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Nomadic and Denotified Tribes

India is a country with a diverse cultural legacy. Due to geographical diversity of the nation, the great task of uniting the entire nation has been done in many ways. We are associated emotionally with even those people also who are different from us, in language and lifestyle. Let's study about such nomadic and Denotified tribes, connecting various cultures.

Nomadic and Denotified tribes migrated from one place to another for occupation and various objectives. Seeing the role of these castes in the uprising of revolt of 1857, the British government of that time, separated them from the community and declared some of them as criminal community under the 'Criminal Tribes Act 1871'. It took a long time for this propaganda to come to an end.

After independence Government of India liberated these tribes from this Black Act in 1952 and gave them a respectable status as Denotified tribes.

Know This

According to the list published in the state of Gujarat till the year 2020, 28 tribes have been included in the nomadic tribes and 12 tribes in the Denotified tribes.

Nomadic and Denotified tribes : Characteristics and lifestyle

Some tribes constantly moved from one place to another for livelihood whom we know as nomadic or denotified tribes. These tribes, were scattered almost all over India. They made their living by doing small and big occupation. Their life was largely based on forest resources and animal husbandary. Nomadic and denotified tribes roamed far and wide with their animals. They exchanged grains, clothes, utensils and other items like wool and ghee etc. from the settled farmers. Some nomadic people loaded goods on animals and moved from one place to another to buy and sell goods.

Some Nomadic and Denotified tribes were associated with trade of sheep, goat, horse, cow, buffalo, donkey, camel, bull, ox, etc. Small and big hawkers of different tribes went from one village to another for selling self-made rope, grass mats and large bags. Some Nomadic Denotified tribes included Kangsia, Modwana, were involved in the trade of bangles and cosmetics.

A distinctive identity of these tribes was that their language, social affairs as well as their lifestyle remained identical. Due to lack of stable social system, they lived a life of different level compared to other societies. The government has taken special measures for the development of these tribes like Sansi, Kanjar etc. as well as groups like Vanzara, Karkamundi, Haransikari by including them in Nomadic and Denotified tribes. For the development and preservation of their culture, the government conducted a special study on them and a detailed report has been prepared in 2008. Attempts have been made to give them human rights by giving them constitutional status of Nomadic and Denotified tribes.

The nomadic tribes of India include Aghori, Bahurupi, Vanzara, Baranda, Bhamta, Bhovi, Chitodia, Helva, Irani, Jatigar, Kotwaliya, Bairagi, Pardhi, Talwar, Kamti etc. Nomadic tribes in Gujarat include Bajaniya, Garudi, Vansphoda, Bhavaiya, Rawal, Kangsia, Salat etc. the denotified tribes include

Chhara, Dufer, Miyana, Vagher, Devipujak, Sandhi etc. The Government of India has made special plans for the development of these tribes by including them in the most backward tribes. These plans include matters to make these groups permanent as they are constantly migrating. Special residential schools and hostels have been set up for their children.

We will try to know about the lifestyle of some nomadic and denotified tribes in the context of India and Gujarat.

(1) Devipujak : Among the denotified tribes in Gujarat, Devipujak tribe is found in most parts of the state. Along with production and trade of vegetables, these people are found to be involved in some traditional occupations. In this society due to low standard of education and lack of awareness, superstition some evil practices are still seen in some places as a result, poverty is seen in the society.

Caste tribunals play an influential role of an arbiter in solving social disputes or family problems in this tribes. As it solves problems, issues related to their internal dispute, their problems are rarely seen in the courts. In recent times as the standard of education has increased in this society, reforms have taken place in economic and social aspects.

(2) Vanzara : Pople involved in Vanjar are known as Vanzara. Vanzara was the most important among the Nomadic tribs. It has been a wellknown name in Indian social structure since ancient times. Most of the merchants were engaged in th transportaion of mrchandise (commercial) goods). Collection of their commercial goods was known as ‘VANjar’ (Tandu). Alauddin Khilji used them to transport grains and goods to the markets of Delhi. Emperor Jahangir has also mentioned about carrying of grains on oxen by Vanzara and selling them in cities. Special thing about Vanzaras is that, during the war, th merchants used to bring grains and goods for the Mughal army by ox cart. In a way, Vanzara were the link between India and the world. Many goods from Central Asia came to India and also went out through them.

Thye are located in India, Pakistan and Afghanistan. This society disintegrated after the British rule. Poor Vanzaras became the traders of bangles, combs etc and some became labourers. Some were involved in clay work also, although thy developed in post-independence India because of education and other government schemes.



Vanzara

(3) Nat (Bajaniya) : We often see Nats or acrobats juggling on ropes on the road in the market. They earn their livelihood by performing different tricks. They know many arts of physical skills. They entertain people by skills like performing magic tricks, walking on a rope, walking on a stick. But being uneducated and poor they stay away from the mainstream of the society. Constant migration has also been an obstacle in their development. Now even their traditional occupation has come to an end and they have started blending into mainstream of the country.

(4) Kangasia and others : Kangasia, Vedva, Madari, Dafer etc are included in Nomadic and Denotified tribes. Kangasia mostly sell combs and cosmetics. They also live in undeveloped environment due to migration from one place to another and closure of their traditional occupations. The lifestyle of all these castes are mostly seen in the form of Kabilas (family). Even though they live in far off places, their language and lifestyle are similar. Their diet and dress are almost same.

Know This

● Although some nomadic as well as denotified tribes migrated regularly, still their internal relations survived. On any fixed day of the year, people of this caste would gather at a designated place. It was during this time that their relationships like marriage were decided, as well as information about things like someone's death during the year was shared. This system was really notable.

Change with changing times

The Central Government and State Governments have tried to merge such tribes into the mainstream through some special schemes/plans for their upliftment. An atmosphere for securing employment has been created by providing them facilities like education, health, sanitation, housing etc., No longer we see vadi, bajaniya, madari, performing tricks on the road. Unfortunately, these people who were in the mainstream of entertainment have lost their identity now. The government has tried to develop them as much as possible by associating them with science and technology. But there is still poverty and unemployment among the Nomadic and Denotified tribes due to lack of education and awareness. This suggests that special efforts are needed to uplift them.

Imagine

Suppose you are a member of a Nomadic tribe / community changing residence every three months. How will this affect your life ?



Exercise

1. Match the appropriate pairs :

A

- (1) Kangasia
- (2) Nomadic tribes
- (3) Vanzara
- (4) Devipujak
- (5) Denotified tribes

B

- (a) Bhavaiya, Garudi, Vansfoda
- (b) Caste tribunals play an influential role of an arbiter
- (c) Miyana, Vagher, Dafer
- (d) Transportation of grains and commodities
- (e) Special report on Nomadic and Denotified tribes
- (f) Sales of cosmetics

2. Find the blanks :

- (1) The tribes which are continuously migrating from one place to another are called
- (2) and have been set up for educating children of nomadic and denotified tribes.
- (3) Collection of merchandise was recognised as

3. State whether the following statements are 'True' or 'False' :

- (1) The government has announced housing loan schemes for Nomadic people.
- (2) Nomadic and Denotified tribes like Nat, Bajaniya, Kangasia live in Gujarat.
- (3) The Nuts, Bajaniya live in 'Ness'.
- (4) Shah Jahan has mentioned about works of Vanzaras in his writings.

4. Answer the following questions :

- (1) What kind of exchange took place between Nomadic pastoralists and permanent farmers ?
Why ?
- (2) State the efforts made by the Government for the development and upliftment of the Nomadic and Denotified tribes.
- (3) What are the tricks performed by the Nat to entertain people ?
- (4) How were Vanzaras important for the economy ?

