



Recent Changes in Kora Tribal Society: A Case Study of Dombandhi Kora Village in Ausgram-II Block of Burdwan District, West Bengal, India

Raj Kumar Samanta

The University of Burdwan, W.B. 713104, INDIA

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Abstract

Kora tribes of Dombandhi are modernized one. Recent change in their society happens due to globalization, economic development and modernization. The present paper finds out the modern changes in almost every aspects of life and also tries to search the possible causes behind that. The problems of Dombandhi village have also been identified and some remedial from it has also been listed.

Keywords: Tribe, Acculturation, Tribal development.

Introduction

In an ancient country like India, there are a larger number of tribal populations. Tribe is the aboriginal population who inhabiting in the most inaccessible hilly, forested areas. They generally speak common language, follow a typical religion and perform many rituals and gestures. They remain in an isolated area¹.

A tribe has following characteristics: They have a definite living place. They have unique social organization. They have cultural similarity. They have common ancestors. They have a common language and folk culture.

The above characteristics are disturbed sometimes when development and social change occurs. Due to the process of acculturation, some tribal groups travel away from the original position and display slightly different characteristics from those of its original stalk. Acculturation is the process by which whole way of life is in a process of change under the influence of another culture². It also accelerates social change. Each tribal group are at a different level of acculturation and social change or transformation. On the basis of such changes tribal groups are classified as:

Primitive Tribal groups: These are at very low level of acculturation and their habitats are still situated in inaccessible areas.

Acculturized Tribal groups: These groups are slightly more acculturized and live in forest which are accessible.

Highly acculturized Tribal groups: These groups include those who have established contacts with the modern world and show a high level of acculturation. These groups have adopted many traits from modern cultural world but still maintain their tribal characteristics and identity.

Moderized Tribal groups: These tribes are at a still higher level of acculturation. They are modernized tribals who are almost assimilated in the modern cultural system. This section of tribal group includes Santal, Munda, Uraous, Kora etc.

Change and development happen side by side. One depends on other. Generally change or, social change comes after development. Due to development, there is socio-cultural and economical improvement, which brings change in the traditional culture and livelihood pattern of tribal society. Now come to the point of tribal development. Tribal development is the process to eliminate the problems of poor living standard, hunger, malnutrition, health problems, illiteracy, poor sanitation, poor housing condition, unemployment among tribal society. In developing countries development requires social and cultural change as well as economic growth. So development brings change plus growth. Modern process of cultural change includes Christianity, industrialization, urbanization, modernization of education, communication development, community development etc³.

The development work would be good if: The beneficiaries become increasingly aware of themselves and the world they live in and especially of their capacity to transform it. The recipients are helped to remove obstacle for personal growth.

In case of 'Kora' tribe, there have been some recent changes due to modernization, globalization, urbanization, industrial development, agricultural improvement, introduction of Panchayati Raj, Integrated Tribal Development Project and adoption of Tribal sub plan approach.

Study Area: The present area, Dombandhi under study, is situated in Bhalki Gram Panchayet under Ausgram II Block in Burdwan district of West Bengal, India. It is about 5 km. from Mankar railway station and 7 km. from NH₂ (Processing through Bud Bud). It is 15 Km. from Gushkara railway station.

Objective: The main objectives of present study includes: To know the meaning and causes of tribal development. To assess the role of acculturation in tribal social change. To know the livelihood pattern of Kora tribal society in Dombandhi village. To identify the recent changes in their life style and causes for it. To identify the major problems of Kora society to point out some remedial measures from it.

Methodology

This is a work based on primary information and data. Qualitative informations have been gathered through personal interviews, field observation, investigations etc. Then informations have been represented after proper analysis.

Kora tribes of Dombandhi village and recent changes: Kora tribes are concentrated in Bihar, Jharkhand, Orissa and in West Bengal. Main profession of Kora is digging of land or, soil. In West Bengal they are found in Burdwan, Purulia, Bankura, Midnapore and in Birbhum district. The Koras of Dombandhi came from Jharkhand and Bihar. There are many types of Koras viz. – Mudi Kora, Munda Kora, Orang Kora, Dhangar Kora, Kurmi Kora etc⁴. There is slight difference among Mudi Kora and Munda Kora. The Koras of Dombandhi are Mudi Kora in nature. Due to development significant changes have occurred in their life. Here an attempt has been made to find out the modern changes of their livelihood and possible causes behind it.

Fooding: Generally they take traditional food for living. Rice is the main diet. They only took rice at noon and night. It was due to financial crisis. But now - a days they take tea, biscuit, snacks or, Puf rice in morning. At noon they take rice. At afternoon they take tea and little tiffin and at night finally take rice as dinner. This short of change has been occurred in their life style due to modernization, following the life style of other general castes, S.C. and improvement of financial condition.

Clothings: The dressing condition was very simple in past. The male members took ‘Panji’ and ‘Gamcha’ and female member took only saree without any innerwear. But now there has been great change in their dress, the male members wear ‘dhoti’, ‘lungi’, shirt, ‘ganji’, etc. The female members use innerwear with sarees. The young generation wear shoes, Punjabi, pants (Jeans and Cotton), shirts, T-shirts, sunglass, wrist watch, etc. Young girls use top, Jeans, churidar, frocks, kurti, etc. Only some old men and women keeping their own traditional dresses which is just below 5% of the total population.

Shelter: After food and cloth, the most important requirement is shelter or, housing. Habitats are important cultural expression. Now Houses are made of mud, asbestos, tin and straw. But at past houses were made of mud and the roof was formed by tree leaf from forest. Out of sixty seven families, only two families have cemented house. Ten families have cement asbestos house which has been made by ‘Indira Abash Yojana’. Remaining houses i.e. 82.03% are made of mud, tin, straw.

Sanitation, Drainage and Water use: At past water from well and ponds were used. The water of pond was not safe, so many diseases occurred during rainy season. Now a days they use water from tube wells. The drainage condition is not good. There is no concrete drains. The roads are unmetalled. Garbage disposals are placed here and there. Recently ‘murrum’ are used to repair the roads. At summer when water crisis starts, they use pond and well water for their domestic activities. Previously there was no latrine and toilet. But now there are 25 families (i.e. 37.31%) which enjoy latrine facilities. Among then 15 were made by owner’s own responsibility and 10 were made by govt. help. Almost every families which have latrine, use soap after latrine use. It is a good mark of hygiene. They also covered drinking water pots.

Fuel and Electricity Utilization: About 10 to 15 years ago the nights of this village were covered with darkness. But now a days 50 families have electric connection. They use fan and light to protect heat and darkness. Previously the inhabitants use tree leaf, bunches, bushes and grasses as fuel for cooking. But now some families use cowdung cake, coal, wood as fuel, though the number is very little.

Occupation and Income: They are day labours. At past, they were used to cut well, canal, levelling of undulating land etc. Previously they collect leaf from forest and make plates, basket, brooms. Now at off season they collect forest leaf and bunches and make plates with leaf. Besides they do agricultural activities, labours in brick field etc. There are 10-15 casual labours who everyday migrate nearby towns for factory works, mason’s job, rice mill labours etc. But now their prime job in agricultural labouring. Due to MGNREGS (Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guaranteed Scheme). Yearly working days and yearly income of every families have been increased. So poverty has been eliminated in some cases.

Table - 1
Monthly Average Income

Income groups / Rs.	No. of families	Percentage share
Below 2500	05	7.46%
2501 – 3500	22	32.84%
Above 3500	40	59.70%
Total	67	100%

Source : Field Survey

Out of 67 total families only 5 families have monthly income of below Rs. 2500. About 59.70% families having income above Rs. 3500 per month. Level of income is not so satisfactory, because each family have average six members and by that little amount it is quiet difficult to sustain a good lifestyle. For income generation, they depends on animal husbandry.

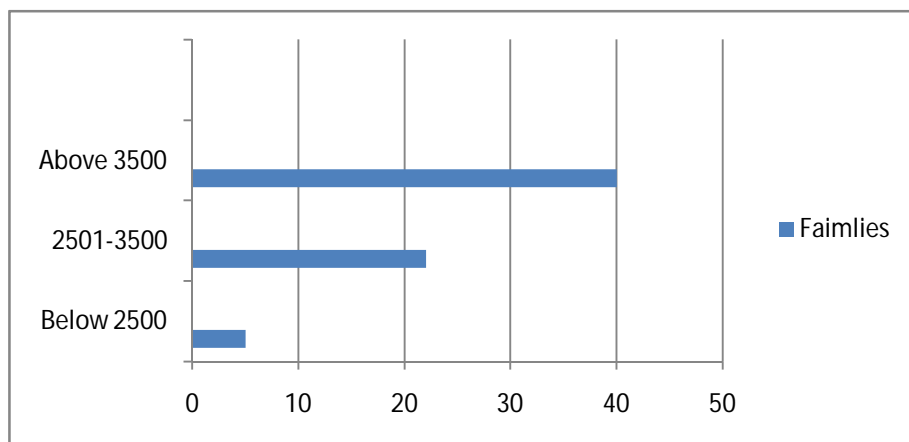


Figure-1
 Bar Diagram showing different income group families

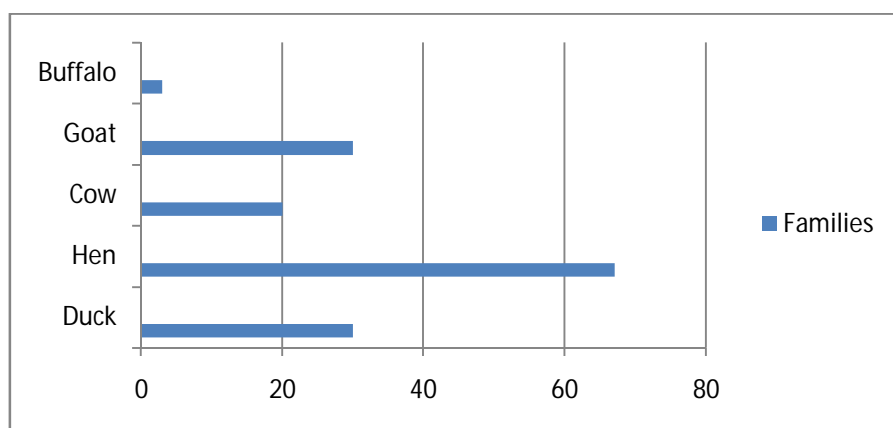


Figure-2
 Bar diagram showing no. of total families having different animals/birds

Table-2
 Nature of Animal Husbandry

Domestic animals / birds	No. of Family
1. Duck	30 (44.78%)
2. Hen	67 (100%)
3. Cow	20 (29.85%)
4. Goat	30 (44.78%)
5. Buffalo	3 (4.48%)

Source: Field Survey.

They also depend on fishing as an occupation. The community fishing activity is performed by the club member in a pond. Excess amount of fish, duck, hen, goat are sold in market. They also earn by selling egg and milk. Besides people earn from ‘Baker Bhata’, ‘Bidhoba Bhata’, ‘Bayosko Bhata’ etc. formulated by government. There is no government registered employees in the village. Another new dimension in the occupational scenario of this village is formation of S.H.G. (Self Help Groups). There are seven S.H.G’s. they are mainly linked with gardening, duck, hen and goat rearing, rice making at domestic level, plate making by tree leaf, brooms making etc. Each SHG have 10 to 12 members. Out of seven SHG, five are

of women’s group and two are of men’s group. Besides a watershed Development Project was taken by NABARD in this village, which was mainly linked with the activities like – afforestation, pisciculture, vermiculture, horticulture, birds and animal rearing etc. From those activities, people also earned. Forty seven families (70.15%) belong to BPL (Below Poverty Line). So it is clear that poverty is the main curse of Kora society. By rationing system, government, help the BPL people with offering lower priced rice, wheat, sugar, fuel oil etc.

Population characteristics: Total population of Dombandhi Kora village is 400. Among them male member is 250 and females are 150 in number. The male percentage is 62.5. There is negative sex ratio. The main cause is the negligency to girl child. This village consists of sixty seven families, so average population size is six per family. Number of male and female below 10 years are 35 and 20 respectively. Most of the family follows two child family norms but if there are two girl child then there is try for further one exter boy child. Now care has been taken for Kora women in case of health, education and empowerment. Girl child to goes to school. Women do both household and outside jobs as well as works of SHG.

Education: Main problem of taking education is language. They are habituated in ‘Kora’ language so they feel problem in school. Recently they are learning beangali language. The children’s of each family go to school.

Table-3
Pattern of Education

Level of Education	Boys	Girls	Total
Primary Education	25	17	42
VI – VIII	14	13	27
IX – X	12	09	21
XI – XII	04	03	07
Higher Education	06	Nil	06
Total	61 (59.22%)	42 (40.78%)	103 (100%)

Source: Field Survey

Percentage share of boys in case of taking education is more i.e. 59.22%. The lesser rate of education among women is the negligence to them. Out of 400 total population, total literates (only can do signature) are 370. Only old men and women have no education. Recently interest of guardian has been increase to educate their children.

It is due to some government projects like mid day meal system, yearly grant or scholarship for S.T. students etc. Due to “Kanyashree Prakalpa” the percentage of girl student has been increased. Recently kora students also learning computer.

Marriage: Marriage in popularly known as ‘Dutum’ among Kora society. It is as like hindu marriage system. They decide a date from ‘panjika’ for marriage. The head of the family priesthood the marriage. At past marriage was performed in a simplistic manner but now a days by imitating hindu marriage they arrange ‘pandel’, ‘lighting’, ‘music system’ and ‘catering system’ etc.

Agricultural system and Land holding Pattern: Majority of families accure 5 to 6 kathas of land which are mainly the

vested lands distributed to them. Almost every family perform agricultural operation by their our effort and by own labour. They grow paddy, mustard seed, potato, wheat in a subsistence level. Previously 95% farmers used only bio-fertilizer but now the picture is just opposite 95% farmers use chemical fertilizer and pesticides. Another interesting fact is the increasing use of farm machineries like tractor, harvester, pumpset, thrashing machine etc.

Table - 4
Land Holding Pattern

No. Of families	Amount of Land
2 (2.99%)	4-5 Bigha
8 (11.94%)	20-25 Katha
7 (10.45%)	10-12 Katha
40 (59.70%)	5-6 katha
10 (14.93%)	NIL
67 (100%)	

Source: Field Survey

Medical Treatment: Previously they believe in “Bunga” (spirit) for the cause of diseases. So they call ‘ojha’ (the spiritual man) to get relief from that physical problem. He suggested ‘maduli’, ‘kabaj’ and ‘jhar-fuk’ as the reliever from the problem. But now a days, due to consciousness and education, old belief has been replaced and for treatment they go to doctor or hospital. Main disease of Kora society in Dombandhi, is T.B. Male at an age of 35-40 years suffering from this disease. Main causes for this problem are taking of alcohol, ganja, cigarette, tobacco and bidi smoking. Maximum family (74.63%) go to Jamtara, Block Primary Health Center, for treatment because of its nearer location (Within 1 km). About ten families go to Abhirampur, or Suata or Amarargarh for treatment. For serious cases they only go to Burdwan Medical College and Hospital. But 6-7 families also believe in ‘ojha culture’. About 90% family take the help of Block veterinary treatment center for their domestic animals, which is situated at Amarargarh. For child delivery cases 97% families go to Jamtara Primary Health Center. It is a good sign of development.

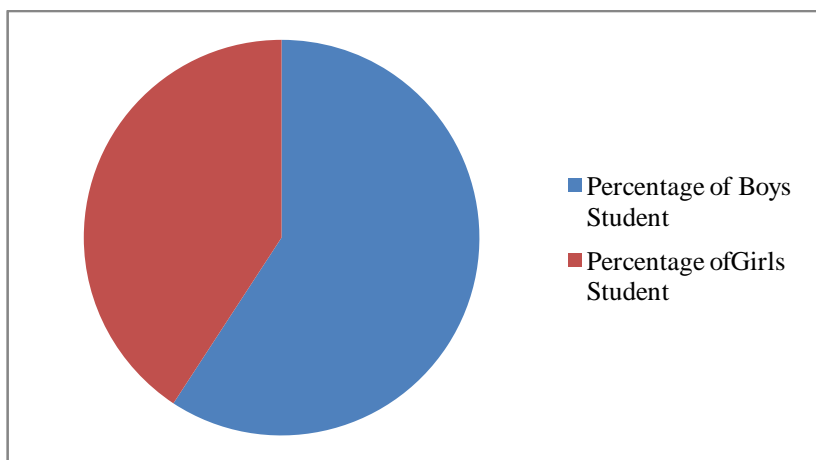


Figure-3
Pie Chat Showing Percentage Share of Total Girl and Boy Student

Religion and Festivals: They believe in 'Kora' religion 'Bung Buru' is the main god. 'Majhi Haram' is the priest. They offer 'hen' to the god. At the time of their own 'charak', mango, 'chatu' (barley dust) are also offered to their God. Main social festival of kora society are "Dutum" (marriage) and "Honda-ke-Mandi khano" (like hindu festival of feeding rice to the child for first time). At the time of 'Poush Parban' (Bengali festival in the month of January) they pray to 'Aken Bunga'. After five days from the birth of new born baby, they arrange 'panchute" in which they take alcohol to sing and dance. After death the cremation ceremony is called "Rapa Senhia" and after 11 or 21 days "Kaman and Sraddha" is performed for the piece of the dead person's soul. Recently 'Kora' people adopting hindu religion and festivals. They now believe and pray to Hindu god and goddess like – Manasa, Saraswati, Kali, Shiva etc. They arrange lighting and decoration in Kali, Manasa and Saraswati puja. School going generation found of Saraswati puja most.

Modern amenities and infrastructure: Recently the use of modern amenities has been increased among kora people. Almost every family have 1 to 2 cycles. Each adult male member use mobile phone. Television is found in fifteen families. Each family have bank account. They also use soap, scented oil, shampoo, power etc. Some family members use pressure cooker for cooking. Kora children now learning song, painting, dance.

Entertainment: Alcohol taking is the daily means of entertainment for 'Kora' people. The tendency is more to male members. Every day after hard working, they take "Pochui Mod" (country spirit) and perform singing, dancing in their own language by 'madal' and 'nagra' beating. In winter season at the time of Bengali "Poush Parban" they arrange hunting festival in nearby forest by killing rabbits, pigs, birds etc. There is one registered club in Dombandhi. Club members go to outside places to perform their song and dances and also earn something. The members recently purchase sports materials of cricket, football, volley ball to improve the quality of sports and games among 'kora' boys.

Problems

Though modernization and development happening in Kora society, but still some problems are found in this village. High rate of Alcohol addiction among young generation. Each family has not still arranged latrine and toilet. Their 'kora' or 'Nakchiki' language has not yet been registered or affiliated by govt. of India. There is no govt. help for cultural development i.e. kora song, dance etc. There is no community hall. In rainy

season roads become full of clay. There is lack of tube well. There is no street lightings. Rate of women education is lower. Lack of finance and continuous poverty.

Remedial

The problems of Kora society could be solved by following means: Arrangement of latrine and toilet for each family by "Nirmal Bangla Abhijan". Govt. of India should take step about the struggle of Kora people for the affiliation of Kora language i.e. 'Nakchiki'. Block or, Panchayet level arrangement of community hall, street lighting, road improvement etc. should be done. Provision of more women empowerment by spread of education and strengthening of SHG activities among women. Govt. and NGO's should take step for the development of Kora culture, song, dance etc. Programmes of social forestry, fishery development, pasture development, animal rearing etc. will be made popular among kora society and there need the renewal of all such programmes by Dombandhi Watershed Committee. To overcome poverty, Micro Finance, Village Cooperative etc. should be popularised.

Conclusion

It is clear from above discussion that Kora society of Dombandhi is changing with time. The main causes of their change are modernization, globalization, economic development and adopting of hindu life style and culture. They are very peaceful and innocent community. If this conditions are going on year after year, then once 'Kora' culture and society will lose their identity. So there need to preserve Kora socio-cultural traits immediately in Dombandhi.

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