

Tribal Life and Traditions in the Satpuda Region

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Abstract

India is country with wide variety of communities spread across. Each community has its own rich heritage and traditions. Tribal Community or Scheduled Tribe or Adivasi is one of them. These Tribal people are heart of the forest and they play an important role in maintaining the eco-balance of nature. These people are residing in the deep and rural part of forest where they do not get the primary facilities related to health, education, transport and other facilities. Thus, they are away from the modern part of India. This paper has shed light on the lifestyle of Tribal Communities residing in the Khandesh region which includes Jalgaon, Dhule and Nandurbar Districts of North Maharashtra region. It has carried out the study of Attire or cloth wearing habits, foods, ornaments used by these people and their socio-economic status. It has been observed that, till today these peoples are away from the modern part of India.

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1. Introduction

India is country with wide variety of communities spread across out of which Tribal Community is one of them. The Maharashtra state is one of the important states of India. The Financial Capital of India is Mumbai city which is an integral part of Maharashtra. The total population of Maharashtra state is around 11 crores out of which approximately 1 crore population is of Tribal community spread across Maharashtra. The north part of Maharashtra State is called the North-Maharashtra region and popularly known as Khandesh (खानदेश) region. This Khandesh region mainly covers the Jalgaon, Dhule and Nandurbar Districts. The major population of this region covers Tribal peoples which includes Pawara, Kokni, Barela, Gavit, Padvi, Vasave, Mavchi, Pardhi, Tadvi, and the Bhil tribes of the Satpuda (सातपुडा) region ^[1,2]. These Tribal people are heart of the forest and they play an important role in maintaining the eco-balance of nature. These people are residing in the deep and rural part of forest where they do not get the primary facilities related to health, education, transport and other facilities. Thus, they are away from the modern part of India.

For a person to live life, it is necessary to live within a specific system or structure. Social order is created through the collective customs and traditions of a group. This same nature is also found in the tribal social systems of the Pawara, Kokni, Barela, Gavit, Padvi, Vasave, Mavchi, Pardhi, Tadvi, and the Bhil tribes of the Satpuda region. The tribal community is many times different from any other society ^[1,2].

Each social group has its own independent social structure. The social lifestyle, cultural customs, traditions, practices, religiosity, and economic production of each tribe show diversity, and every tribe has its own distinct characteristics. Although there are similarities in social life, traditions, and lifestyle shaped by their geographical, economic, and traditionally established ways of living, their values reflect these common patterns. Due to the presence of many dialects and physical characteristics, their cultural unity is distinct ^[1,2]. The tribes existing in the Satpuda mountain region have been living close to nature for hundreds of years, following traditional ways of life. These indigenous groups, who generally reside in forests across various countries of the

world, have played a valuable role in protecting the environment. Tribal communities, whose culture is different from the mainstream culture that has developed in Indian society, are still seen skillfully living their lives while preserving and protecting culture and nature. In India, the cultures of other societies are widely practiced and developed; however, in the modern era, tribal traditions, literature, culture, nature, and dialects are facing many encroachments and attacks.

Today, the existence of tribal communities seems to be under threat. Nevertheless, efforts are needed to preserve tribal tribes and culture and to ensure the development of tribal culture, bringing unity among the tribal communities of Satpuda. By obtaining traditional information about tribal customs, traditions, practices, stories, folk songs, legends, nature deities, festivals, celebrations, rituals, life values, and the self-governance system and community structure of the Satpuda society, the aim is to establish the importance of their way of living or lifestyle. Thus, the tribal life and traditions of the Satpuda region will serve as an inspiration ^[1,2].

The tribal community has been living with great hardship since ancient times in forests and hilly areas. While preserving its own culture and remaining relatively isolated, it stayed far from the path of development. The special provisions included in the laws of the Indian Constitution for the development of tribal communities are important. According to these provisions, gradual progress toward the overall development of tribal society has begun ^[1,3].

This paper is organized as Discussion is followed by Introduction which includes Meaning of Adivasi, Background and Characteristics of Tribal people. It also contains House Style or pattern, Food or Diet consumed by Tribal people, Grinding Grains and Attire. It is then followed by Conclusion, Acknowledgement.

2. Discussions

2.1 Background of Tribal Society

A community of people that has lived in forests since ancient times is called Adivasi. Similarly, Adivasi means "original inhabitants". People who have been permanently settled in forests since primitive times are called 'Adivasis'. Adivasis are also described as a backward group of people living in scattered settlements in hills and valleys ^[1,3,4].

According to the meaning of the term Adivasi under Part XVI, Article 342-(2) of the Constitution of India, after consultation with the Governor of a state, by public notification, tribes or tribal communities shall be considered Scheduled Tribes for the purposes of this Constitution in relation to that state or union territory. Specific tribes or tribal communities, or parts or groups within them, may be specified. From this it can be understood that in India, the tribal society closely connected with geographical conditions has long been settled across various castes and tribes in different states and union territories ^[1,3,4].

2.2 Background of Tribals in the Pre and Post-Independence of India

From ancient times to the modern era, tribal society has been gradually undergoing change. By coordinating with geographical conditions based on elements such as water, forests, land, and nature, the settlements of tribal society in natural regions appear to have increased. While preserving skilled traditions and culture, they practiced agriculture on small pieces of land. Tribal society lived a life based on activities such as animal husbandry and hunting. Different

types of tribes are found in tribal society according to states and union territories. In Rajasthan, for example, the Bishnoi tribe: in 1730, the king of Jodhpur ordered the cutting of rajane khanjari (राजणेखंजरी) or (Shami) trees to build his palace. At that time, Amrita Devi Bishnoi and her three daughters tightly hugged the trees to prevent them from being cut. After the king's order, they were killed; however, the Bishnoi community became even more agitated afterward and launched a protest. The king killed hundreds of people, yet the resistance continued. Inspired by the example of Amrita Devi, the Chipko movement was later carried out. From this it seems that tribal society depends on nature. They worship nature and follow the laws of nature ^[1,3,4].

People from established societies are often seen making accusations and counteraccusations. It is said that tribal people destroyed nature, cut down forests, and finished the environment, and therefore the environment is no longer the same as before. However, the reality is different. If the houses of tribal people and those of developed society are examined carefully, it will be clear in whose houses the oldest and most valuable timber is found. Tribal society has been living in forests for thousands of years following traditional methods. Since they are settled close to nature, they protected the entire forest.

For their livelihood, they collected wildflowers (रानफुले), berries (बोरे), jamun (जांभूळ), bael (बिले), wood apple (कवठे), dhama (धामणे), tembur (टेंबुर), umar (उमर), roots and tubers (कंदमुळे), chalk (खडू), wild vegetables, leaves, and cultivated a small amount of farmland to grow some grains. They stored all these and consumed them as needed. They hunted small and large animals and birds, and caught fish, crabs, and prawns from rivers, streams, and ponds for consumption as and when required. Tribal society has faced injustice since earlier times. They remained deprived of employment, education, facilities, basic amenities, and government schemes. Even so, they did not cut down forests to create vast agricultural lands. If that had happened, today tribal society might have been known as a very wealthy society, and like other societies they would have experienced equal development. In every field, tribal people might have been at the forefront ^[1,3,4].

In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the British entered India in groups through the southern region. Some officials traveled across India and directly inspected regions in all four directions and they had conducted surveys. At that time, India had many small and large kings, provinces, and princely states. The country was prosperous and fertile. Dense and scenic natural surroundings were found everywhere, with greenery spread all around. Every community lived peacefully according to its culture. During that time, British officials planned to establish warehouses. From then onward, large-scale tree cutting began. The British used wood to make various types of furniture and houses. They sold different wooden items. Generally, good-quality timber was sent abroad by ship through sea routes. In this way, they entered every forest region and tree cutting increased. They ruled by creating terror among the local people. Since there were no convenient means for transporting wood in India, it used to take a long time, and because timber was heavy, it caused many difficulties. For this purpose, the British built railway routes according to their convenience. Railway stations were constructed, and wood was transported through railways. At that time, when the British entered tribal areas to cut trees, the tribal people of those regions strongly opposed them. Battles took place in those areas. Hundreds of tribals were martyred

in those battles. Some were captured and imprisoned, while others had their homes destroyed. Some people were tied to trees, and some tribals who cultivated small amounts of farmland to survive were even prohibited from farming [1,3,4].

2.3 Who are Called Tribals?

The methods and customs passed from the previous human generation to the next generation are called traditions.

Scholars who study tribal society have answered this question. For that, it is necessary to consider the definitions of primitive society given by various scholars [5].

A community of local groups living in a specific geographical region, speaking a common dialect, and living a similar cultural life but lacking literacy is called a tribal society [5].

People who speak the same dialect and live in the same social-geographical region are called a primitive tribe [5].

2.4 Characteristics of Tribal Society

A. Limited and Specific Geographical Region: Any society is a regional group. This is a distinct characteristic of every society. Without it, no society can exist. Tribal society is not an exception to this rule. Generally, tribal communities live in remote and mountainous areas that remain isolated from external contact [5]. Tribal society is a community of relatively few people. Since the geographical area where they live is limited, the scope of their social interactions is also small. Due to a specific region and limited population, their social contacts also remain restricted [5].

B. Based on Common Blood Relations: People in tribal society consider themselves related by blood. They firmly believe that their origin comes from a common ancestor. The feeling that they share the same ancestor is very strong. Because of this strong belief, extraordinary bonds, love, affection, and companionship are formed among them [5].

C. Common Religion: Religion and religious practices hold exceptional importance in tribal society. They surrender with devotion to the powers of nature.

To please supernatural forces, tribal people perform various rituals such as ancestor worship (पूर्वजपूजा), spirit worship (भूतपूजा), deity worship (देवपूजा), clan deity worship (कुलदेवता), Girmi worship (गिरणी पूजा), village boundary worship (गावकाकड पूजा), village deity worship (गावदेवता पूजा), Dev Mogra worship (देव मोगरा पूजा), Dongrya Dev worship (डोंग्यादेव पूजा), Wag Dev worship (वागदेवपूजा), Nag Dev worship (नागदेव पूजा), Bab Dev worship (बाबदेव पूजा), Kharetar worship (खरेतर पूजा), Indal Raja worship (इंदल राजा पूजा), Navai worship (नवाई पूजा), village Diwali worship (गाव दिवाळी पूजा), Holi worship (होळी पूजा), village Dussehra worship (गाव दसरा पूजा), village Ditwarya worship (गाव दितवाऱ्या पूजा), Nivachi worship (निवळी पूजा), Pani Panth worship (पाणीपंथ पूजा), and Rani Kajal worship (रानी काजल पूजा). They believe that a village priest or shaman (Bhagat) can appease supernatural forces with the help of rituals chants (आदिवासी पूजाविधी) and magical practices (मंत्र-तंत्र) which is common religious beliefs of tribal society on life [5].

D. Independent Dialect: An extremely important link that unites all individuals in tribal society is their own dialect. The language of any society reflects its way of life. Through the words in tribal languages,

their social relations, beliefs, and kinship ties are expressed. Their language exists primarily as a dialect [5].

E. Distinct and Unique Lifestyle: The lifestyle of tribal communities is completely different from that of other societies. Their social relationships are based on blood and status. Therefore, relationships between individuals are not contractual. Kinship relations hold great importance in their lives. Their system of social control is effective and strong. Their social life is regulated by customs, traditions, beliefs, religion, and rituals. Because they share a common cultural life, similarities are found in their food habits, thoughts, hairstyles, clothing, and overall outlook on life. Due to this, a social unity is seen among them that is rarely found in other societies [5].

F. Limited Technology: The techniques used for cultivating land and other economic activities are basic and traditional. They produce most of their necessities themselves, such as fishing nets, huts, enclosures to protect animals, goats, chickens, and other items. This is evident from the nature of their tools, weapons, and economic activities. The Tribal people use limited technology [5].

2.5 Houses or Shelter Types

The houses of people from the Pawara tribal community usually have sloping roofs. Earlier, there were small huts. Around them, a protective fence made from grass was constructed, which is called 'Tatla' (तटला) in the Pawara language. The hut itself is called 'Khopdi' (खोपडी) These huts are small and are built using approximate measurements. Generally, their height is about 8–10 feet. As the huts gradually became larger, they came to be called 'Haar' (हार). To prevent rainwater from entering or leaking into the house, and to maintain shade and cool air inside for a healthy living environment, materials such as teak leaves, clay tiles, grass, and gravel are placed on the sloping roof. For building the fence, shrubs about five to seven feet high, such as Karavat (करावट) or bamboo, are used. Grass called 'Bajarbhatt' (बाजारभट्ट) is also used. To tie them together, Ataida (अटायदा) or Agaravel (अगरावेल) vines are used. Nigwadya, black cotton fiber, and Turkati are also used while, building the fence. Wood required for daily use is obtained from trees such as teak (साग), Kamav tree (कामव झाड), Sajwadi tree (साजवडीचे झाड), Behada (बेहडा), Anjan (अंजन), Shisham (शिसम), Shivni (शिवाणी), Kusum (कुसुम), Um (उम), Ronchala (रोनछला) and Kushamb (कुशम्ब) [1,4,6,7,10].

2.6 Common Words Used for Various Household Items

The wood of the teak tree is considered best for building houses. It is used for making items such as pat (पाट), dharun varav (धरून वान्याव), bevi (बेवी), undarkhi bevi (उंदरखी), sakti (सकटी), jhulya (झुल्या) and vayar (वयार) which are usually in a total of five or seven. While building a house, the tribal Pawara community believes that the house should have either 3 or 5 structural divisions. Various words are commonly used in the Pawara language. These tools were made and used in-house construction. While taking measurements for building a house, a rope is needed; therefore ropes, cords, strings, and ties are made from small plants such as bhend (भेंड) and san (सन). These ropes are very strong and durable. Using such tools, the extended family and relatives together build a new house. Small sheds called sopatya or hadavya are built near the house for cattle; in Marathi this is called a cowshed. After

the house is fully constructed, at an appointed time a traditional ritual worship is performed. The house is then plastered with cow dung and mud and later coated with reddish soil to give it color, making the house beautiful and clean. After the house ritual, a chicken or rice meal is prepared and eaten. To protect crops from birds, and since fields are in forest areas, houses are sometimes built on elevated places so that the farm and surrounding animals can be seen clearly [1,4,6,7,10].

2.7 Food or Diet

Since the tribal Pawara community lives close to nature, they depend on the materials available there. Wild fruits (रानफळे) found in the forest according to seasons include bor (बोर), bile (बिल), temre (टेमरे), dhamane (धामणे), jamun (जांभूळ), kavath (कवथ), goyadi leaves (गोयदी पाले), mangoes (आंबे), custard apples (सिताफळ), bitter gourd (कारले), kusum fruits (कुसुमचे फळे), gulmohar (गुलमोहर), uma fruit (उमाचे फळ), and tamarind (चिंच). Wild vegetables (रानभाज्या) and leafy greens are eaten during the rainy season, such as pajnyachi bhaji (पाजण्याची भाजी), rajgira leaves (राजगिराची भाजी), tamarind leaves (चिंच), tender leaves of trees (कोवळी झाडाची पाने), leaves of the gondi tree (गोंदीझाडाचे पाने), leaves of the makhakku tree (मखकू झाड), okra, khatphulya vegetable (खाटफुल्या भाजी) red and white varieties, wild cucumbers (रानरान काकडी) such as puvadya (पुवड्या) and potyachi (पोट्याची) as well as leaves of anjan (अजनाचा पाला) and rekni (रेकनीचा पाला) are used in the diet [1,4,6,7].

The diet included porridge made from sorghum (ज्वारी), pearl millet (बाजरी), and maize (मका), along with leafy vegetable curries and fish. Dishes such as raavdi (रावडी) and simple raavdi (साधी रावडी) were also prepared. Sour lentils were made by adding leaves or flowers of khat-phulya (खाटफुल्या) to the dal. In summer, dried leaves or flowers of khat-phulya were added to the dal, and sometimes slices of mango, tender amla vegetable, or tender tamarind blossom leaves (चिंचेच्या कोवळी मोहोर पाने) were added to make sour dal. This dish is consumed in large quantities as part of the diet [1,4,6,7,10].

Earlier, tribal people prepared oil from sesame (तीळ) groundnuts (शेंगदाणे), seeds of the mahua tree (मोहाच्या झाडाच्या बिया) and seeds of the behada tree and used it in their diet [1,4,6,7,10]. Some of special components of food or diet are described in the following sections.

2.7.1 Tubers

Wild tubers such as wild sakriya (जंगली सक्रिया), wild musavi (जंगली मुसवी), wild onion (जंगली कांदा), wild almond (जंगली बदाम) and wild potato (जंगली बटाटा) are also used as food. Children also like eating these tubers. When the thorns of the semwa tree (सेमवा झाडाची काटे) and the tender bark of the teak tree are eaten together, the mouth becomes reddish, like after eating betel leaf. Their taste is sour and astringent. People also search for and eat the resin of the dhawda tree (धावडाचा डिक) and the resin of the kadai tree (कडाईचा डिक). If food items are available in large quantities, they are dried in the sun and used daily as needed. Crops such as sorghum (ज्वारी), pearl millet (बाजरी), maize (मका), pigeon pea (तूर), soybean (सोयाबीन), cucumber (काकडी), khatkalya (खटकल्या), okra, chili, black gram, cowpea (चवळी), green gram (मुंग), sesame (तीळ), groundnut (भुईमुंग), gangaphal (गंगाफळ), raykuhva (रायकुहवा), gilke (गिलके), kuvatha (कुवथा), batti millet (बट्टी बाजरी), rice (तांदूळ), soybean (सोयाबीन) and bhadi (भादी) were cultivated by tribal peoples [1,4,6,7,10].

2.7.2 Non-vegetarian Items

Earlier, tribal people hunted animals such as rabbits, sambar deer, and deer in the forest for food. When they went hunting in the forest, they also hunted birds such as Lavari (लावरी), Titoor (तितूर) Huli (हुली), Kalav (कालाव), and Tithya (तिथ्या). They also went to rivers, streams, springs, puddles, and ponds for fishing. They mainly caught fish such as Cham fish (चाममासे), Tepra fish (टेपरा मासे), Duk fish (डुक मासा), Ghirvati fish (घिरवटी मासे), as well as water birds (पानकोंबडी) and crabs (खेकडे) which were then used in their diet.

Earlier, meat was eaten once a day as part of the regular diet [1,4,6,7,10].

2.8 Grinding Grains

In every house of tribal communities such as Pawara, Bhil, and Vasave, black gram dal and rice obtained from sav were used. Women used to grind sunflower oil at home. People worked cooperatively in the fields. This system was called the padji (पडजी) method. To solve the problem of livelihood, people at that time ate whatever was available in the forest according to their needs. Settlements of the Pawara tribal community were located far from marketplaces. Gradually, changes occurred in the tribal community based on factors such as employment, education, business, marketplaces, roads, transport facilities, and diversity in diet. Similarly, as different food items became available, the diet also changed [1,4,6,7,10].

2.9 Attire or Clothing

The attire of tribal people is different from that of other communities. Men generally wear a cap on their head, a large turban, or a small turban wrapped around the head. In the Pawra language it is called a 'pagdi' (पगडी). Around the waist they wrap a 'dhoti' (धोतर) as well as a 'lungi' (लुंगी) or a cloth, and sometimes a 'shawl' (शाल). They wear a shirt on the body and rubber or leather shoes or slippers on their feet.

They wear thick bracelets on their hands, which are called 'Bhav' (भाव) or 'Vava' (वावा) they wear earrings called 'Gokhru' (गोखरू) in their ears, which are made of gold. A slingshot is tied around the waist. They carry a gun or bow and arrow on the shoulder and show a liking for wearing colorful clothes. Such types of clothing were used by men in earlier times. In the modern era, boys are seen wearing fashionable clothes such as shirts, jeans, T-shirts etc.

Women wore garments such as 'Lugad' (लुगड), 'Full-Dagli' (पूर्ण डगली), 'Ghagra' (घागरी), 'Langa' (लंगा), 'Phulka' (फुलका), 'Odhni' (ओढणी) and 'Dagla' (डगला). These traditions continue till today. Along with these, they used ornaments such as anklets, 'Vakalakadi' (वाकलाकडी), 'Tuda' (तुडा), 'Bangles' (बांगड्या), 'Bela' (बेला), 'Bahava' (बहावा), 'Kurduda' (कुर्दुडा), 'Zhanjaru' (झांजरु), 'Kurdanda' (कुर्दंडा), 'Hasavi' (हसावी), 'Gavasun' (गवसून), 'Patlya' (पाटल्या), 'Bracelets' (कड्या), 'Jhumka' (झुमका), 'Tiki' (टिकी), 'Lali' (लाली), 'Toe-rings Bele' (पायातील अंगठीचे बेले), 'Hetwa' (हेतवा) Worn on the hands, 'rings' (अंगठी) 'Bangles' (बांगड्या), 'Nakhni' (नखनी), 'Thin-Chains' (बारीक-साखळ्या), 'Mangalsutra' (मंगळसूत्र), 'Chhidrya' (छिद्र्या) etc. If their economic condition was good, they used ornaments made of gold or silver.

In today's era, women are seen wearing sarees and blouses. These were considered means of adornment and beauty for women. Earlier, elderly women and men of tribal communities such as Pawra, Padvi, Vasave, Gaviti, Barela, etc., used traditional old attire/clothing, and they continue to do so today. Tribal Pawra people who go to other villages or

states in search of employment can be immediately recognized by their attire and language. Some people settle for a few days in other villages or states for employment. During such times, they observe the lifestyle and way of life of the local people there. Even so, women and men who wear traditional clothing still exist in the Pawra tribe today. The tribal customs and traditions of Satpuda are of this nature [1,4,6,7,10].

Conclusion

Among the tribal communities, groups such as Pawra, Kokani, Barela, Gavit, Padvi, Vasave, Mavchi, Pardhi, Tadvi, and the Bhil of Satpuda are mainly found. In social organization as well, social life, traditions, and lifestyle depend on their geographical conditions, economic status, and traditional customs and way of life. The values and lifestyles of all the above communities show considerable similarity.

Before independence, tribal people lived in the forests, and even in the post-independence period they continued to live in much the same way. Even today, fruits and tubers found in the forests, along with crops such as sorghum, millet, maize, pigeon pea, soybean, cucumber, and other vegetables, as well as hunting wild animals for meat and catching fish and crabs from rivers, are the main components of their diet.

Earlier, elderly women and men of tribal communities such as Pawra, Padvi, Vasave, Gavit, Barela, etc. used traditional old attire/clothing and continue to do so even today. In the modern era, boys are seen wearing fashionable clothes such as shirts, jeans, and T-shirts. Even today, these tribal people are considered backward compared to the developed sections of Indian society.

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