

THE PAHARI KORWA OF CHHATTISGARH: A STUDY OF THEIR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN PREVUE OF TRADITION AND MODERNITY

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Abstract

Chhattisgarh state is known as tribal inhabited area. 42 scheduled tribes reside here, out of which five are primitive tribes. Among these five, Pahari Korwa is also a community of primitive tribal group. Even today their economy appears to be in its initial form. That is, these people are mainly dependent on food gathering, hunting and shifting agriculture. At present, these people also fulfill their economic and other needs by doing animal husbandry and labor. The hill Korwas of Kothipath and Gangaikona villages located in Bagicha block of Jashpur district have not been able to bring much change in their economic activities in today's modern times. Amidst modernity and financial assistance through government schemes, the priority of their traditionalism is still visible among them. This study is based on the current economic activities of the Pahari Korwa families of two villages named Kothipath and Gangaikona. Through this study, an attempt has been made to know what is the status of development of their economy in today's time and at what level is the existence of the economy? This study is mainly based on primary data i.e. fieldwork. To give a complete look to this article, along with primary data, secondary data has also been used.

Key words

Hill Korwa, food gathering, hunting, animal husbandry, shifting cultivation.

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Introduction

Chhattisgarh state is a tribal dominated state. According to the 2011 census, the total population here is 2,55,45,198 out of which the total population of Scheduled Tribes is 78,22,902, which is 30.60 percent of the total population. According to the 2024 data of the Ministry of Tribal Welfare, Government of India, the total population of primitive tribes of Chhattisgarh state is 2,33,450. Five primitive tribes reside in the state of Chhattisgarh. These include Baiga, Pahari Korwa, Birhor, Kamar and Abujh Maria. The total population of Baiga is 87,621. Their residence is mainly in ten blocks of five districts, in which mainly 30.2 percent population lives in Bodla block of Kabirdham district and 19.5 percent in Pandariya block. The population of Birhor tribe is the lowest among the five primitive tribes. They live in small quantities in sixteen blocks of four districts of Chhattisgarh. Their population is only 1.9 percent of the tribal population of the state. Kamar community is settled in 13 blocks of 6 districts of the eastern frontier of Chhattisgarh. 60 percent of their population is found in Chhura, Mainpur and Gadiyabandh blocks of Gadiyabandh district. Abujh Maria mainly resides in Orchha and Narayanpur block of Narayanpur district in South Chhattisgarh. Of these, 90 percent population is found in Orchha block. Similarly, the hill Korwa community lives in 16 blocks of four districts of Northern Chhattisgarh. Of these, 48 percent population is found in Bagicha block of Jashpur district and Shankargarh block of Balrampur district. According to the 2011 census, the total population of Korwa tribe in India is 166,499. Their total population in Chhattisgarh district is 129,429. According to the data 2005-06 of Tribal Research and Training Institute of Government of Chhattisgarh, the total population of Pahari Korwa community in Chhattisgarh district is 34122. At present their population is more than 40 thousand.

It is believed that some people from the Korwa community used to indulge in theft; dacoit etc. in the forest areas, then to keep them calm and for their livelihood, land was allotted to them by the landlords of Khudia area of Chhattisgarh, so that they could live a peaceful life. The group that came down from the hills and settled in the villages of the flat areas were called 'Dehari Korwa' and those who remained on the hills and did not give up shifting cultivation, maintaining their nomadism and wildlife along with the primitive culture were called 'Pahari Korwa' or Pahari Korwa. (CGTRI 2016). Korwa is a primitive tribe. Pahari Korwa is a branch of Munda. They belong to the Astro-Asian sub-family of the Austric family which includes several tribes inhabiting the Chhotanagpur region in India. It is said that the Pahari Korwa migrated westwards from Chhotanagpur to the Khudia region of Jashpur state (present-day Jashpur district of Chhattisgarh) (Srivastava 2007). Their residence

is in Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Bihar and West Bengal. People of this community are mainly found in the areas of Chhotanagpur, Jashpur and Surguja. Many scholars have divided this community into four parts namely Agaria Korwa, Dehariya Korwa, Dand Korwa and Pahari Korwa. However, there is no uniformity among scholars regarding this division. Mr. Russell has divided this community into two parts as Dihariya Korwa and Pahari Korwa. Of these, Pahari Korwa resides on the mountains and the rest of the group live in the flat areas near the mountains. In terms of cultural stratum, the Pahari Korwa community is at the lowest level. Their concentration is found in Chhota Nagpur, Bilaspur, Raigarh and Surguja districts of Chhattisgarh state. Pahari Korwa is mainly found in Bagicha block of Jashpur and Sanna. These areas are the Vindyadri mountain ranges. The height of Jashpur city is 2800 feet above sea level and the height of Sanna is 3000 feet above sea level. Pahari Korwa is based on patriarchal society. These people use the Korvi dialect, which is a part of the Mundari language group of the Austro-Asiatic language family. These people use Korvi dialect along with Sarguja and Sadri dialect to communicate with each other. The present study is of Gangaikona and Kothipath villages falling under Sanna region in which only people of Pahari Korwa tribe reside. The main economy of the people of both these villages is based on shifting agriculture, food gathering and hunting. However, at present the youth of some families are also migrating to many cities to work as labourers.

Research Method

For this research work, descriptive method has been used under qualitative research method. This study is based on primary data collected through fieldwork. For the collection of data, two villages Gangaikona and Kothipath of Sanna block under Jashpur district of Chhattisgarh state have been selected. Both the villages come under Chhichli A Panchayat. The total number of families in Gangaikona village is 17 and total population is 133. The total number of families in Kothipath village is 13 and total population is 183. (Field work 2023). Observation, interview, and genealogical techniques have been used to collect facts and data from both the villages. To obtain facts related to the subject, interviews have been taken with 30 and 20 people from Gangaikona and Kothipath villages respectively.

Discussion

Economic system has been the basis of human culture since the beginning of human life. Human life has been continuously dynamic in different geographical conditions of the natural environment. Due to differences in geographical conditions, differences are also seen in economic activities. If seen in the context of India, the geographical conditions here are found in the form of hills, plains, desert and marine

areas. The culture of the communities living in all these areas is seen to be different from each other. The only reason for this is the difference in their economic system. From this it can be said that the economic system affects culture. In other words, we can say that the economic system is the creator of culture. If we look at human history, many forms of economy can be seen from the beginning till now. According to the chronology, the forms of economy have been described as food gathering and hunting, shifting agriculture, animal husbandry, permanent agriculture, artisanship or handicraft, folk artist, labor and job profession respectively. Over time, technology related to human life has changed at a rapid pace. Its impact has been widespread in the economic sectors as well, as a result of which there have been many changes in the economic activities carried out by humans or in other words, development has been seen in this sector. Amidst such a situation, the status of economic activities of Pahari Korwa in today's context is a subject of discussion in itself.

This Pahari Korwa community, which has been living in Chhotanagpur hilly areas for centuries, is still visible in the initial stage of the economy. The economic activities of both Gangaikona and Kothipath villages are almost similar. Gangaikona village is situated in the middle part of the mountain while Kothipath village is situated in the uppermost part of the mountain. At present, the economic activities of these two villages can be seen in many forms, the description of which is presented further through various points.

Food Gathering

Food gathering is considered to be the first economic level in human history. In the early days, man has lived his life by collecting various food items from the forests. This stage of food gathering is found in many human communities from the beginning of their life till the present time. Among these communities, this type of economic system is still seen even today among the hilly Korwa of Chhattisgarh. People of both Gangaikona and Kothipath villages collect various types of food items from the forests throughout the year. The food items collected include fruits, flowers, leaves, honey and cucumber. According to the season, the villagers collect items like Mahua, Kendu, Pear, Banana, Mango, Tamarind, Jamun, Jackfruit, Soso etc. These people also use these items for selling at home and in the market. The fruit called pear is harvested especially in the summer season. Many families pluck this fruit from the forests in large quantities and after drying it in the sun for several days, sell it to traders at good prices. These people also sell its seeds at a price of Rs 800 per kg. (Field work 2023). For shopping, people here come to Chhichli weekly market, which is held on Mondays of the week. However, local traders come to both the villages once a week to buy and sell.

Collection of other Items

Due to forests all around both the villages, apart from food items, other items are also available in abundance from the forests. The people here collect leaves, wood and Karanj seeds in large quantities and sell them in the local market. Karanj seeds are collected in large quantities. During summer, when fruits fall, adult men and women pick and collect the fruits one by one. After picking, they dry it in the sun for several days in their homes. After drying, it is crushed with a stone to separate the seeds and then these seeds are sold in the market or to local traders.

Hunting

The tradition of hunting has been parallel to human food collection. Through hunting, human communities kill various types of wild animals and birds found in the forests around them and include them in their food. Along with this, they kill fishes from rivers, ponds and pits and use them. The tradition of hunting is still visible among the people of both Gangaikona and Kothipath villages as an integral part of their economic system. Hunting is mainly done by male members only. These people go far beyond the surrounding forests for hunting. For hunting, men go out early in the morning after having their meal with bow and arrow, slingshot or flute (bamboo used to trap fish). During hunting, people travel far and wide, due to which sometimes they return to their homes only in the evening.

Shifting Agriculture

Shifting farming system is seen in most of the communities living in the mountains. Along with food gathering and hunting, hill agriculture is also practiced extensively by the hill Korwa community even today. Mainly coarse grains are cultivated by them and some quantity of Goda paddy (black color) is also grown. Among the grains, corn, pigeon pea and barley are cultivated. These people follow a special process for farming. For this, the agricultural place is first identified in the months of February-March. After that the place is cleaned. In the course of cleaning, the bushes, plants and trees of that place are pruned and left to dry in the sun. After it dries for a month, it is burnt. The ash that remains after burning is left there to be used as fertilizer. When it rains in the months of May-June, the place is prepared for farming and seeds are sown.

Animal Husbandry

Animal husbandry is considered as an ancient profession of human community. In ancient times, many animals and birds were domesticated and used for various purposes. This type of system is still seen among the hill Korwa community. Due to the villages of Korwa people being surrounded by forests on all

sides, animals and birds get abundant fodder throughout the year. In both these villages, cows, goats, pigs and chickens are reared as pet animals and birds. Two-three families of Kothipath rear goats in sharecropping with other communities. They use these domesticated animals and birds for agricultural work, for eating and for selling in the local market.

Drum Playing

Drum playing is also a part of the economic system of the hill Korwa community. This work is done by a group of male members of Gangaikona village. These people earn some money by playing drums at weddings and other occasions. They go to nearby villages and do this work.

Labour

Many forms of traditional economic system still exist in the Pahari Korwa community, but if seen in the present context, the influence of modernity has also been seen in the economic sector of this community in the last eight-ten years. As a result of this influence, the present generation youth of these two villages go outside to work. For labour, the youth here mainly go to Gorakhpur, Uttar Pradesh to work in brick kilns. Due to moving to big cities, the youth are coming in contact with various types of modern things and outsiders, as a result of which its influence is being seen to some extent in their culture and way of living.

Government Efforts for Economic Development

In the economic sector, the Pahari Korwa community has been doing many types of traditional activities for years. For further improvement in this area, efforts are being made by the Central Government and the State Government to further empower this community through various schemes.

MNREGA Scheme

Efforts have been made to develop the primitive tribe Pahari Korwa through the Central Government and the State Government. For the primitive tribe Pahari Korwa, a well was constructed in Kothipath under the MNREGA scheme for the shallow Panchayat, which reduced the water problem among them. There is only one well in Gangaikona village. Whose water is used for drinking and bathing etc. However, during the summer season it remains dry due to which these people face a lot of trouble.

Public Distribution System

At present, the financial assistance provided through the Public Distribution System is proving to be an important link in the life of the Pahari Korwa community. People of both the villages Gangaikona and Kothipath get various types of materials

every month from the Public Distribution System shop located in Chhichli (A) village. This center is situated at a distance of one kilometer from Gangaikona village and three kilometers from Kothipath village. Among the items received every month, the yellow card holding family gets 35 kg of rice, 2 kg of sugar, 2 kg of gram, 1 kg of Sattu as well as one dhoti and one saree for free.

Modern Anganwadi Center

The modern Anganwadi center run by the Chhattisgarh government for the hill Korwa community is also an important link in economic development. Many types of facilities are provided through this center especially to the children of Korwa community. The Anganwadi center here is working with modern facilities. This center is situated in Kothipath village situated in the foothills of the mountain. In this Centre, there are special arrangements for children's education as well as food and drinks. Dal-rice, egg, khichdi, sattu, puffed gram, chocolate, biscuits and cream roll are given as food here. Various types of calendars, posters, maps, paintings, television sets and many types of sports materials are available as study material.

Solar Sujala Yojana

Hill Korwa practice Jhum cultivation. These people use primitive techniques for agriculture. Their population also remains stable. To change the lives of these tribals, the state government has taken care of everything from education to employment and from food grains to cleanliness in the house. On the lines of the Central Government's Kusum Yojana, in Chhattisgarh too, solar panels have been given to farmers for irrigation through 'Saur Sujala Yojana'. Pahari Korwa has also been provided solar panels in their homes under this scheme, which they are using for purposes like lighting and charging. For the development of Pahari Korwa, there is a provision of Scheduled Tribe Boys Ashram Hostel in village Chhichli (A) Hariyarpur under the development block. In which arrangements have also been made for free living and education for the children of the primitive tribe Pahari Korwa.

Conclusion

On the basis of the above description, the facts related to the economic development of the hill Korwa tribe of Chhattisgarh state are clearly visible. If seen in the present context, despite the effects of various factors related to modernity among the S community and the tireless efforts of the government, their economic condition is still dynamic in a traditional state. The government continues to make efforts to improve the economic condition of the community through various special schemes. But despite all these efforts, their interest is mostly visible in their traditional

economic activities. Among the economic facilities provided by the government are food grains and other food items through the public distribution system, food as well as study materials especially for children in Anganwadi institutions, free education for children from primary to secondary level and facilities like hostel and scholarship. Despite these facilities, hardly any children of the Pahari Korwa community go to primary schools. There has not been much positive change in the development situation in the economic sector. Even today, the people of both the villages are fulfilling their economic needs through food collection, hunting and shifting cultivation. However, some of today's young generations have adopted labor as their main economic activity. The facilities provided through government schemes fulfill their economic needs but there has been no significant change in their way of life. Most of the Korwa families here are affected by drug addiction. Women, men and many children of the community were also found consuming Hadiya and Mahua liquor. Due to these habits, they consume intoxicating drinks by selling the rice they get through the public distribution system. Whenever these people go to bring rice and other items, then while returning home, they stop at a house in a shallow area and sell some food items received from the public distribution system and consume Hadiya or Mahua liquor.

In this way, we can say that the economic development of the Pahari Korwa community of Chhattisgarh cannot be called very well in today's context. Various efforts are being made by the state and central government to improve their economic condition, but due to lack of proper participation of the people of the community, there is no significant improvement in their economic condition.

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