



Research Paper

Study of social and economic life of Pahari Korwa tribe

Sudha Vailangini Toppo

(Department of English, Kristu Jayanti College)

Abstract

This research paper, is an attempt to understand the condition of socially and economically despised Korwa tribe.

India is home to many scheduled tribes and the Korwas are one of them. Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, and Uttar Pradesh are the three Indian states, where this tribe can be found. Due to the existence of forest and hills, the ancestors of korwa tribes have lived in Jashpur districts of Chhattisgarh state for generations. Particularly we will focus on the lifestyles of the Pahari Korwa tribe in the Jashpur region of Chhattisgarh. The Korwa tribe is now separated into two groups, Pahari Korwa and Dihari Korwa, based on their geographical location.

The objective of this study is to learn about the changes in the korwa community's social and economic lifestyle after the adoption of forest laws and government incentives.

Through this paper, we shall attempt to answer the question as of, Why the Korwa tribe does not profit from the laws and efforts made by the government to aid them?

Keywords – Korwa tribe, Chhattisgarh, social, economic, lifestyle, government, forest.

Received 25 June, 2022; Revised 05 July, 2022; Accepted 07 July, 2022 © The author(s) 2022.

Published with open access at www.questjournals.org

I. Introduction

Man has been introduced to nature for ages. It is a different issue that many people lost touch with nature, moved into concrete forests, and began to live acivilized life. However, there were other groups of people, who continued to exist in their primitive form. They're known as tribes. In India, each state has its own distinct tribes. One such tribe is the 'Korwa Tribe'. They belong to the Munda ethnic group. Majority of them have settled in the Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh border regions. Korwa tribe was first exposed to the civilized society, during the development of anthropology in the 18th century.

With 129,429 inhabitants, northeastern Chhattisgarh is home to the majority of the Korwa people. There are 35,606 people living in western Jharkhand. In Uttar Pradesh, the Mirzapur district and Sonbhadra are the two southern areas where the Korwa are most prevalent. Hills, valleys, forests, and undulating terrain make up their habitat.

Our country has achieved many excellent things in the span of 75 years of its independence, but we have failed to nurture and develop our own country's marginalized communities. According to the survey of 2005-2006, their total population in Chhattisgarh was 34122, which is now increased to more than 40,000. They think their ancestors favored living in woods and mountains because of the year-round supply of wild tubers, plants, fertile land, and water systems. The Korwa tribe has been living for many generations in Surguja, Bastar and Jashpur districts of Chhattisgarh state.

Their Community has been further divided into four sub-groups: Agaria Korwa, Dam Korwa, Dihari Korwa, and Pahari Korwa.

II. Pahari Korwa or Hill Korwa

The Pahari Korwa are one of the Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTG), that lacks the knowledge of their rights and privileges as well as how to obtain them. Jashpur, Sarguja, and Raigarh are where the Hill-Korwa tribe is primarily found.

They don't have access to utilities like public healthcare, electricity, roads, or drinking water. Collecting food has become even more challenging due to lack of agricultural knowledge, the prohibition on hunting, and the scarcity of food in the forest.

They are a branch of the Kolarian tribe and speak Mundari. Korwa people residing in Chhattisgarh also speak Sadri and Chhattisgarhi as their second language. They are part of the Austro-Asiatic family, as described

in anthropology. They have dark brown or black skin and are between medium and short in height. They rely on nature and forests for both food and a living. They are the reason woods are still protected.

This tribe lives away from modernity by building houses near the forests. They are from those human communities who have been left behind in the race of development and are still living in antiquity. Efforts are being taken by the government to improve their living conditions but there is no improvement.

III. Sociallifestyle

Forests are used to get free household products. They live in a hunter-gatherer society. However, they are switching to farming as a result of the ban on hunting wild animals. The Korwa tribe's financial prosperity serves as a representation of their way of life. They use earthen cookware as cooking utensils. Due to their extreme poverty, Korwa women adorn their bodies with inexpensive trinkets made of gilt and copper. In certain affluent Korwa homes, metal kitchenware and silver jewelries are also found. Korwa ladies acquire tattoos to accentuate their physical attractiveness. They tattoo their chest, arms, and legs, which are inked from the knee to the heel. Generally elephants, stars, and flowers are depicted in their tattoo art. Darha is a custom due to which, boys of the tribe are marked with

women in this community are married at a young age of 14-15 years and some even younger. Among these girls, few had already become mothers. The tribe is an example of how the perceived progressive nature of their society hides the bitter truth about its young, malnourished mothers, and children who are abandoned without any concern for their welfare. However, Korwa women have an important role in their families. Domestic and economic decisions are prioritized according to their decisions. When the woman in their family passes away, they lose balance of their lives and their familial activities come to a standstill.

At the time of the delivery, pregnant women are moved to kumbha (house made for delivery purposes) and village dongin (lady that helps in child birth) is called. Women are stigmatized as impure for six days after giving birth. The Chhathi ceremony, which is performed on the sixth day, sanctifies it. There are many stillbirths in the neighborhood as a result of women working nonstop throughout their pregnancies and even after delivery. They receive no additional nutrients throughout pregnancy and have no relaxation. The rate of institutional delivery is still under 10 percent. More than half of women face reproductive tract infections. In the area, three-fourths of the women were identified to be nutritionally vulnerable.

The disturbing level of child malnutrition in the area can be shown by the fact that two-third of the children there fall into the underweight category, with three-quarters of those falling into the seriously underweight group. During their reproductive years, one-third of the sampled women lose a child. The high rate of newborn and child fatalities in the area is largely due to a lack of sufficient food and nutrition, primitive social customs, subpar outreach services, and malnutrition.

The Hill Korwas live in mud huts with one central room and verandahs around the sides for cooking and sleeping. Some homes are divided into 2 rooms. One variant has the room tiled and thatched. The other variant, called a kumba, is a smaller hut, round in shape and conical at the top. Grass and sal leaves are used as thatch. The house has one room with a low door, and has fences.

Typically, the village's location is selected on a hilltop or land that is covered with forest. The majority of Hill- Korwa's families were nuclear. The kinship system continues to be the fundamental framework for certain strictly prohibited separate relatives. The Hill-religion Korwa is restricted to the veneration of a small number of Gods and goddesses as well as ancestral worship. They also worship Singbonga (sun), Earth, karma, sarhul and other natural entities. They have faith in witchcraft and magicians (witch craft, odka). Hill-Korwas are constantly preoccupied with choosing the side dwellings. The majority of Hill- Korwa families are virilocal nuclear families with some lineal roots.

They believe in the existence of otherworldly forces. They fear magical and supernatural powers and avoid it in their socio-religious life. They have several significant deities, including Khudia Rani as well as Sigr Dev, Gauria Dev, Mahadev, and Parvati. Goddesses are revered for protection from natural calamities, greater crops, healing from illness, and safety. They have faith in witchcraft and magicians (tona-totka, kala-jaadu).

Hadiya (rice beer) is the tribe's traditional beverage. On important occasions, they offer this celebratory drink to welcome their guests. There are certain health advantages as well. However, as of late, they have been drinking Desi daru (alcohol) that they buy from the weekly market. It has a negative impact on their health, financial state, peace and harmony of the family. Unlike other tribes nearby, members of the Korwa tribe do not regularly dance and sing. Only on significant holidays and occasions like birth and marriage do these people dance and sing. Mandar and Dholak are their prominent musical instruments.

The Korwa tribe has its own panchayat. Justice is administered to lawbreakers in a group meeting, in accordance with societal conventions. The village's ancestors also assist with the hearing. Additionally, an oath is administered not to repeat the same mistakes again in the future. However now they are giving importance to government panchayat hearings.

IV. Economic lifestyle

It is clear from historical descriptive method and retrospective study that the economic life of Korwa tribes has been low. The collection of food dominates all of their everyday activities. They face considerable difficulties in obtaining food.

The Korwas mostly engage in “jhoom” kheti, a type of subsistence farming. This agricultural technique includes clearing of the forest in order to harvest lentils and other crops. Prior to the Forest Department’s increased rigor, this involved trimming medium-sized trees; however, they now prune back shrubs and bushes instead. But now that they are aware of the restrictions imposed by the government to avoid the destruction of forests, they have begun to practice sustainable agriculture. But they suffer with the poor fertility of the land. Every family attempts to gather enough food to last them till the next harvest. The Korwas sell supas, donas, and other bamboo-made items to bolster their revenue.

Gathering minor forest goods which includes sal, mahua, gum, tendu leaves and amla are the tribe’s main sources of sustenance. The edible tuber roots of trees, fruits, and flowers are preserved to last for 8 to 9 months. These days they do farming but their techniques are crude. They manage to acquire food grains during some seasons, while during others they satisfy their appetite by eating forest produce such as Gainth, Pitharu, Nakwa, katharu, kulthi, konge, charhat, and bilar. The tribe also consumes kanda, sihar, and burju fruits when they are in season. During October and March, they have access to superior food, such as maize, arua/Madua, paddy, kutki, arhar and other pulses.

Hunting was one of their primary source of livelihood in earlier times. However, the lives of these animal hunters have been impacted by the animal protection laws. They are now gradually quitting this profession due to these regulations.

Their forefathers relied heavily on lacquer farming as a source of food. They consider Lacquer as a lucrative crop which are grown on big trees. They no longer cultivate lacquer since they don’t have exclusive rights on the forest now.

They don’t actually raise bees, but instead sell the honey they collect from the bee hives in the forest. To prevent bee stings, they have been taught the natural skills and procedures by their forefathers.

Raising cows, bulls, goats, pigs, and chickens is a part of their life. Government assistance in raising these animals would greatly benefit their economic situation.

V. Government initiatives

The Indian government has enforced various facilities for them, including roads to their villages, boys’ boarding schools, agricultural assistance, etc.

In the 1950s and 1960s, following independence, the government decided to relocate these tribals into permanent settlements. They were already residing in the forest, but there were intentions to persuade them to abandon their nomadic lifestyle by providing them adequate land for farming. But they neither understood nor felt the need for agriculture. They frequently questioned the reasoning behind this strategy, asking ‘why farming was needed if there was enough food in the forests?’ However today, they have accepted agriculture due to a shortage of food supplies from the jungle, and they are knowledgeable about it but lack the resources.

- **Livelihood programs by Igsss**

The *Igsss* (Indo-Global social service society) partnered with the organization *Prayog*, to help the Pahari korwa, residing in Baghdohdha village with their water Crisis.

The tribal people found it difficult to solve the issue on their own as they had to travel miles in order to fetch water. The only supply of drinking water for the entire village, came from a single shallow water pit, which could only hold enough water for nine months. Nothing from the government had ever reached the village, aside from the representatives of the forest department. An effort was made to educate the community about its rights and the procedures for obtaining them through community mobilization and awareness sessions. The tribal community met with the CEO of Mainpat block with the assistance of project partner and discussed their water problems. This encounter led to the installation of two hand pumps, paving the path for water accessibility.

In addition, the community received 15 houses through the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY) Programme, and a cash-for-work initiative provided them with employment during the construction of buildings. The families also got smart cards that allowed them to access medical benefits up to Rs. 50,000.

VI. Conclusion

Even though we live in the rapidly developing twenty-first century, the light of development has not yet reached many villages in India. The korwa tribe is a group of conservative and reclusive individuals that favor a modest lifestyle. Modernization had a little impact on them as now they wear better clothing, build their homes out of mud rather than wood, practice sustainable agriculture, rely less on forests, and generally live more settled lives. They are now restricted to use the natural resources due to rules protecting forests and

animals, which is why they work a lot harder to obtain food supplies, medication, and the building materials they need to construct their homes.

Their situation is still hopeless even with the government's assistance in many different ways. This can be as a result of their illiteracy and resistance to change. In order to progress, they do not wish to abandon their origin and traditional ideologies. They are reluctant to adopt modernism and have doubts about it. Additionally, they could be afraid of and uneasy around the civilized population.

The first thing that has to be done is for the relevant authorities to never cease assisting the korwa community. The government and other welfare organizations should be more sincere and dedicated towards their responsibilities. Instead of simply making rules, they should make sure that it is fully advantageous to these underprivileged sections. The bare minimum we can do for Pahari Korwas is to convert them into Dihari Korwas. Governmental actions alone won't be adequate to accomplish this goal; NGOS, social welfare organizations, and other activist groups must all contribute equally.

The developmental projects should be planned by prioritizing their culture and lifestyle. Instead of just teaching them what's in the book, their genuine potentials should be unearthed, and they should receive training in accordance with those potentials. For example, they have very strong physical foundations, which can support them in becoming athletes. They should be taught under a friendly and welcoming atmosphere. Lastly, the willingness of Pahari korwas to change will make this process much simpler.

Reference

- [1]. cjtdp.nic.in
- [2]. go.gale.com
- [3]. lgsss.org