage, with its global
arrangement of society and its 'aristocratic consequences' (Lévi-
Strauss 1967: 487), would probably be less tolerant towards the free
choice of partners. In such a system, marriage may soon become a
question of status, whereas this is not the case for patrilateral
marriages, which encourage isogamous unions. Similarly, love mar-
riages do not involve status considerations, since they are guided
solely by the mutual attraction between the young couple. This
shows that both types of marriage may be less contradictory than
appears at first sight.

There are other institutions which favour the multiplication
of alliances. For example, a widower or a widow may remarry a
stranger. Or, if husband and wife do not get on well together,
they may easily separate and live with someone else. However, it
should also be pointed out that the search for new partners is
limited to the traditional 'marriage circle' at least in practice.
The Christian Paraiyars do not venture very far in search of brides.
Very recently attempts have been made to extend the range, but they
are still exceptions. The Hindu Paraiyars marry at a slightly
greater distance, and consequently cross-cousin marriage is less
widespread among them, at least in the village studied. This limit-
ation again reduces the apparent contradiction between the search
for new alliances and preferential unions, since one does not run
away with any girl, but only with those within the marriage circle.
Furthermore, the immense majority of love marriages unite people of
the same community: one falls in love with Catholic Paraiyars. In
this circle, even a non-related person is *anniyan* or a 'distant
relative'. Families who try to go outside the marriage circle are
those who are unable to find a suitable partner or those who ask
for large dowries. These cases are still so rare that we must wait
for future research before drawing any conclusions. Meanwhile, it
appears that there is no contradiction between the repetition of
alliances through cross-cousin marriage (patrilateral) and the
search for new partners within a definte area. One always marries
some sort of relative anyway, and one rarely goes into the unknown;
yet, in spite of the rule of cross-cousin marriage, one sometimes
prefers to marry a girl who is not the prescribed spouse.

Conclusions

Patrilateral cross-cousin marriage as experienced by the Paraiyars
fits only imperfectly with the theoretical model. It can hardly be
practised without matrilateral forms nor can it be described as a

pure form of repetition of previous alliances. It is always accomplished by a search for new marriage partners, though only within a restricted area. On the other hand, one must recognise that patrilateral cross-cousin marriage favours isogamous marriages and therefore prevents the formation of status differentiation through marital unions. This fits in particularly with the internal structure of Paraiyar social organization at Valghira Manickam. Here, there is no leadership, no authority, no hierarchized units and little social sanction. This social equality - which is, however, not characterised by a positive rule - contrasts with the hierarchical division of caste society.

Christian Paraiyars tend to be more traditional than the Hindus. Their exclusion from the lists of Scheduled Castes has kept them outside the mainstream of Harijan or untouchable movements. They are less tempted to seek brides from other regions, although no formal rule prevents them from doing so. Yet they have little contact with other Paraiyars and lack the strong Harijan consciousness. This might partly explain the differences which we have observed between Hindu and Catholic Paraiyars.

The importance of love marriage and the absence of internal hierarchy point to a basic difference between high and low castes. While this difference is by no means absolute (see Moffatt 1979), low-caste institutions do not always follow the high-caste model. We have seen that among the Paraiyars of Valghira Manickam, patrilateral cross-cousin marriage reinforces the absence of authority and status differentiation. The absence of dowry fits in better with isogamy (see Tambiah 1973), and this trend is also reflected in the readiness of the Paraiyars to settle apart from their parents soon after the wedding.

The financial question which lies at the heart of many Indian marriages nowadays is not a decisive factor for the Paraiyars. Marriage is not for them a means of increasing the financial status of the family, and they are still guided by questions of traditional alliances and even mutual attraction. Materially, a young man and his wife are able to manage as well (or as poorly) as their parents. Only the few Paraiyar who have studied hesitate before marrying because, being jobless, they are not able to maintain a family unless they also become coolies. This is often what they have to do anyway after a few years of idleness. Among the Paraiyars, the people who have taken advantage of modern opportunities to obtain a salaried job (municipal scavengers, white collar workers etc), are still too few to form a separate class by marrying among themselves. If economic conditions change drastically, some change can be expected in matrimonial institutions as well. In the meantime, cross-cousin marriage will remain a lively institution.

ROBERT DELIÈGE

REFERENCES

BECK, B. 1972. *Peasant Society in Konku*, Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press.

BOURDIEU, P. 1980. *Le sens pratique*, Paris: Editions Minuit.

DELIÈGE, R. 1980. 'Lévi-Strauss in India', *The Kerala Sociologist* Vol. VIII, pp. 39-50.

... 1983. 'Family Budget of the Daily Labourers: The Case of the Paraiyars of South India', *Cultures et Développement*, Vol. XV, part 4, pp. 701-16.

... 1985. *The Bhils of Western India*, Delhi: National.

... 1988. *Les Paraiyars du Tamil Nadu: l'organisation d'un village d'intouchables de l'Inde du Sud*, St Augustin: Anthropos.

DUMONT, L. 1957. *Une sous-caste de l'Inde du Sud: organisation sociale et religion des Pramalai Kallar*, Paris: Mouton.

... 1966. *Homo Hierarchicus: essai sur le système de caste*, Paris: Gallimard.

... 1975. *Dravidien et Kariera: l'alliance du mariage en Inde du Sud et en Australie*, Paris: Mouton.

GHURYE, G.S. 1969. *Caste and Race in India*, Bombay: Popular Prakashan.

GOOD, A. 1981. 'Prescription, Preference and Practice: Marriage Patterns among the Kondaiyankottai Maravar of South India', *Man* n.s., Vol. XVI, part 1, pp. 108-29.

LÉVI-STRAUSS, C. 1958. *Anthropologie structurale*, Paris: Plon.

... 1967. *Les structures élémentaires de la parenté*, Paris: Mouton.

MANDELBAUM, D. 1970. *Society in India*, Berkeley: University of California Press (2 vols).

MOFFATT, M. 1979. *An Untouchable Community of South India: Structure and Consensus*, Princeton: Princeton University Press.

NEEDHAM, R. 1962. *Structure and Sentiment: A Test Case in Social Anthropology*, Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press.

SCHEFFLER, H. 1984. 'Markedness and Extensions: The Tamil Case', *Man* n.s., Vol. XIX, part 4, pp. 557-74.

TAMBIAH, S.J. 1973. 'Dowry and Bridewealth and the Property Rights of Women in South Asia', in J. Goody and S.J. Tambiah (eds.), *Bridewealth and Dowry*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.