



## Maintenance and Shift among Tribal Migrants in Nandurbar

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### Abstract

This paper concerns the sociolinguistic study of language use in seven domains and tries to establish a correlation between multilingualism and social change among the internally displaced populations in the Narmada Valley. The collaborators are the displaced tribals who were displaced from Satpura mountain range to different talukas of Nandurbar district (Maharashtra) India by creating ten new villages. The overall outcome of the study suggests that the resettled villages are in the transitional stage where social change and linguistic change are going on shoulder to shoulder. The research site is at the border areas of three Indian states - Maharashtra, Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh (MP).

**Keywords:** Domains of Language Use, Language Maintenance and Shift, Bhili, Pawri, Migration and Narmada Valley.

### 1. The Background:

The paper makes a sociolinguistic investigation of language practices in different domains among the internally displaced populations in the Narmada Valley. The collaborators are the migrated tribals who were evacuated from Satpura mountain range and resettled in different talukas of Nandurbar district (Maharashtra), India by creating ten new villages. The research site is at the border areas of three Indian states - Maharashtra, Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh (MP). Nandurbar district is at the border of these three Indian states (see Figure - 1 below). It is basically a tribal (Adivasi) district located in the north-western side of Maharashtra (India). The district headquarter is Nandurbar town, located at 21°22'N 74°15'E 21 37°N 74.25°E. It is a mountainous region, associated with one of the well-known movements of India the 'Narmada Bachao Andolan' led by the Indian social activists. The languages spoken in this area are Pawri, Bhili, Ahirani, Tapti Adivasi, Marathi, Hindi and Gujarati.

Satpura Mountain Range  
(Original / Old Villages)



Taloda, Shahada and Akkalkuwa Taluka  
(Resettled / New Villages)

\*This paper is based on the author's forthcoming PhD thesis entitled "Sociolinguistic Study of Language Practices among Internally Displaced Populations in the Narmada Valley".

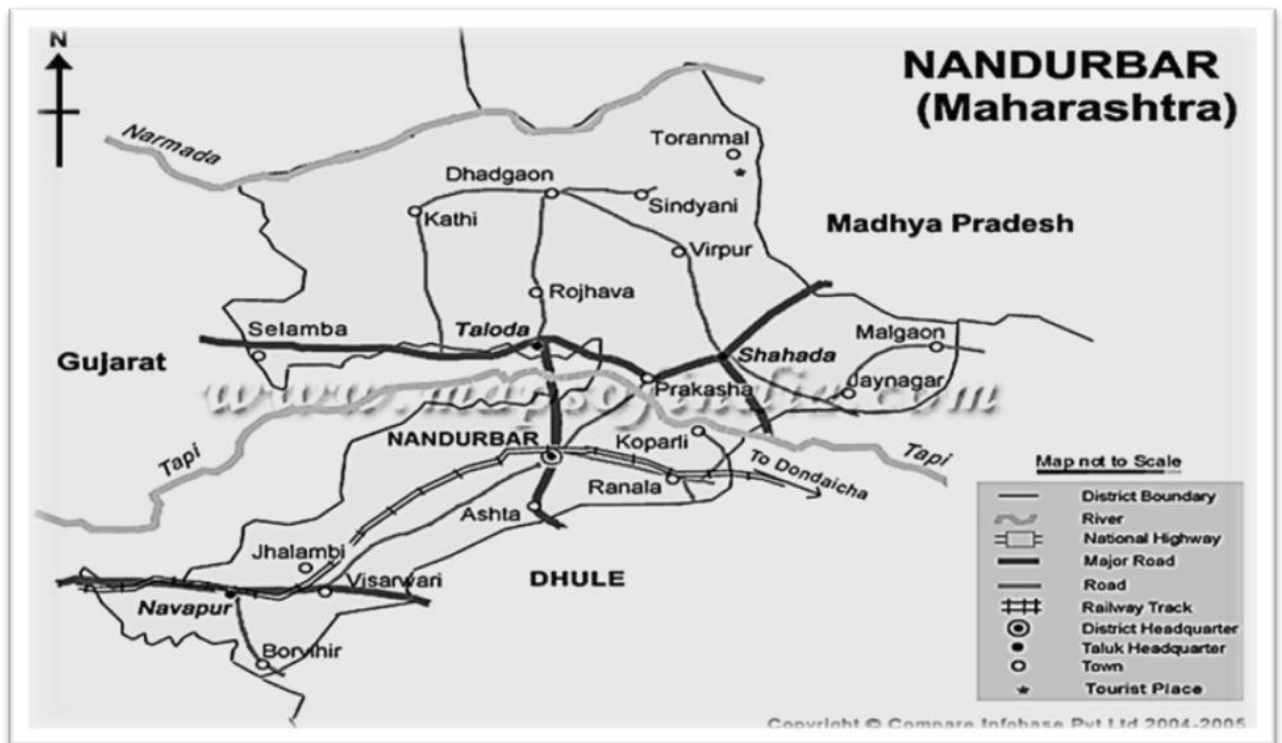


Figure 1: Research sites in Taloda taluka, Nandurbar district (Maharashtra) India

The resettled villages are in Taloda, Shahada and Akkalkuwa talukas of Nandurbar district of Maharashtra state of India. Each resettled village has a 'resettlement number'. The villages and their resettlement numbers are: Narmadanagar (Resettlement Number- 1), Sardarnagar (Resettlement Number- 2), Rewanagar (Resettlement Number- 3), Rozwa (Resettlement Number- 4), Devmogara (Resettlement Number- 5), Gopalpur (Resettlement Number- 6), Taravad (Resettlement Number- 7), Vadchil (Resettlement Number- 8), Wadi (Resettlement Number- 9) and Chikhali (Resettlement Number- 10). Out of the ten resettled villages, six villages are in Taloda, three villages are in Shahada and one in Akkalkuwa taluka of the district.

## 2. The Tribals - Bhils and Pawras:

The tribals belong to the following two communities: a) The Bhils - Speaking Bhili language or its dialects and b) The Pawras - Speaking Pawri language. The Pawras speak Pawri language as their mother tongue whereas the Bhils speak different dialects of Bhili language. The dialect spoken by the Bhils of Narmadanagar village (Taloda, Nandurbar district) is called 'Noiri' whereas the dialect spoken by the Bhils of Rozwa village (Taloda, Nandurbar district) is called 'Bhilodi'. Noiri, Dehwali, Doguwali, Dhanka, Mathwari, Parka and Bhilodi are some of the prominent dialects spoken by the Bhils in this area. This paper however has used 'Bhili' as a cover term for all these dialects. There is a need to work on the linguistic as well as sociolinguistic descriptions of these prominent dialects as the status of these dialects explores the socio-cultural position of the Bhils of the different dialectal groups. Some of the examples of peoples' common perception towards these dialects are: Mathwari speakers are those Bhils who reside at the upper part of the mountain, Dehwali speakers are those who reside at the plain area, etc.

Mohanty et al (2013) have done good amount of literature analysis to examine the past interrelation between the two communities (Bhil & Pawra). They have put their views as “our limited review of available literature on the interrelation between Bhils and Pawras leads us to confirm that, historically, the Pawras were unrelated to the larger Bhil group.” Dance, songs and music are integral parts of the life of both the communities. ‘*Indal*’ is the most popular festival among the Bhils and the Pawras residing at the border areas of Maharashtra, Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh. It is a festival which involves each and every member of the villages of all the age groups and both the sexes.

### **2.1 The Bhois - Ahirani Speakers:**

Besides the Bhils and the Pawras another community lives in the resettled villages with these two communities called ‘Bhoi’. They have a good relation with the Bhils as well as the Pawras as they all were in contact from the original villages itself. They are basically small shopkeepers who used to do the same job in the original villages also. They speak ‘Ahirani’, a language close to Marathi. Their population is negligible, about two to five families in one resettled village. There are five homes of Bhoi in Narmadanagar village (Resettlement Number- 1), two homes in Rewanagar village (Resettlement Number- 3) and two homes also in Rozwa village (Resettlement Number- 4).

### **3. The Objectives of the Study:**

The major objective of this paper is to look into the phenomena of language maintenance and language shift in language practices among the resettled population through studying: 1) The impact of resettlement on the language use in the home domain. 2) The impact of resettlement on the language use in the public domains. 3) The attitude of the individuals in the resettled areas towards: a) the people in partly-submerged villages and b) others in the resettled villages. 4) The extent of difficulties involved in understanding Bhili / Pawri for the Pawras / Bhils respectively. 5) The level of difficulties involved when the Pawras / Bhils learn Bhili / Pawri respectively.

### **4. The Methodology:**

This study has used a sociolinguistic questionnaire as a principal instrument for data collection where responses to the questionnaire are elicited through direct interaction with informants. It overall comprises interactions in seven private or public domains / interlocutors: home, neighbourhood, market-place, Sarpanch<sup>1</sup> / Police Patil<sup>2</sup>, activists, government officials and the unknown persons. The informants are taken from the three villages (Narmadanagar, Rewanagar and Rozwa village), Senior College, Taloda (where students of Pawra and Bhil communities study) and Adivasi Boys Hostel, Taloda (where students of both the communities stay). The villages Narmadanagar, Rewanagar and Rozwa are in Taloda taluka of Nandurbar district of Maharashtra state of India. The three villages are taken for data collection keeping in mind one village from Pawra community (Rewanagar village), one from Bhil community (Narmadanagar village) and a mixed village (Rozwa village) where the people of both the communities live together. The data from the uneducated (illiterate) informants are mostly collected from the villages whereas the data from the educated informants are collected from the college and the hostel.

#### **4.1 The Sample Design:**

A judgment sample is used for this study. The sample is stratified according to age, sex, education and tribe in the following manner: three age groups (15 years to 25 years, 26 years to 44 years and 45 years and above), three levels of education (uneducated / illiterate, under matriculation and matriculation and above), both sexes (male and female) and two tribal communities (Bhil and Pawra).

## 5. The Observations:

### 5.1 The Language Use - Maintenance and Shift:

As stated, the sociolinguistic examination of the language practices among the internally displaced populations in the Narmada valley has been done through the seven domains (home, neighbourhood, market-place, Sarpanch / Police Patil, activists, government officials and the unknown persons). Out of these domains some are examined completely unaffected from the languages of the outside the tribal world (non-tribal languages: Marathi<sup>3</sup> and Hindi<sup>4</sup>). This has been described as language maintenance in Sociolinguistics. But there are some domains where Marathi and Hindi have made / been making their room (in the process of language shift). On the basis of these two sociolinguistic phenomena, the domains can be grouped into two types: a) Those domains which are not affected by the languages of the outside of the tribal world (Marathi / Hindi) and b) Those domains where Marathi / Hindi have entered in language use.

1 and 2: Sarpanch / Police Patil / Pradhan are the heads of the Indian villages elected (or selected) generally for five years by the villagers of a village. They are not outsiders but belong to the same village. 3. Marathi is the first official language of the government of Maharashtra (India). 4. Hindi is the first official language of the government of India.

The Age Groups of the respondents	The communities (Bhil/Pawra)	Bhili and Marathi	Marathi and Hindi	Bhili, Marathi and Hindi	Marathi	Pawri and Marathi	Bhili	Pawri	Not replied / Blanks
Age Group - 1 (15-25)	Bhil	28.57	4.76	4.76	61.90	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
	Pawra	0.00	0.00	0.00	59.09	36.36	0.00	4.54	0.00
Age Group - 2 (26-44)	Bhil	17.66	0.00	17.66	17.66	15.66	16.66	0	14.66
	Pawra	0.00	0.00	0.00	28.57	14.28	0.00	42.85	14.28
Age Group - 3 (45 and above)	Bhil	10.00	20.00	0.00	10.00	0.00	30.00	0.00	30.00
	Pawra	0.00	0.00	0.00	38.46	23.07	0.00	38.46	0.00

Table 1: The multilingual status of the market-place (scores in percentage).

Those domains where Marathi and Hindi have not entered (ie. not in use) include home, neighbourhood and Sarpanch / Police Patil. These domains are completely dominated by their mother tongue(s) (Bhili / Pawri) and are thus free from non-tribal languages (Marathi and Hindi). The language use in these domains is still more or less same as used to be in their original villages. The impact of resettlement on the language use in the home domain and some of the public domains (neighbours and Sarpanch / Police Patil) is almost negligible. However this is not true for Rozwa village where some school and college going students claim to speak Marathi in their homes. The market-place is a multilingual domain where Marathi, Ahirani, Pawri, Bhili and even Hindi languages are spoken. Kumar et al (2014)

study the multilingual environment of this particular domain and have explored the triangular relation between the reported language use, actual language use and the attitudes of the speakers towards these languages. However the qualitative study of this domain investigates that the most common language spoken in this domain is the mixture of Pawri, some dialects of Bhili (Dhanka and Mathwari) and Ahirani. This particular variety of language is called '*Adivasi Bhasa*' by the local villagers. The other interlocutors (from public domain) to whom Marathi and Hindi are spoken are activists, government officials and the unknown persons. Interaction with these speakers of the public domain is in the way of language shift as the impact of resettlement on the language use with these interlocutors of the public domain can be observed.

### *5.2 The Attitude and Linguistic Behavior:*

There are diverse responses obtained for the attitude of the individuals in the resettled areas towards the people in the partly-submerged villages and others in the resettled villages. The educated and young people adore the developed and modern life of the new villages and thus keep sympathy toward their own in the original villages whereas the uneducated and old people show their intimacy with their original villages and consider them superior. The attitude of the individuals in the resettled areas towards the others has association with their relation with those people and also how they evaluate themselves in relation to them. Out of the three resettled villages from which data were taken, the people of Narmadanagar village are found not much happy with their development whereas the people of Rewanagar village have mixed opinion. But the people of Rozwa village are found relatively satisfied with their development. These mixed mind-sets are reflected in their language use too and can be correlated with the selection of language(s) for the different domains. The use of Marathi and Hindi are found relatively the highest in Rozwa village in the public domains (also in few homes) whereas the lowest in Narmadanagar village. The status of Rewanagar village in this case falls in between where Marathi and Hindi are used more than Narmadanagar village but less than Rozwa village in the public domains.

There are precise replies obtained for the questions of the extent of difficulties involved in understanding and learning Bhili / Pawri for the Pawras / Bhils respectively. The Pawras have socially high position than the Bhils and the same is true for their language too. Pawri is treated as a standard language and used more commonly in the public domains than Bhili. It is more prevalent in all the public domains in compare to Bhili in the entire three villages though the degree of use varies from village to village. In Rozwa village (where people of both the communities live together), Pawri is spoken by the entire population (Bhil as well as Pawra) in the public domains. 'Bhilodi' (a dialect of Bhili language) is spoken by the Bhils of this village only in their homes and not in any of the public domains. Such sociolinguistic atmosphere motivates and energises the understanding and learning process of Pawri. Thus people feel easy to understand and learn Pawri which is relatively not true for Bhili.

## **6. Analysis and Conclusion:**

The linguistic impulse of a speaker is generally emotional or instrumental under the influence of such motivations. Emotional motivation is the result out of intimate relations whereas instrumental motivation is the result out of instrumental goals. Hohenthal (2003) states that the 'instrumental features' of a language are one of the prime motives for language shift. The author puts the position of English in India as "English, however, is still clearly a language of ideas, not of emotions". (Hohenthal 2003: ) The wide shift of Indian speakers towards English in number of domains is its capability to support in fulfilling the instrumental needs

of the speakers (like helps in getting jobs, improves social position, energies personal growth etc.) But in spite of being popular in number of domains, it has failed in making its place in the home domain as a home always demands intimate and informal environment.

Domains like home, neighborhood, Sarpanch / Police Patil etc. have association with the tribals' emotion and intimacy which entail their mother tongues for communication. This emotional and intimate touch of a mother tongue prevents shift in those domains having informal relation and contact. On the other hand, to fulfill the instrumental goals (like education, jobs, social position, personal growth etc.) the speakers shift to those languages having instrumental potentials (like English in global scenario). The young tribals find Marathi, Ahirani, Hindi and even sometimes Pawri beneficial as these languages link them to educated and developed life. The old age group comparatively doesn't have instrumental desires which keep them away from the languages of outside the tribal world and thus forms negative impact on their learning progression. Mamun et al (2012) have found connection between the three elements: attitude to language, linguistic behavior and survival / development of a language. Linguistic behavior can be positive, negative, instrumental or integrative. They have used the term 'instrumental motivation' for the motivation out of the advantageous value of a language. The attitude towards a language is the mother of linguistic behavior, and survival / development of the language is their fall outs. Hence, instrumental motivation is one of the major reasons for language shift which has straight relation with the age group of an individual.

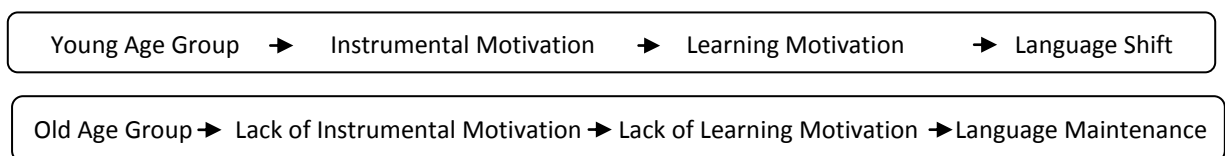


Figure 2: The Age Groups, Language Maintenance and Language Shift

The overall findings suggest that the resettled villages are in the transitional stage where change is in progress. Social change and linguistic change are going on side by side. No doubt this change is brought about and energised by the youths especially by the male<sup>5</sup> youths. The schools, colleges, hospitals, roads, TV, radio, activists and social workers enable frequent contact and communication at various levels, resulting the strengthen of this change in this direction. The Pawras are seen more motivated by this change than the Bhils but they are also not untouched by this change. The strength of students in schools, colleges, hostels etc. indicate the positive result of it. Whether this change in the tribals (Adivasis) is for the good or bad is another issue which needs further explanation. The scholars put different opinions on this issue as this kind of migration is after all categorised under forced migration.

5. In Indian culture, especially in rural India and in tribal culture too, females have not socially as freedom as males which builds negative impact on their instrumental motivation and finally on their linguistic proficiency too.

## COLOPHON

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