

CHANGING LIFESTYLE AMONG THE DARD TRIBE IN JAMMU AND KASHMIR: A SOCIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

Hilal Ahmad Dar*

Abstract

Development of any society largely depends upon the participation of the people from all the sections of society. Usually, it is possible if people were given equal opportunities, irrespective of their background. (Ravi & Raj 2006). Both socially and economically deprived groups are living in the rural areas and they are facing all kind of miseries in leading their lives (Sharma 1994). In accordance with the Constitution (Jammu & Kashmir) Scheduled Tribes Order, 1989, Dards has been given the status of Scheduled tribe. This paper is centered on the changes witnessed in present day on the life styles of Dard tribe, focusing on their social, family and economic life. It begins with the brief description of highlighting their material assets like housing structure, transport facilities, pattern of dress and the type of vehicles owned and their day to day usage. . The main focus of attention was to illustrate the upliftment in their social sphere. Other than this the status of women in the studied area is also discussed.

* **Research Scholar (Ph.D), C/o: Department of sociology, Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar.**

INTRODUCTION

For anthropologists, social scientists, and historians, the key area of interest in the past and present is to go through the socio-economic background of the sample under study. The socio-economic transformation of the rural poor has been a focus of attention of the Government since the inception of planned development. Governmental machinery has been acting as a catalyst effecting change through implementation of a wide spectrum of programmes that are aimed at generation of employment, eradication of poverty, infrastructure development and social security (Sarkar&Baruah 2007). The tribal population in India, though a numerically small minority, represents an enormous diversity of groups. They vary among themselves in respect of language and linguistic traits, ecological settings in which they live, the extent of acculturation, dominant modes of making a livelihood, level of development and social stratification (Xaxa Report 2014). This paper is centered on the changes witnessed in present day on the life styles of Dard tribe, focusing on their social, family and economic life. It begins with the brief description of highlighting their material assets like housing structure, transport facilities, pattern of dress and the type of vehicles owned and their day to day usage. . The main focus of attention was to illustrate the upliftment in their social sphere. Other than this the status of women in the studied area is also discussed.

The present study has been conducted in Bandipora district in Jammu and Kashmir. A total of 18 villages from Bandipora and Gurez tehsils, 9 from each tehsil has been selected for interview. The interviewing was done via an interview schedule for collecting data which was framed in accordance with objectives of the study. In all a total of 234 respondents comprising of 13 households from each village was interviewed. Main focus was laid on developmental

parameters like infrastructure; housing structure, transport facility, status of women, economic resources/ employment.

HOUSING STRUCTURE

Sociological research since the mid- 1950s' has clearly shown that 'household' and 'family' are different though related, categories. The household is now used increasingly as the primary unit, not only in micro-studies by sociologists, but also in such large-scale data collections as those of the census and the national sample survey organization. However, the continuing use of the nuclear – joint family dichotomy vitiates the analysis of household data (Shah 2014). Normally, the household is considered to be a group of persons living in the same house (called *Ghar* in all north Indian states) and eating meals cooked at the same hearth (Chula). It is a site where some of the deepest emotions and sentiments in human life are played out, all of which are integrated to the complex web of relationships between its members. Every member is important, male or female, old or young. The web includes a large number of relationships – between father and son, father and daughter, mother and son, mother and daughter, brother and sister, mother-in-law and daughter-in-law and so on. Every individual is involved in more than one relationship simultaneously (ibid).

Looking at the housing structure of Dards living in Bandipora, they are well constructed with proper use of bricks, cement, stone, iron and tin resembling to that of the houses located at the main Srinagar city. While as some (too less) households in Gurez have traditional outlook constructed mainly with wood, stone and mud. It is only few decades back it has been replaced by bricks, cement, iron and tin. Generally, the traditional houses were made mainly of wood and

it consists of on a maximum of three storeys, but the large proportion among them has two storeys. Due to the cold climatic conditions in the region, houses were constructed of wood and making of excess windows were prohibited.

TRANSPORT FACILITY & ROADS

The movement of people from one place to another generally to other villages or to tehsil or district headquarters is through vehicles (four wheeler public transport) mainly *Tata Sumos*. However, personal vehicles too play on their roads with minimum use of two wheelers. Generally, the owners of these four wheeler public transports are locals. If one is in hurry he/she can hire a TaTa Sumo by giving more money. The best thing the researcher encountered is availability of vehicles in the main market of Gurez called *Dawar*. The movement of these public vehicles is generally on day time. Due to the border area there is always a security vigil from every corner of Gurez. So, one should always take identity cards along with them and for an outsider there should be authority letter from any competent person specifying the purpose of visiting the place.

The tribal areas of Bandipora particularly Gurez is located in remotest an inaccessible places bordering Pakistan Occupied Kashmir (POK). As the road is the backbone of all developmental activities and for defense needs taking this into consideration the connectivity and road network has been developed in fast manner. However, with the efforts of the governmental machineries in the area are also worth mentioning. Because the area remains buried under snow for at least four months in a year and during that time period goods get damaged by the snow. So, the maintenance cost remains fairly high every year.

PATTERN OF DRESS AND EATING HABITS:

Gurez was traditionally famous for its woolen clothes and handicrafts, but due to modern textile factories and due to the lack of support from the government machinery in the state this industry has lost its importance. Gurez was one of the main production centers of woolen articles. Clothing in Gurez is unique in the whole country except it has resemblance with the valley of Kashmir. It presents the distinction of multifaceted, variegated and unique cultural blend, making it distinct from the rest of the country. It is not only from the different cultural forms and heritage but from geographical, ethical, social entities, forming a distinct spectrum of diversity and diversions (Blog.kakcho.com)

The typical dress of these people is a long overcoat called 'Pheran'. Both men and women wear it and there is difference of stitching on them. It is used to cover and protect the body from the cold especially during snow. In the past its cloth was taken from their livestock (domesticated sheep), but now-a-days its cloth is easily available in the market. It is a loosely fitted garment which in winter makes use of Kangri. It is a portable earthen pot woven around with wicker filled with flaming coal, used as a heater to keep themselves warm during winters. Usually it is made up of wool. But the one which is used in summer is made of cotton. Kameez Salwar for women with different stitching designs and khan dress for men is commonly used by these people. Women use scarf and elder men wear topi on their head. It present study it has been observed in the field that over few decades, the Dard people have adopted the dressing pattern of the others living in other parts, as well as of other regional Indian cultures. Interviewer has seen that the dressing styles and habits exactly resemble to that of the mainstream society or that is used in rest of the valley. Jeans, T-shirts, trousers etc. for men have replaced their traditional

dress but they use Pheran and Kameez Salwar or Khan Dress as well. Less numbers are wearing the Pheran with Kameez Salwar. It has been narrated by one of the women respondent, “We see all the television serials on fashion and dressing styles. We compel our spouses or family members to bring the same for us”.

STATUS OF WOMEN:

Status of women can be measured in terms of degree of freedom and equality enjoyed by them (Bala 2004). In our country the status of women is culture, region, and age specific. It is only in relationship to man’s position in each society, social class, country, environment, age group of the population, that one can ascertain the status of women. It is not just describing but actually comparing, as it is the sum of differences between the status of men and women which leads one to the idea that women have a distinctive position in society (Davendra 1994).

SCENERIO OF DARD WOMEN:

The present situation is totally different from the traditional one. The change is witnessed with in them via education, liberal outlook, hand in decision making, modern dressing style, communication, representation of their will and mixing with mainstream society. At present women are also taking part in greater voices in the village administration via implementation of seventy third constitutional amendment act and various women were elected as panch in their respective halqas. As narrated by an ex- women panch, “when I was panch I was having better reputation in our village and I was performing the developmental works in my village and was also participating in meetings for the development of our village. But at present (July 2018) our tenure is over and we are unable to perform such works. Before entering in village administration

the people from our neighborhood were not known to me properly. But after winning everyone was coming to my house for various purposes and I also visited some places as well”.

The status of women differs from tribe to tribe. However the status of Dard tribal women is comparatively better as compared to other tribes of Jammu and Kashmir. It is because of the reservation policy and through this they get employment and via employment automatically their life became better. However, irrespective of this, also due to attaining education their vision has undergone a change and they get enlightened to the outside world too. As per the findings of the researcher and the sample under study there were 99 per cent of households among them were employed. As the status of any person depends upon the social structure of the community, social and economic position one possesses. It is a universal fact that if the economic conditions of a family would be good then the social status of the women would be good. All the respondents being the followers of Islam, there are some religious restrictions imposed on them, which also influences their status. In patriarchal society, the status of women is dependent on the man, the family and the surrounding social structure. But in modern society it depends upon the varied number of factors.

ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES:

The harsh climatic conditions and in the past the unavailability of resources, poor road connectivity, lesser availability of basic commodities, long months of snow ridden area etc. have substantially affected the socio-economic conditions of the people. However, from the past few decades with the introduction of road connectivity, availability of basic day to day commodities and their availability at highly subsidized rate and the benefits taken from reservation policy,

their life and setup has considerably changed nowadays. The most fascinating change which has been witnessed from the field is the migration of lot of people by taking employment in the mainstream society and out of their own place of habitation. With the developmental initiatives taken by the government at various levels towards upliftment of these people has considerably changed them.

TYPES OF VEHICLES OWNED:

When asked about the income levels almost invariably all the respondents appearing very cagey. It was not they were aware as what type of research was undertaken. Such outlook ought to be understood in the background, infrastructural development of their houses, material assets and the surrounding neighbor in the locality. The information with regard to the type of vehicles owned is important indicator in measuring socio-economic development in the society. Not only this, but it also reflects the standard and luxurious life one enjoys.

The data with regard to the ownership of assets, there are 78 respondents who owns motorcycle followed by 69 respondents owning car (personal), four wheeler (commercial) comprised of 55 respondents and a bicycle 43 respondents respectively. Thus it can be deduced from the data that there are a good number of respondents who are occupying vehicles of their own, besides geographically isolated area.

POSSESSION OF HOME APPLIANCES/ELECTRONIC GADGETS:

Like the previous question regarding the ownership of vehicles respondents were also asked about the possession of home appliances or electronic gadgets. From the studies area, it is

deduced that all the respondents were having their own television, mobile phones and Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG). More than half of the respondents were having radio, electric oven/microwave and iron in their houses.

CONCLUSION

We can easily conclude from the study that the present situation is totally different from the traditional one. The change is witnessed within them via education, liberal outlook, hand in decision making, modern dressing style, communication, representation of their will and mixing with mainstream society. The material changes witnessed in the modern housing structure, using luxurious transport facilities, adopted the dressing pattern of mainstream society and a good number among them owing to material assets. Hence we can easily say that the change has undergone from last few decades back.

REFERENCES

- Bala M & Monga O P (2004) Impact of women employment on decision making in families. *Social Welfare*, Vol. 51 No. 5, pp. 13-16.
- Davendra K (1994) *Changing status of women in India*, New Delhi: Vikas Publications.
- R. V. Ravi and D. Sunder Raj (2006) "Empowering Rural India: An Overview", in, R.V. Ravi, et.al, (ed), *Empowering Rural India: Experiments and Experiences*, New Delhi: Kanishka Publishers.
- Shah (2014). *The writings of A M Shah, the household and family in India*, New Delhi: Orient Black Swan.
- S.R. Sharma (1994) *Panchayati Raj and Education*, New Delhi: Mittal Publications.

- Sarkar S. S & Baruah P (2007) Rural Development Socio-economic perspective, Jaipur: Mangal Deep Publications.
- Xaxa Report (2014) Report of the high level committee on socio-economic, health, and educational status of tribal communities of India, Ministry of Tribal affairs Government of India.