

## **CHAPTER-IV**

### **GOSAVI : A PRIMITIVE TRIBE**

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##### A ) ORIGIN OF GOSAVI COMMUNITY -

The words ' Gosavi, Gosai, Gusai or Goswami ' are derived from the Sanskrit word 'Goswamin' 'go' means ' cows ' and 'Swamin' means ' the owner ' The another maning ' go ' is 'organ ' and 'Swamin ' means the person who has conquered his organs. Gosavi is the class of hermits who has conquered their organs and senses. He is a stoic person. They are large in numbers in India. There are two main types of Gosavis i) Shaiva panthi, ( They devote God Lord Shiva Shankar ) and ii) Vaishnava ( the devotees of Lord Vishnu ).<sup>1</sup>

They had very ancient history. They are these from Vaidik period. They are closely connected with the Vaidik community by the Gods, they worship, their hymns and the use of herbal medicines. They worship the Gods - Agni ( Fire ), Go ( cows ), Rudra ( Shiva ), Savita ( Sun ) and Narayan ( Vishnu ), which resembles with the Vaidik religion. We can see links of this in old period.

We have reference of saintly personalities like Vasishtha, Shakti, Parashar , Vyas, Bhardwaj, Gautum, Bhriqu, Garg, Janak, Shukra and others in the tradition of Gosavis. They all were married and observing the second of the four religious orders i.e. 'grihasthashrama ' . The sons of famous hermit Daksha used to reiterate ceaselessly the following incantation for begetting children :-

'aum namo narayanaya, purushay mahatmane,  
vishudha satwadhishnaya mahahansay dhimahi .<sup>2</sup>

even today we find Gosavis worshipping Lord Vishnu (Narayana )  
and reiterating the same incantation.

The Gosavis became the followers of Shankarcharya. They had families at that time Kolhan writes in his book ' Rajtarangini ' that after the 100-150 years of the death of Shankaracharya, the Gosavi community spread in numbers.

#### B ) RELIGIOUS ORDERS IN GOSAVIS -

The Gosavi community has been divided broadly in two types 1) Shaiva and 2) Vaishnava . The followers of Shankardev, Madhavgiri, Brahmagiri, Govindgiri and Kusumgiri established a Mahapurushiya a branch of Vaishnavas in Assam. Madhavendrapuri, Ishwarpuri developed Goudiya Vaishnava division in W.Bengal.<sup>3</sup>

Dasnamgi Gosavi are of Shaiva creed. There are seven types as Mathadhari and Gharbari. They have ten sub-names - 1 ) Tirth, 2) Ashram, 3) Vana, 4) Giri, 5) Parvata, 6) Sagar, 7) Saraswati, 8) Bharati , 9 ) Puri and 10) Aranya. The origin of these names is discussed as follows in ' Mahanama<sup>4</sup> ' . There are three poetic composition in an epic ' Tatwamasi '.

#### 1) Tirtha -

"Triveni sangame tirtha tatwamasyadilakshane  
Snayatatwarthbhaven tirthnama sa ucchate "

"He who bathes spiritually in the water of the union of three river is called ' Tirtha ' "

2) Ashram -

"ashramagrahane praudha ashapashvivarjitah  
yatayatvinirmukta esha ashram ucchate "

" He who is free from desire and all the physical pleasures and lives in Ashrama, he ( Gosavi ) is called 'Ashrama'.

3) Aranya -

" aranya sansthito nityamanande nandane vane  
tyaktwa sarvamidam vishwamaranyah parikirtyate "

" He who leaves the world giving up all the pleasures and lives freely in the company of nature he is called ' Aranya '.

4) Vana -

" suranye nirzarsthane vane vasam karoti yah,  
asbabandhvinirmukto vananama sa ucchate "

" Gosavi, who lives in forest near a spring without having any desire he is called ' Vana '.

5) Giri -

"vaso giri vane nityam gitadhyayan tatparah  
gambhirachal budhishcha girinama sa ucchate "

"Gosavi, who wanders, stays in hills or mountaing, studied 'Gita ', sincere and constant is called ' Giri '.

6) Parvata -

" vasanparvata muleshu proudham dnyanam bibharti yah  
sarasaram vijanati parvatah parikirthyate"

"Gosavi, who is learned, having conscience and lives at the bottom of mountain is called 'Parvata '.

7) Sagar -

" tatwasagar gambhiro dnyanratna parigraha  
maryadam naiva langhet sagarh parikirthyate "

" Gosavi, who is grave in Philosophy like ocean, who is the treasure of intellect, who doesnot cross the limit of religion is called 'Sagar '.

8) Saraswati -

" Swardnyan rato nityam swerwadi kavishwarah  
sansar sagara sar bantasau hi saraswati "

" Gosavi, who is an expert in music, expert in knowledge of music, poet, who breaks .

9) Bharati -

" vidyabharen sampurnah sarvabharam parityajan  
dukhabharam na janati bharati parikirthyate "

" Gosavi, who has given up all the burdens except knowledge, he does not know any burden in the world is called 'Bharati '.

10) Puri -

"dnyanatutwen sampurnah purnatatwapade sthitah  
par brahma rato nityam purinama sa ucchatye "

" Gosavi, who is perfect with knowledge, with principles and interested in divine truth is called ' Puri '.

The names given above were used in Hindu society before Shankaracharya. It has been proved by Goswami, Prithwigiri and Harigiri'.

Gosavi people took much efforts for spreading of Vaidik religion. They are originally the followers of the doctrine of absolute unity of Shankaracharya. In course of time, some of them became Vaishava, Jain and Sikh. Brahmagiri, Madhavgiri, Govindgiri and Kusumgiri established 'Mahapurushiya sampradaya' in Assam, one of the Vaishnava creeds. Madhavendrapuri and Ishwarpuri are pioneers of Vaishav creed in Bengal.

C ) PAST HISTORY OR BACKGROUND OF THE BRAVERY OF GOSAVIS /  
KSHATRIYA GOSAVI -

In History, Gosavi community is regarded as the community of brave persons. In Maurya period, they had their states. The King of Kashmir had many Gosavi warriors in his service. We find this reference in 'Rajtarangiri'<sup>5</sup>. In 300 A.D. there was the rule of begging brahmin in Punjab and Bundelkhanda. These Kings were Gosavi. The king Bappa Rawal, from Guheer race was Shaiva hermit. He was the disciple of Gosavi named Haritmuni. Even today we find the relationship of a Guru and disciple between Gosavi and Rajput.

In the army of Rajput and Maratha there were Gosavis large in numbers. Moghul empire Aurangzeb oppressed these people. They fought against Aurangzeb without thinking of their lives. We can find many references of villages named after Gosavis in Mahabharata, for instance 'Gosaipur, Gosaiganj etc. It proves that they had a great tradition of warriors.'<sup>6</sup>

Gosavis differ from each other on their manner and with their state of living. Dandi Gosavi bears a sceptre with them. Ravan Gosavi wears ropes around their hands and waist. Bairagi Gosavi

have a garland of Tulsi and two vertical lines of pigment as a symbol. Generally, they behave with each other without any quarrel or enmity. But from the period of Akbar, there developed enmity between these two creeds. Further in 1760 they picked up quarrel for bathing first in Ganga at Hardwar, on the auspicious occasion of 'Kumbh Mela'. It resulted in to a small war and 18,000 Bairagis were killed in this brawl.<sup>7</sup>

#### D ) THE RITE OF INITIATION IN GOSAVI COMMUNITY -

In Gosavi community, we can see many castes included because any person who has desire to be one of them, can become Gosavi. He has to perform a rite of initiation ( दीक्षा विधि )

The person, who wants to be initiated should be on fast from the previous day. On the day of initiation his shaving is performed. After having a bath in incantation, he is given a new name. From this day he becomes a temporary Gosavi. Within his two years of learning, he should learn the customs and manners of this Gosavi creed. When he absorbs all the manners and etiquettes the Guru utters loudly in his ear incantation ( मंत्र ) 'Aum Sohm' ( ॐ सोहम् ) . After wards he becomes 'Puccha Gosavi'. Then Guru offers him some food as divine gift. This newly-formed Gosavi should observe fidelity with their creed. To test him he is offered salt first and afterwards the red-ochre clothes. After being a Gosavi he goes on asking for aims. While asking for aims he uses some symbols.<sup>8</sup>

##### a) Symbols used :

While going on to ask aims, they take Trishul, a begging bow a begging bag with nine compartments and damaru.<sup>9</sup>

Since asking religious aims is their occupation, there is mutual understanding among themselves, therefore they distribute the villages among themselves and do not interfere in the other's area. They also perform worship in their community temples, say arthi etc. They sing the songs depicting theological ideas, social morals etc. For singing the songs they use instruments like 'damaru'. The songs are in Hindi language.

Some songs that ( Davari ) they sung during puja are as follows:

- 1) ' nath nath aika ho bhole shankar  
Trisula hathamadhye .....  
..... Patit ya la pawana '
- ii) ' aika shesha somora Jogeshwari  
pash .... deva ha man deshacha ' etc.<sup>10</sup>

This community is known by different names as - Nathbawa, Buva, Davari etc.

( The symbols are shown in fig.No. )

#### E ) DIALECTS USED BY GOSAVI COMMUNITY -

The community people speak Marathi mixed with Hindi.<sup>11</sup> It indicates that they are not originally from the place where they are staying now. They are the nomads. They wander from place to place throughout India. Whereever they go they absorb the language of the province . Thus their language is mixed with the regional languages. They mainly speak Hindi. It also indicates that they might have migrated from the Northern India.



F ) FAMILY SYSTEM IN GOSAVI COMMUNITY -

Man is a social animal. He has the natural instinct to live a happy and comfortable life. He has desire to have children, for the consistency of his race. Man doesnot like instable life. The person gets the love and affection of mother, father, sister, brother and other persons, in family. Family is the place where man may live in comfort and leisure, it is also place which lessens the sorrows of the man.

Gosavi people consistently wanders to earn their livelihood. Yet their family system is fixed and permanent. Due to the advanced techniques and Industrialization they have acquired many services and occupations. It causes the division of the joint family. But these people have high regard for the joint family culture.

Mostly, this community is patrilocal. The head of the family is male. Under his guidance and authority, every activity takes place when the child becomes older he goes outside to earn money. But after his return he lives in the same family. The bride goes to the bride-groom's house.<sup>12</sup>

G ) DEITIES OF GOSAVI COMMUNITY -

Gosavi ( Davari ) worship male Gods like Jotirlinga, Bhairopa ( Ambapuri ), Siddhanath, Srilinga, Ganesh. They worship main God ' Shankar ' at Shikhar Shinganapur. They also worship Goddess. Ambabai, Saundatti Hills, Mariai, Khvdiyar and other. They believe in the power of God. Thus they take vows to please Gods. They offer sacrifice of animals etc.<sup>13</sup>

## H ) FESTIVALS OF GOSAVI COMMUNITY -

They celebrate Dasara, Deepawali, Holi ( Shimaga ) Nag - panchmi etc. They celebrate their festivals as per their economic conditions. For some festivals, they prepare sweets or for some festivals they prepare meat. All the men and women participate in their festivals and also in the festivals celebrated in society.<sup>14</sup>

## I ) LIFE-STYLE, APPAREL AND DIET OF GOSAVIS -

Gosavi people are of blackish or wheatish complexion. They are well-built. They are physically strong as they grow up in adverse natural condition from their birth. They live jointly forming groups on either side of the village. They live in awkward style in tiny accomodations. They lack many a facilities in their colories .

They are nomads. Their drapery is somewhat different from other people. Their original drapery is - red Ochre clothes. It consists of a loin cloth a long shirt a ureath of cowries and two verticle lines of a pigment on ferhead. Their hair and beard are not cut. They women wear traditional dresses like Sari and choli, Kumkum, Mangalsutra ( Sacred thsead ) ,bangles and rings ( jodvi ) at feet.<sup>15</sup>

We find greater extent of non-vegetarian food among these people. They eat meat of the prey caught, fish, alongwith the food they have got while asking for aims. In course of time there is a change observed in their life-style, apparel and diet.

## J ) OCCUPATION OF GOSAVIS -

Gosavi people wander from place to place. In earlier period, they were not allowed to stay in any village for more than a week or two. The Govt. offered them facilities and helped them to be stable.

The people do the priestly work. They go on asking for religious aims. A priest is regarded as a learned man of the community. People not only from their caste but also from other than Gosavi Caste come to have remedies for health problems. They also tell the auspicious dates and days for religious and social activities. They do not have the lands of their own thus they have to depend upon the seasonal occupations, if they have no service. The occupation are divided in two divisions.<sup>16</sup>

## I ) PERMANENT OCCUPATIONS -

The occupation that comes traditionally. In such occupations they have hunting, fishing keeping pigs, hens, etc. They also prepare some things from the loones of these animals. They are stable now a days, thus their occupations are changed. They collect scrap and sell it out. Some sell out spices, some have established stores, or pan-biri stall. They also sell herbal medicines.

### 11) TEMPORARY/ SEASONAL OCCUPATIONS -

The occupation which can be adopted for stipulated period is called seasonal occupation.

Gosavis sell icecream in summer. They sell balloons in change with food grain or money. They repair stores. They sell nets for catching fish.

In raing season they repair umbrellas as sell, them, selling of rubber shoes or doing wages.

In course of time, the occupations are being changed they are getting services.

#### iii) OCCUPATIONS OF WOMEN -

The women from this community earn their livelihood by accepting some occupations like - selling imitation ornaments, black beads, threads, needles etc. Some of them sell steel or Alluminium vessels ( pots ) in exchange of old clothes. Afterwards they sell these clothes in the market.<sup>17</sup>

Some women collect rough papers. They also collect scrap material from sewage. Some do wages. Some clean pots and wash clothes in other people's houses. They also have to perform all the duties of women in their houses despite all these occupations.

They adopt many occupations for earning, but all these occupations are lower perhaps lowest income.

#### K) SOCIAL AND CULTURAL CUSTOMS AND PRACTICES -

The child is associated with society and religion right from the birth. On the 5th day from the birth a ceremony called 'pachvi' is held. The Mantras are in Hindi - ' Yehi mudra Khel - Khele' etc. On this day they worship Goddess ' Satwai '. On the 12th day, there is naming ceremony. The child is put into a sifting fan ( झरु ) . Some women from community excluding widows ) are invited. Thus the ceremony takes place.

After 2 or 3 years, a ceremony is ( only of boys ) performed i.e. shaving ceremony. There is also tradition to put hole in ears and wear rings called ' Kanmudra '.

There is also one of the important ceremonies i.e. Bijahom ( Thread Ceremony ) This is restricted to male only. From 3 years to before marriage this ceremony may be performed. It is celebrated jointly. They gather at a place alongwith their children to perform this ceremony .

The ceremony includes the following acts :- i) Shaving off the hair of the boy keeping a lock of hair on the top of the head  
 ii) He wears a loin-cloth.  
 iii) He is asked to bathe in river, well for twenty one times. They don't wear any ornament at that time on his body.  
 iv) After the bath, the begging bag is given. He is asked to ask for aims.  
 v) The community priest tells him the incantation in ear.  
 vi) The aims got is put on the feet of Guru and he ask for blessing. He should reiterate the incantation given by Guru.<sup>18</sup>

After this ceremony the food is served by community. There is the discussion at night on the condition of community and other subjects. On the next day, they return to their places.

#### L ) MARRIAGE SYSTEM ( CUSTOM )-

Like primitives, Gosavis have a custom to put proposal for girls ( brides ) It is learnt that there is no doury system, only bride-price is taken. The marriage ceremony goes on for 3-4 days.

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All the expenditure of marriage is done by the side of bride-groom. They perform marriages when bride becomes 18 and bride groom is of 20. At some places, child-marriages take place.

When the marriage proposal is set, they perform a ceremony of ' breaking a betel-nut ' . They have to offer meals to community. All the members are presents. They should be revered. They choose the good time, for marriage. The priest tells the time.

At first the bride and bride-groom are anointed with turmeric and oil. Afterwards the bride-groom is taken to the house of bride in musical accompaniment. Bride-groom and Bride are asked to sit on flanks - Some married women smear ash on for heads of both of them. At the time, a sacred thread ( Mangalsutra ) is tied around bride's neck. Further, a specially made bracelet is tied to bride and bride-groom on their left and right wrists respectively. Then they are fied in a sacred-tie of marriage. They utter their names musically. After releasing the tie the marriage rituals are over.

Before marriage, the community member should get non-vegetarian food. The gods should be pleased. First of all some married woman take meals afterwards all the persons take meals.

At night there is the procession of newly-married couple. They dance before procession. Some people sing . When they go to salute their family God. They are given joggery and sugar. The priest offers betel-leaf, betel, nut and coconut to the bride. Then they return.

When marriage is set, they establish family. God at the place of marriage. They tie an axe and a puran-poli to one of the pillars of the pavilion. They also put leaves of auspicious trees in this pavilion.

There is the tradition of widow-marriage. The widow gets married to her younger brother-in-law. If she is not willing to marry her brother-in-law, she can marry any person, she desires. There cannot take place marriage in the families with same totem.

The elder people get much respect in marriages.

The bride is sent to the bride-groom's house. She wears all the symbols auspicious. like - Kumkum, bangles, mangal-sutra, jodvi etc.<sup>19</sup>

#### M ) CUSTOM OF DIVORCE -

In this community, divorce is legal. The husband may divorce his wife only for the particular reasons like - her loose morality, her quarrel some nature, she is barren, not staying with her husband, and others. The husband asks for divorce before Jat Panchayat. Jat-Panchayat listens to both of them. If they are convinced of the real reason, they will allow them to have divorce. Both of them get permission for remarriage.

#### N ) CUSTOM OF FUNERAL IN GOSAVIS -

After the death in Gosavi community, the dead body is buried. In some exceptional cases we find cremation. When a member of community is dead, all people gather. They take off the ornaments from the dead body. Then bathing is done. Afterwards a begging bag of sack. It is put on a bamboo with the

dead body. This is carried by two persons to grave yard. They dig out the pit. The dead body is not laid but placed in a sitting position. They throw curd, onion, salt into the pit. Then the pit is closed. After washing their hands, every body smears ash. Then they are offered jogger. Then they play 'Shankha'.

On the third day after burial, they bring the likables of the dead person and offer it at the place of burial.

On the 13th day they prepare sweet meals (sheera, poli etc.) All the relatives and community members gather and eat. Afterwards on the place of burial they erect memorial or tomb as per their capacity.<sup>20</sup>

#### O ) STATUS OF WOMEN IN GOSAVI COMMUNITY -

The Women have a secondary place in comparison with the men in this community. Though they are nomads, the women should keep their morals very clean. The rules of Jat Panchayat are very strict for adultery. They help to earn or in economic process. They also have freedom to choose their companion provided he should be from the community. Some are having education. Some work in their organization as volunteers. Thus they are as good as equal to men.

#### P ) LINEAGE, SURNAMES IN GOSAVI COMMUNITY -

There are two main divisions in Gosavi community -

i) Shaiva ii) Vaishnava. This community has been divided into the two main and many sub castes. Some of the surnames are Chavan, Garge, Jadhav, Pawar, Mali, Metkal, Ingale, Bamane, Kale,



Atole, Shelke. In this community there may not develop marital relations between the families having the same surnames.

Some Gosavi think themselves Maratha. Under this title, come some branches of Dasnam Gosavis. They have their surnames - Gosavi, Ambiyee, Pawar, Shinde, Padiyar etc. we can see the concept of higher and lower status among them.

As there are many sub types, they also have different totems. Some of them have 'Pancha Pallav ' i.e. a vine or a tree, as their totem, or some of them have 'Trishul '. They are the devotees of Lord Shiva.<sup>21</sup>

Q ) JAT-PANCHAYAT ( COMMUNITY COURT ) - OF GOSAVIS -

Jat Panchayat or community court is the main characteristic of Gosavi community as well as all the nomadic tribes. It is formed under the headship of the eldest person in the community. He has some assistance from the community. It is for justice. It justifies many crimes in accordance with the religious and traditional basis.

The scope of this court is vast. It decides the rituals, intercaste quarrels ,fairs and festivals, crimes of adultery, quarrels about marriages. etc.

The case is put forth the court. They listen to both of the sides. There goes on discussion about the nature and seriousness of crime and also about the punishment. The thieves are fined half of the amount. If any person abuses under the influence of wine, he is fined for Rs.12/- .If the community court's decision is not agreed the court invites them to their

farthest and main court. There the case is put up and justified.

Many of the crimes are justified on local level. The serious crimes or complicated cases are solved in the fair of Shikhar Shinganapur. The implementation of the justice is very strictly observed. If not observed, the criminal is exiled or boycotted. Due to the fear of boycott, these people accept whatever the justice or fine said.

When the crime is revealed, the judges decide the punishment according to the severity of the crime. It may be in form of money, grains, meals for total community or an exile. As the punishments are severe, the criminal does not deceive. Even today, we can observe the dominance of Jatpanchayat. They never go to court for the justice.<sup>22</sup>

Even today if anybody commits a crime in the community. They will not go to court. Quarrels and street brawls are frequent in their ward. For this sort of petty crimes, they observe the rules of Jat-Panchayat. If the offence is of serious nature, it is handled by the police.

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- 19 Old persons from Gosavi community
- 20 Ibid
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