

## SOCIO-RELIGIOUS TRADITIONS & CUSTOMS RELATED TO THE WATER HERITAGE OF SHEKHAWATI REGION: A CULTURAL STUDY

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### ABSTRACT

*Shèkhāwāti zones located in Rajputana of India, keep separate because of their specific history and culture. In the pillars of culture, the water heritage and related traditions and rituals are maintained by the socio-religious coordination of this region. There are many models of social traditions and customs. There are different traditions of the delivery of the woman's water or well worship, the newly married couple's smooth play of Sõtā-Sõtī and the body of the deceased body to bone immersion. On the other hand, the religious tradition and customs related to the water reservoir have caused floods in Shekhawati. Here, for the purpose of collecting water in the water bodies, people here make a Aahuti Yajna in order to please the god Indra and gathering chapaties from house to house revolve around village or water heritage. The orbiting Mālketu Mountain near the Suryakund located in Lōhārgal, in the area, is the biggest honor of the religious significance. The beginning and the end is with the bath of Suryakund.*

*There are various traditions and customs of bath related to the water sources of Shekhawati. Among them, bath in honor of ancestors, bathing after shower and festivals or occasion-based bathing traditions. They have distinctive traditions and customs of Jaljhulani Ekādashi, Gangādashahrā and Kartik Snan. In the Shekhawati area, the month of Shravan is the month of Kawariyas. This month's Shivalyas are resonant with the shouts of the Bol Bam Tadak Bam. At the time of filling in the Kāwad clay, worshiping Shiva at the time of water and at the time of anointing.*

*Fairs of Teej, Durgāshtami, Mahānavami, Gōpāshtami and Ganagaur are organized near Jal Virasat in Shekhawati. On the occasion of Tees festival, girls immersion of dolls, target of coconut floating on water on the occasion of Gangaur, horse riding and camel footage are pleasant. The women of Shekhawati's Gangaur here are the most popular and long time worshiped festivals. During this, Ishra-Ganagaur is worshiped by the daily water and they are served food. Finally, the orbiting of the well is immersed in the pond. The most important fact here is that the fair is gathered on a large number of occasions, but the water heritage does not let dirty. The reason for this is that people keep this sacred in honor of the present God and Goddess on every water heritage.*

**KEYWORDS:** Well Worship, Suryakund, Bathing Traditions, Fairs, Ishar-Gangaur

## INTRODUCTION

### Shèkhāwāti

*Jaipur*, the capital of the *Indian* state of *Rajasthan*, was a part of the *Amer* State. Which later became *Jaipur* itself in the state. Between the 15<sup>th</sup> to the 20<sup>th</sup> century was the largest sub-state in the north-west of *Jaipur* state which was known as *Shekhawati*. The word *Shekhawati* is made up of local language 'Shekha' and 'Wati'. Where *Shekha's* relationship is established with the Maharaja of *Amarsar-Naan* of the State of *Jaipur*, the word 'Wāti' is made up of the word 'Watt'. Which means surrounded place. That is the place which has been ruled by the *Mahārāo Shèkhā* and his descendants, is called *Shekhawati*. (Singh, 2018)

*Shekhawati* area is located at 27° 20' and 28° 34' North and 74° 41' and 76° 6' East longitude. Based on cultural parallels and impacts in this area, *Sikar* (Chandoliya), *Jhunjhunun* (Kewaliya) and *Churu* (Singh) districts of *Rajasthan* state are included. *Bikaner* state in the north and west of *Shekhawati*, *Jodhpur* state in the south-west, the state of *Jaipur* in the south-east and *Patiala* and the *Loharu* state were in the north-east. (Meena, 2011)

## WATER HERITAGE AND THEIR SOCIO-RELIGIOUS TRADITIONS AND CUSTOMS

The *Shekhawati* area maintains a unique place in the preservation of its valorous history and social-religious culture. There is no answer in the preservation of diverse cultural values. Among these cultural values are cultural traditions and customs related to a unique water heritage, which are also the identities of this region and also the carriers of culture. It is worth remembering here that from the point of view of climate, *Shekhawati* has been the second largest dry region of *India* after *Marwar* State. Water warriors from this region, who have struggled with water shortage, invented the water as a 'boond' and consolidated one-drop of rain water. Which is mentioned in front of us today as wells, step-wells, johads, stitches, dams etc. Water warriors have proved how to combat with the absences. The creation of the Water Heritage was an introduction which later became a part of the daily life of the people here. This daily life represents the culture of this region in front of us today. (Singh, 2015 to 2018)

There are various social and religious traditions and customs related to the water heritage and related activities which are the basis of the culture of this region. Water heritage has its own special glory in the editing of different rituals from the birth of the person to the death and various events of the fairs and festivals of the holy places. Whose details are being presented here. (Singh, 2015 to 2018)

### Bath Traditions

There are different traditions and customs of religious baths in *Shekhawati*. Which are held at the water temple here. Their opportunities have been their religious significance on special occasions. Religious water bodies especially in the *Bagholi*, *Manasa Mata*, *Chhapoli*, *Triveni*, *Ganeshwar*, *Kadma Ka Bas*, *Lohargal*, *Kirodi*, *Sakrai*, *Tapakeshwar* etc. create a separate culture of religious bath area. *Lohargal* is a great place for religious baths. Nowadays, the dead person's bone has started getting immersed, which was earlier in *Haridwar*. In the month of *Bhadrapad*, a tradition of bath for a month goes on. On this occasion, people donate plenty of charity. (Singh, 2015 to 2018).

### Malketu Mountain of Lohargal Parikarama and Suryakund Isnan

There is a holy religious pilgrimage named *Lohargal* near *Udaypurwati tehsil* of *Jhunjhunun* district. Where every year the people of this region the *Bhadrapad* month have been a tradition of *Parikrama* (Orbiting) the *Malketu* mountain on the *Suryakund* located. It is mentioned in *Lohargal Mahatmya* that there is no difference between the *Ganges of Lohargal* and the *Ganges of Badrikashrama*. (Sharma, 2016)

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The *Lohargal Tirtha* is one of the famous pilgrimage places of *Rajasthan* state of India. On this pilgrimage many *Rishi Maharisi* have introduced their posterity effect by harsh austerity. Actually it is a sage land. *Maharishi Vyas* said that like the iron archer, this pilgrim does not allow the sin clot to enter the heart and hence this secret shrine is called the *lohargal*. (Sharma, 2016)

YkksL; vxZyso L;kr~ ikikuka lafUujks/kde~ ;Ükr` yksgkxZya uke rhFkZ xqárea HkqfoA

*Lord Parshuram* chose *Vaishnava Yagya* by selecting this place for the atonement of his sins. In which the *Indra Devas* and *Vashishta* etc. came to the *Rishi-Muni* who became enchanted by seeing the beauty of this shrine. It is mentioned in the *Aadi Varah Purana* that the stream of water of a red colour falls down here. The person who takes bath for seven nights and takes a daily bath, he unknowingly acquires *Brahmlok*. The devotee who leaves the ego and leaves his body here, gets the heaven. (Sharma, 2016)

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In *Lohargal Mahatmya*, a story describing the destruction of sins or the process of making a pilgrimage to the *Lohargal* shrine is mentioned. In which *Vyasji* says to his disciples that the pilgrimage is only *lohargal*, which provides pure salvation from touch. Which is originated from *Brahmahridha*. In this shrine, all the Gods of *Brahmadi* have worshiped Lord Vishnu and have proved all the meaning. There are five streams flowing separately here and Lord Vishnu remains here forever. (Sharma, 2016)

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This is the reason that even today people travel to the *Lohargal* shrine for the salvation of their sins. This journey begins with a bath on the *Suryakund* and ends at this place. During this, the pilgrims *Parikrama* around the 24 Kos (Approximately 72 Kilometers) *Malketu* Mountains, performing baths and charity in nine water bodies. *Suryakund* is the holy water tank, where the *Pandavas* also bathed and got rid of the *Gautra* murder. (Sharma, 2016)

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*Suryakund* further bathe in *Brahmakund* (*Gyan Vaapi*) pilgrim and worship *Bhimeshwar Shiva*. It is said that bathing here and doing devotion and worship of Shiva gets in desirable results. The significance of bathing in *Bhimeshwar Vaapi* is that even if the dead body touches its water, it also receives heaven's pleasures. After bathing here, *Parikramathi* lives in *Kantipuri* one night and goes to *Karkotak Tirtha* (Kirodhi). Where *Lord Shankar* is situated in the name of a *Kotishwara Shiva*. In this shrine aromatic with the scent of date forest covered with palm trees and pilgrims bathing the ancestors. It is said that by giving *Pind daan* here, the ancestors receive *Akshay Punyalok* and further ten-ten generations are saved. *Karkotaka* comes forward to *Shakra Thirth*, where *Indra* retrieved his post by doing penance. It is said that bathing here brings prestige in heaven. At this place, *Bhagwati Shakambari* is also sit down, which had to protect the devotees of this region after wearing a *Shakaroop* after a hundred years of renaissance. Here the pilgrims rest on one night and take a bath in *Kuhkund* situated in the west direction. It is said that after bathing here, even the same sin of *Brahmahatya* is destroyed. There is a connotation between *Brahma and Shiva*, including *Kuh*. It is said that *Vishrwah Muni's* son *Ravana* had done terrible penance on this shrine, and *Lord Shankar* was pleased and gave pleasure-seeking boons right here. That is why this *Shivlinga* is known as *Ravaneshwar*. The person who is devoted with reverence, surely he conquers his enemies. Pilgrims visit *Naagkund* after *Kuhkund*. By bathing here people are free from the fear of snakes. It is said about this place that the devotees who donate gold on *Naagkund* are blessed with the blessings of Paradise. The people who donate in the *Chhatt* (6<sup>th</sup> day of new moon) and *Amawasya* (New moon) of *Bhadrapad* month bathing in, receive the results of eternal virtues. Next to *Naagkund*, the *Parikramanarathi* sees *Tapkeshvara*. There is such a fame about this place that *Lord Shankar* gave the *lohargal* pilgrimage to the sun and here he recited himself. After this pilgrims take a bath in the *Shobhawati* river, where the wife of the Sun, *Shabhawati* had done penance. It is said that bathing in this river receives beautiful appearance, hence its name is *Shobhawati*. Pilgrims go to bath on *Khurakund* ahead of *Shobhawati*. This shrine is believed to have originated from the crack of *Lord Varah*. It is believed that a person who performs the worship of the bathing of *Lord Varaha* becomes *Devatulya*. On this pilgrim, the soul who renounces the body, gets the *Vishnulok*. The pilgrims from here re-bath on *Brahmakund* (*Gyanvaapi*) and reach *Suryakund*. *Lord Shiva* and the *Sun* worship the sun by bathing on the *Suryakund*. Even today there is a belief that all the desires of the holy pilgrimage of this sacred pilgrimage of *Malketu* Mountain, located in *Lohargal*, are exhausted. (Singh, 2018)

### **Kartik Bath**

Apart from this, there is a special tradition and custom for women to perform mass *Kartik Isnan* at the festival of *Deepawali* in *Shekhawati*. This bath is done for one month. This bath recognizes that this bath brings joy, happiness and peace to the home and family. Poverty is destroyed. Under this bath, the women sing together on the *Johad* (pond) or well in *Brahma Muhurt* and bath there. There is a famous bhajan of related to Kartik bath EgS FkkuS cq>k Egkjk Jh vks Bkdqjth-A ts Fkkjh vkKk EgkJS ij gks;--- rks EgSa dkfrZd UgkY;ka vks HkxokuA There is also a custom of fasting with this bath. The women following bathing, according to their convenience. *Tulsi* plant or *Khejari* tree is worshiped after coming home after bathing. After worship, *Ili-Ghuniya*, *Ganga-Jamuna*, *Lapsi-Tapsi*, *Jaatka Baatka* and finally listen to the story of *Vinayakaji*. In this bath which lasted for a month, the excitement and enthusiasm of the women in the region get noticed. (Singh, 2018)

### **Kawad Tradition**

*Kawad* is a kind of moving temple. Which is made of wood. At its two ends are pots full of holy water of the *Kund* or waterfall, and in the middle part are the symbols of various goddesses including *Lord Shiva*. Even in *Shekhawati*, it is a tradition to offer water to *Kawad* for *Shivalinga*, symbolizing Lord Shiva in the month of *Shravan*. This water is supplied to *Shiva* by filling the religious places of *Shekhawati*, particularly the water sources of *Kirodi*, *Ganeshwar*, *Chhapoli*, *Mansa Mata*, *Sakrai*, *Bagholi*, *Triveni* and *Lohargal*. During the month of *Shravan*, there is a great fair of *Kawariyas* on the *Suryakund* of *Lohargal*. At this time, the cheers of the whole area *Bol Bom Tadak Bomb* arises. There are different views of the *Kawariyas* on different routes including the *Shivalaya* (pagoda). *Kawad* is a symbol of the faith of the people towards *Lord Shiva*. Which is carried with bare feet and brought to the water of the *Kund*. (Singh, 2015 to 2018) *Kawad's* tradition is believed to be born with *Lord Parashurama*. It is said that the first *Kawad* of water was offered by *Lord Parshuram* to *Lord Bholenath*. (Sharma, 2016)

### **Vristi Yajna**

Holiness *Yajna* in *Shekhawati* has a huge religious belief to please the god *Indra* of the rain. This *yajna* is organized in the *Shekhawati* area when there is no rain in this area or rain clouds appear, but do not rain. This *yajna* is done in the month of *Ashadh-Shravana* of Hindu month. The reason for this is that in the *Shekhawati* area, there are signs of non-occurrence or absence of rain in the *Jyeshtha-Ashadh* month. By this time, *johad* or pond called rain water harvesting is dry. (Singh, 2018)

This *yajna* is organized by all the residents of the village. In which the respected people of almost all the castes, including the head of the village, together with the *Mantrochar*, offer the Ghee *Ahuties* in the fire of *Yajna*. Brahma of *Yajna* is of any religious sect or *Peeth*, under which the *yajna* is organized. *Chapaties* is collected to keep the boundary and Ghee to give *Ahuties* from the village to the *Yajna* from every house. It is believed that the *Ahuties* of ghee plays the role of messenger till the god of rain, *Indra*. By which the *Indra* Gods delight and shower. It is true that even the tales of the *Ahuti* and the rains being performed in the connivance of *Mahant Khakiji Maharaj* on the *Peeth* of *Beri Village's Udaseen sect* are heard. (Singh, 2018)

Many times it has been seen that the clouds of rain appear but do not rain. It is believed that those clouds are stopped by the Goddesses of neighboring villages. For the release of them, the *Chapaties* collected from the village are kept on the boundary of the village and on the cremation land. It is believed that *Lord Indra*, the god of rain, is assured that whatever the remaining *chapaties* have been offered to you, so now you can *Padharo Mahare Aangne*, It is true that there was definitely rain on this and people's faces grew up and the *Johads* of the area was filled with water. (Singh, 2018)

### **The Well or Water Worship**

The tradition of water or well worship is a pure culture associated with social *samaskaras*. The legislation of water conservation has been going on in Indian culture for a long time. This is done on any festival special or newborn birth opportunity. This ritual is organized when the mother and grandchildren are taken out of the maternity room for the second time. On this occasion the neighboring women and relatives gather and bless the newborn. (Singh, 2015 to 2018)

The grandmother, carrying the *Peela* (Women's wear) and the *Potada* (The garment which is prepared by all the members of the house by making different pictures on the birth of the newborn) brought by her *Peehar* (Birth place of the grandmother) side, takes her newborn into her lap and takes it to nearby pond or well. Water is worshiped there. In this ritual, the sweet and the gift is offered to the God of water. In *Shekhawati*, this ritual is edited only on wells, hence it is also called *Kuwan Poojan*. On this occasion, the maternal grandmother sees her peeping inside the well and puts a milk *chhatang* (Drop) in the well with her breast. It is believed that the well is a symbol of the pyre of paternal birth. Pouring of milk *chhangting* is the seeding of the sacrament within the newborn that it is believed that it will never disrupt the respect of his mother's milk. (Singh, 2015 to 2018) On this occasion, women sang *Manglik* songs and they are given in the form of *Aangi* (Women's wear) gift with *Ghooghri* made with moth, wheat and gram. (Singh, 2015 to 2018)

### Rides of Teej, Ishar and Gangaur

*Shekhawati* is a unique tradition and customs area. There are also amazing cultures of festivals and fairs. In the month of *Shravan* and *Chaitra*, the tradition of celebrating the Festival of *Teej* and *Gangaur* is respectively still. Where the festival of *Teej* is dedicated to Mother *Parvati*, along with *Ishar* and *Ganagaur Parvati* as well as *Lord Shiva*. Both the festivals have been celebrated with great fanfare in the places of *Shekhawati*. Almost every *Thikanedar* (*Thakur*) of *Shekhawati* used to take his majestic ride according to his will. In this ride the *Thakur* used to demonstrate their will and grandeur. In this ride, the *Thikanedar* used to take part in elephants, horses and all the princely chats with their chief officials. (Arya, 2013) The Rides of *Teej*, *Gangaur* are still in *Shekhawati*, but their appearance has changed. *Teej* and *Ganagaur* are the festivals of women. While the festival of *Teej* exhibits the emotions of newly married women, there is *Gangaur* a custom of worship made for the groom's wishes for the marriage of virgins girls. While on the occasion of *Teej*, there are swings in the gardens, at the *Gangaur* festival, the whole 18 days are worshiped in the houses *Mandna* (Portraits of *Gangaur* on the wall) and in the form of ash or mud idols. From the second day of *Holi* to the *Teej* (*Tithi*) of *Chaitra* month, almost all the houses are heard the songs of *Gangaur* in the morning. Adult and aged women also do the fame (*Udyapan* or *Ujanana*) of *Gangaur*. After worshipping *Ganagaur* for 18 days, he is immersed in a reservoir or well. There are still trends about these festivals today "Teej Tyohara bavodi Le doobi Gangaur." The names of wells in *Shekhawati* are lying on the name of *Gangaur*. The beautiful portraits of *Teej* and *Ganagaur* ride on the wall of a glass *Burj* (tower) of *Nawalgarh*, along with the main havelis (Mansions) of *Shekhawati*. (Singh, 2015 to 2018)

### Cultural Activities

Fairs of *Teej* and *Gangaur* have been organized on the water heritage of *Shekhawati*. In these fairs young men and women are made to look at the special joy and glee. On the occasion of *Teej*, on the occasion of *Gudde-dolls*, the girls' group is organized in the tradition of immersion. (Singh, 2015 to 2018) The competition for targeting of Gun the coconut in the water, which was held on the occasion of *Teej* fair, on *Churu's Johari Sagar Talab*, was organized. (Annual, 1997) With this, competition for horse and camel racing competition in fairs is still the center of attraction. The competition of camel dance and its acrobatics to be held in the *Badrana Johad* animal fair at *Nawalgarh* is amaze. On this occasion, the mustache and turban banding competition of cattle farmers, *dholak ki Thaap* (Musical Instrument and their rhythm), the rhythm of *Manjira* (Musical Instrument) and flute make the atmosphere very beautiful. In this fair, the rural animal farmer comes to deal with their animals and enjoys fiercely for about ten days. (Singh, 2015 to 2018)

## Others

In *Shekhawati*, there is a tradition of worshiping *johads*, wells and temples situated in them on festivals and *manglik* occasions. Special worship is done today in the temples situated on the water heritage site on the occasion of *Teej*, *Gangaur*, *Ganga Dashera*, *Jal Jhulani Ekadashi*, *Goga Nawami*, *Sheetla Ashtami*, *Ganesh Chaturthi*, *Durgashtmi*, *Holi*, *Deepawali*, *Dushera* etc. Here the *Jaat of Gathjoda* of goddess is taken by the newly married couple to the god. This is where they are playing a game *Sotta-Sotti* from the *Neem's* cast even today. On this occasion, his sister-in-law and brother-in-law ridicule jokes with newly married couple Apart from this, there is a special marital tradition in north-west *Shekhawati*. Under which the first condition of marriage of any girl is that there should be a strain of water for the rainwater harvesting of the boy's house. Otherwise marriage will not be. The main reason is that the responsibility of water for use in the house has always been the woman. The second reason is that there is a shortage of drinking water and rain is also low. The third reason is that the available water of the land is being saline ie that drinking is not worth it. (Singh, 2015 to 2018)

## CONCLUSION

Shèkhāwāti region is a well known name in the world as a separate complete cultural unit. Although water culture is present in the whole country, but here it is like the life element of the people. Whether it is a 24 kos circumambulation of *Lohargal*, *Kārtik bath* or *Kunvā* worship are not only traditions, but they contain the juice of life on the basis of which a person survives.

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### GLIMPSES OF WATER CULTURE OF SHEKHAWATI REGION IN IMAGES



**Figure 1: Map of Shekhawati Region, Parikrama of Malketu Mountain & Suryakund Bath.**



**Figure 2: Odhani of Peela and Potada.**



Figure 3: Teej and Gangaur Portraits in Podar Haveli of Nawalgarh.



Figure 4: Camel Dance in Nawalgarh Badrana Johad Animal Fair.

