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CHANGING IDENTITIES OF KORAGA COMMUNITY: A SOCIOLOGICAL STUDY IN MANGALORE TALUK

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Abstract

The conditions of changing identities are manifested only in unusual circumstances. Such as religious or community cults etc., but smaller changes that accumulate over time is more common. The Koragas are the poorest scheduled tribes in Mangalore Taluk of Dakshina Kannada District. The majority of them lead to hard life and they engaged in their traditional occupation. Total population of Koraga tribe is 4.14 per cent in Mangalore Taluk and 5.90 per cent in Dakshina Kannada district as per 2011 census report. The present study analysis the Changing Identities of Koraga community, the data has collected from rural area of Mangalore Taluk. The 50 sample has collected through semi structured interview schedule from study area. Social change has been taking place through education, occupation, marriage, family, tradition and cultures etc., certain changes have been visible on Koraga community in studied area.

Keywords: Social Change, Identities, Koraga Community, Mangalore Taluk.

Introduction

In the early twentieth century, Indian and European reformers called to the British government of India to do something to improve the lot of India's most disadvantaged groups. In 1935 Government of India Act announced that certain "degraded" groups, in 1936 India's provincial governments prepared lists ("schedules") of local groups meeting the "degraded" because they suffered social disabilities. In 1950, with the enactment of India's Constitution, these degraded groups were referred to as scheduled tribes (ST)

Historical background of Tribes

Various terms for human groups appeared in the Vedas and post-Vedic materials. The Dharma Shashtra of Manu described certain tribes as the result of the mixing of the four varna that is Brahman, Kshatriya, Vaishya, and Shudra. Who emerged from the different part of creator, in epics of Mahabharata and Ramayana as well as in Puranic legends and folktales, Visitors to India also described about the tribes a.

The first decades of the twentieth century have seen major publications describing castes and tribes in different parts of India. "Tribes" were generally considered identifiable because they lived in isolated areas, maintained their own subsistence economies, speaking their own languages, following to their own religious, cultural, and political customs, and differed from the majority of the populations in physical appearance.

The Concept of Scheduled Tribe after India's Independence

The Constitution of India is called for equality of status and opportunity for all citizens of India. In an effort to improve the socioeconomic conditions of the scheduled caste and tribe, the government of India initiated the policy of affirmative action called "protective discrimination" or "compensatory discrimination." Article 15(4) declared that the state could make "special provision" for the advancement of SCs and STs. Articles 330 and 331 reserved seats in the national Parliament and the state assemblies for members of STs. The percentages of seats in the legislative bodies were to match as nearly as possible the proportion STs Living in the represented territory.

Article 325 declared that all voters not just STs could participate in the election of candidates for the ST reserved seats. Article 335 reserved jobs in the central and state governments for members of the STs. Article 16 of equal rights for all Indian citizens; the Constitution stipulated that these reservations of legislative seats and government jobs for SCs and STs would end after ten years. Over subsequent decades, Parliament periodically amended the Constitution to extend the SC and ST reservations another ten years. State governments introduced their own "compensatory discrimination" provisions for scholarships, admissions to colleges and professional schools, low-interest loans, and other benefits.

The recipients of these benefits were members of the groups named on the government lists of SCs and STs. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, India's largest tribes, although more than one-third of the STs lived in scheduled areas, the majority lived in parliamentary constituencies where they formed a majority of the population. In addition, they have sought to preserve some degree of



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cultural distinctiveness for the STs by granting them considerable autonomy in designated scheduled and tribal areas. The total population of STs is 8.6 as per 2011 census report.

Scheduled Tribe in Karnataka

The State of Karnataka was created on November 1, 1956, with the passage of the States Reorganisation Act. Kannada is the most widely spoken and official language of the State. Apart from Kannadigas, although there are other ethnic tribes, the Scheduled Tribe population comprises 6.95 per cent of the total population of Karnataka. Currently there are 50 Scheduled Tribes (ST) in Karnataka notified according to the Constitution (Scheduled Tribes) Order (Amendment) Act 2003. The names of these tribes, along with their population in the State and districts mostly inhabited by them as many as 14 of these tribes are either exclusively found in Karnataka State.

The Koraga is an aboriginal tribe in Dakshina Kannada and Udupi Districts of Karnataka State. Though the Koragas are tribe's, they are regarded as ceremonially impure and unclean in the society and were considered untouchables by the main stream of social group. The Koragas are the most backward among the tribes of Karnataka State, in every respect. A great majority of them lead on hard life and good proportion of them are engaged in their traditional occupations like basket making. At present, they are engaged with many other occupations. Most of them are labourers. According to the 2001 Census, the total population of the Koraga tribe is 21,000. The District and Taluks wise population

The Origin of Koraga Community

Regarding the origin of the Koragas there are, a few legends. One such legend describes them as the issue of Brahmin woman by a Shudra on account of the difference in the social status of their parents. The children were treated with contempt. The parents of that woman driven to forest area, the Koragas are reported to have surrendered on the assurance that they would be looked after and maintained by them but were neglected.

The name **Koraga** has been derived from the Tulu word **Kora** the first part of their name refers to the sun and the name may have originated from their conventional worship of the sun. There is a possibility that their name is a corruption of Koruvar which in Tulu means the people of the hills.

Socio-Cultural life of Koraga Tribes

Koragas have their highly distinct and unique folk culture and language. Their language is Koraga and undoubtedly grouped as Dravidian. The Koraga language has no script, but today a few literates have mostly borrowed its linguistic resources from Kannada. Thus, the Koragas are bilinguals and multilingual too. The multilingual Koraga tribes are living in Kundapur and Karkala taluks, they speak Koraga, Kannada and Tulu languages; whereas the other Koraga tribes living in Udupi and Mangalore taluks speak Koraga and Tulu language. The ethnic and anthropometrical features reveal that the Koragas are aboriginal Dravidian tribe. The Koraga tribes belong to matriarchal family system and they were worshipping major Hindu deities along with their specific type of bhuta worship.

They perform simple ceremonies during death, puberty and marriage. The Koraga ajja or Koraga Thani, which is the god of Koraga community; Most of the Koraga's colony we find the small stones, a few plants or trees representing different cults. Traditional joint families of the Koraga community were not as large as in the main stream of Indian society. The Koragas are expected to perform "ajalu" custom. In other words, a particular area is assigned to a group of families and they are expected to play a key role in certain occasions like village festivals, death ceremonies social and religious functions. The men in Koraga community beat drums and play flute during deaths and other socio-religious functions. At present the custom of ajalu and collection of leftover food has been undergoing transition.

The younger generations are having greater disagreement with their elders for such habits. Several studies reported the existence of many sub-groups among the Koragas. However, this study could observe only 6 groups. There are Onti Koraga, Soppu Koraga, Mudu Koraga, Tappu Koraga, Dadi/Kada Koraga, Vastra /Kuntu Koraga and Kappada Koraga. Koraga is a tribal language spoken mainly in Dakshina Kannada and Udupi Districts of Karnataka State. The marriage systems in Koraga community are simple but convincingly matching with the common core of the Hindu marriage methods. Here, lexical items related to the marriage ceremony have been taken. Matrimonial allied will be made as according to the cross-matrimonial relations allowed in their community. Usual marriage system is simple and arranged marriages are common but no such rule within the community.



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Even though the Koraga community which is associated with the spirit of worship this study find that the ethnic group hold distinction between holy spirits and evil spirits; And their association with the trends other than bhuta worship is quite evident to the fact that those people were associated with the major trends in the Hindu society from the very beginning.

Physical structure of Koraga community is, thin and tall body, dark skinned, thick lipped, noses broad and flat, high-check and sloping foreheads, and with bushy rough hairs and very distinct eyes. This type of tribes has resided in Dakshina Kannada and Udupi District of Karnataka State in South India. It seems to be depopulated and these tribes are in extinction.

Objective of this Study

1. To find out the socioeconomic profile of Koraga community in study area.
2. To understand the objective factors that determines the identity of Koraga community.
3. To understand the factors that responsible for changing identity of Koraga Community.

Methodology

This study has collected 50 samples of primary source from respondent's areas, which are Guttakadu, Karnire, Kemmade, Olaibettu and Badaga Yekkaru of Mangalore Taluk. Data collected from different age group, education, occupation, income, marital status customs and traditions on Koraga Community, by using semi structured questioner through interview schedule. Data also collected from secondary source like E- Journals and website.

Conceptual Frame Work

The tribal identity was influenced slowly by the caste identity during the last century and the influence of modernity including the new educational, political and economic order of villages. Removing the clutches of caste has paved way for the community to negate the caste influence and move towards the modern identity. Compared to the caste influence the influence of tribal and modern identities are stronger on the Koragas. The gender does not have strong association with the change in world view and self-image of the respondents. The modern names are equal among both the men and women. Thus, gender difference in adopting the modern names is not found among the Koragas hence gender do not have any association with the changing self-image of individuals among the Koraga community. As the income of the family is better there is a possibility of movement in the changed social identity especially the name of the family members. The Koraga community is traditionally a community engaged with occupation of making baskets and selling them in the village and city. The modern systems and the changes have made on the occupation.

The possibilities of occupational mobility on the Koraga community; they also converted to a scavenging in the village and cities. The change is not positive immediately on the vulnerability of the Koraga community, to various social evils and economic dependency is increasing due to lack of education, skills and the social position in society. The progress of the community can possible in future. The younger generation has the scope of employment mobility which can change the social and economic conditions of the family. The present study focuses on the changing Identities that have taken place and the factors in effecting these changes and finally the pace and direction of changes that have taken place among them in society.

Findings of this study

1. The socioeconomic profile of respondent

- Data was collected from both male and females of respondent, 76 per cent from female and 24 per cent from male of Koraga community. Koraga women were more open, cheerful and verbalize their thoughts, ideas and feelings better than their male counterparts
- Data collected from different age group of respondents. The range the age starts from above 20 years and below 50 years. 42 per cent respondents were 31-40 age groups, and they were labelled as middle age. 36 per cent respondents were the 20-30 that was youth. The rest of the 22 per cent respondents were in between the 41-50 age groups were adult.
- Koragas have their own language known as Koraga language which is not known to others, at present 52 per cent respondent speaks Tulu and Koraga language and 48 per cent of them speaks Koraga language only at home but they know Tulu, Kannada and beary, Hindi and English language.
- Collected data shows on different marital status of respondent: 48 per cent respondents were married, unmarried 22 per cent, widow's 16 per cent and separated and divorced 14 per cent, this study shows that, divorce rate is very less in their community.
- The educational level of respondent: The most of the younger generation are educated (graduate or Professional). Middle age respondents up to PUC, and above 50 age group respondents were illiterate and primary educated. More females were educated than males.



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- Occupational level of respondent: This study shows that 1 per cent of respondent occupied in Government job. 31 per cent respondent occupied in private job, 28 per cent respondents were engaged in daily wages, and 10 per cent in professional job, 24 per cent respondents were following traditional occupation and 6 per cent of respondent were not working spending time at home. This study shows the changing identities of Koraga community in the studied area.
- Annual income of respondent's family: below 10,000 was 63 per cent, 11,000-20,000 21 per cent; 21,000-30,000 was 10 per cent and above 31,000 was 6 per cent. It needs more improvement for family welfare.

2. Changing Identities of Koraga Community in Mangalore Taluk

There are a certain objective factors that determine the identity of Koraga community.

- **Tradition and Culture:** Though Koragas are the Primitive Tribes, their habitat of present day does not belong to them originally. They have been worshipping the Butas, Koragajja, Maari; About 16 per cent of Koragas worship the Butas. About 15 per cent of Koragas worship the Koragajja, about 30 per cent of Koragas worship Maari, 24 per cent of Koraga worship the Nature and others 15 per cent Koraga's worship the other.
- **Use of Drums:** Koragas were associated with their drums. But, after the Prohibition of Ajalu Act 2000, with the motive of stopping them from using the drums for Ajalu performances, drums were forcefully taken over. Gradually, they lost interest in such activities. Yet, through the Organisations some efforts were being made to keep alive their tradition. About 37 per cent of Koragas are beating drums for family enjoyment, 23 per cent for other celebrations about 26 per cent beat drums for funerals and 14 per cent respondent does not used the drums for beat.
- **Music, Songs and Dance:** The modern music and songs out beat their traditional music, song and dance. These traditional cultures of music, songs and dance using during the time mehendi and reception function of marriage and birth ceremony of child or as well as the occasions for which it is used. About 26 per cent of Koragas were having traditional songs, music and dance and 63 per cent Koragas were singing and dancing during marriage and 11 per cent during the birth time or other time.
- **Festivals:** The impact of other cultures has made on Koraga's to adapt others festivals and celebration. All respondents said that, they are celebrating all festivals of Hindu religion. The festivals like: celebration of Diwali, Ashtami, Chowthi, and so on.
- **Marriage Alliances:** Marriage is a social relation during marriage; Gotra system plays a major role. Marriages do not take place within the gotra rather outside the gotra. 92 per cent of Koragas were deciding the alliances among the Koraga's sub groups and only 8 per cent respondent said that marriage alliances is going to outside of Tribe. Koragas still hold on to their traditional values with regard to marriage.
- **Other Ceremonies:** The respondents were performing other ceremonies like Marriage, death, birth and puberty. All respondents were followed by marriage ceremonies.

3. Different factors responsible for changing identity of Koraga Community

- **Education:** Education is a key to change the life of an individual, all respondent says that they will educate to their children, reason behind their words is, for good job and status, because education gives the good status, name and fame. Majority of the respondent's children are studying under graduate and professional courses. They know the value of education in present society.
- **Occupation:** Occupation is derived from the social and economic status. 6 per cent respondent's parent working in Government job that is sweeper in Village Panchayat; 54 per cent of respondent's family members are earning as daily wages, such as Beedi rolling, engaged in construction work and so on; 18 per cent respondent's family member working in private institutions, 12 per cent respondent's children working in professional jobs and 10 per cent engaged in their traditional work. Higher and professional education brought social change on Koraga community.
- **Decision Making:** Family bond is strong among the Koraga Tribes. 23 per cent respondents said that head of family member takes the decisions regarding the all matters either male or female; 30 per cent said all family members' together (elders only) takes the decisions, and 47 per cent respondent said that husband and wife both are taken the decisions together regarding their children education, life career, marriage, etc.; This study shows the women status has changing by taking decision on any matter.
- **Age at Marriage:** The majority of Koraga women are married above the age of 20 years. Only 19 per cent respondent married below the age of 18 years, at present their age is above the 50 years, it means young generations have not been ready for early marriage; due to education, changing value system in society, modernity, less social rigidity and open class system.
- **Family type:** All most respondents are living in nuclear family and very few (18%) are living in joint families. Who are living in joint family, they also like nuclear family because of, in nuclear family the restriction and rigidities are less. So, they like nuclear family and they belong to matrilineal family.



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- **Relationship with other community:** The influence of educational and occupational aspects on them and they can easily interact with other community people. Some respondent said that they hesitated for interaction with others because due to lack of education and fear among them.
- **Regarding status:** All respondent said that, their status was very low compare to other community people. Educational, occupational and an Individual freedom are more essential for social change and changing identity of an individual in society.

Conclusion

This study analyses among the vulnerable group of tribes. The data collected from different age group, marital status, educational background, occupational background and their traditional culture and customs of Tribe of Koraga's who are living in Mangalore Taluk of rural areas, basically their standard of living is poor; compare to gender; females are more forwarding than males. Younger generation has changed their traditional identities through the influence of modern science and technology and present situation of society. Education is one of the factors to change or mould the life of an individual. Education is more needed to this community for more social changes. Changing identities will emerge on this community with new hopes, aspiration and inspiration.

Suggestions

- Hence, the state with welfare motto should take an immediate action to lift the human dignity of Koraga Tribe and need to incorporate the human right values within its programme and plan.
- Development of the community is possible only through the self-realization; self-assimilation and self-organisation along with that effort should be made to protect the rights of Koraga Tribe.
- And must empower them to grab the constitutional provisions which are meant for their benefit and mainstream of development.

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