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Rathwa Tribe

The Rathwa tribe constitutes the group and sub-groups of aboriginal people native to Gujarat, Maharashtra, and Madhya Pradesh. The tribe gets its name from the ancient Dravidian term 'Rathbistar' standing for the hilly and forested region in the above states. The original inhabitants of the aforementioned regions came to be known as Rathwas. A sub-group who claim their ancestry to the Rathwas is called the Rathwa Koli community. Rathwas presently inhabit the talukas of Navsari, Jabugam, and Chhota Udaipur that lie in the Baroda district. Rathwas have remained endogamous by and large and speak in Rathvi-pidgin Gujarati and farming continues to be their chief occupation.

History of the Tribe: Madhya Pradesh is believed to be the original homeland of the Rathwas. It is from the heartland of India that the Rathwas migrated to the surrounding and neighboring regions in the states of Maharashtra and Gujarat. As per the 2001 census, there were a total of 5,35,284 Rathwa individuals of which there were 2,61,988 females and 2,73,796 males. The Rathwas speak in Hindi with people who don't belong to their tribe but communicate in a local dialect within their community. They marry within their community but interfamily, matriarchies or patriarchies marriages are strictly prohibited. Wedding customs and rites have a striking resemblance to the practices followed by Hindus.

They've traditionally been non-vegetarian and consume both alcoholic (locally brewed) and nonalcoholic beverages. Rule of primogeniture is strictly followed when it comes to inheritance and so it is the eldest male member who takes over following the death of his father. Following the death of a tribal member, the individual is cremated and a 13-day penance is observed after cremation.

Where Do They Belong To : As mentioned above, the Rathwas live in villages in the talukas of Navsari, Jabugam, and Chhota Udaipur in the district of Baroda and also in some talukas of Panchmahal district in eastern Gujarat.

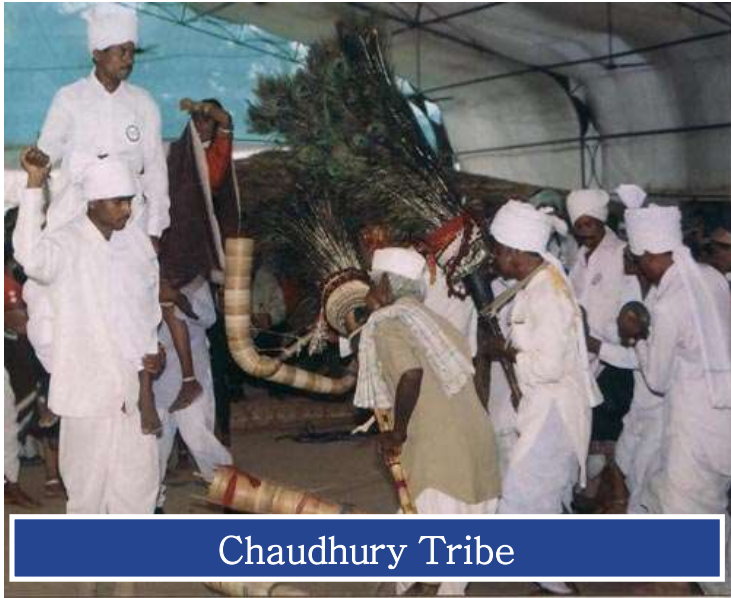
The Bhils are originally tribal people who inhabited and thrived in ancient India, particularly in the Northern zones. Bhils are aboriginal people and together with their endogamous lineages and clans comprise the largest tribal sect not only in India but also in entire Southeast Asia. In fact, 39% of the total population of Rajasthan comprises the Bhils. The tribe gets its name from the Dravidian word 'billu' which means bow as the Bhils historically and traditionally have been skilled bowmen or archers. The Bhils used to be nomads and hunters but they gradually took to agriculture for supporting themselves. Although they communicate in Bhili-an Indo-Aryan dialect, they generally communicate in the lingua franca of the regions where they live.

History of the Tribe: Bhils have inhabited large parts of North India long before the advent of the Aryans and even migrated to eastern and northeastern India later on. Bhils are believed to have descended from 'Nishad' who was the male offspring fathered by Lord Shiva (Mahadev) during his conjugal alliance with a human female. According to the folklore, Nishad had assassinated his father and was cursed to stay forever in the darkness of forests and mountains. One finds mention of the Bhils in the ancient Hindu epics of Ramayana and Mahabharata. Sabari-a woman belonging to the Bhil tribe is said to have earned divinity by offering stone-berries (prunes) to Lord Rama. The Bhils are a fiercely independent tribe and they've served the Rajputs, Mughals, Marathas, and British as warriors. They're endogamous and have a strictly delineated hierarchical order. Their supreme deity is the 'Vaghdev' or 'Tiger God' and they also worship other deities including Sitalmata, Bhairoba, Kanhoba and Khandoba.

Where Do They Belong To: The Bhils are broadly classified into two distinct groups-the central Bhils and Rajput Bhils. The central Bhils reside in Rajasthan, Gujarat, Maharashtra, and Madhya Pradesh, largely in the mountainous areas. You also come across some Bhils in Tripura-a northeastern state.



Bhil Tribe



Chaudhury Tribe

The Chaudhury tribe is comprised of members who claim to have descended from the warrior clan of Rajputs. Members of this tribal group or sect are also referred to as 'Choudhra'. However, census counts since and after India gained independence from British rule in 1947, has documented 'Chaudhury' and 'Choudhra' as separate and distinct tribes. As per the 2001 census, the total population of the Chaudhury ethnic group was 2,82,392 of which there were 1,41,512 males and 1,40,880 females. The individuals residing in rustic or rural regions are generally known as Choudhra whereas the members eking out an existence in the urban zones are called Chaudhury.

History: Numerous studies and research have been carried out about the Chaudhury tribe and hence the clan is considered to be excellently documented. A proportion of the clan believes that they're direct descendants of the last ruler of the district of Pavagadh in Gujarat-Patel Raval-who was a Rajput. This specific section prefers to be referred as 'Ravalias'-which is actually an extension of the name 'Raval'. Individuals belonging to the Chaudhury tribe are also to be found in the talukas of Mandvi and Vyara falling under Gujarat claim to have moved out of Pavagadh and started living in the aforementioned regions about five centuries ago. They communicate amongst themselves in the Choudhra vernacular-a dialect of Gujarati and are also capable of conversing in the Gujarati language. The Chaudhuris are further segregated into endogamous and exogamous divisions. Prominent amongst these clans are Valvda, Naladri, Paragadia, Desai, Hajarnia, Vashi, and Bamaniya. These sects and clans mostly follow the rituals and customs of Hinduism while a few abide by Christian beliefs and mores.

Where Do They Belong To: Members of Chaudhury tribe live in the hamlets of Mandvi and Pavagadh zones both of which are in Gujarat.

The Rabari men and women are individuals belonging to an ancient tribal community that have peregrinated from one place to another in the deserts, valleys, and plains of Rajasthan and Gujarat since the last 1000 years. Members of the tribe who are also referred to as Desai or Rewari, have traditionally followed nomadic lifestyles as their chief occupations have been herding camels and shepherding cattle. Currently, Rabaris are to be found in large swathes of northwestern India mainly in Gujarat, Rajasthan, and Punjab and sections of this ethnic group also eke out a living in the desert region of Sindh in Pakistan. Rabari in local parlance means 'outsiders' which seems to be a fitting description considering their lifestyle and lineage.

History: There is no recorded history or annals that pinpoint their origin although it is usually believed that the earliest descendants of the tribe migrated from Baluchistan in Afghanistan. However, many historians and archaeologists discount this belief. Nevertheless, some sub-clans of Rabaris claim to have descended from Sambal-one of the followers of Lord Shiva. As the offspring of Sambal and their respective descendants became too numerous, Lord Shiva directed them to descend to earth. They started dwelling in the erstwhile Marwar region of Rajasthan and gradually shifted to adjoining regions. As per another version, Sambal used to be a camel breeder who had caught a goddess disguised as a beautiful woman stealing the humped animals. In order to punish the woman, he disrobed her and then subsequently married her to safeguard her dignity. The Rabari tribe is matriarchal as women take the major decisions while the men take care of the herds. It is the Rabari women who've historically been the pallbearers of art and culture through the ages. The womenfolk are extremely skilled in beadwork and embroidery. Presently, there are about 2,70,000 individuals belonging to this tribal group.

Where Do They Belong To: The Rabaris mainly live in the Kutch region in Gujarat.



Rabari Tribe



Vadha Tribe

The Vadha community is a nomadic group that historically moved throughout the Kachchh region, including villages like Nirona and Jura. They were known for collecting natural stones and colors from forests, which they used to create lacquer goods. These lacquer items were then traded with the Maldhari community, with whom the Vadha had close ties.

Over time, the descendants of these Vadha artisans have become permanently settled in various Kachchhi villages. However, the traditional craft of lacquer work has faced challenges, particularly socioeconomically. Today, only a few traditional lacquer artisan families continue to practice this craft in Kachchh. They rely on the tourist market for seasonal sales and obtain their natural resources from the open market instead of sourcing them from the environment. Despite these challenges, the Vadha community has worked diligently to preserve their traditional craft in the face of modern machinery and technologies. The art of lacquered items involves adding vibrant colors and intricate patterns to seemingly ordinary objects. This is achieved through a manual process using a lathe. Local wood varieties such as Babool, Iliahi, and neem are first carved into shape and then smoothed using wooden tools.

The resulting products display a burst of vivid colors and kaleidoscopic designs. This unique form of lacquer work is practiced in Nirona by the Vadha community. Their creations include a variety of items, ranging from kitchenware like spatulas, ladles, and rolling pins to hairpins. The craft itself is a family affair, with men typically involved in cutting and shaping wooden articles, while women contribute by applying the finishing touches. The Vadha community's commitment to preserving this traditional craft showcases their dedication to keeping their cultural heritage alive, even as they adapt to changing circumstances and market demands.

The Mirs of Gujarat, a Muslim tribal community, trace their lineage back to the Butt tribe in the Kashmir Valley. Once a nomadic group, they have settled in small communities within the vast expanse of the Rann of Kutch. Their living conditions are characterized by temporary shanties topped with tarpaulin roofs, highlighting the relatively modest housing they inhabit. Despite their humble surroundings, the Mirs have found a way to sustain themselves by crafting and selling handmade items, such as jewelry, keychains, and beads, primarily catering to tourists who visit the region. Originating from Kashmir, the Mir community's journey has led them to the heart of Gujarat. Their artistry is a reflection of their deep connection to nature, and this sentiment is encapsulated in their craftsmanship. Tribal women proudly wear intricate ear cuffs, nose rings, toe rings, and bangles that symbolize their rich cultural heritage. The adornments not only add to their beauty but also serve as visible expressions of their identity.

Interestingly, the Mir tribe's livelihood revolves around the very jewelry they create. The pieces they handcraft for sale are often similar to the ones they wear themselves. This interweaving of personal expression and economic sustenance is a testament to the community's resourcefulness and creativity. In the vast landscape of cultural artistry, the Mir tribe stands out as an embodiment of untamed imagination blended with deep-rooted sentiments. Each ornamental design they create is a canvas that projects their vibrant creativity. Their treasure trove of handcrafted items not only showcases their individuality but also celebrates a distinctive tradition that is unique to their community. India Imprints pays homage to the captivating allure of the Mir tribe's craftsmanship, recognizing that their artistic expressions are not only rare but also a window into a world of culture and tradition that exists nowhere else. Their ability to infuse their wild imaginations with profound emotions resonates through their art, ensuring that the legacy of the Mir tribe's craft remains unforgettable and cherished.



Mir Tribe



Meghwar Tribe

Meghwar tribe who are variously referred to as Meghvanshis, Meghwal or simply Megh live in the northwestern region of India while a miniscule population live in Pakistan. Presently, the tribe enjoys Scheduled Caste status and it is not unusual to find numerous Meghwar men working in various government departments, in factories, and in private companies. Historically, members of the tribe have worked as weavers though many took to farming and even worked as farm laborers. Although, the Meghwar have espoused Hinduism as their main religion, the rigid caste system associated with this ancient religion (varna) looked down upon the individuals of this tribe as untouchables.

History: The Meghwar claim to be the successors of Megh Rishi, a saint who lived in ancient India. It is alleged that the eponymous saint was blessed with the power to make the clouds burst and open up that resulted in rains. His name is actually taken from the Sanskrit term for cloud-megh. When the suffix 'war' is attached to the word, then the term means sons or offspring of the cloud. Some sections of the tribe trace their ancestry to the caste of 'chamars'. Meghwar, with passage of time have progressed a lot and one finds the males from this community working in the factories in Gujarat, Rajasthan, and Punjab. There are many individuals who have established their own ventures and startups while a section holds government jobs. Though the Meghwars are non-vegetarians consuming fish, mutton, eggs, and chicken they avoid taking beef, veal or pork. Lentils, pulses, and whole grains however form their main diet. Women from the Meghwar tribal community are mainly concerned with rearing children following marriage. However, many women are skilled in beadwork and embroidery. They make intriguing and complex patterns of khadi, cotton, and woolen garments. They live in huts and cottages made from clay and bricks.

Where Do They Belong To: Members of Meghwal tribe live in the rural villages of Kutch.

Tharparkia Tribe: This tribal community draws visitors from different parts of the world due to their hospitable nature and strong attachment with the forestland in Gujarat. This tribal community has all India presence but in Gujarat they share a strong connection with the history of the state. They primarily worship Nature in various forms and perform various primitive rituals that have become an integral part of their culture. This tribe has been further divided into various sub- communities and have scattered across other parts of the country. People of this tribal community can understand Gujarati and other types of regional languages but they normally interact with each other through a special tribal mode of language. This tribal population usually wears traditional form attires that include kurta, dhoti, head gears with ornaments like tabij and ring. Women population belonging to this tribe prefers to wear odhani, choli and Ghaghara. They also like to adorn themselves with chudia in the hand and rings in the toe fingers. Their food habits normally include poultry birds, eggs, crabs, dry fish and others. Most of them are involved in activities like agriculture, cattle farming and other productive occupations. Women do not enjoy superior position in this tribal community and they are also barred from visiting village shrines. But opinions of female members are always sought during any household matter. The government has adopted many welfare measures to provide free treatment, pure drinking water, organizing vocational training and other amenities to this tribal population.

History: This tribal community owes its origin from the Dravidian people. Tharparkia tribe also found its reference in the textbooks of Mahabharata and Ramayana. The mention of this tribal community can also be found in a Sanskrit book called Katha Sarit Sagar that had been written in the year of 600 A.D. This community has collaborated with many Rajput rulers in their struggle against the Muslim rulers. They used to be honored by various Rajput kings as they contributed in the form of supplying dedicated group of warriors. They were even part of the mighty Maratha army under the leadership of Shivaji.

Where Do They Belong To?: This tribal community is main spread in different forest covered districts of Gujarat that include Dang, Surat, Vadodara, Bharuch, Panchmahal, Sabarkantha and Banaskantha.



Tharparkia Tribe



Ahir Tribe

Ahir tribe is one of the numerous ethnic groups that have been resident in India since ages. Some individuals belonging to the Ahir community or tribe strongly believe to have descended from the Yadav community. The Ahirs are variously referred to as tribe, race, clan or a community. Although, Ahirs are spread throughout the length and breadth of the country, they're particularly found in large numbers in the states of North India. In numerous annals and archives, the Ahirs have been further branched into Gwalavanshi, Nandvanshi, and Yaduvanshi. There are over twenty sub-castes and numerous sub-groups are agglomerated to constitute the tribe of Ahirs. They also abound in the Kutch region of Gujarat where they've six sub-divisions namely Vagadia, Sorathia, Boricha, Machhoya, Paratharia, and Pancholi.

History: Most historians regard the Ahirs to be the successors or descendants of Abhira whose origins are not clear. Some chroniclers regard Abhira ancestors to be a race rather than a tribe. And there is no agreement amongst the chroniclers whether they descended from Aryan or Dravidian clans. Additionally, there is no consensus either on the vocations or occupations they followed. Various historians have propounded theories where they attributed as nomadic or pastoralists, grazers and even as bandits. Some claim that the Ahirs directly descended from the heirs of Lord Krishna. There are over 1 million Ahirs spread throughout the country at present and nearly 30% of the adult population continues with their traditional callings including cattle breeding, milking cows, selling the milk and products obtained from milk in the local markets. They're mostly non-vegetarians and whole grains form their main staples. However, Ahirs living in Gujarat are by and large vegetarians. The Ahirs communicate with members of their community in a range of dialects that use Devanagari, Hindi, and Dhundhari scripts. Members of this tribe largely follow the Hindu religion and revere the cow according to the animal the status of goddess. The Ahirs offer prayers to their tribal deities Kharsk Deo and Mater Deo.

Gamit Tribe: Gujarat is one of the states in India that is home to a large number of tribes. These tribes along with their sub-dans and sub-groups have been living in the westernmost state for centuries. Prominent amongst these aboriginal ethnic groups is the Gamit tribe whose population is about 5,67,000. Members of this tribal group are alleged to owe their lineage to the Bhils as their mother tongue Gamitis actually one of the numerous Bhil vernaculars. The sub-clans of the Gamit tribe are known as Mavachi, Padvi, Vasava, and Valvi. There are many schools of thought each having its own theory regarding the christening of the tribe. While one school believes that the tribe gets its name from being devout worshipper of sun, another group stresses that nomadic Bhils who settled down to live in 'gams' (villages) came to be known as 'Gamits'.

History: History: Gamits themselves take pride in professing that Rajputs are their direct ancestors. Historians and chroniclers assert that the Gamits travelled to India from the Bolanghat and Khaibar Ghat areas of Sindh which are now in Pakistan. Gamits live in huts that are spacious and most of the shelters have a porch in front. Paddy grass, cow dung, and clay are chiefly used for building huts and the walls have an infrastructure of bamboos. Individuals from the older generation prefer to dress up in old-fashioned ways but the present generation has adopted modern dress styles. Gamits consume vegetables, fruits, and non-vegetarian food items and pay obeisance to Hindu gods and goddesses besides their own tribal deities. They celebrate their traditional festivals like Nano Dev, Moto Dev, Gowal Dev, and Gam Dev No with pomp and gaiety. They also take part in celebrating Hindu festivities like Dusshera, Diwali, and Holi. Agriculture continues to their chief vocation while those who're landless work as farmhands or laborers. There are many Gamits who work in factories and workshops. Gamits either bury their dead or cremate them.

Where Do They Belong To?: The maximum number of Gamits lives in Valsad, Bharuch, Dang, Surat, Uchchhal, Vyara, and Songadh districts of Gujarat.



Gamit Tribe



JAT Tribe

JAT tribe: It would be a grave error to ascribe the Jats as tribesmen and tribeswomen that descended from the Dravidian tribes or clans that lived in India since the prehistoric times. The Jats have, since recorded history, been engaged in agricultural and farming activities, and gradually they establish empires and ruling dynasties in India. Jats, whose population in India was about 82.5 million in 2012, have excelled in almost every conceivable walk of human life. India even had a late Prime Minister-Chaudhury Charan Singh and there have been highly celebrated Jat sportsmen, actors and actresses, writers, and educationists. The government in India has classified the Jats as an OBC but government jobs were hitherto reserved only for Jats living in Rajasthan (excepting the Dholpur and Bharatpur districts) that led to an uprising by the 'Haryanvi Jats' in the beginning of 2016 who were demanding OBC status.

History: There are many theories about the origin of the Jats. While many historians and archaeologists believe that the Jats existed as a pastoral community in the Saptasindhu region in erstwhile NWP (North West Frontier Province). It was only from 11th century onward that the Jats began to make inroads into the sub-continent as they settled in the land of five rivers (Punjab) and the surrounding regions. There are others who strongly assert that the Jats were descended from Indo-Aryans who in turn migrated from Central Asia. According to Hindu mythology, Jats owe their lineage to Virbhadr, son of Lord Shiva who was born out of his locks. The Jats have accepted the religion which is predominant in the region where they live. For instance, in Pakistan, the Jats are Muslims, in Punjab and Haryana they've embraced the Sikh as well as Hindu religions. There are many Jats residing in Kutch, Porbandar, and Jamnagar districts of Gujarat who are either Muslims or Hindus. Older generations of Jats continue to practice agriculture and animal husbandry while the youth have learnt to adapt themselves with the changing times and have taken up jobs in almost every commercial or industrial sector.

The Agariya tribe has been classified as one of the most backward tribes in India and hence designated as an 'especially backward scheduled tribe'. The tribe gets its name from the profession that most male members of the clan used to choose-iron-ore and zinc smelting. Agariyas have a primitive association with 'aag' or fire as this element was integral for smelting ferrous and nonferrous metallic ores for chiseling sickles, ploughshares, axes, and scythes. Invention of the process of zinc metallurgy is usually ascribed to the Agariyas. Agariyas have traditionally worked as miners and blacksmiths and earned their daily bread by exchanging their produce with clothes, food-grains, and money.

History: Agariyas believe that their tribe existed since the dawn of human civilization. Since most of the members are Lohars (or blacksmiths or ironmongers), great majority of the tribal individuals share the belief that they were the first to make the ploughshare with which the bullocks tilled the primeval earth. The Agariyas are believed to have descended from Gonds - the second largest of tribes in India and they live in several regions of Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh. Some sections of the tribe also exist in the Bhuj, Matra, and Mandvi districts of Gujarat. The Agariyas living in Gujarat are basically salt makers and it has not yet been established whether they are genetically linked to the Agariyas existing in other states. Though the Agariyas were basically blacksmiths by profession, the different sub-groups and clans of the main tribe that migrated to different regions, adopted the calling or vocation that was prevalent in a specific area. The Agariya tribe has two distinct sub-groups or divisions - Patharia Agariya and Khuntia Agariya. Both these sub-clans are endogamous which means members marry within their community. The Agariyas are god-fearing people and deeply religious. They worship their chief deity, Dulha Deo; Bura Deo-the arch deity of the Gonds; Agyasur-the fire god, and Lohasur-the god of iron. They believe that Lohasur dwells in their iron smelters and foundries, and hence pay homage to the lord of fire by sacrificing animals and chanting mantras after construction of a foundry is complete.



Agariya Tribe



Kathaudi Tribe

The Kathodi / Kauthodi tribe is a registered Scheduled Tribe in the states of Maharashtra and Gujarat and their numbers seemed to have dwindled drastically from 1,40,672 in 1961 to about 5820 individuals as per the 2001 census. The name of the tribe has been taken from the Acacia Catechu trees whose extracts are used for making 'Kaththa' or 'Khair'. The members of the tribe are variously referred to as Kathodia or Kathkari and are primarily regarded as catechu makers. These tribal people owe their ancestry to the Bhil tribe and originally hail from Kolaba, Khandesh, and Thana areas of Maharashtra. They were made to relocate to Gujarat by the Bohra community of traders for extracting catechu from the Acacia Catechu trees..

History: The Kathodi people seemed to have originated from the Western Ghats in Maharashtra. They used to live in the forests and mountainous regions of Thane and Raigad districts in present day Maharashtra and eked out a living mainly by dealing in catechu, firewood, charcoal, and other forestry products. Presently, the Kathodis are a scattered and a fragmented lot with collective groups living in various talukas of Rajasthan and Gujarat. They mainly communicate in a dialect which is actually a blend of Gujarati and Marathi. The Kathodis are chiefly classified into two broad groupings both of which are exogamous- 'Dhor Kathodis' and 'Maratha Kathodis'. Marriages are mainly held via negotiations and child marriages are now strictly forbidden. The Kathodis bury the dead instead of cremating them and the abode along with the deceased's belongings is immolated. Most of the religious and societal rites they follow are similar to the ones adhered to by Hindus. They mostly worship gods and goddesses belonging to the Hindu pantheon and celebrate Hindu festivals and ceremonies like Navratri, Diwali, Rakshabandhan, and Holi. They're omnivorous in their eating habits and given to drinking locally brewed liquors.

When to Visit See/Them: In order to see the Kathodis in their natural habitats, you'll have to be prepared to venture deep into the woods and wilderness of Gujarat or Rajasthan. Visiting their habitats during the festival period offers you good opportunities to observe the Kathods from close

Where Do They Belong To: The Kathodis at present stay in the areas of Dand, Gandevi, Chhota Udaipur and Vijayanagar in Gujarat state.

Maldhari Tribes: The Sasan Gir sanctuary in the state of Gujarat is home to the endangered Asiatic Gir Lion. However, the forests of Gir and the adjoining wooded hills of Barda have also been a sanctuary for the Maldhari tribe that has inhabited the region for almost a millennium. Unfortunately, the tribe is on the verge of extinction as the government since the past three decades have been desperate to clear the national reserve and the Banni grasslands sanctuary of human population. The numbers of Maldharis who had peacefully coexisted with the fauna in and around the Gir forests are fast dwindling. Following the declaration of the forested area as a protected reserve, the Maldharis were looked upon as an impediment to the preservation of the ecological diversity and balance. However, many anthropologists, and sociologists have come forward to help the government and NGOs in their efforts to rehabilitate the members of this tribe.

History: Maldhari which literary means possessor or bearer of goods is an individual of the eponymous tribal community who originally migrated from different regions of Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, and Rajasthan to the forested area in Gir and Banni grasslands about 1,000 years back. They moved along with their most prized possession, their cattle and livestock including cows, buffaloes, goats, camels, and sheep. Even today, the tribesmen spent the better part of the year moving from one pastureland to another while their cattle graze on the grasslands. At present, about 8,400 Maldharis stay inside the national reserve and many of them belong to subgroups of the tribe including Mutwas, Junejas, Jat, Hingorja, Hingora, and Halepotra. They live in hamlets which are called ness. The Maldharis always have and continue to live a very primitive lifestyle without any access to even basic healthcare, primary education, electricity, and running water. They earn their livelihood by milking the cattle and selling milk as well as milk products in the nearby markets.





Bharwad Tribe

Bharwad Tribes: The term "Bharwad" originates from the word 'Badawad', where 'bada' means sheep and 'wada' in Gujarati refers to an enclosure. The people who owned such enclosures among the shepherds were known as Bada wad, eventually becoming known as Gadarieas. In South Gujarat, they are called Ahirs. There are different stories about the Bharwad's origin. According to one version, they came from Gokul Vrindavan near Mathura and later moved to Mewar in Rajasthan, and eventually to Gujarat. Another version states that they originated from Bharude, a cattle herder community in Madhya Pradesh. They might be a section of the Ahirs in Gujarat, as both groups are involved in cattle breeding. Anavil Bharuvad, a tribal leader, is said to have aided King Vanraj Chavda in reclaiming his lost kingdom, and the people descended from Anavil Bharwad and his associates call themselves Bharwad. They are mainly found in Junagadh, Rajkot, Surendranagar, Bhavnagar districts, and other parts of the state.

The Bharwad follow Hinduism with Lord Krishna as their supreme deity. Each clan has its own deity, and blessings from these deities are sought by newlywed couples. Their main deity is Masai Mata, and worship is common in villages with a significant Bharwad population. They have temples dedicated to Masai Mata, with a major center in Morvi, Rajkot district. They celebrate festivals like Dussehra, Diwali, Janmashtami, and Holi. During Navratri, they observe fasting. Some Bharwad celebrate local festivals during the months of Ashad (Beiso) and Magha (Beisto), which involve making predictions about crop prospects and rainfall. They undertake pilgrimages to Dwarka, Virpur, and other sacred places. Within their community, they have a bhuv-bhagat for worshipping clan deities, and Anavil Brahmins conduct marriage and death rituals. As pastoralists, the Bharwad have interactions with various neighboring communities. However, when it comes to rituals, they tend to remain within their own group. They avoid accepting or sharing food with certain lower castes, but they do have food exchanges with groups like Lohars, Koli, Bania, and Patel. The Bharwad and their neighboring communities share common resources like roads, drinking water, schools, crematoriums, temples, places of worship, and official council offices. In terms of politics, their involvement is mostly limited to the local level.

Siddi Tribes: The Siddi community, also known as Habshi and Badsha, is believed to have African origins. There's some disagreement about when they arrived in India. According to the 1931 Census, the Siddi were brought to India by the Portuguese in the late 17th century, possibly as slaves. However, Russel and Hira Lal (1916) suggest that they came to India in the mid-15th century. The history of their migration is preserved through both oral traditions and historical accounts. Presently, the Siddi reside along the western coast of Gujarat, Maharashtra, and Karnataka states. They are primarily concentrated in the Junagadh district of the Rajkot division.

The Siddis follow the Sunni sect of Islam and don't have family or village deities. In times of crisis, they visit the tombs of pirs (holy leaders). In Jambur village, there are significant darghas (tombs) of different pirs, with Nagarshi pir dargah, Babaghor Ki dargah, Dasal babu ki dargah, and Mai-Parsa Ki dargah being particularly important. Each Siddi group is connected to one of these pirs. They observe religious events like Eid, Ramjan, and Moharram, and some offer Namaj prayers daily. They also believe in supernatural powers, having a Bhua (spirit-possessed individual) who can heal various ailments. Siddis have folk tales and songs about their origin and migration. These songs are sung during the 'Dhamal' dance, a traditional folk dance popular in Saurashtra. While both genders participate in the 'Rasda' dance, 'Dhamal' is exclusively performed by men. They use percussion instruments in their music. The Siddis accept food, cooked or uncooked, from both Hindus and Muslims except from lower-caste communities. Economically, they have connections with groups like Kunbis, Lohanas, and Memons. Many work as laborers, while some Siddis are teachers, doctors, or serve in the defense services.

Siddis generally have a positive view of formal education for boys, but this attitude is less favorable towards girls. Boys typically receive education up to the secondary level, while girls often stop at the primary level. Boys might drop out of school due to economic constraints, whereas girls face both social and economic barriers. The community uses both modern and traditional healthcare services. Siddis generally hold a favorable opinion of family planning programs.



Siddi Tribe



Dangi Tribe

The Dangi tribe in Gujarat is an indigenous community primarily found in the Dang district, situated in the southeastern part of the state. The Dang district is characterized by its hilly terrain, lush forests, and distinct cultural identity. The Dangi people have a rich cultural heritage that is closely tied to their natural surroundings. They have their own language, which belongs to the Bhil language family. Traditionally, the Dangi economy has been centered around agriculture, with practices like shifting cultivation being prominent. They grow crops like rice, millets, and pulses in the hilly regions. The Dangi tribe has its own traditional attire, which includes colorful clothing adorned with intricate embroidery. Women typically wear vibrant skirts and blouses, while men opt for dhotis and shirts. Jewelry and ornaments also hold cultural significance for them. In terms of religion, the Dangi tribe follows a mix of indigenous beliefs and Hinduism. They have their own local deities and rituals, often performed in natural settings like forests and sacred groves. While the Dangi people have traditionally lived in harmony with their environment, modernization and development have brought changes to their way of life. Efforts are being made to preserve their cultural heritage and ensure sustainable development for their community. Overall, the Dangi tribe in Gujarat contributes to the diverse cultural mosaic of the region, with its unique traditions, language, and way of life.

The Warli tribe is well-known and primarily resides in the mountainous regions of Dharampur and Vansda talukas, as well as the coastal area of Umbergaon taluka in the Valsad district. They are mainly concentrated in Umbergaon taluka, but can also be found in small numbers in districts like Panchmahals, Surat, Bharuch, Vadodara, Sabarkantha, Banaskantha, and Mehsana. Their population was approximately 255,271 according to the 2001 census. The term "Warli" is believed to have originated from "Warud," as described by Pandya (1981). Records suggest that three anarya tribes, including Nishad, Vyas, and Warud, settled in the Satpura of Vindhya mountain ranges. "Warud" evolved into "Warli." According to the Bhagwato Mandal dictionary, "Warli" refers to an aboriginal tribe skilled in extracting roots, transplanting trees, and engaging in agriculture. Save (1945) mentions that Warli are an aboriginal tribe living in northeastern Thana district, Dharampur, Bansda states in the Surat Agency, and the western part of the Nasik district, particularly on the eastern slopes of the Sahyadris. He suggests that "Warli" comes from "warul," meaning forest or fanatic. The Warli tribe consists of three groups: Rusi or Davar, Kilwat or Murdey, and Nehri. The Davar subgroup, particularly those living near coastal areas, is known as Pathar Warlis. According to Warli mythology, when God created mankind, he bestowed a plough upon the Warlis, making them Kulambi (farmers). The Warlis migrated to South Gujarat from the Konkan area of Maharashtra, possibly due to British pressure or the Maratha imperialistic movement. Their language is a blend of Khandeshi Bhili dialect and Marathi, spoken alongside Gujarati and written in Gujarati script. Their traditional clothing includes a choli (blouse) and a four-yard sari called lugda for women, while men wear a bush-shirt, half-sleeve shirt, sleeveless jacket, half-pant, or striped underwear. In the past, elderly women wore a loin cloth around their waist and men covered their heads with a turban.



Warli Tribe



Garasiya Tribe

Garasia Tribe: The Garasia tribal community has garnered significant recognition within Indian culture owing to their distinctive lifestyle and rich cultural heritage. This tribe is notably concentrated in various regions of both the states of Rajasthan and Gujarat, further contributing to their cultural diversity and influence. The name derived from the Sanskrit word 'gras,' symbolizing substance, and their history is intertwined with the Rajputs' flight to Bhil tribal areas after defeat by Ala-ud-Din Khilji. They gradually gained control over the Bhil tribes, becoming known as Garasia, often called 'fallen Rajputs' with a reputed connection to the Chauhan Rajputs of Rajasthan.

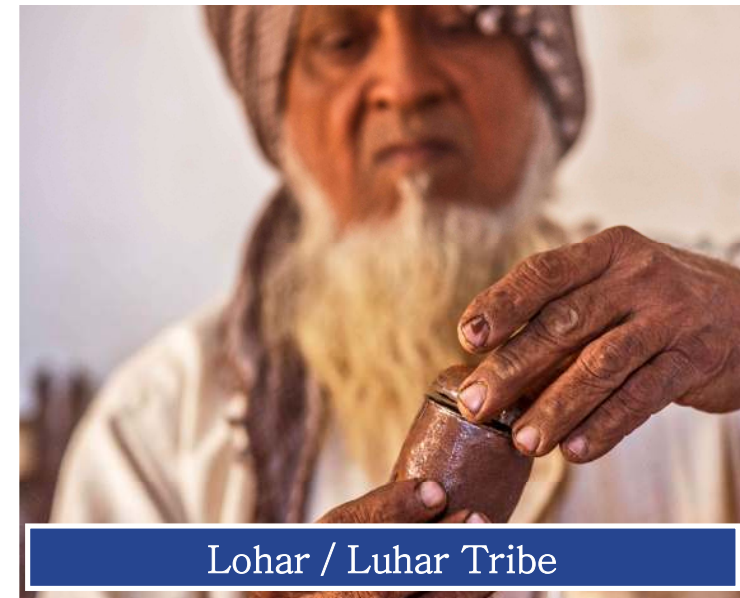
History of the Tribe: Historical accounts suggest that these former chiefs were displaced by invaders in the 13th century, with many taking refuge in Aravalli and Vindhya hills and forming alliances with the Bhil community. Over time, they established settlements, incorporating agricultural practices and earning the moniker 'Garasia' for Rajputs and landholders. Their language, Dungri Garasia, is a blend of Bhili, Marwari, and Gujarati, reflected in the distinctive Nyar dialect. This history showcases the tribe's adaptation, cultural fusion, and linguistic uniqueness within India's diverse heritage. While the Garasia tribal community can be categorized into various clans, unity among them is often scarce. To sustain their livelihoods, these tribes engage in agriculture, with some Garasia individuals also working as laborers in the fields. This tribal communities uphold animism as their core belief system and hold deep reverence for animals such as horses and swords, as well as the sun. Despite preserving their ancient traditional customs and beliefs, Hinduism has notably influenced the religious perspectives of many Garasia tribes. To elucidate, their religious practices amalgamate Hindu rituals with indigenous beliefs. While the Garasia community now venerates a multitude of deities and holds holy cows in high esteem akin to Hindus, they steadfastly maintain their distinctive faith in concepts like spirits, the veneration of ghosts, ancestral spirits.

Where Do They Belong To: They are found in various regions of Gujarat, particularly in hilly and forested areas. This region has historically been their homeland, where they have developed their unique culture, traditions, and way of life.

Lohar Tribe: Lohar, traditionally blacksmiths and metalworkers holds a distinctive place within the local cultural tapestry with their laborious art of hammering, forging, and casting metals, a craft that has flourished for centuries within its borders. Their expertise is pivotal in creating essential tools, implements, and ornamental metalwork include statues, vases, utensils, ornaments, jewelry and furniture that boast of ornate designs for the community.

History of the Tribe:

The craft of copper-coated bells in Kachchh, Gujarat emerged from the practical demands of the time and the movement of the Lohar community from Sindh (now Pakistan). With livestock being a major occupation, the bell makers from Sindh recognized the craft's potential and introduced it to Kachchh. The bells found a significant market among pastoral communities like Maldharis, Bharwad, and Rabaris, who collaborated closely with the artisans to customize the bells' sound to be recognizable by their livestock. These bells, though pricey, carried a lifetime warranty and were cherished possessions. This reciprocal relationship between artisans and pastoralists highlights the synergy between craft and daily life, culminating in a unique tradition of craftsmanship that seamlessly blended utility, culture, and commerce. The region of Kutch, in particular, excels in crafting remarkable silver jewelry celebrated for its intricate craftsmanship. Alongside silver, craftsmen skillfully manipulate iron, copper, and brass to craft a diverse array of exquisite artifacts. Every piece of metalwork is a testament to the dedication of artists who have dedicated years honing their skills, resulting in creations that reflect both their mastery and the finesse of their craft.



Lohar / Lohar Tribe



Halepotra Tribe

The Halepotras Tribe: A well-known Muslim community, reside in the Banni and Pachchham regions of Kutch, which is the northern part of the area. They have a history of buffalo breeding that dates back to their migration from Sindh. This migration was driven by their search for grass and water, which was abundant in the once thriving Banni Grassland of Kutch. The term "Halepotra" translates to "son of descendant of Halaji," who is believed to be their ancestor that migrated from Sindh. Additionally, the Hindu Meghwal's have also settled in Hodka, sharing this region with the Halepotra community.

The Halepotras are part of the larger group known as Maldharis, which are cattle breeders. They trace their ancestry back to Saudi Arabia, and their journey to Kachchh is said to have taken them through Iran, Baghdad, and Sindh in search of suitable pastures for their cattle. Despite being traditional and conservative in their ways, the Halepotras are known for their friendliness towards visitors. They are renowned for their hospitality, often considered some of the most hospitable people globally. In the Banni region, the people are generally taller than in other areas. The Halepotras typically wear vibrant and single-colored Pathani suits. They are characterized by their distinctive long and sharp noses and chins. Some of them sport red beards due to the use of henna/mehndi. Bhirandiyara, a junction village in Banni, offers a glimpse into the day-to-day lives of these people.

Among the Halepotra community, the Mutva women have gained fame for their Mutva Embroidery. This form of embroidery involves the use of tiny mirrors, thick stitches, and sometimes even metal threads, known as Mukko embroidery. This intricate and artistic craft is a part of the cultural heritage of the Halepotra community in the Banni region of Kutch.

Vankar Tribe: The weaving and cloth trading communities of Western India, particularly in Gujarat are referred to as Vankar, Wankar or Vaniya. These communities are known for producing four major types of woven fabrics: cotton, silk, khadi (hand-spun and handwoven fabric), and linen.

History of the Tribe: The Vankar, being involved in both the production and trade of textiles, were often recognized as part of the Vaishya category due to their merchant activities, which included selling the textiles they produced. The weavers in Gujarat share a deep socio-economic connection with their local clientele, primarily the Ahirs, Rajputs, and Rabaris. Traditionally, each weaver had a personal association with a Rabari family, who provided them with yarn sourced from sheep and goats. The farming communities, such as Ahirs, cultivated kala cotton, a type of indigenous cotton, which was then woven into textiles for shoulder cloths and headgear. Wool from sheep and goats were used to craft veils, skirts, shawls, and blankets. The intricate designs woven into Kachchhi textiles were influenced by the communities that wore them, often depicting shapes like musical instruments or the footprints of animal herds.



Vankar Tribe



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