CHAPTER: 8

TRIBALS
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The tribal question in our changing world must be clarified in its historical context, and contextualised in relation to the environment. For it raises fundamental issues for our society: of social equity, ecological sustainability and people’s participation; of cultural autonomy and democratic integration. And in India national development cannot be separated from tribal integration, for that matter the marginalized minorities in our society.

Next to Africa India has the largest number of tribal population in the world. The total population of Scheduled Tribes in India as per 1991 census is 6.78 crores which is nearly 8.01% of the total population in the Country.

The total population of the tribals in Maharashtra is 73.18 lakhs i.e. 9.27% of the total population of Maharashtra. Maharashtra ranks third in the tribal population in the country. There are 47 tribes in Maharashtra. Out of these, three are categorized as primitive. They are katkari, Kolam and Gond.

Katkaris are also known as Kathodis because of their old occupation of making Katha (Catechu) the thickened sap from wood of Khar (Acacia catechu). Although this occupations is almost abandoned by the katkaris. They serve as agricultural labourers and sell firewood and some jungle fruits. They kill rabbits, hares and monkeys. The occupation of fishing is mostly done for domestic consumption. They are also busy in coal making and brick manufacturing. They worship the Gaondev or minor gods Mhasa, Vetal, etc. They usually hunt wild boar or Dukkar and cultivate millets like Sawa or Varai and Nachni (Eleusine coracana).
The Katkari tribal population concentrated in Pune, Raigad and Thane districts. As per the 1991 census, primitive tribe population of Katkari tribal of Pune district is 12,054. The tribal community is declared due to the following:

(a) Pre-agricultural level of technology.
(b) Low level of Literacy.
(c) Stagnant or diminishing population.

The literacy percentage in district is 25.11% and state literacy percentage sex wise is as: Male – 21.70%, Female – 10.79 (Total- 16.25%). However, literacy % of Katkari tribals in Pune is 16.38, which is much below the district and almost equal to state level.

Katkari tribals, dwelling in different terrains, have always been victims of health hazards, nutritional disorders and problem of development.

Due to lack of communication, transportation and developmental facilities it becomes rather difficult for health care providers and health educators to provide satisfactory services to remote tribal villages.

Health status:
Tribes fare badly when compared to the rest of society on health indicators such as like expectancy, infant mortality, crude death rate, population growth rate, antenatal care for pregnant women, immunization coverage and birth, etc. They fare poorly in general comparison, which have a bearing on their health status, life, income level, food security and nutritional status, literacy and education and drinking water and sanitation, housing, roads and communication network, etc.
Social, cultural and economic feature of Katkari s:

The Katkari tribe has nomadic tendency due to poor economic conditions, they have not taken much advantage of educational schemes and hence their literacy, as given above is far from satisfactory.

In the social status, the katkaris are considered lowest among all the tribes of the region, and therefore, all the superior tribes do not accept food or water from Katkaris. They are on an average thin, dark complexioned, thick lipped, with small and curly hairs.

The katkaris prefer to live away from the villages in localities of huts called 'Wadi'. Both men and women are generally short - medium built. The men mostly wear loin cloth, while women wear sarees only up to the knees and choli. But one thing is very peculiar that, after doing their professiona l jobs like farming, fishing, labour works, being very addicted, they consume 'Gawthi Daru' (liquor) every evening. It is taken not only by them (Gents) but also even by their whole family (ladies and grown-up children), who are also addicted to consume liquor and they fight each other furiously for showing supremacy in the community.

It is known that they mostly prefer to have sex activities in day time and not during sun set/rise or in night time, out side their dwelling place, mostly in forest areas where they spread leaves of Tectona grandis for some comfort doing sex.

As per Katkari's hypothesis, they (parent) use blood of placenta for newly born child in the following manners:

(a) If female child is there, they apply blood on armpits and private portion of body to prevent hair growth.
(b) If male child is born, they never adopt such practices.
Katkaris by religion are animistic. Their main object of worship is forest God, Tiger God, who is supposed to look with peculiar favour upon them. Similarly, they worship tribal gods, such as Cheda, Hirwa, Supati, Goandev, Hindya, Shivya, etc. The Katkaris also worship Hindu Gods and Trees of Peepal and Banyan at the time of Nagpanchmi. Herbs, shrub and trees are used for various medicinal purposes. They also keep Apta leaves for well wishing on the eve of Dashehra festival and also sell the same. Thus, Katkari tribals are devotees of forest Gods. Perhaps it is this reason that vegetation and wildlife is well protected in the sacred groves of Dev rais located there.

They celebrate Diwali, Holi, Pola and Pittar Amavashya. In their marriage ceremony they do not call Brahmans, but the head of the community presides over the marriage ceremony and divorce. Widow marriages are also allowed among the katkaris. They generally burn the dead.

Like the other tribe, the Katkaris have the traditional Panchayat. The leader of Wadi, who is called as Naik is the chief among the Panches. The case of adultery, divorce and breaches of marriage rules, etc. are referred to the traditional panchayat, which fines the defaulter and recovers the amount of fine which is spent for the whole community.

Since 1963, the continuous efforts of Maharashtra Govt. have been made to collect exhibits and build up a museum depicting tribal life and culture. They always used huts made up by them in different types. They also use various domestic utensils, which are simple in nature and made out of earth, wood and pumpkins. The tribal people decorate their bodies by ornaments, tattooing marks, bead strings and other articles.

Entertainment: Music and dance play important role in tribal life. Their love for it is widely known. The tribal rituals and social functions provide ample opportunities to sing and dance. Their dance forms are according to the occasion
and season. The musical instruments are prepared by local available material such as bamboo, gourd wood, palm leaves, hide skin and horn of dead animals. They have different types of musical instruments. Traditionally, they use various instruments and masks:

Tarpa: A wind instrument played by tribes to express their joy over the new harvest, nearly 30-40 men and women dance to the tune of music instruments. They believe that this device was gifted to them from Naran God.

Jaunsari: This instrument made up of fruit of \( Lagenaria \text{ sps.} \) and used for weekly entertainment.

Drum: Made up of wood and animal skin with ropes, used in marriage and festival celebrations.

In addition, they also use various devices for their daily life requirements like fish catching articles, etc. They also use various article (utensils), made up of bamboo strips and other forest materials for selling in nearby market.

Veerna: They make it out of bamboo and leaves of \( Leea \text{ macrophylla} \), which is used to protect them from rain while working in fields.

Vadu Viddal: A broad basket from bamboo strips, in different designs. These are used to keep fish for selling in nearby tribal markets.
PLATE NO.7

A device for drying clothes during rainy season.

A lady, preparing liquor using Gul (Jaggery).

A newly married tribal couple.

A tribal distilling liquor.
A medicine man holding twig of *Lagerstroemia parviflora* Roxb.

A medicine man, Ram Janu at Bhimashankar

A herbal medicine man of Kune village of Mawal taluka, maintaining medicinal plants.
A man wearing a 'Veerna' to protect from rain: made from *Leea macrophylla* and bamboo strips.

A tribal showing equipment for hunting of birds.

Tribal men showing their fishing equipment.

A couple showing their fishing equipment.
PLATE NO.10

A tribal group at Pedsyapur.

Tribal community at Jamunwadi.

Tribals of Shinoli, showing fish catching and liquor making devices.

Tribals with their catch of Crabs.
PLATE NO.11

Musical instruments used by tribals
(Courtesy - TRTI)

Celebration of marriage ceremony by Katkari youths.

Youth entertaining in the evening with musical instruments made from *Ficus* sp.
PLATE NO.12

Tribal habitation at Pedsyapur

Tribal youth in Nachni (Eleusine coracana) field.

A device developed for the protection of illness of mouth & foot in domestic animals like goats and sheep.