

**Socio-Cultural changes in Gond Tribal-Culture Brought by
Political interventions of Contemporary Bhosle Maratha's of
Nagpur with special reference to Gond kingdoms of Vidarbha
(India)**

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Abstract – *Gond community is considered to be the one of most ancient tribes of india with counting history of several thousand years. With many upheavals of long drawn political history of india it has undergone through multiple changes in its social and cultural orientations. Significantly earlier under rule of Rajputs (as subordinates of Mughals) and later under socio-cultural umbrella of Marathas, Gond tribe of contemporary Gondwana Kingdom experienced dynamic changes in its cultural and social spheres. This study investigates subsequent changes brought by this Maratha rule with special emphasis on Bhosle's of Nagpur in Vidarbha region of Modern State of Maharashtra in India. We try to understand reasonable causes, historical conditions, socio-political and economic background under which dynamic changes ranging right from philosophy, language, religion to the cultural heritage of Architectures of Gond Culture. Here, through a thorough investigation of available literary evidences and our appropriate and reasonable logic we also commented on some concepts which are interesting to know about. Overall this study in brief gives idea about changes in social and cultural life on Gond Community after successful establishment and running of Bhosle Rule.*

Keywords- *Gond Tribe, Bhosle-Maratha, Social change, Cultural change, Rajputisation, Sanskritisation*

I. Introduction

Tribe in Social anthropology, is a notional form of human social organisation based on set of smaller groups (known as bands) having temporary or permanent political integration, and defined by traditions of common descent, language, culture and ideology. One of such tribes is Gond tribe, of Dravidian stock, which is believed to have its origin in a period prior to the southward migration of Dravidian people of India, aprox. around 2000 B.C.⁽⁸⁾ Some excerpts from *Rig-veda* also indicates connections of Gonds with 'Kuyevo' tribe prominent contemporarily. They ruled over central indian region including southern slopes of Satpuda plateu, portions of Nagpur plains, Narmada and Godavari valley which encompassed together was historically known as *Gondwana*.⁽²⁾ According to 2011 census of India, Gonds, the major tribe of the country has been notified as scheduled tribe in states of Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, West Bengal, Orissa, Karnataka, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh and Uttaranchal having a total population of 1,13,44,629. Their original language is a Gondi dialect.⁽²¹⁾ Which with same consistency is being spoken, over considerable area of old Gondwana. Gond Rulers were subdivided into multiples thrones. like *Raj-Gonds(ruling class)*, *Khatola-Gonds*, *Madia Gonds*, *Dhur Gonds*, *Mokasi Gonds*, *Dadve Gonds*, *Gaita Gonds*, *Koya Gonds* etc.

This tribe initially was completely dependent on natural resources around them, as pastorals. Who carried a significant part of their history in southern india, then marched and settled in Central indian region of Nagpur. But, after coming in contact with central indian political powers they transformed themselves into a ruling class and then onwards till British raj they continued their monarchies and maintained them intact. But while having this Rule of tribe during its existence as a tribe multiple factors like sub-ordination by neighboring contemporary powers left some of significant imprints on both society and culture of Gond tribe.

II. OBJECTIVES-

- 1) To understand emergence and evolution of Gond society and culture.
- 2) To investigate historical background that influenced evolution of Gond culture and society.
- 3) To analyze socio-cultural changes in Gondi culture and society caused by subordination from contemporary neighboring-competitive powers with greater emphasis on

III. Research Methods and tools used-

- 1) Content analysis
- 2) Literature Review

IV. Brief Historical background of Gonds

With reference to this study Tribe's history can be arranged more vividly in two fine and successive stages.

- 1) Gond Kingdom of period before arrival of Bhosle-Maratha rule in central india i.e. *Gondwana*.
- 2) Internal dynastic struggles in Gondwana Kingdom which eventually resulted in Maratha intervention and gradual decline of kingdom.

1) Gond kingdom of period before arrival of Bhosle-Maratha rule in central India

This initial stage starts around 900 A.D. when a tribe initially was completely dependent on natural resources from forests around them and carried a significant part of their history in southern india. Then onwards roughly after 1000A.D. they started their northward journey initially up to *Godavari* into Vidarbha, and from there they moved up to *Indravati* in Bastar of modern

state of Chhattisgarh as well as *Wardha* and *Wainganga* of Satpuda range in state of Maharashtra. ⁽¹³⁾

Characteristic feature of this stage are significant- religiously they used to worship nature having extreme animism with faith in supernatural powers associated with nature. They had their own language which can be deciphered and have much inclination towards Dravidian language family both in terms of Script as well as Pronunciations.⁽¹⁴⁾ This stage was of some uniform lifestyle without much vivid changes in their culture and so in their social organization.

The first historically recorded Gond kingdoms came up in central India's hilly region in the 14th and 15th century AD. The first Gond king was *Jadurai*, who deposed Kalchuri Rajputs, at whose court he had earlier worked, to grab the kingdom of Garha Mandla (modern Mandla and Jabalpur in Madhya Pradesh). The second kingdom of Deogadh (Chhindwada in Madhya Pradesh and Nagpur in Maharashtra), was created by King Jatba in the 15th century. One of his successors, who after consolidating 12 smaller villages established the Town of Nagpur in 1702, Bakht Buland Shah, converted to Islam to win the favour of emperor Aurangzeb. However, he did not demand conversion from his subjects and married a Gond woman. He fell into disfavour in Delhi after he plundered some Muslim kingdoms of Deccan.⁽²⁰⁾ Around the same time as Deogadh, the Kherla (Baitul in Madhya Pradesh to Chikhaldara in Amravati district in Maharashtra) kingdom also came up. Its first king, Narsingh Rai, who deposed a Rajput ruler, had love-hate relationship with the Rajput and Muslim rulers in his vicinity who attacked his fort due to its geographical accessibility. The kingdom was later annexed by Bakht Buland Shah. ⁽¹²⁾ The Chanda kingdom (Chandrapur in Maharashtra), a contemporary of the Kherla and Deogadh kingdoms, produced several remarkable rulers who developed excellent irrigation systems and the first well defined revenue system among the Gond kingdoms. ⁽¹²⁾

Sociological perspective shows that sequence of events during this period influenced Gond culture in very remarkable manner. After deposing Rajput rulers from Garha Mandla a new sense of ruling ignited among Gond Community. Taking Rajput rule as a yardstick a new monarchy emerged. New names resembling Rajput culture were being adopted. e.g. Hirde Shah of Mandla. Dalpat

Shah of Garha etc. ⁽¹²⁾ primarily being a Tribal/Adivasi community it is established that, Gond culture had considerable extent of Patriarchy where women was considered reasonable and important unit of culture in terms of working or earning livelihood but in terms of political rule and general nature of women she was considered not valuable than mens.⁽⁵⁾ therefore associating terms of valour of womens on battlefield was out of the blue in Gond culture. But in unique example of battle of Gonds against Mughal army of Emperor Akbar in leadership of Viceroy Asaf Khan it is exceptional that Rani Durgavati chose death over impending defeat by enemy forces. Gonds having not an established religion started worshiping cows as a sacred part of hindu ritualism, Gond monarchs started performing '*Hiranyagarbha Yadnya*' (sacrifice) a theological key to become Hindu Kshatriya. Gondi people started adopting hindu theological concepts of Deities like of '*Badadeo*' supposed to be *Shiva* (chief Deity of Rajput and hinduism) and *Danteshwari* of Dantewada in modern state of Chhattisgarh supposed to be Mahakali. In this way amalgamation of Gonds under Mughals or their subordinates i.e. Rajputs left some significant imprints on culture of Gonds in terms of both theologically as well as ethically.

2) Internal dynastic struggles in Gondwana Kingdom which eventually resulted in Maratha intervention and gradual decline of kingdom.

Bhosle-Maratha of Nagpur are considered as blood-relatives of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj from their ancestral genealogy and are supposed to hail from village *Beradi* near *Hingani* in the present Pune district of state of Maharashtra. Reason of Their arrival into Vidarbha is still unknown but it is evident that contemporary of Shivaji maharaj, Sabaji bhosle of Nagpur rendered him help during his expeditions to Vidarbha.

First prominent ruler from Bhosle Family Parsoji Bhosle earns credit of consolidating Gondwana from Gond rulers, who after proving his loyalty towards the '*gaadi*' of Chhatrapati Rajaram Maharaj received honour of *Jari Patka* and title of '*Sena Saheb Subha*' in 1699. After clash with Mughals Chhatrapati shahu maharaj worried about central indian territory of Maratha rule and hence handed over the official title of '*Sena sahib subha*' and issued a

sanad granting him and his successors in perpetuity '*mokasa*' of the following places-

- Prant Ritapur and Sarkar-Gavel, Prant Berar, Prant Deogad, Chanda and Gondavana and 147 Mahals Around Nagpur.(S.K. Sane, 1915)

After successful establishment of partial independent rule of Nagpur-Bhosle's over a small region Raghuji Bhosle emerged as a second prominent ruler after Parsoji. At the same time some internal dynastic struggle started taking blaze in Gondwana kingdom. Chanda Sultan died in about 1738. His illegitimate son, Wali Sah killed Mir Bahaddar, the legitimate son of Chanda Sultan. Rani Ratan Kuvar, the widow of Chanda asked for Raghuji Bhosle's help as her two other sons Akbar and Burhan were minors. Raghuji at once proceeded and after prisoning Wali Shah settled dispute of inheritance. As a symbol of gratitude Rani Ratan Kuvar considered Raghuji as her third son and gave him the third part of her kingdom. She paid him Rupees Ten Lacs for war expenses. In 1737, the Rani granted Raghuji a *sanad* of her one-third kingdom bestowed upon him. The Rani also agreed that she would not enter into a treaty with any other power without the knowledge of Raghuji. With the possession of these parts of Devagad, Raghuji shifted his headquarters from Bham (in modern district of Yawatmal) to Nagpur. And finally the crown edifice of Gondwana-Deogarh Kingdom was made a part of Bhosle-Maratha's kingdom. Consistently Garha-Mandla was also included in Bhosle rule. Following these development the only part of Gondwana Kingdom left after all these developments, Chanda was also included in Maratha Kingdom with grant of pension to heirs of Chanda.⁽¹⁷⁾

As Rani Ratan Kuvar herself gave a part of her kingdom to Raghuji Bhosle it was perceived as a willful and friendly initiative by monarch on common people of tribe. This gave a sense of respect towards Maratha rule and hence their culture was supposed as ideal one.⁽³⁾

V. Socio-cultural changes in Gond Culture after arrival of Bhosle-Maratha Rule over Gondwana

In order to understand the sociological perspective of changes brought by Maratha rule over Gond culture this study tries to analyse functional aspects of both cultures with special emphasis on later one, through both vertical and horizontal angles. Maratha rule carved some fundamental changes on tribe's society and culture. Provided in some cases these changes were more concerned with blind imitation of Maratha society. These changes varied from class and caste to the philosophy which reflected its footprints into art and culture of Gonds. Some of the Changes reflected on tribal culture are as follows-

1) Class and Caste

Like other social groups or societies Gond society was also stratified at multiple levels. This stratification was based on hereditary rank and position in society. The division was based on different *phratries*/groups having distinct number of gods in it called as '*saga*'. At an operational level, there were nine '*saga*' and those were referred to by numbers (1 to 7, 12 and 16). However, references to twelve gods (from 1 to 12) named simply as "*Undidev Saga*," "*Randudev Saga*" all the way to "*Padvendev Saga*" (the 10th God), "*Pandunddev Saga*" (the 11th God) and "*Padrandev Saga*" (the 12th God) could also be found, and they all have names. Each Gond was a follower of one of the numbered groups of gods.⁽⁹⁾ Each *saga* had one or more subdivisions locally called as "*pari*", some of the *pari* earned rights to worship prime deities of Gonds called '*Persa pen*' which after ascendance of Bhosle rule was honoured to *Deshmukhs and patils* of Maratha community after looking at their status in society.⁽²⁾ This division was a social Phenomenon and was not related with status or political differences in society. But this stratification was not rigid as compared to caste system of Hinduism. Once the Maratha rule spread over Gondwana, Marathi (Hindu) culture was being perceived as a superior one

because Maratha ruler Raghuji settled internal disputes among unit monarchies in Gondwana which induced a good will for them among Gond tribe. Then onwards society evolved not by adhering to their own culture but adopting Maratha culture. ⁽³⁾ Hindu concepts of 'caste' casted a rigidity upon their minds. 'Gotra' system of Hinduism was adopted for hereditary division and identity in society with 'pardhan' and 'punjaris' at upper strata. These 'pardhans' started wearing 'Janeu'(a sacred thread) on their body to claim having status as Marathi Brahmins. Now Gonds have a very high appreciation of caste, and strongly claim their position as equal to that of the higher castes in the country. Likewise they observe the rules of commensality and social distance with other ethnic groups in some core isolated forest regions.

2) Lifestyle and Social Status of people-

Socio-anthropological analyses by sociologists proved that Gonds of central india are most prominent *adivasi*/tribal group of india. ⁽¹⁰⁾ Being tribal group their existence was fully dependent upon nature. A society with insignificant, weaker and little intensive political control where each individual including woman contributed equally for their survival as tribe were highlighting features of early tribal society. With advent of rajputs earlier as enemies as subordinates under Mughal rule and later as allies in political and marital relations changed prospect of Gond ruling class peripherally, but hunting, gathering and isolated individuals of core tribal culture could not match themselves with these changes. King Bir Shaha of chanda kingdom pensioner and contemporary of Raghuji Bhosle was inspired by Irrigation techniques and agricultural advancement of Marathas under rule of Chhatrapati Shahu in western Maharashtra. He invited 'kohli' community from north india, who were expert in the field of dam building. They built modern irrigation systems in the kingdom over region of Chandrapur, Gadchiroli, Gondia and Bhandara districts of modern states of Maharashtra and in return Bir shaha paid them with agricultural lands covered by those dams. This 'Kohli' community with their immense hard-work and expertise in agriculture emerged as significant agro-tenant community. As this agricultural productivity earned a good

amount of revenue to state monarch also supported them. Gond community as specified earlier was a forest-nature-dependent tribe and little experience of subsistence agriculture through *slash and burn agriculture/shifting agriculture*, with little knowledge and skills of productive agriculture, lagged behind and ended up being agricultural labours. With expansion of Maratha rule over *Gondwana* a new community of 'Kumbi'(modern Kunbi) having ancestral expertise of agriculture and one of the 'Bara Balutedar' system of social organization in Maratha rule flourished region which intensified the process of agro-development which eventually led to marginalization and isolation of tribal group either into class of labors or their primal occupation of hunter gatherers. ⁽¹²⁾

3) Marriage

There existed various type of marriages in the traditional Gond society, like *Ostasana Marmi* (Regular), *Lamsena or Lamhade Marmi* (by Service), *Kotavalda or Ata sata* (by Exchange), *Poyse Ottur or Kals Ottur* (by capture), *Arwitana /Harvititur or Haiwar Marmi* (by Elopement), *Haiwark wat/Paitu or Odiyattur Marmi* (by Intrusion), *Pat or Tiks Tasana Marmi* (Adult or Widow Marriage), *Yer Dosana Marmi (Bhul Bihao)* etc. Maratha culture turned down these methods with some ideal options. Moreover, the Gonds now disassociate themselves from the marriages by capture, intrusion and elopement, and consider these anti-socials. They admire marriage by proper settlement and all of them participate in it most cordially.⁽¹⁵⁾ Among the Gonds marriage was forbidden between blood relatives. Apart from the wishes of the boy and girl, receiving the consent of the father and mother was paramount. After Maratha rule The Raj Gonds, the ruling Gonds, married according to Hindu customs, while in the common Gonds the marriage ceremonies were conducted by '*doshi*', or '*Baiga*'. An important aspect of marriage system was bride price which under Maratha rule got inverted into Groom price traditional feature of Marathi culture as '*Aandan*'. Widow marriage was allowed in the Gond society. Their marriage systems were also pro-women. But Marathi culture strictly prohibited widow Remarriage which was

emulated into the tribal traditions. ⁽⁵⁾ Marriage type was of strict Exogamy between different '*saga*' with a prevalent polygamy. Irrespective of influence of Maratha rule the position of polygamy among Gonds no longer exists now. At present Gonds consider monogamy as an ideal form, and resort to polygamy in certain unavoidable circumstances. Cross-cousin marriages are still prevalent in Gond society which is considered as a strongly prevalent practice of Marathi culture.

4) Religious life of Gonds

A. Gods and Goddesses

Specifically gond tribe is a nature worshipping tribe with strong belief in certain '*totems*'. They worship various trees and animals which are associated with totems. '*Saja tree*' and '*Mahua*' tree are still worshipped in all tribal regions of Maharashtra and Chattisgarh.⁽⁸⁾ Middle period of gond history witnessed emergence of a completely new religion of Gonds. This religion is known as '*Koyapunem*' –meaning 'in the way of nature' which was founded by their ancestor '*Rupolang Pahandi Pari Kubar Lingo*' who was born as the son of the chief '*Pulsheev*', during the reign of Sambhu-Gaura several thousand years ago. Kubar Lingo became the ruler of the '*Koya*' race and established the Gondi '*Punem*', a code of conduct and philosophy that the Gondi practice. This philosophy had many elements similar to the Hinduism like '*munjok*', which is non-violence, cooperation, and self-defense. Another part of Gond belief is '*salla*' and '*gangra*', which represent action and reaction, similar to karma in Hinduism. They also worshipped '*Ravana*' the character portrayed in hindu mythology of '*Ramayana*' and believed him as their deity and ancestor of '*pari kubar lingo*'. When Maratha rule was adopted into practice some hardliner practitioners of Hinduism opposed this practice of worshipping *ravana* which is still a blazing pot in village of *Paraswadi* in Gadchiroli where tribe organize protest against burning of Ravana. Primarily tribes were nature worshipping units but soft power of good will and feeling of idealistic culture towards

Hinduism of Bhosle-marathas⁽³⁾ inspired them to deviate towards Hinduism. They started considering them as '*Kshatriya-hindu*' by performing '*hiranyagarbha yadnya*'(religious sacrifice), nature worshipping Gonds started worshipping '*Badadeo*' believed to be Shiva of Hinduism, '*kali kankali of kachargarh*' in state of Maharashtra believed to be '*Mahakali*' of Hinduism, '*Danteshwari*' of Dantewada in Chhattisgarh is believed to be Goddess '*Durga*'. Historical analyses by Deogaokar(2007, 123) and Mehta(1984, 174) shows the primary reason behind this shift was because of the *Sanskritisation* brought initially with partial changes by *Rajputisation* and later majorly by rule of Bhosle-maratha rule of Nagpur.

B. Concept of Death and Funeral practices-

Conventionally, Gonds bury their dead with the head of the body facing south in most regions, but to the west in some areas. They consider north to be a direction of ill women that brings disaster. Among the Gond mythology, the dead were believed to be greatly interested in the affairs of the living. There was a keen desire to maintain contact and to solicit the presence of the dead to minimize the difficulties of the living, and to help to bring rain and aid the crops to thrive. In the underworld the soul, enjoyed the same status as they were on the earth and led the same desire for thing they owned here. [9] Therefore, it was customary to offer worldly possession of man either inside or on the top of graveyard when a person died. He was also remembered on festive occasions. Thus the Gonds believed in life after death By contrast and hence buried deceased facing south. South is considered to be a holy direction. This is the reverse of Hindu convention. But after the period of *Sanskritisation* they started doing reverse with favour towards Hindu practice. They also shifted from burying dead to cremating them with inherent notion of cremation kills all ills associated with individuality and soul of deceased.

C. Festivals-

Sociological analysis by Vahia and Halkare (2013) shows Gonds developed their own conceptualities of astronomical positions of different stars, moon

and sun. Through this they developed their own calendar and hence had their own terminologies and rituals for distinctive festivals they invented themselves. Some prominent festivals are *Akhadi, Jivti, Pola, Diwali Nawo tindana, Dussera, and Phag or Shimga* festivals. ⁽⁹⁾. These festivals after Maratha rule were changed both in practice of ritual and core element/idea behind those festivals. Some major festivals which got a refined transformation under Maratha rule are as follows- ⁽⁴⁾

Festival name in Gondi	Festival name	Lunar calendar date
Say Mutholi	Worship of Panch Pavli	Magha Full Moon
Sambhu Naraka	Shiv Jagran	2 days prior to Magh New Moon
Shivam Gavara	Worship of Shica (Shigma)	Fagun 5 th day from New Moon
Khandera	Worship of Meghnath	Fagun 5 th day from New Moon
Ravan Muri	Worship of Ravan	Fagun 5 th day from Full Moon
Mand Amas	Worship of Mand	Fagun New Moon
Kuvara Bhimal Puja	Worship of Bhivsan	Chaitra Full Moon
Mata May Puja	Worship of Mata May	Chaitra 5 th day from Full Moon
Nalenj Puja	Worship of the Moon	Chaitra New Moon
Naya Khana	Festival of new food	Vaishakh 5 th day since New Moon
Budhadev Puja	Worship of Budhadev	Vaishakh Full Moon
Sajori Bidari		Jyeshtha Full Moon
Hariyommat	Worship of fruits and plants	Jyeshtha New Moon
Thakur Dev Puja	Time for sowing seeds	Akti
Khut Puja	Worship of Khut	Ashadh Full moon
Saag Pen Puja	Worship of Saag Pen	Ashadh New Moon
Naag Panchami	Worship of the Snake, particularly the King Cobra	Shravan 5 th day from New Moon
Saila Puja	Worship through dance	Shravan Full Moon
Pola	Worship of Pola	Shravan New Moon
Naya hana	New Food Festival	Bhado 5 th day from New Moon
Navaratra	9 day festival of worship of Durga	Ashvin 10 th day from Full Moon
Jango – Lingo Lati Puja	Worship of <i>Jango</i> and <i>Lingo</i> (the Sun and Moon)	Kartik Purnima
Nagar Puja	Worship of the village	Kartik Purnima
Kalimay Puja	Worship of Kali Kankali	Paush New Moon

5) Cultural changes-

Language-

Language of communication for Gond tribe is Gondi which is considered as a dialect of modern language of *telugu* and is the only language apart from *Gujrati* to have its own script⁽¹⁹⁾. It belongs to 'Indo-Dravidian language family' of Southern india. This language contains very basic terms and its speakers in general show higher dialectic intelligibility. Similar with prime principle of all other languages it is also encompassed of different dialects because of geographical variations among all four parts of Gondwana kingdom. Despite being a tribal language it was grammatically encoded with simplistic deliverability. Immediately after the Bhosle rule started in Gondwana, region flourished with the agrarian-marathi speaking population of *kunbi* and *kohli* communities⁽¹²⁾ and for the convenience for governance which was purely developed for productive areas of social and economic life like agriculture, *Marathi* was taken as official language of kingdom.⁽³⁾ From here the process of amalgamation of gondi language started taking pace. Word for revenue officer at village level i.e. 'Mukaddam' was replaced by 'Deshmukh' and 'Paatel'(mistaken for *Patil* of Marathi), some words were fully adopted from marathi in Gondi language. i.e. 'sage-soire'- a word which represents families connected with marital relations between them, *akkal*(mind), *buddhi*(intelligence), *aggidabba*(matchbox), *achanak*(immediate), *anat/anat*(orphan), *pori*(girl child)....etc. interestingly in this way the the *Orthography* of gondi language has changed in favour of other languages with which gondi language intermingled leading to the multilingual attitude from this community where they use language like Marathi in Vidarbha, Hindi in Chhattisgarh as a source language to communicate and borrow. ⁽¹⁶⁾

Maratha rule unintentionally not only declined importance of Gondi language from social strata of all people residing in kingdom but also native Gondi speakers. The inter group communication of Gonds earlier was purely in their own mother tongue which perished of gondi language after Bhosle rule came in kingdom culminating into lingual illiteracy of Gondi

language among young generation in recent years. This had resulted in decrease of lexical similarity, dialectic intelligibility and attitude of using gondi language among Gond speakers, Whereas bilingual attitude and habit increased at unprecedented level. ⁽¹⁴⁾ This process of amalgamation continued even after colonialism and independence of india. According to census 2011 among population of Gond people of 1,13,44,629 only 27,13,790 can speak Gond language.⁽¹⁾ Because of political eclipse of Gond Kings gondi language became obsolete leading to political backwardness in representation of community.

A. *Gothul* Institution

The traditional *Gotul* institutions of the Gonds had inculcated a sense of discipline and co-operative endeavor among their members. It was not just a club for meeting the boys and girls at night, as it was focused by some scholars.^[14] It was the centre of learning and had a religious affiliation to it. When there were no educational institutions available to the Gond community the Gotul was functioning like training centre. It inculcated the integrity and uniqueness among all the members of the Gotul. Prominent ruler of Bhosle-Marathas Raghuji Bhosle earlier promoted the institution. However, with time importance of '*Gothul*' declined comparatively and consistently.⁽²⁾

B. Architecture and Arts.

Gondi Culture had immense heritage of its paintings involving natural and native tribal themes. They were also expert in beautiful wall paintings and floral designs that depicted geometric designs and stylistic figures of plants and animals on the walls of their houses. ⁽⁶⁾⁽⁷⁾ However descendance in their social status made them isolate in forest lives again where they could not revive these arts. Some of the arts that persisted like paintings started shifting their themes from nature-animism oriented to religion based.

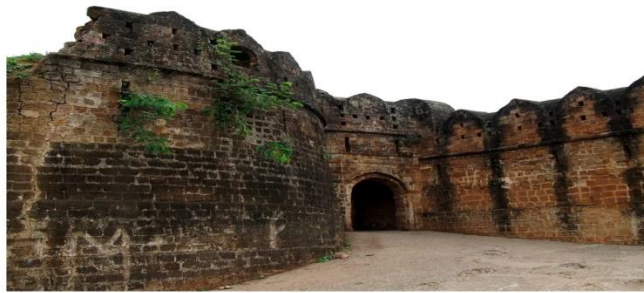


Paintings inside the temple | Author

Gond architecture between 13th to 16th centuries ⁽⁴⁾ of their rule possessed some resembling features of Mughal Architecture. Features like large halls, very large vaulted gateways, delicate ornamentations with wall paintings, bulbous domes and slender minarets with cupolas at the four corners can be observed with delicate similarity in Gondi Architecture. But partially during rajputisation and revolutionarily during Bhosle rule Hindu features of architecture started to emerge and flood the Gondi Architecture. Some of the changes can be differentiated visually as follows-



Architecture at Chanda fort Before Bhosle



Hanuman Khedki, Chandrapur Fort | Author



Panels on Anchaleshwar temple | Devanand

Architecture of Chanda After successful establishment of Maratha Rule there around 1730's

VI. Conclusion-

With occurrence of relations with Rajput either through subjugation/subordination under Mughal rule or political/marital alliances with Rajputs, staged a culture of deviation in attitudes of Gond tribe i.e. Deviation in religious orientations, beliefs and cultural heritages. Being a social unit it is obvious to have sharing relationship of constituent elements between adjacent social systems. But in the wake of Bhosle rule over Gondwana kingdom especially in Vidarbha region this process of deviation from own culture or adoption of foreign culture proceeded with much faster pace. Absolute reasons cannot be drawn for this, but in relative terms much higher number of Marathi speaking and Hindu-maratha culture practicing community and idealistic and 'want-to-be' image for bhosle-maratha culture among Gond tribe, revolutionized this process. This led to socio-economic and most prominent cultural changes in Gond society. Some of these changes like ability to adopt most dynamic changes turned positive and beneficial for the tribe but most of them turned to be negative. Gondi language is moving to be a endangered language with current status of only 23.9% ⁽¹⁾ people among whole Gond population can speak their language. Social values of Gond tribes are withering day by day, productive institutions like *Gothul* have almost lost their significance as unit of cultural conservation and social construction. The Gonds have suitably accommodated a number of things in their household articles, human attires, food habits and personal hygiene"s. Their endeavour to adapt new has made significant changes in their traditions, customs, values, and religious beliefs and rites, in the light of the Hindu way of life. Once upon a time the Gonds were the most cultured community. They have lost their royalty to paramount powers. They were good looking, happy and hearty and regular in their habits. Though financially not very sound but they managed their affairs without getting indebted at some extent. They observed perfect gender equality and attempted to keep their tribe widow free. They were docile, modest, honest and painstaking. Loyalty to their tribe, traditions, systems, organizations is praiseworthy and worth to be followed by elite class.

But this bhosle rule somehow hindered this pleasant flow of cultural evolution. It will be interesting to see what future is going to offer them?

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