CHAPTER V

KINSHIP ORGANISATION

I

The basic kinship group among the Mers is the elementary family. A Mers father remains as the head of the family till the end of his life with his wife or wives and child or children living together. It is likely that after the demise of the head of the family the authority of the family may rest either with the mother or with the eldest son. The family expands when the sons marry. As a matter of fact, the transition from an elementary family to a joint family is a recurring process and so is the process of the splitting up of joint families into various elementary families. The elementary as well as joint family grouping entails manifold rights and obligations; e.g., the mutual dependence of a husband and wife in economic pursuit, religious observances and gratification.
of sex and the rearing of children. The parents on the other hand expect good behaviour, obedience, care and protection in old age from their grown up children, especially, the sons.

Other types of domestic groups that are found among the Mers are those of childless couple, a mother or a father with a widow or a divorced daughter with children, or a deceased son's wife and children, or a couple having adopted a son from the agnatic group. These types of domestic groups are recognized as the integral parts of the Mer society, because they are interconnected by the network of kinship with many other joint or elementary families. Whenever there is a voluntary distribution of gifts, i.e., lam, each of these types of domestic groups is entitled to get the same. In marriage feasts they receive invitations independently. In all the events of community life these domestic groups are bound up with mutual give and take relationships with other kin groups.

A Mer word for an elementary or a joint family is katam (corrupt form of kutumba in Gujarati), all the members of which are called katami, adjectival form of katam. The term katami is also applicable to other agnatic relatives and it likewise includes, except father's sister's daughter, female ascendants and collaterals, e.g., father's mother, father's sister, one's own sisters, half or uterine, father's brother's daughter and others of the same category. All siblings in a katam are recognized by a collective term
bhāndaraṇā which means brothers and sisters. Obviously, it is incestuous to have sex relations with the persons of this category.

The term bhāndaraṇā is equivalent to 'sibling' in English and it generally refers to the children of a man and woman, of the family of one's mother's sister and father's brother.

It has been made clear earlier that the Mers are divided into fourteen exogamous lineages known as shākh. Each lineage or shākh represents, according to their traditional way of thinking, a family, i.e., katam. It is in the wider sense that a lineage is looked upon as a big family. The members of each of these lineages are looked upon as sibling; and in this context members of a lineage consider each other as brothers and sisters, i.e., bhāndaraṇā. Those who do not belong to one's lineage are known as nātarīā (plu. of nātario). Nātarīā means those who may be married; the word is derived from nātarun which literally means remarriage; but the Mers use this word not only for remarriage but for marriage and betrothal too. A special word for remarriage is ghargharaṇu and a word for betrothal is sagāi. The word sagāi primarily refers to affinity and secondarily to consanguinity. The term sagānvahālān (sagān means the subjects of sagai and vahālān means dear ones) is also current among the Mers. The term sagān-vahālān includes both kin and affine and is a term
of wider connotation than katami. At the most a man can call all the members of his lineage katami but he can use sasan-vahalan to denote any person related to him by affinity or consanguinity. There is one more term sambandhi of such a wider connotation that it includes people of any caste, tribe, region or country, and as such it is applied to any individual known to the people. The use of this word is unanimously accepted, almost in the whole of Gujarat.

II

Mer kinship terminology is classificatory. The singular as well as collective terms are defined by generation and sex. The charts 'C' and 'D' ('C' having a man and 'B' having a woman as egoes respectively) are given in genealogical form. They, therefore, explain the nature of the kinship terminology of the Mers. Most of the terms given in these charts are those of reference. They are also commonly used by the people of Gujarat. However, it should be made clear that the terms for grand-parents and grand-children given in the charts are Mer terms. The charts 'C' and 'D' reveal that the categories of primary relatives, i.e., the members of an elementary family, like father, mother, brother, sister, husband, wife, son and daughter are denoted (among the Mers as well as other Gujaratis) by as many different terms as there are categories. Unlike other Gujaratis, the Mers use
the same kinship terms for grandparents and the great-grandparents on the father’s as well as the mother’s side. Similarly, the terms for the great-grand-children of a son and those of a daughter are the same. It should be noted that the terms for grandparents and grand-children given in the charts ‘C’ and ‘D’ are exclusively Mer terms. The terms \textit{potaro} and \textit{potari} are corrupt forms of \textit{pautra} and \textit{pautri} in Sanskrit.

To distinguish elder and younger relatives the Mers use the same prefixes as the others do. The prefixes \textit{moto} or \textit{moti} (elder man or woman), \textit{nano} or \textit{nani} (younger man or woman) are attached to the kinship terms for primary relatives of either sex: e.g., \textit{moto bhāi}, \textit{nāni bēn}, \textit{moto kāko}, \textit{nāni kāki}, \textit{moto āto}, \textit{moti āli} and so on. There are also some additional terms for some of the secondary relatives, e.g., the father’s brother (kāko) is known as \textit{moto bāp}, the father’s brother’s wife is known as \textit{kāki} or \textit{moti mān} (or mā).

There are separate terms of reference, for a husband and wife, e.g., \textit{gharvāro} and \textit{gharvāri} or \textit{dhani} and \textit{dhanīnī}. However, in practice, when they want to refer to or address each other, they do not make use of the terms of reference but resort to teknonymy.

Linked terms, such as \textit{sāsu-sasaro} (mother-in-law and father-in-law), \textit{vēvāl-vēvān} (ones son’s or daughter’s father-in-law and mother-in-law), \textit{sālo-banēvi} (wife’s brother
and sister's husband), nañand-bhojāi (husband's sister and brother's wife), der-derānī (husband's younger brother and his wife), jēth-jēthānī (husband's elder brother and his wife), etc., are the terms of reference used for various kinsmen. These terms are also current among many other castes of Gujarat. However, it is important to note here that the Mers use other significant terms of address for all the prevalent linked terms. The comparison of the charts 'C' and 'D' with 'E' and 'F' shall make this point much more clear. The following terms, for example, are used both for reference as well as for address: e.g., fuo (father's sister's husband), māmi (mother's brother's wife), māso (mother's sister's husband) and kāki (father's brother's wife). (see charts 'C' and 'D'). But unlike other Gujaratis, Mers prefer to use separate terms of address for the above-mentioned relatives. For instance, they use the term māmo for fuo, fui for māmi, kāko for māso and mosi for kāki (see charts 'E' and 'F').

The tendency to use collective terms is observable in the case of the children of a man's sister and brother, and also in the case of his father's brother's and father's sister's children. The children of a man's sister are grouped as bhāṇejadān (sing. of bhāṇeji); they are the potential spouses of the children of the man concerned. The children of a man's brother are grouped as bhātriān (feminine, bhātriī and masculine, bhātriīo); they are the classificatory brothers and sisters of the children of the man concerned. Father's
brother's children are categorically termed as bhândarnān; they are one's classificatory brothers and sisters. Father's sister's children are likewise termed nātariān; they are one's potential spouses and are therefore at least accessible to the licence of speech (see charts 'G' and 'H').

The charts 'C' and 'D' indicate that neither of the egos concerned is united by cross-cousin marriage, while the charts 'E' and 'F' indicate that either of the egos concerned is united by cross-cousin marriage. So, a careful comparison of the charts 'C' and 'D' with the charts 'E' and 'F' (representative of the Mers) points out how the kinship terminology remains consistent with the custom of bilateral cross-cousin marriage.

The following points throw specific light on the fact that the Mer kinship terminology is in harmony with the form of bilateral cross-cousin marriage and also with the institutions of sister-exchange, junior levirate and junior sororate.

(A) The instances in harmony with bilateral cross-cousin marriage are:

1. Fui: It is applied to one's father's sister and to one's spouse's mother.

2. Māmo: It is applied to one's father's sister's husband and to one's spouse's father.

3. Collective term nātariān: It is applied to one's father's sister's children, to one's wife or
husband, to wife's sister, or husband's brother and to brother's wife or sister's husband.

(4) Collective term bhândarā: It is applied to one's sister's children and to son's wife or to daughter's husband.

(5) Again fui is applied to one's mother's brother's wife and to wife's mother.

(6) Again māmo is applied to one's mother's brother and to husband's father.

(7) Collective term nātariṇā: It is applied to one's mother's brother's children, to one's wife or husband, to wife's sister or husband's brother's wife or sister's husband.

(8) Collective term bhāndarā: It is applied to one's wife's brother's children and to son's wife or to daughter's husband.

(B) The instances in harmony with the institution of sister-exchange are:

(1) Fui: It is applied to one's mother's brother's wife and to father's sister.

(2) Māmo: It is applied to one's mother's brother and to the father's sister's husband.

(3) Ben: It is applied to one's sister and to wife's brother's wife.
(4) Bhāl: It is applied to one's brother and to wife's sister's husband.

(5) Collective term bhānejādan: It is applied to one's wife's brother's children and to sister's children.

(C) The instances in harmony with junior levirate are:

(1) Mān: It is applicable to sister and to father's elder brother's wife (also called moti mān).

(2) Bēn: It is applicable to sister and to the father's brother's daughter.

(3) Collective term nātariān: It is applicable to both one's wife and to brother's wife.

(4) Dikari: It is applicable to one's daughter and to one's brother's daughter.

(D) The instances in harmony with junior sororate are:

(1) Mosi: It is applicable to one's step-mother and to mother's sister.

(2) Kāko: It is applicable to one's step-father and to father's brother.

(3) Bēn: It is applicable to one's sister and to one's mother's sister's daughter.

(4) Collective term nātariān: It is applicable to one's wife and to wife's sister.
(5) **Dikari:** It is applicable to one's daughter and to wife's younger sister's daughter.

III

The range of application of kinship does not end so abruptly as shown in the charts 'C' and 'D' which end with the great-grand-parents and the great-grand-children of ego. The classificatory terms which a Mer uses for his ascendants and descendants for a limited number of generations, can be virtually used in a descriptive way up to the Nth generation. Moreover, a Mer may use these terms for the members of his lineage related or unrelated for other affinal lineage. A man looks upon the members of any other lineage, excepting his own, as affines (nāṭariṇān) even though he cannot trace any relationship with them. For instance, a Mer man or a woman calls all the elderly members of his or her mother's brother's village as māmā. I have heard people addressing the Brahmins and Lohanas of their māmā's village as māmā. Also, if a Brahmin is of a group other than to which the family priest belongs, a Mer will call him as māmā. Because, a family priest is also looked upon as a brother and any Brahmin who belongs to some other group than that of his family priest, is looked upon as one of the affines; to his elder affinal person he calls māmā (sin.). So he calls māmā to the Brahmin of a different group than to which his family priest belongs. This is how each
kinship term is widely utilised outside, including the tribal limits; it lessens the social distance between the Mers and the people of other castes. In short, the translation of social bonds into kinship terms is a widespread feature of societies. This is one society where kinship plays a pivotal role in social relations; kinship bonds are thus used as a means for the expansion of social relations.

The informants told me that the founders of the village named Khambhodar were three Mer brothers of Sisodia lineage. These founding ancestors invited some families of craftsmen and traders to come from other villages and told them to live with them on the terms of brotherhood. This relationship between the Mers and others is continued even to-day. So the youngsters of the Mers address the elders of other castes as paternal uncle, or kākā and recognise their equals as brothers and sisters. It is interesting to note here that the Untouchables of this village address all its members as fathers (bāp) or as paternal uncles (kākā), because the Untouchables consider themselves to be as good as children of the high-caste people.

The Mer kinship system can also be related to the stratification of generation in the society. Every individual attains three positions in life; viz., child-hood, adult-hood and old age. When a man passes from the first position to the second or from the second to the third one, his value and status changes accordingly. Obviously, the behaviour and
relations with the people of one's own generation remain the same, which are that of equality in all respects. The first position starts from childhood and ends in adolescence, the second from adolescence to the middle age and the third one terminates in old age. The individuals of the first position address those of the second as father (bāp), uncle (kākā or māma), and aunt, (fui or mosi). The people of the second position come in the centre. They, therefore, address those above them as grand-father (āto), and grand-mother (āji) and those below them as son and daughter (dikaro-dikari), nephew and niece (bhānēj) and paternal cousins (bhatriji and bhatriji).

IV

A Her village is (as it is told earlier) a stronghold of a major segment or sometimes of a minor segment of a lineage. So the relationship of the individuals in a village is as intimate as that in a family. It is interesting to note how people behave with one another in everyday life. In the village Khambhodar (inhabited by a segment of Sisodia Hers) some persons are known as ātā, i.e., grand-father and others as kākā, i.e., uncles, irrespective of their age differences and the rest are known as brothers. Hers give greater weight to generation than age; i.e., a man may call a small boy kaka if he belongs to his (man's) uncle's generation. But sometimes this results in an absurd position, and so the
Let us now take a hypothetical instance. There are two brothers in a family and both of them marry at one and the same time. The younger brother gets a boy at the end of a year, while the elder brother either has no issue or has only a daughter. Now, after twenty years, the elder one gets a boy, and the son of the younger brother who is married by now, also gets a boy. Both these boys are almost equal in age, but the son of the elder brother, eventhough he is equal in age, is addressed as kāko (uncle) by the grand-son of the younger brother. In passing away of the time, the paternal cousin, i.e., the grand-son of the younger brother may get a son, fifteen years later; and the son of the elder brother may also get a son. Here comes the difference in age, almost of thirty five years, between the great-grand-son of the younger brother and the grand-son of the elder brother. Thus, the paternal cousin becomes elder in age but younger in generation; he is of a lower position than his paternal uncle who is very young in age, almost a minor, and perhaps, equal to his own son. When the paternal uncle realizes that he is just a boy and his paternal cousin is as good as his father in age, he forgets his greatness in generation and calls him brother instead of calling him son. Similarly due to differentiation in age grade and generation grade a young man becomes grand-father aito of an old man; but when he realizes the fact, he harmonises or resolves the situation by using the kinship
COMMON TYPES OF UNIONS
(FOUND IN A MER EXTENDED FAMILY)

Key: Men ○ Women □

Mandates × Recruiters ×

Observation: The scale given at the extreme left indicates the generation to which individuals at that level belong.

Numbers against names indicate age. There may be a wide gap in years between people belonging to the same generation.
terms which maintain a respectable behavior towards the old man concerned. The genealogical chart 'J' of a Mer lineage of Khambodar shows that age grade and generation grade vary a great deal in the cases of the children of the latest generation.

It is evident that the form of marriage and kinship terminology of the Mers represent a consistent picture of the kinship system. There is a well-known proverb among the Mers, viz., ful pāchhad bhatrij, which means that paternal cousin follows maternal aunt. This explains how it is obligatory on the part of a man to give his daughter to his sister's son, and it also implies that he must prefer his sister's daughter for his own son; because it is likely that he might have married his sister's husband's sister. It is prevalent to take sister's daughter for one's son, but this is considered an exchange or sētun as it is called by the Mers. Thus, immigration of a girl to father's sister's son is looked upon as a natural course but the immigration of a girl to mother's brother's son is equivalent to compensation. It cannot be said here whether the form of marriage regulates kinship system or the kinship system is responsible for such a form of marriage; but it is true that they go hand in hand among the Mers (see chart 'I').
It should be noted that it is obligatory but not compulsory to marry one's cross-cousins either on mother's side or on father's side. In practice all the sons and the daughters of a family cannot have excess to cross-cousins, because it is uncertain to have the existence of suitable or marriageable (aged) spouses in this short ranged relationship. The return of a creeper depends upon its proper growth. So, when a maternal uncle and paternal aunt are devoid of children, a person is compelled to take freedom from the obligation of marrying the cross-cousins. As a result, a man or a woman seeks spouses from the families distantly related by affinity or from those not related at all.

Thus, a bride and a groom may or may not be cross-cousins, but they are thought of as such, and in similar context are recognized the agnatic and cognatic relatives of both respectively. In the charts 'E' and 'F' it is not certain that the ego's spouse is a cross-cousin; however, as it is indicated in the respective charts, the ascendants and the descendents of the ego concerned are set up in the framework of kinship terms which concur with those of the married cross-cousins.

VI

Before I proceed to give analysis of the functioning of kinship relations I should like to clarify the following points.
A man's mother and father-in-law (vēvān-veval) or his father and mother-in-law (vēvāi-vevan) consider each other as siblings eventhough they each belong to affinal lineages of the other. Thus a man or a woman of one lineage will call a man or a woman of another lineage as brother and sister (as the case may be) provided their respective children are related by matrimonial bonds, but if they are not so related, and if they are of equal age, they may consider each other as potential spouses. A person may call the spouse's paternal uncle memo instead of kāko, paternal cousins bhānijedān instead of bhatrijan, paternal aunt mosi instead of fui. The charts 'E' and 'F' given earlier, give a clear understanding of the pairs of potential spouses as coming under the principle of cross-cousin marriage and the institutions of sister-exchange, junior levirate (deravatun) and junior sororate.

The following information conveyed by my Mer friend Ebho will give an actual idea of the functioning of the kinship system. The chart given below will be helpful in this matter.
Ebho speaking:

' I am the mother's brother (māmā) of Devo (Odedara), so Devo's wife Kari looks upon me as her paternal uncle (kāko). I myself, as one and the same person cannot become mother's brother (māmā) to both a husband and a wife; otherwise they may be considered to be classificatory brother and sister. My normal role is that of a father-in-law to my cross-nephew (sister's son). So my cross-nephew's wife becomes my daughter whether she is so in fact or not. This is a 'legal fiction'. This is also due to looking upon some lineages as affinal (i.e., nātariā) and others as not (in the present context).'

' Though Kari's father Vejo is of a different (affinal) lineage (namely Jadeja) from mine (Sisodia) I have to consider him as my classificatory brother, because Kari is my sister's son's wife, and so no less than my own daughter. Had I an aged daughter, I would have married her to Devo in the place of Kari. If I were younger than Kari's father Vejo, she should have called me as Kāko and if elder as bhabho or moto-bāp.
Karim's father, my sister and I consider ourselves as siblings. Thus Devo and Kari are looked upon as sister's son and brother's daughter (māmā fuinā) respectively.  

'In the same context Viram's (Devo's father's) classificatory sister Puri (i.e., Devo's fui) is looked upon by Kari as her mother's sister (mosi); because in view of the relationship, Viram and (Kari's mother) Rupi (who belongs to Parmar lineage) are looked upon as brother and sister. So, Kari's mother and Viram and his classificatory sister Puri consider themselves as siblings. Also, Kari would have called my wife Puri as mosi instead of calling her as kāki or moti-mān, had Puri belonged to Parmar lineage.'

'As a matter of fact Vejo belongs to a different lineage, viz., Jadeja, and we (my sister and I) belong to Sisodia lineage, therefore my sister Vali could have been Vejo's potential spouse. But, because Vejo gave his daughter to Vali's son, he has no more remained an affine (or nataria); instead, he has provisionally become our classificatory brother and thus a unit of our kin group.'

'Moreover, my sister Vali's husband Viram belongs to Odedara lineage, my wife Puri belongs to Rajshakha lineage and Kari's mother Rupi belongs to Parmar lineage. Consequently, had the present relationship not taken place, Viram Odedara would have been the potential spouse of Rupi as well as Puri. But when Puri is married to me, i.e, to Viram's
son Devo's mother's brother (māmo) and Rupi is married to Viram's son Devo's father-in-law (māmo), Viram considers both these women as classificatory sisters."

Thus, when the persons of two or more affinal lineages come closer into affinal or kinship bonds (by marrying their children), the barrier of lineage distinction disappears, and it provisionally drags various affinal people into agnatic relationship.

The informant Ebho gives me further information: "People of my lineage will call my father-in-law as māmo (who may be called our mother's classificatory brother) in my presence, because my true māmo is also the māmo of any one of my lineage. But in my absence they may not call my father-in-law (not true māmo) māmo, because at this time they look upon him as an affine and therefore call him by his proper name. I shall generally call an older affine māmo, if male, and fui, if female, because such a man and a woman are considered my potential father-in-law and mother-in-law respectively. But if a person of an affinal (nātariā) lineage is of the same age as mine, I would call him simply as nātariā or affine, while one who is younger, I would call as bhānēj, i.e., sister's son or daughter as the case may be."
The sisters A and B descend from an Odedara father. A married Karsan of Rajshakha lineage and B married Ram of Sisodia lineage. In the second generation come Noghan and Veji, the son and daughter of Karsan and Ram respectively. Noghan and Veji may not marry because they are called mosini bhāndarana, i.e., maternal aunt's children. Even the son and daughter of Noghan and Veji respectively may not marry each other as they (Karo and Gheli) fall in the third generation. But the children of Karo and Gheli may marry without restrictions, because at this stage, i.e., at the fourth generation the earlier kinship relations are supposed to have come to an end. This four generation rule breaks the barrier created by the matrimonial alliance contracted by the people of the first generation. Besides, it should be noted that this barrier does not stop X and Y from marrying their children. In fact X and Y look upon each other as affines even though their respective brothers Karsan and Ram have become 'fictitious brothers'.

VII

The Mers generally believe that the custom of sororal union is ideal and practical in the case of a polygynous marriage. The sisters may be affectionate towards each others' children when they happen to marry one and the same person. Once when I was hearing a serious conversation
between two women, I noted a proverb which gave a contradictory statement to the above mentioned belief. The proverb says that the relationship of mother's sister (mosi) is only in words (mosini saga to kōvāni). When a woman dies leaving some children, people prefer to give a younger sister of the deceased woman to her husband. People commonly believe that the younger sister would look after the children of her elder sister with care and affection; but actually there are many examples to prove that mosi does not fulfil expectations regarding the rearing of her sister's children. A mother's sister, when she becomes a step-mother she belies the expectations of a mother. Any woman that a widower takes as wife or that a man marries for second time is called mosi by the children of the previous wife. Thus, the step-wives are considered to be sisters eventhough they belong to different lineages. A step-mother who is not a true mosi of the children is expected to be harsh but occasionally or usually she is not so.

The relation between a Mer woman and her husband's sisters is not one of conflict, because it is likely that she may have to take in future the daughter of her husband's sister for her son; or she may have to give her daughter to the son of the latter. The mutual interdependence of a woman and her husband's sister in this type of matrimonial expectations bring about a harmony between them. On the other hand, a woman may come in conflict with her husband's brother's
wife, because both these women become the members of a joint family where they have to establish their rights and perform numerous duties. So, if the wives of the brothers are not on good terms they may pursue their husbands to break away from the joint family. Besides, the conflicts between a woman and her mother-in-law may also prove harmful to the unity of a family. As a matter of fact a woman (daughter-in-law) may be the brother's daughter (bhatriji) of the mother-in-law and the relation of these should have been as close as that of a daughter and a mother. But in practical life a woman may not be married to her father's sister's son; consequently many points of disputes and quarrels arise between the individuals of these two categories. And, specially when a daughter-in-law comes from some other lineage than that of the mother-in-law, the latter picks up quarrels even from the most insignificant faults of the former. These conflicts are sometimes so severe that they may result into a premature partition of the would be joint family, and it is to avoid such conflicts that people prefer to marry the cross-cousins.

IX

The relationship of mother's brother and sister's son (māmo-bhānej) is very intimate and close among the Mers. People have sacrificed their lives in the cause of this relationship. The story of Natho Modho given in the next
paragraph will explain this better. Similarly, the bond of wife's brother and sister's husband (sālo-bānēvi) is also intimate; but it is not so strong as the bond of māmow-bhānēj. For instance, when a woman seeks divorce from her husband, the friendly behavioural pattern between her brother and her husband gets shattered. We cannot say for what reasons a husband and wife will seek divorce, but when they resort to it, the bonds of sālo-bānēvi also become loose. Thus the nature of the bonds of sālo-bānēvi is of flexible character; while that of māmow-bhānēj is much more strong.

The love for a sister's husband is due to the love that prevails between a brother and his sister. This is further strengthened by the fact that there is a likelihood of a man marrying her sister's husband's sister. Such a solidarity is liable to be breached when a man does not get on with his wife or when his sister does not get on with her husband.

The relationship of the husbands of two sisters respectively is also very intimate. The persons so related are looked upon as brothers; and a proverb says that sādhu bhānī sagāi sāchi, i.e., the bond of brothers-in-law is real, or, I should say, reliable. In spite of the fact that the brothers-in-law generally belong to different lineages they are helpful to each other in many respects.
Here I should like to refer to an institution called dhāl which refers to menial or monetary help that a Mer has to give and receive from the kin as well as the affines. Dhāl literally means shield and it is a kind of assistance given to one's kin or affine in the times of acute need. At the time of harvest and sowing a man offers his helping hand to his relatives and in the same way he expects the relatives concerned to help him in field labour, etc., whenever he is running short of hands. This expectation of return of help once rendered to a relative is called dhāl. Similarly, a person may give help in cash or kind to his relatives who have to return him these things at their convenience. This relationship of dhāl is most prevalent among the people of the same lineage and it is also prevalent between the pairs of relatives such as māmo-bhānei, sālo-bānevi and the sādhubhaīs mentioned above.

The following incident which took place in an agnatic lineage throws light on the relationship of a mother's brother and the sister's son. It illustrates the fact that a man is expected to avenge the death of a mother's brother.

Natho Modho was a well-known outlaw. He belonged to the Modhwadia segment of the Sisodia lineage. His outlawry was against the state of Navanagar (Jamnagar); but he took refuge in the territory of Porbandar state, his place of domicile. He lived in a cave called polo-pāno situated on the western side of the Barda Hills near the village called Khistri.
The then political agent of Saurashtra ordered the Rana Chief of Porbandar either to arrest him or to kill him.

On page 83 I have made it clear that the Munjo Patel of the village Khistri and Natho Modho of the village Modhwada belonged to Sisodia lineage. They became enemies because the associates of the outlaw transgressed the limits of the village Khistri. Munjo decided to kill Natho to avenge the insult of his village-men and also to help the Rana Chief of Porbandar on whom lay the responsibility of getting rid of the outlaw.

The point of interest, here, is this that when Natho was killed, his death was avenged by his sister's son Harbham who belonged to the Ratadia segment of the Keshware lineage. Harbham Ratadio (as he is known) waged a feud for several years against the Mers of the village Khistri and especially against the family of Munjo Patel. But when Harbham failed to kill any agnatic relative of Munjo he killed Munjo's sister's son Pabo. This happened because Pabo, as it was expected of him, was taking side of his mother's brother, namely Munjo. Thus Harbham got full satisfaction of his mother's brother's revenge by killing the son of Munjo's sister. This shows how a man prepares to sacrifice his life for mother's brother. And it may also be stated that a man may sacrifice his life for avenging the death of his sister's son. But as Munjo had already died a natural death before Pabo was killed, the feud came to an end.
I would now give another instance of blood-feud which shows that sometimes a great hostility prevails between a father's sister's husband and wife's brother's son. The hostility between these affines becomes intense specially when an agnatic relative of one is injured by the other. In such instances a person's behaviour is balanced by the strength of the ties that bind him to an affine and a kin respectively.

There was some hatred between E and his father's sister's husband D. The reason of the hatred is not known to me. Once when D tried to kill E, B interfered and stopped the blood-shed. After a long while it so happened that G, the son of D, kept the girl F of B, inspite of the latter's wish. As a matter of fact G and F are father's sister's son and mother's brother's daughter and so are potential spouses. But when B disliked this alliance, he began to threaten G to return his daughter; but the latter did not pay heed to B's threatening. Now, E was always seeking an opportunity to injure or kill D. So the above mentioned dispute gave him a venue to take revenge on D for the fault of the latter's son.
Therefore E contrived to kill D under the pretext of helping his paternal uncle B. Really speaking B never dreamt that his sister's husband D should be killed for the fault of his son. B became too wild at this and out of anger he ran after E to kill him and avenge his sister's husband's death. But E escaped as he was armed better.

Here we can see that B's role towards E and D was very reasonable and in conformity with the expectations of his kinship and affinal bonds, respectively. In brief he saved the life of his cousin E in the first clash with the latter and with D. At this time it was his duty to take the side of his nearest agnatic descendent, while in the next happening he ran to kill E because it was his duty to avenge the death of his sister's husband who was his very near affine. Thus, B's behaviour is balanced between an agnate and an affine. This incident also provides an exceptional case where the love and affection expected between a father's sister's husband (D) and wife's brother's son (E), is unduly lacking.

I discuss in this section an example of an unconventional type of leviratic union. This incident created an embracement for the members involved in it as to the proper use of kinship terms for one another. Junior levirate is
known as dērvatun among the Mers.

The brothers A, B, C and D were the members of a joint family, and the family was poor. This incident took place before a year when I was in the field.

When B died, he left a widow and four children behind him. The remaining brothers did not like that the widow should remarry an outsider, in which case the responsibility of looking after the deceased's children would lie on all of them jointly. The third brother was willing to marry the elder brother's widow in leviratic union. But he was already married at this time and besides he was not ready to have an additional wife because of his poverty. C was therefore seeking a reasonable ground to divorce his present wife with a view to remarry the widow. His wife who was pregnant gave birth to a son. Had the child been a girl, he would have secured a ground to divorce his wife, but unfortunately for him the child was a boy and hence he was helpless. Ultimately the elder brothers, A & C, decided to remarry the widow to the youngest one, viz., D. This was, according to their notion, an unconventional step in the rule of junior
leviratic union; because, the next legitimate man was left in the way.

The widow was now married to D, but she was put in an awkward position and did not know how she should address C. When she was the wife of B, she called C dār and was on free terms with the latter, because she was his potential wife. But now she was the wife of D, whereupon she was expected to look upon B as her jēth and pay him respect. This new situation had put not only her into an awkward position but her children also begotten by B. These children used to call C as kāko formerly, but now they have to call him moto bāp or bhabho. Though in practical life these minute distinctions in the use of terms of address are not given much weight but they do perplex for the timebeing the persons involved in such a situation.

I should like to point out here that a widow or a divorced woman who brings her children by her first husband to the one whom she remarries, pre-plans the future of these children. Usually it is the genitor or his agnates who take all the responsibility of maintaining the children of the divorced woman. But if a woman wants to keep her infants with her, she remarries only to one who consents to allow her to bring the children with her. Such children who go with the mother to their step-father are known as āngaliāt which literally means, 'those who go by the mother's finger'.
I should now like to give some interpretations on the kinship organization of the Mers.

The study of the Mer lineages has revealed the fact that some branch lineages of various Rajput groups (following patrilineal descent) entered into matrimonial relationship with the original (Adya) Mers of Keshwara or Rajshakha lineages. Before getting absorbed into the Mer social organization it is likely that the Rajput groups practised asymmetrical cross-cousin marriage, as they do to-day. And, probably those Rajputs who established matrimonial relations with the Mers adopted also the Mer kinship system marked by a bilateral or a symmetrical cross-cousin marriage.

The bulk of the Rajputs seemed to have looked down upon such of those Rajputs who entered into the Mer fold and lowered down in the status on the ground that the latter allowed marriage with the father's sister's daughter. This tantamounts to marrying a person of the same blood and therefore an incest. On this ground, the bulk of the Rajputs claim superiority over those who entered into the marital alliances with the Mers.

In support of my views I should mention here the story of a Jethva prince named Randhirji. It is said that
Randhirji married a Mer woman called Pabi and so he preferred to remain in the Mer fold because of his love for Pabi. Therefore, he forsook his right over the throne even though he was the heir apparent. He passed on the throne of Porbandar to his younger brother, and his descendants are now known as Rajshakha Mers, i.e., the Mers who descended from the royal branch of the Jethva Rajputs.

In this context it should also be mentioned that the Mers of Ajmer-Merwara do not permit any sort of cross-cousin marriage. These Mers seemed to have changed their kinship organization to such an extent that they do not allow even sororal and leviratic unions. Inspite of all these incest taboos it has been reported that if a Mer in Ajmer-Merwara violates these rules the caste elders fine a person but they do not go to the extent of excommunicating him.

* This information has been supplied to me by Shri Jagadishchandra R. Mer who belongs to Rajputana but who now lives in Baroda.