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CULTURAL LIFE OF PARDHI COMMUNITY IN SOLAPUR DISTRICT

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Abstract: The Pardhi tribes of the Solapur district had no means of subsistence other than forest. They were highly associated with the perennials of the forest and they had adjusted lifestyle as well as a culture with the natural environment. Until the 19th century, they did not have much contact with urban and rural communities. Their main occupations were collecting honey, medicinal plants, and wildlife hunting. Due to the protective forest, the life of the Pardhi community has gradually come in contact with the villages. Women began begging, as well as selling items such as needles, beehives, and plant products needed in urban culture. They started producing and selling local liquor. The production and sale of alcohol become their main source of income. Besides, their natural way of life led them to stealing and sometimes engaging in criminal activities. Besides, the thief gained a place as a hunter in his religious life. After independence, their lives began to stabilize and they began to integrate into civil society. Against this background, the present research has thrown light on the changing cultural life of the Pardhi community in the Solapur district. The present investigation is based on the observation and interactions with the community members. This study is descriptive and it has carried out in November 2020. The study revealed that the cultural environment of the Pardhi community is changing with changes in time. They are gradually giving up traditional belief systems and adapting to new approaches to living. They are progressively civilizing and giving up traditional occupations like hunting and stealing. The social orthodox of the community has also diverting into modern rationality. With the improving educational level and accessibility to the resources, community culture is in the transforming phase.

Index Terms – Pardhi Community, Cultural Life, Caste Panchayat.

I. INTRODUCTION

Cultural heritage and diversity are some of the unique features of India. Indian society has diversified in various caste, religions, customs, and regions. Every social community has cultural uniqueness and a special social setup. The customs, traditions, beliefs are changing from region to region and community to community. The flame of unity, racial diversity, linguistic diversity, scriptural and literary diversity, economic and political diversity, social diversity, and cultural unity, etc. are the fundamental features of Indian culture. The culture of any community, region, or country is recognized with their food habits, languages, belief system, traditions, customs, religious ethics, music, arts, and social habits. Any person can be recognized based on his cultural behavior. It is an identity of the community where the person is belonging.

The term “culture” derives from the French word which in turn derives from the Latin “Colere” which implies to tend to the earth and grow, or cultivation and nature. It is a feature and knowledge of a specific community, encompassing language, religion, customs, social habits, religious belief systems, music, and arts.

Pardhi community in Maharashtra and Solapur district having a unique cultural setup. They are having their language, customs, traditions, and belief systems. Due to the low education level, the community was living in orthodox cultural beliefs. As per the census 2011 and Pardhi, Community District Union Official records the population of the Pardhi community is 62831 in Solapur district. This community has more located in Solapur South, Solapur North, and Akkalkot tehsil. These three tehsils jointly contribute more than 50 percent of the total population of the Pardhi community. The very first aim of the present investigation is to identify the changes in the cultural elements of the Pardhi community of the Solapur district.

2. METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

The present research work is a descriptive type of research. It describes the present scenario and changes that took place in the cultural life of the Pardhi community of the Solapur district. The necessary facts are collected through interactions with community members and keen observations. The observations and interactions were carried out in November 2020. The author attempted to study the changes in the cultural elements of the Pardhi community over a period of time. The author has comprehensively discussed the various cultural elements with Pardhi community members and attempted to recognize the changes in the cultural life of the Pardhi community.

3. RESEARCH STATEMENT

The lifestyle of the tribe Pardhi community was forest resource-based and hunting, collecting honey, and medicinal plants for the rural and urban uses were the main source of their income. After independence, the government had taken keen efforts for tribal development, due to which the socio-economic conditions of the tribal Pardhi community started to improve. The education level among the Pardhi community has improved after independence and it has resulted in stabilizing their life. The migration rate declined and they were settled in the urban areas. The majority of the community members give up their traditional occupations and started working in the industrial area, and the agriculture sector. With the increasing civilization, income, access to education, and health facilities, their culture and way of life has also changed. The economic conditions of the Pardhi community have improved over time but still, it is not up to the mark. The majority of the Pardhi community strata is still living in dismal condition. Hence, it is necessary to study the changes that took place in the cultural life of the Pardhi community which is still a socio-economically backward segment of the society.

4. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The major objectives of the present study are as below

1. To study the social status of the Pardhi community in Solapur district.
2. To study the cultural life of the Pardhi community in Solapur district.
3. To suggest remedies for cultural upliftment of the Pardhi community.

5. DISCUSSION

The changes that took place in the cultural life of the Pardhi community are discussed with help of the below points.

Values and Beliefs

The value and beliefs are having a significant place in the cultural life of the Pardhi community in the Solapur district. They hardly compromise with their ethical base, values of life, and belief system. Right from the birth of the child to the end of life, several blind faiths are being practiced in the Pardhi community. The major values and beliefs in the Pardhi community are highlighted below.

1. The Pardhi community believes that the sun is their god and lineage.
2. Devotion to Mother Shakti can lead to success in crime.
3. The justice of the caste panchayat is the final justice.
4. Ghostly, sorcery, and spirits certainly exist.
5. God gives vision in a dream for the unseen events in life.
6. Things will not work out properly due to the unfortunateness.
7. Leaving the cloth dry during the first intercourse of the newly married couple is a sign of impurity. They believe that if the cloth on the bed is not blooded then the bride has lost her virginity before the marriage. Purity can be attained by undergoing severe punishment. e.g. Remove puris from boiling oil, take hot ax in hand.
8. It is considered inauspicious to sacrifice a goat if the goat leaves suddenly and goes to the west.
9. It is believed that Gudi will not be successful if it is not received as per the Gunjavidhi signal.

Now, these hurdles in the socio-cultural environment of the Pardhi community are gradually reducing due to improvement in their education level and being employed in the industrial area. These values and beliefs are changing with the new era and the community is slowly moving towards civilization.

Norms and Customs

Certain norms have to be followed by every member of the community. These norms are unwritten and it becomes customs of the Pardhi community. The specific norms are as below.

1. Use certain signs and symbols in the communication at the time of stealing or at the time of any criminal activities.
2. Members should trust the partners engaged in criminal activity.
3. The occupation should be kept confidential and members should not discuss their plan in public places.
4. The dog flaps, sneezing, etc. are to be considered inauspicious.
5. The Pardhi community does not create any relations with other community members.
6. Stealing is a religious practice and hunting is their religion.
7. Meat and blood being offered to the god and goddess.
8. From an early age, the father or husband can sell the woman in the form of marriage. Not only this, but the wife can also be auctioned off by the caste panchayat for mortgage and recovery of fines. Mortgaged children have to be taken care of by the mortgagor as interest.
9. The rest period for childbirth is five to ten days. But for three months no one ate her food except her husband. Immoral men and women can be outcast. As per the decision of the caste Panchayat, they are fully accepted in society by charging the penalty.

Religious Ethics

The following major religious ethics are followed in the Pardhi community of the Solapur district.

1. A burial person is considered as a god.
2. There are strict religious restrictions on the menstruation of women
3. Strange rituals like dressing, urinating, throwing animals' meat in the corridor, throwing dogs in the well, removing puri from oil, removing the bones of a buried person are done in a way that would seem strange to civil society.
4. Their gods are enclosed on the west side of the Pardhaya Pala (hut). All their idol of the gods kept in the box. It is opened while performing pooja. Nominal worship is always done from the outside of the Pala (hut).

Symbols and Language

The Pardhi community of the Solapur district speaks Pardhi, Gujrathi, and Marathi language. They use certain symbolic language it's known as Parosi while performing secret activities.

Marriage System

Rotibeti transactions take place in the five clans of the Pardhi tribe. People from every clan consider themselves superior. Except for Bhosale, Kale, and Pawar, Shinde marries Kolis. In the Pardhi tribe, dowry is given to a girl. The cost of the wedding is borne by the boy's parents. Even if the daughter is married, she has the authority of the father and then the husband as long as she is

fertile. By giving the dowry of the first husband, the father can remarry the daughter with another man of any age. The husband can mortgage the wife to pay the debt or the caste panchayat penalty.

Child Marriage

Even though child marriage is prohibited by law, the practice of child marriage is still prevalent in this Pardhi community. In the past, children used to turmeric on their children's umbili and tie the knot. Due to the strict rules of the caste panchayat, the parents of the boy and girl would not dare to break up the marriage. Now in the Pardhi tribe, a girl between the ages of 10 and 15 is getting married. If the daughter is not upstairs, she stays at the father's house until she is upstairs. Now that the Pardhi tribe is slowly stabilizing and the activists are awakening. These are signs that they are getting older for marriage. However, child marriage is still practiced in the Pardhi tribe. Restrictions imposed on women in the Pardhi community automatically confirm child marriage.

Lifestyle

As the Pardhi tribe was listed as a criminal tribe by the British government, society was prejudice against them. After the ban on hunting, the community had no choice but they find out alternative ways for income to survive. However, they are not able to give up the nature of stealing and cheating completely and it was not even possible. The reality of the life of the Pardhi community does not go unnoticed. The occupations adopted by the Pardhi over time were mainly distilling liquor, selling liquor, cultivating the land purchased from the government scheme, cultivating others' land, supervising the construction of bungalows, begging, selling leaves and flowers during the yatra (festival), raising cows, buffaloes, and goats. Some Pardhis have migrated to cities / semi-urban areas and started working in different industries. The children of the Pardhi tribe who learned can be seen working. It is equally true that although very few families have settled down, their wanderings have not completely ended due to lack of employment.

5. CONCLUSIONS

The following major conclusions can be drawn based on the above discussion.

1. The Pardhi community culture is changing as per the civilized society, but it is changing at a very slow rate.
2. Still, the Pardhi community is practicing orthodox and blind faith values, belief systems, and traditions. However, due to educational development, it is a declining trend.
3. The access to resources and income sources of the tribal Pardhi community are very limited due to which they cannot fully give up their nature.
4. The socio-economic condition of the Pardhi community is dismal in the Solapur district. They are even not having shelter and still, their life is unstable. The condition of the women in the Pardhi community is also a matter of concern to the policymakers.
5. The cultural blind faiths and social hurdles in the progress of the Pardhi community are started declining, but still; the vast segment of the community is under the pressure of a conventional belief system.
6. The migrated Pardhi in urban areas are now stabilized and properly mixed up with civilized society. They are gradually adopting modern ethical and rational views, norms, and values of life.

7. SUGGESTIONS

The following suggestions can be given for the overall development of the Pardhi community in Solapur district.

1. It has suggested to the government that the government should provide shelter to all the houseless Pardhi community.
2. The employment will be an effective means of improving the socio-economic conditions of the Pardhi community. Hence, it has been suggested that the government should provide employment opportunities for the skilled and unskilled labor force of the Pardhi community. It will improve the financial conditions of the Pardhi community and helps in breaking the vicious circle of poverty.
3. The awareness about educational significance is seen at a very low level. Hence it has been suggested to NGOs, local governments, and activists to create awareness among the Pardhi community.
4. It has found that the majority of the Pardhi community members are not having access to cultivable land. Hence it has been suggested to the government to provide agricultural land at a reasonable rate.
5. A comprehensive study is expected from the government on the socio-economic issues of the Pardhi community and policy implications.

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