



# Knowledge Consortium of Gujarat

Department of Higher Education - Government of Gujarat

## Journal of Humanity

ISSN: 2279-0233

Continuous Issue - 19 | August - September 2015

### Social, Cultural Transformation and Changing Face OF THE TRIBES of the Border Area of Gujarat and Rajasthan

#### Abstract:-

Since the time immemorial, Indian society has been undergoing a sweeping socio-cultural transformation and change. The ancient India was a tolerant nation, which welcomed and absorbed the outsiders along with their culture. Even when the visitors turned to be invaders, the people of this country adopted the positive side of their cultural aspects and tried to enhance their life-style. This present article is based on detailed and analyzed collection of information, regarding Social, cultural transformation of tribes of the border area and changing face of Bhils from a very remote past till today. The impact of the various movements, on the social, cultural and economic life of tribes, like: Exposure to Outside World, Expansion of Hinduism, and Impact of Bhil Seva Mandal, Bhakti Andolan, Impact of kabir sampraday saint Govind guru, Saint Asharam, Impact of Christianity, the renaissance and Globalization.

The state boarder area which is a part of the present study is Panchmahal (DAHOD) district and Sabarkantha district of Gujarat state. Dahod district shares its borders with M.P and Rajasthan state and Sabarkantha shares the boarder of Rajasthan. The Nature of the present research paper is to observe the changing face, cultural similarity, dissimilarity, Transformation among the Tribes of these three border area, it is worth to discuss the prevalent culture, social trends, religious fervors and the life style of the tribes.

The Bhils are basically tribal people who used to live in thick forest areas. They are one of the aboriginal people, who lived in the Indian subcontinent since unknown times. "The Bhil community does not need any particular introduction. It has prevailed in existence since the time of the Ramayana."1. The most revered sage VALMIKI, the author of epic Ramayana belonged to this tribe. Lord Rama ate the fruits tasted by a devoted Bhil woman named Shabari who lived in and around Pampa region in South India. Ekalavya, an extraordinary archer and sharp shooter of Mahabharat times too belonged to this tribes.

The overview of the tribal world, the culture, fair, festivals, trends, traditions, social life, and their holy places are real center of the spiritual, social awareness and consciousness. The old systems are kept intact even today in the era of reformation and change. It is obvious that without social, spiritual awareness the physical, materialistic development is insignificant. The all round development of the community is not possible amongst the prevalent evils in the society. The Adivasis of the area were victims of ignorance, illiteracy, superstitious beliefs. While interacting with several people it was found that the " Bhils who are neck deep in debt and live below poverty line are drinkers and kill people on trifling issues. During a special field investigation it was found that Ram Naam Diksha has created a wonderful impact on the Bhil population. There was 'involuntary reformation' through Ram Naam Saints and Bhagats work had brought about the spiritual and social awakening. The various activities of saints in the tribal area have worked as catalyst."2. The saints have live relation with each and every person. They were not only prophet but also their friend, philosopher and guide. They nurtured and nourish the values among tribes and established noble, pure and clear thoughts which helped the tribes to be integrated.

#### Factors responsible for the social, cultural transformation:-

1. The religious saint (Sant Parampara) started in the 16th 17th century. It was significant as the Bhajans and preaching of the saints gave message to the community and incurred new zeal and

enthusiasm. Their messages have stopped evils of society. The border area we find the kabir Panthi (Followers), Ramdev Panthi. In the 18th and 19th century their emerged Saint Mavji maharaj and Govind Giri. The saints united have put efforts to eradicate social evil and superstitious belief among tribes and community. This resulted into Bhagat Andolan (Movement) and Samp Sabha.

2. The movement of Govind Giri was historically significant as it awakened Bhil community and connected them with the main stream of Nation. It explored the feelings among adivaasi against slavery and exploitation. The historical Mangadh DHUNI tells the story of Bhils awakening , struggle, and social reformation. All the places where the Govind Giri started and executed the mission to reform the Bhil community have now become the Holy places for worship. Today also the Bhils gathered and recite the preaching and Bhajans of this great Saint.

- **Saint Maavji Maharaj:-** The another great saint of aadivaasi. He awakened the importance of Worship Bhakti among adivaasi. Vagad Pradesh and border of M.P. was his working area. His place of worship and meditation was BENESHWAR DHAAM. The preaching and Bhajans of Maavji Maharaj are still recited and appreciated among the adivaasis of Jhabua (M.P.) Fatehpura (Gujarat) Banswara and Dungarpur (Rajasthan) districts. Mavji maharaj has composed a Holy Book (Locally called as MAVJI No Chopado) at Beneshwar Dhaam near Dungarpur. Every year there is a fair at Beneshwar today the fair is called the KUMBH MELA of all Bhils. The book has now become the holy message of future forecast. The saint has presented the future economical, political, social changes to come. He also talked about corruption, exploitation, price hike in the Nation. Even today the aadivasis expressed the forecast of Maavji Maharaj in their Bhajans during the fairs.

- **Saint Surmaal Das (A Social reformer) :-** Born at Lusadia Village of Sabarkantha district of Gujarat on the border of Rajasthan. He inculcate the spiritual, ethical values among adivaasi of the region. He established DHUNIS at Doja, Hiraata, Mathu Gamda, etc. and made efforts to develop the whole community. Even today the adivaasi gathered at the Dhuni and take oath to unite the community and follow the message of great saint.

### **Impact of Christian Missionaries and Hindu:-**

with the intention of spread of religion hindus and Christians established educational campus in the area. It encouraged the bhil community for seeking education. Education among tribes caused awareness against social evils, they became united and took place in politics and government services. Apart from that the Missionaries activities promoted health services and aware the tribes regarding untouchability. The mission guided the other organisation to work in the field of health awareness. The missionaries promoted the religious fervor among the tribes and it is worth mention that they had brought about the religious awareness among the tribal area of these states and inspiration to Hindu Social worker.

### **Impact of Bhil seva Mandal:-**

The Bhil Seva Mandal, Bhagat Movement, additional services by NGOs like VAAGDHARA, SADGUNA SEVA, is some of the prominent groups working today for the welfare of Bhils community. The aim of Bhil Seva Mandal is to bring about reformation in the field of education, social trends and economic condition. The mandal had to struggle initially but slowly they could manage to open Ashram School for spread of education not only that the tribes of the area were encouraged to get admission in the ashram school. They were facilitated with teaching aids like books pen, pencil, bags etc. The Bhil Seva Mandal has also worked to make the education behaviouristic this helped the tribes in finding the solution of their problem. The skill oriented education of Masson work, art and craft, carpentry, farming, yoga and gymnasium etc. All such activity of Bhil Seva Mandal has awakened the sense of life style among the tribal. Adivasi languages, their culture and their life style are considered low and uncivilized and many NGOs with one another to bring them into the "mainstream" and to "develop" them. The values of community spirit, concern for nature and ecology, respect for elders, sincerity, and refusal to hoard have disappeared to a great degree; the youth are affected by consumerist values and the desire to make money at any cost. Rape, orphaned children, and theft, which were unheard of in tribal communities, have become common. As a result their rich culture and noble human values are fast disappearing from their lives.

"Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru too agrees that tribal culture is flourished in the lap of Nature. He assures that Adivasis must be given opportunity to advance on their fundamental rights. It is therefore he advocated the Principles of PANCHSHIL. He disapproved the attitude of looking at tribal world as the thing to be displayed at exhibition. The tribes in-fact should be considered as member of any civilized community. They are people of forest so they must get all facility of forest." 3We must think and understood the psychological and emotional attitude of tribes. It is possible only if we pursue tribal culture in the light of Nature.

### **CHANGING FACE:-**

Bhil Culture has its significant and peculiar identity from the ancient time. The process of industrialization and scientific development has started a new era. World's all communities had changed a lot due to scientific development. The change has largely noted in religious, cultural and social life of adivasis. Apart from that the facilities of transportation communication and information technology has vital impact on tribal life. It has bridged the gap between the tribal, rustic and urban areas. Use of communication technology, mobile and movies has changed their living style and added concept of beautification and fashionable trends. The Bhil culture is now not restricted up to Forest. They came in contact with the people and culture of other communities such as Hindu, Muslim, and Christians. As a result, there emerged a process of Sanskritisation among tribes. Moreover, the construction of roads, highways, telephones on the name of development in jungle areas and digging Hills for minerals and natural resources has caused need for more agriculture land. It encouraged deforestation hence, the tribes compelled to accept the change. The spread of religion and education contributed deeply in bringing about change in the set rules and values of adivasi Community. Therefore, one can see the drastic change in each and every walks of tribal life and culture. The following changes are observed during the survey;

**1. Change in Religious Activities:-** The Bhil community had its own peculiar Van Dharma. They had distinguished gods and goddesses. Their ways of worship and praying God was different than that of Hindus. But all now changed because of their close contact with Hindus. The sanskritization process is causing the Adivasis to replace their cultural identity and adopt upper caste practices. One can see that Brahminical methods of celebrating rituals and observing Hindu festivals and visiting Hindu religious places are growing rapidly in the entire tribal belt of the these border area. In some areas sanskritization is so pervasive that some tribal people have given up altogether their traditional way of living and culture and have completely accepted upper caste Hindu ways of living. The Bhagat Movement also has changed the mind set of tribal. Now the tribes have faith in all Hindu religious books and perform all Hindu religious rituals such as Marriage, Death ceremony.

**2. Politicization in Bhils:-** The study of the history of bhils of these border area implies that the bhils consider themselves as inferior citizen. But after the independence govt. has provisioned in the constitution the participation of the backward class to give them respectable position and confidence. Despite we didn't find matured political consciousness among the tribes. However a special reservation of seats for the tribes in parliament and legislative assembly is provisioned, but its benefit is restricted to some prosperous Bhils not to whole community. The Tribes are considered as vote bank by the political parties so the benefits and short term relief is given that too during the election time. There is a need of political awareness and maturity among the tribes of this under privileged area.

**3. The changed face of Bhil Family:-** Enormous change is observed in the nature of the Bhil family. Traditionally Bhils believed in Joint family. All the members of the family; mother, father, sons, daughters, stayed together under one roof. They enjoyed all festivals, marriages collectively. But as the sons and daughters grows they get married and they are told to stay separate even the property is also distributed. This way the concept of joint family is now switched to single family. Because of the deforestation the tribes has to rush to cities in search of labour and livelihood along with wife and children. Later the settled in the neighboring towns and cities. This result the concept of single family and affected the social life of tribes.

**4. The Change in the Houses of tribes:-** In the past the houses of the tribes were built with forest products i.e the lived in Kacha house. But now they build Pakka House with reasonable facility. Even the govt. has also allotted houses to those who live below poverty line.

**5. The Change in Marriage System:-** Marriage is considered as religious convention by the bhils like Hindu culture. The trends of tribes earlier were very peculiar. They perform adventures. A young tribe

man is given the task to target the Vessle by Bow, he is given three chances to accomplish the task if he failed then it is considered that the boy can't marry the girl as he failed because they were brother and sister in the previous age. But this method has now become symbolic. Today with changing scenario the boys and girls meet in the fair. They understand each-other and matter is discussed in the family then marriage is performed. Dapa system (The bride has to give money to the girl's father) has now become secondary but it has taken the system of Dowry. Now the marriage follows all religious mantras and in the presence of Bhrahmin. In some cases polygamy is seen but it is restricted to prosperous tribe families. Generally they believe in single wife.

Together with the effects of Liberalization, Privatization and Globalization, the forces of religious fundamentalism are also active in their midst, alienating them from their culture and destroying their identity. Market forces and the profit-making values of the market economy affect tribal identity and changing their life style and traditional values. The sanskritization process is causing the Adivasis to replace their cultural identity and adopt upper caste practices. In some areas sanskritization is so pervasive that some tribal people have given up altogether their traditional way of living and culture and have completely accepted upper caste Hindu ways of living.

Generally speaking, Bhil women believe that everything is happening in the context of `Devi shakti' and evil spirits or ghosts. Being deprived of doctors the witch doctor called Badwa is the source of information and probable solution to all physical, mental and environmental problems. These Badwas BHOPA are the male traditional magicians who play with some grains and gesticulates in a state of trance. They create a fear psychosis among the people to extract anything. These Badwas also work as a tool for social vengeance and exploit the women. If a woman does not succumb to advances made by a Badwa he projects her as an evil soul and declares her a dakini. Then the whole tribe hunts her down and kills her. Now the movement of Saint Asharaam in the border area villages of Gujarat and Rajasthan awakening the tribes and many families has now turned and become settled. The change has not only brought social awareness but has also nurtured and awakened the importance of family concept in social life.

To understand the traditional belief system of Tribal womenfolk and the transformation undergone by them after Ram Naam diksha, we conducted a series of interviews. It was revealed that most of them no longer face torture as their husbands no longer consume liquor. Post liquor consumption fights have become a thing of the past. Women no longer go to Badwas. They now believe that Sri Ram resides in them. The concept of shanti (peace) received a good response from a large section of women. Elderly women have taken the lead.

### **Change through Preservation of Culture:-**

The culture has two aspects i.e. Material and non-material. Material aspects are science, technology, clothing, Food habit etc. while non-material aspects of culture are the values, goals, thoughts, language, status and role system. The tribes of the area express their cultural identity in their social and political organisation, language, rituals and festivals, dresses, costumes and ornaments. With the spread of proper education and knowledge it is seen that the negative aspects trends and rituals had gone away. There is lot of finer values in tribal culture, which are worth mentioning and preserving and if such positive aspects of their life is preserved and encouraged, the development of this communities will be lips and bound.

### **THE TRIBLE ART:-**

The tribal art, dance, songs and music is ancestral gift. It has enriched the culture of Indian National life. The finer aspect of their cultural life has attracted the people of our country and even outside the country. They are the only people who sing freely while working. They work with pleasure and peace of mind. The routine work is an act of art and joy. The performance of dance and music during fairs festivals and evening time is a regular practice even today. Most of the fairs we visited and the rituals we came across are practiced since old times but today also their art is not changed and the culture is well preserved.

- The tribal crafts have great artistic values. Their sense of beauty and art is found in their idols and monuments of gods. They have their own ways of using the forest products for the various purposes. It can be observed during the Haat (Local Weekend Market). Their economy and culture revolves round a specific craft in which they are specialized.
- The sense of humanity is still preserved; the tribes have special way of hospitality and sense of

togetherness. In search of livelihood they migrated but as and when they are in the aura of the natural life, among their people they follow the culture of helping others providing comfort to their kin and kiths. Even in the age of materialism and capitalism they have not left the culture of humanity. The women are assigned high status in the tribal culture. Women move freely with men in the hills and forest, in the fairs and festivals. In the field of economic pursuits the women have greater share than Men. There is no dowry system among the tribes of this region. One never finds any case of bride burning or torture in tribal society.

- Youth dormitories (DHUNIS) are the core of tribal culture and reinforced age-old traditions. These are the places of social gathering, cultural centers, religious place and centers of learning positive values of life. The young and the elders often gather to discuss important events in their corporate life.
- The discipline in social life, dignity of labour, the collective and cooperative support in the field of socio-economic activities, the hospitality and friendship and above all honesty and simplicity are some of the finer values that are noticed in tribal culture. This will go on enriching the great Indian culture. These human values have positive roles to play in socio-economic development of the tribal communities.

### **The Culture Change:-**

Many of the development schemes were introduced to bring about the changes in these communities but few take care of the cultural background of the tribal people and their traditional skill. The tribes of these border areas resist changes which include introduction of modern technology as they feel it will interfere with their respective core culture. They find themselves misfit in the new pattern of habitation. Modern forces are also actively moulding their way of life. As culture is dynamic, the tribes are facing changes. The transformation is broadly of two types; Traditional and Modern. The traditional changes are mainly due to the impact of major neighbouring communities on the tribal group. The modern includes industrialization, urbanization etc. Tribal development schemes, community and rural development schemes, democratic set up of the nation are recent origin of the rapid changes in tribal world and culture.

### **CHANGE EDUCATION SYSTEM:-**

On paper there are adequate numbers of schools, at least primary schools, including Ashram Shallas in all our tribal regions. Yet, the literacy rate in most of the tribal regions is lowest in the State. Apart from this poor literacy rate and abnormally heavy drop outs, the most serious issue is the quality of education in the tribal regions. One wonders how our tribal boys and girls would compete with the world in this liberalization and globalization age, with the existing quality of education. I think, this is an area on which the tribal leaders should ask themselves whether they are happy with the quality of education for their boys and girls? If not, what are the remedies? There is no future for our tribal boys and girls unless relevant and quality education is given to them. The curriculum needs to be reviewed in light of the market needs and the teachers involved in imparting the education need to be inculcated with missionary zeal. Any compromise on these two aspects will close the doors of career development for our tribal boys and girls. It is usually observed that the tribal students are very poor in languages, science and mathematics. This scenario, if continues, will cost very heavily to the tribal students. The special efforts are needed to equip tribal students in above three most important subjects.

With all probability, the future job market will be dominated by information technology and service sector. Our tribal boys and girls need to be equipped for this emerging market needs. The tribal boys and girls need to be equipped to join these main stream qualities. as the dependence on the Government jobs will lead to uncertain future for most of the educated tribal boys and girls. In conclusion, the development of extremely backward tribal regions requires holistic approach in which, all types of activities need to be incorporated and integrated.

Government and NGO programmes. In Gujarat, various agencies including state, market or industries, non-government organisations (NGOs) and Gandhians have been working with tribes for their uplift. By and large their approach for tribal development has been paternal and condescending, wanting to assimilate them into the so-called mainstream. Despite separate tribal development programmes and safeguards like reservation in educational and political institutions, high illiteracy rates, and increase in the numbers of migrants and displaced people indicate that tribal development programmes have not achieved desired goals.

Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru said "The people of the tribal areas and the hills attracts me greatly and deserve our special care. I am anxious that they should advance, but I am even more anxious that they should not lose their artistry and joy of life and the culture that distinguish them in many ways."4 The process of change and transformation in these three states begin in the middle of 19th Century. The efforts made by Christian Missionaries, Govind Guru, Bhil Seva Mandal and Bhagat are quite noteworthy. Apart from that the changes observed presently is the result of communication and technological advancement, Education, Political awareness. The changes noted are two folds, one based on industrialization, and introduction of development programmes by NGOs and other due to compulsion of adopting new trends and culture. Based on the analysis, discussion and findings of the study made to draw the following broad conclusion with regard to social transformation and changing face of the tribal residing in the border areas of these three states.

Our first conclusion is that the tribes over a period of generation have undergone transformation in the pursuits of culture, tradition and livelihood. They have abandoned their criminal activities as change source of livelihood. They are now more or less leading a settled life. Most of them do not adhere to parental/ traditional occupation and are slowly steadily enter into modern occupation. The lack of better level of education and skill development education are inhibiting factor for their further social transformation and modern occupation. The inter and intra deviation trends mobility of occupation support the conclusion.

Our second conclusion is the significant changes in their life due to development of communication within the tribal area and with outside world. Development and spread of formal and modern education, extension services by modern institutions. In spite of these forces operating and changes the different tribes or a section of the tribe continue to respond to the change differently. They have retained the principal elements of their ways of life though they are modified to an extent. The identity and variety of the tribal culture in changed form will be maintained. The aspect of tribal culture which have survival values are preserved and encouraged. It is time to teach them their own culture, art. It is precious thing that we need.

The changes that observed is in the field of education. Initially as mentioned earlier educational facilities were there but the attitude of the tribes was reluctant. The missionaries' activity and the services of Bhil Seva Mandal started the movements for giving education to tribal people of the area. Bhagat community also contributed. Today Education in these areas is not restricted to literacy but it has developed the skills of the tribes and as a result they are developed. Now they avail the opportunity to get jobs in govt. sector as well as private sectors. Most of them have become economically self reliant.

Adivasi community is known for their Specific social life, trends, tradition and rituals. The reformation activities of the Govt, NGOs, and all Tribal saints like Govind Giri, Mavji Maharaj etc.. has created an atmosphere of changes in all social trends, traditions and rituals. No liquor, social evils, non veg, superstitious belief. The impression of BHOPA, over expenses in social activities is the area where change is observed. This is the process of sanskritisation and now a special class called educated tribes has developed. The process of sanskritisation has much affected the tribes of Gujarat and Rajasthan. In Jhabua district of M.P it is less but in progress.

With the wake of globalization and cultural transaction it is observed that the Sanskritisation has changed the old trends and traditions, life style, and eating habits.

In The process of change the life style, economy, and culture of adivaasi of these areas have changed. They become cultured, well mannered, educated but the original Adivasi culture become instinct and rare. In fact Thakkar Bapa and Govind Giri are of opine to bring about changes with the original culture. That is less observed in the area. A very specific point worth mention here that the social reformers, social leaders and religious saints have gifted the Bhils economic stability, social reputation, education, individual progress etc. But there contribution has been now considered as magical and as a result The DHUNIS of all such personalities have created another issue of superstitious belief.

With the wake of changing pattern and globalization and spiritual teaching preaching of saints, The adivasis of the border area has witnessed drastic change both way negative and positive. If we look at the negative side it is observed that the educated tribe or the high designated tribe group is completely in the aura of the civilized society and is deviated from the original Adivasi culture, though the ratio is less, but its red signals to the originality of the tribal culture. In the border area of the

study the adivasis of Gujarat are more affected with the civilized society than Adivasis residing in Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh. They still stuck to their originality. So It is clearly seen that the community is divided in two Classes on the issue of development and culture. One group (Educated Adivasi) supports development of the community at any extent. They dont want to be the part of the original Adivasis rituals trends and tradition, traditional celebration of festivals while the other (Indigenous) group supports development but not at the cost of the original existence and Adivasi culture.

Due to the development trend the Bhil community is not changed in totality, even the development is also not reached to the internal dwellings of tribes. On the one hand we observed the higher income group or high dignified cultured tribe, at the same time we observe poor tribal group migrating with their kids with a small bundle of livelihood The position of Adivasis of Gujarat border is comparatively better as they have plain land and scope for farming. The Adivasis of Rajasthan and M.P. are seen migrating to the big cities for the job and labour work.

Education is spread in almost all border area villages of these three states but the attitude of the tribes for sending their child to school is same. It is more effective in some parts of Gujarat and Rajasthan. But the need of money and economic status of the family the child labour is in practice. In the tribal area of Rajasthan majority of tribal children or adults are settled in Gujarat for earning livelihood. All in all the situation of the Adivasis of these border areas is not in the tune of the world. There is need of more efforts to bring about changes and reformation along with the preservation of the fundamental culture. In the present age of globalization this society has developed in all fields. Much has yet to be done to bring about the changes through preservation of original culture. There is a need to teach them their culture and the steps are taken by the Govt. in the form of establishing schools and Colleges of higher education in almost all districts of the project area.

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