

Koraga Community- Pullanji Valli Baskets

As plastic is banned in Kerala, as per the Government Order (G.O(MS) No.7/2019/Cir) from 1 January 2020, there arise the requirement of more alternative products for plastic. The Koraga Community of Kasaragod District of Kerala are making baskets out of the natural resources and are selling the same and are finding their source of livelihood. They are the Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group residing in Kasaragod District. They sell the baskets they make and it is their traditional source of livelihood. Kudumbashree Kasaragod District Mission had made remarkable interventions to bring them to the forefront of the community and lead a better life for themselves. The Kudumbashree Kasaragod District Mission had also realised the opportunity for finding alternatives for plastic and has already been supporting the Koraga community to come forward for making use of this opportunity. Let us see what Kudumbashree Kasaragod District Mission had done to bring them to the forefront of the community.

Koraga

The Koraga is a tribal community found mainly in the Dakshina Kannada, Udupi districts of Karnataka and the Kasaragod district of Kerala, South India. These areas in Karnataka, are altogether often referred to as Tulu Nadu. They are also found in small numbers in adjoining districts of Uttara Kannada, Shimoga and Kodagu. The Koraga are classified by the Government of India as a Scheduled Tribe.

The Koraga, who numbered 16,071 according to the 2001 census of India, have their own language, classified as an independent Dravidian language, which is strongly influenced by Tulu, Kannada, Malayalam, languages commonly found in their area. The 1901 census report noted the Koraga as being a lowly tribe of basket-makers and labourers, some of whom were employed as scavengers.

The area in which they live comprises mostly agricultural land and forest and the tribe continue to make use of the forest produce—principally, bamboo and creepers for the manufacture of

baskets today. They traditionally lived in structures made of leaves, called koppus and also dressed in leaves. Around at the beginning of 21st century, they started to live in simple free houses constructed and sanctioned by Government agencies some of them are still either homeless or live on government-owned lands.

Tribal Programme-National Rural Livelihoods Mission-2019-20

Kudumbashree introduced an exclusive and integrated intervention strategy in the tribal sector of Kerala giving special emphasis to 6 district/category /areas, namely Kasaragod (Koraga-PVTG), Kannur (Aralam farm resettlement area), Wayanad (Thirunellygrama panchayat-PVTG), Malappuram (Nilambur constituency-PVTG), Thrissur (Kadar-PVTG) & Pathanamthitta (Malmbandara-Namoads) with the convergence all PRIs and Development department. [Particularly vulnerable tribal group (PVTG) is a government of India classification created with the purpose of enabling improvement in the conditions of certain communities with particularly low development indices]. These areas are separately supported through Kudumbashree. A special Project Management Unit (PMU) is actively working in these areas with tribal animators (Community Resource Persons). Continuous capacity building for the all NHGs leaders and CRPs in the special area is one of the major component for 2019-20. Fund to community like Revolving Fund, Vulnerability Reduction Fund, Start-up fund to producer groups and livelihood support through Community Investment Fund would also be ensured during 2019-20. Food, Nutrition, Health and WASH (Water, Sanitation and Hygiene) (FNHW) and educational interventions plan in place for these special areas and community through a convergence action. Some of the focused livelihood interventions like organic clusters, Non Timber Forest Products, traditional and local livelihood etc are in consideration to develop the economic and financial capacity of tribal families. Apart from the focus area, a state wide utilization of Tribal Community Resource Persons as tribal animators is also planned. The Community Resource Persons among tribal community of Kerala build the best inclusion of tribal communities and their all level empowerment. An amount of Rs 800 Lakhs will be expected as expenditures for the entire activities. The rest of the fund will be met from State Plan Fund.

Koraga is the Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group existing in Kasaragod district, which come under the exclusive and integrated intervention strategy of Kudumbashree.

Traditional Livelihood

Making baskets out of creepers named *as Pullanji valli, Paal Valli, Madhari* etc is their main source of livelihood. It is their traditional source of livelihood as well. They go to the forests and collect the creepers and make the baskets and find their livelihood through that. They had been following this as their traditional livelihood. All among them, including men and women are trained in making these kind of baskets out of the creepers and they used to find their livelihood by selling the same. They used to sell it in the local shops in the locality as well.

What Kudumbashree did?

Kudumbashree initiated this special programme to give special intervention to the Koraga Community residing in the Kasaragod district and for ensuring their welfare and help them earn better livelihood. Kudumbashree had among the Koraga Community and managed to start NHGs and micro enterprise units as well. The special project was launched during November 2018.

There are 2 units functioning in The Badiyadukka Panchayath named Deepashree and Pallavi. The Deepashree unit is located at the Pedala Colony of Badiyadukka Panchayath has 6 members named Vimala, Shobha, Anitha, Sumathi, Sasikala and Chandravathy. The Pallavi Unit has 5 members named Bindu, Sumathi, Bindu, Sumathi and Sasikala.

Six months back, associating with the assistance of the Agriculture Department and District Administration, it was decided to grow the plants of Pullanji extensively near their settlement. It was started 6 months back. As of now, they have to go to forests and collect the creepers and make baskets out of the same. They usually make three types of baskets using the creepers.

Kudumbashree made interventions to make them participate in various trade fairs and sell their baskets. They had participated in various fairs such as Saras Fair held at Kannur, Saras Fair held at Thrissur, Gaddhika Mela, KIFBI Exhibition, Kerala State School Youth Festival held at

Kanhangad and Suchithwa Sangamam, the programme organised to introduce the alternatives of plastic at Thiruvananthapuram, etc.

The sales recorded by them at various trade fairs are as follows:

Sl No.	Name of the Event	Sales Recorded
1	Saras Fair- Kannur	Rs 12,000
2	Saras Fair- Thrissur	Rs 5,010
3	Gaddhika Mela	Rs 10,000
4	KIFBI Exhibition	Rs 3140
5	State School Youth Festival	Rs 5,500
6	Suchithwa Sangamam	Rs 3000

The products of them are also marketed by the Kudumbashree markets and also through local shops as well. *Muram* or Winnowing sieve, which is known as Thuduppu in Koraga language is their traditional product.

Apart from marketing the products, the issues of the Koraga Community are also addressed through the special intervention programme of Kudumbashree. The colonies where Koraga communities live are visited with the help of the community counsellors. The Snehitha Gender Help Desk of Malappuram had taken over the Paivalika Panchayath for one year. Hamlet level

mapping is being done and interventions are being planned there. The reports would be submitted to the District Collector and the needed interventions would be included in the project of Panchayath.

Koraga Community mainly resides mainly in 9 Panchayaths of Kasaragod viz, Badiyadukka, Enmakaje, Madhur, Puthigai, Kumbala, Paivaliga, Meenja, Orkadi, and Mancheswaram. There are 24 NHGs functioning in these 9 Panchayaths. Koraga Community had also been residing in 4 other Panchayaths viz., Chengalam, Karadukka, Mangalpaadi and Bellur, and has low population rates there. Two traditional Micro enterprise units are functioning in Paivalika, which makes baskets.

How the baskets are made?

The creepers are collected from the forests and on returning, the creepers would be put in water and once the skin of the creeper would be peeled off, the baskets would be made. Once completed the same would be dried and the basket would be ready. They were given training to make designer baskets other than the big baskets they used to make traditionally. The training was organised in the respective CDS halls. They would be given training for making caps, carpets etc as well. They would also be given training to make baskets out of cane. It will take them 3 days to make a basket completely. They could make 5 small baskets a day.

Their products were used for felicitating the best entrepreneurs in the district. Their products were given as gifts for the DDUGKY Talento event as well. Kudumbashree Kasaragod District Mission is giving more importance for them and are helping them find better yet sustainable markets. The unit members share the profit within themselves as who made the basket.

Other interventions

Chicken farms, tailoring units etc are also being planned for the welfare of the Koraga Community. Bridge Course centres are presently functioning in Badiyadukka, Meenja, Paivaliga and Mancheswaram and soon would be started in Madhur Panchayath as well.

A website for marketing the products of the ME units of Koraga community is under process. An Facebook page had already been started for marketing their products.

Scope

The programme has great scope that the Koraga Community will get the maximum out of this special intervention. As the Kudumbashree Kasaragod District Mission is giving extra focus to this programme, the Koraga Community would get the maximum out of this special intervention of NRLM. The approach and the effort of Kudumbashree Kasaragod District Mission towards the Koraga Community is much appreciable. As plastic is banned in Kerala, the products of the Koraga micro enterprise units would be of great demand among the customers. Kudumbashree Kasaragod District Mission had set a model for other districts through the successful implementation of this special intervention programme.