

# Koraga in India



Photo: Lokesh Kunchadka



*"Therefore beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into His harvest."*

People Name	Koraga
Country	India
Status	Unengaged Unreached
Population	44,500
Language	Odia
Religion	Hinduism
Written Scripture	Yes
Oral Scripture	Yes
Jesus Film	Yes
Gospel Recordings	No
Christ Followers	No
Churches	No
Workers Needed	1
Workers Reported	0

## BACKGROUND

The Koraga people are a tribal community found primarily in Southern India and are classified by the Government of India as a Scheduled Tribe, making them 'untouchable', or ritually polluted, in Hindu society. The 1901 census report noted the Koraga as being a "lowly tribe of basket-makers and laborers", some of whom were employed as scavengers.

## WHAT ARE THEIR LIVES LIKE?

Koraga people can be subjected to a practice known as *ajalu*, which the Government of Karnataka defines as "differentiating Koraga people and persons belonging to other communities, treating them as inferior human beings...". *Ajalu* has been considered inhumane and was prohibited in 2000 by the Karnataka Koragas (Prohibition of *Ajalu* Practice) Act, 2000 but can still be witnessed at various events. Members of higher castes believe they can symbolically transfer sins, or even an illness, to another human being. Should someone fall ill, the family calls upon any woman from the Koraga tribe, who is then made to eat food which has the fingernails or the hair of the patient mixed with it. They believe that this can symbolically transfer the disease to the Koraga woman. "We still hear instances of them not being allowed to use water from the wells that are used by people from other castes,

including the other untouchables" says Mandeep Shetty of the Karnataka Komu Souhrada Vedikae in Udipi.

Traditionally, the Koraga people lived in structures made of leaves, called *koppus*, but near the beginning of the 21st century they started to live in simple, free houses constructed and sanctioned by Government agencies. The Koraga make use of the bamboo and creepers to manufacture baskets. However, this has come under threat because of deforestation. Additionally, education within the community is a challenge. Many children drop out of school to support their families financially and roughly 200 out of 13,000 people have received education in undergraduate fields. Because of exclusion from social and economic advantages, these "untouchables that live among untouchables" face extensive challenges within their community. Heavy alcoholism and malnutrition is prevalent.

## WHAT ARE THEIR BELIEFS?

Although an untouchable community, the Koraga regard themselves as Hindus who also follow a tribal religious system. They exert a sense of superstitious fear because higher ranked communities consider the Koraga to be capable of influencing events using magic and witchcraft. They worship spirits, known as *Bhutas*, as well as some

*devas* and a sun god. They are known for drum beating (*dollu* or *dolu* beating) and traditional belief was that Koraga drum-beating had special powers and that the drum-beating drives away evil spirits.

## PRAYER POINTS

\* Pray for the Lord to thrust out workers to this people group. (Mt 9:37-38, Jn 4:35)

\* Pray for the Holy Spirit to equip, empower, and guide these laborers to bear fruit through disciple-making and church-planting movements within this people group. (Mt 18:8, Mk 4:8, Jn 15:8)

\* Ask the Holy Spirit to multiply these movements until there is no place left in this people group where Christ is not preached or known. (Mt 24:14, Mt 28:18-20, Acts 19:10, Rom 15:23)

\* Ask that these movements transform this people group's culture to fully glorify God and represent His Kingdom on earth. (Mt 6:9-10, Rom 12:2, 2 Cor 3:18)

\* Pray for every opposing spirit to give way to the liberating, life-giving gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, the coming King. (James 4:7, 2 Cor 10:4-5, 1 Cor 15:58, Mt 18:18)

## SOURCES

<https://goo.gl/Uj1iRF>