

LANGUAGE IN INDIA
Strength for Today and Bright Hope for Tomorrow
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A BRIEF STUDY OF KOYA FOLK SONGS OF ORISSA

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KOYA TRIBAL PEOPLE IN ORISSA

The Koya tribal people live in Podia, Kalimela, Mathili and Malkangiri blocks of Malkangiri district in the State of Orissa. According to Verrier Elwin, “they are a Gond speaking tribe living in the Godavari area in Koraput district”. Russell and Hiralal in their work *Tribes and Castes of Central Provinces of India* identify the Koyas as a branch of the Great Gond family.

The Koya dialect is Dravidian in origin. It bears considerable resemblance to Telugu grammar and vocabulary. It has no script of its own. But it has a rich oral literary tradition in various forms. Particularly, the age-old folk songs are elegantly simple, lively and absorbingly lucid.

THE CELEBRATION OF THE SPRING FESTIVAL

The Koyas celebrate “Bijapandum” festival in Chaitra. It is their spring festival. During this period the boys and girls sing famous taunt songs against each other. They sing the song by the pattern of alternating a few lines repeatedly. When the *chaitra* moon comes up on the blue sky and the silvery moon light spreads everywhere, a Koya youth calls his female partner to accompany him:

*Chandamama Andalaki
Kodala Kutulo,
Samalara Posukundama
Kodala Kutulo,
Vennilaie Pandiri kinda
Kodala Kutulo,
Darakonda Duramaina
Kodala Kuturo,
Veladulara Posukondama.*

The English version of this stanza is –

O my darling behold

the chaitra moon has come up
the moon light is every where
come, let us bath in the moon light
the moon and the hill are far away
but we are very nearer to each other.

THE DEPARTING BRIDE

The Koya girls of the village spend most of their time with each other in company. They go to the weekly market, collection of forest products and celebration in a group. When a girl becomes a bride and after marriage leaves the village her playmates miss her very much. The departure sight is one of the most moving events. The girls bid farewell to their friend singing songs. The bride virtually breaks down because she is leaving a world of freedom and romance. The departure songs are sung in a chorus-

*Kalakani Nanle Kelakani Nanle
Nanle weyale,
Manayayan Lankan Mana Yayan Lan
Nanle weyale,
Galwatke Ata nanpal watke aat
Nanle weyale.*

It means –

You are leaving your playmates
Don't forget them.
You are leaving your father, mother and village
Don't forget them,
You are going to establish your new world
Do not forget us.

REALITIES OF LIFE AFTER MARRIAGE – HARASSMENT BY MOTHER-IN-LAW!

Life is not a bed of roses. After marriage the young girl has to face the realities of life she has to adjust herself in a total new situation.

But sometimes she fails to do so and that is why is harassed by her mother-in-law. In the following stanza she expresses her grief to her young friends-

*Toue pungar poye, Napoye mundakiyata
Na kadamam melole, Napoye mundakiyata*

*Maina pijhte mutpal Noni, maina pitte
Marka mada mamal Noni, marka mada mamal
Na poye kundakiyita.*

This song may be translated into English as given below.

My mother-in-law quarrels with me,
my friend, I am unfortunate;
I have a handsome husband,
A good father-in-law,
A well decorated house,
Still I am unfortunate,
My friend, I am unfortunate.

THE BEAUTIFUL KOYA LAND, NOW DEPLETED – TAKEN TO FAR OFF LANDS

Once the Koya land was full of forests. During the establishment of D. N. K project, the jungle was cleared to rehabilitate the refugees. The Koyas lost their natural habitat, land and way of living. They became poor and unemployed. Some of them are deported to Assam to work as coolies. In the following lines a poor Koya youth consoles her young bride.

*'Besikora Denasu
Runga kalu mutala,
Mutala Taranjiva
Asupite Assamu,
Asama Orjuvalale
Piditumdi gamade
Poyanju Karakubudu
Gutala daya ille.'*

It means:

O my love,
Life is miserable here!
Come, let's go to Assam,
It is a beautiful place!
We will work there,
Earn a lot of money,
We will live happily.

The traditional oral verses of the Koyas have great aesthetic value. They reveal the cultural view of these tribals towards life, love and society. It is important that we ensure that tribal people of India are provided with means for better livelihood. At a time when tribal culture is fading away, it is our national duty to collect and preserve these valuable sources of our folk literature with authenticity.

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