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RESEARCH PAPER On Cultural Changes in the Special Tribals with Special Reference to Khedbrahma Taluka of Sabarkantha District, North Gujarat



Background:

There are tribal societies all over the world. They live as nomadic tribes or settle down in the remote areas. Their main vocation is raising cattle, cultivating land and trading in forest produce. The Galas of the East Africa or Hausas of the West Africa appear to be a kin to the tribals of North Gujarat (Sabarkantha, Khedbrahma). These tribals live in various geographical regions of India. Their tribal society, elements, linguistic and cultural traits have variations. These tribals are the most important contributors towards the origin of the Indian society. The tribal society tends to be attacked by the movements such as westernization, modernization, acceptance of non-tribal cultures and "Munda" and "Ho" festivals are ancient tribal celebrations but now they are being replaced by "Easter" and "Christmas" celebration. The traditional "Yuva Gruh" (the youth hostels) are now going out of sight. There are visible changes in the family marriage institutions, tribal guilds, dresses, lifestyle, socialites etc.

This study is related to the cultural issues of the Dungari, Garasiya tribals living in the Khedbrahma Taluka, Sabarkantha district.

This article aims at studying the changes, their reasons and the present situation of the tribal culture with a special reference to Dungari Garasiya tribals. For this study 100 Adivasi families of the North Gujarat, Sabarkantha district were selected at random.

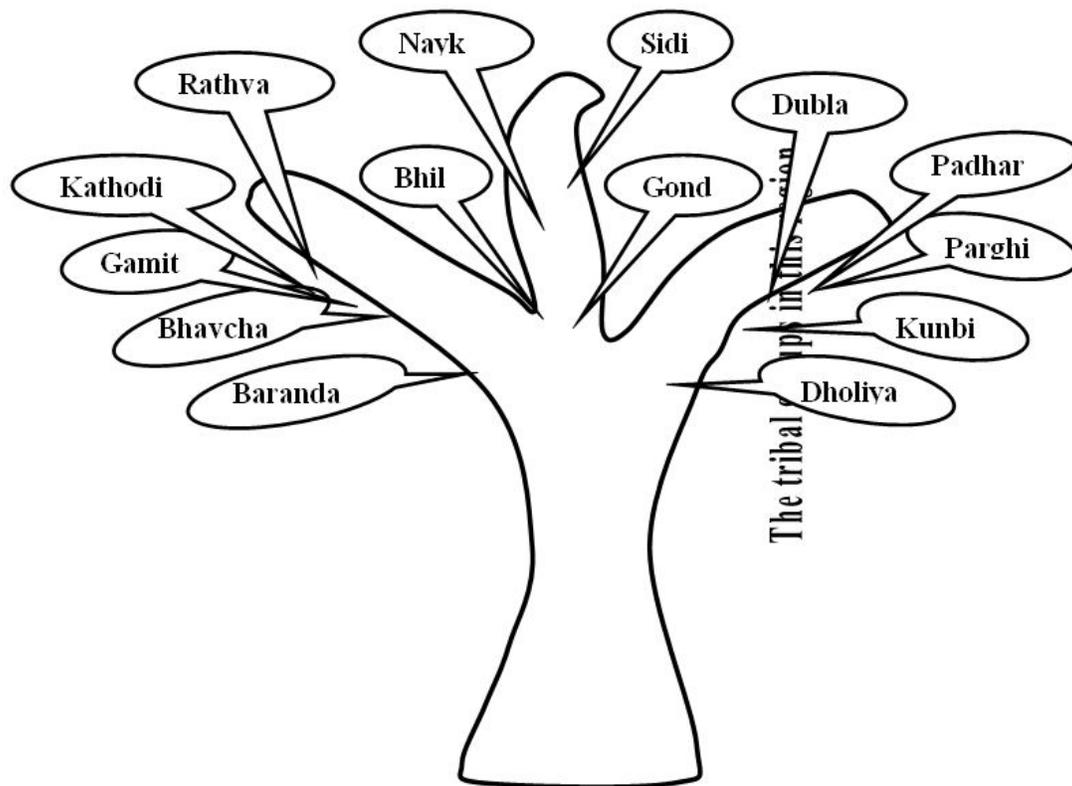
Fairs inspire joy and encouragement in the lives of the Dungari tribals. In modern times such festivals are celebrated by the elderly people. The youth are in an insignificant numbers in the celebrations. 65% of the people who answered to questionnaire have indicated that the burden of education on the children has bereaved the children of this joy. The Christian tribals celebrate Christian festivals.

The traditional ornaments of the Dungari tribal men and women are: Stud, earring bracelet, necklace (double), necklace (single) have been replaced by the attitude of wearing modern ornaments. There are noteworthy changes in the traditional dresses, food, lifestyle etc. also. The relationship in the social context and in the kinship relationship is also undergoing changes. We seldom find pictures of Gods and Goddesses or their vehicles on the walls of the hut. In short the tradition way of this life struggling for livelihood, hunting, arms etc are changing in the Dungari, Garasiya and their place is taken by education, cultural connections, urbanization and modern technology.

Introduction:

There are two opposite forces at work: Traditionalism vs. Modernism, constancy vs. changes. Thus the Indian tribal society is going through a basic change where apparently two contradictory forces are at work. The Indian tribals live in various geographical regions. There are variations in their tribal competitions, elements, language, cultural level etc. The tribal community is the most important aspect of the creation of the entire Indian society. The tribals in India are full of variety. They have their own original lifestyle and philosophy of life. They have a unique social structure and a long cherished classical civilization. The social and cultural variety of the Indian tribals has inspired the sociologists/ humanists to make special study of them. Due to the civilized society of the Indian tribals a few problems have arisen. On the other hand noteworthy changes have taken place in their cultural elements.

The tribal society is now attracted towards westernization, modernization, adaptation of alien civilization Christianization. The tribals of 'Munda' and 'Ho' now celebrate Easter instead of their festival. The important institution of the tribal called 'youth houses' is now waning away. There is a marked difference in their family institution, marriage institution, the tribal guilds, dresses, lifestyle, family relationship etc. the present study covers the cultural aspects of the tribals of the Khedbrahma Taluka, Sabarkantha District, Dungari tribals.



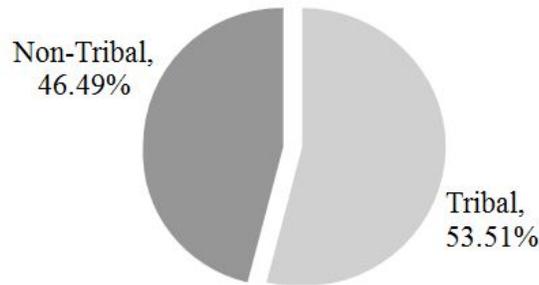
The population of the tribals in India is 6,27,51,027. The maximum number of the tribals live in the Madhya Pradesh. The population of the tribals in Gujarat is 61,61,755. Beginning with mountain ranges Danta Taluka, Banaskantha District, it covers the Poshina, Khedbrahma and Vijaynagar. Then is the region of the South in the North-East of Panchmahal borders. It passes through the Nanchhal in the South. Further to Mandavi Taluka in Surat District, the tribals occupy Vansada, Dang and Dharampur. These are all mountain ranges and the forest regions which is the home of the tribals. The region occupies the Aravali mountain ranges in the North, Saputara and Vindyas mountain ranges in the East and the Sahyadri mountain ranges in the South. We can identify about 35 groups of tribals in Gujarat. They consist of Baranda, Bavcha, Bhil, Ghodiya, Gamit, Gond, Kathodi, Nayak, Paradhi, Rathava, Kunbi, Koli, Sidi, Dubala, Padhar etc. from the population point of view, the tribals are highest in number in Panchmahal. Then their numbers are respectively Surat, Baroda, Bharuch and Sabarkantha district. Sabarkantha is no. 5 from the population point of view. The entire Gujarat is divided into 3 regions geographically viz. North, Central and South. Tribal population of Bhil and Dubala is the highest in Gujarat. Bhils mainly live in Sabarkantha, Banaskantha, Baroda, Panchmahal, Bharuch, Surat and Dong districts. The Bhils and Garasiya tribals of Aravali mountain ranges of North Gujarat have social, cultural and religious ties with the Bhils and Garasiya tribals of Rajasthan. The Bhils, Rathava, Nayak, Pateliya and Dhanaka of Panchmahal have closer ties with the tribals of Madhya Pradesh. Whereas the Ghodiya, Chaudhari, Gamit, Konkan, Dhor, Varali, Bhil, Koli etc. of the South have close affiliation to the tribals of the Maharashtra. The Gujarati tribals have their unique art, music, dona and vocal music. We can see their art in their dresses, ornaments etc. their art festival songs, children's songs, dance music, stories, riddles are exciting frolicsome.

Objectives of the study:

The study covers the changes, the factors responsible for the changes and the present condition of the Dungari, Garasiya tribals.

Sample Selection:

100 families of the tribals in Khedbrahma Taluka, District Sabarkantha were selected at random. The head of the family was chosen as the main person to answer the questionnaire. Accordingly, the data were collected through the questionnaire. Some tribals live in Khedbrahma for study or for work. Some of the tribals are leaders, some of them are quite responsible elders. My personal contact with them for a long period 10 years has become a good source of information for this study.



Tribals in Khedbrahma Taluka

The tribals of the Aravali mountain ranges of Sabarkantha district live in the mountains and the forests. Generally they believe in Hindu Gods and Goddesses. As per the 1991 Census the tribal population is 18.75 % of the total Sabarkantha district population. Their number is 3,24,199. In the Khedbrahma Taluka they are 53.51 % of the total taluka population. Their number is 93,858. From among these 45,771 are males and 48,087 are females. The present study is about the Dungari, Garasiya tribals of the Bhiloda taluka.

The tribals living in Kedbrahma taluka are known as Dungari, Bhil, Garasiya tribals. Their staple food is corn. On festivals or other occasions they cook CHURMU or LADDU (sweets). As regards dress, the males wear Dhosis, Shirts or traditional unsewn piece of cloth. The young males wear trousers, shirts etc. the women wear traditional petticoats, shirts, dress, blouses etc. they are fond of ornaments.

In the Dungari, Garasiya tribal society traditional Patriarchal system works. The male has more importance in the society than the female the entire Garasiya tribals are divided among various GOTRAS or kinshipties. They are exogamous in their marriage system. There is the Pancha system in every village in the form of Grampanch, regional panch and tribal panch. The Dungari, Garasiya tribals build crude huts in their own small pieces of land live in scattered settlements. They are physically strong and sturdy.

The Dungari, Garasiya tribals traditionally have the marriages outside their own GOTRA – Exogamous. In other words Endogamous marriages are prohibited. They practice polygamy, remarriages, divorces, keeping concubines elopment and get married etc. They practice division of labour in their economic system. Their main profession is agriculture, raising animals and hard toil. Agriculture is generally in the mountain region where there is scarcity of water. They cut down wood and do agricultural labour. They grow vegetables and ginger, roots, turmeric etc. Their whole life passes as a struggle for survival. They believe in their tribal Goddesses and worship her. They also believe in Rama, Hanumana, mother Sheetal, Ganesh, Ambaji etc. They also observe rituals, keep on oath to Gods and Goddesses and do Puja. They worship 'Shamaliya' as 'Kaliye' (black God) with faith. They believe in black magic and all kinds of superstitions. Their main festivals are Holi, Akshyaya Trutiya, Uttarayana, Janmashthami, Navratri, Diwaso, Diwali, Shivratri etc. On certain festivals they have big fairs. They celebrate Uttarayana in a unique way.

Conclusions:

All the respondents to the questionnaire were males. They were married. They belonged to the age group 35 – 50. All the respondents were educated but the percentage of having higher education was very small.

Cultural Transformation:

Some of the tribals have been converted to Christianity. Those converted Christian tribals have adopted Christian culture. They follow Christianity in their dresses, ornaments, lifestyle, traditions and festivals.

Fairs inspire excitement and joy in the life of the tribals. During the whole year there are many fairs according to seasons and certain lunar dates of various centres of Gods and Goddesses. The tribals make purchases, enjoy themselves, select their life partners and have innocent joy. They dance and

play on flute. In modern times the form of enjoyment in the fairs has undergone a change. Now we see the prominence of exchange of money and profit making element getting the upper hand. On the other side the young men of modern generation have no attraction towards such fairs. 70 % of the respondents have supported the above information. Majority of the respondents have indicated that they can't see crowds in such fairs as they used to do before.

The tribals feel high spirited in Holi and such other festivals. The festivals give them new vigour and spirit. They used to celebrate the traditional festivals also with same enthusiasm. One month before the Holi, they begin to form groups beat drums etc., wear special dresses, sing and dance, drink and go round the nearby villages collecting jaggery. From the collection of money they buy coconuts and eat coconuts and jaggery. In modern time the elderly people celebrate such festivals. The young are very few in the celebrations. 65 % of the respondents supported this information. The burden of education on the school going children takes away their joy. The Christian tribals celebrate Christian festivals.

The Uttarayana festival is celebrated on the first Thursday in the month of Posh among the Dungari, Garasiya tribals. On that early in the morning they form a group of 8-10 tribals and catch a live 'black swallow'. They take the bird to the head of the village. There they make the 'black swallow' drink butter and then say 'Hod, Hod, Hod' and make it fly away. Then they observe where the bird sits. From that they give forecasting about the coming year. If the bird sits on a green tree their forecast is that the year will be green and fertile. If it sits on a dry tree they forecast that the year will be dry, there may be a famine. They play the club and a ball game that day. The ball is woven with thread and cloth. It exhibits the tribal art. But in modern times the Uttarayana celebration is seldom seen among the tribals. Nor do the young men join it. Thus the game of the club and ball is now dying away. 72 % of the respondents indicated this fact.

The traditional ornaments of the tribal men and women such as stud, ear-rings, necklace, double-necklace etc. are being replaced by modern ornaments. There is a visible change in their traditional dress, diet, lifestyle etc. the style of addressing the social relations and family relations are changing, replacing the traditional ones. We seldom see the pictures of Gods and Goddesses or their vehicles on the walls of their huts. In short due to education, cultural contracts, urbanization, modern technology factors, the tribal civilization is speedily changing.

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Dr. Badar Kureshi

Assi. Professor,
Gujarat Vidyapith, Randheja.

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