

Clan Structures and Social Organization Among Tribal Communities in Ahmednagar District

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Abstract: *Ahmednagar district is the largest in Maharashtra in terms of area. This district has 14 tahsils and these tahsils are inhabited by tribal communities like Mahadev Koli, Thakar, Pardhi, katkari, Gond and Bhil in greater or lesser extent. Indian society is diverse, and not only are people of different races, religions, and cultures living in India, but there are also people speaking different languages and dialects, which shows that there is diversity in the tribal society. When considering the social organizations in tribal society, the importance of the clan has to be mentioned after the family. Although the place of the clan in social life is unique, the clan is an independent social group. The clan is a group based on kinship. In short, the tribal community believes that the clan originated from some animal, bird, or tree.*

Keywords: tribal communities, clan, diverse, races, religions, dialects

1. Introduction

'Kul' is called 'Clan' in English. A clan is a group of one - sided kinship. Clans are found to be prevalent everywhere in tribal society. Robert Lowy, while defining clans, has said that a clan is a group based on one - sided kinship. Clans consist of many blood - related families and lineages. Tribal societies believe that the clan originated from some imaginary ancestor. Membership in the clan is inherited by a person.

While studying the clan in tribal society, various thinkers have expressed their views on how the clan originated. Among them, the famous thinker Margan has put forward a theory regarding the origin of the clan. According to him, 'The clan may have become prevalent after the origin of the family in tribal society. First, the matrilineal clan became prevalent. And then it is believed that the patriarchal clan came into existence.' Tylor, a famous thinker, has presented his thoughts regarding the origin of the clan. According to him, there are three stages of clan origin. First, matrilineal clans, matrilineal clans, and finally, the patrilineal clan became prevalent. He has expressed this opinion. A clan includes many families. The number of clans in any tribe is not fixed. There can be many clans in a tribe. The people of the Mahadev Koli tribe, while recounting the origin of their clan, consider Mahadev and Parvati as the original gods, based on mythology. Therefore, the worship of Mahadev holds an important place in this tribe.

The tribal community of Ahmednagar district believes that their clan originated from a fictional ancestor. These ancestors are mainly humans, humanoid beings, animals, birds, and inanimate objects. Such physical objects or animals, birds, and natural objects with which our clan has a mystical relationship are called totems or deities. This appears to be an important basis of tribal society. From this, it is evident that tribal society has a special respect for animals, birds, trees, mountains, rain, water, and rivers. They have a single clan organization and clan exogamy. It is seen that totems have originated on different bases in different tribal tribes.

Dr. Alvin has told some stories about how totems originated through accidental events.

- 1) Some people went to the forest for hunting, one person hunted pigeons. Then due to some reason, the person became blind. Then he was taken to a witch doctor. The healer, keeping in mind the sequence of events, connected the two events and told the people that this man had become blind because he had killed a pigeon. Therefore, the people of that group developed a sense of fear towards the pigeon and started expressing respect towards it. After some time, the people of that group started considering the pigeon as the totem of their clan. This custom is seen among the Koli Mahadev, Bhil and Thakar tribal communities of Ahmednagar district.
- 2) One day during the monsoon season, there was a lot of rain. The river was flooded. People could not cross the river because of the flooding. People started feeling worried. At the time of such a crisis, a crocodile, a big fish and a turtle came there. They carried the people across the river on their backs, which made the people who were riding the crocodile, the fish, and the turtle respect the animals. So, they considered them totems of their clan.
- 3) Once, while some tribal people were hunting, they hunted a deer. They roasted the deer and had dinner there. One of them got food on a lotus leaf, so later the people of that clan started using lotus leaves. They considered the lotus leaf as sacred and started worshipping it. Hence, that clan started being referred to as the Lotus Clan.

In this way, animals and birds began to be worshipped as ancestors. A special sense of faith, trust and respect was created towards those animals and birds. Totems are considered very sacred in tribal society. Therefore, tribal people perform the tasks of maintaining the sanctity of the totem, worshipping it, holding festivals, etc. with great devotion. According to Andrew Lang, tribal society initially named social groups based on the names of animals and birds for whatever reason. Animals that were included in the clan symbol were considered venerable.

According to Herbert Spencer, initially the tribal people used to name their clans after the names of animals and birds. Often the clan was known by the name of its original male ancestor. Symbols are seen embedded in the various clans of the tribal community in Ahmednagar district. The Hindu Mahadev Koli tribe of Ahmednagar district has a gotra - based social organization. There is a total of 24 gotras in the Koli community. They are as follows: Wangpal, Kadam, Pawar, Kedar, Buddhiwant, Namdev, Kshirsagar, Bhonsla, Bhagivant, Jagtap, Gaikwad, Suryavanshi, Puliwala/Palvi, Uttrecha/Uttare, Dalvi, Gawli, Aghesis/Agase, Chavan, Ujaji/Dadoji, Sagar, Shaikachashesh, Kharad, Sirkhi/Shirke, there are generally twelve gotras under one gotra. They are called Barabude and they call each other Gotbrother. The Shiv Mahadev Koli community is found in large numbers in Pune, Nashik, and Ahmednagar districts.

The main deity of the Bhils is the village god Mogra Dev, while the clan symbolic deities are the trees Marmari, Hatiri, Gator and Apta, and the animal Manjar. The clan is important in the social subdivision of the Bhils and they help each other. Among the Bhils, there is intermarriage at the tribal level and Ex - marriage at the clan or gotra level. Since one cannot marry within one's mother's or grandmother's clan, one does not marry one's maternal uncle. One cannot marry his wife's sister while she is alive. Polygamy is accepted among the Bhils. The language of the Bhil community is Billi, a Sanskrit derivative, and is very close to the Gujarati language.

Although some Bhils were forcibly converted to Islam during the reign of Aurangzeb, their number is very small and they all follow Hindu traditions. Therefore, they are practically Hindus. They have many sub - divisions. The Bhils have a gotra system and 27 to 36 gotras are mentioned. The gotras are divided on the basis of the family crest. Clans or sub - clans have been recorded from 54 to 150 to 162. Some examples of clans are Jamuniya (jam tree), Rohini (rosewood tree), Awaliya (aval tree), Mori (peacock), Ghodmare (horse rider), Masarya (fish), Sannyan (cat), Maheda (horse rider), Ghataya (miller's goiter) etc. Gotras. The names of the gotras are derived from animals, plants, and some from the names of ancestors or their habitats. Ethnoven has given the names of some of the clans/gods of the Bhils as follows.

Clan name Clan symbol

Ahir - A fish called Ahir which is like a snake
 Bhavare - Village bird
 Bhorkole - Kohale
 Bijari - Binu
 Bongade - Village bird
 Magar - Crocodile
 More - Peacock
 Pawar - Pigeon

The people of the above gotras do not hunt or kill the animals of their gotras, but show respect towards them. Some gotras have the names of Rajput clans. For example, Sisodia, Pawar, More, etc. According to Ethnoven, some clans among the Bhils have emerged from mixed blood. Eg. Ahir, Barda, Baria, Gaekwad, Gomawa, Mali, Mori, Pawar, Rathod, Thakur etc. There are clan groups in the tribal Bhil society and each clan group has goddess clans. They do not intermarry. Every clan has its gods. They have a Bhat who

preserves their clan and lineage. They have their devas. Marriages do not take place within the same deva. One cannot marry within the clan of one's mother and grandmother. Therefore, one does not marry one's maternal uncle.

The tribal community of Pardhi in Ahmednagar district has an important clan deity and each clan or surname is associated with a specific deity. For example, the Pava clan has 9 gods. The Ghosala clan has 5 gods. The Chauhan clan has 7 gods. This gotra or clan structure reminds us of the social structure of the Gondas. There is a caste panchayat in the Pardhi community and the post of caste panchayat is given only to a person with the surname (gotra) of Kale. Among them, there are sub - types and clans like Dhammalaya, Khalkaya, Pinjriya Katkaya, Shelya, Nembhaya, Dudhaya, Godhaya, Pawar, Suryavanshi, Sonawane, Mali.

There are no gotras in the Thakur tribal community of Ahmednagar district, so the Thakur people do not believe that this community originated from any one sage or ancestor. No one can say who the original father of this community is. There are many clans among them, and they are called Archanam. Some of the clan names of the Thakar tribal community can be generally described as clans or gotras such as Dadakuli, Babakuli, and Soyre Kuli. These names are related to the names of various animals, birds, and trees in nature and to family traits.

2. Conclusion

The customs, religious ideas, rituals and worship methods of the tribal tribes of Ahmednagar district are of different types. The religious customs of the tribals have evolved from nature worship. All objects in nature are worship able. Similarly, our ancestors also consider dead souls and ancestors as gods. Similarly, the tribal community has also given an important place in worship to some gods and goddesses of Hindu religion. The Thakar, Bhil, Pardhi and Mahadev Koli tribal communities worship various gods and goddesses. The Mahadev Koli consider Mahadev as their Janita or creator. The Thakar tribal community worships Kalsubai and Bahiroba. The Pardhi community worships their ancestral deity, Sun God, ancestral tank, etc. in their home deities. There is a temple of Mahadev at every twelve kosa in the tribal region. Mahadev and Shankar are the ancestral deities of Mahadev Koli community.

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