

# Continuity and Change among the Koras of Bindukata

## *An Ethnographic Re-analysis*

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## Abstract

The Kora is a small tribal group who are mostly found in eastern part of India. Like many other ethnic groups, the Kora had their own distinct culture, customs, rituals and religion. However, in comparison to other major tribal groups in West Bengal, the Kora as a group to date have received relatively little research attention. In this article, we reappraise our experience and observation on the social-cultural life of the Kora people of Paschim Medinipur district, which we collected as part of anthropology undergraduate fieldwork in the year 2002. Through an ethnographic re-analysis method, we try to provide a fair glimpse regarding the process where the Kora, as group, is adopting certain Hindu traits. We also look to find the probable reasons that hold the key to understanding the source of continuity and change in Kora communities at large.

## Keywords

Kora – ethnographic re-analysis – social-cultural life – continuity and change

## Introduction

A number of tribal groups living in different areas constitute about 8% of the total population of India, which is probably the largest in the world (Topal and Samal, 2001). Most of these tribal groups have had their own heritage, history and tradition, which they able to sustain for over a long period of time, as these groups have often lived in isolation. However, with continuous efforts from the Indian government for bringing a number of these groups at par with the mainstream population and developing facilities of communication and also due to a direct or indirect influence of mainstream people, most of these groups are now facing a serious challenge in sustaining their tribal way of life. A number of works (Bose, 1941, 1964, 1969; Sinha, 1958; Orans, 1965; Munshi, 1979; Roy Burman, 1983; Mahapatra, 1986; Dash, 1998; Xaxa, 1999; Moser and Gautam, 1978; Gautam, 2016) have already been done in this aspect and various scholars have given different names to the conversion method of the social-cultural aspect of tribes of India. Moreover they have also identified various reasons behind this conversion. Some scholars (Bose, 1941; Srinivas, 1966; Gautam, 2016) point towards the absorption of tribal people by local Hindu caste people and has named this process as “Hindu Method of Tribal Absorption” (Bose, 1941), “Sanskritisation” (Srinivas, 1966) or “Hinduisation” (Gautam, 2016); the other scholars point towards continuity or gradual change of tribal people towards local Hindu caste groups or peasant groups and named this process as “Tribe-Caste Continuum” or “Tribe-Peasant Continuum” (Sinha, 1958). According to Kulke (1993, cited in Mahapatra, 2006: 23) this transformation process is a gradual one and it can be equated with the process of “Syncretism”.

The Kora is one such small scheduled tribe of eastern India that is already in an advanced stage of integration with Hindu society and is, therefore, found to be maintaining its existence in the threshold of Hinduism (Banerjee, 1991). Some of them are even forgetting their original mother tongue (Paul, 2004).

The distribution of the Kora is mostly found in the eastern India, i.e., in the states of Bihar and West Bengal. According to the 2001 Census on India, the Kora rank 5th in terms population concentration, after tribal groups like the Santal (51.8%), the Oraon (14.0%), the Munda (7.8%) and the Bhumij (7.6%). The Kora tribe constitutes of 3.2% of the total tribal population of West Bengal. In spite of being quite small in number, Kora tribes had their own cultural and traditional heritage. Most of the Kora tribes used to converse in the distinctive Kora language, which falls under the category of the Mundari language family group (Grierson, 1931). Many believe that the Kora language is closely related to the other Andamanese languages.

However, not much work has been done to explore changes in the socio-cultural life of the Kora of eastern India, except for the fact that the generic name “Kora” seemed to have emerged from the occupation of earth digging and they have four endogamous groups: Mudi Kora, Kurmi Kora, Nagbanshi Kora, and Dhangar or Orang Kora (Mandal et al., 2002). Clearly, this scantily available information has been mechanised by a relative lack of research work carried out on the social-cultural life of the Kora population (e.g., Risley, 1891; Das, 1964; Banerjee, 1991; Ray, 1993; Mandal et al., 2002; Paul, 2004; Tarafdar, 2007; Duari, 2010). The type of studies that have been done on the Kora population of West Bengal within the last decade speaks about the scenario itself. There have been studies on the prevalence of thinness (e.g., Bisai et al., 2010) and prevalence of undernutrition (e.g., Bose et al., 2006; Bisai and Mallick, 2011) among Mudi-Kora tribal children. Only two of these have managed to shed light on the life-cycle-related rituals and healthcare practices (e.g., Tarafdar, 2007) and religious beliefs (e.g., Paul, 2004) of the Kora population of West Bengal. And the rest (e.g., Risley, 1891; Das, 1964; Ray, 1993; Mandal et al., 2002; Duari, 2010) presented an offhand description of the Kora community along with many others.

### **The Present Study: Objective, Study Design and Methods**

In this article, we put forward a reappraisal of one of our earlier fieldworks carried out on the Mudi-Kora population. In the present work, we have tried to provide a description of social life, culture and customs of the Kora tribal group living in a village under the Jhargram Block of district Paschim Medinipur, which have been largely missing within anthropological ethnographic tradition. This re-study/re-analysis, however, does not strictly engage itself within the Cartesian framework of observation that researchers often use for comparing field-sited those have already been studied or as a point of reference for measuring the changes occurred during the time lapse. Instead, through a portrayal and reanalysis of pre-existing data material on socio-cultural and religious life of the Kora, collected as part of our first undergraduate level ethnographic endeavour in 2002, we try to take readers back in time and clear-cut understanding about proceedings of Kora societies of Paschim Medinipur at that point of time. With the aforementioned aim, we further try to understand changes in the socio-economic life ways of Kora people of Bindukata due to the impact of so-called local mainstream groups, as well as due to the impact of modernisation. Due to these reasons, as Burawoy (2003) points out, our work typologically falls in genre of ethnographic update or ethnographic re-analysis (e.g., Heaton, 2004; Oberoi, 1971).

TABLE 1 *Distribution of the Kora population in different districts of West Bengal*

Districts	Person	Male	Female
Darjeeling	51	27	24
Jalpaiguri	621	338	283
Koch Bihar	10	7	3
Uttar Dinajpur	3,330	1,658	1,672
Dakshin Dinajpur	1,923	931	992
Maldah	5,998	2,973	3,025
Murshidabad	1,228	600	628
Birbhum	13,456	6,758	6,698
<b>Barddhaman</b>	<b>37,073</b>	<b>18,614</b>	<b>18,459</b>
Nadia	385	194	191
North Twenty-Four Parganas	4,182	2,157	2,025
Hugli	11,324	5,682	5,642
Bankura	10,851	5,450	5,401
Puruliya	21,690	10,911	10,779
<b>Medinipur (undivided)</b>	<b>24,861</b>	<b>12,511</b>	<b>12,350</b>
Haora	2,393	1,232	1,161
Kolkata	178	96	82
South Twenty-Four Parganas	3,235	1,646	1,589
<b>Total</b>	<b>142,789</b>	<b>71,785</b>	<b>71,004</b>

SOURCE: CENSUS 2001

The study has been carried out in one of the Kora-dominated villages of the Jhargram block. We carried out our research on the Kora-Mudi population of Bindukata village, located at the Jhargram Subdivision of Paschim Medinipur District. The reason behind the selection of the Kora as our target population was quite obvious. We came to know that along with other major tribes, such as the Santal, Oroan, Munda and Bhumij, the population of the Kora tribe is found to be fifth numerically in terms of total tribal population in West Bengal (as per the 2001 Census). But unlike the other major aforesaid tribes, the Kora as a group had not received much research attention till then. This instigated the selection of the Kora as our target population. However, the logic behind the selection of a suitable field site from a particular district was not that obvious. Paschim Medinipur District (part of the undivided Medinipur 2001 Census) was selected on the basis of population concentration of the Kora tribe,

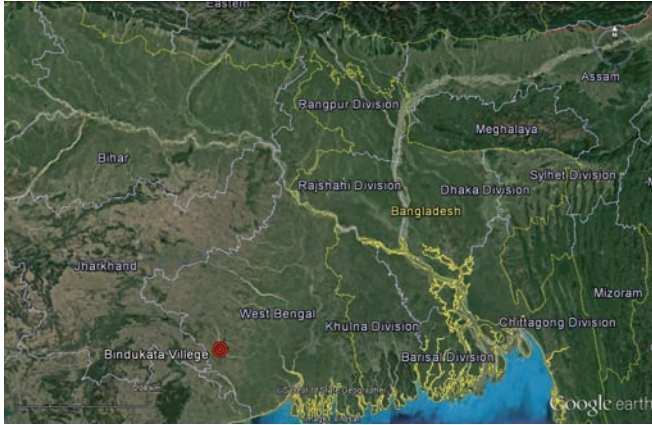


FIGURE 1 *Location of Bindukata village*

which at that time was second highest after Bardhaman (as shown in Table 1). Henceforth, it was decided that we would carry out our first ethnographic fieldwork at Bindukata village, located under the Jhargram Subdivision of Paschim Medinipur District (undivided Medinipur, then) in West Bengal (see Figure 1).

Initially, during our fieldwork, we collected information on name, age, sex, occupation, education and marital status from all 234 Kora individuals distributed in 53<sup>1</sup> households of this village through standard census schedules. Understandably, because of the number of variables that the aforesaid schedule contained, we spent our first few days exclusively for this task only. We also collected some general information regarding the administrative location, ethnic composition, economy, education, landscape, nature of soil, climate, flora, fauna, nearest railway station, nearest bus stop, water sources, drainage systems, sanitary system, electricity, healthcare system and facilities of communication of the village. And, in the course of time, in order to supplement our understanding about the overall proceedings about the different aspects of Kora community, we had to take the help of in-depth observation of their agricultural activities, lifestyle, living conditions and food habits. Afterward, we also took a number of case studies and interviews for getting further information of their economic activity, religious practices and life-cycle rituals.

<sup>1</sup> There was a total of 57 households in the village. Among these, 53 were inhabited by members of Kora tribal community and four were inhabited by the members of the Santal tribal community. In the present article, data on the 53 households, inhabited by the Kora tribal community are used to show the demographic profile.



FIGURE 2 Aerial view of the village Bindukata village

### Bindukata Village

The village of Bindukata is situated at a distance of 15 km from the Block and headquarters of Jhargram, in the district of Paschim Medinipur. The Jhargram is a subdivision of the Paschim Medinipur district in the state of West Bengal, India. It consists of Jhargram municipality and eight community development blocks, namely Binpur-I, Binpur-II, Jamboni, Jhargram, Gopiballavpur-I, Gopiballavpur-II, Nayagram and Sankrail. These eight community development blocks of Jhargram subdivision contain 79 gram panchayats. The rural area under Jhargram block consists of 13 gram panchayats, namely Aguiboni, Dudhkundi, Patashimul, Shalboni, Bandhgora, Lodhasuli, Radhanagar, Chandri, Manikpara, Sapdhara, Chubka, Nedabahara and Sardiha. The selected village of Bindukata is located under Radhanagar gram panchayat (see Figure 2).

Bindukata is surrounded by a number of villages, including Talmetal on the eastern side, Palashbani on the western side, Ballamdanga and Chotatilaboni on the northern side and Radhanagar on the southern side. The village is also bounded by *nazir-bandh* (the local name of a nearby dam) on the eastern side, *naher-khal* (the local name of a nearby canal) on the western side and cultivated lands at the both the northern and southern sides (see Figure 2). The main road of the village was constructed from laterite soil and large boulders. The laterite soil is locally known by the villagers as *moram*. This main untarred road of the village runs from the eastern to western part of the village; it is locally known as *kaji* road. It passes through the central part of the village, dividing the village into two equal halves. A number of bridled paths branch out from the main road and lead to the households. The path leading to the

north was being broadened at the time of the fieldwork. The main road goes to Dahijhuri in the west and Baita in the east. The nearest railway station of the village is situated at Jhargram, which is nearly 18km away. Sevayatan is the nearest bus stop and is located about 5–6km away from the village. Due to this reason, villagers use bicycles, rickshaws, auto-rickshaws, trackers and buses when they go outside Bindukata. The bicycle is mainly used as a mode of transport inside the village.

The landscape of this village is undulating in nature and is sloped from the north-west to the south-east. The soil type of all the arable land of this village, in general, is alluvial in nature. Again, scattered distribution of loam soil has also been found in the northern and southern portions of the village where the villagers cultivate paddy.

According to the oral tradition of the villagers, settlement of Bindukata dates back to the time of the “Zaminders”, when India was under the rule of Mughals. According to some of the elderly Kora people, this region used to be a dense jungle under the jurisdiction of the *zamindar* of Jhargram. In fact, there was no settlement in the nearby areas. After consulting with a few of the other knowledgeable people of this region another fact came to forefront that the Kora people of this village were not the permanent residents of this village. Originally these people were residents of Nagpur, Madhya Pradesh. The migration took place when the *zamindar* of Jhargram hired them for cutting down the jungle and clearing this area about 500 years ago.

The name *Bindukata* came into being with an interesting incident that took place while clearing of this jungle. One day, while cutting up of a tree, the workers found a rabbit lurking around. Some of them started shouting: “Look, it’s a rabbit” (i.e., *bindh* in Kora language). In the meantime, one of them shot an arrow to kill it (*kata* in Kora language). The rabbit was then presented to the *zamindar*, who named this place “Bindhkata” after the killed rabbit. Gradually, “Bindhkata” became Bindukata in the due course of time.

### Socio-Demographic Profile

During the time of the field visit, only 53 Kora families were found in the village and another four Santal families lived in the eastern outskirts of the village. The total Kora population of the village comprised of 234 individuals, of which 55.55% were males and 44.44% were females (see Table 2).

The sex ratio in this village was markedly low (800 females per 1,000 males) compared to the numbers in the State (934 females per 1,000 males) and national level (917 females per 1,000 males), as per the data of 2001 Census.

TABLE 2 *Distribution of the total Kora population of Bindukata village in terms of age and sex*

Age groups (Years)	Male		Female		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
0-4	13	5.56	10	4.27	23	9.83
5-9	26	11.11	10	4.27	36	15.38
10-14	13	5.56	12	5.13	25	10.68
15-19	10	4.27	9	3.85	19	8.12
20-24	11	4.70	10	4.27	21	8.97
25-29	9	3.85	17	7.26	26	11.11
30-34	9	3.84	7	2.99	16	6.84
35-39	7	2.99	8	3.42	15	6.41
40-44	8	3.42	4	1.71	12	5.13
45-49	7	2.99	4	1.71	11	4.70
50-54	8	3.42	2	0.85	10	4.27
55-59	2	0.85	5	2.14	7	2.99
60+	7	2.99	6	2.56	13	5.56
<b>Total</b>	<b>130</b>	<b>55.56</b>	<b>104</b>	<b>44.44</b>	<b>234</b>	<b>100.00</b>

This table also shows that 35.88% of the total population belongs to the age group of 0-14 years, 51.27% constitute the adult population (15-59 years) and only 5.56% constitute the aged population (60 years and above).

Age and sex-wise distribution of the Kora population demonstrates that males and females were proportionately distributed in most of the age groups, except for the 5-9 years and 25-29 years age groups (as shown in Figure 3). The base of the population pyramid is flat: the distribution of population is similar to the previous age groups. The flat base of the pyramid may be an indication of the low rate of family planning practices by the younger couples. The population pyramid also depicts that the percentages of the children and middle-aged population are more than the aged population.

The level of education among the Kora people of Bindukata was found to be mediocre, to say the least. The literacy rate among the Koras of Bindukata is 70.14%, which is higher than the overall tribal literacy rate (40.70%) at that time. However, a large chunk of these literate people continued their education up to primary (31.75%) and secondary (24.64%) level, respectively (as shown in Table 3).



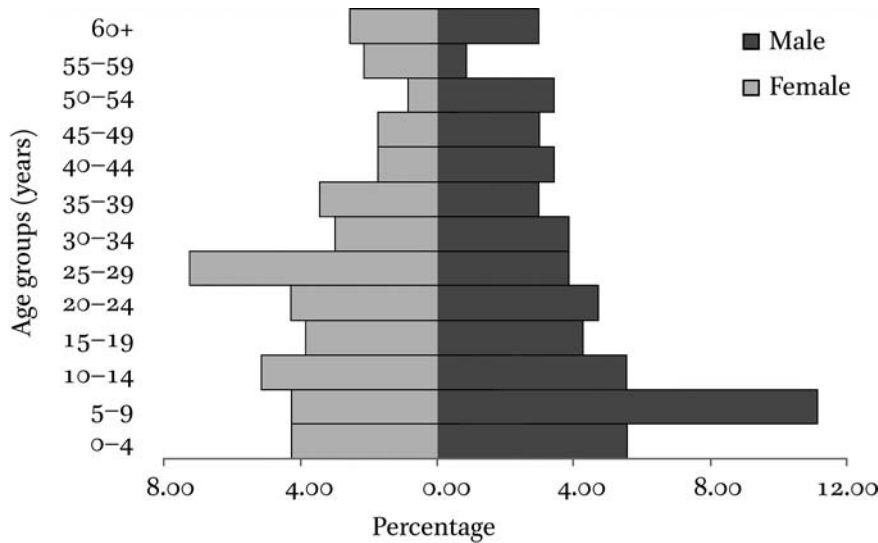


FIGURE 3 Population pyramid of the study group

TABLE 3 Educational status of the Kora of Bindukata village

Educational status	Male		Female		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Non-literate	20	9.48	43	20.38	63	29.86
Can sign	12	5.69	14	6.64	26	12.32
Primary	39	18.48	28	13.27	67	31.75
Secondary	43	20.38	9	4.27	52	24.64
Higher secondary	2	0.95	–		2	0.95
Graduation and above	1	0.47	–		1	0.47
Total*	117	55.45	94	45.55	211	100.00

\* 13 males and 10 females could not attend the normal age for schooling

Very few individuals continued their education up to graduation level (less than 2%) and one of the primary reasons of this dropout is that, after attaining a certain age, young people, especially males, had to support their family economically; therefore, they had no other way but to leave their education halfway through.

TABLE 4 *Age-group, sex and working status-wise distribution of the Kora population*

Age groups (Years)	Male				Female				Total			
	Working		Non-working		Working		Non-working		Working		Non-working	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
0-4	—		13	5.56	—		10	4.27	—		23	9.83
5-9	—		26	11.11	—		10	4.27	—		36	15.38
10-14	—		13	5.56	—		12	5.13	—		25	10.68
15-19	4	1.71	6	2.56	3	1.28	6	2.56	7	2.99	12	5.13
20-24	10	4.27	1	0.43	8	3.42	2	0.85	18	7.69	3	1.28
25-29	9	3.85	—		13	5.56	4	1.71	22	9.40	4	1.71
30-34	9	3.85	—		6	2.56	1	0.43	15	6.41	1	0.43
35-39	7	2.99	—		8	3.42	—		15	6.41	—	
40-44	8	3.42	—		4	1.71	—		12	5.13	—	
45-49	7	2.99	—		4	1.71	—		11	4.70	—	
50-54	7	2.99	1	0.43	1	0.43	1	0.43	8	3.42	2	0.85
55-59	2	0.85	—		3	1.28	2	0.85	5	2.14	2	0.85
60+	5	2.14	2	0.85	1	0.43	5	2.14	6	2.56	7	2.99
<b>Total</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>29.06</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>26.50</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>21.79</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>22.65</b>	<b>119</b>	<b>50.85</b>	<b>115</b>	<b>49.15</b>

Moreover, in regard to the number of persons with education up to the primary and secondary levels, the female members of Bindukata stand way behind in comparison to the male members. Firstly, the number of non-literate persons among the female members is much higher (20.38%) than the male members (9.48%). Furthermore, male members show a higher percentage in primary (18.48%) and secondary education (20.38%), in comparison with female members' primary (13.27%) and secondary (4.27%) levels of education, respectively. Very few who have reportedly had education up to the higher secondary level (0.95%) or above (0.47%), and all are males.

One of the reasons could be that females tend to marry at an early age in comparison with males and that is why representation in higher education of the females is relatively low. Some 47.87% of the total population of Bindukata is unmarried, out of which 29.49% are males and only 18.38% are females.

Table 4 shows the age-group, sex and working status wise distribution of the Kora population in the village, where 50.85% of its total population was

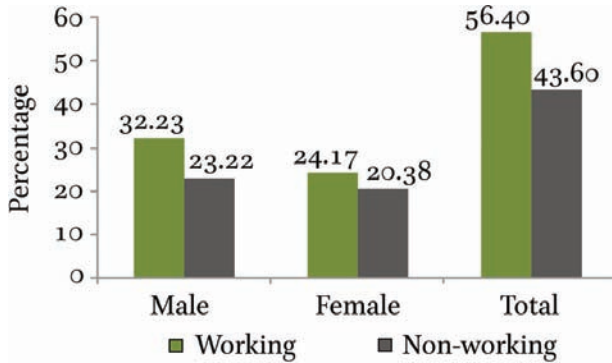


FIGURE 4 *Working status of Kora population in the Bindukata village*

working and another 49.15 % individuals were non-working. Sex-wise breakup of the working population shows that 29.06 % of these working individuals were males and 21.79 % were females, which indicate towards the fact that females also work outside their home. Similarly, 26.50 % of the total non-working population was males and 22.65 % were females. Age-group-wise distribution of the population indicates that the majority of the non-working males and females belonged to either the infant, children or aged categories, which reinstate the fact that children continue their education; hence, they do not engage themselves in economic activity at that age, while the aged have lost their ability to work. However, a certain percentage of the aged (around 8 %) and young (2.99 %) individuals were engaged themselves as part of the working population.

Excluding the infants (less than 5 years) from the eligible working population, it is found that a relatively higher percentage (56.40 %) of individuals were found to be engaged in some sort of work compared to non-working (43.60 %) individuals (as shown in Figure 4). Sex-wise breakup of the working population shows that 32.23 % were males and 24.17 % were females, which indicates towards the fact that males' participation in work outside their home is higher. A total of 43.60 % individuals, including 23.22 % of males and 20.38 % of females, were categorised as part of the non-working population.

### **The Economy of the Kora of Bindukata**

Traditionally, the Kora, as a group, has been associated with earthworks. Both literary and historic evidences suggest that a number of their generations have earned their living by performing manual work, such as the digging of tanks

TABLE 5A *Age-group-wise distribution of Kora males engaged in primary occupation*

Age groups (Years)	Non-worker		Owner-cultivator		Share-cropper		Agricultural labourer		Daily labourer		Business		Service		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
0-4	13	10.00	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	13	10.00
5-9	26	20.00	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	26	20.00
10-14	13	10.00	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	13	10.00
15-19	6	4.62	2	1.54	—	—	2	1.54	—	—	—	—	—	—	10	7.69
20-24	1	0.77	5	3.85	—	—	2	1.54	—	—	1	0.77	2	1.54	11	8.46
25-29	—	—	6	4.62	2	1.54	—	—	1	0.77	—	—	—	—	9	6.92
30-34	—	—	5	3.85	1	0.77	—	—	2	1.54	1	0.77	—	—	9	6.92
35-39	—	—	4	3.08	—	—	—	—	3	2.31	—	—	—	—	7	5.38
40-44	—	—	6	4.62	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	2	1.54	8	6.15
45-49	—	—	7	5.38	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	7	5.38
50-54	1	0.77	3	2.31	—	—	—	—	3	2.31	—	—	1	0.77	8	6.15
55-59	—	—	—	—	1	0.77	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	2	1.54
60+	2	1.54	2	1.54	3	2.31	1	0.77	—	—	—	—	—	—	7	5.38
<b>Total</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>47.69</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>30.77</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>5.38</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>3.85</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>6.92</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1.54</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>3.85</b>	<b>130</b>	<b>100.00</b>

or clearing of jungles. One of the primary reasons being that these people did not have the resources to earn a living through other occupations. But due to their prolonged stay within the groups who have been following the Hindu way of life, some of the more resourceful among the Kora have abandoned their hereditary occupation, saying it often brought a devalued image of being “lower class” (*nichu-jaat*). This fact indicates that due to the advent of the agricultural economy among the Koras of Bindukata at a large scale, a gradual change in the tribal identity has taken place among them. It is further observed that due to the impact of local Hindu caste groups, a number of the villagers have shifted to other occupations, like agriculture, services, business, etc. Among these, agriculture has been one of the most popular sources of livelihood activities.

Tables 5a and 5b show the age-group-wise distribution of Kora males and females engaged in primary occupations, respectively. In case of Kora males, 47.69% individuals were non-workers and, among workers, the majority of the individuals were engaged in agricultural activities as owner-cultivators (30.77%), sharecroppers (5.38%) and agricultural labourers (3.85%) (see

TABLE 5B *Age-group-wise distribution of Kora females engaged in primary occupation*

Age groups (Years)	Non-worker		Owner-cultivator		Share-cropper		Agricultural labourer		Daily labourer		Business		Service		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
0-4	10	9.62	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	10	9.62
5-9	10	9.62	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	10	9.62
10-14	12	11.54	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	12	11.54
15-19	6	5.77	—	—	—	—	2	1.92	1	0.96	—	—	—	—	9	8.65
20-24	2	1.92	—	—	—	—	4	3.85	4	3.85	—	—	—	—	10	9.62
25-29	4	3.85	—	—	—	—	8	7.69	5	4.81	—	—	—	—	17	16.35
30-34	1	0.96	—	—	—	—	3	2.88	3	2.88	—	—	—	—	7	6.73
35-39	—	—	—	—	1	0.96	4	3.85	3	2.88	—	—	—	—	8	7.69
40-44	—	—	—	—	—	—	3	2.88	1	0.96	—	—	—	—	4	3.85
45-49	—	—	—	—	1	0.96	2	1.92	1	0.96	—	—	—	—	4	3.85
50-54	1	0.96	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	0.96	—	—	—	—	2	1.92
55-59	2	1.92	1	0.96	—	—	1	0.96	—	—	—	—	1	0.96	5	4.81
60+	5	4.81	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	0.96	—	—	6	5.77
<b>Total</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>50.96</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0.96</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1.92</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>25.96</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>18.27</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0.96</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0.96</b>	<b>104</b>	<b>100.00</b>

Table 5a). In addition, a certain percentage of workers were engaged in daily labour activities (6.92%), services (3.85%) and business (1.54%). On the contrary, 50.96% females were non-workers, although they were engaged in other household activities but did not work outside the home (see Table 5a). Among working females, the majority were engaged as agricultural labourers (25.96%) and daily labourers (18.27%). The primary occupations a few females were owner-cultivators (0.96%), sharecroppers (1.92%), business (0.96%) and services (0.96%) (see Table 5b). Besides household and paid labour activities, these working females also work on their own agricultural land. It is further observed that entry level age group in any occupation was 15–19 years for both males and females and they continued their occupational activity to the age of 60 years onwards (around 5% of males and 1% of females).

It has been found that usually it is the male members who perform the role of owner-cultivators or sharecroppers, while female members work either as agricultural laborers or daily/manual labourers. Agricultural activities of this region mainly revolve around paddy cultivation. In this region, paddy

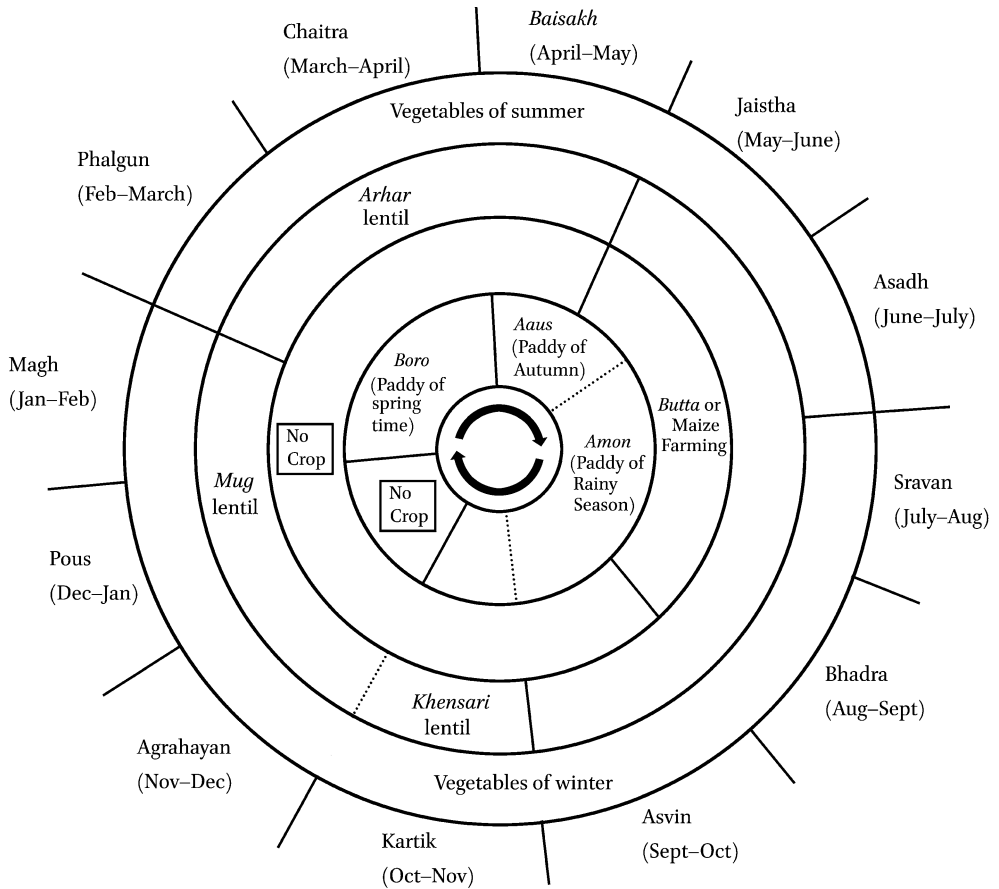


FIGURE 5 Kora agricultural calendar

is cultivated three times a year. The *aaush* paddy is cultivated between the months of June and September, *aamon* paddy is cultivated between the month of June and November and *boro* paddy is cultivated between December and April. Aside from that, different types of cereals like maize, wheat and different pulses, such as *arhar* and *khesari*, are also grown as rotational crops (see Figure 5). A few others produce vegetables, such as tomato, chilli and brinjal, as part of their kitchen garden.

In order to supplement their livelihood activities, sometimes, the male members of Kora community carry out fishing activities also, but only as a subsidiary occupation. The Kora of Bindukata mainly practice shallow-water fishing during the monsoon. For carrying out their fishing activities, these people use different types of hand-operated nets, such as *chakni-jaal*, and traps, such as box-traps (*ghuni*) and bag traps (*patta*). Usually, they plant some of

these instruments in their waterlogged paddies. Sometimes, they also use cast nets (*khepla-jaal*) and fishing rods (*chip*) to catch fish from ponds and ditches.

There was also a customary practice of ceremonial hunting among the Kora of Bindukata. These people consider this act as one of the most integral parts of their socio-economic life, which they have managed to hold onto as a part of their tribal traditions. This ceremony is known as *sendra* and it is performed on a particular date (a day before the end of the Bengali calendar year or *chaitra-sankranti*) each year. During this ceremonial hunting, all the male members of Kora community go to the forest of Kolaboni early in the morning, which almost 10 km away. First, they surround the forest and then they play trumpets and hit drums so that birds and animals come out of their shelter out of fear. The birds and animals are then killed by either a bow and arrow, an axe or a spear. The flesh of the killed animals is shared equally among the participants.

Villagers of Bindukata rear a large number of cattle and goat for milk. At the time of the fieldwork, the number of bullocks in the village was only 36, and they were mainly used for agricultural activity. In addition, a large number of hens are reared by the villagers. Conversely, the numbers of ducks and geese are relatively low. The study has also revealed that the Kora in Bindukata use various local terms to identify different types of flora and fauna such as *merom* for goat, *vrich* for cow, *sim* for hen, *hons* for duck and *kora* for buffalo. Kora people also domesticate dogs and cats in their houses.

### Political Organisation

Generally, two types of political organisations are found in the village: traditional and modern. In the case of the traditional political organisation, *majhi* (village headman) play the role of head. The assistant of the *majhi* is locally known as the *kotal*. It is revealed that in case of any mishap/breaking of rules by the villagers, a trial session (*bichar-sabha*) is called near the club-house of the village. In the case of *bichar*, all the village members provide their opinion but the *majhi* delivers the final verdict. On the other hand, Bindukata is governed by the "Three Tier Panchayati Raj System" of the Government of India and is connected to other villages and larger segments of local government. As a result, different local administrative divisions are noticed, such as *gram-panchayat* (lowermost tier of Panchayati Raj), *anchal-panchayat* (middle tier of Panchayati Raj) and *panchayat samiti* (upper tier of Panchayati Raj). So, it can be said that a parallel system of political organisation is followed by the Kora of Bindukata where traditional and conventional/modern political organisa-

tions run side by side. It is further observed that nowadays the major role of the traditional political organisation is confined to solving minor intra-village conflicts and making decisions in connection to traditional rituals and religious practices, while major developmental works and the political activities of Indian democracy is conducted by the modern Three Tier Panchayati Raj System.

### **The Social Life of the Kora**

The social status of the Kora people is considered by the local Hindu mainstream people to be at the same level of social hierarchy as other tribes, like Santals, Sahis, Oraon and untouchable Hindu caste groups of the region. The Kora society is patriarchal in nature where the authority to take control and make decisions mostly lies in hands of male members. The relation between husband and wife though is very cordial. As in other tribal communities, Kora society is also divided in different forms of descent groups, such as clans and lineages. Clans and lineages play an important role in regulating marital alliances. The Kora generally practice community endogamy and clan exogamy. Nonetheless, exceptions in regard to inter-community marriages have been found. A few cases of Kora men marrying Santal women have been reported, which suggests that the rules of community endogamy have become weak. However, intra-clan marriages among the Kora community though are still severely punished. Usually, the Kora choose their mate from a neighbouring Kora settlement. But at times, these ties extend beyond the boundary of neighbouring groups, where marital alliances are fixed with a family living in far away from a particular village.

Most of the families among the Kora are nuclear in structure where the couple lives with their unmarried children. Often, the economically independent son among this community separates from his parents as soon as he gets married. The existence of joint family is very rare. In spite of that, the people maintain a reciprocal relationship with their clan and lineage members. Exchange of gift on occasions of birth, marriage and death takes place quite freely. Consequently, joint and extended families are rare in Bindukata but such types of family cannot be totally ignored. Instances of several married brothers living together with their wives and children have been found.

The division of labour in a Kora household is quite obvious. Usually, the mature male members act as the head of a Kora family. He is the key person who controls the family financial resources and is held responsible for procuring the livelihood resources necessary for his family members. On the con-



trary, the mother of a family is the person in supreme command in household affairs. Her permission is to be obtained in any business concerning household affairs. Adult sons are supposed to help their father in the procuring of livelihood resources, repairing and construction of old and new dwelling huts, in agricultural operations and so on. Similarly, daughters assist their mother in domestic work: cooking, rearing children, fetching of drinking water, collection of fuel and cleaning the house are within the purview of the female duties.

The Kora recognise two types of property: private property and communal property. The pasture land and agricultural fields are the property of the village. Individuals have usufructory right over these lands. On the contrary, homesteads with dwelling huts, domestic animals, personal dresses and ornaments, utensils, weapons and implements are included in the category of private property. Private property is owned by the sons. Daughters inherit nothing. Primogeniture principle (eldest son or daughter enjoys the lion's share of the parental property) is applicable to some items of property.

### *Life-Cycle*

Ritual surrounding the event of the birth of children in the Kora household starts in the seventh month of pregnancy. They observe the ritual of *saadh-bhakkhan*, which is quite common to their Hindu neighbours. This ritual is arranged in the household of the pregnant woman's father, and he also bears all the costs of this ritual. On the day of this ritual, the father and mother of pregnant woman go to the nearest temple for worship. They pray for the good health and well-being of their daughter and her child by offering fruits and sweets. When they return, the pregnant woman takes a bath and wears new clothes. Then, seven types of fried vegetables, pickles, fried rice or *muri* and sweets are given to her. This is known as *saadh*. While eating, a lighted lamp is placed in front of the pregnant woman and a little girl sits on her lap. A feast is arranged on this occasion for the relatives and the family members. A similar *saadh-bhakkhan* ritual is arranged in the pregnant woman's husband's household, but on a much smaller scale.

After the birth of the child, both the mother and her newborn baby generally live in her parental home. A pollution period is observed for nine days from the day of childbirth. After these nine days, a purification ritual is performed, where the mother of the newborn cuts her nails herself. Further, a small ritual takes place in the house of the father of newborn baby where some villagers and close relatives are invited. In front of all these invited persons, the name of the newborn baby is declared. Kora society considers this as a way of giving recognition to a newborn baby.

Marriage is an important life-cycle ritual among the Kora, which is known as *dutam*. They generally practice community endogamy and clan exogamy. Nonetheless, exceptions in regard to these rules have been found. We have made a narrative study on the different forms of marriage patterns practised among the Kora of Bindukata.

Different ways of acquiring mates have been found among the Kora of Bindukata. Marriage by negotiation is one of most common ways of acquiring a mate among them, which they call *nel-dutam* or *kater-eng-a-pu-dutam*. Besides, instances of marriage by elopement have also been found, which is locally known as *kheter-dutam-huina*. In such cases, the boy and girl generally perform the marriage rituals at the temples of local Hindu Gods and Goddess after the elopement. Further, infrequent instances of marriage by love (*bhalobasa-khata-dutam*), marriage by exchange (*badal-dutam*) and marriage by intrusion (*balamtanay-dutam*) have also been found among the Kora. The Kora still exchange a bride price and dowry: Jewellery, household utensils, cash and various other gifts are exchanged.

Usually, marriage starts with a small ritual, known as *sulum-sasa*. This ritual takes place in the morning of the day of the marriage. In this ritual, a mixture of turmeric and oil is applied over the body of the bride and groom. *Sulum-sasa* takes place at a sacred place, known as *chamra-tala* in front of the tribal priest or *dehori*. After that, one kin member from groom's family ties a sacred thread knotted with a mango leaf on the hand of the bride. This ritual is known as *majna bandha*. On the afternoon of marriage, the groom and all his kin members go to the house of the bride. These accompanying persons of the groom are called as *bhuinyat*. Thereafter, the rituals of actual marriage are performed at the *chamra-tala* of the bride's family household. Marriage takes place in front of the *dehori*. Members of the bride's family and the *bhuinyat* gather at the *chamra-tala* during the marriage.

During marriage, the groom and the bride, respectively, stand to the right and left of a yoke and two bundles of straw kept at the *chamra-tala*. Then, the bride touches the toes of the groom with her own toes. At this point of time, the groom applies vermilion over the forehead and chest of the bride. Then, the family members scatter holy water, puffed rice and flowers over the head of newly-married couple. This way, the ritual of marriage or *dutam* ends. Then, a feast is offered to the *bhuinyat* and other invitees of the marriage by the bride's family. On the next day, the bride-groom goes to the groom's family household to reside there. On the night of the day, a feast is offered by the groom's family to the visiting members of bride's family, who are known as *bahorta*. In this way, the entire ritual of marriage ends.

Besides marriage, death is also an important phenomenon in the Kora life-cycle. After the death of a person, the dead body is first decorated by white clay, sandalwood paste and *tulasi* (holy basil) leaves. The feet of the dead body are decorated with a kind of lac-dye or *alta*. After these activities, the close kin members of the dead person carry the dead body to a nearby burning *ghaat* or crematorium. In Bindukata, there is no public crematorium, so the dead body is cremated on the ground, owned either by the deceased person himself/herself or by any close kin of his/her family.

While carrying the dead body, these people chant the words *bolo-hari-hari-bol*. Use of *tulsi* leaves in the decoration of dead body and chanting of words *bolo-hari-hari-bol* (i.e., all the names of the almighty God *Hari*) indicates the influence of Hinduism upon the rituals related to death because *tulashi* (holy basil) leaves are sacred to the Hindus and *Hari* is another name of the Hindu God Lord Vishnu. It is mentionable that the dead body is carried to the crematorium with a procession and an accompanying person scatters some spices and fried paddy grains along the way.

After reaching the crematorium, first, a five-foot-long and six-foot-wide trench is dug in the ground. Then, a pile of firewood is prepared over this trench. The naked dead body is placed over this pile, where the head and feet of the dead body faces to the south and north, respectively. The youngest son of the deceased person then holds a bunch of burning straw and revolves around the dead body kept over the pile. The other sons of the deceased person accompany their younger brother by holding his shoulder with one hand and covering their eyes with another. Finally, they place the burning straw on the mouth of the dead body.

After the cremation, the nearest kin of the deceased person make a small doll or *hor* from the cremated ash of the dead person and place a *kush* plant, *tulshi* plant and some water in an earthen pitcher with a number of pores in it. Then, the sons and kin members who have participated in the cremation activity go to the nearby *naheer-khal* and take a bath. Only the person who has given fire to the mouth of the deceased wears new clothes and hangs a bunch of cotton threads tied to an iron ring around his neck. After that, the relatives and close kin members of the dead person observe a pollution period for nine days. During these nine days, the relatives and the kin members of deceased person observe a restriction on the consumption of non-vegetarian food items. In addition, both males and females do not comb their hair and use any kind of oil, cosmetics and soap. Men, especially, do not shave and trim their nails, nor participate in any other kind of ceremony and ritual in the village. This pollution period ends on the 10th day, when all the kin members of dead person trim their nails and shave their heads and beards. They take a purification bath

in a nearby pond. After this activity, all the persons drink locally made rice beer or *handia*. On that night, a chicken is sacrificed in the name of the dead person and its flesh is boiled in water. Then, the boiled chicken, rice and some *handia* are placed in a small house made out of *kush* grass straw. The kin members of deceased then burn this small house. While burning this house, all the kin members of dead person shout to the dead person and tell him that he is now dead and his home is being burnt. This ritual is known as *ghar-poraus*. After this ritual, a feast is arranged for the people who have participated in the activities of cremation. On the 11th day, the funeral of the dead person takes place. With the assistance of village priest or *dhutful*, the relatives and kinsmen arrange a prayer on the morning of the funeral. Then, the family members of deceased arrange a feast for close kin and fellow villagers that night. The funeral ritual ends with this feast.

### *Religion and Rituals*

The Kora of Bindukata still practice their tribal religion, however, some belief and ritual practices of the Hindu religion are also found among them. The study shows that there were no Hindu temples in Bindukata at the time of our field visit. However, villagers regularly went to temples of Hindu deities, situated in Dohijuri, for worship. There were two *Jaherthans* (a local ritual place) in the village; one is situated at the northern side and another at the southern side of the village. The northern *Jaherthan* is bounded by five *babla* trees. There are also an *asan* tree and a banyan tree in the middle portion of this *Jaherthan*. Many terracotta figurines are placed under the trees. The southern *Jaherthan* is bounded by *babla* tree and there is a *kochla* tree in the middle portion.

Apart from these, the Kora religion revolves around the belief in the supernatural beings. The Kora religious system is a mixture of the traditional tribal faith and Hinduism. The high god among the Kora is *Grambonga*, who is also their village deity. They also worship a number of Hindu gods and goddesses, like *Kali*, *Durga*, *Manasa*, *Shiva*, *Sitala* and a few other deities. A specialist of tribal religion among the Kora is known as *dehori*. He assists them in worship and also helps them to perform the marriage, birth and death rituals. Besides, another tribal religious practitioner locally known as *dhutful* is also found among them. Clan-based worship has been found among the Kora of Bindukata. *Karam-Puja* and *Kali-Puja* are their major festivals, although a number of religious ceremonies take place at different times of a year. Some of the festivals have been illustrated in Table 6.

On the first day of *Baisakh* (April–May), which according to the Bengali calendar is the first day of the Bengali New Year, a fair takes place at Ballamdanga

village, which is around 5 km away to the north of Bindukata. This fair is organised as part of the worship of the Hindu God Lord Shiva. This fair continues for two days. The people of Bindukata participate in this fair.

TABLE 6 *Religious ceremonies and festivals practiced by the Kora in Bindukata*

Name of month**	Name of ceremony or festival	Place of worship	Name of God or Goddess	Purpose	Propitiator	Offering
Baishakh	Shiv-puja	Karudih	Shiva	Villagers' prosperity	Priest/ <i>Sanyashi</i>	Candle, paddy, fruits, flowers
Jaistha	Rohin puja	Village residence	Manasa	Paddy production	Household head	Hen/fowl, milk, fruits, incense sticks
Ashar	Ambubachi	Every house	Earth	Favourable climate	Household head	Milk, fruits flowers
Shravan	Goram-puja	Dahijhuri-Sitalamandir	Sitala	Rain	Priest/ <i>Dehri</i>	Fruits, flowers
Bhadra	Karam-puja	Few houses	Viswa-karma	Good workability	Priest	Fruits, flowers, sacrificial goat
Aswin	Durga-puja	Dahijhuri	Durga	Evil power demolition	Priest	Fruits, flowers, sacrificial goat
	Laksmi-puja	Dahijhuri	Lakshmi	Wealth accumulation	Priest	Fruits, flowers milk
	Dak-puja	Every house	Manasa	Villagers' prosperity	Villagers	Fruits, flowers, milk
Kartick	Kali-puja	Karudih	Kali	Evil power	Priest	Fruits milk, flowers, fowl
	Goru-khutan	Cowshed	Cows	Cows' prosperity	Women	Incense sticks, eggs, milk, fowl, vermilion, country liquor
Agrahion	Dharam-puja	Village <i>Jaherthan</i>	Dharma	Paddy production	Priest	Sacrificial goat, incense sticks, candles
Poush	Makar-sankranti	Every house	Lakshmi or Tusu	Wealth accumulation	Women of family	Fruits, purchased paddy, cake of sugar, fried rice

Name of month**	Name of ceremony or festival	Place of worship	Name of God or Goddess	Purpose	Propitiator	Offering
Magh	Maghi-puja	Every house	Goram	Family members' prosperity	Kissar families	Sweets, rice purchased paddy, sacrificial goat
Falgun	Dol-purnima	Every house	Krishna	Family's prosperity	Females and males members	Flowers, sweets, colours
Chaitra	Gajan	Karudih	Shiva	Villagers' prosperity	Sanyashi/ Monk	Flowers, fruits

\*\* Baishakh (April–May), Jaistha (May–June), Ashar (June–July), Shravan (July–August), Bhadra (August–September), Aswin (September–October), Kartick (October–November), Agrahion (November–December), Poush (December–January), Magh (January–February), Falgun (February–March), Chaitra (March–April)

On the last day of the Bengali New Year, the devotees of Lord Shiva from Bindukata and nearby villages perform a ceremony of self-torturing, known as *gajan*. Next, the Kora worship *rohin-thakur* during the month of *Jaistha* (May–June). This festival is known as *rohin-puja*. *Rohin-puja* is mainly performed before the sowing of seeds. In the month of *Ashar* (June–July), the Kora observe the Hindu ritual, *ambubachi*. As part of this ritual, generally, the Kora female members do not consume their staple food, rice, for four consecutive days. Instead, they eat different dry foods like *muri* (puffed fried rice), *chira* (parched rice) and different fruits during the observance of this ritual. Besides, all activities related to agriculture come to a halt during the four days of this ritual. This ritual is followed by another Hindu festival, *ratha-yatra*, which the Kora observe in the month of *Ashar* (June–July). Previously, this festival used to take place in the village of Dahijuri, 4 km from Bindukata village in the west. The Kora worship the Goddess *Sitala* in the month of *Shravan* (July–August). Villagers go to the Dahijuri *Sitala-mandir* to worship her as they believe that she is responsible for the rain. This worship is locally known as *goram-puja*. After that, they worship *karam-thakur* in the month of *Bhadra* (August–September). The entire village takes part in this festival. This festival is locally known as *karam-puja*. Both men and women sing folk songs during this festival. Two goats are sacrificed during this festival. After this festival, the Kora worship another Hindu God Lord *Viswakarma* in the month of *Bhadra* (August–September). *Viswakarma-puja* or the worship of Lord *Viswakarma* is an integral part of households own-

ing agricultural machines and tools. After this, the Kora participate in the worship of Goddess *Durga* in the month of *Aswin* (September–October). All the villagers go to the Dahijuri *Durga* temple for worship. Here, the Goddess *Durga* is worshipped by the local Brahmin priest and a male goat is sacrificed on the fourth day of this festival. The next ceremony, *Lakshmi-puja*, is performed in the month *Aswin*. Every household of Bindukata performs this ceremony. Every Kora household of Bindukata village also worships the Goddess *Manasa* in the same month, which is locally known as *dak-puja*; no animals are sacrificed during this ceremony. The villagers then worship the Goddess *Kali* in the month of *Kartick* (October–November) at the Karudih temple, which is 2 km away from village in the south-east. In the same month, another important festival is practised by the Kora, known as *urich-khutan* or *goru-khutan*. During this festival, the Kora women worship their cows in the cowshed and male members consume various types of country liquor like *mahua* and *handia*. The villagers simultaneously observe another Hindu ritual known as *bhai-phonta* along with the festival of *goru-khutan*. Next, the Kora worship *Dharma-karma thakur* (the God *Darma-karma*) in the month of *Agrahian* (November–December); this is a harvest festival locally known as *saral-puja*. This festival is arranged at the southern *jaherthan* of the village. Both male goats and chickens are sacrificed during this festival. The members of the *Haver* clan of this village propitiate in the worship the God *dharmakarma*. Thereafter, the Kora worship *Tusu-thakur* (the Goddess *Tusu*) in the month of *Poush* (December–January). House-wives from each household of village take part in this festival. This festival is locally known as *Poush-Parban* or *Choto-Makar*. The Kora worship *Goram-thakur* (the God *Goram*) in the month of *Magh* (January–February). This festival takes place at the northern *jaherthan* of the village and is known as *Maghi-Puja*. Persons belonging to the *Kissar* clan propitiate in this festival. The Kora observe another Hindu festival, *dol-yatra*, during the Spring. This festival is observed in the month of *Falgun* (February–March). Along with their Hindu neighbours, the entire village celebrates this festival. Lastly, in the month of *Chaitra* (March–April), the Kora worship the Lord *Shiva* with the belief that he will bless them with good luck during hunting; the villagers go to the Karudih *Shiv-mandir* for the worship.

### Conclusion

A two-fold conclusion can be drawn for the present study. In one way, this study provides a description of some aspects of the social life of the Kora of Bindukata village. In another way, this study focuses mostly on the changing

aspects of their social life. However, in the description part of the social aspect of the villagers, major emphasis is done to bring forward those features of social life from which the changes in the life of Kora people can be scaled. Due to this fact, in the conclusion part, we will mainly place emphasis on the changing life of the Kora of Bindukata. It is true that the study of cultural changes at a local or regional scale cannot produce the entire scenario of changing aspects of Kora tribal culture of India. But if the villages of India are considered as the microcosm of India as a whole, this study may produce some aspects of cultural transformation of a tribal group of eastern India.

Various studies (Bose, 1941, 1964, 1969; Sinha, 1958; Orans, 1965; Munshi, 1979; Roy Burman, 1983; Mahapatra, 1986; Dash, 1998; Xaxa, 1999) have revealed that the tribal peoples of India have been going through a process of assimilation and acculturation, gradually becoming included within the Hindu caste framework. This process is sometimes called the “Hindu Method of Tribal Absorption” (Bose, 1941, cited in Munshi, 1979: 294), “Hinduisation” (Gautam, 2016) or as “Tribe-Caste Continuum” or “Tribe-Peasant Continuum” (Sinha, 1965).

The result of the present study, quite similar to the observations of Banerjee (1991) and Paul (2001), brings forward a similar scenario where the Kora tribal group of West Bengal is gradually assimilating with the Hindu community at large. The effect of this gradual transformation can be seen in various social-cultural and even material-cultural features of the Kora of Bindukata village. It has been mentioned before that the traditional economy of the Kora was earth digging/earth working and due to this particular economic specialisation, they are known as “Kora” or *earth diggers*. However, this study reveals that the Kora of Bindukata are not engaged with earth digging anymore because they believe that this activity brings them a devalued image in the eyes of their Hindu neighbours. Nowadays, a major portion of the Kora people living in Bindukata are engaged in agricultural activities. Most of them have their own land and others are working either as sharecroppers or agricultural labourers. Much evidence indicates that the impact of Hindu social hierarchy has gradually entered the belief system of the Kora. The effect of Hinduism can be seen in the Kora rituals related to agricultural activities too. Hindu rituals like “*makar-sankranti*” or “*lakshmi puja*” or even cow worship, which is known as “*Goru Khuntan*” in the Kora language, are practised by the Kora. All these aforesaid evidences actually support the claim of Bose (1941, cited in Mahapatra, 2006: 3) regarding the process of the Hindu method of tribal absorption.

Almost similar scenarios have been noted in regards to social-cultural aspects. Life-cycle rituals related to birth, marriage and Death represent a mixture of customs and rituals performed by tribals and Hindu caste groups. Offer-



ing of special feast to a pregnant woman (known as *saadh-bhakshan*) at a certain stage of gestation like Hindus, instances of marriage taking place in local Hindu *mandirs*, use of vermilion (*sindur*), conch shell bangles (*sankha*) and iron bangles (*noa*) by married Kora women indicate towards the fact that influence of neighbouring Hindu societies have been quite strong. Furthermore, use of Brahmin priests during the worship of Hindu Gods and Goddesses and the use of tribal priests during traditional Kora rituals, the presence of the tribal ritual place (*jaherthan*) in the village and the *mandir* of Hindu Gods/Goddesses near the village and, finally, the existence of traditional tribal political organisations along with the Panchayati Raj system in the village indicate towards the fact that perhaps the Kora of Bindukata are going through a process of religious, cultural and social amalgamation, which is popularly known as “syncretism” (Das, 2006; Singh, 2015).

Studies of Bailey (1957), Dash (1998, cited in Mahapatra, 2006), Mahapatra (2006) and Gautam (2016) have shown that a number of tribal groups of eastern India, especially in the states of Orissa, Jharkhand and Bihar have completely given up their tribal identity and they claim themselves as various sub-castes of Hindu social structure, for example, the Mahatos of Jharkhand and West Bengal, and the Bhagats and Saraks of Jharkhand and Bihar can be taken into consideration (Gautam, 2016). However, there are certain tribal groups in this region who still continues their traditional cultural practices along with their tribal identity and, very recently, a kind of re-tribalisation (Mahapatra, 2006: 35–36) or claim of new tribal identity or tribal nationality (Mahapatra, 2006: 35–36) has been seen among elite tribal groups, like Santals, Mundas and Gonds of eastern India. The situation among the Kora of Bindukata is a little bit different. The Kora in this particular region are still in a “Cultural Transitional Phase”, i.e., they can be placed in an in-between phase of Tribal-Caste transformation. However, results coming out of the present article indicate that gradual changes of economy, ritual behaviour and other cultural practices, the impact of local Hindu caste groups and the advent of modern technology and Western culture may bring forward a serious challenge to the Kora tribal group of eastern India in sustaining their tribal way of life in the near future.

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