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A Study of Warali Tribe in Maharashtra

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People living in the vicinity of nature are called 'sovereigns of the Jungle' while a few others call them 'Sons of the Soil' Researchers and thinkers call them 'Original Natives' 'Backward Hindus' and 'Primeval Men' The constitution of India identifies them as 'Scheduled Tribes.'

A study of Indian society makes us divide the society into three groups. The Adiwasi's, The Rural and the Urban. The Adiwasi's being the minority As per the 1991 census the Adiwasi's form 8% of the total population and as per the 2001 census 9% Though low in number they are not concentrated in one particular state. They have scattered across the nation and they are divided into 427 different tribes. Maharashtra is one of the states in India where Adiwasi's are found 'Bhill', 'Warali', 'Koli', 'Thakur', 'Kathkari' and 'Gond' are the tribes mainly found in Maharashtra a 'Warali' happens to be the main tribe among them of the 35 districts of state 'Thane' is the dwelling place for the tribe. This paper aims at a brief study of this 'Warali' tribe.

Methodology- The present paper is based on secondary sources which include reference books journals and websites.

Objectives- The present study aimed at the following objectives.

1. To Study the traditional life of the 'Warali' tribe in Maharashtra.
2. To study whether the 'Warali' tribe has come in contact with the advanced society or not.
3. To study the change in the traditional life style of the waralie's as a result of their contact with advanced society and changing times.

Hypothesis

1. The 'Warali' tribe is coming in contact with the advanced society.
2. Traditional system of social restrain is less effective.
3. Change occurring in the Marriage System and Family System of the waralis.
4. Village Panchayats and courts are replacing the clan council of the waralis
5. Transformation is coming over the economic and life of the waralis.

phratry. They don't have a joint family system. Though parents and siblings work together on the common land they live and eat separately this makes the aged parent live in bad condition. As children support the defaults in earning their livelihood the birth of a baby pleases all. As Waralis are patrilineage a girl after her marriage takes her husband's name and the groom takes his father's. The Waralis are patrilocal. The bride after her marriage leaves her parental home and goes to stay at her in-laws house

Waralis have free family relations. They call each other by their first name. The bride and the groom move about freely in the presence of their in-laws. Women don't feel abashed. Waralis do have adoption system. But they don't perform any ritual for the purpose. Being childless is the only cause for adoption of course they have very few occasions of adoption because the tribe allows a second marriage if the first wife is childless and if they have daughters they are allowed to obtain Ghoror.

Clan-system of the Waralis

Clan is called vargani by Waralis clan observes exogamy. Every clan has a different surname. They maintain that each clan has a different ancestor. One clan has one ancestor and so members of one clan consider each other consanguineous. The Waralis can't trace their origin beyond three to four generations. They are unable to trace their first ancestor. Though they are scattered they experience closeness and communication.

Judicial system of the Waralis -

The Waralis value their clan council very much. A person howsoever great he may be can't go against his society. A person disrespecting the verdict of his clan council is excommunicated by the tribe as well as by the village. If two persons belonging to two different villages are involved in a conflict the members of the clan councils of the respective village meet to pass a verdict. And if the jury of the respective villages are found to be partial the jury of two other villages are invited to do justice. There is yet another body to issue justice among Waralis. It is called Patel or Jetala. The Patel or Jetala is the chief justice of the tribe. In matters of crisis regarding the social position of person the Patel or Jetala is so entitled to give justice. He is also responsible for implementation of the justice the title of Jetala is hereditary. The punishment for a crime is in the form of fine. A criminal who pays the fine is acquitted from the crime. The highest punishment is believed to be excommunication from the caste.

Change

Village Panchayats are gradually replacing the clan council. The village panchayat settles the quarrels and establishes harmony and protects the village the Indian penal code has the right to punish the criminal among the Waralis.

B) Economic Life of the Waralis -

Economy of the Waralis is subsistence based. They somehow manage to meet their basic needs. As they don't have any special skill or technique they have to rely upon hard work. A few details about their economic activities.

1) Farming- Farming is the chief occupation of the Waralis but their methods are age old, Use of old seeds, lack of proper cultivation, absence of irrigation facilities and fatalism reduce

their production and they somehow manage to earn from hand to mouth.

2) Woodcutting-Jungle is the source of income for the Waralis. They work as wage earners for cutting trees and transporting wood.

3. Grass cutting-Waralis are employed by landowners for cutting grass on uncultivated land and storing it in the form of hayricks.

4. Garden-hand farming and other sundry works The Parsi and Irani people own some garden land and flower beds in the area inhabited by Waralis. The Waralis get a variety of jobs in these garden lands. Besides they are employed in the construction work for building houses, roads, bridges etc some get jobs in the brick laying industry

5- Medium of exchange- Along with money as a median of exchange the Waralis have a barter system under which they exchange rice, salt, salted dry fish etc.

Change -Observable change is coming over the economic life of the Waralis due to the efforts of the government. The former barter system is being replaced by money exchange. Formerly they were cheated by members of the advanced society as they didn't know value money. But these days they are getting used to money exchange system. Formerly they had no idea about transactions in markets, banks and credit societies. But recently awareness about these is created among them. Formerly they were exploited by the moneylenders and landowners when they had press-service. Now there is a law against it and it has minimized their exploitation. A positive change is covering over their economic status as the government provides those jobs complementary to agricultures, training for handicrafts and loan at low interest rate

B) Religious Life of the Waralis -

Waralis have faiths and beliefs and they follow religions like other Adiwasis. Farming is their chief occupation and their means of subsistence depend upon nature, which is uncertain. This makes them have faith in god. They worship their god, seek the blessing and then start any important work. They have faith that start any important work. They have faith that god assures health success in work and safeguards them from illnesses and perils. Waghaya, Narandeo, Hirwa and Himai are the chief deities of Waralis. Each deity has a specific task. Waralis each deity has a specific task. Waralis worship them and seek their blessings. For example Waghaya protects them and their cattle from wild animals. Narandeo bring rain Hirwa is their family deity which brings wealth however Himai has no specific task. The religious priest of the Waralis is called Bhagat. He is highly honored by the Waralis and he has to perform a wide variety of tasks such as performing religious rites, foretelling, treating the sick and ailing. The 'Bhagat' receives a special training of his profession. Waralis believe in ghosts and black magic.

Change-As a result of their constant contact with the advanced communities the Waralis have accepted the gods and deities of the Hindus. They perform 'satynarayan' at the hands of Brahmin. A priest of the advanced society performs their marriage. They celebrate Ganesh Festival. They have realized the importance of group marriages which reduces expenditure. In recent times primary health centers and mobile clinics have improved in their villages and the Bhagat is sidelined.

Summary - The change coming over in the life of all Adiwasis is not identical. The rate of change is fairly fast in tribes such as 'Mahadev Koli, Kokana, Rajgod and Bhil'. While tribes such as Media Gond Thakur Katkari and Warali stick to their traditional life style more or less. The change coming over their life is both positive as well as negative for example.

1-Gram Panchayat replaced clan council underlined importance of money. Place of a person in a family is decided on the basis of economic utility of the person in the family.

3-Deline of community spirit and rise of individuals.

4) Change in values. Honesty last its hold. Importance given to worldly life.

5. Traditions of polygamy, wife on credit kordyawar taking a second husband came to an end.\

Conclusions-

1- The Waralis have come more in contact with the advanced Hindus.

2-The Governments effort to bring all Adiwasis in the mainstream of progress has affected the Waralis too. As a result the traditional agencies putting social restrain are replaced by law, court and police department.

3-Change in the marriage system of the Waralis as a result of their growing contact with advanced society traditions of second marriage of a man bridge on credit came an end change in the family institution community spirit replaced by individualism important to a person earning money.

4-Change in economic life of Waralis Money is accepted as means of exchange end of barter system. Occupations supporting farming undertaken by Waralis acceptance of modern farming methods.

5-Change has occurred in the religious life of Waralis. Their acceptance of the Hindu god and deities performing marriages and 'satyanarayan' at the hands of Brahmins.

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