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## **Language Choices among the IDPs in Nandurbar**

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### **Abstract**

The paper concerns the sociolinguistic analysis of the linguistic preference in seven domains and tries to form a correlation between multilingualism and social change among the IDPs in the Narmada Valley. The subjects are the displaced tribals who were displaced from Satpura mountain range to different talukas of Nandurbar district (Maharashtra) India by creating new villages. The overall result of the study shows that the resettled villages are in the intermediary phase where social as well as linguistic changes are in progress. 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, Adivasi Bhasha, Migration and Narmada Valley

### **1. Introduction**

This study makes the sociolinguistic analysis of the language choices 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 research site is at the border areas of three Indian states - Maharashtra, Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh (MP). Nandurbar district is on the boundary of these three states (See figure - 1 below). The district headquarter is Nandurbar town, located at 21°22'N 74°15'E 21 37°N 74.25°E. It is mainly a hilly region. This district is associated with one of the well-known movements of India the '*Narmada Bachao Andolan*' led by the Indian social activists. It is basically a tribal (*Adivasi*) district located in the north-western side of Maharashtra (India).

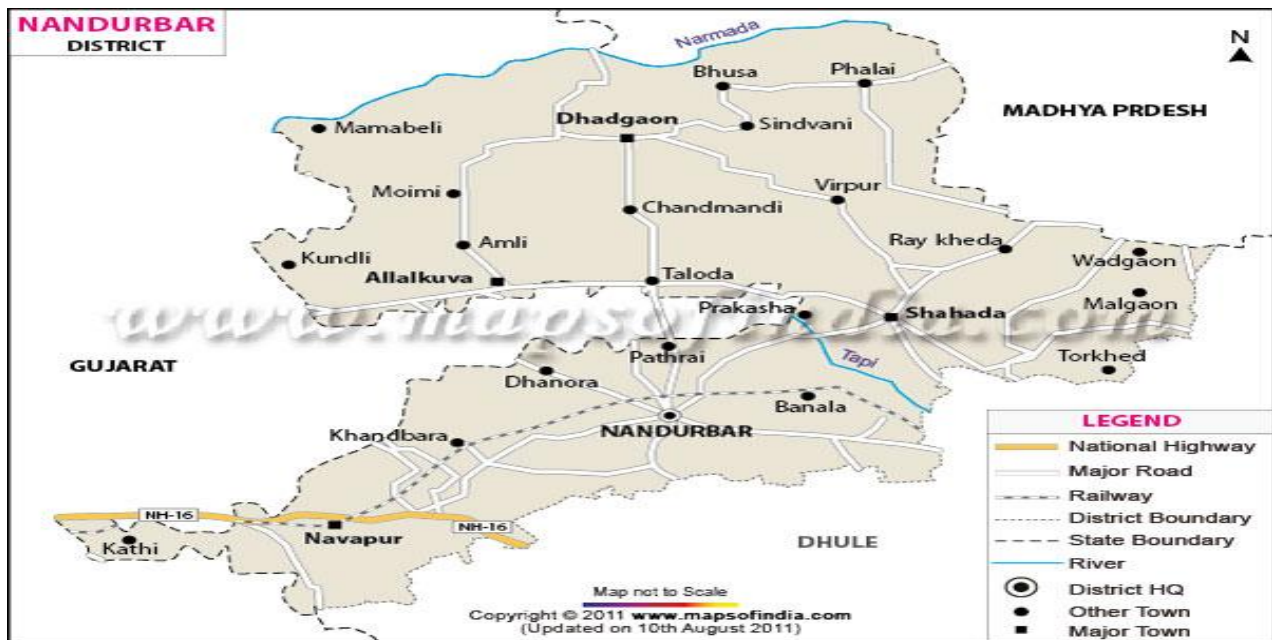
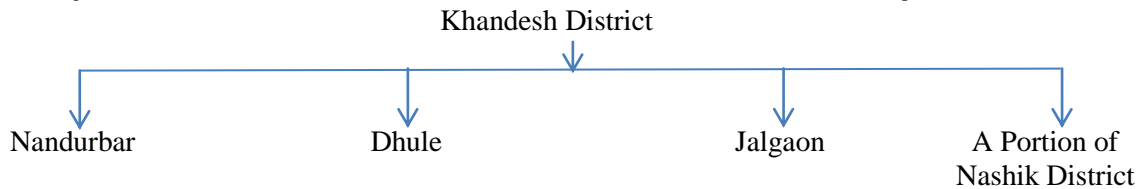


Figure 1: Research site in Taloda taluka, Nandurbar district (Maharashtra), India (Source: www.mapsofindia.com)



The new villages are in Taloda, Shahada and Akkalkuwa talukas of Nandurbar district of Maharashtra state of India. Out of these ten resettled villages, six villages are in Taloda, three villages are in Shahada and one in Akkalkuwa taluka of the district. 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).

The tribals belong to the following two communities: a) Bhil - Speaking Bhili language or its dialects and b) Pawra - Speaking Pawri language. The Pawras speak Pawri language as their mother tongue whereas the Bhils speak the different dialects of Bhili language. Noiri, Dehwali, Doguwali, Dhanka, Mathwari, Parka and Bhilodi are some of the prominent dialects spoken by the Bhils in this area. This study however has used 'Bhili' as a cover term for all these dialects. There is a need to work on the linguistic description of these prominent dialects. 'Noiri' (a dialect of Bhili) is spoken by the Bhils of Narmadanagar village (Taloda, Nandurbar district) whereas 'Bhilodi' is spoken by the Bhils of Rozwa village (Taloda, Nandurbar district). 'Indal' is the most popular festival among the Pawras (celebrated by the Bhils also) 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. Dance, songs and music are integral parts of all their festivals and so Indal too. Happiness on the face of the villagers can be seen easily by just articulating the word 'Indal'. Besides the Bhils and 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, two homes in Rewanagar and two homes also in Rozwa village.

The research questions of the study include interactions in seven private or public domains / interlocutors: home, neighbourhood, market-place, Sarpanch / Police patil, activists, government officials and unknown persons. This study is mainly quantitative where mostly interactive approach has been applied through the sociolinguistic questionnaire as a principal instrument. The informants were 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 were taken for the 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 were mostly collected from the villages whereas the data from the educated informants were collected from the college and the hostel.

Resettled Villages	Resettlement No.	Years of Resettlement	Languages / Dialects Spoken in the Home Domain as a Mother Tongue
Narmadanagar	1	1990-91	Noiri and Ahirani
Rewanagar	3	1992-94	Pawri, Ahirani and Tapti-Adivasi
Rozwa	4	1994-95	Pawri, Bhilodi and Ahirani

Table 1: Languages / dialects spoken in the home domain in the three resettled villages.

#### The Objectives of the Study:

- 1) To assess the impact of resettlement on the language choice in the home domain.
- 2) To assess the impact of resettlement on the language choice in the public domains.
- 3) The attitude of the individual in the resettled area towards -
  - a) People in partly-submerged villages
  - b) Others in the resettled villages

To test the hypotheses, the sample has been categorised according to the tribal / ethnic identity, age, gender and the levels of education in the following manner:

1. Tribal Groups - 2 Groups of Tribes
  - a) Tribal Group - 1 : Bhil
  - b) Tribal Group - 2 : Pawra
2. Age - 3 Groups of Age
  - a) Age Group - 1 : 15 years to 25 years
  - b) Age Group - 2 : 26 years to 44 years
  - c) Age Group - 3 : 45 years and above
3. Gender - 2 Groups of Gender
  - a) Gender Group - 1 : Male
  - b) Gender Group - 2 : Female
4. Education - 3 Groups of Education
  - a) Education Group - 1 : Uneducated (illiterate)
  - b) Education Group - 2 : Under Matriculation (10th)
  - c) Education Group - 3 : Matriculation (10th) and above

The sociolinguistic study of the language practices among the internally displaced populations in the Narmada valley has been done through the sociolinguistic examination of seven domains / interlocutors. Out of these domains / interlocutors, some are found entirely free from the languages of the outside the tribal world (non-tribal languages). This has been described as

‘language maintenance’. But there are some domains / interlocutors where these languages have made / making their room (in the process of language shift). Rozwa is a village where some students speak Marathi in their homes also. Those domains / interlocutors where Marathi / Hindi are completely missing include home, neighbourhood and Sarpanch / Police patil. These domains / interlocutors are fully dominated by their mother tongue (Bhili and Pawri) and are thus free from Marathi / 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 / interlocutors (neighbourhood and Sarpanch / Police patil) is almost zero or negligible. However this is not true for Rozwa village where some school and college going students claim to speak Marathi in their homes. Pawri and Marathi are more common in the public domains in this particular village. Market-place is a multilingual domain where Marathi, Pawri, Ahirani, Bhili, Marwari and even Hindi are spoken. However the qualitative study of this domain (market-place) 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 Bhasha*’ by the local villagers. The other domains / interlocutors where Marathi / Hindi have entered or entering are activists, government officials and unknown persons. These domains / interlocutors are in the way of language shift as the impact of resettlement on the language use in these domains / with these interlocutors (of the public domain) can be seen.

The results of this study state that the new villages are in a state of shift where change is in progress. This change is brought about and energised by the youths (especially by the male youths). Social as well as linguistic changes are going on side by side. The social workers enable regular contact and communication at various levels, resulting in strengthening the direction of the change in this direction. The Pawras are seen more encouraged by this change than the Bhils but the latter are also not untouched by this change. Whether this change in the tribals is for the good or bad is another question.

This paper is based on the author’s PhD thesis entitled “Sociolinguistic Study of Language Practices among Internally Displaced Populations in the Narmada Valley” submitted to the AMU, Aligarh, India.

#### COLOPHON

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