Kinship and Kingship as Strategies and Practices

In this chapter I examine how kinship and kingship (strategy to claim a kshatriya heritage) are employed as strategies by the ‘Marathas’ to further their resources. This chapter has seven sections. Section one interrogates the ways in which kinship is construed as rule and the limitations that this perspective manifests. It also analyses Bourdieu’s (1990) conceptualization of kinship as strategy. Section two explores the relationship between kinship and caste as found in social science scholarship and examines the limitations of this approach. Section three assesses the scholarship that maps ‘Maratha’ kin terminology. Section four and five are case studies that explore and contest the idea of kinship as rule. Section six and seven are case studies that highlight how particular colonial context (introduction of ‘martial’ race concept) enabled ‘Marathas’ to accrue symbolic and cultural capital. Having given an outline of this chapter I begin with how kinship is conventionally examined through the lens of rule and how one can overcome this dilemma.

Conventionally kinship has always been associated with social anthropology and is deemed to be a social institution through which rules, customs, traditions, culture and other facets of society are reproduced inter-generationally. It is through the institution of kinship that questions related to decent, honour, identity, status, social network and social structure are examined. Research on kinship can be generally classified into the following interrelated and enmeshed perspectives:

(1) At the level of nomenclature so as to make it universally applicable- this lens provides the objective categories or conceptual frameworks whereby people experience and understand their social universe, for instance the relationship terminology (Father, Mother, Fraternal uncle, Maternal uncle among others) (2) At the jural level, it includes an analysis of how rules prescribe individual and collective behaviour- for instance rules that define the following systems; Matriarchy/Patriarchy, Matrilocal/Patrilocla/Avunculocal, Matrilineal/Patrilineal among other forms. (Fox, 1967:10)
There is another perspective which conventional anthropologists overlook. One through which social phenomenon can be interrogated through practice (mapping the why, how, what and when, do actors behave and act in the social universe). Bourdieu (1977) argues that practice is influenced by jural rules, but in a more complex way than is often assumed. In a few societies one finds prescription, whereby the relationship terminology defines marriageable categories of kindred such parallel or cross cousin marriages. He contends that this obligation is however never absolute and whether actors actually follow the prescription depends on the political, economic and situational advantages of choosing an alternative spouse rather than the ‘preferred’ partner. According to Bourdieu (1977, 1984) Marriage alliance is therefore not a matter of coercively obeying a rule but rather reflects a much more subtle objective i.e. of accruing capital. Bourdieu (1977, 1990) argues that kinship is a strategy through which actors accumulate certain forms of capital that enables them to partake in fields. An actor may marry a particular individual from a family because it may entail accumulation of symbolic, cultural, economic or/and social capital. He therefore contends that kinship does not constitute a static and closed system of rules, but an open-ended set of opportunities and constraints that allow for contestations of various kinds of strategies depending on the context.

For Bourdieu (1977;72) everyday activities that actors partake in are produced by an interaction of agency and social structure and it is through participation in these social practices that culture is embodied in the habitus and reproduced (structured structure and a structuring structure). The dispositions that constitute the habitus are acquired through social practice and although they may differ from individual to individual, variation is limited by the particular social positions occupied in social fields. Thus what follows is that practice mediates between habitus and social fields and it is through practice that social structures are embedded in the habitus. Those who occupy the same field share similar habituses and reproduce the culture of their shared social fields through practice. This position therefore challenges the conventional understanding of class which
assumes them to be objective and enumerable categories based on the parameters of relations of production (Marx) or demand in the market (Weber). This is similarly true of caste and kinship being assumed as an objective methodological category- as social institutions that are assumed to reproduce exactly generation after generation. Bourdieu (1990) clarifies that the social practices internalized in the body (habitus) which then reproduces culture are not, however, objectively determined.\textsuperscript{xxiii} Nor are they exclusively the product of free will. They are produced by the interaction of the social context (structure) and the response of the actor (agency). Therefore the actor's practices involve a combination of conscious, intended action and unconscious, unintended action (due to naturalization of reality, which Bourdieu terms as doxa).

As Bourdieu (1977) reflects,

"...every established order tends to produce (to very different degrees and with different means) the naturalization of its own arbitrariness. Of all the mechanisms tending to produce this effect, the most important and the best concealed is undoubtedly the dialectic of the objective chances and the agents' aspirations, out of which arises the sense of limits, commonly called the sense of reality, i.e. the correspondence between the objective classes and the internalized classes, social structures and mental structures, which is the basis of the most ineradicable adherence to established order.” (Bourdieu 1977: 164)

Since the practices display a certain degree of regularity they tend to display patterns and sequences across time. Bourdieu (1977) argues that it is these regularities that are misrecognised in social science scholarship as rules and in turn these rules are codified as objective realities which are then classified as measurable categories- such as class, race, gender, kinship, marriage among others. (Bourdieu 1977, 1990, Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992)

It is no wonder that the literature in early social anthropology and sociology was more concerned about jural rules, but conformity to such rules was usually seen as unproblematic and even predictive and explanations were sought only when they did not follow 'the' general principle. Through such an axiomatic prism, it was presumed that social actors would enact these rules and norms generation after
generation and thus even their behaviour became predictable according to this schema. In short scholars (Brown, 1950, Pritchard, 1951, Leach, 1961, Strauss, 1969, Fortes, 1970) went to the ‘field’ with a preconceived idea of rules/universal representations i.e. maps, grammars, role sets, lists of ordered rules, hierarchies and predetermined behaviour patterns and outcomes. This static, atemporal and positivist approach led to a downplaying of the strategic aspects of actual or rather practical kinship behaviour. While exploring the objective relations underlying social phenomenon such as kinship, marriage and family, such research accounts presumed apriori, what ought to be ‘practice’. It is no wonder then why Bourdieu (1977, 1990) contends that all these approaches miss the practical and ‘real’ web of social life. Bourdieu’s theory of practice transcends the objectifying position of earlier scholars. He does this by introducing the concept of ‘generative principle’ of practice i.e. the habitus. He observes,

“...(habitus) is the end product of structures which practices tend to reproduce in such a way that the individuals involved are bound to reproduce them, either by consciously reinventing or by subconsciously imitating already proven strategies as the accepted, most respectable, or even simplest course to follow” (Bourdieu, 1977; 118).

In short, the habitus, the product of history, produces individual and collective practices, and hence history, in accordance with the schemes enmeshed by history. However, according to him the habitus must be seen not simply as historically produced structure that functions to reproduce the social system that generated it, but as a set of schemes both imposed and imposing. The system of dispositions shaped by past experiences and which survives in the present tends to perpetuate itself into the future- this is manifested as reproduction of the dominant order, which tends to be misrecognised as rules. He suggests that kinship is an open-ended set of practices employed by actors seeking to satisfy their material and symbolic interests. He observes that marriage choices are made in context to one’s social situation at the time, including the options available in the form of marriageable persons and the material and symbolic capital to be gained by choosing each of them.\textsuperscript{xxxiv} (Bourdieu, 1990; 82)
It is in the interest of certain groups and individuals that a particular manner of doing, a specific dominant, naturalised or standardised mode of social life, is considered the only possible way of acting— a doxic condition in and through which participants construe the social world. Social actors pursue the values dictated by their economic and political interests by making such pursuit appear to be in accordance with cultural rules that can be invoked as the validation of practice i.e. what Bourdieu (1990) labels as second-order or officializing strategies. These strategies are ways of positing behaviour to appear as to conforming to rules. As Bourdieu (1990) reflects

"...to be motivated by pure, disinterested respect for the rule by ostentatiously honouring the values the group”. (Bourdieu, 1990; 22)

Thus he urges social scientists to look beyond these officialised versions and explore the contexts that propel such action of actors. He argues that it is for the researcher to unmask and penetrate the officialised versions of the informant to reach the truth as respondents have naturalized the official version as ‘the way of doing things’. With this brief introduction on how kinship can be examined as a set of strategies/practices I ask how the discourse in social science has addressed the relationship of kinship with caste in India.

**Relationship of kinship to Caste: Review in social science discourse**

Scholars such as Bailey, (1957, 1960), Beck (1972), Fox (1971), Hardgrave (1968), Karve (1953, 1975), Mayer (1960), and Srinivas (1959, 1962, 1969) argue that kinship and Jati are interlinked social institutions that to varying degrees govern the functioning of social, economic and political life of individuals and groups in Indian society. Implying Jati can be examined on the basis of blood relations (consanguineous) or marriage (affinal) relationships. These scholars follow the conventional methodology of anthropology i.e. of mapping rules rather than examining strategies. Moreover these scholars unproblematically employ the colonial category ‘caste’ i.e. as objective representation.
Karve (1953) in 'Kinship organization in India' has argued that caste is divided into many sub-castes also called Jatis. The Jatis are further divided into lineages. Lineages are exogamous but Jatis are endogamous and so is caste which may contain a number of Jatis. The endogamous nature of the Jati system (sub-caste or clans) ensures a distinct kinship pattern. Under this organization, a bridegroom receives a bride from a near or distant segment of a descent-group, although the families involved in the alliance may or may not be able to trace the actual lineage distance of the individuals involved. (Karve, 1953, 1975)

Both Karve (1968) and Mandelbaum (1970) refer to the endogamous unit, the Jati, as the caste. In their terminology, several Jatis composing a regional unity, with the same name, occupation, and, possibly, ethnic history, are referred to as a caste-cluster (Karve 1968: 9) or Jati-cluster (Mandelbaum 1970: 17). Dumont (1970) and Ghurye (1961) use the term sub-caste for this grouping.

Similarly Orenstein (1965) argues that there are castes which include within them subgroups of varying status and occupation and, possibly, of differing ethnic origin. He refers to such castes as “loosely structured” and gives as examples the Kolis and ‘Marathas’ of Maharashtra. Thus, ‘Marathas’ according to him include ritually clean Hindu castes except the vegetarian castes of Brahmans, Gurava (temple priests), and Sonars (Goldsmiths). He further argues that Kolis include a variety of Shudra castes ranking below ‘Marathas’ and above Untouchables (Orenstein 1963, 1965). According to him ‘Marathas’ did not have ranked sub castes; instead, they had roughly ranked bilateral kindred with some sets of households looking upon others as lower or higher (Orenstein 1965: 125).

Otenstein (1965) observes that hierarchy may occur both between castes and within castes. Such diversity within a caste probably comes about as some lineages have made successful conquests to become ‘royal’ lineages or as some lower castes have successfully laid claim to a new caste title and been integrated as a lower sub-caste. Srinivas (1975) argues that such diversity in occupation and rank has occurred more recently (post colonial period) by means of education and
the taking up of businesses and professions by educated caste members. Hardgrave’s (1969) research on the Nadars, traditional toddy-tappers of Tamilnadu is an instructive example of how the Nadars have achieved social mobility through education and pursuance of ‘respectable’ and profitable professions. (Hardgrave, 1969)

There have in fact, been cases when a Jati segment has moved to a new place and claimed to be of a caste of higher rank. Mayer (1960) for instance has observed some attempts at “passing” as a higher caste and finds that the process of acceptance of such Jatis is slow, because the natives of the new place cannot ascertain the correctness of the claims (Mayer 1960: 27-28).

Cohn (1968) argues that in some parts of India the sib or clan, the exogamous unit within the Jati, may be anchored territorially and represent a socially organized body with headmen and common property. Such is the biradari in parts of the northern state of Uttar Pradesh, a set of males who believe themselves to be descendants of a common male ancestor. (Cohn 1968: 24) They occupy a set of villages within a limited geographical territory which they hold by right of conquest or grant, having a political organization for self-government and relations with other social units such as the district or state government. Pradhan’s (1996) study of the Jats of Meerut District is the most detailed study of such a clan, whose territory was called among his subjects a Khap. Fox (1971) has discussed a similar clan territorial and political organization for the Rajputs of Eastern Uttar Pradesh. Beyond the clan, there is seldom any conceptualization of segmentary unilineal relations. However, the combination of intermarrying clans within an endogamous sub-caste makes the sub-caste, in effect, a descent-group. Thus the microcosm of any Jati organization is the lineage. In India, descent-groups are unilineal-usually Patrilineal, but in some cases as the Nairs and Khasi communities it is matrilineal. At some levels the segments may be exogamous and at some levels endogamous. An assemblage of lineages form clans or kin group in turn, constituting endogamous units called Jatis.
Dumont (1970: 189) argues that the two features which link a series of sub-castes into a caste are usually similarity in name and occupational function. There are, however, some castes which include sub-castes varying in both function and caste rank. Srinivas (1975) for instance observes that the Lingayats in Karnataka, originally formed from people of other castes who converted to a religious sect, the Virasaiva. Among the Lingayats are sub-castes of priests, merchants, artisans, servants, and Untouchables. Thus, within the caste of Lingayats, there is an entire complement of specialists necessary for an operating caste system. (Srinivas, 1962, 1975)

Karve (1953, 1975) opines that members of a Jati living in a village are usually relatives by kinship or by marital alliance and therefore the etiquette of kinship regulates interpersonal relations. Kinship terms were usually extended to members of one’s own Jati. According to Karve (1953), descent-group signifies the group through which an individual traces one’s lineage. Rules for behaviour within the descent group are well-defined, and consistently sanctioned. There are councils at various levels within the descent group for enforcement of rules, for meting out justice in disputes, and for ensuring cohesiveness of the larger unit i.e. Jati. A large number of such lineages belong to a clan or sib, a unilineal descent group in which actual descent cannot be traced; but descent is believed to have occurred from some common ancestor and hence one is prohibited to marry within the same lineage. A lineage typically has one surname (Gotra).

Having noted this simplistic and objectifying methodology of these scholars, I argue following Bourdieu that kinship may be construed as strategies. These strategies are usually obscured by the officialising categories and as a researcher one needs to uncover these camouflages.

It is in and through the family that the habitus first gets structured. It is in the interactions that the rules also get embodied in a deeper, practical and often pre-reflexive way. The family is also the site where an individual acquires embodied cultural capital. The embodied cultural capital as the term suggests consists of
both the consciously acquired and the passively “internalized” value system in a period of time, usually from the family through socialization, of culture and traditions. Cultural capital is not transmissible instantaneously like a gift or money; rather, it is acquired over time as it impresses itself upon one’s habitus (character and way of thinking), which in turn becomes more attentive to or primed to receive similar influences. Embodied cultural capital through one’s ‘inherited’ surname i.e. patrilineages is important while operating in the field of kinship and marriage. Cultural capital provides a foregrounding in the way the field of caste operates.

In the next section I assess how ‘Marathas’ which I am arguing is a social imaginary which manifests itself in and through everyday practices. However this imaginary group is construed as caste/cluster. This objectification of processes into an identifiable category has led to its examination through the lens of kinship which is taken to the fundamental organizing principle of this caste.

Kinship amongst the ‘Marathas’ as conceptualized in social sciences

Karve (1965) has argued that Maharashtra often is regarded as a zone of transition between the kinship systems of the northern and southern regions of India. And therefore she contends that the systems of kinship and marriage of the non-Brahmin communities of Western Maharashtra, particularly the districts of Ahmednagar, Poona, Satara, Kolhapur, and Sholapur, have a Dravidian form of kinship and the rest have an Aryan form of kinship. One of the features of the Dravidian kinship pattern is permission to marry among cross-cousins.

Social anthropologists (Karve, 1953, 1965, Orenstein, 1965) and colonial ethnographers (Betham, 1908, Enthoven, 1921) who have analyzed the social imaginary called ‘Marathas’, construe this social group to be a caste. They further argue that the ‘Maratha’ group, is divided into two broad status divisions, assal or kulin (pure ‘Marathas’ belonging to 96 lineages) and Shinde or lenkevale
('Marathas' who are descended from irregular unions). It is pertinent to mention that it was during the colonial period that these hierarchies such as 96 lineages, Panchkulin, Saptkulin among others got organized within the 'Maratha' social imaginary. These hierarchies formed the basis of distinctions that were to be maintained to accumulate symbolic capital by some lineages and through the symbolic capital maintain domination. Scholars such as Karve (1953) and Orenstein, 1965 have misrecognised these hierarchies to be 'real' objective, timeless and strictly endogamous categories rather than these being mutable and transient imaginaries. These scholars in their attempt to catalogue the diverse social interactions tend to objectify, standardize and freeze them in time and space using universal anthropological concepts such as descent, lineage, clan, totem, jati and Varna. In short their methodology registers the rules rather than the logic of practice. For instance they argue that among 'Marathas' (which they deem as caste/caste cluster) the most inclusive agnatic (patrilineage) group is the clan or kul (kuli). Actors believe that the members of a clan are descended from a single common ancestor or genitor (mul purush), although the specific links involved are unknown. Clan members have a common surname (adnav), a common clan deity (dev/devi), and a common clan totem (devak). There is a prohibition on marriage between persons with the same kul devat (family god), which bars marriage within one's own clan i.e. people with the same surname and if, as sometimes happens, other clans have the same totem, with those clans as well. Clans are widely dispersed and intermingled and do not form corporate groups.xxxvi (Carter 1973).

Similarly according to Carter (1973) the 'Marathas' (caste) have a form of clan organization- they are divided into localised lineages called bhaubund or bhauki. These lineages are always agnatic (patrilineal), but they vary greatly in genealogical depth and knowledge and also in size. Lineages, most often 'Maratha', which are corporate groups with estates (vatans) in office and tax-free land such as the Revenue or Police Patilship tend to be quite large and to include attached groups in addition to a core of proper members. Members of vatandar
lineages often have considerable knowledge of their lineage pedigree supplemented by extensive written genealogical records. (Carter, 1973)

The terms natevaik and nathlag are used to refer to kinsmen in the most inclusive sense. In principle this concept defines one’s caste, although people recognize that this is extremely unlikely to be the case in practice. In this most inclusive sense natevaik refers to all those persons connected to an individual by ties of blood (raktache nate). Karve (1953) argues that internally, the concept of natevaik segments into two opposed lesser concepts, bhauki (patrilineage and matrilateral parallel cousins i.e. maternal aunt’s sons) and soyre. Karve (1953) observes that a woman’s position is thought to change when she marries. Women are bom in a bhauki relationship with their brothers and fathers, but upon marriage they become bhauki to their husbands and soyre to their brothers and fathers (as her surname changes to that of her husband). (Karve, 1953, David 1972)

Thus according to Karve (1953, 1975) Bhauki, includes all those natevaik who are related to an individual by blood in the restricted or marked sense as a result of birth or the marriage ritual. It includes all one’s agnates plus matrilateral parallel relatives as well as the soyre of one’s soyre, but always excluding married sisters and daughters and including wives. Soyre includes all those natevaik who, in a restricted or marked sense of the term, as a consequence of marriage are not related to an individual by blood. This concept applies to all natevaik who are not bhauki and are identifiable as marriageable relatives (lagnache natevaik). (Carter, 1973)

Carter (1973) has researched on ‘Maratha’ kinship patterns in a village called Girvi, in Satara District. Here he found two vatandar (land owing nobility) ‘Maratha’ lineages, both belonging to the Kadam clan but otherwise unrelated. He argues that these hereditary benefits continued even after independence when the office of revenue Patilship was abolished. The varchi ali (upper street) lineage held the revenue Patilship and the khalchi ali (‘lower street’) lineage still holds the police Patilship. The khalchi ali (lower street) lineage is now divided into
several branches (*shakhe*), the links between which have been forgotten, but three of the four branches of proper members possess written genealogies varying in depth from seven to eleven generations. Members of some non-vatandar lineages in the village could trace their agnatic pedigree back to a lineage founding ancestor as many as four generations before, but in general the genealogical knowledge of the non-vatandar is much less extensive than that of the vatandar. No non-vatandar lineage possessed written genealogical records.

Carter (1973) argues that in order to understand these variations in agnatic organisation it is necessary to distinguish the lines along which personal credentials are transmitted patrilineality pure and simple, from the precise rules that govern the transmission of different classes of attributes. This distinction emerges quite clearly when one considers the contrasting meanings of the terms *bhaubund* and *taksim*. Taksim has to do with legally sanctioned rights and refers to a share (*hissa*) of a hereditary estate or to a corporate group which holds part or all of such an estate. Thus the *khalci ali* Kadam lineage of ‘Marathas’ in Girvi is a *taksim* because only bona fide members of the lineage may serve as Police Patil or hold a share of the tax-free land which goes with the office. The term *sutak* refers to the ritual pollution which in western Maharashtra is believed to arise from connexion with birth or death and which is transmitted by blood (*rakt*).

Thus, according to Carter (1973) vatandar patrilineage have two aspects, *taksim* and *sutak*- these are two types of credentials both transmitted along agnatic lines but according to different principles. *Taksim* refers to the corporate descent group aspect of vatandar lineage organization. Vatandar descent groups possess estates consisting of legally sanctioned rights in public office and associated rights in tax-free land. All the male members of the lineage may be addressed by the title of the lineage office and may use it as their surname. If the office is such that its duties can be carried out by one man, each male member of the lineage is entitled to apply for the office when its vacant. The duties of other offices may be shared or rotated among lineage members. The tax-free land associated with vatana
offices is shared among male lineage members. An estate-owning patrilineage or taksim also is clearly delimited.

According to Carter (1973), the vatandar lineage constitutes a 'descent group' implies the precise information that these groups are made up of persons whose genealogical relations with one another are exclusively and exhaustively specific—both by any member and by an informed outsider. Anyone acquainted with the rules of exclusion and inclusion can predict the descent group location of a given person. It is in order to delimit their descent groups, to validate their own claims of membership and to forestall the illegitimate claims of outsiders that members of estate-owning descent groups preserve copies of government-sanctioned genealogical records. Membership is acquired not by virtue of filiation but rather by reference to a patrilineal pedigree linking a person through his father to a lineage founding ancestor. All this is entirely distinct from questions of hierarchy and ritual status. Rather, it governs entitlement to credentials which are legally sanctioned. (Fortes 1969:286)

According to Carter (1973) sutak, refers to an element of ritual status, what Dumont (1970) calls the principle of hierarchy or the opposition of the pure and impure. Purity and pollution are thought to be transmitted by blood kinship, but the manner of transmission varies in accord with the segmentary nature of kinship. From an external point of view members of a caste are conceived of as sharing a common hierarchical status by virtue of shared blood resulting from common filiation pushed to its furthest extent. Internally, however, there is an emphasis on the transmission of purity and pollution along agnatic lines. Carter (1973) illustrates with an example—when a death occurs, the deceased’s relatives (natevaik) must necessarily observe impurity or mourning (sutak) with varying severity and for varying lengths of time. A dead man’s eldest son is usually the chief mourner and has to light the pyre. Residents of the deceased’s household (ghar), generally agnates and their spouses and often including more than one domestic group, must give up cooking for three days. For ten days members of the dead person’s lineage (bhauhund), again including spouses, are forbidden to
shave, have guests, or to eat the ‘sweet’ foods required for marriages and other ritual occasions. Close matrilateral parallel relatives (bhauki) and affines (soyre) must observe these sutak prohibitions for three days. In general, all bhaubunds are regarded as having a common ritual status while patrilineal descent pertains only to those corporate lineages which own estates.

I suggest that one can assume kinship as a form of capital cultural and social that is transmitted as in embodied cultural capital (that is through inheritance of a lineage and surname) and acquired or institutional cultural capital (through marriage and filiations). Kinship in terms of bhauki and soyre can be construed as networks of social capital. From this perspective members of the social imaginary ‘Marathas’ are incorporated into the larger community not only as individuals but also through the group, and their rights and obligations would thus depend in part on their group membership—understood as a form of ‘collective moral consensus’ emanating from within a community. Meaning that, an individual by virtue of possessing a membership of a community, can participate in the determination, practice and promotion of the common good of the community but is also bound by its rules and its logic of practice.

Since all of one’s kinsmen are in some way bound together through certain accepted and legitimated rules (I argue it is practice) of reciprocity, it is therefore possible to construe this universe of interactions as social networking. It is in this social network that an individual internalizes certain forms of knowledge necessary for negotiating in the various fields. These dispositions constitute what we call as habitus. Bourdieu (1984) has demonstrated how distinctions tend to determine an individual’s likes and interests which get reinforced through practice in everyday life— it becomes part of the unconscious and remains doxic. It is through these distinctions that the various sections/groups within this ‘Maratha’ imaginary claim to be higher/lower placed than others and thus claim certain privileges.
The distinction between cumulative filiation and descent also helps to account for attached membership in estate-owning lineages. Attached members are persons whose lineage credentials are incomplete and often of recent origin. They are generally involved in pollution observances with proper lineage mates, but are carefully excluded from access to their lineages' corporate estates. For various reasons they have been allowed to share in the ritual status of the lineage to which they are attached by asserting a vague claim of fictitious patrifiliation, but they are not allowed to fabricate a pedigree on which they might base a claim to a share in the lineage estate. (Carter, 1973, Karve 1975)

What is pertinent here is that a universal feature of lineage organisation in western India is the unilineal transmission of ritual status within castes according to a rule of cumulative patrifiliation. But, although ritual status is transmitted unilineally, it cannot be maintained without the assistance of affines (soyre). This is so in several ways. As the segmentary system of non-Brahmin Maharashtrian concepts of kinship and marriage implies, soyre are regarded externally as a class of blood relatives (raktache natevaik). Furthermore, from an internal point of view a woman becomes a bhauki relative to her husband, a blood relative in the restricted sense. A consequence of both these notions is that actors come to naturalize the idea that only by marrying a woman of suitable status may one transmit unaltered to one's children the status one received from one's father. Indeed, if one succeeds in marrying very well one may even enhance one's ritual status. (Carter, 1973)

The question of the relative status of spouses is of more important to understand the relative ranking of the lineage system- the officialised version. It is no wonder that the 'Marathas' deem it to be important to marry someone from a family whose rank (darja or symbolic capital), a compound of ritual status, social position, and wealth, is equal to one's own if not more. One's spouse also ought to have a good character and adequate education. As a general rule it is felt to be easier to find a suitable spouse among one's marriageable natevaik, i.e. soyre, for ties of kinship and affinity may be used as discreet channels of communication.
But in all cases the spouse should be related to the individual (*padar lagne*, literal meaning would be meeting of the ends of the women’s sari) either through cumulative filiation or in some rare cases through notional filiations.

Having examined the conventional terminology and classificatory schema above, in the following pages I examine two case studies that highlight kinship as a strategy to accumulate and accrue various forms of capital. I have included narratives (verbatim) so as to highlight the misrecognition of the actors who have naturalized the idea that ‘Marathas’ is a caste cluster and who are aware of the symbolic hierarchies within and know how to improve their social and economic standing through alliances- which they tend to officialise. Another reason to include the narratives is to explore the adeptness of the actors to notice potential opportunities and strategise so as to access them depending on the context.

**Kinship as a strategy for social mobility**

This is a case study undertaken in the district of Satara. This case is related to the idea of how a higher status (symbolic) can be obtained which is really the achieved (institutional) cultural capital and through the use of this cultural capital, social networks are expanded and overtime forms the basis for accumulating economic capital. For Bourdieu (1984), institutionalized cultural capital consists of institutional recognition, in this case kinship credentials or qualifications in terms of ritual status. This form of capital is measurable and plays an important role in operating within the labour market.

The family which I researched has Shinde as the last name (*adnav*) or clan name. They are based in Satara city and had migrated from Belgaum in the early 1910s. Anandrao (ego) is 80 years old and belonged to an extremely poor family. Anandrao’s father Shankarrao who had migrated from Belgaum had no land and was a landless labourer and worked on others fields. Shankarrao’s wife Mangala (ego’s mother) belonged to the lineage of Kaware who are located in Sholapur district. Both the Shinde and the Kaware lineages are considered lowly ‘Marathas’ (outside the 96 assal ‘Maratha’ lineages, some deem them to be non-
‘Marathas’ also)- in ritual status in Satara (this notion of ritual hierarchy is to a great extent based on the economic, symbolic, cultural and social capital that a family possesses or has the potential). If one were to operationalise Bourdieu’s concept of symbolic capital (capital can be referred to as the resources available to an individual on the basis of honour, prestige or recognition, and functions as an authoritative embodiment of cultural value) then Shankarrao and his family possessed very little symbolic capital or in other words very little credit in the market. Anandrao’s father (Shankarrao) was an agricultural labourer in Satara on the estate of Mr. Cooper, a rich Parsi and an industrialist. It was Mr. Cooper who paid for the education of Anandrao (passed matriculation, today’s 11th standard). He joined the Indian Army as a soldier and retired as a Subedar Major (Non commissioned officer) in 1969.

Shankarrao (ego’s) father had two brothers (Marutrao and Tukaram) and one sister (Shubhangi) of whom one of the brothers (Tukaram) died at the age of only ten due to tuberculosis. Marutrao was the eldest brother, followed by Shubhangi followed by Tukaram and finally by Shankarrao. Shubhangi was married into a relatively ‘lower’ status (outside the 96 ‘Maratha’ lineages) ‘Maratha’ lineage called Galgale from Wai (Satara). Her husband was a lowly placed railway employee. Marutrao worked as a tangewala (chariot driver) and his wife was his maternal cousin (maternal uncle’s daughter) who came from the Bhand family based in Sangli district. Shankarrao’s wife (ego’s mother) belonged to lowly placed (outside the 96 ‘Maratha’ lineages) ‘Maratha’ lineage called Khute from Phaltan (Satara).

On enquiring about the family names of his natevaik (of his paternal uncles and aunts) such as Bhand, Galgale and Khute as also being found in other communities (castes as understood by him) he argued that they were ‘Marathas’ but not highly placed ‘Marathas’. He tried to justify his position by arguing that it was because of lack of wealth and prestige of his family surname (Shinde). He reasons that because his father and uncles and aunts did not have the requisite wealth to form alliances with well to do families. The family names such as
Galgale Bhand, and Khute are also found among the ‘Dhangars’ (shepards, deemed to be a caste).

Anandrao (ego) has two brothers and two sisters all younger to him. Deepakrao (73 years) is a retired police inspector (his wife belongs to the Nikkam family from Satara), Veenita (70 years) is married to Ganpatrao Thorat from Pune who is a retired foreman (ammunition factory, Pune), Sheetal (67 years) is married to Khanderao Kaspate who was a former employee of the Pune Municipal Corporation and Vithalrao (63 years) who retired as a production engineer from Bajaj automobile industry. Vithalrao’s wife belongs to the Dhere family of Pune her paternal cousin was a corporator and a former member of legislative council (MLA) called Prakash Dhere who also served as a Minister of State for Revenue from 1994 to 1995. Chayya (60 years) is the youngest sister who is married into Thopte family from Ahmednagar.

All brothers and sisters other than Anandrao completed their graduation. Deepakrao from Rajaram College in Kolhapur and Vithalrao from Government college of Engineering, Pune, Veenita and Sheetal completed their graduation in Arts from Rajaram College. Anandrao could only manage to complete his matriculation from Satara and soon after enrolled in the Army at the age of 18 years as a soldier (in the Maratha regiment number one or the Jungi Paltan). One could sense a perceptible change in the status of natevaiks in ego’s generation. I asked him how come his brothers and sisters were married into assal ‘Maratha’ lineages he argued that it was because of two main reasons. The first reason was that he could get his wife from a very ‘prestigious’ family called the Ghorpade which made marital alliances with assal ‘Maratha’ families easier and the second reason was that by the time his brothers and sisters got married, they were well educated and were employed. Also the economic situation of the family had improved.

On enquiring how come his brothers and sisters could attain higher education and he couldn’t, he answered
"I was the eldest in the family and when I was very young we were going through a very bad phase. My father Shankarrao was only a labourer. It was Mr. Cooper who paid part of my school fees. We also did not have any support from my fraternal or maternal uncles. It was only after I joined the Army that we were slightly better placed. I used to send money home."

Anandrao has four sons, Prataprao Shinde is 48 years old and is a deputy collector, Shivajirao is 45 years old (captain in the Indian Army), Sambhajirao is 41 years of age (is a practicing dentist in Satara) and Babanrao is 37 years of age (software engineer).

Anandrao's wife belongs to the Ghorpade family (before marriage). It was while in the army that he was introduced through a common friend to Hambirrao Jadhav the maternal uncle of his to be wife (Shevanta). Shevanta had lost her father when she was very young. She is the eldest in the family and has four sisters (had a brother who died in an a road accident when he was only 14 years old- Shevanta and her family believe that it was not an accident but because of the feud over land and property within the Ghorpade family, he was killed). Shevanta and her family was in a pauperised state as her father had sold off most of the ancestral land that he inherited and the rest was under legal dispute (her paternal uncles were claiming a share in the land). Shevanta's mama Hambirrao Jadhav was also reeling under economic constraint (he was from Kagal, Kolhapur). On being asked how and why did her father sell most of his inherited property, Shevanta observed,

"in those days belonging to such a respected lineage meant that one had to display wealth and status. He would spend a lot of money on expensive clothes, compete with his kin on spending, buy unnecessary items and he spent a lot of money on his sister’s marriage and also on his brother's marriage...who later did not support him in his time of difficulty."

One must remember that although the schemes of the habitus enable members of a culture to generate infinity of practices adapted to endlessly changing situations, they are never recognized by these agents as explicit principles. Rather, they are embodied corporeally in postures and attitudes and interactionally in the style of
strategies whose implementation constitutes practice. It is this very implicitness of operation that Bourdieu (1990) is careful to highlight. Bourdieu (1990, 1998) emphasizes that all the provisions of customary laws, the precepts of customs, the sayings and proverbs generated from these oppositions do not constitute an explicit axiomatics, a self-consistent system of rules. The generation of practice is not a matter of explicit derivation from a code, but a feeling of appropriateness, a sense that the precepts given by schemes preserve the boundaries of that which should be kept separate, even though the exact parameters of those oppositions remain instructively vague. (Bourdieu, 1998:12)

Researcher: Did he not spend any money on your education?

Respondent: Yes he did, but he was not concerned. I left school before he died because we could not pay the fees. This was also the time I lost my brother and the family feud became more protracted. He also took to heavy drinking because of which he lost his life.

Researcher: And then what happened?

Respondent: We became extremely poor and none of my paternal kin helped us. My maternal uncle was also unable to help out as he too was facing economic problems. But he would send some amount every month.

Researcher: Problems like...?

Respondent: He had given his friends huge amounts but they did not repay it. He had to sell part of his land. But as he was enterprising he opened a sweets shop in Kolhapur which was doing fairly well until a lot of competition undid his business.

Researcher: Why did you not go and stay with your mama?

Respondent: That is what my paternal uncles would have wanted us to do!
Researcher: So how did you manage? Did you not ask your other relatives for help?

Respondent: It was a matter of shame to ask for financial aid...It was very difficult at first as my sisters were younger to me and we could not go out to find employment. Also as we belonged to a namwant khnadan (well known family) it was most difficult to find an appropriate job. My mother with the financial help of my mama converted part of the house into three shops and rented it out to a Marwari family. We managed our home with that rent. (Such an underlying structural conception of women and marriageability, however, is not the final resting point of Bourdieu's analysis. Rather, this opposition is seen to correspond to and arise from the fundamental division of domestic politics or as Bourdieu (1990) observes

"...the interests of the mother, seeking to reinforce her position in her adoptive home by bringing into the family a woman sprung from her own lineage, are objectively opposed to the interests of the father, who, in arranging his son's marriage, as befits a man, by an agreement with his own kin, his own brother, or some other patrilineal kinsman, reinforces the agnatic unit and, thereby, his own position in the domestic unit."

(Bourdieu, 1990; 45)

Forms of marriage thus reproduce the social relations of which they are the product. They are not simply the execution of rules already given, but the officialized outcome of a play of strategies derived from interests embedded in schemes of perception that embody the social order)

Researcher: Did you not get any marriage proposals from within your kin group?

Respondent: I did, but the dowry demanded was extremely high and also they were not educated not employed. They lived on ancestral property.

From the above discussion I am reminded of Bourdieu's (1984) symbolic capital. According to Bourdieu symbolic capital can be a double edged i.e. it can have the potential for returns as well as costs. Gidwani (2002: 85) has shown through is research on the Patel caste of Gujarat how in the pursuit of symbolic capital to
maintain ‘distinction’ with lower castes has actually led to an erosion of their wealth and therefore their power. He, asks why is their power now being challenged by previously less powerful groups? Should the accumulation of symbolic capital not strengthen the Patel caste’s domination? But this did not happen. In their quest to accumulate symbolic capital in order to draw boundaries of inclusion and exclusion, the Patel’s of Gujarat begin to adhere to certain social distinctions. Patels’ urge to display their status strained their assets.

However, an account of the interests motivating such a marriage is not a matter of describing participants’ weighing of benefits and deficits in some utilitarian fashion. Rather, it situates interest and entailed strategies within a given symbolic order.

Through Hambirrao, ego managed to get married to Shevanta. The Ghorpade lineage is traced to the famed ‘Maratha’ sardar of the 17th century called Santaji Ghorpade. This lineage is an offshoot of the main Ghorpade family located in families Bedag and Detwaddi in Kolhapur. The Ghorpade lineage in Satara has natevaik (relatives) with Nimabalkars from Phaltan (who belong to a princely family), Kadams from Sangli, Ghule from Ahmednagar, Dhere from Pune, Lad and Nikkam from Satara.

So my question is if kin relations could not help Shevanta how would this marriage be useful for Anandrao? So what if he could contract a marriage with a lineage superior in ritual status then his own, he could not pass that on to his children as they would still carry the paternal surname?

Researcher: So did this marriage help you in terms of social mobility?

Respondent (Anandrao): Being associated with a respectable family has its own advantages. For one I became a part of their natlag (kindred)...

Researcher: so what...
Respondent: Being a *pahuna* (guest) in has a special privilege of pahunchar (special treatment). Once I got married I was introduced to the larger Ghorpade family. I was invited for all occasions. The Ghorpades and their kin group have many acquaintances and being a pahuna they had to oblige if I asked for any favour. I was the son in law of the Ghorpades...

Researcher: Did the kin connections of the Ghorpades help you? I mean how did you reach where you are right now...?

Respondent: As my wife and her family felt ackward in asking for help did not mean that I could not intermingle with them. After completing 15yrs of army service, I returned to Satara and through the good offices of the Ghorpade (my wife’s paternal uncle who was a government contractor) I became a petty government contractor at the municipal level. My wife’s lineage is well known and has a good name. Also the Ghorpade lineage is itself well known to all here. I was able to get many works passed by the Municipal corporation without any bureaucratic hurdle. My wife’s family also has influential kin in other places. Through these connections I was able to buy land at a cheap rate in Mahabaleshwar and in Satara. I started the hotel business soon after. The kin relations also helped me get introduced to a number of local and state level political actors. I now work for the Nationalist Congress party in Satara.

Researcher: What about your brothers and sisters?

Respondent: I was able to get Veenita married to Ganpatrao Thorat who was employed in the ammunition factory as a central government employee. I got Chayya (youngest sister) married to a well educated well respected family-Thopte of Ahmednagar. Her husband is an agricultural officer in the state government. The proposal came from Hambirrao Jadhav (my wife’s mama).

Researcher: What about your sons?

Respondent: Well, one good thing that I could do for them was give them good education. Pratap and Shivaji studied in the Sainik School Satara one became a
deputy collector and the other is now a captain in the Gurkha regiment. Sambhaji was not interested in doing a government job so he became a dentist and Baban is pursuing his Engineering in D.Y Patil College in Pune. Pratap’s wife is from the Bhoite family in Wai. Shivaji’s wife is from the well known Nimbalkar family of Phaltan. Sambhaji’s wife is also a dentist and is from the Shirole family of Pune, her father was a famous high court advocate.

This case study highlights how different forms of capital are required in different fields. Kinship here was used as a strategy to accrue certain forms of capital. In doing so, Anandrao had his wife’s family’s symbolic capital a kind of credit that was used in furthering his career in politics and business. The Ghorpades are very well known and respected family in Satara even though their economic wealth had deteriorated in the last generation. I am arguing that through this marriage Anandrao managed to accumulate cultural capital. The Ghorpades family name was now linked to the Shinde’s that enabled him to get an opportunity to move ahead in his service. The Ghorpade’s have atleast 12-15 lineages in Satara and some of them were very well connected in western Maharashtra. Besides, the Ghorpades have kin relations with other important lineages such as the Barges of Koregaon, Jadhav’s of Maooli, Bhoite’s of wai, Ghadge’s of Kolhapur, Mandaliks of Kolhapur, Babanrao Padwal (who was mayor of Pune), Mhaskes and Shirole from Pune, Pawars and Nikkam of Satara among many others.

Once well settled, Anandrao educated his children. Here education itself became the instrumental cultural capital for further advancement. Moreover the children can also tap into the large reservoir of social capital embedded in the social kin networks. Capital here in this case study takes various forms to enable a family to climb up ritually but more importantly economically.
Journey from Kunbi to ‘Maratha’ back to Kunbi

This is an interesting case as this family over a period of time has changed its surname in order to belong to the ‘Maratha’ caste. Prataprao (ego of 67 years) has one younger brother Malojirao. Ego’s great grandfather (panjoba) Gyanba migrated from Koradgaon village in Pathardi taluka in Ahmednagar district to Pune sometime in the late 19th century. Their surname then was Jabade. Gyanba Jabade had two sons and one daughter from two wives as the first wife died in the plague epidemic. Both wives were sisters. Ego’s grandfather Baburao was the son of the second wife. Baburao’s mother Savitri, before marriage belonged to the Shelke family from Nashik (and so did the first wife who was the elder sister of Savitri called Vani). Baburao was the eldest and had one sister Manjula. Baburao’s step brother Babanrao (brother from the first wife i.e. ego’s step grandfather) had two daughters (Rani and Kranti) and one son Santaji. Both Rani and Kranti were married to two brothers of the Mane family hailing from Bhor taluka in Pune.

Babanrao discontinued his school education in Pune and returned to his ancestral village Koradgaon (his father Gyanba helped him in purchasing more land, and also handed over his ancestral piece of land to him). Babanrao’s descendants continue to stay there. Babanrao wife’s (Sarita) belonged to the ‘Maratha’ lineage (they are however considered as having low ritual status) before marriage, Chavan who hailed from Parner taluka of Ahmednagar. Babanrao had two sons Kisanrao (70 years) and Laxamrao (who died at a young age before he could get married). Kisanrao is illiterate but owns ten acres of rain fed land. Kisanrao’s wife is from the Kadam lineage, hailing from Aurangabad. Kisanrao has two sons and two daughters. It is interesting to note that the both his daughters were given in marriage to two brothers of the Mulik lineage from Ahmednagar district and in return one of the sons of Kisanrao took a wife from the Mulik family (this is also called sata-lota, an exchange of women, especially when one is finding it difficult
to get one’s daughter or sister married). I have not gone into much detail into the decendants of Babanrao (ego’s fathers’ step brother as my case study focuses on the ego’s line of decent. However interview with Kisanrao became imperative as he still retains his surname as Jabade, whereas ego’s family now uses Jagtap. Another interesting twist to this case is that both ego’s and Kisanrao’s children now claim to be kunbi ‘Maratha’s and therefore have the other backward caste (OBC) certificates).

Prataprao (ego) was educated in the Shivaji ‘Maratha’ preparatory school (set up by a Keshavrao Jedhe and his associates) and went on to complete his matriculation. He joined the police department as a sub-inspector and retired as a Senior Inspector of police. Prataprao (ego) has one daughter and two sons - Parvati of 35 years is the eldest followed by her two brothers, Manoj 32 years and Sangram 29 years. Parvati is completed her Masters in Business Administration from Symbiosis college and looks after her husband’s business (which is production of food pellets for animals in Barmati). Manoj is a practicing lawyer at the high court and Sangram is a software engineer working with Infosys private limited. All the children were able to take advantage of the OBC reservation policy at various stages of their education as the condition of the ‘creamy layer’ was not applicable to them.

Parvati is married to Vijayrao Nimbalkar (Nimbalkar family belongs to a well known aristocratic lineage) from Phaltan taluka in Satara district and has two daughters. Manoj’s wife Lata came from the Shitole family (well known and having a high ritual ‘Maratha’ lineage, they claim that their ancestors were Sardars or Army commanders during the Peshwa period) in Pune. Sangram is unmarried as yet.

Ego’s great grandfather Gyanba was illiterate and had agricultural land (five acres) in Koradgaon which was rain fed. He left that agricultural land in the care of his elder brother Someshwar (his descendants use Jabade as their surname are
neighbours to Kisanrao’s family i.e ego’s fathers stepbrothers son) and came to Pune to seek employment.

After coming to Pune, Gyanba invested some money in tangas (horse driven vehicles). He prospered and soon had enough capital to diversify his investment into trading in grain. Very soon he had a couple of tangas and he himself did not work on them but employed other people. He resided at Kamatipura (in today’s Pune cantonment area) and overtime was popularly called as Gyanbarao Jabade (the rao was more of a symbolic title of displaying a ‘Maratha’ connection and became habitual with his descendants, unlike his brothers who stayed back in Koradgaon). He was associated with the Satyashodhak Samaj activities in Pune and also contributed some money towards this end. With his economic status he was able to connect in social gatherings with well known ‘Maratha’ families such as Dhere, Dhamdhere, Mhaske and Shirole. He was able to enroll his son (Ego’s father) in a local school in Pune cantonment. But what is interesting for this case is while enrolling Baburao in school, his surname changed from that of Jabade to Jagtap. Jagtap is a common ‘Maratha’ surname across Maharashtra and Jabade is rare (On enquiry, I found out that this surname was not on any of the lists drawn out during the late 19th and early 20th century and usually referred to by the ‘Maratha’s). Baburao studied till 8th standard and dropped out. He joined the post office first as a postman rose up in rank to become the head clerk.

Here is an excerpt of the interviews with Prataprao (ego) on the history of the family.

Researcher: Why did your grandfather migrate?

Respondent: Well, my father (ego’s father i.e. Baburao) told me that it was due to constant famine conditions in Ahmednagar and also because Pune was seen as more progressive city in terms of life opportunities. As my grandfather was a follower of Satyashodhak Samaj he wanted to settle in Pune.
Researcher: So, did your grandfather have any relatives...whom he could ask for help?

Respondent: Well...I don't think he had any close relatives in Pune. But he did have friends from our ancestral village who had earlier migrated to Pune. It was with their help that he began his business of tangas. He was also a Satyashodhak and thus it was not as though he was all alone.

Researcher: Was your father also associated with Satyashodhak Samaj?

Respondent: Yes. He was also closely associated with Keshavrao Jedhe (who was one of the leading Satyashodhaks and active member of the Brahminetar party) especially while founding the 'Maratha' Shikshan Prasarak Mandal (an educational trust for the promotion of education for the 'Maratha' caste) in the late 1920s. He collected donations from a large number of 'Maratha's and non-brahmins for the Mandal.

Researcher: Did this help your father to have many 'Maratha' friends?

Respondent: He had friends who were politically and socially active such as Shankarrao More, Baburao Gholap, Baburao Sanas, Bapusaheb Parge, Karle Guruji, K.B. Babar, Vitthalrao Satav Raibahaddur BaburaoJagtap and Keshavrao Jedhe.

Researcher: Why did your father not continue his education? Why did he leave schooling early? Was your grandfather's business not doing well?

Respondent: Studying till the 8th standard then itself was a big achievement. But yes my as my grandfather got more and more involved as a samajik karyakarta (social activist) he did not pay much attention to his business. He was also contributing some money to the Satyashodhak cause. But that was not the reason my father left school. He himself got very interested in the activities of the Satyashodhak Samaj. He had also failed thrice. My grandfather thought it best that he should quit school. By then he was already in his late teens. Also by then
the business of my grandfather was fledgling and the family needed an extra earner.

Researcher: Why do you think that your father’s surname was changed?

Respondent (ego): Jabade is not a surname it is a title.

Researcher: What does the title stand for?

Respondent: It is a title given for valour and courage. We were told that someone from our lineage had torn open the jaws of a tiger and hence the name Jabade (jaws).

(This seemed a very well rehearsed argument, because everyone I asked in Prataprao’s family seemed to know narrate this story, it is naturalised now. I say this because Kisanrao and his sons, who reside in Ahmednagar, still use the surname as Jabade. Kisanrao visits ego’s family quite regularly and had come to give the lagna patrika that is wedding card of his elder son. I was also invited for the marriage and I attended it. All the patrilineage surnames were Jabade including Ego’s surname. I enquired with some more lineage kin (of Jabade) while attending the marriage procession, as regards to the story of Jabade being a title – the respondents came up with various theories but none describing Jabade to be a title. More over all the Jabade families now claim a Kunbi status for obvious reasons, but they simultaneously claim to be ‘Maratha’s when seeking marital alliances and also when owe their allegiance to ‘Maratha’ politicians during election especially at the local level. I enquired with Kisanrao for more details)

Researcher: So how come your descendents and you use the surname Jabade and Prataprao’s descendents use Jagtap when all of you belong to the same family tree?

Respondent: As far as I know it was the practice at that point of time. One could change one’s surname when one settled in the city.
Researcher: Why did your father not change his surname when he returned from Pune?

Respondent: It would not have been accepted here (in Koradgaon) because people knew us as Jabade...how could he have changed it?

Researcher: Do you think that changing the surname from Jabade to Jagtap made any difference for Prataprao (ego) and his family?

Respondent: I think with the surname Jagtap it was easier to become part of the ‘Maratha’ community. One could easily get one’s daughter or sister married to good ‘Maratha’ families.

Researcher: Can you change your surname now?

Respondent: In our village people recognize us by Jabade and therefore even if we cite another surname people will call us by the same name. It will only create suspicion.

Researcher: Would a change in surname have made any difference to your family’s prospectus?

Respondent: I may have got a better bargain during my marriage, either a richer and well placed ‘Maratha’ family or better dowry (laughs)

Researcher: Do you think that after Prataprao’s father changed his surname they were able to do well economically?

Respondent: Yes, definitely. Baburao (ego’s) father was able to get a girl from a well to do family through which he had access to many of their kin (bhuaki) and relatives (natevaik). Baburao was also well educated and well placed. And also the fact that he stayed back in Pune gave him and his descendants many opportunities. Now of course Prataprao has many more acquaintances.
Researcher: I have noted that that you gave both your daughters to one family in marriage and also received your daughter in law from the same family. What was the logic behind this?

Respondent: My elder daughter found it difficult to find a suitable husband. Everyone who came to see the girl (*mulgi baghayala*) wanted the hand of my younger daughter in marriage. Also she was passing her prime age.

Researcher: Was there some problem with the elder daughter, if I may ask? You don’t have to answer.

Respondent: *tyat kai laponya sarkha nahi ye* (there is nothing to hide). *Ti payani jara adu ahe* (she is slightly paralytic in her leg).

Researcher: was this from birth...or...

Respondent: *Nahi, vara angat shirla* (No, the wind entered her body). That is why we had to get her younger sister and her married together and in return we had to accept their daughter for my son. *Tadjod karavi lagte* (one has to make some adjustments)...

Researcher: Did you not get help from Prataprao and his family in finding a groom?

Respondent: He was the one who got the proposal through his friend.

On further investigation I learnt that Prataprao (Ego) and Kisanrao were in good terms as there was no property related dispute. However what intrigued me in this case study was the trajectories that each of these lineage lines followed. The change of surname of Prataprao’s (Ego’s) father proved to be a useful strategy. It enabled him and his descendants to enter into the elite ‘Maratha’ circle first as friends and later as affines. Moreover his father’s connections in the Satyashodhak samaj and later with the Maratha Shikshan Prasarak mandal also provided the legitimacy of his being a ‘Maratha’. Prataprao’s father through these interactions acquainted himself with the cultural bearings of a ‘Maratha’, like
putting on a pheta (turban), adding the suffix of rao and also naming his sons and daughters with historically relevant ‘Maratha’ names. These small cultural nuances were internalized by his descendants that proved to be helpful during marital alliances and also for intermingling with the ‘Maratha’ elite circle. Prataprao’s father’s Satyashodhak background was one of the reasons why Prataprao was also enrolled in the Shivaji ‘Maratha’ School. It was here that Prataprao could access many more social networks. Once he joined the police it was easier for Prataprao to educate his children in convent schools and also find high ritual status martial partners for them.

On the other hand Kisanrao’s father (Babanrao) returned to his ancestral village and took to agriculture. Though he maintained close relationship with his step brother Baburao in Pune, he did not change his surname (or was not accepted by the villagers). He lacked the cultural capital of his step brother who was enrolled in a mission school by virtue of which he was able to get employed. This disparity grew over the generations so much so that now Kisanrao is still illiterate. Of course Prataprao and his family were residing in Pune city that provided many life opportunities. But to survive and do well in a city also required social capital, which overtime was accumulated by Prataprao’s father and Prataprao.

From the case it also becomes clear that the in the field of kinship that is related to other fields such as the market, bureaucracy, politics, education among others. An access through marital alliances can and does provide the necessary kind of symbolic capital which is fungible into cultural and social capital. Economic capital may also be used in the field of marital alliances such as this case highlights. But economic capital alone is not important. One has to also possess the requisite embedded cultural capital to move ahead.

The Field of Military Services- ‘Marathas’ as Kshtriya

After the Indian revolt of 1857, the Peel Commission in 1858-59 made the general recommendation on recruitment that “the Native Army should be composed of
different nationalities and castes, mixed promiscuously through each regiment as the best safeguard against revolt. It was in this context that the colonial state introduced the concept of ‘Martial’ races in the last decade of the 19th century. (Omissi 1994, 9)

‘Marathas’ were considered as a martial race in the Deccan region. The colonial state with its policy of higher recruitment in the native Army urged the ‘Marathas’ to join the Army by legitimating their ‘Kshtriya’ claim. For instance, Major Betham (in his military hand book on Deccani Musalams and Marathas, 1908) defines ‘Marathas’ as

“As a class the Marathas possess great military qualities. They are quiet, orderly, amenable to discipline; clean, intelligent, determined and well behaved...they are both good infantry soldiers and the Dekhani unsurpassable as Cavalry. These qualities have not yet been recognized at their true worth. Judged by the races from the North they are not a ‘showy’ race of men. They do not go in for picturesque dress, they are quiet in demeanor and small in stature, they are not warlike in appearance and are noticeable for quiet and respectful manner and want of swagger. For the want of these qualities on the surface the prevailing idea appears to be that they are unwarlike...what other class in India have fought as the Marathas have, except perhaps the Sikhs?” (Betham, 1908; 76)

Similarly commenting the skills of the ‘Marathas’ and glorifying them, he comments

“...they (Marathas) are a manly race and proud of their former greatness. The fact that Marathas are alone recruited in this recruiting area, has added greatly to their status...he is hardy and phlegmatic but makes a good soldier and can be relied on to give a good account of himself...As a cavalry soldier he is unsurpassed, being a good horseman and master...”(Betham, 1908; 74-75)

With the objective of enrolling ‘Marathas’ into the military the colonial state enlarged the military market and also instituted the King George Royal Indian Military Colleges (KGRIMC or RIMC) from 1922 to 1930 at Jhelum, Jullundhar, Ajmer, Belgaum and Bangalore with the idea of training the indigenous actors (natives) for enrolling as Non Commissioned Officers (NCOs). RIMC was not, in fact, a College, but a pre Sandhurst institution run along the lines of an
English public school. The British believed that for becoming an army officer, if education in Britain was impossible, a public school education in India was an absolute necessity. The British believed that public school education was particularly necessary for Indian boys whose up bringing made them suitable for the rigors and self-discipline of army life.

Thus by the early 20th century the situation was favourable for the ‘Marathas’ to join new openings that the colonial state was organizing. One of the fields where the ‘Marathas’ could use their cultural capital was the military. The colonial state had through its policy of the martial race concept facilitated the entry of the ‘Marathas’. The two case studies below demonstrate how the British policy and the British inaugurated institutions some of the ‘Maratha’ families became exceptionally mobile.

The case of ‘Military’ Aphshinge

This is a case study on how certain families were able to accumulate cultural, social and symbolic capital in a village popularly called ‘Military’ Apshinge which is 14 kilometers south west of Satara city. This village is also popularly called ‘Military’ Apshinge as almost one male of all families rooted in this village are serving in the armed forces and/or the paramilitary since the colonial period. They have recently erected a memorial to commemorate all those who served in the armed forces. Joining the Armed forces and paramilitary forces became a way of social mobility. Aphshinge is a very small village with majority of the members belonging to the ‘Maratha’ community (connoted and imagined as caste). Agriculture is labour intensive and rain fed. It is even difficult to grow sugarcane as there is an extreme dearth of water. The land is uneven with rock outcrops in places. There is no canal irrigation till date.

The total population according to 2001 census of Apshinge is 3874 and there are 637 families (households) residing in the village. Of the total population of the village approximately 2000 and more have served in the military and paramilitary forces. The Nikkam lineage is the most branched out into 22 households. The
Karande lineage has 15 households, the Pawar lineage have around 10 households, Kadam, Jadhav, Nimbalkar, Chavan, Mane, Jagtap have branches of 3 to 5 households. The total population of other communities such as scheduled caste is only 383 i.e. approximately 10 percent and there are only 27 scheduled tribe members. The approximate percentage of other (castes) communities (calculated by me based on the number of households, from my field study) is as follows- Dhangars (15%), Kumbhar (3%), Lohars (3%), Navhi (1%), Parit (1%), other caste members being negligible (members of the Mali caste which is otherwise quite widespread in parts of Satara is negligible)

In this case study I examine branches of two lineages, the Nikkam and Karande lineage. The two branches of these lineages are interesting because ninety percent of the members have served/serving in the military and their spouses also belong to ‘Maratha’ lineages in which their father and sons have a history of serving in the military and paramilitary services.

The late Col. Ramrao Nikkam (ego) is a well known figure in Satara. His father Dhondiram was the first to join the British Indian Army in the early 20th century. He joined as a sepoy and rose up to become a Naik Havaldar. Col. Ramrao Nikkam (ego) was the eldest brother in the family followed by his sister Savitra, then by another sister Hira and then by Dr.Yashwant (he has one son who is a Major in the Army).

Ego followed the footsteps of his father and joined the British Indian army during the Second World War in 1940. He also joined the Army as a sepoy and by the end of the war he rose up to become a Non commissioned officer (Subheddar Major). He continued his service in the now Indian Army and soon became an officer. He retired in 1976 and was the commanding officer of the Maratha light infantry battalion and is well known for this. His sister Savitra was married to the late Subedhar Major Anandrao Jadhav from Ninam (an adjacent village to Aphinsinge). Ego’s sister Hira was educated in a convent school in Gwalior and
was married to the late Colonel Jagannath Karande also from Apshinge. Ego’s youngest brother became a medical doctor by profession.

Col. Ramrao Nikkam’s (ego’s) wife came from Degaon (near Karad). She came from a respected lineage called Salunke. Her father was Subhedhar Major and a close friend of Ego’s father. After retirement in 1976, Col. Ramrao Nikam began to make inroads into local level politics. As a first step in 1978 with the help of retired defence personnel, he inaugurated the Maharashtra Ex-servicemen and Pensioner’s Association (the association has more than one lakh members and is a strong pressure lobby). The forum, apart from addressing pensions and efficient health services of ex-servicemen, also started the Sainik Co-operative bank in 1985 in Satara with initial deposits of Rs 7,72,000. Today, it has 15 branches spread over Satara, Pune, Sangli, Kolhapur, Solapur, Ahmednagar, Paigad, Sindhudurg and recently in Pune and has Rs 290.59 crore in deposits. While shareholding is limited to service personnel or veterans, civilians can keep accounts at the bank. So far about 12,000 ex-servicemen, widows and their dependents have been re-settled by the bank. Ego was nominated as a Member of the Legislative Council by the Congress Party in 1986 and later in 1996. The Maharashtra Ex-servicemen and Pensioner’s Association supported the Congress party in most of the state and local level elections. Now it favours the Nationalist Congress Party. Colonel Ramrao Nikkam was the president of this forum until his death in 2008. He was also the unchallenged chairman of the Sainik Sahakari Bank until his son Captain Udaji Nikkam took over from him in 1991.

Colonel Ramrao Nikkam (ego) has three sons. The eldest Brig. Mohan Nikkam, followed by Capt. Udaji and the youngest Col. Sayaji. Brigadier Mohan’s wife is from the Sawant lineage of Ratnagiri. Her father was a colonel in the Indian Army. They have two daughters. The eldest Panchami (who completed her Masters in Business Administration from Symbiosis) is married outside the Maratha caste. Hemant Tiwari is from Uttar Pradesh and is an alumnus of IIT Kanpur and IIM Ahmedabad. He is currently employed with Microsoft. Seema the younger sister is a software engineer and is working with Infosys.
Captain Udaji's wife is from Jadhav lineage from Sainik Takli in Kolhapur. Her father retired as a Lt.Col from the Army. Captain Udaji joined the Army as a short commission officer. After serving as a captain he quit the Army and took over the administrative charge of the Maharashtra Ex-servicemen and Pensioner's Association and the Sainik Sahkari Bank. In 2009 the bank was renamed after the late Col.R.D Nikkam (Colonel R D Nikam Sainik Sahakari Bank). Udaji has one daughter and one son. Both of them are studying civil engineering in Pune.

Presently Captain Udaji Nikkam is the chairman of the bank, his wife Pushpa Nikam is one of the directors Brig Mohan Nikam his elder brother is another director, Captain Gopal Gaikwad a relative of the Nikkam is also another director. Captain Udaji Nikkam is closely associated with Sharad Pawar and the Nationalist Congress Party.

Colonel Sayaji's wife is from Sugune lineage from Indore. Her father retired as a Major in the Army. They have a daughter and a son. The daughter is an airhostess in Singapore Airlines and recently was wed to Capt. Dharam Singh from Punjab. Her brother has joined the National Defence Academy.

Savitra (ego's sister) who was married to Subedhar Major Anandrao Jadhav has two sons and two daughters. The eldest is Subedhar Major Bhimrao, followed by Colonel Arun, followed by Vasanti and finally Vijaya.

Subhedar Major Bhimrao Jadhav's wife, Kamal belongs to the lineage called Ghadge (from a village called Kameri 5 km from Apshinge). Her father retired as a Havaldar from the Indian Army. Bhimrao has one son and daughter. The son Amar is a Havaldar in the Indian Army and his sister is married to Lt. Jaysingh More from Kolhapur (his father is a retired Major from the Army).

Colonel Arun Jadhav's wife is from the Thorat family from Nashik. Her father was a Major in the Army. They have two sons. One of them is a Lt. in the Airforce and the other is in the National defence Academy.
Vasanti (Bhimrao’s and Arun’s sister) is married to Deputy Superintendent of Police of the Central Reserve Police Force Shankar Pawar from Apshinge. Shankar’s father was a Subedar Major in the Army. They have two daughters. Varsha is married to Capt. Niraj Pol (whose father was a retired Lt.Colonel in the Army). Deepa is an MBBS and is yet to get married.

Vijaya the youngest of the Jadhav family is married to Subedar Major Ranajit Bhosale from Rahimatpur, 30 km south of Satara. His father retired as a Captain from the Indian Army. They have two unmarried sons who are in their early teens. Ego’s younger sister Hira who was married to Colonel Jaggannath Karande.

I had the opportunity to interview Colonel Ramrao Nikkam (ego) in 2007-08.

Researcher: Can you tell me something about your family...about why your father joined the Army...how difficult was it to enroll...why did you join the Army...

Respondent: My forefathers were not very rich...We had this plot of ancestral agricultural land which was getting smaller and smaller as the family grew. The land here as you must have seen is not so fertile as to sustain so many people. My father joined the Army in 1914 when the British were scouting for people to join. The recruitment center was then at Belgaum. If you look at the military recruitment hand book...

Researcher: By Major Betham...yes I have a copy...

Respondent: You must have noted that they wanted assal ‘Marathas’ only in those days. It was not very difficult to enroll in the Army then. But if you had family members and relatives already serving then it became much easier as one could legitimately claim to be a Maratha. It was only in the 1920’s and 1930’s that any ‘Maratha’ could join the Army. My father literate but not highly educated. He had passed his 7th standard. In those days joining the military or the police was the only option for ‘Marathas’ as they were not highly educated. Army life also meant...
that one could pursue one’s ancestral occupation. An Army man could easily find a bride as it was seen to be an honourable occupation.

Researcher: When did you join the Army...and why?

Respondent: It was natural for my father to urge me to join the Army as he thought it was one of the best institutions which trained you and disciplined you like the British people. One also got to see the outside world. After matriculation I joined the Bombay Sappers as a sepoy in 1939. During the height of the war I served in Burma against the invading Japanese army. I continued in the Army and rose to the position of a 2nd Lt. in the Indian Army. I was then shifted to the Maratha light infantry battalion which I commanded before I retired.

Researcher: Did you have other options than joining the Army?

Respondent: No. It was difficult getting employed and especially when the payment was good and one also had the benefit of pension. My father used to get Rs. 90 as pension. That was a big amount. In that he could educate my younger sister in a good school at Ajmer and my brother could pursue his MBBS from Bombay. Of course I was also contributing then.

Researcher: Your sons are also in the Army...

Respondent: Yes all three of them. And they have begun their careers as officers. All three of them studied at the King George memorial school at Belgaum.

I was also able to interview some contemporaries of Col. Ramrao Nikkam in Apshinge and Sainik Takli (Kolhapur, which is similarly famous as a village from which many individuals have joined the military). I observed that it was during the early 20th century when the Martial race concept became popular and the military market expanded that many Marathas like ego’s father enrolled for Army service. There was hardly anything to fall back on in those days. Moreover serving in the Military was seen as something prestigious. Firstly it legitimated the claim of the family being ‘Maratha’ as per the martial race concept and
secondly it also meant that one could help in recruiting a relative as a bonafide ‘Maratha’. In Bourdieu’s terms one could use one’s embedded cultural capital i.e. of being a ‘Maratha’ with ‘Maratha’ ethos and cultural traits to join the Army which in turn increased one’s social capital and one’s symbolic capital. The military naukari also provided the required economic capital to run the family.

On enquiring what benefits the third generation accrued by joining the military, I was informed that it was not only about benefit but the way of life.

Researcher: Could you elaborate on the way of life...

Respondent (Brig. Mohan Nikkam): When one grows up in a family that has many of its members in the Army and especially when one’s own father or brother is in the army, it becomes part of you. You are disciplined and trained in a certain manner. You begin to like the military life because it has many benefits for the families of the serving officers. You get to see many places, make many friends, get other benefits such as free medical care, rationing of food, rebates in school fees etc. But most importantly as an institution one has access to a large number of amenities which is not possible in civil employment. An individual develops a taste for this kind of adventurous life and well respected profession. Donning the uniform itself is so self satisfying...Also one moves beyond petty issues such as caste, region and language.

Researcher: But even the school in which you studied made you want to join the Army...?

Respondent: Yes of course. Many of the students from King George memorial school join the Army. The whole ambience is geared to make you like an officer. One learns the ways of being a gentleman, right from how to eat with a spoon and fork to dressing to behaving in chivalrous ways.

Just like the Nikkam family, the Karande family which is related through martial alliance to them has a similar story. Karande lineage is also based in Apshinge. Colonel Jagannath Karandes’ father was also in the British Indian Army and was
a close friend of Col. Ramrao Nikkam’s father. Col Ramrao Nikkam’s youngest sister is Colonel Jagannath Karande’s wife. Colonel Jagannath Karande has two sons Lt.Col Sunil Karande whose wife is from the Desale-Patil family (a wealthy family) in Kolhapur. Her father is civil engineer and has a private business. The other son Lt.Col. Vikram Karande’s wife Aruna comes from the Jadhav family from Pune whose father is a retired Major in the Army. Both sons were educated in King George memorial school in Belgaum.

Colonel Jagannath Karande had an elder brother (elder to him by 15 years) who joined the British Indian Army and retired as a Captain from the Indian Army. He has two sons and two daughters. The eldest is Rukmini who is married to the Colonel Hemant Nimbalkar from Kolhapur, the second is Major General Vishwasrao Karande followed by Colonel Subhashrao followed by Mangala given in marriage to Brig. Pawar of Belgaum.

Colonel Jagannath and his nephews Major General Vishwasrao, Colonel Subhashrao studied in an elite institution Ajmer King George Royal Indian Military College at Ajmer. Col. Hemant Nimbalkar and Brig. Pawar (bothers in law of Major General Vishwasrao Karande) also alumnus of this institution.

Major General Vishwasrao has one son, Colonel Jayesh and a daughter Sanjana (married to Brig. Dhananjay Chougale from Kolhapur. Colonel Jayesh studied in King George memorial school in Belgaum and Sanjana did her schooling from Gwalior public school in Gwalior. Sanjana went on to do her MBBS from Bombay. She practices even today.

Colonel Subhashrao’s wife comes from the well known Naik-Nimbalkars of Phaltan. Her father was an officer in the Indian revenue services. They have two sons. Lt. Colonel Abhijeet and Major Vikrant. Lt. Col. Abhijeet’s wife is the daughter of Brig. Arun Ghule from Nashik and Major Vikrant’s wife comes from Mohite family in Pune, her father is a retired colonel in the Army.
From discussions with other serving and retired military personnel and their family members I discerned certain consistencies. The first was that children of military officers always gave their daughters to officers. The second conclusion was that officers sons consistently became officers. Whereas those who remained in the category of non commissioned officers (or below officers rank) sometimes were able to give their daughters to officers but could not receive an officers daughter. Third, all officers sons were educated in reputed military schools which the Non commissioned officers children could not avail. Fourth, the kind of grooming that took place in the family of an officer was distinctly different from that of the Non commissioned officers' families. Fifth, all the marital alliances of non commissioned officers children were limited spatially i.e. most of the alliances were restricted to adjoining villages of Apshinge, whereas the officers children could find partners across Maharashtra and also outside of Maharashtra. Sixth, marriage within the caste was not a major concern for children of officers, but which was for children of the non commissioned officers. Class became more important in certain instances rather than caste. Additionally the kind of cultural capital required to become an officer, like fluency in English, mannerisms, body dispositions, decorum, chivalry among others is lacking in the children of non commissioned officers. This is learnt through the process of internalization through the habitus- which Bourdieu (1990) defines as cultural capital in its embodied form.

Most of the properties of cultural capital can be deduced from the fact that, in its fundamental state, it is linked to the body and presupposes embodiment. The accumulation of cultural capital in the embodied stat implies a labor of inculcation and assimilation, costs time, time which must be invested personally by the investor. Because the social conditions of its transmission and acquisition are more disguised than those of economic capital, it is predisposed to function as symbolic capital, i.e., to be unrecognized as capital and recognized as legitimate competence, as authority exerting an effect of misrecognition. Differences in the
cultural capital possessed by the family imply differences first in the age at which the work of transmission and accumulation begins. (Bourdieu, 1986:48)

The officer’s sons are enrolled in schools which groom them with the requisite cultural capital. This is also in its embodied form. It is incorporated in the body. But it also provides them with cultural capital in its institutionalized form i.e. the institution of which they are alumni and which is held in great esteem in the field of the military officer recruitment enables the officers’ children to ‘naturally’ become officers whereas it takes a lot more effort for the children of the non-commissioned officers to rise to the ranks of officers.

The case of ‘Sainik’ Takli

Sainik Takli is a village located 20 kilometers south of Kolhapur and is well known as a village that has at least one member of each family in the military/paramilitary services. It has a total population of 4190 as per the census of 2001 comprising of 739 households. The major Maratha lineages here are the Jadhav (with over 33 households), Nimbalkars (21 households), Ghadge (15 households), Chougale (12 households) and others such as Chavan, Pawar, More, Pol among others have 4 to 5 households. The scheduled caste population comprises 17% of the total population and the Scheduled tribes 5%. The other castes range from 3 to 5%. The land here is fertile and is canal irrigated. This village is also similar to ‘Military’ Apshinge in that most of the families are affiliated amongst each other and also have a similar military background.

In this case study I examine only one branch of the lineage of Jadhav (Major Shantaram Jadhav). Major Shantaram Jadhav (ego) had three sons and one daughter. The eldest daughter Saraswati was married to Major Shivaji Nikkam from Satara. The eldest son, Brig. Maruti Jadhav’s wife is from the Zende family of Karad. The second son Major Ramchandra’s wife is the daughter of Captain (in the navy) Gaikwad from Kolhapur and the third son Colonel Krishna’s wife is the
daughter of Major Thorat from Kolhapur. Major Shantaram Jadhav joined the Indian Army in 1952 and continued his service as an officer in the Indian Army. He retired in 1984. Major Shantaram’s father Shamrao was also in the British Indian army and retired as an honorary captain in the Indian Army. Major Shataram Jadhav’s schooling was done at the King George Royal Indian Military College at Ajmer. All the three sons were educated in King George memorial school in Belgaum.

I was able to interview Major Shantaram Jadhav on his family history.

Researcher: Why do so many youth from your village join the military...as your lands are well irrigated and have good soil?

Respondent: An army man is highly respected in this part of the district. Military service is seen not as an alternative livelihood but rather a manly profession.

Researcher: Tell me something about your father joining the Army

Respondent: You see, Kolhapur was a princely state before its merger into the Indian state. It is here that the battle against Brahminism was most strong. Shahu Maharaj and other Maratha leaders urged Maratha youth to join the Army and paramilitary forces as it was one way of regaining our lost pride...It was in this context that not only my father but his two brothers, his cousins and many Maratha youth from Takli joined the Army.

Researcher: So it was not the pressure on land that compelled them to join...

Respondent: No. Kolhapur was a favourite district of the British to enroll Marathas. Kolhapur has a history of youths serving in the army, be it the Maratha army or the British Army. It gave sense of pride to be in the army. Even now we urge our children and youth to join the military.

Researcher: Since your father was in the army, did that help you when you enrolled in the Army.
Respondent: Sure. There were many advantages, but the most important one was that I got to study at the Royal Indian Military College at Ajmer on a scholarship as my father was a defence personnel. The other advantage was that I knew what Army life was all about that I learnt from my father. The military college groomed me well to qualify for the entrance examination for the officer rank. In the military college we are called as gentlemen cadets and learn everything from parade to decorum to manners.

Researcher: Did the fact that your father was in the Army help you in your recruitment?

Respondent: Yes. It definitely did.

Researcher: Does it matter when in the interview boards?

Respondent: Well you get an edge over other candidates because you are trained to be bold, upright, disciplined, well mannered...

Researcher: Did joining the Army as an officer increase your matrimonial weightage...you know in terms of better prospects.

Respondent: Yes sure it did. I was able to get a girl from a good family and especially from a family with a military background. It helps because such girls are also brought up in a manner such that they can adjust to any situation. They are well mannered and homely. We prefer getting our sons and daughters getting married into families that have a military background. The Army provides for so much of social life but also a disciplined life which is absent in the civil life. Also it is a tradition in our family and lineage to join the military. We are good leaders of soldiers.

Researcher: Does being a ‘Maratha’ then really mean that one should pursue a career in the military?
Respondent: ‘Marathas’ were warriors and belong to the kshtriya caste. It is not a compulsion that being a ‘Maratha’ one must join the military. But which ever profession they take up they must lead.

Researcher: can you elaborate ...

Respondent: Most of the politicians belong to the ‘Maratha’ caste, most ‘Marathas’ are found in the military and paramilitary occupations and even police. The reason is because ‘Marathas’ at least in Takli are groomed to take up roles as leaders in which ever field they choose.

Researcher: So why don’t the youth from Sainik Takli enter the political arena...

Respondent: We have a tradition here that we must enroll atleast one son in the military service. The other sons can carry on any occupation they wish to. But most of us prefer that our sons join the military.

I interviewed many more retired and serving military personnel in Sainik Takli and was surprised that none of them spoke of a compulsion to join the military. Their families were well off and they joined because it was ‘almost the right thing to do’. Some of the excerpts from various respondents from Takli are given below.

Researcher: Why do you wish to join the military?

Respondent (youth): I like the army life. As my grandfather, father, uncles and cousins are in the army I know that joining the army would be a hassle less profession.

Researcher: All of them are officers...

Respondent: yes.

Researcher: You may get a better remuneration in other professions...

Respondent: I don’t want higher income. We already have ancestral property.
Researcher: So what else do you get serving in the military?

Respondent: The life in the army is challenging, disciplined and I get a chance to serve the nation.

Researcher: Why did you choose to join the army?

Respondent (young cadet in the National Defence Academy and a relative): I wanted to join the army since I was a child. Many of my relatives are in the army. It is a respectful profession. It is a dignified and a manly profession. It is part of our culture to join the military.

Researcher: Where did you do your schooling from?

Respondent: I was at Sainik School Satara.

Researcher: Did the training there help you for your selection?

Respondent: very much.

Researcher: How?

Respondent: We are trained from the seventh standard onwards to improve our skills of solving entrance examination papers. We also have special training for quantitative mathematics and abstract reasoning other than general knowledge. We also have extra curricular activities like the National Cadet Corps, Trekking, map reading, sand models etc.

Researcher: Did your military family background help you?

Respondent: Yes it did. From a very young age I learnt manners, discipline and other good habits such as reading, socializing, exercising etc.

I interviewed a few non commissioned Maratha personnel.

Researcher: Did the fact that you belong to Sainik Takli make any difference for the success of your selection?
Researcher: yes, it did. As the recruitment centre for the Maratha regiment is at Belgaum most recruiters know the history of our village.

Researcher: Why did you not join as an officer?

Respondent: I do not have the required skills to pass the exam.

Researcher: like?

Respondent: fluency in English, Mathematical ability, general knowledge etc.

Researcher: Your schooling was in Marathi medium?

Respondent: yes.

Researcher: But you can join a better profession which does not require these skills

Respondent: I have grown to like this profession as I know what it requires. I don’t know any other occupation where my skill will be valued. Also by serving in the military an individual is respected. It is also a government job with other benefits.

From more interviews I realized that joining the military had become part of the habitus. Thus the proclivities of following the same path as their father or brother had become natural for them. Besides, their habitus and the social situations did not push them walk on uncharted territory so to speak. They are trained from childhood to take up these positions. Their internalized skills match the requisite capital that the military field requires. In thinking that by joining the military they are keeping to their tradition is really as Bourdieu (1990) states their misrecognition.

Social actors can pursue the values dictated by their economic and political interests by making such pursuit appear to be in accordance with cultural rules that can be invoked as the validation of practice. What Bourdieu labels second-order or officializing strategies are simply these ways of making behaviour appear
to be motivated by pure, disinterested respect for the rule by “ostentatiously
honouring the values the group honours”. (Bourdieu, 1990; 22)

This ability to officialize one’s practice by second-order strategies lends a certain
paradoxical quality to the nature of misrecognition. In Bourdieu’s usage,
misrecognition connotes not a simple lack of awareness of the objective reality of
a particular cultural practice but a strategic misconstrual of practice as other than
what theoretical knowledge makes it out to be.

Thus in this case being a ‘Maratha’ meant one should join the military to follow
his predecessors and relatives in order to fulfill the role of a kshtriya. The
practical logic is really getting employed in a profession for which one’s habitus
is trained but the officializing strategy is one of believing that one is doing the
preordained.

This process is quite evident in Bourdieu’s analysis of the sense of honour. His
first task is to demonstrate that honourable conduct cannot adequately be
explained by deriving it from a set of rules constituting a code of honour.

“...the point of honour is a permanent disposition, embedded in the agents’
very bodies in the form of mental dispositions, schemes of perception and
thought, extremely general in their application, such as those which divide
up the world in accordance with the oppositions between the male and the
female, east and west, future and past, top and bottom, right and left, etc.
and also, at a deeper level, in the form of bodily postures and stances,
ways of standing, sitting, looking, speaking, or walking. What is called the
sense of honour is nothing other than the cultivated disposition, inscribed
in the body schema and in the schemes of thought, which enables each
agent to engender all the practices consistent with the logic of challenge
and riposte, and only such practices, by means of countless inventions,
which the stereotyped unfolding of a ritual would in no way demand”.
(Bourdieu, 1990;15)
Conclusion

In this chapter using Bourdieu’s (1977, 1990) theorization I argue that kinship and kingship (the strategy to claim a martial heritage) can be construed as strategies rather than rules. These strategies enable individuals and social groups to accumulate various species of capital that are then fungible into economic and political capital. The actors are seen as extremely adept players, who know the fields well and are aware of how to accrue capitals and resources by employing various strategies. However, the actors usually mask their actions in the garb of official rules so as to give an impression that they are following the prescriptions of the community/society. The actors are also in a doxic condition where they have naturalized certain ideas as rules. But in reality when one explores how social interaction takes place it becomes evident that actors are strategizing to accrue and accumulate more of the various species of capital. The four case studies highlight the doxic nature of the actor’s habitus and also the strategies that they employ. However, it is pertinent to note that these strategies should not be seen as rational choice explanations. These are long-term strategies which at times may seem illogical but in fact have a sound reason.