

# Struggle for Existence: Korwa Tribes of Jharkhand

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## ABSTRACT

*The tribes of Jharkhand is divided into two groups primitive and non primitive , Korwa belongs to primitive ; the socioeconomic status is miserable .Their culture and dialects are almost on the verge of extinction . Korwas are very peace loving people and are very close to nature , most of the products they use are biodegradable and contribute very less to pollution .Their poor economic status make their life very challenging. It has become difficult for the ethnic clans to safeguard their rich culture. Although government has taken many steps to raise their status with different projects still their need a great support both from the society and government to make their life at ease .*

Keywords: Tribes, socioeconomic, biodegradable, primitive, and Korwas.

## INTRODUCTION

The **Scheduled Tribes (STs)** are the most privileged people since ancient time, they used to live within a definite topography and had their own kingdom. They are the most peace-loving people and are very closed to natural vegetation as they worship nature. They have the sense of unity and a common dialect. They belong to “**endogamous group**” i.e. they do not marry outside their tribes. Kinshiship forms the basis of tribal organisation and has the “**egalitarian values**” as their distinctive feature, i.e. there are no institutionalized inequalities like the caste system or sex-based inequalities. In spite of enjoying the rich culture and being the original inhabitants of India, they are deprived of many benefits and are forced to live a miserable life

Scheduled Tribes comprise about 8.6%, respectively, of India's population (according to the 2011 census).

The *Constitution (Scheduled Tribes) Order, 1950* lists 744 tribes across 22 states in its First Schedule.

According to the latest annexure there are 32 tribes in Jharkhand , these are Baiga , Banjara, Bhatudi , Bedia , Binjhia , Birha , Birjia , Chero , Chik Baraik , Goud Gorait , Ho Karmali , Kharia , Kharwar , Khond Kisan , Kora Korwa , Lohra , Mahail, Mai Paharia , Munda , Oraon , Parhaiva , Santhal , Sauia , Paharia , Savai , Bhumji , Koi , Kanwai. These tribes were classified by Indian anthropologist Lalita Prasad Vidyarthi on the basis of “Hunter Gatherer” type, shifting agriculture, simple artisans, and settled agriculturists. Korwa tribes is one of the primitive tribes of Jharkhand out of the 8 primitive tribe groups such as Asur, Birhor, Biajia, Pahariya, etc. They are generally hunter gatherer and are found in hills, valleys and forest of Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Madhya Pradesh. In Jharkhand, Korwas are mainly concentrated around Dhanbad ,Dumka ,Godda ,Hazaribaagh Gumla and Palamu .According to census of 1991 the total number of Korwas residing in Bihar and Jharkhand was 33,251 .According to 2011 census the total population of tribes in Jharkhand is 8567961

out of these korwas are 35606 in which males are 18000 and females are 17606 , hence korwas form 0.4155714 % of the population .In Jharkhand the maximum population comprises of Santhali, Oraon and and Munda. Korwas living in Jharkhand has their social, economic and education situation very poor. A study on tribal tongues, sponsored by Central Institute of Indian Languages (CIIL) Mysore carried out by scholars and students of Ranchi University found the Korwa dialect to be on the verge of extinction.

## **HISTORY OF THEIR ORIGIN**

Korwas are one of the scheduled tribes of central India. They are generally found in hills, valleys and forests of Jharkhand. They speak Munda language and belong to the Austro-Asiatic language family. They have savage appearances. They are short with stocky legs, appearing to be sting. They are malnourished. Average height is only five feet for the men and four feet for the women. According to 'Narmedshwar 'they belong to Munda family whereas Suresh in his book 'People of India has mentioned they belong to Bengal, but the Korwas believes that they are the original inhabitats of Madhya Pradesh (Nagpur).

Korwa tribes often called Adivasis, means the first settlers, Korwa tribes have a unit without any hierarchical discrimination. In the past history they used to have a chief for their protection. Later on the chief was given political and military power and thus he became the ruler. . The traditional tribal institutions were vested with legislative, judicial and executive powers. The tribal chiefs exercised a considerable influence over social, economic and religious affairs of their respective tribes. During the feudal period (400-1000 AD) the process of Sanskritization affected the tribal chiefs. The ruling Brahmin class spearheaded the process of Sanskritization which may be briefly defined as the process by which a low caste or tribe or other group takes over the customs, rituals, beliefs, ideology, and style of life of a high and, in particular, a twice-born (dwija) caste. This process of social change is also termed as "Hinduization''.

With the advent of Muslim invaders in the 1th and 12th centuries, a number of tribes were converted into Islam. The loss of their power compelled the tribes to convert to Islam, but some of them still retained their identity. Apart from the Moghuls, the other groups who disturbed the tribal regions were the Persians, the Greeks, the Sakas, the Huns and other hordes of nomadic invaders who came periodically from the Northwest tried to destroy their culture to a great extent.

With the advent of the East India Company, the British penetrated into tribal regions. They used forest produces for their business. Trees were cut down for timber, forestland was used for tea, rubber and coffee plantations. Train lines and roads were built in forest areas. Routes from forest to sea coasts were built to transport goods. The bruisers dominated the tribal in many ways. Most of the tribal families lost their agricultural lands and lived in a state of starvation. The tribals were also victims of a host of middlemen who operated between the new rulers and the tribals. Among the outsiders, there were merchants and moneylenders who exploited the tribals in different ways.: After the Sepoy Mutiny in 1857, Christianity got official and many tribal people got converted into Christian.

## SOCIAL STATUS

Korwas are very peace-loving people and are very close to nature, they mostly lives in hills, forest and the plateau region of Jharkhand. In Jharkhand they are mainly found in Dhanbad, Chotanagpur, Dumka , Godda ,Hazaribaagh and Palamu . From the very beginning they had a nomadic life but later on they settled in a group called “Tolas “ Their main dialects are Mundari, Chotanagpuri , Bengali and hindi . Following are the main key factors of this tribe

- **Panchayats :** In korwa tribes the panchayat is mainly called ‘ Maiyari ‘ . The chief of the panchayat is known as “Mahato ‘or “manjhi” .He is given lots of respect and his post is hereditary .The verdict of the panchayat is considered as final .common people abide by the rules and regulations of the panchayat.
- **Houses :** Their house is mainly made of mud and thatched roof , in their hosue other than the kitchen and bedroom they have space to keep their domestic animals .The outer space is known as ‘ Uthan ‘ They decorate their homes with paintings on the walls . They also lives on trees known as ‘machan ‘
- **Marriages :** Korwas beliefs in Gotra system the main gotras are Kashyap , Hansda , Sama ,Aluboda ,Butku which are named after the birds and trees . They do not marry among the same gotras . In the time marriage no priest or paandit is required ,by putting Vermillion or sindoor three times on the forehead of the bridegroom their marriage is complete . Their marriage is known as ‘Dhoku ‘ i.e. mangi marriage .
- **Foods :** Economically this tribe is very poor , hardly they get food to fill their stomach , their main food is rice and salt .During festivals they make ‘Peetha ‘ made of rice as their delicacies.They are found of intoxicated drinks such as mahua, hadia and tari .
- **Religious beliefs and festivals :** Korwas are very close to nature and it is reflected in their religious celebrations , the main festivals are ‘Navakhani ‘which they celebrate during Purnima ( Full moon ) , ‘Singri ‘ this festival is celebrated after 5 yrs , ‘Karma puja ‘ is celebrated mainly by the females , in this festivals they worship the twig of a tree for their well beings .’Tusu ‘ is another festival celebrated with great enthusiasm . Their main goddesses are ‘Khudiarani ‘ and ‘saket bonga ‘ (Goddess of Lakshmi ) . Korwas believes a lot in superstitions and black magic , their strong beliefs lies in ghosts and evil spirits and time to time they make sacrifices to make them happy . For medicals they have ‘Baidhyas ‘ who treats all types of diseases using ayurvedic treatments .They also worships their ancestors known as ‘ Kakbagodha ‘
- **Status of female :** korwa tribe is male dominated society , the males keep themselves busy earning for family . Women of korwa tribes are very hard working and work day and night for their livelihood .women has to go far off to bring clean water as most of the pumps go dry in summer .Women are subjected to sexual exploitation by the Naxalites and paramillatary forces.Moreover domestic violence is very common in this tribe.In brief korwas women life is worse. This tribe do not discriminate on the basis of sex , hence the practice of female infanticide and foeticide are not prevalent .

- **Education :** Most of the people are not educated the literacy rate is very poor .The children do not have access to basic education. The infrastructure of government schools are extremely poor, moreover there is dearth of teachers in schools . The mid day meal is also not efficiently working . As the children lacks the basic education hence they are deprived of higher education although there are so many scholarship and reservation policies to help them .
- **Health issues :** Korwas infant and maternal mortality ratio is quite high ,as the tribal women weigh less at the time of pregnancy . Government hospitals are very few and are not well equipped with medical facilities , hence they like to go to local medical practitioner for their diseases which are treated by ‘Baidhya ‘ with local herbs or ayurvedic medicines . Moreover they believe that any ill cause is due to evil spirits and can be cured by mantras . Many households do not have toilets and safe drinking water.

## ECONOMIC STATUS

The Jharkhand Panorama by Jagdish Prashad wrote about the marginal shift of workforce from agriculture to non agriculture areas . It is very ironical that the tribes has to live a life below poverty line although there is abundant of natural resources in this area .These tribes has been exploited by the industrialist and the various political parties in various respects .Naxalism in this area is another hurdle in the growth of economic slowdown “Status of land among the tribals communities in Jharkhand by P.N. S. Surin discussed about the ‘Resource curse ‘ based on recent development .Lack of education and skilled traits are the reason they are deprived of jobs in industries and other educational institutions .Many of them depends upon their livelihood on the cottage industries . Women earn by selling the homemade products such as brooms , mattresses .baskets etc.

## ROLE OF INDIAN CONSTITUTION IN UPLIFTING THE SOCIO -ECONOMIC STATUS

Since independence of India the Scheduled Tribes were given Reservation status, guaranteeing political representation. In order to safeguard and promote the interest of Scheduled Tribes several provision has been amended in Indian constitution They are as :

- \* Article 342 and 366 defines and specifies the Scheduled tribes ;
- \* Article 15 is for the Prohibition of discrimination on grounds of religion , race ,caste ,sex .
- \* Article 16 is based on equality of opportunity in public employment
- \* Article 46 is for the promotion of educational and economic interests of scheduled tribes .
- \* Article 335 is claim for the posts and services
- \* Article 332 is for the reservation of seats in the Legislative assembly
- \* Article 243 D is for reservation of seats in panchayats.

Korwas due to their inefficiency to communicate with the main stream cannot take the advantages, where as some of the tribes like Oraon which contributes to 20.03% : Santhal 32% and Munda 15,47 % has started taking advantages of the provisions made by the government for their upliftment .

Apart from constitutional Provisions and Safeguards, following steps are taken for the tribal upliftment

\* **Representation in Legislatures and Panchayats:** Under article 330 and 342 of the Indian constitution seats are reserved for ST's in Lok Sabha, Vidhan Sabha and panchayats .

\* **Reservation in service:** in terms of relaxation in age limits, standard of suitability , and promotion in qualifying exams

\***Tribes Advisory council:** According to fifth schedule Advisory councils are set up in different states to advise the government for the welfare of ST's

\***Educational Facilities:** Various measures are initiated by the government to upgrade the education among the ST's for vocational and technical trainings. Different types of scholarships are given to bring the students into mainstream .

\***Economic Opportunities:** cottage industries are developed by providing loans to them Apart from providing agriculture facilities, cattle breeding and poultry farming are also being encouraged among these people

\***Tribal Research Institute:** In order to protect and preserve the rich heritage of tribal arts , culture and customs Research centres are set up in various states .

## CONCLUSIONS

It is seen that Korwas belong to rich culture and it is of prime importance to upgrade their socioeconomic status. Although the government has taken various projects to boost their economic crisis still lots more has to be taken care of. In " Saving Behavior Of Tribals by Jaiman Xalxo stresses that in agriculture sector their productivity is very low. Provisions should be made to give them loans not only for agriculture issues but also for cottage industries . The electronic and print media should also play a significant role in upgrading their condition below the poverty line. Most of them are deprived of basic amenities like food, clothing shelter etc. Korwas are the rich heritage of our culture, we should take all possible steps to retain their identity and struggle for their existence.



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