



## ANTHROPOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE: SOCIO-CULTURAL ASPECTS OF MEENA TRIBES IN RAJASTHAN STATE, INDIA

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### *Abstract*

*The tribes are still shrouded in mystery. Almost half of the world's tribal population lives in India. The highest concentration of tribal population is mainly in areas like Rajasthan state. Nearly 14% of Rajasthan's overall population is made up of tribes. The Bhil and Meena tribes are the two largest tribal groups in Rajasthan. The slopes of the Vindhya and Aravalli mountain ranges are home to the majority of Rajasthan's two tribes. The aim of present research is to describe the Society and Culture in transition with Special reference to the Meena Community of Rajasthan. Meena tribes are the most famous tribes in the state of Rajasthan that have their own social and cultural customs and manners, therefore the purpose of this research is to identify the social and cultural customs of these tribes. In order to collect information, the descriptive method was used, and the social and cultural points of these tribes were placed in the charts. The research results show that sociocultural and dietary practices were suitable for their level of life.*

**Keywords:** *Socio-cultural aspects, of Meena Tribes in Rajasthan State*

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

Tribes are social groups that are commonly associated with endogamy, do not specifically have functions under the control of a tribal king, and are unified in language or dialect while acknowledging social difference from other tribes or castes. Among them, Santhal is a significant tribe that makes up over half of all Indian tribes.(Guha & Ismail, 2015). Hitherto has become customary to assume safely that the interaction led by the urbanization, modernization, Hinduism, etc, after independence has resulted in a great deal of change in the traditional life of the Gonds. Nowadays, it might be challenging to tell the Gonds from the non-Gonds during social events in metropolitan areas. The Gonds have appropriately adapted to many things in their personal hygiene practices, eating habits, human clothing, and home items. In an effort to adapt, they have significantly altered their religious beliefs and ceremonies, traditions, customs, values, and way of life in light of Hinduism. The Gonds were formerly the most sophisticated group(Koreti, 2016). The ST population exhibits heterogeneity at national, state, and even district levels, with differences in language, cultural practices, and livelihood patterns influencing socio-economic status. Their problems vary from region to region, even within the same group. Different types of tribes live in different parts of the country. Tribes from different parts of India have different rituals, customs, and literacy levels(Paltasingh & Paliwal, 2014). Reproductive health is considered a basic right of every person. Access, availability, affordability, and acceptability of reproductive health interventions depend on each person and community. Menstrual health is considered one of the important factors associated with women's reproductive health. There are social and cultural factors related to menstrual health. Tribal communities in India are considered one of the vulnerable groups in various aspects of their socio-economic, health and cultural life.

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The reproductive health disadvantages of women belonging to tribal communities are closely related to the menstrual health problems faced by tribal women. There are socio-cultural factors related to the menstrual health of women in tribal communities (BABU & KUMAR, 2020). There are many different tribes around the world, each with their own unique cultures, traditions, and languages. Some well-known tribes include the Maasai in East Africa, the Inuit in the Arctic regions, the Navajo in North America, and the Yanomami in the Amazon rainforest. Tribes have played a significant role in shaping the history and diversity of human societies (Garg et al., 2001). The socio-cultural aspects of tribal societies encompass a wide range of social and cultural elements that shape the identity, relationships, and way of life within these communities. Tribes often have distinct social hierarchies and kinship systems that govern relationships, roles, and responsibilities within the community.

Tribes have unique traditions, rituals, and customs that are passed down through generations, shaping their cultural identity and providing a sense of continuity and belonging. Many tribes have their own languages, which are central to their cultural heritage. Language plays a crucial role in preserving tribal knowledge and traditions (Singh, 2015). Tribal societies often have traditional methods of food production, hunting, gathering, and land use that are deeply tied to their cultural identity and relationship with the natural environment. Many tribes have distinct spiritual and religious practices, often involving animistic beliefs, ancestor worship, or other traditional forms of spirituality. Tribes have diverse artistic expressions, including unique forms of music, dance, storytelling, and visual arts that reflect their cultural values and history. Tribal communities often have their own systems of governance and decision-making processes, which may be based on consensus-building, elder councils, or other traditional structures. Tribes often have deep connections to the land and natural resources, with cultural practices that emphasize sustainability, conservation, and respect for the natural world.

These socio-cultural aspects are essential for understanding the diversity and richness of tribal societies and their contributions to the broader tapestry of human culture (Jat et al., 2015). Several factors have been discovered to determine the eating habits of people in the Arab world. Food consumption patterns have changed significantly in several Arab countries due to the sudden increase in oil revenues. The food subsidy policy is said to have had a negative impact on dietary habits in the Gulf states by encouraging the consumption of fats, sugar, rice, flour and meat. Sociocultural factors such as religion, beliefs, dietary preferences, gender discrimination, education and women's employment all have a significant influence on food consumption patterns in this region. Mass media, especially food advertising on television, plays an important role in changing eating habits. Migration movements, especially those occurring in the 70s, had a major impact on dietary practices in many Arab countries (Musaiger, 1993). The cultural effect on the Sugali brought about changes not only in their village/settlement but also extended to neighboring settlements. These changes continue to provide a means of understanding their social structures and other evolving practices. Thus, human adaptation has brought remarkable results in the form of social, cultural and economic parameters, which form the backbone of any society (Eswarappa, 2011).

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

Rajasthan has a wide range of climate and topography. Which makes it a challenging areas to live in. Some places are very hot deserts while others have arid climate. The culture and beauty of Rajasthan attracts the tourists and laymen. For the people of Rajasthan, it is seen that very little effort has been made to publicize the social history of Meenas. There are many documents about the palace, its women and its kings. The reason may be that the current geopolitical status of the tribes is completely dependent on the groups that have migrated to these parts of rajputana through conquest or coercion (Singla, 2014).



### 3. RESEARCH METHODS

A research design is an investigation plan determined before scientific research begins. The present study is based on secondary sources of data, and more emphasis given on secondary data which are collected by authors through various books. Lastly all the data are arranged in the suitable table form and prepare chart and diagram for better understanding through analysis. At last all the data are represented through graphical and descriptive methods.

### 4. DISCUSSION RESULTS

#### Nangal Meena Village

This village is a medium sized village located at Mahwa of Dausa district, Rajasthan with a total of 169 families living. Nangal Meena village has a population of 1,008 including 522 males and 486 females, according to the 2011 census with residents (Bontje, 2019)

**Table 1: Socio- Cultural Aspects of Nangal Meena Village**

Aspect	Total	T.Male	T.Female
Total houses	169	-	-
Total houses in Meena	69	-	-
Population	1008	522	486
Population (ST)	857	446	411
Population (SC)	94	48	46
Children from 0 to 6 yrs.	145	75	70
Population of Meena	421	246	175
Literacy of Meena	64.19%	83.78%	42.86%
Total workers in Menna	403	255	148
Total Key workers in Meena	300	0	0
Marginal worker	103	12	91

#### Work Profile

In Nangal Meena Village 403 people were working out of the total population. 74.44% of workers identify their work as their primary source of income (i.e., employment or longer than six months). Conversely, 25.56% engaged in marginal activities that supported their way of life for fewer than six months. Three were agricultural laborers out of the 403 people involved in primary labor, and 251 were cultivators (owners or co-owners) (Choudhary et al., 2008). Akhoda Meena Village- district Alwar There are 92 households living in this medium-sized hamlet in the Rajasthan district of Alwar, which is part of Rajgarh. As to the 2011 population census, Akhoda Meena village has 573 total residents, of whom 282 are male and 291 are female. The Scheduled Tribe (ST) makes up the entirety of the population of this hamlet. The village's closest train station is Akhoda Meena. The settlement of Akhoda is 65 kilometers away from the district headquarters in Alwar (Shekhawat, n.d.).

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Figure 1: rajgarh-alwar

**Table 2: Socio- Cultural Aspects of Akhoda Meena Village**

Aspect	Total	T.Male	T.Female
Total Houses	92	-	-
Total Population	593	282	291
Total Children's 0-6 yrs.	100	41	59
Total Tribes	573	282	291
Total Literacy	72.73%	90.46%	54.31%
workers	262	129	133
Key workers	136	0	0
Total Marginal worker	126	6	120
Total population	425	248	

**List of Maps**



Figure 2: Poetical Map





Figure 3: Rajasthan Political Map



Figure 4: Origin of Meena

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**Socio- Cultural corporation of Meena Tribes in Rajasthan State**

Traditionally, the Meenas adhere to a patrilocal, patrilineal, and kin-based societal structure. They culturally and traditionally divide their homeland into twelve territorial units known as 'Pals'. The Meenas reside in either compact villages or isolated hamlets called 'dhanis', which possess a uniclan nature. Generally, the Meena community's villages consist of members belonging to a single 'got'. However, in a significant number of villages, multiple 'got' of the tribe are settled. Hence, it can be inferred that the village community primarily represents a tribal community. Agriculture, being the primary occupation of the community, is carried out in accordance with the ancient settlement patterns of the Meena village. These settlements are situated on either alluvial plains or semi-arid plateaus. The habitation area is demarcated by the boundaries of the villages and fields. Throughout the ages, the Meenas have chosen to live in forests, villages, and hilly regions. The traditional Meena dwelling, commonly referred to as 'Dhodhe' or 'Jhopadi', is a hut constructed using clay, and hay. These houses are typically built in dense forests and hilly areas to ensure isolation and prevent easy detection. These secure zones of the Meenas are known as Mewas. Around these Mewase, their dwellings were constructed using earth or bricks. The assemblage of such residences was referred to as a "Pal." Primarily, Meenas belonging to a specific lineage resided in a Pal. The designation of each Pal was also derived from the aforementioned lineage of the Meena community. There were a total of 12 such Pals. Within the Bhil-Meena community, the leader of each Pal was recognized as the "Gameti." (Salvi, 2012).

**Food Rules**

The Meenas are commonly perceived as non-vegetarian; however, it is worth noting that only a small number of Meenas from certain regions partake in the consumption of liquor and meat. Otherwise, their primary dietary intake consists of various grains such as wheat, millet, gram, maize, bajra, and pulses. As an established agricultural community, they commonly possess milk-producing animals such as cows, buffaloes, and goats, indicating that milk and its derivatives constitute an essential component of their diet. Their preferred delicacy is "rabdi," while buttermilk is extensively utilized in various culinary preparations. Dalia, thooli, dal, baati, churma, maalpua, kheer, and chane ki daal are among their favored food items. For the purpose of offering prasad to Lord Jagdish, they prepare maalpua, kheer, and chane ki daal. Moreover, during the "engagement" and "tikka ceremony," a dish comprising rice, ghee, and crushed sugar is prepared, with a generous amount of khoya added for enhanced flavor (Joshi et al., 2019).

**Table 3: Terminology of Meena’s Related to food intakes**

No.	Items	Terminology
1.	Maize/Bajara flour cooked in Butter milk	<i>Rabdi</i>
2.	Maize flour cooked with ghee and water	<i>Laapsi</i>
3.	Bajara and pulse cooked in water	<i>Bajara ki khichari</i>
4.	Onion	<i>Kanda</i>
5.	Kadhi	<i>Khaata</i>



**Table 4: Terminology of Meena's among Family relations**

No.	Family Member	Terminology used
1.	Father	<i>Kaka</i>
2.	Mother	<i>Jiji</i>
3.	Father's elder brother	<i>Baba</i>
4.	Father's younger brother	<i>Kaka</i>
5.	Sister (elder)	<i>Bahen</i>
6.	Sister (younger)	<i>Chhori</i>
7.	Daughter	<i>Chhori</i>
8.	Son	<i>Chhora</i>
9.	Father's Father	<i>dada</i>
10.	Father's Mother	Dadi

## 5. CONCLUSION

The study's key conclusions showed that the Meena tribes' sociocultural and dietary practices were suitable for their level of life. Nutritional knowledge of the tribes was insufficient and they require in-depth. For their overall development, nutrition education and intervention programs play a crucial role in improving the nutritional status of a person or community with regard to food, health, and nutrition and in motivating individuals to adopt healthy eating habits

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**ANTHROPOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE: SOCIO-CULTURAL ASPECTS OF MEENA TRIBES IN RAJASTHAN STATE, INDIA**

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