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HISTORICISATION OF DHANGAR COMMUNITY: ROLE OF ORAL, FOLKLORE AND
MYTHOLOGICAL TRADITIONS

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ABSTRACT

Researchers study the different communities. The methodology and theory that they use to analyse the community literature either oral or written differs in its application as well as comprehension. Many scholars have approached the issue in a different way. But still there is a growing demand for the more reliable empathetic theory and methodology to understand the life experiences of the communities' especially nomadic communities. I will concentrate only on Nomadic Communities in the scope of this paper. Since, these communities have less literacy rate. The narratives of such communities are either in oral form and folk songs. In most cases there is no availability of narratives in well documented format. Many Nomadic community need to be researched to reorganise the otherwise written dominant narratives which give subordinate mention to the existence of Nomadic or subjugated communities. Since it is very important to understand the schema of theory before we venture in to the actual analysis of community aspects, we have to consider the overall general field of community study. Community study is a very large term. Community study has different implied meanings. Nowadays, with the advancement of internet and technology, the types and features of community are changing. Thus, the nature of the community is changing. In order to capture the changing nature of the community and transformation in the life of particular community we have to keep a check on the community proceedings in the social, political and economical field. The community changes its nature according to the external forces and elements. The community aspects can be studied by implementing the different theories. So many people have ventured to do so. I would concentrate on Dhangar community from Maharashtra. More particularly, This paper tries to tackle the problems and challenges while doing research on the oral literature especially Dhangar oral literature and Dhangari Ovis. It also deals with the folklore traditions and tries to argue that how these traditions are the sights of cultural history if look into the deeper level. This paper owes to Joseph Muleka's study on African Oral literature for the Idea of theory. But this idea has been recontextualized in Maharashtra to understand the rural Dhangar Oral literature. it also extends to other two aspects of

community literature i.e.folklore and myth tradition. We, as researchers, always find it difficult to choose theory which is more relevant to the topic related to a particular community Oral literature and its analysis to build a more reliable narrative of the community. It is easy to find out the theory for written work or for literary analysis of written literature. This theory can facilitate to the researcher who works on written literary work. On the other hand, the problem arises when a particular community is least researched or the availability of written literature on that community is scanty. In such scenario, the researcher has to rely on the oral literature of that community. he or she also gets some insights from folk songs and mythological stories which were circulated and preserved by community people. Here the role of the performer comes into picture. At the same time the researcher is grappled with another problem of choice of theory because the nature of oral literature is unpredictable and transient. It is the performer who decides how to present or perform the literary piece. This puts the researcher of the oral literature in to dilemma about the choice of theory to analyse the oral literature to build the history of a particular community. Even many scholars have argued on this issue what I believe there is acute need of theory to analyse the local oral literature as the academia still uses the western theories to do so. But the complexity grows when these theories fail to grab the essence of the community people who speak of their existence using folk tales, oral art forms. The dilemma comes when there is no alternative way, for oral literary forms, myths from that community and folk songs are important available material for research on Dhangar community from Maharashtra state. This material can be analysed and tested using Ethno-historical method where the researcher gets the freedom to use different approaches to look into the history and experiences of the community. My paper tries to show how Dhangar community can be studied using this method of ethnohistory.

Key words- Dhangar ethnohistory oral traditions folklore myth

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To begin with, we have to start with the basic questions- what is community? How to study community? What is community research? Why should we conduct research on communities? Does community carry the same burden of caste in Brahmanical hierarchy? What is the relevance of community study in present academia? Who has conducted research on communities? How the different communities and caste are studied through the history? What was the status in colonial period of community research? How to study the community if the literature on that community is scanty? What is the role of oral forms of literature and folk songs and stories which get transmitted from one generation to another in various communities? Can we study it as research material for better analysis and understanding? What are the gaps or scope in existing community research? Why should we research history of community in general and community's history in particular? What is community's historical transition? What is the need of the past of the community in establishing or sustaining in the present? What is the community Transformation? These questions are very important to contextualise and anchor the research on Dhangar in the existing community research. 'Dhangar¹ as religious community of peculiar features' has been studied by German scholar Gunther-Dietz Sontheimer² using anthropological approach. According to Shyam Yedekar, Dr. Shyam Singh Shashi had Done PH.D. On the Subject "Hamara Samaj: Bharat Ke Meshpal" (Our Society: Indian Shepherd.), in Hindi.³ There are few theoretical and methodological issues that will be discussed in the following sections. We must start with the very basic question in order to proceed to the systematic analysis of the term "Community".

1.2 What is community?

There are several definitions of community. Many scholars have defined the term community. But the one which is nearing the sense is of Gusfield taken in article 'Sense of community: A definition and theory by David W. McMillan and David M. Chavis. Gusfield makes two parts of the definition according to its usage. First is related to geographical area or territory. Second relates to the human relationship.⁴ p(xvi). McMillan and Chavis proposed the four criteria for definition and theory. "First, the clarity of definition, second concreteness of the definition, third it should represent the warmth and intimacy implicit in the term. And finally it needs to provide a dynamic description of the development and Maintenance of the experience."

In continuation, they talk about their proposed four elements of the proposed definition- Membership, influence, integration and fulfilment of needs and shared emotional connection. They proposed a very short definition it goes as follows- the sense of community comes through the shared feeling of togetherness and when the members of the community feel the commitment of shared faith with each other.⁵ It's very interesting to know that the community believes in sharing their feelings and emotions with each other. A sense of togetherness comes when they believe in faith about each other. McMillan and Chavis talk about the shared emotional connections. They state that there is Spiritual bond in almost every community.⁶ Existence of the community is visible through their sense of sharing or what Bernard calls it "Community of Spirit." He gives a very important example of Soul of Blacks and formation of a National Black Community. He beautifully relates this concept with the concept Volkgeist. It means folk spirit.⁷

But one important thing needs be valued that the community is not the static feeling. It gets influenced by different forces. It changes throughout the time with no-static values. For example, forces such as economic factors, commercial force, employment, the media, the transport, professions, caste hierarchy i.e. social forces, political forces. If we go into the depth of the matter then we find that the same person belongs to the different communities according to his/her needs for example- family, nation, and religion, etc. As Fischer, 1982, talks about the

"Layering of the Community". According to him this is the modern phenomenon⁸. One person getting attached to the different communities is based on two things. First one is because of territory and tradition and second is, As Durkheim Mentions in Division of labour in Society, the "Organic Solidarity" according to their interests, professions, Religions, etc.⁹

By looking at the preceding definitions and opinions of the scholars, it can be understood that there are various ways to look at the community. Community is a very complex phenomenon. It needs to be studied in a very convincing way and with purpose. We will see the purpose in next section.

1.3 Why should we study community?

Either through oral or written narratives, people always try to make sense of their present by getting associated with the past in their memory or the past they imagined for themselves. This strategy includes the people's effort to associate some objects or places to their past. This has been there much before archaeology as a discipline came into existence. This is the survival strategy as community.¹⁰ This happens because the community wants to sustain with the time. They want to uplift themselves. Every community expect these things. Here the argument of Dokecki and Hobbes is apt to mention. They suggest that one must design the government policy by considering the needs of community, their expectations. They state that the main intention of the policy should be the Human progress and development.¹¹ That's why we must study the community. If the scholar provides the clarity in his research on community the lawmaker and planners get very sound foundation to bank on to strengthen the community. This is so because such research is very clear and empirically and theoretically strong. In order to avoid the problems in designing the plans for such communities' two scholars Glenwick and Janson established a very influential model. They show some of the deficiencies in the system. They advocate the role of community psychologist in suggesting the mechanism and actions towards the overall progress of the community.¹²

Thus, the scholars must take up the study of communities in order to strengthen the community aspirations and life experiences in a better way. In order to analyse the changing nature of community we have

take up variety of methods and theories because there are some drawbacks of such studies. There have been some arguments and counterarguments regarding the community study and its importance and Problems. For example William has given only positive side of the community. He said that community is positive all over the globe. 13 But he was confronted by some scholars Like Crow and Maclean and Hogget. They have shown the darker side of the communities. According to them community comes with social exclusion, inequality, oppression and social divisions. 14 Here we must look at the positive side of the community by considering the social belonging, solidarity and support, collective well being, a sense of being connected also consider the negative aspects like social problems.15 In theory and operationalization of a contested concept ,Graham Crow and Alice Mah have suggested the four interrelated and overlapping themes in relation with community research in their recommendations for the future research. These themes are connection, difference, boundaries and development. According to them, these themes donot relate to the communities of interest, place and identity but they relate to the broader sense of community research.16 Now we will move towards the theoretical issues of Dhangar literature from Maharashtra.

Nomadic community in Disciplinary complexity-Nomadic people and their history need to be studied in various disciplines. Some of the disciplines have given the space to the study of various communities. For example ethnographic studies have been done on various communities. But these communities need to be brought under the interdisciplinary or multi-disciplinary approach.17 The colonial records and ethnography have influenced the approaches and perspectives of the post- colonial ethnographers and historians. There are several issues which can be brought under the research scanner. For example, It is vague and problematic argument that the nomadic people are leading nomadic life from very distant past. It is not justifiable that the Nomadic communities are nomadic from time immemorial. It's very complex procedure to document and record the history of nomadic people.

Historical Dislocation: A challenge

Their historical dislocation itself is very complex issue. Their enumeration or classification is very big issue in front of state. For example, colonial anthropologists have implemented problematic methods to depict the nomadic communities. Nomadic people were forced to leave their traditional means of livelihood and occupations because of colonial rational attitude and its implementation had put nomadic people in detrimental condition socially as well as historically.18 The nomadic communities were dislocated historically due to some social, economical or political force. The scholars from history and ethno-history explained that the colonial rule was very adverse for the nomadic people all over the country. For example, Bhangya Bhukhya has shown how Lambadas in Hyderabad lost their traditional occupation because of colonial market economy and transport. The Lambadas used their self technology and confronted with colonial rule through various methods of Identity assertion.19

Searching Alternative history of Community

Multi-dimensional and multi-disciplinary enquiry will lead us to more reliable history of nomadic people. In this regard Shail Mayaram's construction of the Meo community history based on Oral resources has given indication of ethno historical understanding of communities. Most history books do not mention subordinated communities existence. But according to Mayaram, community orality is one of the methods to construct or make the history. She has taken into consideration the Meo resistance which was done through their oral songs20 . The whole argument has its origin in the famous project by subaltern studies. David Hardiman studied the community through various methods. Similarly, this attempt is to understand and explore the area of community historical research and methodology in general and ethno history of Dhangar21 community in particular. I will closely observe the detailed history of different communities. Different scholars have employed different theories and research methodology. In a way all methodologies head towards more scientific standard of understanding and reconstructing the community history. Here, I wish to explore the recent development in the field of the study of community history. I would like to use ethno-history as a method and oral literature and other related sources as my research tools.

If we explore the issues that include socio political underpinnings in Dhangar literature and the access to education for nomadic Dhangar, it shows the apparent contradiction about Dhangar because it is striking to know that according to some historical records Dhangars' ancestors had led a glorious life in the past. By looking at the existing realities of Dhangar community, the Question arises that why is there mismatch between what is being said in history and existing reality? Modern advancement reproduced the educated Dhangars but they are marginalized by the attitude of the upper -caste people. They have been adversely included in the mainstream at the periphery. Comparative study of the literature produced by Dhangar community and literature produced on Dhangar community shows politics behind the writing and the sociopolitical and economic condition of the community and subsequently the mainstream point of view on the community.

Many scholars like Dr. Bhangya Bhukya, Shail Marayam, N. sudhakar Rao, Gunther Diez Sontheimer, Dr. Wasant Patil , Nicolas Dirks . They studied the different communities. For example- Lambada, Meo, Dhangar, Dhangar linguistic ethnography. There is an acute need of the history of subordinate castes and communalities. This history should give more detailed interpretation of the colonial way of power and domination, their encounter with colonial power as well as the experience of colonial hegemonic power structure.²²

1.2 Colonialism and Nomadic Communities

Colonial agenda worked against Dhangars' socio-political and economic conditions at multiple levels. The overall identity of Dhangar was reshaped and reconfigured. Dhangar community was not homogenous in their socio-political and economic conditions. Dhangars Leadership gradually emerged and social reformers from the community tried to preach the community people to contest the changing political and economical conditions. Dhangars' engagement and negotiation with dominant caste can be deconstructed and understood in different parameters altogether. Dhangars in Maharashtra were either co-opted or relegated to the status of lower castes by the colonial attitude of dominant castes. The roots of this lie in the popular colonial discourse on caste and tribes in interdisciplinary project because the scope of the study allows to venture to understand the colonial and postcolonial historical records about Dhangars through the understanding of the oral traditions, archivals and enduring customs and its negotiation with the mainstream history. The Dhangar community's identity assertion, changing and multiple identities can be better understood by using the ethno-historical resources. The study will mainly focus on the self transformation technology of community. The significant study of community history is done by Dr. Bhangya Bhukya. He systematically critiqued the colonial efforts to subjugate the people , especially subaltern community people and showed how these hegemonic practices entered the lives of people .²³

Scholars on Subaltern Communities-

A trajectory can be drawn among the subaltern group of scholars and ethno-historians. For instance Ranjit Guha, while showing the relationship between colonialism and the local powers takes up a different stand. He argues that there existed well knit relationship between the English people and local dominant castes people. Mutually, this joint venture subjugated the nomadic people and subaltern community people²⁴ Drawing heavily from this argument, similarly, I feel in Pune the Dhangars witnessed the similar treatment from the colonial non British Puneri Peshawas. They were always given a subordinate post to then existing Maratha empire people. They were offered the popular titles of Patils in some of the regions of Maharashtra.²⁵ This further continued the subordinate identity of Dhangar people in Maharashtra. In my opinion, the continuation of Indian colonists' existence after the obliteration of western colonialism cannot be neglected. The mechanism and system of covert hegemonic ruling is perceptible in reclamation colonial history in relation with new ruling class in Maharashtra. The dominant and educated castes people claimed the warrior history of their ancestry and adopted a different method of consensus supremacy over the certain castes people. The second half of the nineteenth and early twentieth century played a major role in subjugating and subordinating Dhangars, Mahars, Mali and Mangs through a brahmanical and Chaturvarna model .This discriminatory and created model has been paramount in establishing the Maharashtraian society vertically as

well as horizontally into multiple identities. It offered a scope to assert identities within the Brahmanical fold. It ascertained the limits for caste identity assertion. All the movements and identity politics fights ended in asking some rights or status in hegemonic Chaturvarna fold. According to Bombay general department records, Dhangars and mali were rejected from certain post as they were not considered on par with some kshatriya status castes. 26 The second half of nineteenth century created a different social and political and economical atmosphere in Maharashtra as well as in whole British India. The new changes in dynasty of Maharashtra and Pune indirectly changed and affected the Dhangars. After Maratha, Peshawas under British people especially late 18th century and early 19th century the introduction of new technology affected the way of Market and transportation, it affected the peasants as well as the nomadic people not only in Maharashtra but all over the Country under British rulers. The concept of advanced technology was very new for the existing agricultural community and nomadic people. Through the introduction of advanced technology the oppressed community people were controlled by the Colonial people.

By quoting Foucault in the similar argument Bhangya Bhukya a well known scholar in community history, affirms the state action against the community people. While evaluating the state action against the Lambada community he proves that state had controlled the community activity through branding and stigmatizing the community. It forced the community to adopt the forceful identity of criminality. According to him, the colonial state's method of policing the community and cattle has deep inclinations towards the Foucault's concept about the state regarding the creation of docile body.

Dhangars efforts for self reform and struggle for existence through the preservation of oral songs and stories and their oral history is an example of modern mechanism or technology to pose challenge against the discrimination and in a way advertised the parallel existence of themselves. By quoting Foucault, Bhangya Bhukya writes about Lambada community and the state's action against Lambada people. The state controlled the community through branding and stigmatizing the community. It forced the community to adopt forceful identity of criminality. Its method of policing the community and cattle has deep inclinations towards the creation of docile body as Foucault says about the state²⁷. How Dhangar community due to lack of literacy and social movements indirectly kept concealed. The main aim of this chapter is to interpret and try to find out the challenging and contesting oral stories and ovis. These forms of art and literature have self reformatory agenda. As Foucault and Dr. Bhangya Bhukya argued - this tendency is technology of self. In addition to this, gods, goddesses, pilgrim places of Dhangars are manifestations of their distinct and unique counter culture. Here counter culture means as subaltern group proposes the history of other dominated communities. Here counter culture has negotiating and engaging nature in with so called mainstream culture. The counter presence of the customs of nomadic people and their religious practices determine the unique but democratic practices of the Dhangar community. The study will attempt to deconstruct the prevailing popular construction of Dhangars by the colonial and post colonial anthropologist and sociologist. This study will further and check the underpinnings of the dominant/ brahmanical agenda

Indian state has not been the stable. It has always changed its form geographically, socially, politically or culturally. Before independence the country was fighting against the external enemy or colonizer i.e. British people. During Nationalism period it has constructed and reconstructed and in a way deconstructed different narratives and histories. We have witnessed so many changes in India as far as social and political scenario is concerned. Before and after Independence India has come across several movements from marginalized communities and mainstream society as well. On the one side India was trying to liberate itself from the White colonizers and their exploitation and on the other hand some People like Mahatma Jyotiba Phule, Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar were trying to wipe out the social evils like Caste and its painful effects on the Bahujan and Marginalised people. During Independence movement also these movements against the caste and Varnashrama -dharma were going on simultaneously. To quote few, we can take examples of Phule's Satyashodak Samaj²⁸, Kalaram Mandir Satyagraha of Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar.

At present condition, in India, we get some examples of resistance from different sections of the society. The resistance movement differs considering religion, region, castes, and communities. Recently

Indian state experienced one more severe resistance from its Telangana region. Indian state history tells us about the different movements and resistance instances throughout the history, before and after the Independence. Here in this context the research on these issues like some self – identity movements, community assertions, community self efforts to reform itself in existing condition in relation to other social factors. I would be studying

Dhangar community's effort to mobilize them against the injustice being done to them by the state since last 60 years and how they are identifying themselves at two levels simultaneously. On the one hand, there has been some efforts to claim and highlight the Kshatriya status of the community and on the other hand there are some efforts in recent past to get included in Scheduled tribe category of the social reservation. In the past the same efforts were being taken by the Jats community in northern India . As Nonica Datta argues in her article, Jats: Trading caste status for empowerment , "The Jats of north India, who through the Arya Samaj movement used to clamour for Kshatriya status, are now demanding to be included among the OBCs. The demand will not add up to much in terms of government jobs, but what is at stake for the Jat leadership is not the proportion of jobs but political and social empowerment."²⁹

For instance, Looking at the past and present of Dhangar community in Maharashtra we can say that the community is not a homogenous as far as social, political and economical status of the people is concerned. It differs region-wise. The reasons behind this heterogeneous existence of the community are different. For example, in 17th century, of the historical records show that Dhangars were Patils of Supa Region. As Prof. A . R. Kularni says in his book

Maharashtra: Society and Culture " the ruler did not interfere in disputes involving the watan. The Patilki of Supa belonged to the Dhangar Family., but as Jagtap Brothers wanted to take it away by force from the Dhangars, the matter had to be referred to the king, who decided in favour of the Dhangars and warned the Jagtaps not to disturb the Dhangars anymore."³⁰ It means traditionally the community is not in a same profession that now they are relegated to sheep rearing community.

Myth and Community study-

Myth gives a cultural space to community to assert themselves socially, politically; it gives a regenerative and creative ability to the community for stabilizing and strengthening the community's social and political identity.³¹ Likewise Dhangar Community, in recent past, has started asserting their cultural and social identity against description about them in the dominant Indian grand narrative of Equality. Under the scheme of Positive discrimination Indian state tried to solve the problem of discrimination but it has created one more problem of categories and percentage of reservations.

As discussed above the myth gives a cultural space to community to assert themselves in different forms. Subsequently, the pro reservation movement and anti reservation movement have taken oppositional form against each other.

Mainstream history has suppressed and gave a secondary treatment to the experiences of the subaltern communities. The Endeavour in this research would be to locate and dig out the hidden narrative, history and experiences of the marginalized community and Dhangar community in particular. Any community is marginalized through a certain mechanism which has roots culture of the dominant communities. In this process, cultural construction of domination, difference and otherness gets strengthened. The construction of marginality happens through the confrontation among writing, state, history and religion.³² Looking at the past and present of Dhangar community in Maharashtra we can say that the community is not a homogenous as far as social, political and economical status of the people is concerned. It differs region-wise. The reasons behind this heterogeneous existence of the community are different. For example, in 17th century, some of the historical records show that Dhangars were Patils of Supa Region. As Prof. A . R. Kularni says in his book Maharashtra: Society and Culture " the ruler did not interfere in disputes involving the watan. The Patilki of Supa belonged to the Dhangar Family., but as Jagtap Brothers wanted to take it away by force from the Dhangars, the matter had to be referred to the king, who decided in favour of the Dhangars and warned the

Jagtaps not to disturb the Dhangars anymore.”³³ It means traditionally the community is not in a same profession that now they are relegated to sheep rearing community.

As Prof. A.R. Kulkarni, in his book, talks about the change caused by a Political or economic upheaval in the country. This Change is apt to affect the society in various ways. The new situation demands new arrangements, and the organization of the society is modified accordingly. The French revolution for Example, not only revolutionalized the political structure, but also affected the French Society. It threw open careers to the talented, and thus created opportunities³⁴

Origin Of Dhangar community

First of all, I would like to discuss the origin of the Dhangar community as per the available sources -

The Dhangar (Dhangad) are a herding caste of people primarily located in the Indian state of Maharashtra. Their original home is said to be Gokul, Vrindavan, near Mathura. From Gokul they are said to have moved into Mewar, and from Mewar, to have spread into Gujarat and Maharashtra.

The word "Dhangar" may be associated with a term for "cattle wealth" or be derived from the hills in which they lived (Sanskrit "dhang"). Ul Hassan noted that some people of his time believed the term to come from the Sanskrit "dhenugar" ("cattle herder") but dismissed that etymology as being "fictitious" The Dhangar were described by British colonial researchers as industrious, honest and sincere. It was noted that, "truthful as a Dhangar" was a proverb among Indians. Traditionally being shepherds, cowherds, buffalo keepers, blanket and wool weavers, butchers and farmers, the Dhangars were late to take up modern-day education. Though it has a notable population, not only in Maharashtra but also in India at large, had a rich history, today it is still a politically highly disorganized community and is socially, educationally, economically and politically backward. They lived a socially isolated life due to their occupation, wandering mainly in forests, hills and mountains. In Maharashtra, the Dhangars are classified as a Nomadic Tribe but in 2014 were seeking to be reclassified as a Scheduled Tribe in India's system of reservation.

The Dhangar produce a type of poetry known as ovi, often inspired by the forests and pastures where they graze their flocks. The ovi are formed of couplets, and can include legendary tales such as those of their god Biroba. Also in honour of Biroba, they perform the Dhangari Gaja dance.

Dhangars worship various forms of gods, including Shiva, Vishnu, Parvati and Mahalaxmi as their kuldevta. These forms include Khandoba, Beeralingeswara (Biroba), Mhasoba, Dhuloba (Dhuleshwar), Vithoba, Siddhanath (Shidoba), Janai-Malai, Tulai, Yamai, Padubai, and Ambabai. They generally worship the temple of these gods that is nearest to their residence which becomes their kuladev and kuladevi. In Jejuri, the deity Khandoba is revered as the husband of Banai, in her incarnation as a Dhangar. He is, therefore, popular amongst the

Dhangars, as they consider him their kuldevta. Khandoba (literally "father swordsman") is the guardian deity of the Deccan. Initially there were twelve tribes of Dhangar, and they had a division of labour amongst brothers of one family. This later formed three sub-divisions and one half-division. These three being Hatkar (shepherds), Ahir (cowherds) or Mhaskar (Gujjar buffalo keepers), and Khutekar (wool and blanket weavers)/Sangar. The half-division is called Khateek or Khatik (butchers). All sub-castes fall in either of these divisions. All sub-divisions emerge from one stock, and all sub-divisions claim to be a single group of Dhangars. Studies have revealed that they are genetically the closest. The number three and a half is not a random selection but has a religious and cosmological significance. All Dhangars of Western Maharashtra and Konkan/Marhatta country, like Holkars, can be termed "Marathas", but all Marathas are not Dhangars. Reginald Edward Enthoven listed 22 endogamous groups (sub-castes) and 108 exogamous groups (clans) of Dhangars, though other scholars state that this is not exhaustive. ³⁵

To describe about the origin of numerous groups of Dhangars in detail would lead us too far afield. Here we will confine ourselves to a more detailed description of the Hatkar Dhangars. There various sub clans in the Dhangar community. Bargi Dhangar is one of them. Little is known about the origin of the Hatkars. They are supposed to have immigrated from the North. Sayed ul Hassan Lists them as a 'cultivating and hunting caste' and also calls them Bargi

Dhangars. Hatkar or bargi dhangrs are numerous in the districts of Parbhani and Nanded. Guther

– Diez Sontheimer cites Sayed ul Hassan’s citation where ul Hassan has cited the the observations of Captain FizGerald, an “ Assistant Commissioner in Berer”,

They Declare that they immigrated from the north to this part of India many years ago, supposed to be some time prior to the Nizam Becoming the Subedar of the Deccan on behalf of the Kings of Delhi. But the Ani-akbari seems to suppose that the Hatkars were driven westward across Wardha By the Gonds³⁶ The Hatkars are all Bargi Dhangars, or the shepherds with the spear....the Hatkars say that they formerly,when going on any expedition,took only a blanket seven hand long and a bear –spear, and that on this account they were called “ Bargir” or barga Dhangars. They would appear to have been all footmen. To this day the temper of the Hatkar is said to be obstinate and quarrelsome. They will eat with a Kunbi. 37

Myth and Community assertion

Myth gives a cultural space to community to assert themselves socially, politically; it gives a regenerative and creative ability to the community for stabilizing and strengthening the community s social and political identity.³⁸ Likewise Dhangar Community, in recent past, has started asserting their cultural and social identity against description about them in the dominant Indian grand narrative of Equality. Under the scheme of Positive discrimination Indian state tried to solve the problem of discrimination but it has created one more problem of categories and percentage of reservations.

As discussed above the myth gives a cultural space to community to assert themselves in different forms. Subsequently, the pro reservation movement and anti reservation movement have taken oppositional form against each other. The affirmative action has created a peculiar rupture in the Indian society. Now the reservation issue has taken a different turn as far as dhangars reservation is concerned. The dhangars have been demanding the reservation as ST category.

Mainstream history has suppressed and gave a secondary treatment to the experiences of the subaltern communities. The Endeavour in this research would be to locate and dig out the hidden narrative, history and experiences of the marginalized community and Dhangar community in particular. Any community is marginalized through a certain mechanism which has roots culture of the dominant communities. In this process, cultural construction of domination, difference and otherness gets strengthened. The construction of marginality happens through the confrontation among writing, state, history and religion.³⁹

Conclusion

Thus, we have to accept that the Historicisation of Dhangar is possible through a ethno historical Method. The proposed theory cum Methodology tries to grapple the essence of above discussion in this paper. It is so because the complexity of the study gets validation through this methodology. As the ethnohistory tries to understand the issues related to the History and Past experiences of the Dhangar Community. Ethnohistory gives us freedom to bring together the various disciplines in order to make a comprehensive case towards the history-making. As Shail Mayaram says that the Myths also plays an important role in History making. In continuation, we can say that folk songs and oral forms of literature are the key components in Dhangar history making attempt. As we have discussed above the colonial agenda and description of the community goes against the dhangars. In order to find out the alternative history of Dhangar community we have to dissolve all the disciplines and try to build more reliable history. This history would be liberative for the Marginalised dhangars in Maharashtrian Society.

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