

## GORAIT

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The Gorait: An Ethnographic Profile

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### CHAPTER - I

#### **Sub Headings of the Ethnographic Report will be in the following manner**

1. **Introduction (Present demography, Origin, Migration, History etc).**

(A) Present Demography:

(B) Origin:

The Goraites are a minor scheduled tribe scattered throughout the state of Bihar. Their population during 1941 census was distributed as follows: Patna 4311, Gaya 1071, Shahabad 43, Monghyr 133, Bhagalpur 54, Purnea 106, Santal Paragnas 16, Hazaribagh 250, Ranchi 2955, Palamau 53, Dhanbad 105, Singhbhum 194.

In these areas, they live with other tribes and castes. Mostly their habitat is surrounded by hilly ranges covered with forest in the Chotanagpur and Bhagalpur divisions. In these areas, they support themselves by agriculture, forest products, occasional labour for wages and as drum players. The Goraites are Proto-Austroaloid. Linguistically, they belong to Austric group which is locally known as Munda. In different areas, they speak the languages of their neighbours. They understand and speak Hindi in addition to their own dialect.

In 1891, Risely recorded that on the basis of the totemistic character of their sections, Gorait, Korait and Bukar are offshoots of the aboriginal tribe which the variant Korait rather suggests that they may be connected with the Kora caste. He further recorded that the 'Korait may probably have been the original name of the caste, which was corrupted into Gorait from its similarity in sound to the village messenger and watchman. Their specialised and comparatively degraded avocations and the fact that they are not employed as village messengers exclude the supposition that the converse process might have been at work and that the bond of a common occupation might have been at work and that bond of a common occupation might have

formed a number of Goraitis properly so called into an endogamous group bearing that name. (Book- Land and people of Tribal Bihar – Narmadeshwar Prasad).

## 2. Linguistic affinity

### Physical features

#### 1. Material culture

The house construction of the Goraitis vary from area to area. Its pattern has been imitated from the neighbours. In Ranchi Sadar, their house consist of more than one room. In one room, they have their kitchen and besides this it is used as bed and store room. The other room which is behind the house is occupaid by cattle. The houses are constructed form sal or any other woods, bamboo, thatched grass (kher), paddy straw and mud. The walls are plastered with mud. Inside the room, they construct wooden racks for keeping household articles. They do not construct window, as result of which it is impossible to see anything inside the room, even during day time. Very little comes through the doors. The daors are fixed permanently.

#### 2. Occupation (Economy, Livelihood, and pattern):

Their source of livelihood are agriculture, forest products and labour for wages. Besides this they work as drum-players, village messengers and watchmen.

Many of them own land. In ploughable lands, they sow paddy. The seeds are sown in small plots in the month of June. The seedlings are prepared in a month, which are then transplanted in the paddy fields. The paddy is harvested in the onth of November-December. The sowing is done by men. Weeding is done in the field twice or thrice by both the sexes with a sickle (dat). The harvesting is done by both men and women.

Besides, this, they collect edible fruits viz Bel, Bair, Mango etc in different seasons. They also use various timber viz sal, kend, mahua etc in their house construction ; they are used as fire wood as well.

Ocassional labour for wages is another source of their livelihood. They work as agricultural labourer in the fields of their neighbours. During marriage, birth and other festivals they are employed as drum players by their neighbours.

#### 1. Art and Craft:

#### 2. Food habit

Gorait's cooking implements are mostly of earth in which rice, dal, or vegetables are cooked. Very few of them own metal utensils for cooking. The food is served in metal plate while drinking water is served in a metal tumbler. The food articles are stored in wooden vessels, which they make themselves.

Baskets : This is made by them for storing grain and collecting fruits from the jungles.

Winnowing fan : After harvesting of paddy, they use it for winnowing the harvested grain.

Pounding stone : A grindstone and a head-stone roller are used for pounding grain and turmeric.

Broom : the brooms are purchased from the market for sweeping the house, which is done twice a day. The dirt is not thrown at any particular place.

Plough : The wooden portion is made by them while its iron head is obtained from the market.

Wooden Mortar and pestle ; They use it for husking paddy.

Cot : They make it from wood and rope prepared from the fibres of a tree. This is used to sleep on and they are also offered to guests to sit upon.

Gourd ladle : Gourd ladles of various shapes and sizes are used as ladles and water containers.

### 3. Village life (type of village)

The Gorait's do not live in a place as a group. They live in villages inhabited by other tribes and castes.

### 4. Dress & Ornaments:

Their dress and ornaments are purchased from the local market. The children up to four or five years do not use any clothes. Then up to puberty, they use loin clothes as lower garment. One end of it is tied round the waist and then it is allowed to hang down to the knee. After puberty they use clothes. Men wear a shirt and a dhoti. The dress of the women consists of a sari. When she goes out she puts on a blouse.

The women wear very few ornaments. Ear rings, nose ring, garland of beads are the brass ornaments which are used by the women folk. A few rich Gorait's have one or two silver ornaments.

### 5. Social organization (Society, Clan system):

Society : The family of the Goraitis consists of the husband, wife and unmarried children. It is thus of nuclear type.

Inheritance among the Goraitis is patrilineal. The property is portioned equally among the sons after the father's death. Daughters are entitled to maintenance until the marriage. Widows are entitled to maintenance so long as they are not remarried. In case of there being no heir to claim the property, it is acquired by the village headman, as a village consolidated property.

Clan system : From Risely's account, we learn that they have various sections of totemistic character. Some of the sections are 'Bagh'(Tiger) 'Induar' (a kind of eel) 'khalkho' (a fish) 'toppo' ( a kind of bird) etc. He has given a long list of these sections which are of totemistic character. Marriage within these sections do not take place.

The Goraitis observes a rule of avoidance with certain relatives with whom no physical or joking relationship is maintained. The avoidance is observed with wife's husband's elder sister, younger brother's wife, husbands elder brother etc. The joking relationship is allowed with wives younger sister, husband's younger brother, elder brother's wife etc. They can marry wife's younger sister or widow of deceased elder brother.

#### 10. Political life (Customary law, Kinship)

As the Goraitis are scattered, their tribal panchayat does not function smoothly. In the absence of this, any dispute concerning their community is heard by a council of elders, which disposes of the cases, according to their traditional customary laws. Some of their customary laws are as follows :

- a) Inheritance is patrilineal. Property is shared equally among the sons.
- b) After marriage, sexual relationship with a man other than her husband is an offence.
- c) Premarital sexual relation is not permitted.
- d) Witch craft is not tolerated. Witches are expelled from the village, if detected.
- e) Widow marriage is permitted.
- f) Divorce is granted by the tribal panchayat on grounds of cruelty, barrenness, impotency, adultery, etc. Divorced persons can marry again.

At the time of delivery, the pregnant women is attended by a midwife known as Dhai. Besides her, other women members remain in the lying - in-room. As soon as the child takes birth, the umbilical cord is cut by the Dhai with a knife. The placenta and after -birth are buried outside the house. Birth pollution is observed for eight days. During this period the father does not cut his hair or beard or nail till the eighth day. The nails of the child and mother are pared then they take bath which makes them clean. The child is named off after this ceremony is over. This is given by his or her elder relatives after reading omens.

The Goraitis are monogamous but polygamy is permitted. In marriage, the girls side is first of all approached by the boys parents. In marriage negotiations, they generally settle the bride price. The bride price constitutes of a sari, a he-goat and three to five rupees to buy ornaments with. It is paid before marriage.

The Barat is brought by the boy's side. The actual marriage ceremony starts in the morning. The marriage is performed in the marriage booth. Risely writes that " The marriage is completed by the bride and bride groom smearing smearing vermilion on each others forehead (Sindur dan). In widow marriage sindur dan is performed in the presence of the widows relatives but there is no marriage procession.

#### 11. Religion:

The Gods worshipped by the are Devi Mai and Purubia. The Purubia, a tribal spirit is given a goat once a year. Illness is due to demon or witch who are detected by an exorcist (Mati; Baiga). Besides this, ancestor worship is practiced by them. They are propitiated on all occasions.

#### 12. Line of descent

#### 13. Disposal of death

The rich people burn their dead while the body of the poor are buried, head to the north. The death pollution is observed for ten days. On the tenth day, the nearest relative of the deceased gets himself shaved and gives a feast to the friends of the family.

Points to be considered for the Ethnographic Study?

##### A. Name, Identity, Origin and History

1. Name of the community, other name, name referred by other communities, meaning associated with the name.
2. Name mentioned above are considered derogatory in any manner?
3. Traditional demography.
4. History of origin of your community
5. Myth and legends, if any, associated with the origin and migration of your community.
6. Any other information.

##### B. Habitation pattern

1. Type of village
2. Whether mixed with other communities/religious groups etc.
3. Neighborhood pattern

4. Dwelling unit. Ground plan of the dwelling unit i.e. Rectangular / square/ oval/circular/any other.

5. Any other information.

C. Food and drink

1. Type of utensil used for preparing and serving food and drinks.

2. Staple food.

3. Food items.

4. Drinks and types of drinks.

5. How many meals take everyday.

6. Any other information.

Address and Ornaments

1. Type of dress worn by a) Adult male/ Adult female – i)

head gear, ii) Upper garment, iii) Lower garment. b)

Male child/Female child – i) head gear, ii) Upper garment, iii) Lower garment.

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2. Uniqueness of the dress pattern.

3. Type of dress worn during festivals/special occasion etc.

4. Type of dress used by the Priest, Headman and Medicine man.

5. Ornaments worn by male and female and parts of the body where worn.

6. Materials used for preparation of the ornaments.

7. Any other information.

E. Family, Clan and other Analogous division

1. Type of household

2. Where a couple does usually reside after marriage

3. Traditional practice of descent.

4. Role of family members.

5. Sub caste/sub tribes.

6. Etymological significance of name of each sub castes/sub tribes.

7. Myth and legends associated with sub castes/ sub tribes.

8. Traditional occupation of sub castes/ sub-tribes.

9. Clan/ Gotra of the community.

10. How clan regulates marriage.

11. Any other information.

F. Economic activities

1. Traditional occupation, main occupation pursued now a days and other occupation.

2. Main crops produced.

3. Months of the following activities i.e. ploughing, sowing, weeding Y& harvesting.

4. Activities usually performed by adult male, adult female, male child, female child.

5. Magic-religious ceremonies performed during ploughing, sowing & harvesting.

6. Implements used for ploughing, sowing & harvesting.

7. Any other information.

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Fishing & Hunting

1. Where & how do you fish and how?

2. Implements used for fishing & hunting.

3. Any other information.

#### G. Life style

1. Beliefs associated with conception. Barrenness, prolong delivery, delivery of dead child & maternity death.

2. Restriction imposed on mother during pregnancy on – Diet, Work, Visiting any place.

3. Who provides assistance during delivery?

4. What type of instruments is used to sever umbilical? cord?

5. How placenta is disposed off.

6. Duration of confinement of mother after delivery.

7. Any other information.

#### Marriage

1. Age of marriage

2. Type of marriage (elopement, capture, service etc)

3. Whether following practices are prevalent – Child marriage, widow marriage, widower marriage, remarriage, polyandry, polygyny, levirate, sororate and divorce.

4. Custom and practices associated with marriage.

5. Dowry and Bride price.

6. Any other information.

#### Death

1. Beliefs associated with death.

2. Rituals performed and ritual objects used at the time of disposal of the dead body.

3. Place where dead body is disposed off.

4. Manner in which dead body is disposed off – Cremation, Infant, accident death.

5. Who prepares the site for cremation?

6. How the dead body is placed in the grave/pyre/

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7. What are the offering made to the deceased.

8. Rituals performed at the time of disposed off.

9. Duration of pollution period.

10. Restriction observed during pollution period.

11. Who officiates in performing death rites?

12. Any other information

#### H. Religion

1. Supreme deity.

2. How supreme deity is associated with the life of the people?

3. When this deity is propitiated?

4. Village deity.

5. Clan deity

6. Malevolent spirit

7. Ancestor worship.

#### I. Traditional system of social control

1. Traditionally recognized agency/traditional/political

Organization (e.g. Customary law, Panachayat, etc) If yes, are there any permanent set of office bearers.

2. Functions of traditional/political recognized agencies.
  3. Any other information.
- 10.

#### CHAPTER – II

##### Five Criteria

1. Primitive traits.
2. Distinctive culture
3. Shyness of contact with the community at large
4. Geographical isolation
5. Backwardness

##### Conclusion

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#### CHAPTER – III

##### Replies to the queries made by RGI/National Commission for SC/ST

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#### CHAPTER – IV

##### Conclusion