

CHAPTER XV

CULTURAL CHANGE IN THE DANGS AND ITS IMPACT ON THE DANGI PERSONALITY

I. INTRODUCTION

No society and culture are ever static. An unchanging stagnant society decays and ultimately dies.

The Dangi society and culture have undergone some changes. The Dangis have no inventive genius. The changes are the result of borrowing. After 1948 the contact of the Dangis with the outsiders have become frequent, easy and smooth, and the facilities and opportunities of coming into contact among themselves have also increased. Their interests and contacts have become wider. Almost

every adult Dangi might have visited one or more of the nearby towns like Bilimora, Bulsar, Bansda, Navapur, Songarh, Jalgaon, Nasik etc. Many have visited cities like Surat and Navasari. Quite a few are fortunate to visit Ahmedabad, Bombay and Delhi also.

II. CHANGES AND PERSONALITY ADJUSTMENT

Any kind of change in the ways of life affects the personality traits in a more or less degree and the individual is required to adjust accordingly. People who cannot adjust to the demands made by the changing circumstances and ways of life feel maladjusted and certain personality difficulties arise.

Many of the changes that are constantly occurring in the Dangi society, for example, changes in the fashions of clothes and ornaments, use of varieties in the articles of food, housing accommodation are of some importance and require minor adjustment. The Dangis have adjusted to them in a happy manner. These changes and the steps for

economic development taken by the government have added to the comforts of the people. Some of the changes, for example, change in the method of cultivation, facilities of transport, medical aid etc. have been introduced, so slowly that people can keep up with them without much difficulty. Some of the changes are, however, so significant and appalling to the Dangis that they have created mal-adjustment for many people, no matter how well adjusted those people were to the circumstances of life prior to the changes. Such changes are especially those which are the result of education and political controversies. There is a wide gap being created between the children who are educated and their parents who are uneducated, and live in their narrow world. Political controversy on the status of the Dangs, whether to be included in Maharashtra State or Gujarat State created a field for fight and quarrel, and put the people in the state of unsteadiness and doldrum. These changes have created emotional conflicts and instability in the personality of the Dangis.

III. THE DANGIS AS A SCHEDULED TRIBE

According to the constitution of India the Dangis are a scheduled tribe. Provision has been made in the constitution for appointing a special body which attends to their needs and the special and general welfare of the scheduled tribes. There is a separate body to investigate the safeguards provided for tribal population and to report to the president of India on their working. Special financial grants are provided for programmes of social and economic welfare of the tribal people. So the government is taking keen interest in promoting the welfare of the Dangis and help the agencies which undertake such activities.

IV. SOURCES OF CHANGES IN THE DANGS

Cultural changes in the Dangs have occurred mainly through the following sources :

- (a) Education
- (b) Facilities of transport and communication
- (c) Legislation
- (d) Economic Development.

(a) Education :

Opening of the schools, and spread of education have caused violent changes in the ways of thinking and behaviour of the Dangi children and youths and adults. In 1945 one school covered the average of 38 sq. miles(1). The number of schools and students was 6 and 284 respectively in 1948. It increased to 70 and 2600 in 1952. At the end of first Five Years Plan in 1955-56 the number of schools was 88 and that of students 3677. Today, in 1960 the number of schools and students is more than 100 and 5000 respectively. There is one high school teaching upto secondary school certificate examination class.

The aim of Education in such a backward region should not only be to make the children literate but to create an atmosphere and build a positive attitude towards education. The purpose is served if the children are under constant care and attention and get a square meal. The purpose is very well fulfilled in starting 'Ashram Schools' at Kalibel, Rambhas and three other places. In the primary

1. J.G. R.S., Vol. IX, July 1947, p.166.

schools conducted by the school board a mid-day meal is served to the students.

It is natural that where the parents are not literate and children are the economic assets, the advantage of the facilities of education is not taken as fully as it should be. The Dangi parents can see the difference between an educated and an uneducated. The government officers and servants are superior and 'Saheb' because they are educated. But as a Dangi put it to me, "We Dangis are 'Bharamsat', people of no value'. Though we are not educated we get meals and live. Those who are educated also get a living and live". So many Dangis are neither keen to send their children to the school nor repugnant to it. They are not only indifferent but are in a state of indecision. This is an expression of laissez faire attitude of the Dangis. So in most of the schools even though the strength of children may be more on the role the actual number regularly attending the schools may be much less.

It is felt that the spread of education may create a conflict between the old and the new

generation. By going to schools and reading books the children's field of vision and experience becomes broader. Their notions of 'eatable' and 'non-eatable', 'good and bad', 'clean and dirty' will change. This kind of change is evident in the students of the Ashrama schools. In the Ashrama schools the students are under the constant supervision and care of the Ashrama people. Such a student does not put on the dress in the Dangi fashion, takes bath daily and keeps the body, clothes and room clean, forms the habits of hygiene and many other habits not typical to the Dangis. Such a student when, he goes back to his home during the vacation sees and feels the difference between him and his parents and siblings. If the child's mind is not guided properly he may begin to hate and abhor whatever is different from his experiences. If the parents and child cannot adjust it may lead to a serious conflict between them. This conflict is evident from their talk and behaviour. Common Dangi parent would not be ready to marry their daughter to an educated boy for as a Dangi put it to me, they believe that "An educated boy is a non-Dangi, he does not eat fish and meat, he does

not know how to kill birds....." Nor are they ready to marry their boys to an educated girl for, "She is a literate one, her dress is non-Dangi. She will not be hardworking. We cannot afford such a member in the family". Sometimes it creates an attitude of repugance in the minds of ^{the} parents also. Once I accompanied a teacher from Ashram school of Kalibel who was going to Menhskatri to collect the students who did not return to the school. We went to a Bhil woman's house whose daughter had ~~been~~^{run} away from the school. Seeing the teacher coming, she shouted, "Do not enter my house". I have not given away my daughter to the Ashram. I do not want to send her. She has become mature and I want to marry her".

These new experiences have become the theme of songs also. There is a song -

1. Write one letter and forget the ~~another~~,
 The teacher beats me, the teacher beats me.
 People of village have gone to the river,
 And I am left alone, the teacher beats me.
 There is a marriage in the village,
 All have gone for dancing,

And I am left alone.....

The teacher beats me.

2. Oh, master say, why my boy should learn,
 If he has no work, he will go for fishing.
 If he has no work, he will go to offer
 hen-cocks,
 Say, why should he learn.

(b) Transport :

Facilities of transport and communication provide greater opportunities for coming into contact with the distant people. Moreover, the import of articles of various kinds becomes possible. Hence new articles and fashions become current in use. As mentioned earlier people visit the nearing towns and villages. So they know that the world is wider than the Dangs, and compare their ways of living with those of others. Frequent contact with the outside world and cultures, and with the social workers have made the Dangi aware of the problems of the Dangs and made him politically conscious and socially forward looking.

(c) Legislation :

The civil laws and the criminal code of the old Bombay and now the new Gujarat State are applicable in the Dangs also. The Dangis as such are a peaceful people. Incidence of crimes is more about theft, beating, drunkenness, and illicit distillation. Observation of the government and police records show that prohibition was a success in the Dangs. Only lately the incidents of illicit distillation and drunkenness have increased. But the number is negligible as compared with those in other districts. It does not mean that the Dangis have a keen sense of law and are law-abiding. It is a typical expression of their general way of regressive behaviour, avoiding conflict with others.

The incidence of prohibition crimes has increased for two reasons. First, the Dangis who formerly did not know the art of illicit distillation have learnt it from the people of ^{the} neighbouring districts who come there as labourers. Secondly, they have learnt how to tell a lie and defend when caught by police. An unsophisticated law fearing

Dangi at the first instance would be unwilling to give false statements and evidence in the court of law. But the lawyers and interested parties teach them the tricks. It is explained to a Dangi, "If you are guilty and say 'no' there are fifty percent chances of being acquitted. So why not tell a lie". This is one of the major character changing effect of the contact with the outsiders.

(d) Economic Changes :

The state and central governments earnestly want to bring up the level of economy of the Dangis and make all sided efforts to enhance it.

The community development and National Extension Service programmes have been extended to the Dangis district. Under these schemes people are supplied manure and fertilisers, improved implements and improved seeds. Very freely loans are given to the needy for soil conservation, to purchase carts, bullocks and improving their land. There is a programme for development of animal husbandry which includes the provision of veterinary services.

Moreover, there are also local development works which include in the programme the items like drinking water supply scheme, works for improvement of rural sanitation, building of village, roads and bridges, school buildings and dispensaries, construction of godowns for storage of goods etc.

There are multi-purpose societies, co-operative farming societies, marketing societies, housing societies, jungle societies, which have been recently started. There were nine multi-purpose societies at the end of March 1956 and it was proposed to have nine more during the second Five Year~~s~~ Plan. There are six housing societies functioning under the housing board. The housing society gives interest-free loans for building houses. The jungle societies are given limited contracts of logging and thinning the coupes. They perform a useful function in the economy of the Dangis. Moreover, the Dangis are encouraged to earn by way of labour and carting.

Provision is made for supplying the medical aid to the Dangis. There is one big hospital at Ahwa and two mobile dispensaries equipped with^a van and staff, located at Galkund and Waghai. A maternity

and child health centre is started at Subir and is meant to provide domiciliary service to the Dangi women.

Though the Dangis believe in magic and witchcraft they do not disregard the necessity of medical aid. Simultaneously with the medical aid they also indulge in the magic practices. The number of attendance at the hospital as well as mobile dispensaries have shown a marked increase in contrast to the lean figures of pre-merger Dangs. A Dangi's phobia of being treated in the hospital is slowly decreasing.

All the efforts to bring up the level of the Dangis are not in vain. The Dangis have benefitted a great deal and they realise it too.....'it can be said that as a result of the various development schemes the economy of the Dangis has reached a transitional stage of integration with the surrounding region'(2).

V. FASHIONS IN DRESS AND ARTICLES OF USE

The process of acculturation is slowly going

on in the Dangs. One shall find a noticeable difference in the life of the people in 1960 from that of in 1948. The change is apparent in the changing fashions of dress, ornaments, use of certain articles, beliefs etc. The traditional 'langoti' is giving place to a short dhoti or shorts. The use of trousers is also not unfamiliar. The 'paghri', head wear, is replaced by a cap, white or black. Some Dangis imitate the dress of 'a Saheb', and put on socks, or a hat whenever they get hold of them. It does not matter whether the two socks are of the same colour or not. I saw one Dangi at Galkund putting on one white and one red sock. Fashions have been accepted in the stitching and the pattern of the blouse by women.

The Dangis have learnt to make use of the pieces of furniture like a chair, a bench, a cot etc. Utensils like cup, saucepan, pots made of brass or copper are finding place in many a houses. In the preparation of food, they have started using sugar, jaggery, til oil and spices. Use of kerosene lamps, soap have entered their life. The photos of Lord Shiva, goddess Amba, Kalika, etc. are seen decorating the walls in some houses. In two or three

houses I saw the photos of the person alone ~~or~~ with his friend framed and placed on the wall. The buildings built by the housing society provides more facilities ^{and} accommodation, ~~and~~ Sanitation and ^{hygiene} ~~are~~ can be maintained in a satisfactory manner, if one takes a little care.

The effect of modernisation is seen more in their 'Tamasha' and 'Khel'. Tamasha troops from the adjoining districts come to the Dangis, so the Dangis adopt many of their features in their performances. Once I heard a young boy in Lavchali humming a song of a film. I wondered how he happened to hear and sing a film song. The teacher of the school told me that the boy might have heard the song in the 'Tamasha'.

The age old beliefs and prejudices are so deep and irrational that even though man ~~realises~~ realises its fruitlessness, he is not ready to give them up. The Dangis realise the superiority of medical aid over their magic rites. I once told a Dangi that I do not believe in witch and ghosts and do not offer a cock or a goat. Yet I do not become a victim of the evil eye. He replied, "You do not get hurt

because you are educated, and you know how to keep the spirits away. We have our methods of propitiating them and seeking their favour".

The field of vision of a Dangi is broader today. He has heard the names of Vallabhbhai Patel, Jawaharlal Nehru, Morarji Desai, Gandhiji etc. and is aware of their work. He can understand the problems, local and national and can be persuaded to think in terms of larger interests. He knows that the world is wider than the Dangs.

VI. GENERAL INTELLECTUAL LEVEL OF THE DANGI CHILDREN

No psychological testing of the Dangis has been done so far. The Dangis seem inferior to us in various aspects, not because that their intelligence level is low but that they are backward and brought up in a different environment and manner. In absence of any experimental and statistical evidence, from general behaviour the intelligence level can be inferred. The Dangi children in the Ashrama school who are resident students have shown skill in picking up the tasks and achievement in the studies no less

than the achievement of a higher class civilised boy. Supplied with proper facilities and opportunities a Dangi child is able to show his worth. The report on the intelligence testing of ^{the} tribals in Surat District observes that the Dubla children can reach the standards attained by the American children on the Pass-a-long Test"(3)..That.in.our country small children are not deficient in their native intellectual capacity but that as they grow old they lag behind children of other countries. This may be due to the reason that the children are slow in developing their inborn intellectual capacity. They do not make use of the educational facilities already available to them for the purpose(4). What is true of the Dublas may also be true of the Dangis. The Dangi children provided with educational and other facilities and proper cultural perspective have shown marks of good progress. Four Dangi boys for the first time passed S.S.C. Examination.of 1960 and have joined the college.

3. Shah, P. G. : The Dublas of Gujarat. New Delhi, Bharatiya Adim Jati Sevak Sangh, 1958. p.275.

4. Ibid., p.274.

VII. IMPACT OF THE CHANGES ON THE DANGI PERSONALITY

The effects of the changes of various kinds through various agencies have been very far reaching on the life of the Dangis. It has affected their attitudes, sentiments and values. A Dangi is losing faith in the efficacy of magic. I told a Dangi, "As the Bhagat possesses 'Vidya' he is a powerful man. So you must be fearing him". He said, "No, no, the Bhagat is not different from us. He is just called when we have some difficulty. We do not depend solely on him. For example, in serious sickness the case is hospitalised". This attitude is more apparent in the youths who are educated and some enthusiastic parents". The political controversy has done great harm to the mental stability of the people. The ~~backward people~~ like the Dangis who cannot make out a case whether the Dangs should go to Maharashtra or Gujarat, were chased for about twelve years by the persons of both the parties to get their support. They were given promises, hopes, temptations and any how persuaded to side with them. One day the people from one party would come,

persuade them to support the case that the Dangs should go to Maharashtra. Next day, the other party would come and plead for the case of Gujarat. An average Dangi was puzzled and in a utter state of conflict. This controversy divided the people as a whole in two groups.

In some respects the efforts of urbanisation and acculturation have been welcomed by the Dangs. For example, they welcome the facilities for transport, appreciate the aid and grants given by the government, desire that facilities for water should be provided, accept the new method of cultivation and housing. They are slowly adjusting to these changes. But the general picture is that an average Dangi feels more frustrated and perplexed. The total picture is of conflict and despair. He is puzzled "whether I should send my child to the school or not ? Whether I shall take my sick son to the hospital or not ? For whom shall I vote, this party or that party ? Shall I tell lie or confess my fault in the court of law ?" etc. The contacts with civilisation have undermined their social solidarity, invaded their security, introduced discomforts, diseases and vices. The changes

introduced without insight into the culture and personality of the people have resulted more in conflicts than in useful contacts, not the conflict of arms, but of culture and material interests.

"When changes are taking place in a haphazard manner, where human energy is wasted in blind experimental efforts, perhaps an organised body of knowledge may help, at least in the prevention of much of this wastage"(5). It is for this reason that the knowledge of the personality and culture of the Dangis is needed, to understand their problems and find solution for them.

VIII. THE PROBLEM

The problem is, should the tribals like the Dangis be kept isolated in a dark corner and remain unaffected by the outside world ? Should we not make efforts to raise their social and economic level and assimilate them with the rest of the society ?

Thakkar Bapa, a devoted worker of the tribals, has said in eloquent terms that 'the aborigines should

5. Bose, N. K. : Cultural Anthropology. Bombay, Asia Publishing House, 1961. p.vii.

form a part of the civilised community of our country not for the purpose of swelling the figures of the followers of this religion or that but to share with the advanced community the privileges and duties on equal terms in the general social and political life of the country. Separation and isolation seem to be dangerous theories and they strike at the root of national solidarity".

IX. THE SOLUTION

While implementing the welfare programme in the tribal societies two things must be kept in mind. One, the changes must be administered by the people who know the psychology and culture of the people. Secondly, the changes must not be very slow. It is easier simply to drop one culture pattern and adopt another integrally than to pass through mixed intermediate phases. It is the slow partial change that causes stress and strain and maladjustment, total rapid change may leap over the difficulties. Moreover, '.....He (Officer in tribal areas) must be a man or woman whose mind and even more so whose heart understands the problem, who is an enthusiastic

in this business, who does not go there just to sit in an office for a few hours a day and for the rest of the course his luck at being sent to an out of the way place. That is the type of man completely useless'(6).

"We have to do something much more intimate than political integration and this process takes time. You cannot force it to grow as you cannot force a plant or a flower to grow. You can nurture it and produce conditions when it grows, that is psychological integration and consolidation"(7).

The welfare programme of the Dangis has to be based on respect and understanding of their culture and traditions and an appreciation of the social, psychological and economical problems with which they are faced. The anthropologist, the administrator, and the specialist and the social worker have to work as a team approaching the problem of the people with sympathy, understanding and knowledge of the social psychology of the community.

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6. Nehru, J.M.: Indian Journal of Social Work - Right Approach to Tribal People. 1953. pp.230-231.
 7. Nehru Jawaharlal M. quoted in 'Tribal Welfare in Western India in J.G.R.S., Vol.XVIII, Jan.1956. p.283.