



Bishnoi Community in Haryana

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Abstrac:

The emergence of Bishnoi sect in Haryana is an important social phenomenon, the study of which would help to know the process of social change in the sect and also to decide its line of progress. Since, no good and desired material is available in English, nor any objective study has been conducted on this theme. Even then in this an attempt has been made to highlight some of the important aspects of Bishnoi community have been explored in a very vivid manner.

Paper

The Bishnoi community had already celebrated Quincentenary of its existence in 1985, but without a whisper. No media

coverage, no big flashy advertisements in the newspapers, no big processions and programmes. It had been utterly a quiet affair in a sharp contrast to the Tercentenary celebrations of the birth of 'Khalsa' which made bang news throughout the world and even the Government of India had to shell out as large a sum as a hundred crores rupees by way of its contribution in making the Khalsa Celebrations a grand success. The reason is not far behind to search.

The Bishnoi

community has failed to attract attention just because it is little known both within and without the country. Surprisingly, even Lt.



Col. James Tod, the celebrated author of the *Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan*: could not spot them, though he extensively loafed about in the kholls and sand dunes of the Indian Desert; the Bishnoi homeland.

However, the reason for their relative anonymity is not hard to seek. This community is, basically, too much self-centred and egoistic, with little inclination to promote higher secular education. Even during the last 50 years, they have not thought of spreading the globally acceptable message of Guru Jambheswar to the English-speaking people of India and abroad, nor could they attract the attention of the English and European scholars, who have otherwise done remarkable researches on various Indian

faiths and community. The world has witnessed during the last century an unimaginable all-round development in science and technology and its commercial application has created wonders, which has made life on the earth easy. The revolution in the means of transport and communication has shrunk the world into a global village. In the fast developing civilization of modern times, there has been an increase in materialistic thinking and action. This endless race of modernization has changed our attitude and life style. Now religion is hardly regarded as a beacon light to guide us on a path of right thinking and right actions. Bishnoism is not an exception in today's fast changing world. It is interesting to note that there are some changes in the fundamental verse listing the

twenty-nine tenets also. In Hisar District Gazetteer 1915, the twenty-nine commandments or precepts given by Jam bhoji for the guidance of his followers are as follows—

Tis din sutak-panch
roz ratwanti nari

Sera karo shnan-sil-
santokh-such Pyari

Pani-bani-idheni —
itna liyyo chhan.

Daya-dharam hirde
dharo-garu batai jan

Chori- nindya- Jhuth-
barjya bad na kariyo koe

AmaI-tamaku-bhang-
lil dur hi tyago

Mad-mas se dekhe dur
hi bhago

Amar rakhao that-
bail tani na baho

Amashya barat-runkh
lilo na ghao

Horn jap samadh
puja-bas baikunthi pao

Untis dharrn ki akhri
garu batain soe

Pahul deo par
charyajisko nam bishnoi
hoe.¹

But now Bishnois
made a little confusion in reciting
the verse. The new version is as
given below—

Tis-din-sutak, Panch
Rituwanti nyaro,

Sero karo sanan, sheel
santosh shuchi pyaro.

Trikal sandhya karo,
sanjh arti gun gavo,

Horn hit chit preet su
hoy, bas baikunthe pavo.

Pani bani indhai dudh,
itna lije chhan,

Chhima daya hirdye
dharo, Guru Batao jan.

Chori nindya jhoot
varjiyo, vad na karno koi,



Umavas vrat rakhno,
bhajan Vishnu bataVO joi.

Jiv daya palni, runkh
lilo nahin ghave,

Ajar jare jivat mare,
ye vas haiku nthe pave.

Kare rasoi hath sun,
aan ko pallo na lave,

Amar rakhave that,
bail badhiva na karave.

Arnal tamakhu bhang
mans Madhya sun, doorhi
bhage,

Lil na lave ang, dekhte
door hi tyage. ²

Again there is
confusion in new version also. The
seventh tenet i.e. “*teen kal sandya
karo*” appears “*Do kal saiidya
karo*” at some places.

In the Hissar District
Gazetteer 1915, Mr. Fagan
observes that even in the 19th
century, some of these precepts
were not being followed strictly.

Now in the ever-
changing world, it is not only
difficult but also impossible to
follow all precepts strictly but
some rules are followed without
exception. Segregation of women
for 20 days after childbirth,
compassion towards animals, and
to avoid castration of bulls etc. are
some of them.

To partake of only that
food which was cooked by
someone initiated into the fold
and segregation of women during
five (days of menstrual discharge
are some rules which have now
become almost a dead letter.

There are some
restrictions on interaction
between certain relations. For
examples, a Bishnoi woman does
not have any direct conversation
with her father-in-law and
husband’s elder brother. She is
not supposed to talk to them or sit

in their presence. Similar avoidance relationship exists between mother-in-law and son-in-law. But these types of taboos are losing their colour, especially in urban areas where such avoidance is seen nowhere.

Nuclear families are on increase and status of women in the society is also improving. The first Bishnoi woman (Smt. Jasma Devi) got elected to the Haryana Assembly Elections in 1987 from Adampur constituency.

The attitude of the Bishnoi community towards most developmental programmes is positive. The literacy rate is fast increasing. They are very particular to make full use of medical facilities available. Generally, people do not want more children and adopt small family norms.

The Bishnois are known for their love of animal life with deep religious zeal, they rigidly oppose and fight poachers, even risking their own lives. Such teachings are instituted from childhood, to create strong sentiments against harming any animal. Consequently, their villages are swarming with (leer, black bucks and *neel gaf*. The Bishnois are the unpaid wardens of wildlife in Haryana.

Food habits and dressing of Bishnois are changing very fast. Three meals are taken in urban areas but in rural areas still two meals are taken during the day. Traditional food preparations are generally not preferred by the younger generation. Earlier, the people refrained from taking alcoholic drinks and smoking, as the sect prohibits it. But Bishnoi men



have started drinking and smoking. The drunken brawls, howling and abusing is now a common village scene in the evening, and on this account litigation has increased manifold, particularly in rural belts.

The 29 articles of faith were crafted to bring about a symbiosis of science and religion, to create a consciousness that there was an essential unity among all creations. But consequent upon the narrow interpretation of articles of faith, the Bishnois chose to wrap themselves in cocoon and be an island into themselves.

Therefore, it is a pressing need for breaking these shock able taboos and to interpret the articles in an objective and scientific manner to revive their true spirit for the welfare of mankind.

REFERENCES

1. Revised Settlement Report of Sirsa District, 1872-79, p. 137 *Amar Jyoti*, December 2002, Bishnoi Mandir, Hisar.
2. Ibid, Dec. 2002
3. *Amar Jyoti*, October, 2002, Bishnoi Mandir, Hisar