



Tribal Identity, language and cultural expression

Dr. Balkrishna D Kongare

Head, Department of English, Bhagwantrao Art and Science College Ettapalli, District Gadchiroli, Maharashtra, India

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.66856/english.2026.12.3.12113>

Abstract

The tribal community known as adivasi is indigenous peoples of India. Over 700 tribal communities are found in India. Their language, culture and identity are not similar. Still their identity is marginalized because of education in their regional language and less exposure to society. Particularly in Maharashtra, there are about 50 tribes residing in different districts of Maharashtra. Most of them preferred to live in forest and remote part geography. Among them, are Gond, Halba, Koli, Kolam, Bhil, Korku, Pardhan, Santhalli, Rajgond and Madiya, all belonging to Scheduled Tribe who have been dwelling in Maharashtra and Vidharbha, eastern part of Maharashtra. In Chandrapur and Gadchiroli district of Vidharbha, communities namely Gond have more than 18.1% population in Yavatmal, Chandrapur and 38.75 tribal people population in Gadchiroli districts as per 2011 census of Vidharbha region as tribal. Gond has been recognised well in social strata in all these three districts. But there is no official record of the Madiya community which is living only in the deep forest of Gadchiroli district. Their language is Gondi and its dialect is spoken in the Madiya community which is called the Madiya language. In fact, this language is a part of Dravidian languages that is still available in only spoken form so the culture, tradition and identity is found in marginalized condition because of having no literature of this tribe yet to emerge in written form. The knowledge and information of this community passed on orally to the new generation. This paper attempts to find the problem of identity, language and cultural Expression of the Madiya community of Gadchiroli district.

Keywords: Indigenous, tribal community, Gondi language, Vidharbha region, culture and tradition

Introduction

Gadchiroli district is famous as a tribal district in Maharashtra. Adjunction boundaries of Madhya Pradesh, Chattisgarh and Telangana are very close to this area. So apart from the main Marathi language, there are few speakers of Telugu, Chattisgarhari and Bengali are found in some tahasil of Gadchiroli district. Refugees from Bangladesh settled in tribal areas and have been running their business and trade in remote. Of course, they have mentioned relationships with the Madiya community but they are progressive and identifiable to others rather than Madiya. Marathi speaker percentage is 56, Gondi 14% Telugu 6% and Bangali more than 3% found in Gadchiroli district. This Madiya community resides in Aheri, Ettapalli, Bhamragad and Dhanora tahasil of Gadchiroli district. All these tahasil are backward in education, social reformation and economic development. There is no industrialization and urbanization. Therefore, the Madiya community is so long from the community development. Poverty and lack of education keep them in backward class. At present, globalization and social media bring awareness among them but without education in their regional language, they could not change their pathetic condition so far. Language and accusation are the main hinder in progress which can give them self-identity. Their accusations are only seasonal farming, hunting and a collection of forest material useful for life. Most of their time is spent brewing alcohol from mauha flowers, making wooden parts for agriculture and the hanny dew collection. Hunting is their favourite job in which they emptied a month for hunting forest animals. Superstition and blind beliefs are the main reason for backwardness. Instead of taking a doctor's treatment, they

give much preference to village Vaidu or mantric, a local person. They speak the Madiya dialect of the Gondi language known only to the people of their community. Language is the biggest obstacle in the teaching-learning process. They could not speak Marathi fluently so while students of this community have faced a lot of difficulties and not achieved the best rank in education. Some exceptional students' performances are commendable. But it is rare so they need education in their regional language which is still not available. Marathi medium school and colleges could not provide this facility that is why teachers do not get expected results from teachers endeavour.

For many decades, Maharashtra Government has made many schemes and open projects for Scheduled Tribe conservation and preservation of language and culture and community progress, no specific development is established in the Madiya community, social behaviour, mind set and influence of global changes. Through the projects and schemes, they get agriculture instruments freely and provision for free education, free hostels, and reservation in government services and higher education not made them responsible and upgraded. In spite of continuing all these facilities, they become lazier and more dependable. Genuinely people of this community are free, forest living Life style and moody, simple and shy nature somewhat more favourable to Naxalism. Once this Naxal movement was strong in this area but day by day it became weak. People of this community fear to interact with educated people. They like to live in deep forests at remote places. The impact of government Resolution upon them seems to be in vain.

Blurred Identity of Madiya Community

History and identity have integrated part of any race and intermingle for existence. "The first law of history is to dare to say nothing false, and again to omit nothing which is true. And in writing there should be no suspicion of either partiality or hatred". Identity is the set of qualities, beliefs, personality traits, traditions, location, interest appearance, or experiences that characterize a person or group.

This tribal madiya community is originally a sub-caste of the Gond community. In history we find the domain of Rajgond hierarchy and it embellished the kingdom of Gond community in the 18th century in the central part of India. Birsa Munda and Veer Baburao Shadmak fought against the British soldiers to save the Gond community. King Ballarsha was head of this community during pre-independence in this area which is known as Gondwana estate. In those days this community followed their traditions and collective sense of belonging and affinity that distinguish a group of people from others, formed through shared elements like location, ethnicity, beliefs and interest. The origin of this community is set up in Gondwana land. But after independence, this community vanished its glory. And only in the form of tradition and culture its upbringing has remained in blurred Identity. The appearance of these people is savage racial. Physically strong, short height, black coloured, shorts pressed nose, and few clothes used to dress up their body. Particular and unique metal or wooden ornaments wear to indicate their identity. No trace of custom and convention found in history. But they are pagan and worshipers of nature. Their beliefs and traditions differentiate them from other tribes. But their identity is blurred lines that separate them from the Gond community.

Language of Madiya Community

The language of the madiya community is the madiya language, its dialect of Gond language. Language is the mirror of any literature that preserves the profound knowledge of everything. Language is the main instrument that expresses thought, feeling, emotions, idea, imagination as well as narrative of writers. Articulation, reception and perceptions is a function of language. It has the power to keep alive the old ages in written form. Today only ancient literature is known to us because of language. Language is the instinct of a human being. Many cultures and traditions have disappeared due to script.

Madiya language is the dialect of the Gond language. This language is available in only spoken form hence it is very hard to learn this language. The sentence structure and grammar of this language is the same as Marathi. For example,

Subjective pronouns in English

I, We, You, He, She, They.

Subjective pronouns in Marathi.

मी, आम्ही, तु, तो, ती, ते

Subjective pronouns in Madiya

Nana/Nna, Matu, Nimma, Adu, Adu, Adu.

Objective pronouns in English

Me, Us, You, Him, Her, Them.

Objective pronouns in Marathi

मला, आम्हाला, तुला, त्याला, तीला, त्यांना.

Objective pronouns in Madiya:

Naku/Nak, Maku, Niku/Niwa, Ona, Anadu/
Adhehku/Aad, Ora/ Orihku.

Possessive pronouns in English

Mine, Yours, His, Hers, Ours, Them.

Possessive pronouns in Marathi

माझे, तुमचा/तुझा, त्याचा, तीचा, आमचा.

Possessive pronouns in Madiya

Nava, Nimma, Niva Ona, Adhena, Mava//Mavang.

All these pronouns are arranged in three languages respectively

Following are some sentence structure in three languages.

I gave him money.

मी त्याला पैसे दिले.

Nanna honku kotang hitan.

I gave her money.

मी तीला पैसे दिले.

Nanna tanku kotang hiyanan.

I gave them money.

मी त्यांना पैसे दिले.

Nanna honku kotang hiyanan.

English structure of sentence.

S+V+O.

Marathi and Madiya structure of sentence.

S+O+V.

Without the written form of the madiya language, the tradition and culture of the madiya community will soon become extinct permanently.

So, the Maharashtra Government has sanctioned 35.73 lakh amounts for its preservation and protection. Manjiri Paranjape, a research scholar in Marathi Language University has been working on the madiya language extensively. Vice - Chancellor Dr Avinash Awalganekar assured to fulfill the need of various documents, vocabulary lists, dictionaries and books purely on madiya language. Future generations of the madiya community possibly educate in madiya language if efforts will be done seriously. And upgradation and upliftment of this community can be possible through the regional language education system.

Like this, there are many sentences that can be formed without Madiya script. But it is impossible to understand the grammar, words class, phonetic function of Madiya dialect. It needs letters and alphabet of Gond language. The pronunciation of this language can only be learnt by the practice of speaking with them. This language can be preserved only after its script and literature in written form.

Cultural Expression of the Madiya Tribe

Gadchiroli district was separated from Chandrapur district in 1982 after independence. In the past, the Madiya

community was unknown and had less contact with others societies. In Vidharbha there are Kolam, Pardhan, Gond, Halba, Gowari ect communities in Yewatmal, Chandrapur districts. Madiya community is only found in Gadchiroli district which belongs to schedule tribe but most other tribes communicate fluently in Marathi and have been developing in all sectors as they could learn better in Marathi medium. In fact, due to remote and tribal area, they didn't have get chance to learn Marathi well. Their forest natural life made them shy, isolated inferior complex and simplicity. The old generation of the Madiya community had much busy preserving and protecting their own culture and tradition. Still the cultural and traditional expression passed to new generation orally. Many tantrik and pujari have known the remedy and natural therapies for incurable diseases like cancer, arthopadic knowledge, ayurvedic medicine. Their costumes are very different from other tribes of Maharashtra. Seasonal farming and hunting are their main occupations and hobbies. Limited need of life not allowed them to become rich and entrepreneurship in their regional part. They are pagan and worshipers of nature dities. Their appearance and dress code seem to be foreigners like African. Their festival and rituals performed in the community give more choices to meat of forest and pet animals.

Conclusion

In short, the tribal life of the Madiya community in Gadchiroli district is still miles away from the main current of the national progress and development. Government negligence and peripheral identity keep them silent for many decades. Representations of their culture cross the limitations through social media which are bound to them in isolation. The language of the Madiya community is the victim of backwardness. Some social workers and community leaders, writers come forward for their indigenous rights and common existence. In comparison to other tribes, the Madiya tribe is still in complexity. By their side, they are also responsible for their backwardness. Their narrow mindfulness, fear nature pressurized their voice for fundamental rights and freedoms. Their vision is fogged because of the geography situation. But in modern times Madiya community activists bring up the people in new hope.

References

1. Atram, Venkatesh, "Gondi Sanskrutiche Sandharbh"
2. Kangali, Motiravan ; Mazi Katemundarichi Shala.
3. Wikipedia. [https:// English. wikipedia.org.](https://en.wikipedia.org/)
4. Madiya Gondi- Wikipedia.
5. Culture and Heritage l District Gadchiroli, Government of Maharashtra l India.