

Cultural Continuity and Livelihood Strategies of Dhangars in Lakherem-Bicholim Goa

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DECLARATION BY STUDENT

I hereby declare that the data presented in this Dissertation report entitled, “Cultural Continuity and Livelihood Strategies of Dhangars in Lakherem-Bicholim Goa” is based on the results of investigations carried out by me in the Sociology Department at D.D Kosambi School of Social Sciences and Behavioral Studies, Goa University under the Supervision of Dr. Joanna Pereira Coelho and the same has not been submitted elsewhere for the award of a degree or diploma by me. Further, I understand that Goa University or its authorities will be not be responsible for the correctness of observations / experimental or other findings given the dissertation.

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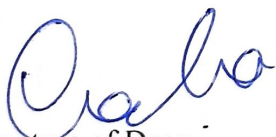
COMPLETION CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the dissertation report “**Cultural Continuity and Livelihood Strategies of Dhangars in Lakherem-Bicholim Goa**” is a bonafide work carried out by Ms. Siddhi Devanand Shirodkar under my supervision in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree of Master's in the Discipline Sociology Department at D.D Kosambi School of Social Sciences and Behavioral Studies, Goa University.



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PREFACE

This dissertation, seeks to delve into the cultural continuity and livelihood strategies of Dhangar in Lakherem ward of Bicholim taluka in North Goa. Central to this community is the significance of culture and tradition, which serves as pillars of solidarity and identity among the community. As modernization sweeps across indigenous land, they witness transformations within the community. This indigenous community employ various strategies to maintain their unique identities amidst modernization. Amidst these changes, there are efforts to safeguard their identities and cultural heritage. The study seeks to understand the interplay between tradition and modernity, exploring the challenges and success encountered in preserving and promoting indigenous culture for future generation.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND

Culture refers to various aspects such as values, norms, belief that makes up a significant part of our social life. In my dissertation I have sort to discern the Cultural Practices and Livelihood Strategies of Dhangars in Lakherem ward of Bordem village in Bicholim taluka. The lifestyle of pastoralist communities, such as the Dhangars, not only reflects their unique essence but also offers valuable insights into the coexistence of ancient practices in today's dynamic world. I am intrigued by the cultural continuity and livelihood pattern among the Dhangars of Lakherem. My keen interest and curiosity drive me to find out whether their traditions remain in the original form or have been influenced by the culture of mainstream society. Given the growing demand for job opportunities, Government jobs, and entrepreneurship, I am interested in understanding how the growing job opportunities have had an impact on those who were depended on traditional occupation and those who still choose to follow their traditional livelihood practices amidst these changing dynamics. Residents of Lakherem have migrated from Maulinguem village, Dodamarg, Maharashtra and Sahyadri mountain range before Goas liberation. Well, there are also non- Dhangars living among the Dhangars who are also migrants from other parts of Bicholim Taluka. Lakherem is not the only ward occupied by the Dhangars. Dhangarwada Bicholim, Kasarpal and Sonarbhat, Bhatwadi ussap, Savardhat, Dhangarwada Advalpal, Kholpewadi Sal, Shivolkarwada, Kasarwada, Vathadev, Dhangarwada Kudchire, Karmalewada, Pale, Surla and Dignem are the wards occupied by the Dhangar community in Bicholim taluka.

Gawdas, Kunbis, Velip and Dhangars are four tribal groups settled in Goa. All these tribal groups practice agriculture as their main occupation. But there is something more interesting and unique about the Dhangar community who are also known as animal rearers. My interest to know more about this community comes from the fact that from the four tribal groups of Goa, only Dhangars domesticate animals. Their traditional occupation or source of income is through animal rearing. During my childhood whenever I traveled to the rural villages of Bicholim taluka, I always noticed one or two people handling herds of goat. Having no clue about this activity it sparked my curiosity to know more about the lifestyle, economic activity and cultural practices of Dhangar community. Adding to this I also noticed Dhangars engaging in economic activity which is different from their traditional occupation. On the other hand, there were still people practicing their traditional occupation and were emotionally attached to the animals. My keen interest also lies in knowing the rituals performed by them at the time of birth, death, marriage and festivals.

1.1,1 Dhangars in India

In the Indian context pastoralists can be defined as “member of caste or ethnic group which is traditionally associated with the livestock-keeping, where the group derives over 50 per cent of household consumption from the livestock product or earn by selling animal product and over 90 per cent of the animals consume natural pasture lands.” (Sharma et al, 2003, pp.3). In other words, pastoral group are those who domesticate animals like cattle, goat and move from one region to another in search of pasture lands. Various pastoral groups living across India are known by various names, like the Golla, Karma, Monpa, Rabari, Bharwad, Charam, Aahir, Kuruba, Dhangar, Toda, Raika, Gujjar and Sandhi.

(Sharma et al, 2003, pp.3). In India Dhangars are found in Maharashtra, Karnataka and Goa.

1.1.2 Dhangars in Goa

Dhangars in Goa are recognized as shepherds, similar to the Maratha shepherds present in Konkan and southern Maratha region. Dhangars are also known as Dhangad or Dhanpal. The word Dhangar is derived from the Sanskrit word 'Dhenu' meaning cow or 'Dhan' means wealth. (Naik, Movie). Dhangars are semi nomadic pastoral groups who move from one region to another. Nomadic groups do not live in the same area throughout their lives. They will move to different places to find better livelihood and pasture lands for their animals. Usually, Dhangars lived an isolated life in the mountains or forested area away from the city folks. Most of the Dhangars today have stopped moving and have settled in one area. This could be due to the lack of pasture lands and forest areas or they must have found better living opportunities in one area and therefore stopped moving.

According to The Times of India, in Goa the total Dhangar population is around 20,000.(N.D, 2016). They inhabit in Pernem, Bicholim, Sattari, Sangem, Ponda, Quepem and Canacona taluka. It is said that Dhangars still live in isolation on the Sahyadri mountains in the east of Goa. They engage in goat and sheep rearing and some domesticate cows and buffaloes for milk production. Dhangars who are traditionally shepherds have been demanding their inclusion in the Scheduled Community (ST) category to avail reservation benefits. Currently Dhangars are categorized under other backward class (OBC), and get 3.5 per cent reservation in Government job and education. But if they are listed under the list of Scheduled Community, they will get 7 per cent reservation in Government service sector and in education. (Malik, 2023). In Maharashtra Dhangars are

classified as ‘Vimukta Jati’ – Nomadic Community (NT). Dhangars in Goa and Maharashtra fall under the ‘Other Backward Class’ category of the central level. Since they are excluded from the ST category they are deprived of the reservation benefits. Struggle to obtain ST status has led to the formation of various organization to list the four communities under one banner. Gawada, Kunbi, Velip and Dhangar (GAKUVED), United Tribal Association Alliance(UTAA), *Mull Goenkarancho Ekvott*.

1.1.3 Dhangars in Lakherem

Bicholim taluka is situated in the north Goa. Over time, Bicholim taluka has become a cultural hub. Within this region there exist a particular ward which is occupied by the Dhangars. I have chosen Lakherem ward as my research area. It is situated within the hilly region in the eastern coast of Goa. Lakherem was originally known as Kumdhad. There was a time in history when this region was under the Portugues rule. This land is a home to Dhangars and non-Dhangars. Primary occupation of the Dhangars has been animal rearing, domestication and selling milk products. For centuries this community has isolated themselves from the mainstream society. For the past few years some interaction has been taking place between Dhangars and non-Dhangars in Lakherem. Non-Dhangars have also started residing among the Dhangars. Transformation can be noticed among the Dhangars with regard to their attires and their livelihood practices.

1.2 LITERATURE REVIEW

In literature review we gain insights, into the lives and situations of tribal communities. This review of literature aims to identify gaps in research regarding the Dhangar community.

According to Blench (1999) there is a lack of knowledge about pastoralism when compared to regions. This gap exists due to descriptions and terms used for systems and ethnic groups. Unlike Africa and the Middle East, where pastoralists are typically organized by communities in territories India incorporates pastoralists into the caste system. Despite being overlooked in research and development this group plays a role in animal husbandry and livestock care across various landscapes, in India. Some regions are utilized seasonally for activities (Blench, 1999).

1.2.1 Diversity of the term Dhangar

In the book "Community and Castes of North Western Province and Oudh", by Crooke (1999) the discussion revolves around the Dhangar caste. According to him Dhangars are a part of the Dravidian family as noted by Colonel Dalton. The meaning of the term "Dhangar" varies widely from referring to hillmen in Chutia Nagpur to representing individuals in Mahal community. It is mentioned that this term may not specifically identify any community on a level. Mr. Risley referencing Mr. Oldham mentions that Male Pahariyas call "Dhangar" to men of Qragns group. Another interpretation suggests that the name could be related to wages paid in rice. In Bulaspur they are seen as a subgroup of Kanwar, have adopted Brahminical traditions. In Sambhalpur, they are regarded as Chota Nagpur emigrants, engaged in works of weavers and village watchmen in Saranggarh. M. St. Martin highlights the connection to Tank Rajputs, Tangana of the Mahabharata, and Tanganoi or Ganganoi of Ptolemy. In the Dakkhin, the Dhangar people who are linked to the Sanskrit Dhenukara, are described as herders with similar religious practices as the Kunbi. In Malwa the Holkar family is said to have roots in this group. (Crooke, 1999, pp.263-264).

1.2.2 Geographical location of the Dhangars

Parkhe & Salok (n.d) in their study “Religious and Social Life of Dhangars in Maharashtra” reveals that, Dhangar community resides in areas surrounded by thick forests and pasture lands. In Mr. R.E. Enthoven's work "Communitys and Castes of Bombay," he states that the Dhangars are widespread across the Deccan, Konkan, and Southern Maratha regions. According to him, Dhangars are not only situated in these areas but have also spread to the Central Provinces, Berar, the United Provinces, and Central India, where they are known as Dhangars. Thus, in his conclusion he says that Dhangars in Northern and Southern India belong to the same race, acknowledging the possibility of tribal subdivisions based on geography and occupation. In the Konkan region, including Goa, their habitation pattern is significantly influenced by the South-West monsoon, which brings heavy rainfall. Due to their livelihood, of rearing livestock, the Dhangars often choose to live in these foothill areas for easy access to pastures lands. (Parkhe & Salok. n.d, pp. 97).

1.2.3 Livelihood strategies

Malhotra and Gadgil (1981) in his study “The Ecological Basis of the Dhangars: A Pastoral Caste-Cluster of Maharashtra” delve into the intricacies of potato cultivation and the distribution of different Dhangar castes within Maharashtra, India. It states that the presence and prevalence of these castes in particular regions are primarily contingent upon the region's suitability for preserving livestock. More specifically, these castes either domesticate the animals which are important to their livelihood or rely on the animal products derived from these animals for their subsistence. The climatic condition of an area is an important factor for livestock rearing, whether it is the maintenance of animals themselves or the utilization of their products, emerges as the principal determinant

influencing the geographic distribution of Dhangar caste. This unique way underlines the close interrelation between human communities and their livestock, highlighting how the natural environment and its capacity to support animals play an important role in the livelihood and geographical distribution of these caste within Maharashtra, India. (Malhotra & Gadgil, 1981, pp. 49-58), (Parkhe & Salok, n.d, pp.96-97). Enthoven says that while Dhangars in the Konkan and Deccan are shepherds and wool-weavers, those in Northern India have diverse occupations such as jungle clearing, labor, and scavenging. Despite variations in occupation and social status, Enthoven argues for the common identity of Dhangars across regions, emphasising that the Dhangar was originally a tribal, not functional, name. (Enthoven, nd,).

According to Singh (1993) in Goa Dhangars predominantly communicate in Konkani and Marathi language. In Goa, they stand out due to their distinctive attire and occupation, which sets them apart from another mainstream. When taking their cattle in the fields, they often carry a scarf on their shoulder and are accompanied by one or two dogs, which help them in herding the flocks and providing protection against wild animals. Dhangar men traditionally wear loin-cloths (casht) and head turbans (feta). Older women wear a sari (kas) without a choli, while the younger generation tends to wear cholis. They also wear a multi-layered necklace made of beads of various colors. The study also provides insights into their cultural practices such as pre-pregnancy, birth and death ceremonies. Additionally, it deals with their unique marriage patterns and family structures, notably focusing on the prevalence of patriarchy. The study also highlights their participation into agriculture and the absence of land ownership. (Singh, 1993, pp. 71-75).

Parkhe & Salok (n.d) in their works “Religious and Social Life of Dhangars in Maharashtra” states that, their livelihood revolves around goat and sheep rearing, with a belief that wolves help them to maintain the health of their livestock. This cultural perspective highlights their distinct way of life. (Parkhe & Salok, n.d, pp.96-97).

1.2.4 Food Habits

Dhangar community's food habits are mostly non-vegetarian, with a more preference given for the meat of animals such as goats, sheep, fowl, deer, and hare. Notably, they don't consume beef and pork. Since there is limited agricultural land, they predominantly cultivate millet (ragi) and jowar in foothill areas with laterite soil, making ragi their staple crop. Men often drink local liquor made from molasses, while women normally do so during festive and ceremonial occasion. Preparation of Liquor is not common in every household. Both men and older women smoke bidis made of dry leaves. Black tea is a common beverage, and children in the community drink milk. Dhangars also generate income by selling milk. During lean seasons, they may include forest- roots, tubers, vegetables, and fruits as their dietary habits. They avoid using oil for cooking but use coconut in both vegetarian and non-vegetarian food. (Parkhe & Salok,n.d, pp. 96)

1.2.5 Cultural pattern

According to Parkhe & Salok (n.d) the Dhangar community, who have settled in the Deccan regions of Maharashtra and Karnataka, maintain a cultural heritage intricately woven into their pastoral way of life. Their cultural heritage involves the making of "Ovi" poetry inspired by the natural beauty of their surroundings, with epic tales of their deity "Biroba." Their Kuldevta, Khandoba, occupies a special place in their religious life and beliefs. The

Dhangar community consists of sub-divisions like Hatkar, Ahir, Khutekar, and Khateek, all having their roots to a common lineage. The connection between religion and folk literature in the Dhangar community of India, highlights the crucial influence of their religious beliefs on their lifestyle. These beliefs have been passed down through generations and continue to shape the cultural identity of the Dhangars. The worship of deities, specifically Khandoba and Biroba, is the main element of their religious practices. Specific places like Jejuri and Aarewadi hold tremendous importance in their spiritual belief. This signifies the connection between the Dhangars and their gods. Goddess Tulja bhavani is also worshipped, with rituals and offerings as part of their religious practice. Historical fights, such as those between Aryans and Dravidians, failed to erase the Dhangar's commitment to their traditions. Instead, they adapted and got indulged in new practices, resulting in an increase in the number of gods, customs, and rituals. Religion, as the main element of their existence, unites the Dhangar society. The age-old religious practices continue to expand within their culture. In this context, literature is evident that religion plays an important role in strengthening their belief system providing a structure that shows the unity and harmony within the community. (Parkhe & Salok, pp. 96-97).

Patil & Meena's study of "Social Economic Profile of Sheep Reared Dhangars Pastoralists of Maharashtra, India" shows how recent years have seen a change in the interest of social scientists towards pastoral societies, particularly those focused on subsistence patterns. People sustaining their livelihoods through the domestication of animal, represents a unique adaptation to their environment. The Dhangar in Maharashtra, predominantly rear sheep and are dependent on animals for various purposes such as food, fuel, fiber and transportation. Pastoralist's lifestyles range from nomadic to semi-nomadic

and transhumant, with some transitioning towards more settled lives in urban or rural areas. Additionally, changes in livestock domestication are observed, by state policies concerning forests, agriculture, irrigation, fodder, famine, pastoral rights, and migration. Qualitative data was collected from 120 Dhangar sheep pastoralists across 12 selected villages in Sangli and Kolhapur districts of Maharashtra. Data was gathered on their socio-economic profiles, age, family dynamics, education, land holdings, income, sheep ownership, and sources of information. (Patil, Meena & Tripathi, 2012, pp. 85-89)

1.2.6 Social stratification

Patil & Meena (2012) in their study reveals the division of labor in the Dhangar family. Men primarily took charge of sheep husbandry tasks, like herding, feeding, and marketing. They also handled activities such as milking the cow and providing care to the animals. Even taking care and looking after sick animals comes under their responsibility. On the other hand, women's roles were to handle and process milk and its products, along with their traditional household chores. Children played a significant role by assisting their parents in various activities like taking care of siblings. This division of labor showed that the men were more involved in outdoor tasks than the women, as seen in other communities as well. (Patil, Meena & Tripathi, 2012, pp. 89)

1.2.7 Marriage among Dhangars

Malhotra (1979) conducted research, "In Breeding among Dhangar castes of Maharashtra, India" of consanguinity within a substantial sample of Maharashtra's Dhangar community revealed intriguing patterns. The study encompassed 22 endogamous castes, demonstrating significant variability in consanguineous marriages, with an overall frequency of 26.4%.

Notably, matrilineal first cross-cousin marriages were more common than patrilineal ones, while maternal uncle-niece marriages were the least prevalent. Geographical disparities played a significant role, with regional differences in the commonness of these consanguineous ties. Matrilineal unions increased in frequency as one moved northward, while patrilineal and uncle-niece unions decreased in the same direction. Comparatively, the Dhangars displayed notably high levels of inbreeding when contrasted with other Maharashtrian groups, yet these levels were considerably lower than those found in southern Dravidian-speaking communities. This intricate examination sheds light on the intricate landscape of consanguinity among the Dhangars, underlining the multifaceted factors influencing their marriage practices. (Malhotra, 1979).

1.2.8 Decrease in grasslands

Wennstrom's (n.d) research explores an innovative approach to advancing the field of land cover change studies by integrating remote sensing observations with ground-level perceptions. This methodology is applied in a specific case study conducted in southern Tamil Nadu, India, where changes in the pastoral landscape are examined from two complementary viewpoints: the perspective from space, using satellite images, and the perspective from the ground, through interviews and participatory mapping. The study reveals a decrease in grasslands, vital for livestock feed, and an increase in agricultural and built-up land from 1992 to 2014. Qualitative data enriches the understanding of land cover change dynamics and uncovers the intricate challenges faced by pastoralist communities, where the reduction of grazing lands is just one aspect. The research highlights that pastoralists are concerned about the loss of relatively small but significant grazing areas,

which are not readily detectable through Remote Sensing alone. (Wennstrom, n.d, pp. 15-24)

1.2.9 Ethnomedicine

Shinde & Dahisar's (2021) research underscores the extensive historical use of plants for various purposes, such as medicine, food, agrochemical, and pharmaceuticals among India's diverse tribal, rural, and urban communities. A survey of ethnomedicinal plant usage within the Dhangar community was conducted in specific areas of Northern Maharashtra's Khandesh region. The data analysis revealed that the Dhangar community relies on 127 plant species from 116 genera and 59 plant families, including both flowering plants and ferns, for medicinal purposes. Significantly, 27 of these species represent novel findings in terms of less-known uses for medicinal plants in this region. (Shinde & Dahisar, 2021, pp. 237-245).

1.2.10 Political mobilization

Kumar and Mokta (2023) in their study "The Politics of Reservation: A Case Study of 'HATTI' Community of Sirmour District in Himachal Pradesh" discusses the prolonged demand for Scheduled Community status by the Hatti community, dating back to 1967. Living in the Trans-Giri region of Himachal Pradesh's Sirmour district, the Hattis faced educational and employment disparities due to topographical challenges. The historical and cultural ties between the Hattis and Jaunsar Bawar region across the Tonsriver are highlighted. Despite Jaunsar Bawar receiving tribal status earlier, the Hattis faced a development divide. With 14 clans spread across 164 Panchayats, the Hatti community formed the Central Hatti Committee in 1967, and in 2014, Rajnath Singh announced tribal

status. The Union Cabinet approved a constitution amendment bill in 2022, granting tribal status to the Hattis, enabling them to access Government benefits and reservations. (Kumar and Mokta, 2023)

1.3 RESEARCH QUESTION

Lakherem ward, situated in Bicholim Taluka of north Goa, is surrounded by hilly forests and is the residence of the Dhangar community. They are said to be the early settlers of Goa. Lakherem is a remote ward, these members are primarily involved in goat, cattle rearing. In the past they had isolated themselves from the mainstream society but recently interactions with the broader society can be noticed. This slow and gradual development is providing a diverse scope for researching the cultural continuity of the Dhangar community.

In my dissertation I made an attempt to find answers to the question such as what are the cultural practices, ritual, and traditions practiced by the Dhangar Community? What are the main economic activities and livelihood strategies adapted by the Dhangar community? How have these strategies adapted in the face of changing agricultural and environmental conditions? These research questions have served to gather in-depth studies on the complexities of the Dhangar community's culture, livelihoods, and socio-demographic profile of the Dhangar community settles at Lakherem Goa.

1.4 OBJECTIVES OF THE RESEARCH

The study primarily aims to understand some aspects of the lives of the Dhangar community located in the Bicholim taluka of north Goa. The specific objectives of the study are:

- i. to document the historical background of Dhangar community in Goa;
- ii. to know socio demographic Profile of Dhangar in Lakherem ward;
- iii. to identify livelihood strategies of Dhangar community in Lakherem ward;
and
- iv. to discern cultural change and continuity among the Dhangar community in Lakherem.

Several theories can be applied to study the cultural preservation and livelihood strategies of the Dhangar community. I have selected two such theories to find in dept information on my topic of research.

Cultural Theory

Cultural theory helps to focuses on the relationship between culture and social behaviour. It examines how shared beliefs, values, norms, and practices that shape the Dhangar community's culture. This theory can help understand cultural practices, rituals, and traditions within the group and understand how they impact livelihood strategies and political mobilisation. It will also shed light on how cultural factors impact intergroup relations, social identity, and the transmission of cultural practices across generations.

Structural Functionalism

Structural functionalism theory deals with how social structures, institutions, and functions contribute to the maintenance and stability of a society. It is be used to examine the social organization and structure of the Dhangar community, including its kinship ties, family structures, division of labor and caste dynamics. By studying the social roles,

responsibilities, and divisions of labor within the community. This theory will than help us to understand how livelihood strategies are organized and followed. It can also highlight the role of community organizations and institutions in political mobilization and decision-making.

The Dhangar community of Lakherem ward in Bicholim taluka is an unexplored area of research. This research area offers a wide scope to investigate and study the cultural continuity and livelihood pattern of the Dhangar community. It provides an opportunity to know whether the Dhangars have assimilated into the local culture and community or have isolated themselves from the rest of the mainstream society even today. To achieve a comprehensive understanding of the Dhangar community in Lakherem- Goa, qualitative ethnographic research approach will be applied to collect the required qualitative data. Tn order to get an in-depth understanding of the research problem, the study will depend on primary and secondary sources of data collection.

Primarily data collection methods include interview method-interviews of individuals from various age groups who are actively involved in animal herding and religious rituals will provide diverse perspectives. This approach helps to trace the continuity of traditions and some shifts in practices across different generations. Oral history, narratives are gathered from elderly people, focus group discussions helps to understand their view points and participant observation was carried by the researcher by attending functions, festivals and observed rituals. It has provided with great, firsthand insights into their cultural practices, beliefs, and social dynamics.

Secondary data sources include books, journals, newspapers, magazines, vlogs, census data, and survey data, enabling a deeper exploration of the Dhangar community's cultural norms, religious practices, and social structure.

1.5 CHAPTER SCHEME

My dissertation consists of 6 chapters, each containing information on the history, socio-demographic profile, livelihood pattern and cultural practices of the Dhangar community from Lakherem ward of Bicholim taluka. The first chapter is the introductory chapter consisting information on Dhangar of India, Goa, and Bicholim. Further it provides brief discretion of the Lakherem setting. It also includes literature review, research questions, objectives of the study, methodology and methods of the study and limitations of the study. The second chapter deals with the socio demographic profile of Dhangars from Lakherem ward. It consists population of Dhangars across Bicholim taluka, social stratification and division of labor.

The third chapter comprises of the livelihood practices among the Dhangars of Lakherem. In this chapter I will sort discuss their traditional occupation, current economic activity and factors affecting their traditional occupation. In the fourth chapter I will try to find the cultural change and continuity among the Dhangar community in Lakherem. This chapter will focus on the cultural change and traditional practices, lifecycle ritual, celebration of festivals.

1.6 RELEVANCE OF THE STUDY

The lack of literature on the Dhangar community has marked the urgent need to conduct a comprehensive sociological study which has revealed the belief system and transformation

that has taken place at Lakherem. The research has served to provide an in dept information on the lives and complexities of Dhangars. This study provides a diverse perspective on the challenges, adaptation, and characteristics of their society in their region. The findings of the study may help in formulation of schemes and upliftment of the Dhangar community.

1.7 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Lack of literature on a particular topic can make the topic more difficult to understand. Since the Available literature provides very little information on the Dhangars of Goa, I had to start Collecting primary data from field. Conducting interviews to gather my primary data was not an easy task.

The reason is that Dhangars who are involved in traditional occupation have a busy schedule and it was very difficult for them to meet for an interview. There was an incident when the respondent called me to meet late in the evening, but when I reached to their house, she denied to give interview since she was very tired. There were many such cases where I was called and then denied to provide information. Such incidences at times, may lower your confidence.

Second reason is that some people were not very open to provide information on their origin and social classification. One of my respondents mistook me to be a Government employee and disconnected the call. Once he was informed about my dissertation he provided me with the required data.

My dissertation ends with the summary, conclusion and references after conducting an in dept research on the Dhangars of Lakherem and by also observing them perform their rituals.

CHAPTER 2: SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF DHANGARS IN

GOA

In chapter two, I sought to discuss the oral history on the origin of Dhangar community. Secondly, I have discussed settlement and the history of Dhangars from Lakherem. I made sure to highlight the atrocities faced by the Dhangars of Lakherem under Portuguese administration. Further I have discussed the distribution of Dhangars in each ward of Bicholim taluka and gave a brief over view of their land management.

2.1 ORAL HISTORY OF DHANGAR ORIGIN

Oral History narrates that when God created the universe, there was nobody to take care of the animals. Therefore, Lord Mahadev created Dhangar from his dust to look after the animals. From here, the Dhangar were originated. Another story says, once a couple was wandering in the forest to look for another couple having the same names. This couple wanted to have children for a very long time but couldn't have. Finally, they found a 70-year-old couple. The name of the old lady was Parandi Mhali and the name of her elderly husband was Parando Mhalo. This couple helped the elderly couple which made them happy and out of happiness they blessed the couple saying that they would give birth to three children. Eventually, the couple were blessed with three children and the elder son named as Yedga Bira. It is believed that Dhangars are the descendants of Yedga Bira. (Chari, 2014, pp. 2-3)

Another narrative is that once goats and sheep entered in the field of a farmer and destroyed the yield. The farmer got disheartened and prayed to Lord Mahadev to help him. At that moment, Lord Mahadev created Dhangar to take care of goats and sheep and to

keep them away from the field. Maybe this is one of the reasons why Dhangars stay away in hilly areas.

Tate(2017) in her study “Children of Mountains Settled on Plains” mentions that the Vijayanagara Kingdom was founded by two brothers, Hukkaraya and Bukkaraya. Once these two brothers had a dispute over something and this led one brother to leave the kingdom. When one of the brothers left the kingdom people from his kingdom, followed him along with the goat and sheep and they went and settled down in the forest. From this, the Dhangar community originated.(Tate, 2017). There are many such stories where in it is said that Dhangars are descendants of the kings who had moved to the forest.

Some Dhangars claim that they belong to the Kshatriya varna. It is said that Dhangars were king Chhatrapati Shivaji's Maule means soldiers. These soldiers were not paid by the king but sometimes were offered traditional liquor. It gave them pride to be a Maratha and a part of the Maratha army. Question arises that if Dhangars belong to the Kshatriya caste and were soldiers, then how did they end up rearing animals? One of respondent replied, back then, during the time of Chatrapati Shivaji Maharaj, it was not possible for all the family men to become soldiers. One member would join the Maratha army and the rest would take care of the animals.

Dhangars claim to be the decedents of queen Ahilyabai Holkar. The Holkar dynasty was founded by Malhar Rau, father-in-law of Ahilyabai Holkar in Indor. It is said that Ahilyabai Holakar belonged to the Dhangar community. Dhangars are herding caste of people. Dhangars are present in different parts of India and known by different names.

Dhangars are present in various states in India and their population in each state varies.

Name of the state	Population
Goa	20,000
Gujarat	1,468,000
Karnataka	1,189,000
Maharashtra	149000
Uttar Pradesh	43,806

Table 2.1: Population of Dhangars in various states as per the census 2011

Source: Joshuanetproject.net

2.2 DHANGARS IN GOA

Gawda, Kunbi, Velip, and Dhangar communities in Goa are considered to be the original communities to settle down first. Total Dhangars population in Goa are around 20,000. Dhangars have migrated to Goa from Maharashtra and Karnataka. Dhangars belonging to the Konkan region i.e. from Thane, Mumbai to Karwar share similar ethnic identities and language. The Dhangars in Lakherem had settled in Goa before the advent of Portuguese administration. Lakherem ward is situated in Bordem-Bicholim taluka in North Goa. Bicholim taluka is a Municipal Council and was formally known as Bhatagram.

Initially, Dhangars lived in hills and never stayed at one place for more than two years. After every two years they migrated with their goats and cows in search of new pasture lands. They walked for miles in search of new places. They moved by carrying all

their belongings and wherever they stopped, that place would become their home. Initially, throughout their lives, they have walked. Walking and moving was never an issue for elderly people. They were fit and could walk for miles. By chance if they fell sick or got diseased and could not walk then they were carried on palanquin.

2.2.1 Seeking isolation from the mainstream society

Dhangar's main livelihood was of animal rearing and they also practiced agriculture. They reared animals like goat, sheep, buffaloes and cows. They would stay in forest, mountains and near rivers or ponds, where their animals, would find fodder to eat and water to drink. Since their survival was dependent on the animal, they were bound to first see that there were required land for grazing. In city area, availability of pasture lands was quite less. Areas away from city were always covered by grass. Animals required fodder and Dhangars required land for agriculture. Settling down away from city provided them with grazing land for animal agricultural land and also land to build their temporary houses and cowshed.

Another reason for not choosing to live among the city people was that they planted beautiful plants and vegetables in the garden. Animals like goats and cattle would get attracted towards the green leaves and would go at their garden to eat them. The owner would get angry and sometime hit the animal to drive them away. There were many complaints that animals would eat their vegetables and flowers from the garden. People from the city area, also expressed hatred and dislike towards the community. They did not respect them and considered them low status and uncivilized community. This was the main reason we always distant ourselves and our animals from the city area.

They stayed really far from the city area almost more than 10 km. Therefore, Dhangars never got the chance to gain education. Since they lived far, there were no schools and any other source through which they could learn. They did not see the development happening in village area. They stayed among their own people and were unaware of activities happening outside their community.

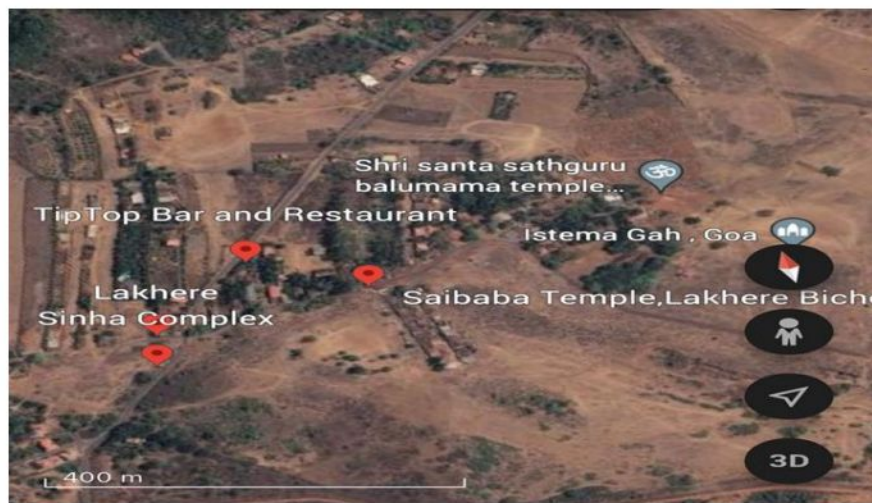


figure 2.1: Map of Lakherem: The geographical location of the field.

Source: Google Earth

2.2.2 Understanding migration pattern

Dhangars have migrated to Lakherem from places like Maulinguem, Kudashe and many other places of which the new generation of Dhangars are not aware of. When they arrived at Lakherem ward, they could see only thick bushes and trees. It was a dense forest with hard rocky soil. There were three houses located on the edge of the ward. It was a long and hard journey which they had to overcome before settling down. They started clearing unwanted bushes and trees. Since it was a hilly region, the surface was rocky and uneven. The land was really hard to level up. Dhangars themselves levelled the land and built huts.

Huts, in which Dhangars stayed were known as *Gauwal* and the place where they kept their goats were known as *Sadh* which was built of dry palm leaves and bamboo. The only natural source of water was Chamar kund, a river outside Lakherem. They cultivated Dhangari vegetables like Vaal, Dhangari *Bhene*(ladyfinger), and *Dodke* (Ridge gourd), millits, *zondlye* (Jowar), and udit(black gram). Besides, they took care of animals and took them for grazing. The land where they settled was known as Kumdhad. Later on, the land came to be recognised as Lakhere. Lakere name was given by Dhangar who settled there first. It is said that the word Lakhere is derived from a tree locally known as Khair (*Senegalia catechu*). These Khair trees surround one side of Lakherem. These trees act like a natural boundary of the ward making it easier to distinguish from another area. They had a pattern of migration. All community members did not arrive at Lakherem at once. The first clan to arrive Lakherem was the Fale followed by the Zores then came the Tate later on the Varak came and last were the Gauly clan who arrived. Since Fales are the early settlers of that area they are given more respect. Later when Portuguese captured the area, they constructed headquarter for them and a well nearby. This well served as a supplementary water source providing additional resource for their daily needs. They started practicing agriculture on large scale since water was easily available.

Settling down permanently in Lakherem was never planned by the Dhangars. But as situation changed it became the need of the time, when people following traditional occupation started to decline. Some also started going to work in city areas to repair cowshed. Some worked in the mines and stone quarry. They saw working in the city as an alternative to make their living better and earn much more income. Later they decided to stay there permanently. They had also started sending their children to school. During the

course of interview, I got the firsthand information from one of the elderly persons who narrated his arrival at Lakherem:

“I was born in Maulinguem village in Bicholim. And later shifted to Lakherem village along with my parents and grandparents. We also carried our domestic animals since our livelihood was depended on them. It is nearly 80 years I have been staying here. Previously, this area was covered by green forest and wild animals lived here. Before our arrival there were few Dhangar houses who had settled down here decades ago. We had to clear some trees to build houses for us. When I was a child, I supported our family occupation. Later when my parents expired, I sold all our animals and moved out of Goa to work as a driver. I also work Abroad as a taxi driver. When I returned, I sent my children to school as I had seen the world grow and those suffering who were uneducated. I dint wanted this for my children.”

Lakherem ward is situated in an urban area, but it is situated amidst forests, away from the city. It is located in Bicholim taluka of north Goa. Bicholim taluka is the hub of mining area. Although it is technically classified as urban, it lacks easy access to resources like markets, and supermarkets within walking distance. Residents often have to walk miles to reach these amenities.



Figure 2.2: *Dhangar women wearing traditional Kasode.*

Source: Photograph by the researcher



figure 2.3: Dhangar man using kambal to cover himself

source: <https://images.app.goo.gl/3iWLcsf7WC7dVjd86>

2.3 TRADITIONAL ATTIRE

Traditionally Dhangar men wore white *Kashti* on the waist, *Pagode* on the head (*pagode* means Turban). Wearing *pagode* carries a significant cultural aspect and conveys a sense of pride. It symbolizes dignity, authority and respect for their culture. Latte on the shoulder, also known as *Kambal* in Konkani. It is a *woollen* blanket which Dhangars carry on their shoulder, black *kobzo* (waist coat), silver *kade* on their wrist, *bali* in ear, *Vahkyo* on their ankle. Some men even wore white wale (short towel) around their waist.

Dhangar women wore *kasode* which is above their knee length. It is a nine-yard saree which married as well as girls used to wear. Married women also wore Mangal sutra, vermillion, silver rings on her finger, huge nose ring locally known as *nath*, earring, anklets, toe ring, green bangles and a red bindi to signify she is married. This is the traditional dress code of Dhangar men and women. In the present-day Dhangars have changed their way of dressing. Men usually wear shirt, t-shirt and trousers. And women have switched to six

yards saree, salwar and girls wear kurta, top and jeans. In Lakherem there is only one elderly man who still continues to wear traditional outfit every day. Rest all men wear traditional cloths only during festivals and while performing rituals.

On the other hand, there are very few elderly women in Lakherem wearing knee length *kasode* (knee length saree) and on top they tie short towel on their waist as shown in figure 2.2. Other women wear six yards saree normally and only on festive occasions they wear nine yards saree till ankle length.

Kambal played a crucial role in Dhangar's daily life. Whenever he took his animals for grazing, he used the *kambal* as a mat to lie down and take some rest. He used the *kambal* as a base on top of which he venerated God. The *kambal* shielded him from getting wet during monsoon. You will always find a *kambal* on a Dhangar's shoulder

A person who takes animals for grazing is called a "*Rakhno*" or "*Rakhandar*". *Rakhno* means person who provides protection. It is interesting to note that there is a deity also known as *Rakhandar* who protects the villages and wear similar cloths as the traditional cloths of the Dhangar. He also wear *kambal* and hold a sick in the hand just like a Dhangar. They wear a *kambal* on their shoulder, *pagode* on their head, and carry a stick in their hand. They also have *ghungroos* tied to the top edge of the *Kathi*. When grazing, if the animals wander off or face a threat, the *Rakhno* hits the *kathi*(stick) on the ground, making a sound "*chann chan*". This signals their wife to guide the animals in a different direction for safety. A "*kukari*" is a special sound made with the mouth to alert a companion. Sometimes, it's hard to tell if it's a real alert or just a prank. That's why the *ghungroos* on the *kathi* (a type of stick) were used as a reliable signal. Their special drink includes "*ambel*" made of ragi flour and *ragi bhakri*. It is served as prasad in the temple after puja.

2.4 COMMUNITY INTERACTION

Ancestors of Dhangars lived in the forest, and they are still connected to it. Moving from the forest to the city wasn't easy because the city folks didn't welcome them right away. Dhangars understood that it was difficult to accept new people with new cultures and different backgrounds. It took years for people to accept them but eventually, a new tradition started, mainly in remote villages. During Ganesh Chaturthi, the non-Dhangars would share Prasad and keep an extra bit for the Dhangars. The Dhangars, carrying baskets, would go from house to house, collecting these special done. This tradition was practiced by Dhangars in Lakherem but now they have stopped following it because now even they celebrate Ganesh Chaturthi. Some non- Dhangars considered Dhangars as low-status people who lived in the forest and disrespected them.

Even Dhangars isolated them from the main society for many decades. They were unaware of the development taking place in the society. They always kept their self and children engaged in their occupation. Settling down permanently was never planned by them. But it became a need of the time when people following traditional occupations declined. some also started going to work in city areas. They saw working in the city as an alternative to making their living better. later they decided to stay there permanently. Only when they started coming in contact with the non-Dhangar people, they realized that the world was developing and quite ahead of them. Then they realized the importance of education.

I could gather narratives from elderly people on how Portuguese treated them:

“At that time life was very difficult. we were not allowed to go out of the houses after 7 PM. If anybody was caught outside after seven then they were beaten up by the Portuguese. Sometimes Portuguese threatened the Dhangars and forcefully took away our goats and in return gave 1 rupee or 50 paisa Even the Goan constables would warn us to handover our goat to the Portuguese or else the Portuguese would kill us. Fearing the Portuguese my parents handed over the goat to them.”

This shows the harsh realities of colonial rule, including the restriction of freedom, economic exploitation and the fearful atmosphere among the colonized population. For the past 20 years, people from other communities have started building their houses. And now in Lakherem, the Dhangar and the non-Dhangar live together. During festival time they visit each other's place and greet one another. At times of occasions and wedding they do invite one another. Assimilation can be noticed to some extent but when it comes to union of families by marriage both the communities, Dhangar and non-Dhangar become very cautious. They are very particular when it comes to following norms led by their own community.

2.5 LANGUAGE AND COMMUNICATION

Language is a medium of communication through which we convey our thoughts , belief, feelings, and emotions. Richards and Schmidt (2019) define language as the structured arrangement of sounds or written symbols into units like morphemes, words, and sentences, used for human communication. It can also refer to communication system in non-human animals, like bees or dolphins.(Alshami, 2019). Dhangars speak Dhangari language. This language is not recognized. They speak their language at home with family

members. People from other community don't understand their language properly. Sometime the non-Dhangar would make fun of their language and accent. Therefore slowly, and gradually, they started adapting to the language of the other local communities leaving around them. while interacting with them, they tried to speak Konkani but end up using some Marathi terms. Therefore, their language sounds like a mixture of Marathi and Konkani language. Elderly people communicate with Dhangari language whereas the younger generation find it difficult to comprehend the messages in their regional language. Youngsters feel hesitant to speak in Dhangari language. Not knowing one's own regional language threatens your culture and tradition, risking the loss of linguistic heritage. If people don't know their language than the importance and uniqueness of their community might fade away over time.

SURVEY DATA						
Sr. No.	Assembly Constituency	Name of Village panchayat/Municipality	Names of dhangar wada	No. of houses	Males	Females
1	Bicholim	Bicholim Municipal Council	Dhangarwada Bicholim	24	63	55
2	Bicholim	Bicholim Municipal Council	Lakherem	39	119	111
3	Bicholim	V.P Latambarcem	Kasarpal and Sonarbhat	10	29	27
4	Bicholim	V.P Latambarcem	Bhatwadi ussap	11	30	31
5	Bicholim	V.P Latambarcem	Savardhat	62	174	154
6	Bicholim	V.P Advalpal	Dhanagr wada Advalpal	12	31	30

7	Bicholim	V.P Sal	Kholpewadi Sal	37	37	91
8	Bicholim	V.P Mulgao	Shivolkarwada, Kasarwada	25	50	51
9	Mayem	V.P Karapur Sarvan	Vathadev	11	28	23
10	Mayem	V.P one Maulinguem	Dhangarwada Kudchire	33	122	118
11	Sakhalim	V.P Kudnem	Karmalewada	4	16	17
12	Sakhalim	V.P Pali Surla	Pale, Surla, Dignem	43	101088	99
	Total			311	853	807

Table 2.2: Survey data of Dhangar population distribution in Bicholim Taluka

Source: The Gomantak Dhangar Samaj Onnati Mandal Bicholim-taluka branch

The above population distribution data is retrieved from survey data collected on 4/10/2020 by Gomantak Dhangar Samaj, Onnati Mandal, Bicholim-Goa. The table 2.2 represents the population statistics of Dhangars in Bicholim taluka. The table presents a systematic categorization of the Dhangar population ward-wise. It presents the total number of houses and, the distribution of males and females in each ward.

The first column contains the serial number, second column lists the names of the assembly constituency which are the Bicholim, Mayem, and Sanquelim. The third column consists of the names of village panchayats and Municipalities, followed by the column of the names of Dhangar Wada (ward). The next column consists number of houses of Dhangar in each ward, and the next two columns present the distribution of males and females in each ward. In the Bicholim constituency, we have Dhangarwada Bicholim, consisting of 24 households and 63 males and 55 females. Whereas in Lakherem there are 39 houses with a population of 115 males and 111 females. In Kasarpal and SonarBhat,

there are only 10 houses with 29 males and 27 females' population. Bhatwadi ussap consists of 11 households with 30 males and 31 females' population. There is a relatively equal distribution of males and females with a slight variation in number. Savardhat in Latambarcem consists of 62 households with 174 males and 154 females. In Dhangarwada Advalpal there are only 12 houses with a population of 31 males and 30 females. so far, we have seen that the population of males is more than females. But in Khopewadi Sal Female population is more than the males, 91 and 87 respectively and the total number of houses are 37. In Mulgao Bicholim, Shivilkarwada and Kasarwada ward consist of 25 households with 50 males and 51 female population. Shifting to Mayem Bicholim the ward Vathadev comprises 11 houses with a population of 28 males in 23 females which is relatively equal to the population of Bhatwadi Ussap and Dhangarwada Advaipal. Dhnagarwada Kidchire consists of 33 houses with 122 males and 118 females. The third assembly constituency is Sakhalim. Karmalewada in Sakhlum comprises four houses with 16 males and 17 females. Pale, Surla, and Dignem consist of 43 houses with 108 male and 99 female population. Through this survey data, we come to know that in Bicholim taluka there are a total of 311 households that belong to the Dhangar community with a total of 1660 population of which 853 are males and 807 are females.

2.6 LAND MANAGEMENT AMONG THE DHANGARS OF LAKHEREM

Dhangars were residing there before the 16th century. During the Portuguese rule, some non-Dhangars who were educated were employed under the Portuguese. These educated people took the influence and acquired the land without the awareness of the Dhangar. When the Dhangars received notice from the collector that they were not the land owner, later, they realized that they did not have any land rights despite being the first settlers in

that area. Soon after that, they went to the collector's office and registered their name as tenants under the Mundkar Act and got their right as tenants of the land on which they resided. Dhangars became aware of the progress happening in the mainstream society and by 1953, they started educating themselves. Though they had knowledge about nature, they were illiterate which kept them away from obtaining land rights. After Goa was liberated from Portuguese rule, the first land management survey was conducted in 1969 in Goa. The survey was conducted to make a record of different types of land. Since the Dhangars were uneducated, they never thought of transferring land in their name as their property. Another reason was that they never thought of settling down permanently. According to them transferring land in their name was pointless. Some of the Dhangars were not allowed to register their names as tenants by the Bhatkar. The *Bhatkars* were scared to allow the Dhangars to become tenants of the land thinking that they would lose the land to them in future.

Today, Dhangars claim that if they were educated, then now they would have been the landlord of that area. Even comunidade land would have been under their control. Since they were uneducated, and lived an isolated life, they failed to understand the land policy. They were engaged with their traditional occupation of animal rearing and even children didn't know what school was. When they realized about the land rights it was too late.

2.6.1 Challenges faced by the Dhangars residing on comunidade land

Dhangars say that around 35 per cent of the area in Lakherem comes under comunidade land. Some area is occupied by the Dhangars and the rest is just barren land. Dhangars had settled down in the area before the land was declared as comunidade land. Agricultural

land which fell under comunidade was taken by the authority from the people. The area covered by the house and cow shed was given to the people. Rest all was taken by the authority. Those whose houses are on the comunidade land are not the owners of the land.

Family possessing large area of land becomes the head of the comunidade. Besides this there are other members from Bicholim, they are Paul, Boddekar, and Salkar. There is no Dhangar member in charge of Lakherem comunidade land.

Dhangars don't have their own property even the land in which they stay are not in their name. This is not the case everywhere. There are some places in South Goa and at Thivim in North Goa who own land and are even landlords of that area. Lambor, Misal, Kolekar(now they have changed their surnames to Kaulekar). Some members of the comunidade land reside at Lakherem but are not Dhangars. This shows that non-Dhangars are living among the Dhangar community.

The Dhangars of Lakherem alleged that the Comunidade members tried their best to torture the residents and drive them away but failed at every attempt. people residing on the Comunidade property faced numerous issues. Whenever the residents attempted to build additional besides their houses or put some shades in front of the houses, it was broken by the comunidade members. Even the public toilets provided by the Government were broken if it was built on the comunidade land, causing many problems for the residents. Very often, their cowshed was broken leaving no place to keep the animals due to which they had to sell the animals. Due to very little area, people started domesticating very few animals. This affected their traditional occupation. There was an incident which occurred in Lakherem in the year 2006. This incident took place in the morning between 10:30 am to 11 am. A few comunidade officials came and set fire to the house of a resident

which was built on comunidade land. Thankfully no harm was caused to the family and the animals. Earlier Dhangars lived in Gawal. Gawal are huts made of dry coconut palm leaves with one door to enter and exit. Such incidences frightened the people but they never lost hope. They struggled until their last breath.

2.6.2 Landlords asserting their right over the land

Around 25per cent of land in Lakherem belongs to the landlords. The land belongs to the Salkar, Paul and Karapurkar family who are residents of Bicholim taluka. Salkar and Paul reside in Lakherem. They faced a lot of challenges from the landlord when they attempted to reconstruct their houses. Despite being original settlers of Lakherem who had levelled and smoothed the land in the past for the construction of houses and to begin agriculture. These Dhangars failed to acquire ownership of land. The Dhangar tenants feel they are being oppressed by the landlord for residing in an area which was discovered by their Dhangar ancestors.

In 1964, the first Agriculture and Tenancy Act was passed by the first chief minister of Goa Babasaheb Bandodkar. In 2014, the Government led by Chief Minister Manohar Parrikar amended the Tenancy Act wherein all the land cases were transferred from Mamlatdar to the civil court, claiming to get speedy disposal of cases. But this decision was not in favor of the tenants and hence they started losing the cases. During the course of this amendment, 250 tenants lost their cases and their rights over the land. Resentment and agitation led by the tenants affected the political party. Again in 2017, the chief minister transferred cases back to the Mamlatdar to provide justice to the tenants. He also appointed more Mamlatdar to work on Saturdays and Sundays to dispose of the cases.

It was also announced under the amendment of the tenancy act that houses of tenants which are built within 300 sq. meters be legalized. One of my respondents replied,

“The property in which I reside belongs to my forefathers. They were the ones who discovered this land and struggled to level it and build houses. originally, we had 2000 sq. meter of land belonging to my family. But now the new amendment act provides only a 300 sq. meters area legalized in our name which I feel is in justice. From 2000 sq. meters we have right over only 300 sq. meters. All the hardship and struggle of our ancestors has gone in vain. We are not asking for the entire 2000 sq. meters area, but we only need space for our dwelling house and to keep animals. I strongly feel that this act should be amended in favor of the tenants who have been residing here for more than five centuries. The Government should take the initiatives to provide justice for us. If the same scenario continues, then a future generation will be left with nothing and all rights of being a *Kul Mundkar* will be taken away from them.”

There are also legal actions taken by the Dhangars of Lakherem, but did not receive any positive response from the court.

2.6.3 Government property

In Lakherem 40 percent area belong to the Government. Besides residing on Comunidade and landlord's property Dhangars in Lakherem also stay on the Government's property. Almost 45 percent of the Dhangar population have their houses constructed in Government area. There are also non-Dhangars staying among the Dhangars who have property of their own in Lakherem.

Dhangars faced social exclusion, colonial exploitation, and land rights issues. They were tortured at the hands of the Comunidade members and landlords. They were the founder of the land who worked hard to level the hard soil to construct houses and turn them into cultivable land. Despite such hardship, they did not even receive basic land rights. For Dhangars, their identity is connected to their tradition. Passing tradition to the next generation is their main motive. In the next chapter I will discuss changing livelihood pattern of Dhangars in Lakherem.

CHAPTER 3: LIVELIHOOD PATTERN OF DHANGAR COMMUNITY IN LAKHEREM WARD

In chapter two, I have discussed the Socio-demographic profile of Dhangars in Lakerem in Bicholim taluka. I have highlighted the history of migration community interaction, social structure, and land management. In this chapter, I sought to discuss their livelihood pattern and what causes a shift in traditional occupation over time. Initially, many people were engaged in traditional occupation but due to lack of land, Government support, and changing socio-economic conditions, maintaining these practices has become difficult. I have further discussed their history of traditional occupation, the causes of shifting to new job opportunities, and their current economic activity.

3.1 HISTORY OF TRADITIONAL OCCUPATION

Traditional occupation can be described as an occupation that is ascribed to the progeny from their parents. It is a practice and activity which is passed down from one generation to the next and are expected to follow it. Traditional occupations are activities often involving agriculture, animal husbandry, crafting, and fishing. It is a mode of earning income and contributing to economic sustainability. Traditional occupation is always tied to sustainable practices that respect and preserve the environment. Following traditional occupation is a way to embrace their identity.

For the past three decades, some alterations can be noticed within those families who follow traditional occupations. The advent of globalization brought waves of economic opportunities. Some Dhangars like other people took advantage of this

opportunity to improve their living standard but on the other hand, this has affected their practice of traditional occupation.

The traditional occupation of the Dhangar community is *sheli palan* (rearing of goats) and agriculture. Later their occupation got extended as they started domesticating cows buffalo hens, etc. They also practiced agriculture to produce different varieties of vegetables. They sold animal waste which was used as a manure in the field. Every Dhangar family cultivated the land where they stayed. They practiced sustainable agriculture. They cultivated the land in which they stayed. Large areas were cultivated unless the landlord, comunidade official, and Government asserted their right over the land. Vegetables were grown in the fields that were consumed by them. Dhangars at Sadyar near Mopa airport in Pernem Taluka continue to practice agriculture, specifically growing ladyfinger, locally known as dhangari *bhene*, jowar, ragi, and other vegetables. They sold these crops in the city to earn a living. Ragi is the staple food and they had that in abundance. They would grind the ragi and make ragi *Bhakri*. *Ambel* was also made of ragi flour and coconut. In the past, when Portugal had control over Goa, Dhangars had to take up jobs in khan and mines alongside their usual work to make more money for their families. This was because they had large families, and relying on just one job wasn't sufficient to provide for everyone's needs.

3.2 CURRENT ECONOMIC ACTIVITY

Dhangar community members can be seen working in various job sectors. Some try to maintain a balance between traditional occupation and current economic activities. In the past, all households domesticated cattle and goats. But now most of them are selling them.

There are hardly three to four households that have goats and most of the others have buffaloes and cattle. There are other houses domesticating animals but are not fully dependent on them for their income. I interviewed an elderly person to know his views on the declining traditional occupation:

“There is no guarantee that these households will continue their traditional occupation for the upcoming years. Choosing to follow a traditional occupation or no, is up to them. we cannot compel anyone to follow traditional occupation, since most of them have found another way to earn their livelihood. We have seen and experienced how difficult it is to manage household expenses by only following traditional occupation.”

To some extend Dhangars have realized that following only traditional occupation is not enough to satisfy their needs and wants.



figure 3.1: Elderly women, while taking her goats to a pasture land

source: Photograph taken by the researcher

3.2.1 *Sheli palan*: Traditional occupation of Dhangars in Goa

Some families domesticate goats and aspire to continue that occupation in the future. The goat is an important animal culturally and as a source of income. During specific festivals or rituals goat sacrifice is a very crucial aspect. Goat skin is used to make one side of the

drum which is played during Chapai *nritya* and other cultural programs. The milk and urine of goats are valued for having medicinal properties. Since goats eat green grass, it is said that they acquire the protein that can reduce the impact of asthma, kidney stones, tuberculosis, and many other chronic diseases. The cost of per liter milk is Rs.400. Even though it is expensive there is a great demand for goat's milk for having healing properties. Goat manure is also in great demand it is an organic waste used as fertilizer in agriculture. Goat manure refers to goat waste. It improves soil fertility and the yielding capacity of land. Many farmers buy bags of goat manure. Domesticating goats is profitable, but not an easy task to do. It is time-consuming and apart from good space it also requires hard work to keep the goat, patience, and hard work. I got to interview an elderly woman who is in her 60s and is a resident of Lakherem and continues goat rearing:

“When I was a child, I accompanied my parents when they took animals for grazing. I have grown up around goats and cattle. I have good knowledge of natural medicine and have cured diseases of many patients. I got married at the age of thirteen years and after that, I looked after the animals of my in-laws. Usually, women are expected to work in the kitchen and take care of the family. But in my case, it was the opposite. I was involved in the occupation and my brother-in-law took care of the household courses and also balanced his job. I am very much attached to these animals and can't imagine selling them off. I am old now and can't walk much. My vision has become weak due to which I end up hurting my feet and knees. Although I am old, I still wish to look after them. And I continue to take them to pasture lands in other villages and try to reach home before it is dark. I can't imagine my life without them being around me”.

There are few houses domesticating goats and are very much dedicated to it. They are not dependent on it since other family members go to work.



figure 3.2: Buffaloes and cattle domesticated in the cowshed at Lakherem.

source: Photograph taken by the researcher.



figure 3.3 : cow dung cakes being dried on a large scale.

source: Photograph taken by the researcher.

3.2.2 Cattle domestication

Very few people have cattle and buffaloes who earn by selling milk and milk products.

Cow dung cakes also known as *gobar* cakes are traditionally used in rural areas as fuel. It

is made by collecting fresh cow dung and then mixing it with hand. Some quantity is taken in both hands making a round shape which is eventually flattened by applying little pressure giving it the shape of a cake. These cow dung cakes are then kept in the sun to dry. The size of cow dung cakes might differ depending on their use. In Lakherem they make cow dung cakes which are almost equal to 70 centimeters in diameter.

3.2.3 Cow dung cakes are commercialized

They are sold on a truck basis. One truck of cow dung cakes might cost around Rs 5000. It is used as a fuel while cooking or boiling water. It is also used for religious purposes to light lamps because it has insect-repellent properties. Cow dung is considered a purifying agent. People prefer to apply cow dung paste in their houses, cowshed, their compounds, and in the temple, especially during festivals.

3.3 MAINTAINING BALANCE BETWEEN TRADITIONAL AND MODERN ECONOMIC ACTIVITY

Dhangars say that more than 90 percent of the population is involved in some profession or the other. Every member of the family except for children contributes to the family income. Elderly people are involved in their traditional occupations. Educated population go to work in Government offices and private companies. Very few among them have a milk business. In the morning, they wake up early to give fodder to the animals and then milk them. After milking them they supply the milk to the respective area and go to work. In their absence, their parents take care of the cattle. In the evening after returning home from work they again go to the cowshed and work. few have found a way to maintain a balance between their two different occupations. Women in the past worked at home and

took care of animals but now they work in the office, Anganwadi, some are teachers, professors, and doctors. Middle-aged men and women who are uneducated are employed as peons in Bicholim municipality. They have found a perfect way to earn through jobs and to continue their traditional occupation without hurting the sentiments of their parents and grandparents.

3.4 GARBAGE TREATMENT PLANT AS A SOURCE OF EMPLOYMENT

Bicholim Municipality took the initiative to free Bicholim from the garbage disposal problem. They succeeded in constructing a Garbage treatment plant at Lakherem in the year 2021. This plant generated many job opportunities for the Dhangar men and women in Lakherem. Many of them are even employed in the Garbage treatment plant.

3.5 REASONS FOR OCCUPATIONAL TRANSITION

Occupational transition can be described as a process where an individual chooses to give up on the existing occupation or their traditional occupation to start or join a new profession. Occupational transition can occur due to various reasons. Individuals may opt to leave their traditional occupation if it demands excessive time and yields insufficient profits, seeking better economic prospects to enhance their financial well-being and quality of life. Those pursuing higher studies may find better job opportunities in companies, Universities, and Government offices.

3.5.1 Scarcity of pasture land

Grazing on fresh pasture land is important for the well-being and health of animals. Access to pasture land ensures that animals get a proper diet consisting of herbs, grasses, and other

essential vegetables. The unavailability of pasture land can lead to inadequate nutrition. A proper nutritious diet is necessary for animals like goats because it affects their milk which has the healing properties to cure some diseases. Grazing areas have declined and buying fodder (pend) for animals is quite expensive. Most of the hills around Lakherem are being cleared to build houses or for development purposes. There is no grazing land left for the animals. They find it very difficult to make arrangements for fodder for animals. Those who have goats take them to far places where they find some grazing area.

3.5.2 Lack of space to domesticate animals

In the past, when Dhangars migrated from one place to another, they got access to a large area where they were free to take their animals. In Lakherem they had access to 2000 sq. meters of land when they arrived. Later they were given only 300 sq. meters of land. This altered the number of animals they could domesticate. Since there was no proper land to keep the animals, they had to sell them.

3.5.3 Less profit

There is too little profit earned through traditional occupation. Instead, money earned through traditional occupation is less than money spent by taking care of the animals and providing them with food. One can follow traditional occupation if he wants to start a business and has 20 to 30 jersey cows, then the inflow of income will be more and guaranteed. A cow cannot provide milk throughout the year; therefore, it is not a continuous source of income. Therefore, some families have kept one or two cows in the cow shed. This is because they don't want to hurt the sentiments of their parents and grandparents by

selling them. They have grown old by taking care of them and living among them. So, it is hard for them to spend the rest of their life without seeing animals around them.

Dhangars mentioned that in 2002, the Government of Goa came up with a scheme wherein one liter of good quality milk was sold at rupees 30 by the Dhangars to the fair price shop. Now it has been 22 years that the rate of one-liter, good quality milk has not increased even a rupee. They sell milk to the fair price shop worth Rs 100 but are paid only Rs 40 instead of Rs 100. In 2002 per bag of 50 kg fodder was worth Rs 700 and now the same quantity fodder is worth Rs1500. They have to invest more than the profit they earn.

Farmers suffered great hardship in managing agriculture. In 2002 wages of male laborers were ₹400 and the wages of female laborers were ₹300. Farmers would employ laborers and pay them but the yield received did not make up for the amount invested by them. Even now laborers charge exorbitant rates but since farmers don't get much yield, they find it difficult to employ them. This results in less cultivation of land. He said, "The scheme of the Government is only on paper, we are not benefited through this said scheme." This shows the deep emotions of the Dhangar community who feel they are being neglected by the state.

3.5.4 Hardships faced by people handling traditional occupations

There was a time when domesticating more animals was a matter of pride and a dream. As time changed handling animals became a burden. The only way to free themselves from the burden was to sell them. Some people opted to sell them. On the other hand, some families considered animals as their children and thought that it was their responsibility to take care of the cattle and goats respective of their financial crisis. Rearing cattle and

buffaloes was the most unprofitable and tedious work. There was no direct contact between the seller and the buyer. The only market for the Dhangars to sell milk was the fair price shop at the Government rate which was very low i.e. ₹30 per liter. After supplying milk to the fair price shop, the milk was transported to the dairy farm where filtration of the milk and packaging took place. workers at the dairy farm are paid salaries of more than ₹30,000/- and Dhangars who work so hard by taking care of the cow, providing them fodder, and milking them are paid only ₹30 per liter by the Government.

The Government had come up with schemes where the cow was sold online. Where in the picture of a cow was displayed along with the price and the quantity of milk they could give per day. In addition to this, the buyers had to bear the expenses for importing the cow from Bangalore to Goa and also had to pay full advance money which is one lakh. Many buyers had fallen victim to the scheme. Some of them had bought a cow from Bangalore for one lakh but instead of 10 liters, the cow gave only 5 liters of milk. Before buying a cow, there is a need to make sure that the cow is healthy enough to provide sufficient and good quality milk per day. This was not possible through online buying. If in case the cow was not as per the advertisement shown, then the Government doesn't take any responsibility for replacing the cow, refunding or compensating. In this case, the buyer is at total loss. Many times, they have bought cattle from Kolhapur and other states. when they decided to resell cows after a few years, they did not even get half the price

3.5.5 Wider job opportunity

Children have obtained education and they no longer choose to continue their traditional occupation of animal rearing. Now they go to work in offices and some of them have got Government jobs. The younger generation is completely not interested in continuing the

traditional occupation of animal rearing. Money earned through this occupation is not enough to satisfy their basic needs and wants. Secondly, there is no option left for them to continue traditional occupation because there is no pasture land available for grazing. Houses are been constructed in areas where they used to take animals for grazing. Cashew plantations are found in plenty at Lakherem. If animals eat their plant then the owners retaliate. Areas surrounding Lakherem have limited pasture land and most of the areas are agricultural fields.

3.6 CASE STUDY OF AN ELDERLY PERSON WHO GAVE UP ON TRADITIONAL OCCUPATION

Mr. Tate is 82 years old and is a resident of Lakherem ward. He was born in Maulinguem village and migrated to Lakherem along with his parents and grandparents when he was two years old. He helped his family with their traditional occupation when he was young and later started working the mine to supplement family income. At his workplace he learnt to drive and got his driving license in 1965. He got the opportunity to work in Saudi Arabia as a driver. In India he has worked in various states like, Andhra Pradesh, Kerala, Bangalore etc. He has travelled to many parts of India and have observed living condition of many families and children who lived in pathetic condition and lived a miserable life while those who were educated, had better living condition. When he returned home in 1970s, he lost his father then he decided to educate his children and sold all their animals. Even today he stands by his decision of giving up on their traditional occupation and choosing to educate his children. Now his children work in various sectors. This decision changed their financial condition and living standards. He was illiterate but made sure to provide good education to his five children to become financially stable and independent.

Education is the most important factor in every aspect of our life. Education adds value to the person's life. To start up any business education is a must. The simplest business among the Dhangars is of selling milk, even to do this education is needed. From the time they realised the importance of education, their children have started going to school. Since then our society has attained upward mobility in terms of income and standard of living. Education has transformed our lives and one can see Dhangars working in various fields be it a Government job or a private company. Some have become doctors' professors and even a part of Parliament.

Individuals having buffaloes and cows have their own businesses of selling milk. These people are not dependent only on milk businesses but they also go to work. Most of the people have limited animals so it is easy to balance work and taking care of them. When they go to work their parents take care of the animals. When there more members in the family, work is divided and balancing the modern job opportunities and traditional occupation becomes a much easy process.

3.7 A CASE STUDY OF TWO INDIVIDUAL EMBRACING TRADITIONAL OCCUPATION IN MODERN TIMES.

Mr. Zore is an 85-year-old retired Military personnel. After taking retirement in 1993 he continued the practice of traditional occupation. His grandparents domesticated cattle during their time. Later, his parents had goats, buffaloes, and cattle. At present he has 10 to 12 cattle. In the past he had around 40 to 50 cattle but he sold them away. It was very difficult to manage 40-50 cattle with very little profit. He says, that animal rearing is one of the most difficult occupations one can do. Although it is difficult, they are the wealth of

Dhangars, and practicing it gives them pride. He further says that animals are like his children and he is used to being around them. Every afternoon he takes his goats for grazing. They have preserved this wealth for generations and are expecting to pass it on to the next generation. He also says that they cannot compel their children to follow that tradition but expect to respect their tradition of animal rearing. He concludes by saying that if children don't consider animals as their wealth, then they will lose them.

3.8 WORK DISTRIBUTION AMONG FAMILY MEMBERS

Work distribution is how a society or a group of individuals distributes work for smooth functioning. It is a way to organize tasks for better achievement of the goal and also to avoid work conflict. To study this concept, I have applied Emile Durkheim's theory of "division of labor". Emile Durkheim in his study, *The Division of Labor in Society* published in 1893 discusses the concept of division of labor in society highlighting its role in forming social cohesion and the transition from mechanical solidarity to organic solidarity in advanced society. (Hausner, 2019) Durkheim emphasizes that different societies have varying degrees of division of labor.

Applying Durkheim's theory to the distribution of work among family members, one can analyze how responsibilities and tasks are divided within a household. In traditional societies, there might be a more uniform distribution of labor among the family reflecting a mechanical solidarity. However in modern society, there tends to be a greater specialization of task reflecting organic solidarity. All communities have their way of dividing work among the family members. Work distribution is important because it helps the family to work smoothly. When each family member has a task to perform it ensures

that it will be done efficiently. Understanding these changes can help us see how families adapt to new circumstances and develops over time.

Elderly male was the head of the family. If there were many members in his family, then he would distribute work among them. Each person was allotted a task by him. If one person was told to take the cattle, then the other one was told to take the goats. similarly, some people were allotted to work in the field and some to do household work.

Males of the family took the animals for grazing. Sometimes the male would go to other villages to repair the roof of the cowshed or were engaged in some other activities, then the women would take the animals for grazing. The household work, specially cooking, cleaning, working in the agricultural field and taking care of children was done by the women. Milking the cow was done women and men. Women would collect fresh cow dung and make cow dung cakes. She would dry those cow dung cakes gather them and burn it to prepare manure for the crops to use in the rainy season. Dry Cow dung cakes were used as a fuel for cooking. Women and men both worked in the field, sometimes they would both take the animals for grazing in faraway pasture land. In this case elder child would take care of their younger siblings, cook in the house and tie green leaves outside the house for the goats to eat at night. If children were old enough, they would also lend a hand in the field and take animals for grazing. Male children usually took animals for grazing. Women worked non-stop without taking any rest. Parents took the animals for grazing, but it was not possible to take young ones of the animal along with them. Children would take care of calf and kid. children would take the calf and kid around the house for grazing. Children had very limited freedom to choose what they want. But now everything has changed. But now children go to school and most of the time they study and play with

friends. Those who have finished their studies go to work. They hardly spent time with the animals and some of them don't even domesticate animals like before. Children take liberty to take their own decisions, and they are no more bound to follow that traditional occupation. They have the freedom to give up on the traditional occupation if they wish to.

Traditional occupation ties the community to their roots. With changing time and circumstances some people have given up on the traditional occupation but others have found a balance between the traditional occupation and job. Choosing not to continue the family occupation will lead to the fading away of the uniqueness of their community. Every tribe is connected to nature, and occupations like animal rearing deepen their connections. Their knowledge of natural medicinal herbs which are known to them will also decrease over time. Having a common occupation tightens community solidarity. Their identity as Dhangars originates from their occupation. Traditional occupation is central to the cultural identity and heritage of indigenous community. In the next chapter I have discussed the cultural continuity among the Dhangars of Lakherem.

CHAPTER 4: CULTURAL CONTINUITY AND LIFE CYCLE RITUALS

In previous chapter three, I discussed the livelihood pattern undergoing transition among the Dhangars of Lakherem influencing their identity and tradition. In this chapter, I sought to discuss the life cycle ritual and cultural continuity among the Dhangar community. Dhangars have been following this life cycle ritual for time immemorial. Life cycle ritual is an important aspect of their lives as it gives them a new social status. Similarly, the tradition of passing down culture from one generation to the next is an integral part of the tribal community. In the first part of the chapter, I have discussed birth customs and ceremonies, the notion of purity and pollution, and rituals performed by the mother. Next, I have discussed, marriage as a social institution, widow remarriage, inter-caste and inter-religious marriages. In the third part, I have discussed rituals performed during funeral and post-funeral and disposal of the dead body. Concerning cultural continuity, I have discussed most of the festivals celebrated by the Dhangars of Lakherem and their folk dance.

4.1 SIGNIFICANCE OF LIFE CYCLE RITUALS

Life cycle ritual is an important aspect of an individual's life that makes them move from one stage to another. Arnold van Gennep, a French ethnographer, developed the concept of "rites of passage" in his classic study, 'The Rites of Passage' 1908, to explain the rituals that mark important transitions in life. He characterizes rites of passage into three distinct phases; Separation, transition, and return. (Hanchett, 2021). Through this he explains the journey of an individual separating from one status and undergoing a transition to take up another social status. Every religion follows life rituals during biological and social events

in their life. The degree of sacredness of each ritual may vary depending on the community. Life cycle rituals are a pre-established categories of rituals performed when an individual reaches a particular stage and moves to another stage in their life.



figure 4.1: *Traditional cradle made of Bamboo.*

source: Photograph taken by the researcher.

4.2 Birth Ritual: Embracing new life

Birth rituals are often performed to celebrate new life. On the arrival of new member in the family celebration is held. Special rituals are performed such as naming ceremony, ritual to purify mother and the baby, blessing are bestowed on the mother and child to protect from evil energies and to bring good fortune.

When child birth takes place, the notion of purity and pollution is considered among Dhangar. After the birth of child for 12 days, the family is not supposed to enter temple or perform any ritual. Even the Shrine at home is closed till they are purified. If a girl is born, then parents of the baby are not supposed to go to the temple for three months and in case on the birth of a baby boy, parents cannot enter the temple for six months. Parents are also

suspended from performing any religious ritual until they are considered as pure. When the mother and baby come home after the delivery they are isolated from other family members. Their cloths and things which they need are not touched by any other family member except one person who helps them. Even the cloths of mother and child are washed separately. It is believed that the mother and child are polluted. Another reason for keeping the mother and baby separate may be to keep the child save from bacteria.

On the fifth day a ritual is performed called *Panchvi*. *Panch* mean five and *Panchvi* means celebration held on the fifth day of the child birth. Sometimes the celebration is also held on the seventh day depending on the health of the mother. Since the elder family members have more knowledge about the ritual, they will organize the ceremony and invite the villagers.

Celebration is held at night. Lamps made of rice flour dough are lit up and placed near the baby. Turmeric root is tied to the *Matka*, from which water is boiled for baby's bath every day. Five cereals are kept near the baby that is millet, chana, horse gram, green gram (mung), paddy etc. Basically, there are no specific cereal to be used for this ritual. In the past, cereals grown by Dhangar were used for the ceremony. People gathered are served delicious food. Whole night Dhangars sing their folk songs, play musical instrument and stay awake praying for the good life of the baby and the family. After the event the mother and child are considered pure. Once the ritual is completed it is believed that the child is protected from the evil eye.

On eleventh day *Bhat ji* is called to perform ritual called Hom. It is a ritual where fire is lit in small area inside the house and family member sit around. The *Bhat ji* chants the mantra. Based on the astrology the Bhat tell the initial on which the name of the child

is decided. Performing *homa* means purifying the whole family and house. After this ritual family members are allowed to open the shrine at home and perform *puja*.

On the 12th day there is a tradition called Barsa. On this day the baby is put in the cradle made of bamboo. But now people use the modern cradle available in the market. Barsa is performed before 12 clocks during the day time. During this ceremony name of the baby is decided by the parents. Sometimes name of their late ancestor is kept to the baby. At the time of naming ceremony women will stand on either side of the cradle. One woman will hand over the baby from beneath the cradle to the lady standing on the other side. This ritual is performed by 5-6 married women. Then the ladies receiving the baby will again handover the baby from the top of the cradle to the other woman.

While giving the baby to the other women they say '*ghe tujo Sahadeu*' and while taking the baby back they will say '*di mhazo Mahadev*'. this process is repeated for 4-5 times. While passing the baby they will sing their folk song. After completing this process, the baby is finally kept in the cradle. Parents of the baby will than name their child. Food is cooked and served to the people gathered for the ceremony.

On this day mother is taken to the well or any other water body where she herself removes water from the well. Five different types of cereal like millets, grains are sown in that place this is called Ruzwan ghalap. The mother than waters the area where cereals are sown. This ritual is called *Panouta*. This is the most important ritual to be performed by the mother. Sometimes the baby is sick due to which the mother cannot perform this ritual. In this case, the mother is restricted to go near well for three months on birth of a girl child and six months on birth of a baby boy. Once this ritual is completed, the mother is considered as pure and can finally perform any ritual and go to the temple.

4.3 MARRIAGE: A SACRED UNION

Marriage represents the union of two individuals and their families. Rituals performed at marriage are assumed to unite the individual spiritually for a lifetime. Marriage is the establishment of a new family unit.

4.3.1 Engagement ceremony

Once the marriage is fixed the first thing is to get the groom and bride engaged. In the past engagements were held in markets. The whole family of groom and bride would go for shopping. Even villagers were invited to the shop. Gifts were exchanged in the market. Gifts were given to all the relatives and close friends. Shopping of saree was done for the bride's future use. Once all shopping was done coconut pieces and jaggery was served to the people. In this way the engagement was done. But now people have become modern. They book a hall for engagement ceremony. Invite relatives and friends.

4.3.2 Haldi ceremony

One day before marriage they have haldi ceremony. Haldi ceremony is held in the evening. On this day their Kuldevata is worshipped and first haldi is applied to God and then people apply haldi paste to the groom and bride. The main reason to have the ceremony in the evening is that during the day time Dhangars take their animals for grazing and they reach home late in the evening. Once all the Dhangars return home with their animals the ceremony begin. On this day elderly women would make turmeric powder in a traditional way. While preparing the powder elderly women sings *hovlyo* (folk songs sung during haldi ceremony).

हळद कुटने

नव्ह-या बाळाची हळदायी व्हानात घाला हो

नव्ह-याच्या आई हळदायी व्हानात घाला हो

नव्ह-या बाळाची आज्ञा - आज्ञासी यादवी हो

अशी ही हळदायी बारीक कुटा हो

.....कुटून- कुटून बारीक करा हो

The folk song sung during the haldi ceremony is a cherished part of cultural folklore, passed down through generations. It symbolizes the process of making turmeric powder traditionally. It describes how the mother of the bride/groom plants it and the way family member nurture, harvest, dry, and ground it into powder traditionally and apply it's paste to the bride or groom as a pre-wedding ceremony. It symbolizes not just making powder but also family unity, tradition, and the celebration of love and marriage with the community.

4.3.3 On the day of marriage

Marriage rituals were performed by Yedgo or Lambor people. They are given the right to perform *pūja* and other required rituals. Now people have started calling brahmin priest to perform the rituals for haldi and marriage. Despite of calling brahmin priest they still call Lambor and Yedgo to come and perform their part.

Marriage is performed the next day. In the past marriages took place in an open area or under a tree but now people marry in the hall. In the past 14-15 couple would marry at the same time at the same venue.

Dhangars follow endogamy form of marriage. Endogamy means the marriage is restricted within their own community. Members of a Dhangar community are supposed to marry only Dhangars. As far as their *Kul devata* is considered, they practice exogamy. Kuldevata means clan deity. In this case marriage takes place outside their own clan. A person will not marry someone from the same clan. Each clan has a particular surname and *Kul devata*. Dhangars do not marry their siblings and step-siblings. Cross cousin's marriages are allowed. Brother's daughter was allowed to marry sister's son or vice versa.

In the past marriages were arranged by elders of the family. Child marriage was very common in the past. Children who were 4-5 years old were married and once the girl attained the age of puberty, she was sent to her husband's house and was expected to spend her entire lifetime in that house. One of my respondents replied,

"I got married at the age of 13 years. I was too young to know what marriage was. As children, my husband and I used to play together and since we played together, I never understood the relation of husband and wife. As a child, I was scared to live in the house and was unaware of the household chores. I was very active when it came to handling goats and cows. Even though I was a 13-year-old child, I was a married woman who was expected to dress 9 yards saree like other married women"

Usually, people did not marry non-Dhangars much since there was very little interaction between them. There were strict rules which the Dhangars had to follow. Elders from the community took charge of punishing those who violated the community norm. Those who dared to marry a non-Dhangar had to apologies to the community head and pay

fine of rupees 10,000 to rupees 20,000 which was then distributed among those elderly people. This was done 40 -50 years ago. This was done so that other people would not repeat the same mistake of marrying non-Dhangar. Marriages with the non-Dhangars were considered as polluting their community. As time and situation changed, mentality of people also changed. interaction between the Dhangars and the non-Dhangars community increased. Now in some cases marriages outside the Dhangar community are accepted and all marriage rituals are performed in the same manner. In the past caste system was rigid and people were forced to follow it. now people give less importance to caste differences. Inter-caste marriage is accepted if the individual belongs to the Hindu religion.

4.3.4 Marriage restriction

Dhangar practice endogamy form of marriage. Marriage of a Dhangar with a person belonging to the Dalit caste is prohibited. Inter religion marriage with a person belonging to a religion other than Hinduism is not accepted. When such marriages take place, the couple is usually not allowed to stay with the family. Sometimes that particular family is excluded from the Dhangar community. After marriage among Dhangars, there is a ritual performed by the couple called *deukarya*. Performing *deukarya* is an important part of the marriage. It is performed after the marriage. At the groom's house *deukarya* is performed to accept the bride in their clan. Marriage is incomplete without *deukarya*.

4.3.5 Widow remarriage

In certain rare cases Dhangars followed polygyny. Polygyny is a custom where in a man marries multiple wives. Man chose to remarry when a woman was unable to bear child or was not ready to handle their traditional occupation of animal rearing. If the husband died

at a very young age than women were allowed to re marry. There were many instances where marriages were arranged between a widow and widower. Second marriages of widow often took place at night. The main reason to marry at night was because married women and unmarried girls were prohibited from attending the wedding. They were also not allowed to see the wedding from far. Whereas there was no such restriction put on married men or unmarried men on attending marriage of widow. Marriage of a widower was held during the day and it was attended by everyone. Even now marriage of a widow is held at night. Mostly widower choose to marry unmarried girls and in rare cases they will marry a widow. If someone marries a widow than *Deukarya* is not performed at the groom's house. This is because it is the second marriage of the women.



Figure 4.2: Traditional ornaments worn by married Dhangar women in the past.

Source: respondent.

4.3.6 Ornaments worn by a married woman

We often notice that married women wear accessories which are not worn by girls or widow. This unique trend of wearing accessories makes the married women distinct from

other unmarried girls. Married women wore accessories which signified that the woman is married. Main accessory worn by her is nath (nose ring) and mangalsutra and vermilion(sindoor). In olden days mangalsutra was made by the groom on the previous day of marriage. He would take the ceremonial thread and put five poule (corals) on each string and in the middle of ten corals a locket was put either made of gold, silver or shell. The pattern of mangal sutra was not fix and arid depending on the groom figure 4.1...Married women also wear green bangles and silver toe ring after marriage. It symbolizes that she is married. The traditional way of making mangalsutra by the groom has transformed into making gold mangalsutra by the goldsmith.

4.4 FINAL RITES PERFORMED DURING FUNERAL

Human life is mortal. Person who is born has to die one day. Death rituals are performed to honor the dead person. On this day all his family members, relatives, friends and neighbors come at the deceased funeral to see him for the last time and to consol his family. The funeral marks the final moment to see them one last time. Once the person dies, neighbors, relatives and friends of the dead person is informed. Dead body of the person is kept in the hall. Every religion has their own customs to perform the final rites. Among the Dhangars there is unique way of performing the ritual on the day of the funeral and after the funeral. It is believed that after performing rituals, soul of the deceased will find peace.

4.4.1 Disposing the dead

In the past, the body was positioned in a sitting posture tied with *kumyecho dor* (a special thread used to tie the body) against a wall with a met and pillow supporting the head. During the funeral, all those gathered to pay their last respects put sugar in the mouth of

the deceased. Rituals are performed by individuals from Dhangar community only i.e. Individuals from the Yedgo and Lambor castes. After the rituals, the person's body is untied and taken to the cemetery. Before leaving the house, gathered people hand legumes to the one responsible for cremation, who then drops them along the way. After reaching the cemetery, an elderly person guides the selection of a *Visau* (stone). Chandan is applied to the selected *Visau* and kept in the cemetery. Then body is again positioned in a sitting posture and then, the person is buried in the sitting position. On top of the burial bamboo hut is built and weaved bamboo basket is kept. Nowadays some areas burial system has transformed to cremation of the body.

The body of the deceased is placed on the pyre and set on fire by the eldest son or a male person who has lost his father. Water in the urn, *Jamblecho talo* (leaves of a sacred tree) and salt in other container is kept at the entrance. All those who had gone to the cemetery compulsorily have to come home to give condolence to the family. before entering the house, they have to dip the *jamblecho talo* in the water and sprinkle all over the body and take salt and keep it on their tongue and then enter the house. It is believed that by doing this the deceased will find peace and it is an important part of the ritual.

Mourning period lasts for twelve days or for some it is only three days. This mourning period family of the deceased is considered to be impure. Sacred religious practices, temple visit and celebration of festivals are suspended. Shrine in the house is closed. On the third day the *Visau* is brought home and kept outside the house, may be under a plant. Some Dhangars keep it in the cemetery. *Visau* is not moved from that place, and it is believed that their deceased family member is still there around them. Every year

on the day of Dussehra *nevedye*(food) is showed to the *Visau*. On this day chapati and *khuti chutney* is cooked.

A practice called *khute modap* is done where in four members who had carried the deceased body on their shoulder are called and served food i.e. chapati and rice and are made to eat it. On the eleventh or twelfth day *Maal Laune* rite is observed at night. On this night, family members and neighbors come together. They take rice flour cover it with a piece of cloth, all sit around it and observe it until they see any image forming on the cloth. If they see any image, it is believed that the person will take rebirth in the form of that object. They worship *Kalash* which is made of copper urn filled with water, mango leaves and coconut. *Ghadi* (person who performs ritual)are called to perform this ritual which takes place the whole night. People sing the whole night in the memory of the departed soul. The person who had done the cremation of the body has to shave his hair and beard.

On the twelfth day in the morning *bakryacho maan* i.e goat sacrifice is done. On this day rice and Rakti is cooked. Rakti is a dish cooked as a gravy using the blood of the sacrificed goat and other ingredients like onion except coconut. First the food is eaten by the family members of the deceased and thereafter other people gathered start eating it. Before leaving the house, friends and relative give towel to the person who had done cremation. This practice of giving towel is called *Pagode ghalap*. They are not supposed to buy new clothes unless they perform *Amsut Mhaal*. There is no restriction on the food they consume. non-vegetarian food like goat chicken can be consumed by the family of the deceased.

After completing twelve days within three months, the family of the deceased has to perform a rite called *sodun hadap*. If a person has died in other village, then the family

members have to sacrifice rooster to the *Rakhandaar* of that area. On their way to home they have to sacrifice a rooster or keep betel leaf and betel nut on every border of the village called *Xhim* and if they have to cross a river or water stream than they have to leave five betel leaves and one betel nut (*Veedo*) in to the water body. Once they reach home soul of the deceased is kept outside the house. On the appointed day *koul* is taken where in their *kul* devata indicates on which object the spirit will rest. The spirit may rest on *ghatli*(bell) coconut, betel nut or *Pashaan* (black stone). After chanting mantras one of the family members of the deceased is been possessed by the spirit of the deceased. It is called *Vaari*. When the person is possessed, the spirit makes the person narrate about its life stories, that is where and when the deceased was born, where he lived, what caused his death, how he suffered before dying and when and where he died. Once the family member confirms this information to be accurate, then the object on which the spirit is resting is taken inside and placed at the shrine in the house. Family members venerate their *pitra* (ancestors) and consider them as their God. Besides *pitra dev* their God can be of *Patve*, *Tandli*, *betel nut*, *sonyacho*, *pitlichho*, *Chandichho*, *Naallacho*(coconut) and of *Pashaan*. One day before, selecting the *Pashaan*, family members along with the people from neighboring villages get together at night. *Kathas*(stories) are narrated in the form of songs to people gathered there. The next day they go to select the *Pashaan*. While selecting, one has to go in the water until he is fully submerged in the water. When in water, which ever stone he touches is chosen as a *Pashaan*.

4.5 RELIGION FOLLOWED BY DHANGAR

Dhangar community profess Hinduism. What makes them distinct from other non dhangar Hindu is their strong belief in animism. Animism is a form of belief which considers

everything in nature is worth worshipping. Dhangars too believe that everything in nature like stone, rocks, trees have soul. Dhangars believe in worshipping their ancestors. Dhangars worship their ancestors during festivals and special occasions. It is believed that those who don't worship their ancestor suffers from Pitre dosh. Whenever a person will want to start something in life that particular event will not happen and face lot of difficulties. Whenever a person dies in the family after some time, he/she is worshipped in the shine in the form of stone, bell etc. Besides this Dhangars worship their family god/goddess known as Kul devata.

4.5.1 Significance of worshipping Clan deity/*Kul devata*

A clan deity is a protector of the family. The deity is regarded as a guardian who is believed to watch over them, guide them and helps them when they need it. Dhangar seeks guidance from their clan deity before starting any task. Deity guides them through the process of *Kaul*. Among Dhangars whenever they want to start something new or want to buy new car or during times of marriage proposal, they often tend to take permission from the deity. It is called Prasad. They do not have to go to the temple to take the Prasad. Their *Kul devata* is worshiped in our homes so they take prasad in their home only. Now a days Dhangars also take prasad in the temple like the non-Dhangar. This belief binds the family member together and shares a sense of common identity. Clan deity is not common among people with various family name. People belonging to one particular surname has one *Kul devata*. There are further more divisions among their surname. The Tate are further divided into Athaudekar and Tarlekar, Varak is divided into Tambekar and Sutkar, Zore is divided into Damekari and Burud and the Gauly are divided into Gawdo and Vani. All the above-mentioned subdivision of Dhangar clan are residents of Lakherem. Dhangars follow

Hinduism. Dhangar say that there are 108 *kul* of them, out of which there are 31 *kul* in Goa.

Each *kul* has their specific clan deity.

Clan/ <i>Kul</i>	<i>Kul devata</i>
Zore	Zanya-Naulya
Fale	Kanoba-Kedar
Varak	Vithoba-Nimzya
Tate	Ambabai-Pursai
Lambor	Siddheshwar-Amba
Kale	Biroba-Makhali
Paune	Biroba-Tyemya , Zyotiba-Tyemzya
Mote	Biroba- Bhavani
Yedge	Vithoba-Naulayi
Doifade	Kalamba-Ithlya

Table 4.1 list of clans and their clan deity

Source: respondent

Kul devata is worshipped at home. Only the main house of the ancestors will have *Kul devata* in their shrine. In the past their ancestors after performing rituals started worshipping coconut as their *Kul devata* as coconut was easily available. Dhangars follow totemism. Depending on the financial condition of the family members totem is selected. Coconut was more common totem earlier. Since everyone goes to work and earns has

started to transfer the *Kul devata* on another totem. Those, who had little more money would worship their *Kul devata* in the form of stone(*tandli*). Those having even more money would worship *Kul devata* in the form of silver (*chandicho*). This transferring of *Kul devata* on the other totem is done only by taking *Kaul*. *Kaul* means taking permission of their clan deity.

Earlier, when they migrated, they would carry a clan deity along with them. They tied out deity in one cloth and moved from one place to another. There was no fixed place to keep their deity. Since now they have settled down permanently, they keep the clan deity in a shrine during festivals. On other days their deity and other gods are kept in weaved bamboo baskets. They don't worship them every day but during the days of festivals and some special occasions.

4.6 RELIGIOUS FESTIVALS

Celebrating festivals is an important part of tribal since it serves as a way to preserve their cultural identity, heritage, and tradition. These celebrations Often include ceremonies, dances, and storytelling through which they inherit their ancestral knowledge.

4.6.1 Bhandaryachi Punau

Bhandaryachi Punau is celebrated in the month of February. On this punau Dhangars believe to bring their ancestor home. Dhangars give the status of God to their Purvaj (ancestors). On this day, we prepare special dish called ghatlyo in the form of laddoos, prepared of boiled rice, onion and jaggery. This laddoos are distributed among the neighbors as a prasad. While giving prasad the person says "Amcho deu yeylo ". Which

means that our ancestors have come home. After — months once all the festivals are over, they say that their ancestors have gone home. ie “Amche purvaj or deu gele”.



Figure 4.3: Bonfire to celebrate holika dahan(it is celebrated one day prior of Holi festival) Holi celebration

source: respondent

On the full moon night people burn *holika*. It is call *Punvechi raat*. On this night people get together and sing *zaty*o(folk songs) and play *ghumat*(musical instrument). They get together and burn *holika* figure 4.2. The next morning everyone play holi by applying colors to each other. They move from house to house in their traditional attire, dancing, and singing to collect donations called *Vargani*. This tradition of moving from house to house is continued but now they don't wear traditional clothes. This collected amount is used to perform rituals and to buy a goat which is then sacrificed. Moving from one house to another, singing and dancing is locally known as *Shabai* and the process of sacrificing a goat is called *Fost karyakram*.

4.6.2 Gudi Padwa: A new biggening

Gudi Padwa is a festival celebrated on the first day of *Chaitra* month as per the Hindu calendar. That is March or April. Gudi Padwa is considered as beginning of a new year for

the Dhangars. On this day we place our God in the prayer room on top of the *vastra* (cloth) which is previously used to tie Gudi. Gudi is made of a thick stick where in at the tip of the stick a cloth is tied with Neem and mango leaves tied surrounding it. A small copper urn is placed at that particular tip and the Gudi is ready to be hoisted on top of the house.

4.6.3 Ganesh Chaturthi

Ganesh Chaturthi was never celebrated by their ancestors as it is not a traditional festival. Back, then they were invited by our Hindu brothers to collect *done* (fruits/food in disposable container made of dry leaves). They moved with a basket from door to door to collect *done* from those who celebrated Ganesh Chaturthi. As time passed interaction among Dhangar and the non-Dhangar community increased and this festival of Ganesh Chaturthi was adopted by the Dhangar community. Now they celebrate Ganesh Chaturthi for five days. Before placing Lord Ganesha's idol, they worship their *kul devata* and then worship lord Ganesha.



figure 4.4 :Mand puja performed on the occasion o Dussehra

source: respondent

4.6.4 Dussehra

Dussehra is one of the most important festivals celebrated by the Dhangar community. Dussehra is celebrated for three days. During the celebration, people are strictly restricted to eat non-vegetarian food. Some people among Dhangars even fast for nine days. On the *athvi maal* that is on the eighth day of Navratri they mostly eat *Godshe* (made of daal and jaggery) this is called *Gulouni*. On this whole night, they stay awake and this is called *zagor*. On this night they make toran. Coconuts are tied to the matoli (wooden canopy). Each family will get their coconut and they will tie it to the wooden canopy along with some mango leaves. This process of tying coconut to the wooden canopy is called *Toran bandne*. On the 10th day, Dhangars celebrate *Shilangan* but in Lakherem they don't celebrate it. *Shilangan* is celebrated in Mollem, Maharashtra, and Karnataka. On the occasion of Dussehra Dhangar do *Mand puja*. On this day all family bring their *Kuldevata* outside the house in an open area and put *kambal* on the ground on top of which they systematically place their god and goddesses along with their ancestors. On the 10th day, they perform a ritual called *Sone lootap*. *Apta* leaf scientifically known as *Bauhinia racemosa* is considered as holy in Hinduism and is called *sone* i.e. gold. On this day people randomly pluck these particular leaves and then exchange it among them. This leaf is then kept in the shrine at home by the people. On this day men and young boys perform their traditional dance called *Gajja* or *Chapai Nritya*. Women perform their folk dance *fugdi*.

4.6.5 Pandharicho Pava

Pava is one of the major traditional festivals among the Dhangars. it is celebrated during the days of Dussehra or Diwali. Pandharicha pava is celebrated only by those who make vow to God. example, if a person has vowed for a male child, then he will celebrate

Pandharicha pava. It is also celebrated by those who want to change their birth name. Celebration is held for three days continuously and once in a year. Those who perform Pava invite people from nearby villages. Minimum five villages are invited but nowadays even 10 to 12 villages are invited. Invitation is given to the head of the village in a traditional manner by giving *veedo*. *Veedo* consists of *Paan* (betel leaf) and betel nut, it is given to the head of the village and are being invited. These villages then attend the function and each group from one village will perform their gajja dance on the beats of the *dhol*.

The celebration starts at night and is continued throughout the night. In local language they call it *Raat zagoupacho khel*. Gathered people dance and sing the whole night. We even played traditional games like playing with sticks, showing strength to others by lifting one another, *Komyani khelap*, *Supari dharap*, *Murli vazap* and many other traditional games. All these traditional games are now stopped and we don't play anymore.

In the past, when Dhangars stayed isolated from city folk, they had the freedom to follow their ritual and festivals without anybody interfering. During the daytime, they would take animals for grazing. since the pasture lands were far away, it took time to return home. they usually reached home after sunset. The presence of all family members and animals was necessary to celebrate any festival. Now 20% of the people celebrate during the daytime and 80% still celebrate at night. Now most of the people go to work and they can manage to take leave one day and celebrate the festival during the day. Those who still want to preserve the authenticity of festival and believe that it is a part of their identity still continue the celebration at night.

Another reason is that now, people from other communities have started staying with the Dhangars community. When these Dhangars stay awake the whole night, dancing singing and playing dhol, the other community often got disturbed at night. many times, they even filed a complaint against the Dhangar community, who then had to stop the celebration in between. There are many instances when other villagers had invited us to perform gajja dance. when the celebration was on people from other community would complain that they were getting disturbed by the sound of the dhol. They would call the police many times. In the past, when Dhangars stayed isolated from city folk, they had the freedom to follow their ritual and festivals without anybody interfering.



figure 4.5: Chapai dancer wearing Jhaga(costume).

source: respondent.

4.7 Folk dance

Among Dhangars women's dances are different from men's dances. One will never find women and men dancing together. Women performs folk dance called Fugdi and men perform Chapai dance.

Chapai dance also known as Dhangari Gajja dance is famous ritual dance of Dhangars. This dance is performed only by the Dhangar tribe. The Chapai dance is performed during the time of festivals like Diwali, Dusshera and as a repayment of vows made to the deities, it is called playing pawa. While dancing they chant “*Haar Chang Bhala*”, which means may God bless shower his blessings on everyone. The dance starts at a slow pace and gradually picks up a fast pace.

Chapai dance costume: Their costume is called Jhaga. Chapai dancers wear white color full-length dresses with red color symbols on the arms and back. They wear white feta on the head sometimes may wear a handkerchief on the head, vakhyo(anklets), earrings, hold a red handkerchief and a stick in the hand. Some Dhangars believe that the costume was *designed* by Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj. Chapai dancers, dance on the beats of dhol. one side of dhol is made of goat's skin. Dhol is played by hand. The flute is also played to provide a tuning impression

Festivals, rituals, and ceremonies foster a sense of community solidarity, reinforcing bond and collective identity within the tribe. It provides an opportunity for cultural exchange and interaction with neighboring communities. Celebrating festivals reminds them of their original identity but exposure to other cultures may lead to some alteration. Embracing diversity is a must but one should not forget its roots. In the next

chapter, I will discuss political mobility attained so far by the Dhangar community and how it empowers the community members to preserve and pass on their cultural heritage to future generation.

CHAPTER 5: POLITICAL MOBILITY

In the previous chapter four, I discussed life cycle rituals and celebrations of festivals fostering the preservation of cultural heritage and ensuring its continuity among the Dhangars of Lakherem. In this chapter, I sought to discuss the political mobility among the Dhangars in Goa by focusing on the historical context of the community association, its challenges, functions, and achievements. I have also included reasons for disparities and ongoing disputes impacting the community's advancement.

5.1 EMPOWERING INDIGENOUS VOICE: THE FORMATION OF COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION FOR POLITICAL MOBILITY

It is said that “When something is created for the generations to come, they have their forefathers who have made several efforts to make it done.” In 1981, around 16 people stood together to form the association. There were not only men who participated but also women belonging to the same community showed equal interest in forming the association. To name a few Vithu Kokre, Rama Tate from Salcette, Gunu Zore from Lakherem, Babu Zore, Babu Kale from Sattari, Janu Kolekar from Ponda, Laximan Kolekar from Vasco, Mali Kale a socially active female member. They faced many challenges in gathering people. There was no network of people earlier and no proper means of communication. People that time lived in the forest where there is no means of connecting to them. It took around three months to go door to door and inform people regarding the association. There was no office to meet venue were houses of people. The venue to conduct the next meeting for the next session was decided prior and would inform the taluka heads to gather the people of their locality. After forming one association of all Goa, they formed one

association in each taluka of Goa which would keep track of Dhangars in that area. Each taluka association keeps track of the population, male female ratio and number of houses and many more data is recorded by them.

The Association came to be known as Akhil Gomantak Dhangar Samaj Onnati Mandal, formed by Dhangars in the state of Goa. This association has link with other association formed in each Taluka. Except for Sattari taluka, rest every state in Goa has one association which is connected to the Akhil Gomantak Dhangar Samaj Onnati Mandal. Due to certain dispute Sattari taluka had formed their own committee named Sattari Seva Sangh which was registered in 1990. Hence, at present there are two committee formed in Goa. And each taluka association has its president who keeps all the record of Dhangars in that area. Years back then most of the people from Dhangar community were inhabited to the forest life. They lived in the jungle itself and used to survive on the forest produce with the animals like goats, cows, buffaloes as their survival guide and hardly few people belonging to the same community were seen living in the villages of Goa. So, to have a mutual understanding and to know about the basic rights they had formed this particular association. and thus, they started conducting meetings, convocation, conference etc. As time passed more Dhangars became aware about this association being formed and joint the committee. Number of people attending the meetings increased in large numbers. Through these gatherings, they realized the importance of attaining education. Hence, the people of Dhangar community made a decision to educate their children. They availed the benefits from the association that was formed and made sure that majority of the people reach to the maximum level of education. Several Boys and Girls perused higher level of education.

It was said that during the medieval period Dhangar community was affected the most in the society and that had to face many challenges. The drawback that they faced during that time was that they were not much socialized due to which remained undated with the daily happenings and development in the villages. The only occupation that they followed was to domesticate animals in the forest. They were confined to their forest boundaries because many times the animals would even eat or destroy the crops, flowers of people belonging to other community. In order to secured resources of the people belonging to the other community they lived an isolated life. When they moved outside the forest they had to face many challenges every day in their life, they were finding it difficult to manage or adjust themselves with the village locals. But this move was required and happened with the support of the said association.

Initially it was formed to spread awareness among the Dhangars to stop the evil practices such as dowry system which was very much prevent among the Dhangars. There were few families who would not give up on dowry practices. Groom's family would take money from the bride's family. When such incidences were brought to the notice of the committee members, they would catch the family and punish them. According to the respondent they succeeded in completely stopping the dowry practice among Goan Dhangars and later tried to stop it in Maharashtra among the Dhangars. There were many such instances when the association tried to reach out to the needy Dhangars.

Another main motive behind forming this association was to make sure each and every person belonging from this community gain equality and status among the society. They tried their absolute best to make every person understand about the association that was formed. They even paid a visit to the neighboring states of Goa like Karnataka,

Maharashtra in the presence of Dr. Bernadette Gomes to have a lookout as to how the people belonging to same community were treated there and how they were managing their lives. Whether there has been any development taken place for them? if yes, then why were we lacking behind? such questions were reflecting in the minds of the people belonging to the Dhangar

5.1.1 Upward mobility among Dhangars

The association was officially registered in 1993 with Satish, a Professor from Mapusa Anjuna, Goa was the president. Vaga Misal had earned the title of becoming vice-President. Gunu Zore from Lakherem Bicholim was the treasurer and other members also had some role or the other. Achieving a self-identity became crucial motive of the association. Earlier there have been several issues and people were not given much importance in a society for being illiterate and uncivilized. So, as stated now 90% of the people have attain their identity there have been reservation put up in different fields of education, job selection, so that everyone has an equal right in a society and everyone can live in harmony. Now we can see the multitude of people from this community excelling in several fields whether it is education, politics or possessing a high salaried job in a society. In the field of politics, there has been a people contesting for village panchayat and Municipality and also winning the elections at village and state level and so also, MLA being elected from Dhangar community.

There have been different activities that are conducted under this association in different part of Goa. Earlier people used to live in gouvais houses which were covered with palm leaves but now around 98% of Dhangars have pakka houses made up of stone and cement. This association helped people in knowing the schemes which were provided

by the Government. It helped individuals who were in need of financial support by providing loans at low interest or no interest rate at all.

Earlier they had less participation of women in social and political activity. But now in Salcette taluka there are around 8 women and 4 men heading the committee. Salcette taluka was the first taluka to form a Dhangar Committee.

- i. The tenure of the Akhil Gomantak Dhangar Samaj Onnati Mandal is of three years. After every three years new committee members are elected. Current president of Akhil Gomantak Dhangar Samaj Onnati Mandal is Babu Kavlekar. To be the member of the committee;
- ii. the individual should be born the Dhangar community.
- iii. he/she must have attained 18 years and above.
- iv. Once he/she owns the title of the committee it is a responsibility of the member to work for the benefits of the people and be there for the people as and when required.
- v. Even if a non-Dhangar is willing to be a part of the association it will be against their association rules.

5.1.2 Goa Dhangar Samaj Seva

The Goa Dhangar Samaj Seva Sangh was established on 20th December 1990 in Sattari Taluka of North Goa. It took 5 to 6 years to spread awareness among the Dhangar community prior to the establishment of the said association. This association was registered as the Goa Dhangar Samaj Seva Sangh on the advice of Mr. Kashinath Zalmi, a

social worker. They took initiative to come up with an association to make people aware of their rights and free them from the atrocities. Surviving without Government support was very difficult. The main agenda of this association was to provide justice to the Dhangar community who faced challenges at the cost of the Government and people from other community. At the time of the formation of this association, there were only 16 founding fathers who took the initiatives. Some of the brave founding fathers of the association were late Mr. Manohar, Vithu Mula Varak, Babu Kale, Babu Zore. One of the female social workers who played a role in the formation of this association was Mali Kale.

The founding fathers of this association did not have a formal education. They only knew to write their name and to sign a document. This association motivated and assisted the children from Dhangar community to perceive higher education. Through this association, the education rate has increased to a great extent.

The benefits of Goa Dhangar Samaj Seva Sangh is confined only to the citizens of Sattari taluka. It deals with issues that take place within the Sattari taluka or which are related to the members who reside within the estimated boundary. In the 90s there was no proper medium to communicate with others. The only way to spread awareness was through door-to-door campaigning done by the Dhangars.

5.1.3 Need to form the Association

Dhangars were nomads and would stay in the forest. When they came down from the hill and started settling down, some built houses on Government land and on the private property of landlords. Disputes over land right emerged an upcoming issue. Conflicts over the land between the owners and the Dhangars became a common phenomenon. Dhangars

were subjugated by the dominant group. Many of the Dhangars' goat, cattles were snatched by their rivals. Dhangars had to bear continuous domination by the dominant community in the area. The Government did not pay attention to their needs and often neglected their appeal. There were no special schemes to adhere to the needs of the Dhangar community. To deal with this problem and to provide justice to the Dhangars there was an urgent need to come up with an association. The main agenda of this association was to provide justice and maintain peace and harmony among the community members. To maintain the original identity of any community it is important to preserve its culture. culture can never be preserved in the way it was started, but it can be passed down to the next generation to keep it alive. This association of Dhangar make sure to follow the rituals, tradition and festivals to maintain unity and their distinct identity. The main agenda is This association bridged the gap between the illiterate Dhangars and civilisation.

Slowly and gradually this association informed the Dhangars by educating them on the benefits of education. Schools were set up in rural areas to provide education to these children. After the awareness many children of the Dhangars pursued higher education in various fields. Some of them also succeeded in achieving white collar jobs. The first Dhangar boy passed his 12th standard in the year 1992. As years passed education rate among the Dhangar community increased. Every year we have annual function organised by Dhangar Seva Sangh to felicitate individuals who excel in the field of profession or academics and also who are culturally active, trying to preserve and continue forward the culture of Dhangar Community. It was at this time that people realized they were listed under other backward class (OBC) category. They also assist the members to make OBC certificates to avail the benefits

When the Dhangars came to know about the benefits of falling under other backward class category, they started making their caste certificates. The Goa Dhangar Seva Sangh provided the caste certificates, which then helped the Dhangars to obtain their Other backward class (OBC) certificates from the Government to avail the benefits. At present, there are around 1000 dhangar members having membership of the association comprising male and female. Conditions required to be a member of the Goa Dhangar Seva Sangh

- i. The person should be born into the Dhangar community.
- ii. No voluntary membership is provided to a non-Dhangar in the committee
- iii. The Dhangar should be a resident of Sattari Taluka only.
- iv. Dhangar who has attained age of 18 years and above is eligible to become a member.

The meeting of the association is presided by the President of the Dhangar Seva Sangh. Tenure of each elected member in the association is five years after which elections are conducted to elect new members. Earlier association, members were elected by their ability and support from the majority members without any formal voting process. Now to ensure fairness, as more people want to contest for the position of president, vice president, secretary, joint secretary, treasurer, and joint treasurer they have started formal voting system to provide a fair chance to everyone.

5.1.4 Community development initiative by Dhangar Seva Sangh

Through this association, they have empowered their community members by encouraging them to educate themselves. This has resulted in their youth pursuing advanced careers like doctors, engineers, professors, politician, and so on. they have advocated justice by standing beside their community members in times of difficulties, including mistreatment and conflict by other community members towards the ownership of animals. They have also extended their support to find surely disadvantage individual to improve their living condition by providing housing assistance and assess Government welfare program. They can't offer much financial support because they rely on membership fees for funding. If any of the community member is unemployed, then they might ask for favor from the politician to provide employment for that child to support his family. They have also worked very hard to stop discrimination of all sorts towards their community member. In the past association have sent memorandum to the Government asking for reservation in order to secure future of their children. Due to the hard work of the association members Many of the aspirations have been achieved.

5.2 REQUEST FOR LAND ALLOCATION FOR ASSOCIATION OFFICE

The association has faced numerous challenges in acquiring land to build its office. They don't have a land of their own for that matter they even don't have an office that belongs only to the Dhangar Seva Sangh Association. Despite sending so many proposals to the Government over the years, asking for land their request still remains unrealized. The struggle has persisted over 17 years, with Bhomo Dhaktu Mote also known as B.D Mote

serving as the President before Ghulo Shelke took over. They eagerly await the opportunity to conduct the legal activities and establish their own office space.

5.3 BARRIERS IN ACHIEVING SCHEDULED TRIBE STATUS

The Dhangars who are traditionally shepherds, are demanding their inclusion in the Schedule Tribe (ST) category to get more reservation benefits. This has led to various protests and clashes between the Dhangar and the State. Currently, they get 3.5 percent reservation in Government jobs and education. But if they are included in the Scheduled Tribe list, they will get a 7 percent reservation. (Malik, 2023). The ST category list includes a group called “Dhangad” but the Dhangar community, spelled with the ‘r’, is not included. The community believes this is a typographic error and asks the Government to correct it, changing “Dhangad” to “Dhangar”. they say this mistake has led to the tribal community missing out on benefits since 1976. For decades Dhangars in Goa referred as Gaulys. Along with the other three tribal communities i.e. Gawda, Kunbi, and Velip, Dhangars have struggled to get included in the Scheduled Tribe (ST) category and yet they are denied the status. They formed GAKUVED, federation to fight for the ST status, but due to some confusion between the Dhangar and Gawali community, Dhangars were denied the status by rejecting their report sent to the central Government. Whereas the other communities were successful in achieving the Scheduled Tribe status in 2003. In Maharashtra, the Dhangar community is classified as ‘Vimukta Jati’-Nomadic Tribe (NT). They fall under other backward class category of the central level. Since they are not included in the schedule tribe category, they feel they are being deprived of the reservation benefits by the central Government. However, Dhangar community is recognized in the Scheduled Tribe lists of Bihar, Jharkhand, and Odisha under different names. In Bihar, they are listed as

"Oraon, Dhangar (Oraon)" at SI. No. 26, in Jharkhand as "Oraon, Dhangar (Oraon)" at SI. No. 25, and in Odisha as "Oraon, Dhangar, Uran" at SI. No. 53. These listings indicate the community's tribal status in these states. On the other hand, Dhangars in Maharashtra and Goa seek inclusion in the scheduled tribe category aspiring to have access to the benefits associated with it. (Malik,2023)

There exists an ongoing debate among the Dhangars whose ideas contradict. Dhangars in south Goa recognize themselves as Gauly-Dhangars whereas Dhangars in north Goa assert that they are only Dhangars and Gauly term should not be associated with the Dhangar. They defend their statement for not accepting the term Gauly. They claim that Gauly are those communities that rear cows and buffaloes and deal with milk production like the Krishna Gauly community which domesticates buffaloes and cows. Dhangars on the other hand are goat and sheep rearing and in recent years they have expanded their occupation by domesticating buffaloes and cows. One of the respondents who has participated in debates held regarding the Dhangar community, spoke on the term Gauly:

“Yes, in the past we lived in gavwal which was our traditional dwelling, but that doesn’t automatically make us ‘Gauly Dhangar’. there were also other communities, like the Kunbis, who lived in gawvals, but they were never labeled as ‘Gauly Kunbis’. So why are we labeled as gauly? While some people from South Goa accept this identity, many from North Goa and a few from South Goa reject to accept it, asserting that they are simply Dhangars.”

One more reason for rejecting their report to attain ST status was due to two reports sent to the central Government, one report was sent by Akhil Gomantak Dhangar Samaj Onnati Mandal and the other was by Goa Dhangar Seva Sangh. One community with common goals, sending two different reports from the same state indicated lack of unity among the community, despite sharing common goals and occasionally working

together for the betterment of their community. Later, they started sending a joint report from both the associations to the central Government.

As we are aware there are Gawdas kunbis, Velips and Dhangar tribes in Goa. Except Dhangar community rest all other tribes had acquired the ST Status. Their efforts to achieve the same has still been a dream to come true. They have also approached to in this matter but were once rejected. They say that their attempts are still in process. The only goal to earn the ST Status is to secure the future of their young Generation. Reservation has been an uttermost part of today's world.

In the 20th century, the Dhangar community realized the need to secure their indigenous identity and heritage, leading them to form a united association across the state. Initially, there was one association that later got split into two, yet both have common goals to achieve.

Their efforts have led to successfully tackling issues related to discrimination, and marginalization, and promoting cultural traditions for future generations through the annual function. Despite this achievement, their persistent struggle to attain Scheduled Tribe status continues. Their ongoing battle to secure a better future for their descendants reflects the Government's neglect towards them.

CHAPTER 6: SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

In the dissertation, Cultural Continuity and Livelihood Strategies among Dhangars of Lakherem-Goa, the application of Cultural Ecology theory offers a lens through which we understand the intricate relationship between the community and their environment amidst the forces of modernization and mainstream societal influence. Cultural ecology theory posits that human culture and behavior are deeply intertwined with the natural environment, shaping and being shaped by it reciprocally. In the case of Lakherem Goa, when nature worship is deeply ingrained in the cultural fabric, The application of cultural ecology theory allows for an exploration of how This traditional connection to nature is evolving in response to modernity. By examining how the community's livelihood strategies and living patterns are transforming, we can uncover the intricate dynamics between cultural traditions, environmental context, and the pressure of contemporary society. Through this study, I aim to shed light on the resilience and adaptability of Dhangar community's cultural heritage in the face of changing socio-environmental relations.

Embracing change, and being flexible can lead to growth and resilience. Change, particularly concerning indigenous communities' contact with larger society of an involves shift in culture, social and environmental dynamics. It can include alterations in tradition, language, lifestyle and relationship with the land and resources. These changes can come from various factors like colonization, globalization, environmental degradation and Governmental policies. However, it's crucial to approach these discussions with sensitivity and respect for the diverse experiences and perspective among the indigenous communities.

Impact of change within indigenous community is complex and multifaceted. While some changes can lead to positive growth, such as improvement in financial and economic conditions or increased literacy rate. Other changes may challenge their identities, cultural traditions, and heritage. It's important to acknowledge that adapting to change doesn't always guarantee upward mobility. It may improve someone's quality of life, but culturally it will lead to the downward movement of indigenous community communities. For many indigenous people change in culture, tradition, and identity has been deeply unsettling and leading to loss of heritage and connection to the ancestral root. As indigenous communities interact more with the largest society, there is a risk of losing one's cultural practices, languages, and ways of life that have defined them for generations.

In the second chapter, I have sought to discuss the socio-demographic profile of Dhangars in Lakherem in Bicholim Taluka. The Dhangar community's decision to isolate themselves reflects both practical considerations and social dynamics, their resilience on animal rearing and agriculture, necessitated access to ample grazing land and agricultural space which urban areas often lacked. Additionally, the experiences of social exclusion and this respect from urban dwellers like influenced their choice to live apart from the mainstream society.

The transformation of Lakherem from a dense Forest to a habitable settlement highlight, the resilience and adaptability of the Dhangar community. Despite facing challenges like rocky terrain, unlimited water sources, they successfully established an assistant livelihood in the area. The adaptation included not only physical transformation but also social-economic changes such as embracing education and accepting an alternative livelihood beyond traditional occupation. Traditional attire and lifestyle symbolize their

cultural identity and heritage. However, modernization and societal changes have led to a shift towards contemporary clothing and livelihood practices among the younger generation.

Historical experiences, including colonial rule and social discrimination, have shaped the communities, interaction and perception, land management issues particularly regarding communidade, land owned by the Landlord and Government property, pause, significant challenges, impacting the communities, livelihood, and well-being. Government policies such as amendment to tenancy law have sparked debates and protests among the community seeking justice and treatment. The struggle for land rights reflects inequalities and power dynamics within the region. Overall, the Dhangar community experiences highlight the complexities of preserving cultural heritage, while socio-economic transformation are taking place and advocating for their rights in the changing world. The Dangar community known for their traditional attire and lifestyle faced challenges, such as social exclusion, colonial exploitation, and land rights issues. However, challenges such as limited access to amenities in areas like Lakherem highlight, the outdoing disparity faced by the Dhangar communities, emphasizing the need for equitable development policies and resource allocation.

In chapter three I sought to discern the intricate livelihood patterns of the Dhangar community, residing in Lakherem ward. At the beginning of the chapter, I have explained the historical background of the communities, and traditional occupations specifically, *Sheli palan* (goat rearing) and agriculture. These practices have been passed down through generations and boarding is not just a means of livelihood but also a profound connection

to cultural heritage and environmental sustainability. Traditional occupations were deeply ingrained in the community identity, fostering a sense of pride and continuity.

However, the advent of globalization and shifting social and cultural conditions assured a wave of change prompting some Dhangars to take up new economic opportunities. This transition away from traditional occupation arose from various factors, including access to pasture land, declining profitability, increase in job opportunities which provided high income. Education also shapes occupational choices and socioeconomic mobility within the community. Some of the Dhangars are trying to attain mobility by changing their surnames. They are adapting to surnames of the mainstream Hindu society. Kokre are changing to Konkre, Kolekars are changing to Kaulekar. Even those who stay in Mapusa are switching to names like Mapsekar. They do this because they are embarrassed of their indigeneous identity. Education emerges as a transformative force, empowering individual to pursue various career options beyond the traditional occupation and therefore enhancing their financial and social standing in society. The changing dynamics forced the people to follow economic activity.

The chapter also provides insight into the current economic activities of the Dhangar community, showcasing a diverse Choices pursued by the people ranging from animal husbandry to employment in sectors like Government, offices, and private companies. While some individuals continue to engage in traditional occupation, many have diversified their sources of income, for a quality standard of living. Case studies of individuals within the community offers the perspective on the dynamics of occupational transition with some upholding traditional practices. Despite the challenges, others, who chose driving and employment as a way to gain economic growth and embraced the change

for better future of the family. Among this, there are some people concerned about the declining traditional occupation and hopes that the Government should come up with schemes which will be only applicable to the Dhangar community so that without any problem, the younger generation can engage in starting up large businesses, which will reflect the traditional occupation. This shows the complexities between traditional and modernity, showcasing some concern for the preservation of the traditional occupation

In chapter four I sought to examine the life cycle rituals and cultural practices of the Dhangar community, focusing on birth marriage, and those ceremonies as well as the continuity of their religious festivals. the significance of life cycle ritual is highlighted by applying Arnold van Gennep's concept of "Rites of Passage" to undergo as they transition between social statuses. Birth rituals are described as emphasizing purification, rituals, and celebrations such as the naming ceremony and the *Panchvi* celebration on the fifth day. Marriage rituals are detailed showing traditional engagement ceremonies. The haldi ceremony, the practice of endogamy within the community remarriage and the significance of ornaments won by married women are also discussed reflecting the cultural norms and beliefs surrounding marital unions. The final rites for the deceased are mentioned, encompassing, funeral, rituals, burial practices, and morning customs, observed by the Dhangar community. The chapter highlights the importance of these rituals in honoring the departed soul.

Festival is the most important aspect of any relationship. celebration of festivals at colors to one's life. The Dhangar community cherishes its cultural heritage through various religious festivals and rituals, which play a significant role in preserving their identity festivals like Bhandaryachi Punau, Holi, Gudi Padwa, Ganesh Chaturthi, Dussehra, and

Pandharicho Pava are deeply rooted in the tradition, serving as occasions for communal bonding, storytelling and passing down ancestral knowledge.

Each festival has its unique customs, such as preparing special dishes like ghatlyo for Bhandaryachi Punau or hoisting Gudi on Gudi Padwa, Dussehra is celebrated over three days which involves fasting, toran bandne and Mand Puja, where God and ancestors are worshipped. Dhangars believe in the afterlife and ancestors' worship, their ancestors in the form of totems. Pandharicho Pava is significantly observed by those who make vows to God.

However, the influence of mainstream society is increasingly shaping the cultural aspects of the community. Interaction with other communities has led to the adoption of festivals like Ganesh Chaturthi and changes in traditional practices reflect this influence. While efforts are made to preserve customs, such as continuing traditional dances like Chapai Nritya and Fugdi, there exists a strong shift away from wearing traditional clothing due to shyness or external pressure. The younger generation especially opts to wear modern clothes during the time of festivals, while Dhangar wears traditional clothes except few people.

Despite these changes, there remains a strong desire within the community to uphold their cultural heritage. Festivals serve as a reminder of their roots and provide a platform for personal exchange. Some challenges lie in balancing preservation with adaptation to evolving societal norms. Finding a balance between preserving cultural practices and adapting to changing times to attain mobility is essential for the community's growth.

In chapter five, I have sought to examine the extent to which Dhangars in Goa have attained political mobilization and how difficult the path has been. The formation of the Akhil Gomantak Dhangar Samaj Onnati Mandal and Goa Dhangar Samaj Seva Sangh illustrates a remarkable journey towards empowerment and community development. Initially, it was established to address various challenges faced by the Dhangar community in Goa, these associations have played a pivotal role in advocating for justice, promoting education, and preserving cultural identity. The associations have spearheaded initiatives to raise awareness among the Dhangar community members, leading to a significant increase in education levels and career opportunities. Through these efforts, many individuals from the community have excelled in various fields, including education, politics, and professional careers. Furthermore, the associations have worked tirelessly to eradicate social evils like the dowry system and to promote gender equality, resulting in increased participation of women in social and political activities.

However, despite these achievements, the Dhangar community continues to face challenges, particularly regarding tribal status. The ongoing struggle to attain scheduled tribe status reflects the persistent neglect and discrimination faced by the community. Despite their efforts, the Government's response has been inadequate, leaving the communities' aspirations unfulfilled.

The mobility of the Dhangar community towards empowerment and social upliftment highlights the importance of political mobilization. By organizing themselves and advocating for their rights, they have made significant strides in improving the social and economic conditions. However, the challenges they continue to face underscore the need for continued efforts.

critical need for ongoing political mobilization and collective action to address systematic inequalities and secure a better future for future generations.

In conclusion, the Dhangar community in Lakherem-Goa offers profound insights into the dynamics between culture, environment and modernisation. The application of the Cultural Ecology theory allows us to understand how the traditional connection to nature is evolving amidst the forces of contemporary society. As the Dhangar community navigate through socio- environmental change, it becomes evident that embracing change and flexibility are essential for resilience and growth. However, this transition is not without its challenges. While some changes may lead to positive outcomes, such as economic growth and improved living standards, others may pose threats to cultural heritage and identity.

The impact of change within indigenous communities is complex and multifaceted. Adaptation to modernity may enhance individual livelihood, it also risks eroding cultural traditions and ancestral connections. The Dhangar community's experience highlights the delicate balance between preserving cultural heritage and embracing socio-economic transformations.

Furthermore, the socio-demographic profile of the Dhangar community reveals the interplay between practical considerations, social dynamics, and historical experiences. The transformation of Lakherem from a dense forest to a habitable settlement showcases the community's resilience and adaptability in the face of challenges.

Moreover, the livelihood patterns, life cycle ritual, and cultural practises of the Dhangar community reflect the ongoing negotiation between tradition and modernity.

While some individuals uphold traditional occupations and customs, others seek economic opportunities and social mobility through alter means.

The political mobilization of the Dhangar community underscore, the importance of collective action in addressing systematic inequalities and advocating for their rights. It is also interesting to note that they claim themselves to be Kshatriyas but seeking for the scheduled tribe, status and are being classified under the Other Backward Class category. Despite facing challenges such as discrimination and neglect, the community has moved towards empowerment showing the significance of ongoing mobilization for a better future.

In essence, the study of the Dhangar community in Lakherem- Goa offers valuable insights into the complexities of cultural preservation, Socio– economic transformation, and the pursuit of equitable development in a rapidly changing world

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