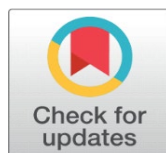


EDUCATIONAL CHALLENGES AND LOW LITERACY AMONG THE HILL KORWA COMMUNITY IN CHHATTISGARH

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ABSTRACT

The Korwa Adivasi Community in Chhattisgarh attains the status of PVTGs or Particular Vulnerable Tribal Group in India. The ethnicity of the tribe is deep rooted in the ancient Austro-Asiatic traditions and even with the constant flow of time they have been able to preserve their unique identity through their language, culture, tradition and tribal customs. However, the community faces significant challenges in the field of education as the literacy rate is very low, particularly among these subgroups that are residing in the hilly areas and are popularly known as the Pahadi Korwa or the Hill Korwa due to lack of education facilities and schools in the remote areas. The paper attempts to survey the possible proof and reasons behind the low access to education of the Korwa adivasis tribe with special focus upon the present-day condition and efforts taken at the government and non-government levels for social well-being of the conserved tribe.

Keywords: Ethnicity, Education Access, Present Condition, Future Prospects

1. INTRODUCTION

The Korwa adivasis community is facing challenges since its recognition as the PVTG and efforts have been constantly made by both government and non-government organizations to improve the status of the community that lies and lives and isolated life in order to bring to the mainstream of a progressing nation. The community is facing significant challenges in the primary education and with a very low literacy rate and educational attainment there are fewer counts for the higher education and University level graduates. Both at the government and at the non-government levels through the NGOs and other welfare organizations time to time steps have been taken to make education accessible to the Korwa and Pahadi Korwa communities by structuring the residential Eklavya model schools but still the disparities persist among the community. The ethnic background of the community is deep rooted into the ancient Austro-Asiatic traditions, and they have their unique identity through the language they speak and the cultural customs that they follow. The language spoken by the community is the Korwa/Koraku which is a dialect of Munda subgroup of the Austro-Asiatic family and in this way, they are linked to the Santhals, Ho and Munda indigenous communities. However, with advancing times and in touch with the population of the educated class who have taken interest in improving their condition the Korwas have also learnt to speak Sadri, Chhattisgarhi and Hindi as well. Primarily found in the hilly areas of Jashpur,

Sarguja, Raigarh, Balrampur and Korba the community is known as Pahadi Korwa or Hill Korwa. They fall into PVTG due to three main reasons:

- 1) Pre agricultural level of Technology
- 2) Low literacy rate
- 3) Declining or stagnating population

The lifestyle of Pahadi Korwa is traditionally characterized as hunter and food gatherers with shifting cultivation as they do not remain confined to any one place, thus their access to the welfare programs and education is marred due to the traditional customs and culture. However, with changing times some of them have started practicing subsistence farming and collect forest products like mahua, tendu and tendu leaves to do wage labour or sell the products in open markets of nearby cities and urban markets. They are skilled craftsmen and artisans and are known for weaving bamboo baskets and making ropes. However, despite their rich cultural diversity the community faces extreme poverty and a low literacy rate of around 32% as per data of 2023 for Hill Korwa. According to a study in Northeastern Chhattisgarh which covered the regions of Jashpur, Sarguja, Balrampur and Raigarh reported Hill Korwas aged 7 years and above had a literacy rate of only 31.2% .

A major challenge is the low allocation and underutilization of funds allocated for the PVTGs which limits the any improvement in their development status. While Rs. 250 crores (Rs. 2500 million) were budgeted for the development of PVTGs in 2020-21, the actual expenditure was only Rs. 140 crores (Rs. 1400 million), a pittance considering the significant socio-economic impact of COVID-19 on vulnerable groups. (Ministry of Tribal Affairs, Budget Estimates 2021-22 <https://www.indiabudget.gov.in/doc/eb/sbe99.pdf>) Further, the fund allocation for Chhattisgarh for 2020-21 saw a decrease from the amount utilized in 2019-20. (Ministry of Tribal Affairs PVTG Division- Minutes of the meeting of the Project Appraisal Committee with the government of Chhattisgarh. June 19, 2020.

https://tribal.gov.in/DivisionsFiles/pvtgMinutes/Chhattisgarh_06052020.pdf). Another key issue that persists is the misidentification of Pahari Korwas as 'Korwas'. The Constitution (Scheduled Tribe) Order (Amendment) Act, 2013 recognises Pahari Korwas and Korwas as two distinct tribes, with the former also being identified as a PVTG. There is though, an absence of caste certificates for most of the Pahari Korwas which results in them getting accidentally clubbed with the Korwas and thus be denied their entitlement to special provisions and government benefits. This has created great problems in the path of their employment and education enhancement:

In another case, 60-year-old Leda Ledaram and his 20-year-old son Ramsai, who are Pahari Korwas from Shankargarh block in Balrampur district, have a caste certificate and settlement papers which identify them as Korwas. The son, after completing class XII, applied for a job as a Pahari Korwa. According to the state government policy, he is eligible for direct recruitment for a grade III job with the government, but he has not any response for the last years. These are only two instances among many where Pahari Korwas, a Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group (PVTG) of Surguja district in Chhattisgarh, are facing roadblocks to jobs, healthcare and so on only because their caste certificate identifies them as 'Korwa' instead of 'Pahari Korwa'. Incorrectly listed as 'Korwas' instead of 'Pahari Korwas' on caste certificates, members of the Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group continue to face roadblocks to schemes, subsidised healthcare and government jobs.

Figure 1



Education levels in the community are also poor. In a recent study conducted by the Chaupal Gramin Vikas Prashikshan Evam Shodh Sansthan, an organisation working with the Pahari Korwas in Sarguja, the rate of school dropouts is quite high. Among 219 families surveyed with 254 children in the age group 5-14 years, 21 children left the school without completing class V and 17 children had never even been enrolled in a school.

In a study undertaken by Dr. Mehul Chauhan Executive Director Gramodyog Sansthan and Shambhu Kumar Consultant Ernst & Young Chhattisgarh (RJMSH Vol 8 Issue 10 [Year 2017] ISSN 2277 – 9809 (Online) 2348–9359 (Print) International Research Journal of Management Sociology & Humanity (IRJMSH) Page 104 www.irjmsh.com Pahari Korwa in today's Contemporary World) a very good percentage of the sample was covered in which the observation of 94% of the villages covering 77% of the Gram Panchayats encompassing 95% of the Pahari Korwa population have been covered under the study.

It was an Exploratory research design which was adopted to check and explore whether the provisions for the welfare of Pahari Korwa is reaching them or not. Simple research tools like questionnaires were developed to capture the data or information from the Tribal Sub Plan and its various components. The period of the study was from 04.12.14 to 13.12.14. The study was undertaken for a period of 10 days. The findings revealed that the percentage of literacy amongst this group is only 0.6 per cent. No female has been found to be literate. The percentage of literacy of this group is the lowest of all tribal communities of the Bilaspur division (2.6%). Only 230 Korwa children which is only 4% of all the tribal communities of the Bilaspur division is in the Primary School in all three districts, out of which 180 were enrolled in Raigarh district and 50 in Sarguja district. In Bilaspur, no Pahari Korwa child was enrolled (Tiwari, 2001)

The study also brought into light the basic facilities for school scheme titled "School dress, shoes and socks " and under this programme the sanctioned budget was Rupees Seven Lakhs and Fifty thousand only which was to meant to provide these things to around 750 children. It was observed that children from 138 Pahari Korwa families were studying in the Pahari Korwa Ashram and out of them around 119 children got these free school dress, shoes and socks. (Tiwari 2001).

Dr Rashmi Kujur E-ISSN NO : 2455-295X | VOLUME : 9 | ISSUE : 9 | SEPTEMBER 2023 International Educational Scientific Research 86 EDUCATIONAL STATUS OF HILL KORWA OF CHHATTISGARH highlights specifically the education status of the Hill Korwa thereby throwing light upon the availability of educational institutions for the community to access education. She reflects Statistics showing that educational facilities exist in 92.36% of the villages plus 7.64% do not have any educational institutions. Primary schools lead the institutions available to villagers at 48.84% while high schools stand at 23.59% and middle schools stand at 4.32%. Higher education facilities are absent from these villages since neither higher secondary schools nor colleges exist within them. The 23.26% of institutions in Pahadi Korwa hostels operate as primary schools to provide designated educational support for tribal communities. These villages lack both higher secondary schools and colleges which presents a major obstacle to students who wish to proceed to college-level education.

In the remote areas where the community resides it must be observed that Government support serves as the main source of funding for 51.83 percent of schools whereas 2.66 percent do not benefit from these grants. Most schools (45.51%) have been classified as "Not Applicable" while other unregistered educational institutions or private institutions or non-functional schools account for this category. Respondents reported similar levels of satisfaction (51.83%) regarding school facilities but 2.66% dissatisfied while 45.51% did not apply to the assessment. The substantial portion of 45.51% indicates that many respondents do not participate in formal education programs because they lack access to it.

A large proportion of 43.19% of respondents have educational facilities within one kilometre from their homes thus enabling students to access these facilities easily. Out of all respondents, 4.32% travel between one and two kilometres distance to their educational institution. This distance remains manageable for their school commute. Educational access starts to become unmanageable because no respondents reported attending schools between two to five kilometres from their homes. Students who need to pursue their studies at institutions located outside their city or village numbers 4.32% of the total population.

Schools which receive government funding together with accessible locations serve most students although numerous individuals either do not have school access or fail to participate in educational activities according to survey results. Improvements in educational infrastructure together with better school facilities should be prioritized to boost educational standards in these villages that abound in the Hill Korwa population. (Committee reports. (n.d.). PRS Legislative Research. <https://prsindia.org/policy/report-summaries/educational-schemes-for-tribals>)

The educational status (literate/non-literate) is clarified through percentage followed by male and female category. As per census analysis, 53.9% male, and 46.2% female are educated while 52.8% male, and 47.2% female are uneducated. In whole population, 57.9% people are non-literate, whereas 42.1% people are literate.

The literacy rate of Hill Korwas is very low. This is a barrier for their individual as well as community development. The level of education is divided into five categories. Out of 411 males, 236 (57.42%) are non-literate due to unawareness on importance of education. Only 139 (33.82%) males are educated up to primary level followed by 22 (5.35%) males who are educated up to middle class. Only 10 (2.43%) males are literate up to matriculation level and, just 4 (0.97%) males up to intermediate level. When it comes to female category, 211 (58.45%) females are non-literate due to unawareness and other social factors. 127 (35.18%) females are literate up to primary level whereas 18 (4.99%) females up to middle class. Only 3 (0.83%) females reach to matriculation, and 2 (0.55%) females are educated up to intermediate level. This is demonstrated in the table given below:

Educational status	Male	Female	Total
Frequency/ Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency Percent
Non-literate	236 / 57.42	211 / 58.45	447 / 57.90
Primary	139 / 33.82	127 / 35.18	266 / 34.46
Middle Class	22 / 5.35	18 / 4.99	40 / 5.18
Matriculation	10 / 2.43	3 / 0.83	6 / 0.78
Total		411 100.0	361 100.0

Thus, among studied Hill Korwas, males are more educated than females. Household works, domestication of cattle, child rearing, and minor forest produce collection are main reason behind low female education. In most cases, education and certificates are in pen and paper, people even do not possess any knowledge except their signature and name. They are still educated in uneducated way. The Government Census 2001-11 includes Korwa as a part of the ST Group that hardly publishes tribe specific literacy rates. The Census of India 2001 includes educational breakdowns for Scheduled Tribes in Korba district (which includes Korwa). The full "ST 08 Appendix" lists literacy rates by sex and educational levels, but it doesn't break down specifically for Korwa. This dataset is publicly available under Census records.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

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