

THE INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF HUMANITIES & SOCIAL STUDIES

Koraga a Vulnerable Tribe in Dakshina Kannada District of Karnataka, India

Dr. Wajeeda Bano

Assistant Professor, Department of Economics, Mangalore University, Mangalore, India

Abstract:

The Koraga a particularly vulnerable Tribal Groups (PTGs) of Dakshina Kannada District of Karnataka is one such tribe which has suffered centuries of exclusion, social discrimination and isolation which had made them thoroughly inward looking and led to their socio- economic segregation. Now despite spending huge amount of fund and efforts by both government and non-government agencies development schemes have not benefited them fully. The present paper aims at discussing the reasons for their low literacy rate, high dropout rate and slow change in their situation.

Keywords: Koraga, low literacy, segregation and inward looking

1. Introduction

Tribal communities constitute a significant segment of Indian society and civilization. The tribal population constitutes 10.4 percent of the total population of India in 2011 census. Karnataka state is the home to 42, 48,987 tribal people, of whom 50,870 belong to the primitive group. In 2006, the Government of India renamed the PTGs as particularly vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs), PVTGs have some basic characteristics -they are mostly homogenous, with a small population, relatively physically isolated, social institutes cast in a simple mould, absence of written language, relatively simple technology and a slower rate of change etc. The various studies conducted by government observes that these vulnerable communities have experienced a 'decline in their sustenance base and the resultant food insecurity, malnutrition and ill-health has forced them to live in the most fragile living conditions and some of them are even under the threat of getting extinct'. Government of Karnataka has identified (i) Jenu Kuruba; and (ii) Koraga tribes as Primitive Tribal Groups (PVTGs). Jenu Kuruba tribes are originally from Mysore, Chamarajanagar and Kodagu districts and Koraga tribes are from Udupi and Dakshina Kannada.

Korga Tribe

The Koraga are a tribal community found mainly in the Dakshina Kannada & Udupi districts of Karnataka and the Kasargod district of Kerala, South India. They are the aboriginal tribes of Dakshina Kannada district notified as primitive tribes in 1986. Their existence is believed to be prior to 6th Century A.D. Though Koragas are tribal, they are regarded as the lowest rung in the caste system and as untouchables were not allowed inside temples and upper caste households in the local conservative Hindu society. Koragas are engaged in their traditional occupations like basketry, coir making or working as Safai Karamacharis (manual sweeping, collection and disposal of municipal solid waste, commonly referred as 'Paura Karmikas') in village panchayats, town municipalities and city corporations. The Human Development Index showing very sensitive details of Koraga community such as education, death, life expectancy and standard of living, dropped out rate among their children is very high, 90% of women and children are anemic, literacy rate is very low, the life expectancy is estimated around 40 years. Their main occupation is basket weaving and still engaged in scavenging. They are untouchables even to the Dalit communities. At present the koragas are facing the serious threat to their existence, their population is declining from census to census.

Seeing the alarming situation, the Zilla Panchayat of Dakshina Kannada District entrusted the responsibility of understanding a study of the social, educational and economic conditions of the Koragas and also to prepare an action plan for their development to a research committee under the Chairmanship of the Late Dr.Mohammed Peer a professor in the department of Sociology Mangalore University. The committee submitted its report in year 1994 and it is only committee till now to make recommendations about Koraga community. However, after the Peer Report many agencies started taking active interest and many research works related to different aspects of Koraga have been done and Central and State Governments have been implementing Social, Educational and Economical programmes for the development of ST community under the flag ship schemes of Integrated Tribal development Project. Despite all these efforts to bring them to mainstream or organize them for better awareness remained insufficient till today Koragas have remained tradition bound and superstitious. The belief that they are the lowest human creatures had made them thoroughly inward looking and fatalistic. The society at large made them ever dependent and exploitative.

2. Objectives

With this background the paper has examined the changes taking place in literacy level, dropout rates of Koragas in D.K district, and also aims at explaining the possible reasons for low level of literacy and educational background and possible suggestions for educational development among koragas

3. Data and Methodology

The study is undertaken in the Dakshina Kannada district of Karnataka State in India. To investigate the above objectives and verify the hypotheses at field level, the study is based on primary data which is supported by other analytical and empirical studies concerning the topic.

Interview method is widely used to collect the detailed information for the study. To collect primary data by organizing field survey of Koraga colonies. In the first stage out of 717 colonies we selected 350 sample respondents from Mangalore district which consist of five Taluks. In the second stage, from each sample taluks, 70 sample respondent members of Koraga were selected at random.

Apart from primary data the secondary data were collected from Census of India, Annual Reports of Ministry of Tribal Welfare, Government of Karnataka, District gazettes and ITDP reports. Interview method and structured and unstructured questionnaire methods were used to gather the information, wherever required group discussion, informal interview methods have been used and observation has been conducted through semi participant methods.

4. Results and Discussion

Karnataka is one of the fast developing states of India. According to 2011 census Scheduled Tribe constitutes 6.9% of the total population. Majority of the tribes in Karnataka constitute the Workforce in agriculture, cottage industry and other unorganized sectors.

T/R/U	Proportion of SCs		Proportion of ST	
	2001	2011	2001	2011
Total	16.2	17.1	6.6	6.9
Rural	18.4	20.0	8.4	9.1
Urban	11.9	12.6	2.9	3.5

Table 1: Proportion of SC/ST population in Karnataka

Source: census 2011

Most of the scheduled tribe continues to live under the precarious livelihood status economically because of their low literacy and lack of vocational skills. The urban tribes are slightly better placed than their rural counterparts. Their status has not improved considerably due to non-implementation of various tribal development programmes. They do not have adequate land ownership opportunities and income generating capabilities due to inbuilt constraints. Karnataka state has achieved notable progress in the fields of agriculture, industry, education, science, technology, human development, media management and other sectors of development. The state has also emphasized the need and importance of tribal development in the post-independence era. Series of tribal development programmes are implemented across the state for the welfare and progress of tribal people. The government has also formulated a policy on tribal development and implemented Tribals Sub-Plan (TSP) which is the Special Component Plan (SCP) of national Fifth Five-Year Plan. In particular, the Department of Tribal Welfare was formed specifically to address the needs of STs in Karnataka. Its budget is part of the budget of the Department of Social Welfare. The Tribal Sub-Plan was first introduced in 1976-77 when it was implemented in select districts of Karnataka state. This project was extended to all districts in the state in 1992. The objectives of the TSP are poverty alleviation, protection of tribal culture, education, healthcare and providing basic minimum infrastructure.

Profile of the Dakshina Kannada district

Dakshina Kannada(DK) is the coastal district of Karnataka. The district has made remarkable progress in literacy since independence, as per 2011 census it ranks first in literacy rate in the state (88.57). D.K District has performed better than state average, the issues in the education sectors are mainly centered on access, enrolment, out of school and dropout rate, retention, transitional rate, teacher-student ratio, quality of education, equity, educational attainment and infrastructure. The performance of D.K District in terms of most of these parameters is very impressive. However, inter taluk, gender and inter groups disparity still exists. Total population of the district is 20, 83,625, Schedule tribe population is 82,268 therefore ST constitute 3.95% of the total population of the district. Among the ST the major three tribes Marathi Nayaka are 84.75percent, Malekudiya are 9.43% o and Koragas are 5.90% of the population.

Taluk	Schedule tribes		
	Marathi Nayaka	Malekudiya	Koraga
Mangalore	12782	58	3406
Bantwal	19916	424	572
Puttur	16759	472	396
Sullia	10760	980	101
Belthangdi	9509	5750	383
Total	69726 (84.75)	7684 (9.34)	4858 (5.90)

Table 2: Dakshina Kannada (D.K) District ST Population

Source: ITDP report D.K district (2015)

Koraga: Koragais an aboriginal Tribe of Udipi and Dakshina Kannada district of Karnataka and Kerala state, which is notified as a primitive tribe in 1986. From 1956 to 1986 they were listed in the category of scheduled tribes. The Human Development Index showing very sensitive details of Koraga community such as education, death, life expectancy and standard of living. Their main occupation is basket weaving and still engaged in scavenging. They are untouchables even to the Dalit communities. At present the koragas are facing the serious threat to their existence, even their population is declining from census to census.

The total population of Koragas in the Dakshina Kannada is **4858**. They are concentrated mainly in Udipi, Mangalore, Kundapur and Karkala. Though Koraga are the earlier habitant of the district they population is not increasing. Koraga are among the lowest rung of development in comparison to other tribal communities in Dakshina Kannada District in terms of income, educational levels, housing and sanitation, living and health condition. Since Koraga are considered as impure normally their colonies are situated far away from villages and even in cities their colonies are segregated.

Years (census)	Population of Koragas
1981	6,382
1991	7,620
2001	11,656
2011	4,858

Table 3: Declining trend of Koraga population

According to the 2001 Census, the total population of the Koraga tribe is 11,656 and according to 2011 census 4,858. The District and Taluk wise population in D.K district is as follows

SI No	Name of the Taluks	No of Families	Population		
			Male	Female	Total
1	Mangalore (Urban)	271	621	583	1204
2	Mangalore(Rural)	503	1088	1114	2202
3	Bantwal	187	294	278	572
4	Puttur	100	206	190	396
5	Belthangady	113	195	188	383
6	Sullia	32	61	40	101
	Total	1206	2465	2393	4858

Table 4: Koraga population in Dakshina Kannada district (2011 Census)

Education is a basic ingredient for capability development and functional empowerment. It is an important factor influencing other human development indicators like health, livelihood standards, income and freedom. Dakshina Kannada district has made remarkable progress in literacy since independence, as per 2011 census it ranks first in literacy rate in the state (88.57), but the literacy rate among the Koraga community is low compared to other communities in the district.

	Illiterates	Primary	Higher primary	SSLC	PUC	Degree	Total household
Mangalore	25 (35.71)	20 (28.57)	10 (14.28)	10 (14.29)	3 (4.29)	2 (2.86)	70 100
Bantwal	22 (31.44)	20 (28.57)	13 (18.57)	6 (8.57)	5 (7.14)	4 (5.7)	70 100
Puttur	20 (28.57)	15 (21.43)	10 (14.29)	10 (14.29)	10 (14.29)	5 (7.14)	70 100
Sullia	28 (40.0)	22 (31.43)	10 (14.29)	5 (7.14)	2 (2.86)	3 (4.29)	70 100
Belthangdi	28 (40.0)	22 (31.43)	8 (11.43)	8 (11.43)	4 (4.7)	-	70 100
Total	35.14	28.28	14.57	11.14	6.85	04	350

Table 5: Education level of the respondents
Source: District Gazette

35.14% of the Koraga respondents are illiterate, 28.28% have attended primary education, and 11.14% could go beyond high school level but lack of appreciation for education, depressing home environment, difficulty in adjusting with others and poverty are contributing to their educational backwardness it is also observed that no doubt due to Govt and non-government agencies interference school enrolment ratio has improved considerably but dropout rate among the community is very high.

Among the Koraga children dropout rate is very high at primary and secondary level. The data shows that good number of them dropped out from schools due to lack of interest and impoverished economic condition, early marriages, punishment by teachers, parents death, health problems, ignorance, and ill-treatment by others. Despite the continuous efforts by NGOs, private-public partnership and government programmes like Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan which had made considerable impact on improving entry in to elementary school education among the underprivileged in D.K District but have failed to improve the conditions of Koragas.

Occupational distribution has direct impact on economic condition of the population. In case of Koraga community there is no occupational diversification still they continued to engaged themselves in scavenging and cleaning work, 57.14% of the respondents are engaged in sanitary works both in government and non-government sector as scavenging is considered as their traditional occupation, 25.7% of the respondents are involved in basket weaving.

Taluks	Wage earner/labour	Basket weaving	Sanitary Works	Other pity works	percentage
Mangalore	15(21.42)	10(14.28)	40(57.14)	05(7.1)	70(100)
Bantwal	10(14.3)	15(21.4)	25(35.7)	20(28.6)	70(100)
Puttur	05(7.1)	20(28.6)	35(50.0)	10(14.3)	70(100)
Sullia	-	25(35.7)	35(50.0)	10(14.3)	70(100)
Belthangdi	05(7.1)	20(28.6)	45(64.3)	-	70(100)
Total	35(10.0)	90(25.7)	180(51.43)	45(12.8)	350(100)

Table 6: Occupation of the respondents

Source: parenthesis

Recently with the interference of NGO efforts few of the respondents (12.8%) are involved themselves in other pity works like auto drivers, mechanics etc. as Koragas are treated as impure and their contact with other people is very limited only 10.0% are working as labourer in agriculture.

➤ Factors contributing to low literacy among koraga

In the very heart of the temple town resides the Koraga tribe which still fights for a dignified position in the society. "The Koragas who live in and around D.K. district still face discrimination at many levels," We still hear instances of them not being allowed to use water from the wells that are used by people from other castes, including the other untouchables. There are situations where their interests are ignored simply because of their background More than sixty years after the abolition of untouchability as pressed upon the Constitution of the country, the tribal still are made to follow practices, some unfair and even inhuman which go beyond untouchability. One such practice is *Ajaalu*, which is carried out in many forms. Members of higher castes have a method by which they believe they can symbolically transfer sins, or even an illness to another human being. Should any of them fall ill, the family calls upon any woman from the Koraga tribe, who is made to eat food which has the fingernails or the hair of the patient mixed with it. This is their way of freeing the patient of the illness; they believe that this can symbolically transfer the disease to the lower rung of the society. And it happens even today. "Should the child be born on the 'bad' day, such as new moon, the father gives away the child to someone from the Koragas. Later, the infant is 'bought' back by him, this way the misfortune is transferred to the tribe". As an aftermath of exclusion from the social and the economic benefits these "untouchables that live among untouchables" face a lot of problems within their community in terms of health and hygiene. Heavy alcoholism is prevalent among the men, while the women and children suffer from malnutrition. Their primary means of livelihood being basket weaving has also come under threat because of deforestation. The upcoming factories and industries near forests have led to the decline of their resources.

Education amongst this tribal has its own story. Many children drop out of school to support their families financially. Those who do continue with it, often face discrimination at the hands of teachers from higher classes.

It is surprising to note that majority of them are aware of free provision of lodging and boarding facilities for their children, they are reluctant to admit their children particularly ashram schools, because they find it difficult to adjust in new environment, parents are not willing to send their children very far and stay separate.

The study shows that Koragas have not utilized education facilities available to them, those who joined schools have dropped out at early stage that they almost reverted to illiteracy, although majority of them desired to educate their children, but reluctant to send their children to schools including residential schools owing to the fear that they have to send their children away and, both parent and children are not interested in new environment and also they have the complain of under performance of their children in schools particularly residential school.

Participation of Koragas with other communities is restricted to performing of Ajal duties and marketing of their products social discriminations has given them a sense of inferiority complex, and social non acceptance by others had demotivated them. The programmes meant for their development are not proper implemented

5. Conclusion

However today we come across a change in their attitude towards education, NGOs are playing very imp role in creating awareness importance of education and government facilities available to them.

Despite spending large amount of the funds, and several efforts by government and non-government agencies their condition is not improved much. The development schemes have not benefited them fully. The main reasons for the failure of welfare schemes meant for Koragas is due to the inadequate knowledge of their problems, requirements, and social cultural values. Added to this, the Koragas are not yet fully aware of the developmental schemes and are unable to use them properly, lack of training, low self-motivation and isolation had made them thoroughly inward looking and led to their socio- economic segregation. Therefore, urgent need is to sensitize them that they are not inferior to others, to build their self-confidence and necessary awareness among them have to be created before the introduction and implementation of any scheme meant for them.

6. References

- i. Census reports 2001 and 2011 Government of India.
- ii. Duggappa Kajekar(2015), "Problems of Tribal Development in Coastal Karnataka", International Journal of Interdisciplinary and Multidisciplinary Studies (IJIMS), Vol 2, No.9,68-74, 2015.
- iii. Dr.Devath Suresh (2014), "Tribal Development through Five year plans in India-An overview", The Dawn Journal Vol.3,No1,January 2014.
- iv. Dr.B.P. Mahesh, Chandra Guru, H.S. Shivaraj, Dr. Madhu Gundelpet and M.Dileep kumar, "Tribal Development in Karnataka State", International Journal of English Language Literature and Humanities, Vol III, Issue II, April 2015.
- v. Dr.V.Jayarajan, "Ethnic identity and Intangible Cultural Heritage- A study of Koraga Community of South India at folkland @rediffmail.com
- vi. Mohammed Guthigar and Dr Vina Vaswani (2013), "Availability and accessibility of the basic facilities including health care by a Primitive Tribal Group of South India - An exploratory study", The International Journal's Research Journal of Social Science and Management, Vol 3,November 2013.
- vii. Peer, Mohammed, et .al., 1994, Social, Economic and educational Conditions of Koragas - An Action Plan, (A Project Report submitted to the Zilla Parishad, Dakshina Kannada District) Department of Sociology, Mangalore University
- viii. Rao Ravindranath Y. (2003), 'Kudbis of South India', Mangalore, Mangala Publications Singh Anil Kumar (1982), 'Economics of Tribes and their Transformation', New Delhi