



NOTES ON PAWARA TRIBE IN KHANDESH REGION

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Abstract: These notes on the Pawara Tribes are the part of ethnographical research study, sponsored by Tribal Research and Training Institute Pune under Ministry of Tribal Affairs for documenting the healing practices of the tribes. It is a monograph on Pawara tribes, residing in the Satpuda ranges of Khandesh region with special reference to Jalgaon district in Maharashtra state. The social and cultural characteristics of Pawara tribe are documented in this paper e.g. hierarchy of subgroups in the same tribe and ecological coexistence of tribes in the forms of festivals and celebrations etc are explored in the study.

Key Words: Pawara, Khandesh, Social System, Social Sanctions, Culture

THE PAWARA TRIBE

Ancestrally, most local people of the Pawara community have been verified to have a history of migration from Pavagarh to the Satpuda ranges. This spiritual place is located in Pachmahal district of Gujarat. The word Pawara came from the word Pavagarh. They had Rajput ancestry, but with no documentary evidence to establish it. Oral narratives were popular among the local people. It can help to understand the complete profile of the Pawara tribe. Local tribal songs are popular among these people. References to Pavagarh exist in their songs. The available literature on Panchmahal district gives us evidence of their origin and migration (Pawar P., Borse B., 2016). The 'Pawara' tribe had their habitation in Rajasthan and Udaipur, with a history of migration to Pavagarh, and further to the Satpuda ranges. This can help to track the historical voyage of the Pawara tribe.

PAWARA TRIBE IN JALGAON DISTRICT

The Pawara tribe are the dominant across the Chopda, Raver and Yawal blocks of Jalgaon district. The northern ranges of the Satpuda are the most populated habitation of the Pawara. The total population of the district is 42,29,917 of which 14.29 percentage (6,04,367) are Schedule Tribe, comprising 14.11 percentage 'male' and 14.48 percentage 'female' (Census, 2011). Among them, they have subgroups or sub-castes, called Tadavi and Barela. They have lived deep in the forest for hundreds of years. Therefore, they lead the life of indigenous Adivasi people (Aaglave P., 2019). The existence of these tribes was not so well known in Maharashtra. However, tribal groups with large populations were in focus. The Pawara tribe were small in size and located in the northern ranges of the Satpuda. They had little or no interaction with mainstream society. Therefore, there is scope to explore more about the Pawara tribes.

People of the Bhil and Pawara tribes live in proximity to each other. So, a new tribe, the Bhil Pawara, evolved, and is different from the others. Both the tribes are different, but the Bhil Pawara tribe have their own identity. People who came from outside were known as Barela. Therefore, the Pawara Barela tribe also exist in the Chopda block. Besides, Rathva and Nahrya are the other subtypes of the Pawara. In the larger context, they are called as one tribe, i.e., Pawara (Pawar P., Borse B., 2016).. Their dialects have differences. The Barela dialect is more influenced by Nimadi language of Madhya Pradesh state. They have a caste hierarchy as mentioned by the local people from the region. Nahrya are tribal people at the bottom, compared to others. They are also excluded from marital alliances with the Barela, or other groups of

people. In the era of globalisation, these tribal communities were influenced by mainstream society living in town and cities. Love marriages across groups of tribal families are indicators of such influence. Now such relations are socially accepted among the tribes.

SOCIAL SYSTEM OF THE PAWARA TRIBE

The tribes are divided into small groups. Their daily routine and social rules and regulations are pre-decided in the form of social control. The administrative procedures of tribes across hamlets are different. Each hamlet consists of two to five houses and 10 to 15 such hamlets form a village. In the northern part of the Chopada block, there are 15 villages with Pawara population. Ten villages have most of the Pawara tribal population. In other five villages, there is very little population of this tribe. These people work as daily wage labourers and migrant workers. A few of them also work in agricultural plots in the forest. In the Indian social context, 'panchayat' is a popular word. Caste and community-wise panchayat has a significant role in social harmony. It is the backbone of communities where social, economic, cultural and religious work distribution is organised by this system. The importances of social and public values are insisted upon to achieve integrity. At the village level, local residents are stratified into Patila, Gawandayle, Pujara, Badwa/Bhagat, Kotwal, Thakarav, Bangarcha and Dedmanghu, among others.

Patila are popularly known as Patil. It is the top position in the administrative hierarchy of a tribal village. The position is carried forward dynastically, based on tradition and inheritance norms. Patila are responsible for organising all kind of festivals and celebrations and maintaining social discipline and peace in the village. The Gawandayle are famous and rich individuals in the village. They share equal powers in the administration. The Pujara are responsible for conducting all religious celebrations, marriage ceremonies, and festivals such as Nilpi, Navayindal and Bapdev in the village. The Badwa/Bhagat are indigenous health workers in the village and possess knowledge of traditional healing practices. They are mostly engaged in magical healing practices. The Kotwal works under the village Panchayat. He works on the field and engages in public work activities. He conveys messages to people inside and outside the village regarding participation in meetings and public events. Varati Thakrav are engaged in food catering work at public ceremonies such as marriages and religious celebrations. Each Pada has one or two houses of the Thakrav people. Dedmanghu are those engaged in playing Dhol or Dholki and are at the lowest strata of the Pawara tribe.

TRIBAL PANCHAYAT

Tribal people have their own Panchayat. It is a committee of local individuals to resolve criminal and civilian disputes at the village level. It has the authority to punish offenders to ensure justice for the victim. Punishment is in the form fines of Rs 100. Settlement of disputes outside the Panchayat is allowed where chicken or alcohol is given in damages. In matters involving kidnapping another's wife, there have been instances of murder. The old generation of the Pawara tribe are illiterate and strongly believe the tribal Panchayat's verdict. On the contrary, the new generation is more literate have more faith in the state judiciary.

HOUSING PATTERN

Traditional houses of the Pawara tribe are made of stones, mud, leaves, grass, bamboo and teakwood (Sagvan). In modern times, education facilities have reached to the tribes. So, local tribal people are employed in the service sector and this has led to structural changes in traditional housing patterns as concrete is used in the construction of houses. Iron and steel sheets are also used. As the villages are connected to nearby towns and cities, it has brought modern changes in house construction.

RELIGIOUS PRACTICES

People of the Pawara tribe are followers of Hindu religion. They follow Hindu religious practices of worship and celebrate all Hindu festivals, such as Pola, Rakshabandhan, Diwali, Bhaubeej, Akashay Trutiya and Holi. All people of the Pawara tribe participate in these festivals and collectively enjoy the celebrations. The Pawara tribe worship many gods and goddesses. They worship rain as Varun Devata, land as Dharitri Mata, and nature as Nature God. There is also evidence of worship of other deities, such as Bapdev, Seeta Mata, Aasrao, Rani Kajol, Gavshivche Dev, Karhan, Virdata, Palya, Bilatdev, Hivardev, Ochavat, Indiraj, Pandhrmata, Kodev, Govidev, Holka Devi, Aathi, Khetarpau, Girhun, Devmogra Mata and Yahamogi, among others. Worship of the household deity, *Kuldevata*, i.e., *Girhun* and *Ghinchari*, is seen among the Pawara tribes at many places. *Kuldevta* is worshipped in the form of a wooden effigy of two to three feet in height and fixed in the ground. These wooden effigies are worshipped at marriage celebrations and festivals. Most women and men of the tribe wear silver ornaments. Among the most popular ornaments

worn by women during festivals and community celebrations are the Nathani, or Pansala, for the nose; Velya, or Betya, for the armpit; rings, or Kangetla, for the ears; table, or necklace of silver coins; and *Painjan*, or *Tula*, for the ankles. Silver chain, or Hakul, for the ear; Vava for the armpit; and Kurdola for the waist are common jewellery worn by men (Pawar P.,Borse B.,2016).

FOOD AND DIETARY HABITS

Crops and food available in the Satpuda ranges are commonly part of their diet. Maize is part of daily diet. In the olden days, the Pawara tribes gathered fruits and roots, and hunted animals and birds. However, deforestation and stringent wildlife laws of the state have brought changes in the lifestyle and food habits of the tribal people. They are now engaged in agricultural activities for their bread and butter. Maize, soyabean, jowar, bajara, rice and groundnut are common agricultural produce. The literacy rate among the Pawara tribe is low and they are mostly engaged in daily wage or agricultural work. Tobacco chewing, smoking, tapkir, and ash are addictions common among the members the community, from children to old people. Drinking alcohol is a common practice among the Pawara tribe and men, women, children and old people consume it.

HEALTH PRACTICES

The Pawara tribe are conscious about health but ignore family planning. Large families cause extra burden to the family. Lack of nutritious food has affected the physical age of members of the tribe, making them look older than their actual age. The main causes of these are poverty, hunger, low marital age, early motherhood and contaminated drinking water. Indigenous traditional health practices are still used by people of the tribes. Tribal health practitioners among the Pawara tribe are commonly known as Vaidhu, Bhagat, Mantrik, Bone settler, Suine and Potdhari.

FESTIVALS AND CELEBRATIONS

Tribal culture is full of festivals and celebrations that are part of their tradition, rituals and mode of worship. Community celebrations help clear the air in strained relationships. Folk songs, tribal dance, food and renditions in local dialects are a part of such events. Happiness and mirthfulness are enjoyed by the community (Bhamare N.,2015).

Holi is the main festival of the Pawara people. Fifteen days before Holi, people of the community gather at a common place and exchange greetings. This festival is popular among the common people as Gulalya Bazar. People gather and smear *gulal* on the foreheads of each other. Young boys and girls are more interested in this event as they get the opportunity to select their life partners. Boys apply *gulal* on the cheeks and forehead of girls. This is the marriage proposal from the boy to the girl. The girl can decide whether to accept or reject. If the girl accepts the proposal, the couple run away from their home to get married. Now the 'run away' practice is proportionally less. Mutual consensus between the families of the boy and girl help to resolve issues. However, parents of the boy have to give dowry to the girl's family.

For eight days before Holi, the tribal people celebrate the festival of Bhongarya Bazar, where they congregate at the nearby weekly bazaar, or marketplace. They participate in a rally, where villagers play the *dhol* and invite the Gav Patil for worship of the *gods or goddesses*. Competitions involving playing of musical instruments, dancing and singing by tribal people showcase their art and culture. The celebrations last from morning till night (Gayki.G, 2019).

After the successful completion of Gulalaya Bazar and Bhongarya Bazar festivals, the main attraction is the celebration of Holi. It is celebrated in every hamlet. The Police Patil or Pujara of the village participates in a ritual where he walks on a bed of embers to seek personal blessings. If his wishes are fulfilled by the Holi Goddess, he walks barefoot over the embers. For this, a 7x2x3ft rectangular pit is dug on open ground outside the village and filled with embers. This is a traditional ceremony among the tribal people. If the walker's feet do not hurt, it means that he is pure of soul. It is considered a positive omen from the Holi Goddess. Otherwise, it is seen as a curse. Positive omens are considered the go-ahead for the annual Holi celebrations.

SOCIAL SANCTIONS AMONG PAWARA TRIBES

Human society is based on the culture of customs, beliefs, rituals and hierarchy. The manifestation of these is seen in people across cultures, including modern and indigenous civilisations. The Pawara tribe have their sub-groups/castes and hierarchy. Barela and Rathva are at the top of the strata, compared to the Bhil and Nahrya Pawara. Tribal society does not permit inter-marriage among the different sub-groups/castes. Under the community sanctions, a strong notion prevalent among the tribes is that twelve days after a person dies, he/she gets rebirth. They also believe in the 'purity of the soul' and that impure souls haunt humans

on the darkest nights. It is believed that when a woman who has had extramarital sexual relations dies, her soul is transformed into an owl. They also believe that taking untruthful oaths leads to adverse effects in the future. Sorcery and witchcraft are commonly observed practices among the Pawara community. There are two types of magic – good magic and black magic. Good magic is considered beneficial. Black magic is to cause harm others. Bhagats are involved in performing magic rituals.

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