

Cultural and Social Rituals of Raval Caste Especially in Sabarkantha District

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ABSTRACT

Our India is a vast sub-continent with a colorful richness of variety and wisdom. It has various communities, castes, sub-castes and all these have created a complex nature of our society. This mingled complexity has given us enchanting richness and unfathomable wisdom. In India, the tribes used to pour in from the far regions and their passage added their local colors into the panorama of our culture. Thus, our society slowly and steadily grew and got enriched with these received cultures. Today, we have hundreds of sub-castes and many languages. Every community has their own language pattern as well as cultural traditions. They are proud of them too.

Though we have variety, they are not totally different from one another. Every tradition bears the impact of the other one. They are intermingled with one another. Generally, we all belong to the Aryans, Dravidians and other eminent communities that had arrived many centuries ago. So, basically we belong to the same ancestors. Its result is seen in the identical traditions of several castes and communities.

One of such castes in Gujarat is the Raval. In Sabarkantha district of Gujarat, we can find many villages with Raval community. They are generally in the business of farming and animal husbandry. They have their identity for their culture. Basically the Raval community is considered as the backward community of Gujarat. But they are more enriched in their traditions and cultures than others. In modern times when the most of the communities have been leaving their traditional values behind, the Raval caste has kept up its traditional values and rituals.

The members of this community rely upon animal husbandry. Their business of animal husbandry is well known to the world. They have chiefly camels, goats for their professional work. In Sabarkantha, the Raval community has the houses in every village. They generally

have camels in their verandah. When you visit a village and if you find a camel in the verandah of a house, you can easily and unmistakeably come to the conclusion that it must be the abode of the member of this community. They chiefly used camels to import goods from nearby towns or cities or they exported crops and grains from the local farmers to the nearest Mandi. Even today also some of their community members continue such works. They use their camels to import or export agricultural crops or goods. Secondly goats are also seen being kept by this community. But in modern time we can see some of their members in the government services or in the private fields.

It was a time when this community need not to focus on the education and relied totally on the paternal business of agriculture and animal husbandry. They had low level of formal education. Now, they are not behind from the other community in this matter. They send their kids to schools nowadays and mainly ensure their graduation. In the matter of girl education, this community was considered backward. They didn't use to send the girls to school for higher studies. But with the advancement of age of knowledge, they have started to send their girls for the higher studies too. It has though to be confessed that there is much to be done in the region of the girl higher education in this community. We can find some examples of girls of this community doing government jobs or private sector jobs. But they are not enough for our satisfaction.

The community follows Sanatan Hindu Dharma worshipping *Chosath Jogani* goddesses as their Kuldevi in sabarkantha district. They feel proud to be the heir of Lord Shiva. In Sabarkantha, the community usually believes in *Ramdevpir Maharaj*, too. They have also superstitions. But we can see the receding level of superstitious beliefs with the advancement of education. They are god fearing people and always observe honesty and kindness. They are famous for their hospitality.

Their food is the grains of wheat, maize, millet, rice and vegetables. They are non vegetarian. Their dresses for men are Dhoti and Kurta and for women are Sari. But we can see them in modern dresses in modern times. They welcome the birth of girls and boys evenly. They don't have tradition of child birth. Marriage is celebrated with enthusiasm in this community. They also perform *Dhundh* on the first Holy of a new born baby.

Especially in Sabarkantha district, social ritual "*kodo bharavvo*" takes place in the 7th month of pregnancy. This is one type of festive occasion for upcoming baby in the family. All the family members and relatives are very excited to see this occasion when the newborn baby comes, "*Chhthi na lekh*" is performed on the sixth day in this ritual. Mother put a small stick, *kanku*, and sheet of paper under the bed of a child. It is believed that the Goddess Vidhata comes this night to write the fortune of a child and with these things. After that *foi* has the right to give name of a baby child as per the tradition of the community.

The marriage is a spiritual step. But before the marriage, "*sagaiprasang*" (ring ceremony) is performed. This community also includes modern aspects in modern age. Both the boy and the girl wear golden ring each other. "*gouna*" (songs) are sung by elder women. Friends give precious gifts to them on the day of marriage, and bride's house and groom's house *Chakala Pujan* (worshipping of potters wheel) followed by *Pithi* (turmeric apply to the body). Like in other communities the bride comes at her parents home after 10 days of marriage as per the social standards decided by the community. we have seen this tradition in other communities also. Thenafter she goes to her in laws house with her brother or uncle on the second day with "*Peti*". This is called "*Aanu bharavu*".

Most of the people of this community who are illiterate, work as a "sharnaivadak" in marriage functions. They play flute and Nagada in musical way. We can say that it is in their blood. In many villages and urban areas of Sabarkantha, the people of other communities often call them to play in marriage functions.

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