

"Religious And Social Life of Dhangars In Maharashtra"

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Preface:

There is existence of many castes in all parts of India. Dhangar is one of the caste among it. Grazing sheep and goats is considered as the main occupation in Dhangar caste. There are many stories said about the origin of Dhangar society. In Sanskrit language there is a word "Dhang". Dhang means mountain. People residing on mountains are Dhangars, this is how Dhangar word has come in origin. Person engaged in animal husbandry is called as Dhangar. So Dhangar or Shepherd is a word meant for it. Earlier tribal used to consume raw food, tuber root and animal milk and meat together. The speciality of these people is that when they started to live in group with grass, grains, sheep, goats, horses, donkey, camel, cow and some people doing farming, they were counted and treated as people who live in herds. The people whose livelihood is dependent on only herds and animals are called as "Shepherds". "Dhan" means cow, "gar" means who possesses it so the one who keeps cow is abater or holder such an origin is associated with the broad signification with Dhangar as a word. Meaning of Dhan is also taken as Laxmi means Dhangar. Though Dhangar is a caste based word even then a Dhangar is known by various names like Dhangad, Dhankar, Dhanvar, Dhanpal, Meshpal, Paal. In the book "Marathi Sanskruti" written by S.B.Joshi it is said that there is reference of Dhangar caste in the

Rugveda and Atharvveda. Explanation of Dhangar society is also found in Vaidic mantras. In fact Dhangars were Aaryas. They had various names as Avipa, Ajapa, Mendhpal, Gopal in Vaidic era.

Vedas is very ancient book. It was divided in four parts viz. 1) Rugved, 2) Saamved, 3) Atharvved and 4) Yajurved (Japved). Explanation of Dhangar is found at some places in Vedas. Because of Vedas, Dhangars are counted as residencies, in Yajurveda the note of Dhangar-karuba-udaav include-Dhangad is found. Gopal (one who grazes cows) or Yadav Gawali, Unhipaal, Aajpaal (one who keeps goats) and Dhangar (Karuba) one who keeps goats and sheep (Shepherd) such explanation is found. So Karuba Yadav, Ahir Gwala, Gawali, Dhangar these all castes are one and the same. Region wise their names are different. The information regarding the original people of Dhangar society and Dharmaguru is found. As Vedas itself is the base, the information regarding Dhangar race is found in it. In the era before history in Vedas an entry regarding sacred nagari of racial family of Karuba Dhangar is found. The name of the great person of Karu Race was Samrat Pourba such entry is also mentioned in it. Its capital and race was in Pratishtanpur. They selected "Kurunaad" today's Karnataka and made it centre in order to spread Kurba Kurvansh in whole country then after he was known by

different names by suffixing Kurba - Kurvanshi- Kurba Dhangar. The division of Kuruvansh were made on the basis of various businesses and so acquired names according to their businesses, so Dhangars are known by different names in various states of the country. The last king as a successor of Kuruvansh was "Samrat Yayati". The name of Yayati's son Puran is mentioned in the Vedas.

Research Procedure:

In the present research while studying the social and religious lifestyle secondary factual collection procedure has been used and has tried to take the overview of the social and religious lifestyle of the Dhangars in Maharashtra.

Religious life:

Like ancient Indian literature(wangmay) the establishment of public literature (lok>wangmay) is base on religion only. Keeping religious needs of society in eyes books like "Brahmin" and "Aranyak"have come in origin. Moreover in order to establish religion in the society and it to be sacramental, Aryas have composited areology (dharmashashtra). With that it left behind its effect on peoples life in society and likewise it affected on our lives too and people started to live life with these principles. This brought importance to devirilization in routine life since dawn to dusk. This is only natural because of the soft reflection of religion in the folk literature that comes from such a lifestyle, because the traditional way of life is the creed and utterance of the people, that is, the true heirs of folk literature are primitive in the Vedas. In Indian life religion has been of much importance since ancient time. Even today in this computer age influence of religion can be seen on folklore.

It is natural to have an interconnected relationship between religion which is integral to Indian folk life and the folk literature that emerged from this life. The same can be said of

folklore, which is a part of folk literature. The ritualistic practice involves the desire to attain mozh by enriching and enriching the deities. There are gods and goddesses following the various practices of Dhangar. Behind birth, marriage and funeral rituals, there are rites and in these rites only there lies principles of religion. Religious sentiments are also believed in public beliefs, customs and traditions. The idea of divinity comes from people who don't want to sit in the door, eat onions, brinjals etc. Sunflower, lotus, pachpalvi etc. are shrines of Dhangars.

Khandoba and Biroba are his special gods. Jejuri (District Pune) and Aarewadi (District Sangli) are the places of these gods whom Dhangars consider very important. The famous Historians Holkars were Dhangars and famous for worship of Khangoba. Holkars have contributed a lot in raising the majesty of Khandoba of Jejuri. Worshiping goddess Tuljabhavni is also prevalent in them. They execute the Navratri of goddess and offer coconut to the goddess on the tenth days. The conflict with Dravidians with the arrival of volume 4 Arya did not ruin the tradition of Aryan Dhangars despite David's defeat in this conflict. Both of these traditions influenced each other and the process of hybridization continued. So the number of gods, customs and rituals increased. The old tradition continued in accepting new cultures, new ideologies and new traditions. Discovery of new arts like Jagran, Gondhal, Sumbrat, Lifting Tali, Huik determine the most important aspects of life. In this culture, Mhasoba, Khandoba, Dhuliba, Mariaai etc. along with the gods Ramkrishna and the sun, moon and others remained in total popularity. From ancient times, the influence of the gods on the Dhangars continued for later. It kept on increasing and orbits of religion increased.

In the mythology, the God of the epic started from Aryas. Life of Dhangars is religious. When religion is the soul of life, it is only natural for

the society to discover the religion through the culture of folk literature. Religion can make the structure of any of our societies. It shows how much unity there is and how well it is harmonized. Many people think that the religions of the primitive people are just full of delusion. It may not be part of reality but it is not true. The religion of the wild ones is certainly confused. But they make the physical description of reality. Using symbols, they express social needs and community interests. From the emotions of the religion of the community such useful things are done to the community. Lack of written code of religion created a lot of goodwill, customs and beliefs in religion. Dhangars are Dravidian native is an assumption of many researchers. From the folk literature we find that folklore was the collective healing not only the Dhangar tribe, but also of the entire caste before the Aryan state.

Cultural life:

The houses of the stable Dhangars are as long as sloping as the pavilions. They are covered with grass. They have only one entrance and no windows. A nappy is worn ahead, diagonal on the head, blanket on the shoulders, wearing vahanas (slippers) and a long thick stick in the hand. Women often wear red robes to their knees. Dhangar females like silver ornaments more. Dhanagar males wear silver cordon in right hand. They wear silver ear ring too. Dhangars are very fond of silver coins. Their children's necks carry rows of rupees from Malikambara. Dhangar is basically hardworking and economical by character so he saves money. Traditionally folk life is characterized by folk culture as it incorporates the culture of folk life. Traditional social system the traditional way of life of castes and tribes in the social system, along with its ethics, customs, folk beliefs, religions, ideas, rituals, its habitat, the methods of making the dishes, their costumes, their ornaments, their beauty their art and physical culture, folklore, traditional

things like folklore, invention of words like folklore they are all manifested from loksanskriti.

While studying the cultural life of Dhangar, the deities and rituals of Mariaai, Mhasoba, Vithoba, Khandoba, Dhuloba, Asra, Satvai are important. The nature of religious rituals is similar to that of those Gram Devta. Worshipping Mariaai's carriage, worshipping rituals in worship of Maraai, rituals, sacrificial rituals, worship of asras, rituals of sheep slaughtering, ritual of chanting sheep, feeding the munja in worship of munjoba and the rituals such as dahak are followed in worship of Mariaai. Dhangar society seems to be far from the urban culture. As a result their own culture came into origin. Traditionally this culture was preserved and developed as a rule of development. It has its own developmental speed though it doesn't have developmental speed like urban culture. Making human life comfortable, beautiful and prosperous is the only obstacle that can be brought to the mainstream by any culture. It is said that India had a glorious culture. But this culture seems to hold all the tribes of Bahujan community in superstition, religious, rituals.

This culture can truly create a cultural convergence of Dhangar. Folk literature is abundant in Dhangar culture. Folk culture is seen through the literature. Culture evolves through the way of life of different groups in the society. The religion is the soul of the culture. In order to preserve the religion, women not only sing various types of folk songs but also rangoli, wall paintings, carving, weaving, embroidery are seen while saving many arts. In rural areas, there are folk songs of young men and women.

Objectives:

1. To take an overview of the cultural and religious life of Dhangar community.

2. To study the current status of Dhangar community.

Conclusion:

While studying the religious and cultural life of the Dhangar community, the Dhangar tribe has existed since primitive times and should be Dravidian. Shepherd appeared as the chief business of Dhangar community. The Dhangar tribe rulers, in ancient times, are economically backward and consciously, the tribe, though tribal, has been found to be deprived of major concessions/ facilities. So today it is still reflected in ignorance, poverty and superstition. Although the people of Dhangar tribe have moved to different villages in the last few years, it cannot be said that their wandering is completely gone. In today's industrial age, wealth is becoming more familiar with the outside world and the prevailing standard of living is changing ideas and practices. Even in the twenty-first century, the importance of fairs and festivals in the Dhangar tribe has not diminished. They still celebrate rituals by arranging fairs of god of their caste. The Dhangar tribe is spread across India and Maharashtra under different names. Dhangar's social life is characteristic. There are some sub castes in this. Their standard of living is simple and distinct from other tribes. Their main business is of knitting blankets. In this tribe the joint family system is much higher. Awareness of confusion in cultural life, folk songs, wedding ceremonies, jatra, ritual worship, vows and sacrifices etc. factors

distinguished the cultural life of the Dhangars.

Context:

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