"I'm Not Like My Grandparents.": How the Korwa Tribe's Social Identity is Shaped and Defined by the Process of Modernization

A Bachelor's Thesis in Sociology

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Abstract

While many contemporary studies observe modernization in the Global South, few have centered tribal groups. The Pahadi Korwa tribe in Surguja district, Chhattisgarh, India, is one such historically isolated group that has recently shifted from their grandparents' hunter-gatherer lifestyle to agriculture and informal wage labor. This economic shift brings changes in social relationships, understandings of wealth and inequality, and a growing awareness of one's place along a spectrum of lifestyles connotated with social and cultural meaning at individual and national levels: a process referred to here as 'modernization'. This study seeks to understand how the Korwa tribe's identity – a sense of self formed by social relationships – is embedded in modernization, by observing three interactive aspects of how modernization shapes Korwa identities. Firstly, as lifestyles shift, Korwa tribe members draw boundaries to distinguish and distance themselves from other Korwa, both past and present, based on lifestyle, literacy, or social values – indicators of modernization. Such boundaries alter social realities and can create conflict within the tribe, as differences in the adoption of these indicators become sources of tension. Because these boundaries are often drawn in response to how one is perceived by others, the second section examines how Korwa identities are formed through recognition by others, particularly landowners, within observed social hierarchies. Interviews with landowners (primarily the Yadav group) and their interactions with tribe members reveal that Korwa identities are shaped through a language of modernization: landowners often frame Korwa tribe members on a pendulum ranging from *jungli* (wild) or *poor* to its complementary, *progressing*. This pendulum illustrates how landowners shift their framing depending on their own aspirations for social mobility, their self-perception as helpers of the tribe, or their desire to demonstrate 'progress' to outsiders – factors illustrating that landowners themselves have identities embedded in modernization experienced relationally to the tribe. Thus, the landowner's pendulum-like framing ties how tribe members are recognized to modernization *indefinitely*. Finally, we observe that in embodying these modernization-coded identities, Korwa tribe members act as agents to achieve mobility, ultimately reproducing such identities. This study shows how, in decades, shifting relationships have made a historically isolated group's identities shaped by modernization.

Introduction

Modernization, on the national scale, is a process that takes place over an indefinite period of time. It can be understood as a shift of economic lifestyle, which brings along shifts in social relationships and shifts in the understanding of wealth and inequality. More broadly, it involves an increasing awareness of where one stands along a spectrum of quality of lifestyle that has accrued social and cultural meaning. It is this aspect of the complex process of modernization that is central to this study. In the case of India, various groups of people, such as the middle class – a group entirely understood and conceived in lieu of modernization – as well as other castes and tribal groups have uniquely experienced the shifts that modernization brings. This case study specifically looks at the Korwa tribe, a tribe that has historically been pushed out of dense forest areas, and especially in recent decades, has significantly increased its interactions with landowners and members of other groups, as well as the market economy that comes with adopting agrarian and informal wage-labor based lifestyles.

Prior to undergoing such lifestyle shifts, the Korwa tribe was a relatively isolated group living in the forests. Understanding the historical context within which the Korwa tribe began living agrarian lifestyles provides the context for understanding the lifestyle shifts that have sparked the changes in identities discussed in this paper.

The precolonial period of kingdom rulership under Rajput kings (770 CE - 1740 CE) and Maratha rulers (1740-1818, 1830-1854) largely left tribe members untouched in the forest. The forests in Chhattisgarh historically served not only as homes and resources for Korwa members but also as "an obstacle to invasion and expansionist ambitions of the state" (Arnold and Guha 1995). It was only during the colonial state that there was enough military and technological

resources to harness the forests for profit. From 1855 to present, the state continues to harness forest resources, resulting in the degrading of forest cover and impoverishment of forest dwellers. Certain groups continued to practice shifting cultivation secretly, while others engaged in theft and robbery (Verma 1995). In response, the colonial government enforced criminal laws as well as attempted to resettle the displaced tribal groups in lowland villages, and provided land for settled agriculture. However, lacking the knowledge of settled agricultural and property laws, the many Korwa were landless and indebted (Majumdar 1929). As a result, tribal groups rebelled against colonial rule to reclaim forest rights (Singh 1982).

In the aftermath of India's independence, forest policies remained largely unchanged, leading to a resurgence of campaigns for forest resource rights among indigenous communities. Despite legislative progress, the Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act of 2006 has several shortcomings, including a restrictive cut-off date that limits benefits to those residing in forests since October 1980. This act has particularly harmful effects on the Korwa because they were forcibly removed from their forest homes in the early 1970s.

With this displacement as the generational backdrop, this study seeks to characterize how the Korwa have adapted to agrarian and informal wage-labor based lifestyles, particularly during the broader scope of India's pursuit of modernization specifically in the last three decades. Specifically, through semi-structured interviews and ethnographic observations, this study seeks to understand how, in the process of increasingly participating in lifestyle shifts, the Korwa tribe situates themselves in the nation's project of modernization, and hence forms an identity embedded in modernization.

What emerges, first, is that as lifestyles change, members of the Korwa tribe establish boundaries to differentiate and sometimes distance themselves from other Korwa, whether from earlier generations or their contemporaries. These distinctions are often based on factors such as lifestyle, education, or social values – all indicators of modernization. The creation of these boundaries changes social dynamics and can generate conflict, as varying degrees of adoption of these markers become points of tension within the community. Since these boundaries are typically made in response to external perceptions, or an awareness of such, the next section explores how Korwa identities are constructed through recognition by others, especially landowners, within social hierarchies. First these social hierarchies will be articulated. Then, conversations with landowners (mainly from the Yadav community) and their interactions with the Korwa reveal that these identities are articulated through the discourse of modernization: landowners commonly position Korwa individuals along a spectrum, or pendulum, from *jungli* (wild) or *poor* to the complementary notion of *progressing*. This pendulum metaphor captures how landowners' perceptions shift according to their own ambitions for social mobility, their self-image as benefactors to the tribe, or their intent to showcase 'progress' to outsiders – demonstrating that landowners, too, have identities intertwined with modernization and experience them relationally to the tribe. In this way, the pendulum-like framing used by landowners continually links their recognition of Korwa members to modernization. Lastly, we observe how by inhabiting these modernization-informed identities, Korwa tribe members themselves become active agents in seeking social mobility in an often nuanced fashion, thereby perpetuating and reproducing these identities. Overall, this study highlights how, over just a few decades, evolving social relationships have led to the Korwa's identities being fundamentally shaped by the forces of modernization.

Literature Review

There have been numerous sources of contemporary research that have studied modernization, from a theoretical perspective seeking to understand how our modern society has come about. This section will articulate how this particular study is responding to two such cases of contemporary research within the Indian context. However, prior to delving into the sociological literature this study responds to, it is important to provide background regarding the precise categorical placing of tribes within the Indian context.

India explicitly recognizes tribes in their Constitution, indicating an explicit official recognition of what it means for an individual to belong to a tribe; in fact, this recognition is articulated in terms of 'backwardness' and is hence defined by modernization as well. As articulated in Article 341 and 342 in the Indian Constitution, the government recognizes certain castes and tribal groups as Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs), means of categorizing groups of people who typically face social disadvantages. The Constitution does not specify the criteria for being an ST. However, according to the National Commission for Scheduled Tribes, tribal groups who meet this definition have "come to be understood in terms of their historical background of backwardness. Primitiveness, geographical isolation, shyness and social, educational, economic backwardness due to these reasons are the traits that distinguish Scheduled Tribe communities of our country from other communities". In India, there are some 705 STs, with an estimated population of 104 million people comprising 8.6% of the total population. This characterization by an official governmental agency illustrates how

governmental recognition of tribes is defined by their perceived position in the process of modernization.

Next, it is important to have some background knowledge about the Korwa tribe itself to inform our understanding of the group studied. The Korwa people are an *adivasi* (indigenous) group who primarily live in the border region between Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand. Within Chhattisgarh, they live in the districts of Balrampur, Jashpur, Balrampur and Surguja (the site of this study). A population of 129,429 live in Chhattisgarh, the state home to 42 tribal communities where 44.2% of its total area is forest land. The tribe is subdivided into the Agaria, Dandh, and Dil, as well as the Pahadi Korwas who are the respondent group in this study. Traditionally they are described to practice a form of subsistence agriculture called jhoonga kheti involving trimming the forest to support a lentil crop. Originally this involved trimming medium-sized trees, but due to government regulations restricting such practices, they have reduced to cutting shrubs and bushes instead. They practice hunting as well and often carry a bow and arrow. However, of course, given that many have transitioned to agrarian lifestyles, many now grow rice, millet and vegetables. However, agricultural labor is often not enough for sustenance; to this end, their agrarian diet is supplemented with various fruits, leaves, roots, and tubers found in the forest. *Handia* (rice beer) is the traditional drink, along with liquor prepared from *mahua*. Additionally, they eat animals such as chicken, fowl, and cows. The British claimed they historically ate dogs as well. Many of them participate in local markets by selling forest products such as firewood and making rice cleaners out of bamboo called *supas*. Additionally, they make weave baskets and mats from hand as items to support their lifestyles. This provides one with general background knowledge regarding the tribe as is typically found through online research.

As we will see, much of the aspects of the lifestyle listed in this paragraph will take on crucial social and cultural meanings as illustrated in this study.

Given this background information, the primary purpose of this literature review section is to outline why this study addresses the Korwa tribe's experience of modernization insofar as it has formed their social identities. To do so, this section will outline two contemporary studies regarding modernization in India to outline a niche, yet unaddressed, aspect of understanding of how modernization can become a defining force of identity in a short period of time.

Firstly, this study seeks to respond to Raka Ray's edited anthologies, illustrating how the Indian middle-class is constructed through the process of modernization, and becomes a group that champions and spearheads processes of modernization itself. This study responds by illustrating how a historically isolated group, that is, a tribe, in-turn forms its identity in the face of modernization, often in dialogue and interaction with other individuals themselves (like the middle-class) further along but embedded all the same in the process of modernization. Secondly, this study seeks to respond to Gaur and Patnaik's study illustrating how Korwa tribe members displaced from the forest faced hardships in health due to an inversion of their former lifestyle's social, cultural, and health based values rooted in their hunter-gatherer lifestyles. This study responds by illustrating how, in a drastically different fashion, the Korwa tribe members of latter generations, now actively align their own narratives in accordance with the social and cultural meanings set forth by their new agrarian and wage-labor based lifestyles, that is, those posited by modernization.

Baviskar and Ray's anthology, *Elite and Everyman: The Cultural Politics of the Indian Middle Class*, details multiple characterizations of how modernization has embodied the self-realization project of the modern Indian middle class. Particularly in post-independence

years, the ideology of development has been essential in creating a strong and synergistic relationship between the developmental state, the nation's future, and a small but significant middle class, where even by the broadest definition of middle class, only the 26% of Indians qualify as middle class, meaning 70% of Indian households are substantially lower (Baviskar & Ray 2011). In this sense, the politics of the *aam aadmi*, or common man, does not include the poor but is a politics of and by the middle class, a socially and politically constructed group. Taking off in the 1990s, liberalization and market deregulation paved the way towards delineating the modern middle class (Baviskar & Ray 2011), associating it with principles of upward mobility and higher-level consumption practices. This group lies at cross sections across caste, religion, and occupation, and associates with contradictory principles of modernity and tradition, reason and sentiment, and equality and hierarchy. This literature provides the background knowledge for understanding how modernization came to become the self-realization project for many Indians - both those who are able to indicate their middle-class status as well as those who strive to *be able to* indicate such status, such as low-caste groups and tribes.

Modernization has also been studied from the perspective of understanding how existing social institutions place the middle class in this powerful position in India. *Cultures of Servitude*, an anthology edited by Raka Ray and Seemin Qayum, explores how domestic servitude allows the middle class to subordinate domestic worker classes and create dependent structures in modern Indian society, and in fact, to have domestic workers becomes an indicator of one's belonging to the middle class. To call domestic servitude an occupation would paint an incomplete picture; domestic servitude is better characterized as an institution because of how it pervasively crosses boundaries of wage-based employment in shaping the given order of the

home and life (Qayum & Ray 2009, p.4). These social relations are accepted and reproduced, constituting identity groups through daily interaction. In the contemporary sense, domestic servitude is legitimized into the evolution of a 'modern' Indian elite. It does so by distinguishing a class of employers, those destined to lead India to modernity, and a class of servants, rooted in traditional Indian culture and dependent on the middle and upper classes for their well-being and avenues of social mobility (Qayum & Ray 2009, p.2). These relations are further complicated at present day, where "the conceptual divide between family and work, custom and contract, affection and duty, the home and the world" (Qayum & Ray 2009, p.3) must find its place in a "modernizing" capitalist world.

In a similar manner to how the social institutions of the middle class have had to adapt into the "modernizing" capitalist world, hence creating a new understanding of modernization local to India, isolated tribal groups have encountered similar shifts in their social lives that both is shaped by and uniquely defines modernization local to India.

More specifically, in a similar way that the middle-class adopted indicators of modernization in championing such a project, I am interested in understanding how tribe members have experienced shifts in their own social norms and practices in attempts to adjust to the social and cultural meanings or values (i.e. to be 'educated') set forth by modernization (often by the middle-class); specifically, how they do so by adopting certain indicators of modernity. I am interested in how certain tribe members may or may not adopt such indicators, whether they be social norms of how one must eat or marry, or whether one pursues education, and how this process further changes the social fabrics of their communities. I am interested in understanding how the adoption of such indicators are perceived and thereby recognized by other

individuals in their communities, such as landowners, and how this process thereby informs how Korwa tribe members are recognized and form their identities.

While this study of indicators of modernization may parallel Qayum and Ray's study, it does so uniquely in the case of a tribe: a historically isolated group of individuals who experienced a shift in their social and cultural identities within a very short period of time. Furthermore, because modernization is a national process, understanding how the tribe experiences *in interaction with* landowners and other individuals allows one to illuminate how the tribe is a component of the broader self-realization project that is modernization in India. One observes that the narrative in mainstream media is primarily led by the middle class, who have characterized modernization as a force that includes, and even depends on, encouraging shifting tribal group lifestyles into market economies and "modern" forms of thinking. Articles such as *"Awareness is necessary, President's adopted sons Pahadi Korwa and Majhi are hiding in the forests due to fear of vaccine"* (Daily Bhaskar) exist plethora, indicating how the mainstream modernization project incorporates "educating" or shifting the lifestyles of tribal groups. Tribal groups are categorized alongside "Other Backward Castes" in the Indian Constitution, indicating how in the post-Independence era, tribes and their associated lifestyles are considered to be traditional, in the sense of predating or being antithetical to modernity. In this manner, we can observe that what is thought of as "traditional" is an invention of modernity itself, and the battle between tradition and modernity is a product of modernity as well. "To be 'modern' in a postcolonial India is to align oneself with projects such as development, science, progress, invention, and discovery; in turn, to be 'traditional', means to react negatively to such aspirations of modernity, to perhaps reject the terms of the debate, yet often make alternative claims couched in the very language of modernity" (Qayum & Ray 2011). These observations illustrate how tribe

groups are typically framed as objects of modernization, components of a process championed by the middle-class. However, few studies have sought to understand the tribe themselves, as agents, have experienced and positioned themselves in the process of modernization. Hence, in this study, I am interested in understanding how the Korwa tribe themselves narrate their experiences of modernization – to what extent do they implicitly reject or align themselves with this project?

To this end, I am interested in studying the Korwa tribe, one such group that was historically isolated from industrial development, yet has since increasingly been immersed in the language of modernization. Hence, this study expands upon the findings of Gaur and Patnaik's study, which illustrated how the Korwa tribe first experienced displacement and more precisely, the mis-alignment of the social and cultural values of their former lifestyles with the new agrarian and wage-labor based lifestyles. Researchers Gaur and Patnaik, in studying Korwa members living in four villages bordering the small town of Ambikapur (the town of 121,000 people 80km away this study's fieldsite), illustrate how displacement from the forests since the early 1970s, along with regulations restricting shifting cultivation (trimming of forests for temporary cultivation), have caused the resettled Korwa to "summarize their journey of displacement from hill forest to lowland villages in terms of deprivation of healthy life" (Gaur & Patnaik, 2011, p85). They draw from concepts of liminality, where in the context of a community's displacement, refers to such communities reaching a state, "when the past is momentarily negated, suspended or abrogated, and the future has not yet begun…when everything, as it were, trembles in the balance" (Turner 1979, p41). In such a state, resettled communities experience exclusion and deprivation that may last a number of years (Good 1996), which incites a "crisis of reintegration" such that these communities ambivalently adapt to

change while sustaining certain aspects of the past (Marris 1974). Gaur and Patnaik characterize the Korwa they interviewed as existing in this state of flux, "facing a double-edged sword because they have lost their old patterns of socioeconomic sustenance on one hand and have not been enabled to build new stable patterns on the other". This study seeks to observe the latter part of this very process – how did the Korwa "adapt to change while sustaining certain aspects of the past"? To what extent, have they now, 1-2 generations later, "built new stable patterns of socioeconomic sustenance", and furthermore, how is this stability socially and culturally experienced? Hence, this study interviews the Korwa members who are further along in this process, those whose parents and grandparents lived hunter-gatherer lifestyles, but they themselves have primarily lived agrarian or wage-labor based lifestyles.

Gaur and Patniak's study illustrates that elderly Korwa tribe members had a resistance towards shifting lifestyles due to a misalignment between the values of their former, hunter-gatherer lifestyles and the modern agrarian and wage-labor based lifestyles. They cite a quote from an unstructured interview with tribe member Biphna: "The Korwa were carved in deep woods by God to do *beora* (shifting cultivation) and prey on *ras mas* (fruits and flesh)...we were not created to work for others. It is not our job to sell firewood to others or break stones for *babbumaan* [employers]. *Korwamann* [Korwa people] cannot be healthy [in servitude]". According to the researchers, this quote summarizes how with displacement, the Korwa perceived a loss of agency and fulfillment. Specifically, when living in the forest, the Korwa practiced hunting, gathering, and shifting cultivation that provided adequate food supply without compromising on their autonomy or independence as well as the "ties of reciprocity and mutual cooperation within the community". However, upon settling in lowland villages and working as wage laborers at quarries and road construction sites, they perceive such activities to violate their

sense of autonomy (in working for a superior) as well as weaken their community ties, resulting in a degrading of their experienced health (Gaur & Patnaik, 2011, 86). In this manner, one observes how involvement in the local market economy directly affects how the Korwa articulate their own agency. This study seeks to characterize how *at-present*, Korwa tribe members' characterize their involvement in the new market economies, through their *shifting* social and cultural meanings influenced by greater exposure to modernization. That is, I'm interested in observing how Korwa tribe members at-present speak to the lifestyles that their grandparents and parents had (those listed above), and form their identities in the process of now adapting to new social and cultural meanings that come with the agrarian and wage-labor based lifestyles they are now increasingly living in.

Methodology

This study seeks to understand how the Korwa tribe member experiences modernization by observing how they 1. Draw boundaries between themselves and others of their tribe in an effort to position themselves in the process of modernization; 2. Are recognized by other individuals such as the landowners they live amidst, and how these interactions further reproduce their identities as being embedded in modernization; and 3. How Korwa tribe members operate as agents within the structures set up through modernization.

In order to observe these three aspects of how Korwa tribe members' identities are formed through the process of modernization, this study employs semi-structured qualitative interviews and ethnographic observations. Such methods allow for a deeper understanding of how the Korwa tribe narrate their experiences; interviews allow for the tribe member to articulate their daily experiences on their own terms. These interviews do not involve asking broad

thematic questions but rather inquire about their daily lifestyles, their interaction with individuals they encounter, and the mundane experiences that constitute the fabric of their life. It is by observing these mundane, daily experiences, as well as the *manner* of speaking, that I am able to make the observations detailed in the data section. Hence, these interviews with tribe members contribute to section 1 and 3 of the data section: how tribe members position themselves in the process of modernization by drawing boundaries between themselves and others, thus forming their own identities, as well as how Korwa tribe members are agents in such a process. Similar interviews are conducted with landowners, and these interviews are incorporated into the data section 2 of this study: where landowner interviews are reflected upon to indicate how landowners recognize, and hence play a role in forming the identities of Korwa tribe members. Ethnographic observations, on the other hand, allow for these narratives to be observed in action, sometimes in manners that confirm or complicate what is said during the interview. For instance, ethnographic observations of how tribe members interact with the local landowning group illustrate the social relationships that are a part of the tribe members' daily experience. More specifically, they illustrate how the two groups interact through a language of modernization, making references to one another that illustrate their respective positionalities, and stakes, in the process of modernization. Hence, ethnographic observations primarily contribute to the second section of the Data section, addressing how Korwa tribe members' identities are formed in lieu of how they are recognized by others, often landowners, in terms of their positionality (and the landowner's positionality) in the process of modernization; these broader patterns are understood by observing how the two groups interact. Ethnographic observations also confirm and supplement the findings in section 1 and 3 as they allow one to observe the narratives described to take place by tribe members in real action, in dialogue with others.

To this end, the data collection took place within the general area of Shankargarh, Chhattisgarh, India reaching the rural hillside of Jam Paani. Recruitment and primary data collection will take place in the outskirts of this town where Korwa tribe members live, as well as with landowners living in both the outskirts and the closest village town of Shankargarh. I primarily interviewed Korwa tribe members living in the hilly, more secluded area of Jam Paani, approximately 30 km away from village-town Shankargarh. Interestingly, this offers insight into the tribe members who are amongst the more secluded regions of Surguja, Chhattisgarh, as these tribe members live in more hilly, rural areas as opposed to the lowland, town-neighboring areas that other Kora tribe members now live in. Hence, one observes how even the tribe members who geographically live further away from the closest village-town have experienced lifestyle shifts that shape their identities.

Specifically, this particular study draws from three narratives of Korwa tribe members. Firstly, Rani, is a tribe member approaching her 60s, living in a hay hut with her husband and single child. She narrates her lifestyle to be one characterized by poverty, while having great conviction with her own values (as we will observe). She is limited in her social capital, as she does not have connections to the nearest village-town Shankargarh, but vaguely knows of community leaders there. I was able to observe Rani through intimate interviews as well as in interaction with other individuals including the Yadav landowners. In this way, her narratives provide insight into a tribe member whose life is characterized by relatively greater inequality. Secondly, Bhirav, is a tribe member in his 30s, living in a permanent dwelling of a clay-based hut, and is involved in political social networks within the hillside. He has frequent interactions with both landowners living in the hillside and those living in the closest village-town Shankargarh, and he has also experienced working in the closest town of Ambikapur. He narrates

his lifestyle to be of relative ease. My semi-structured interview with Bhirav was conducted in the presence of young Yadav men, who connected me with him. Hence, data collected with this particular tribe member provides both ethnographic observations of him in dialogue with young landowner men, as well as insight into a tribe member who has navigated forming social networks to achieve improved material lifestyles for his family. Lastly, Pranav, is a tribe member who no longer lives in the Jam Paani hillside, but grew up in different hillside areas but has since attended a series of schooling to eventually get a college degree locally. He is now a teacher teaching the children of Korwa tribe members such as those living in areas like Jam Paani. I conducted an interview with Pranav without anyone else's presence. This particular interview provides insight into the personal narratives of a tribe member who no longer lives in the secluded rural area and reflects upon his journey as someone who left but is still connected insofar that he teaches younger generations from similar hillside rural areas. The combination of these three key informants provides a variety of narratives, with various experiences of lifestyle shifts, to draw a nuanced interpretation of the role modernization has played in forming their identities.

I also interviewed landowners belonging to the Yadav caste living in Jam Paani: this is a landowning pastoral lineage living amidst Rani and Bhirav. The data on the Yadav primarily consisted of an interview with the eldest member of their family, Yadav-Baba, who had been living in the area for over 50 years. This data also included ethnographic observations of younger Yadav, men in their late 30s, who were in interaction with Korwa tribe members as well as facilitating my process of finding tribe members to interview. I conducted interviews with these two individuals to understand what is included in section 2 of the Data section: how Korwa tribe members' identities are formed through recognition by other individuals such as landowners.

Furthermore, the ethnographic observations allowed me to elucidate the social interactions and hierarchies at play between the Korwa and the Yadav, as these provided a medium of understanding how each group is positioned within the process of modernization and thereby positions themselves in response to one another.

Finally, I also interviewed landowners and community leaders living in the closest village-town of Shankargarh: Neelbaba and Maanya. These individuals were not living amongst the Korwa tribe or the Yadav, however, were in occasional contact with each of these groups. These two individuals were well known, particularly Neelbaba, by the Yadav and the Korwa tribe members. I conducted interviews with these two individuals as a medium of understanding what is observed in section 2 of the Data section: how Korwa tribe members' identities are formed through recognition by other individuals such as landowners.

Due to the methodological limits of this study, individuals will be loosely referred to by the status of 'landowning group', as opposed to another label (i.e. middle-class), as this label more broadly encompasses individuals who at present were born into a group that has inherited some land from their direct parents. It is important to note however that there are differences within such a broad categorization: for instance, the Yadav are a pastoral non-elite group technically categorized as a "Other Backward Caste" by the state government. The Yadav live in the rural hillside amongst the Korwa and have only come to own land during the last century, while certain other landowners interviewed include Neelbaba and Maanya, are community leaders living in the lowland village-town of Shankargarh (though still rural, has a larger population size of 2,600[1]). These differences will be relevant in the observations detailed in the second section of the data section of the paper.

[1] https://www.census2011.co.in/data/village/432433-shankargarh-chhattisgarh.html

The interviews were conducted in a combination of Hindi and Surgujia, the local dialect of Hindi spoken in Surguja, Chhattisgarh. The interviews were conducted either directly with the tribe members or with a translator who can facilitate translating Hindi into Sadri (the local dialect of Hindi spoken by Korwa tribe members). Aware that there may be translation issues, I recorded each conversation and cross-check my understanding with someone more familiar with the local dialect. To avoid misunderstandings due to lack of familiarity with written consent forms, I asked for oral consent at the beginning of each interview. I only interviewed and conducted research with those above the age of 18.

To this extent, because of my own lack of knowledge of the local dialect, there were times when I had to ask for clarification through a third party, or simply did not understand the full meaning of what was being said. This however, at times, resulted in a greater elaboration of what was being said, providing greater insight into what the tribe member may otherwise take for granted.

Interviews lasted between 30 to 90 minutes. I conducted a total of 11 interviews, 6 of which resulted in dense and thorough conversation lasting over an hour. These tended to be the cases where I was able to communicate directly with the respondent because they spoke some Hindi. The cases of less thorough data were primarily due to requiring a local community member to translate for me. If interested, the participant opted for continued contact through the form of another interview or ethnographic observation. A similar method was utilized for supplementary interviews for landowners in the hilly area of Jam Paani, as well as in Shankargarh. Much of the sampling was done through social connections between townspeople living in Shankargarh and their contacts of local Yadav pastoral landowners living close to the Korwa. This allowed for ethnographic observation between the local pastoral landowners and the

tribe members they introduced me to, allowing me to observe the interactions between local landowners and tribe members. In certain cases, I was able to interview tribe members without the presence of a landowner, spending 3 hours in the sole company of one particular respondent. The contrast of such interviews allowed for great breadth in both ethnographic observations of social interaction as well as private Korwa and landowner narratives.

Due to the method of sampling – snowball sampling through landowners – this study is unable to speak to the tribe members who still maintain hunter-gatherer lifestyles while living isolated from landowners. This is an important note to make as the data collected in this study, by nature of the methodology, speaks to those tribe members who have come into increasing contact with the local landowners and their particular experiences of modernization. There is, however, reason to believe that a significant portion of the Korwa tribe members living in Jam Paani share some of the same experiences listed in this study, given that the primary narratives cover a broad basis of experiences of a large number of tribe members who have adopted agrarian and informal wage-labor based lifestyles in the hillside, and hence are participating in the process of modernization.

It is important to reflect upon how my own positionality informed the collection of this data; my positionality is embedded in the data itself as I was the person the tribe members were speaking to. For instance, tribe members knew of my association with the landowning group locally, and were aware that I was here due to my connection with landowners living in the closest town Shankargarh. They were generally aware of my status as an insider-outsider, emphasis on outsider, as they were aware that despite my knowledge of Hindi, I lived outside of the country – where people spoke a different language and had a different culture. They were not aware of much more of my foreign-ness, however, this was enough to characterize that I was

in-part connected to the landowners they were familiar with, but also different enough that I wanted to come and learn about their lifestyles and write about it (something that the landowners typically did not do).

Hence, I found that many of my informants were both surprised by my interest as well as my questions that did not pre-assume an answer that others associated with landowners would have. While I feared that my 'outsider-ness' as well as my association with landowners would significantly impact what they said – and it surely did frame their answers – my positionality overall served to slow down the nature of the interviews. Their statements, that were sometimes spoken with an 'obvious' tone, that were then prodded by me, resulted in an element of surprise: it was these moments that were most revealing to me in my research, and highlighted to me a particular social reality that was taken for granted by the tribe member – the very social reality I was seeking to study. To this extent, tribe members listed in this study, to varying degrees, were relatively open with their explanations, with an understanding that I was more an outsider than an insider. I noticed this because interviews began with a sense of obvious-ness in the answers stated, and were likely spoken in response to how the tribe member assumed a landowner would perceive them. However, upon prodding, they grew to be elaborate upon such answers, reaching times where tribe members paused before answering a question with greater detail. Furthermore, after pausing, tribe members would then continue adding commentary or narrating their own stories on their own without encouragement from me; this indicated to me that they were sharing aspects of their day to day life from their authentic paradigm. Certain tribe members did this insofar that they spoke openly about their misgivings with the landowners they were aware of my connection with. Furthermore, they expressed emotional sadness at my departure and asked me to come back within a year, indicating a level of trust and intimacy. This experience

illustrated to me how one's own status of insider-outsider can very much shape and inform the depth of narratives shared; one has to be aware of initial perceptions and assumptions, and navigate them throughout the interviews for the purpose of obtaining data with depth that is surely framed by the researcher's positionality.

Data

Roadmap of Data

This primary section of the paper will provide and analyze the data collected in this study, unpacking the ways in which the Korwa tribe members' social identities are formed through processes of modernization. Prior to doing so, this section will outline the specific shifts in lifestyle Korwa tribe members have experienced in the past few decades. This will provide a base-line understanding of the economic and social changes Korwa tribe members have adopted in their generational shift from a hunter-gatherer society to an agrarian society – the effects of which the rest of the section will illustrate.

Hence, beyond observing recent economic and social shifts, this study analyzes how the Korwa tribe form their identities in the midst of such large-scale lifestyle changes. Identity, while associated with economics of livelihood and experiencing poverty, is not limited to such factors. Rather, identity forming is a process one actively participates in alongside other individuals who recognize such identities; in this manner, identities are socially formed. To this end, this study will explore first, how modernization has shaped social relations and created conflict within the Korwa tribe, second, how tribe members' social identities are formed within social hierarchies involving local landowners, much of which is based in terms of modernization, and finally, how

certain Korwa tribe members act as agents of change within the structure set up by modernization, actively reproducing their identity as rooted within the project of modernization.

First, by drawing on the narratives Korwa tribe members provide, the first section will illustrate how lifestyle shifts brought by modernization have shaped social relations and created conflict within the Korwa tribe. These changes and conflicts within the tribe are formed because certain tribe members distinguish themselves or *draw boundaries* between themselves and other tribe members on the basis of characteristics and practices rooted in notions of progress and respectability. Boundary drawing is defined as an explicit indication of oneself being or not being a certain characteristic or indicator, or describing others as having or not having this characteristic or indicator, with the purpose of setting oneself apart. These indicators are either expressed as status of literacy, personality traits, as well as practices of marriage, eating habits, and others. Specifically, this section will illustrate how certain Korwa tribe members form their identities by positioning themselves as different, often more 'literate' or 'progressed' than their elders. Curiously, this section will illustrate how even the relatively poor Korwa tribe members draw distinctions between themselves and other tribe members at-present, on the basis of their following of shifting social norms and customs (influenced by modernization) as a means of indicating respectability. We will then observe instances where the practices associated with the Hindu minority landowning group (the Yadav) are replicated within the tribe, adopted as an indicator of progress, and lastly, how such social customs adopted by an uneven number of tribe members creates conflict amidst them. In this manner, the ways Korwa tribe members form their identities is rooted in a dynamic process of drawing boundaries amongst themselves such as to position themselves alongside an axis of progress and respectability, in relation to one another. The last part of this section will briefly consider how such instances of boundary drawing are

done in response and in the midst of a broader social hierarchy - the nature of which the second section will make clear.

Secondly, one must understand within what broader social hierarchy Korwa tribe members are seeking to differentiate (draw boundaries between) themselves and other tribe members, and thereby attempting to position themselves in a broader hierarchy. Furthermore, one must understand how Korwa tribe members are *recognized* by landowners within this social hierarchy, and how such recognition informs how their identities are constructed. Hence, this section will explicitly bring in the voices of landowners, both those living amongst the Korwa as well as those living in the closest town about 30 km away. These narratives are brought in in order to elucidate how identity is formed and reproduced in the context of inter-group interactions characterized by a social hierarchy, often articulated and reinforced by terms of modernization. To this end, ethnographic observations of inter-group interactions with the Yadav, a local pastoral landowning group, will illustrate the social hierarchy at play, revealing both intimate ties and subtle authorities individuals have over one another. Furthermore, interviews with the Yadav alongside other landowners will illustrate how their recognition of tribe members is rooted in a language of modernization. We will observe how their language consistently positions the tribe member in a pendulum of *poor* or *jungli (wild)* to its complementary, *progressing*. This pendulum illustrates how landowners shift their framing depending on their own aspirations for social mobility, their self-perception as helpers of the tribe, or their desire to demonstrate ‘progress’ to outsiders – factors illustrating that landowners themselves have identities embedded in modernization experienced relationally to the tribe. Thus, the landowner’s pendulum-like framing ties how tribe members are recognized to modernization *indefinitely*.

The final section will illustrate how certain Korwa tribe members, in an effort to navigate the social hierarchy illustrated previously, encourage others to seek social mobility, typically through education, hence, actively adopting a project of modernization *as a means of* shifting their group's identity. However, this process is nuanced, as certain tribe members who simultaneously adopt indicators of progress rooted in modernization, also reject the pattern of urbanization encouraging them to move and work in the local town. Hence, this section offers multiple accounts of how Korwa tribe members navigate the infrastructure, or pattern, provided by modernization, often with the explicit goal of improving the lifestyle of themselves and their community members. These instances ultimately illustrate how Korwa tribe members act as agents in forming their identity intentionally, ultimately embedding their identities as they perceive themselves and others of their group to be defined in terms of modernization.

Data Section (Preliminary): Lifestyle Changes Brought by Modernization

Bhirav is a Korwa tribe member, with a family consisting of his wife, mother, two daughters, one son, and a brand new granddaughter. He, his mother, his wife, and son live in close proximity to the rest of his family, living in a clay hut off the side of a cement road, up in the rural hillside areas of Jam Paani, in Surguja District, Chhattisgarh. His couple acres of land are not far away, which his family uses to grow food as a supplement to their diet. According to Bhirav's mother, her parents lived in temporary huts, or *jhopdis*, roaming the forest and living in a new hut every year or two. Bhirav recalls very little of such a lifestyle.

Bhirav's lifestyle, like many of the Korwa in the rural hillside of Jam Paani, has changed significantly in the last few decades. Many of them have increasingly taken up wage labor jobs, often informal and varying in frequency. Some have experienced moving to the closest small city

of approximately 200,000 people to work, amongst whom not a small number chose to return back to the hillside. Others have acquired land through filing claims with the government and use that land to engage in subsistence farming. Overall, in a matter of a few decades, most have forgone the hunter gatherer lifestyles that their parents or grandparents once engaged in. He himself expresses his lifestyle as being improved, that "It's good. As of now, every two or four days, we eat chicken and goat. Now that we have money, well brother, we're having 35 kilos of rice to eat, and we are earning as well." He has come to own 5 acres of land, acquired through a policy that allows tribe membest to lay a claim to the land. He has come to have more social capital with landowners living in the closest village-town Shankargarh, and is also involved politically in the hillside area. This lifestyle is a distinction from the lifestyle his mother described where she said her parents were quite hungry living a hunter-gatherer lifestyle in the forests. These changes describe a shift in Bhirav's lifestyle through his usage of government policies as well as greater involvement and interaction with local political figures.

Yet this is not every tribe member's case: certain tribe members describe themselves to be "extremely poor" with limited food to eat. Rani explains that her husband is old and sometimes bedridden, and hence, unable to bring in income into the house. She says that she is unable to get her son married because they do not have enough money to host the necessary marriage ceremony, with the food provisions it has, and hence are unable to find a bride willing to marry her son. She lives in a hut that differs from the clay *pucca* (permanent, solid dwelling) that Bhirav lives in; rather she lives in a hay hut. Hence, she experiences poverty socially, in that she is ashamed to bring me to her hut, as she states that seeing it will make me realize how poor she is and "run away". She is currently not receiving money from the government policy that distributes benefits to unemployed women, and has attempted to walk to the closest government

center and inquire about the holdup without much luck. She spends much of her day carrying water or herding cows, while her son finds informal jobs to earn occasional income of up to 200 rupees a day. She has also reported making use of the 35 kilos of rice provided by the government, however, says that due to issues with the government's identification machine, they are sometimes not approved and she is only able to get 5 or 10 kilos at a time. These examples illustrate a varying experience of recent lifestyle shifts, one in which Rani experiences poverty profoundly characterized by interactions with the state or local landowner employers.

Hence, each Korwa member describes their experiences in varying terms, along various axes: wage status, frequency of jobs, availability of subsistence farming, number of dependents, network with local landowners, access to government benefits (such as monthly rice stipends). These factors are some of many factors that various families navigate in order to maintain their livelihood.

However, the subject of this study is not focused on the lifestyle changes themselves, but understanding how these lifestyle changes and the broader connotations they carry in an increasingly interconnected society – that is with landowners, with government policies – that which is called modernization – have brought upon a genuine and powerful shift in identity. This shift is powerful in so far that it changes one's social relations with others of their own tribe, and it shapes how one is recognized by others consistently in terms of modernization. These changes to identity formation in light of modernization are observed at depth in the following sections of this paper.

Data Section 1.1: Boundary Drawing within the Korwa Tribe: Elder Generations

Most consistently, Korwa tribe members would make distinctions between their own lifestyles and the lifestyles of their parents and/or grandparents, emphasizing how the older generation had poorer lifestyles, while the newer generation was living better. For instance, Bhirav's mother, a lady in her late 60s, referring to her parents' generation, says "Very poor, Korwa people, very poor." She adds, "A lot of struggle. Today's boys and girls wouldn't be able to live it. How would they live? You couldn't even get a fistful of food. Now, well, there's *really* some earning coming in. Now they eat and have kids." When asked for clarification about the kids, she highlights that providing for children has gotten easier. This quote illustrates how many Korwa tribe members characterize their lifestyles as having improved from those of their parents and grandparents.

Importantly, these statements are not made in occasional instances, but are rather brought up often and consistently when speaking about life's circumstances. Furthermore, Korwa tribe members, particularly those who describe their lifestyles to be improved from their grandparents, associate their grandparents' lifestyles with illiteracy. An interview with Pranav, a Korwa who now teaches other Korwa tribe children amongst others, describes this very phenomenon. For instance, when asked how his elders lived, he says "Back then, my grandparents, while they *were* illiterate, that is, they weren't well-read, so they would cut the forest. Cutting, meaning they would live there for one year, then live in another place for another year." Here, Pranav clearly draws an association between his elders' nomadic lifestyles and illiteracy. His narrative reveals he associates his elders' illiteracy as feeding into their practice of cutting the forest. Korwa tribe members draw distinctions between themselves and the Korwa tribe members of their past, specifically their own family members on the basis of such changes in lifestyle.

Furthermore, they explicitly state that they cannot live in the same ways their parents and grandparents lived, and often, that they do not want to. For instance, after describing how his grandparents would live, Pranav took a long pause and continued, referring to Korwa tribe members, “Now they’ve all made houses. They’re making houses and living there. Before, *literally*, huts. Using grass and stuff to cover it. And using wood, they’d make a ‘kuma’, which would be on all four sides”. He raises his hands mimicking walls. “Under that, they would sleep. On the floor itself.” This description illustrates how Pranav characterizes their making of houses, with the word ‘literally’ to emphasize their living conditions. The animated use of his hands in acting out the living conditions further characterizes how he considers such living conditions to be distinct, crude, and primitive in a sense.

His responses to questions probing whether he would consider adopting his parents’ lifestyles illuminate his positive attitude towards furthering the process of modernization. When asked if he would consider adopting a hunter-gatherer lifestyle, he asserts, “No. Now we won’t be able to live like that.” When asked why, he responds, “Because we have had it happen. A little looking at one another, feeling like we should also live well. Now the thought has changed a lot. It’s not like before.” Pranav answers this question slightly surprised, almost as though the answer is obvious. This manner of answering illustrates how Pranav views such lifestyle changes as the obvious choice to make. Furthermore, he directly associates the adoption of improved lifestyles as indication that “the thought has changed”. Such a statement is used often in Indian culture, often to indicate a sort of “moving with the times”, indicating an openness to progress or improvement. Through using such a phrase, Pranav clearly indicates how an adoption of such a lifestyle is an indication of values: of openness and of progress. Pranav’s frequency in bringing

up such ideas *on his own*, after long pauses and without direct prompting, indicates his desire to distinguish himself and other Korwa at present from the Korwa of past generations.

A bit of complexity arises in this form of boundary drawing when observing Korwa tribe members who do not own their own land, and hence, are still making the shift from hunter-gatherer lifestyles to agrarian lifestyles: they are circumstantially unable to draw strong boundaries between themselves and their grandparents even if they would like to. At times, they illustrate a sort of pride in their dynamic, strenuous lifestyles rooted in the hillside, the 'jungle' itself. For instance, at one point, Rani and I were walking through dense grass fields, where one pathway through the grass was slightly less dense. While walking, I tripped on a pebble. Rani exclaimed, "See I told you, don't walk here!" I responded, "No no it's okay. You walk on the path please." To which she responds, "You walk on the path. I'll walk on this side [through the grass]. I'm one of those who live in the mountains!" Her response gave a hint that she has a sort of pride in being one of those who lives in the mountains. At the same time, telling me multiple times not to walk here, illustrates her awareness of those who don't have walking-intensive lifestyles – an awareness that Korwa tribe members of elder generations wouldn't have needed to have. Additionally, Rani displayed a great amount of enthusiasm when talking about their festival *Jitiya Karma*, where they dance, sing, and worship nature, particularly a certain kind of tree. "It's in the jungle. We bring it, plant it, and play around it." Her husband adds that they dance around it. With that, Rani jumps into full song: she sings the song they sing during *Jitiya Karma*, loud and clear, with great pride. She explains, "There are pieces of hay and we carry it on our heads, and…" with that, she launches into the next stanza of the song, keeping one hand on her head, mimicking the carrying of the hay. "Then in the evening, you offer it. In Karma." She looks intently at me, beaming. Her depiction illustrates a sense of spiritual and joyful

meaning that she derives from living in the forest, rooted in a lifestyle that navigates the forest. Rani's family illustrated a similar notion of pride: when asked how much they walk every day, Rani's aunt answers "20km!" Rani's husband adds, "We walk on our own two feet. It becomes nightfall by the time we return." He makes this statement with a hint of pride, as though he is aware of his resilient lifestyle rooted in herding cattle amidst the hillside.

Interestingly, however, within the same breath, it does not take long for Rani to switch to looking at her forest lifestyle from the perspective of poverty. At one point she excitedly leaves to find and gift me two rocks, or rather, two large pieces of packed clay/mud that is to be soaked in water and used as soap. Yet, immediately upon coming back, she cries, "*Oh ho!* Look at this. *Carrying* this, 5kg or 10kg of it, we sell it and get some rice, Pinky [her nickname for me]. And cutting up bushes and collecting herbs. In my own time, we've done all this. And carrying that, and then making spinach, *cooking and cooking.* Then by 8PM – you know the well? We go there at night and bring back water. Then we'd eat and then sleep. *So much poverty, so much poverty, that is how poverty is!*" Right after her exclamation, she tells me, "Take one with you!", referring to the clay soap. This example illustrates how even as Rani is enthusiastic in sharing aspects of her forest lifestyle with me, she ultimately views this lifestyle as evidence of poverty. In linking her lifestyle with poverty, she illuminates the perceived association between poverty and hunter-gatherer lifestyles from which other Korwa tribe members seek to distance themselves from.

This form of boundary drawing between Korwa at present and Korwa of older generations is a means for Korwa tribe members to assert their identities: they are not the Korwa that have primitive, poor lifestyles, rather they are the Korwa that are moving with the times, and adopting higher quality lifestyles. The frequency with which such boundary drawing occurs

indicates in part the tribe member's awareness of how others may perceive them, and a desire to proactively assert their own identity. Furthermore, this pattern of boundary drawing indicates that the social hierarchy is in part associated with how well one is able to fit – not only fit, but illustrate to others – that they are amongst the Korwa who have moved with the times, and are in fact 'modernized'. This particular insight will be elaborated upon at the end of the following subsections.

Data Section 1.2: Boundary Drawing by the Poor with other Korwa At-Present

This subsection articulates at a deeper level, how in the midst of experiencing poverty itself and the obstacles it poses in fulfilling social norms, a Korwa tribe member grapples with asserting her values of respectability. This subsection profoundly illustrates that one need not acquire permanent housing or education – the typical indicators of modernization – to draw boundaries between oneself and others on the basis of social values and customs still shaped by modernization. Specifically, Rani asserts values of openness and civility by drawing boundaries between herself and other Korwa on the basis of having such values. This form of boundary drawing further illuminates how Korwa tribe members draw boundaries, within their in-group, to form their identities in the midst of change. This boundary drawing illustrates how as a result of their lifestyle changes, certain Korwa tribe members experience a social force, urging them to illustrate their difference between themselves and other tribe members who supposedly do not have such values. These boundaries ultimately create rifts within social relationships within the tribe.

Rani describes herself and her family as poor. Her family does not own land for subsistence farming. Her husband earns money by herding cows for other landowners in the area,

and her son does a few menial labor jobs as well. Rani herself occasionally collects and sells *gober*, or cow poop, to the government (typically to be used as fertilizer or fuel) earning a wage that way. These jobs are informal - meaning the wage is typically 200 rupees per day, and are not necessarily done on a regular basis, but rather based on the need and request of the employer, as well as the availability of the employee. Rani's family receives 35 kg of rice per month from the government, sometimes less (depending on the success of the government's identification machine), which she says lasts them up to two weeks, after which they have to acquire food another way. She is also supposed to receive the state government benefits of a couple thousand rupees for unemployed women; however she says there is an issue with her account, and hence she is not receiving the money. Her family does not have a phone of their own, however, is able to ask others nearby for one should they need to make a phone call.

Rani is quite vocal, often describing herself as 'extremely poor'. She asked me, "Can you tell your mom 'I know a sister here who stays hungry, mom. They are *extremely poor, extremely poor'"*, throwing down her hands, emphasizing each time she exclaims 'poor'. She has described herself in this way in the context of a private interview with the researcher, as well as in the presence of others, including neighborhood landowners.

Rani often frames many obstacles in relation to her poverty; namely her financial situation hampers her ability to fulfill social customs. For instance, her inability to get her son married is exacerbated by her inability to afford providing food and drinks for all the guests. She says, "So how do I get my son married! Are you seeing this, what happens when there is cattle. The cattle can get us a little money, but it can't get us food and rice and all. That we have to do ourselves. And things have gotten so expensive. How do we earn all this? How do I get my son married? That's how I feel." While her cattle is her means of livelihood, she feels simultaneously

immobilized by it; she herds cattle all day, and requires it, but it is inadequate for her to fulfil her social obligations. Bhirav's wife, Kunti, confirms the financial abilities necessary to fulfill such a marriage social obligation in another interview. She says, "If there isn't a pig, there isn't a girl!" referring to the groom's family's obligations to host and provide rice-beer (*hadiya)* and food such as meat. This instance shows how economic constraints have framed social obligations.

However, her financial status does not only restrict her ability to perform social obligations, it shapes her ability to form relationships, and derive satisfaction from such relationships. For instance, she expresses, "[My daughter-in-law would] fill up water for me and give it to me. She'll cook food for me. That's what I have sadness for." She repeats, "That's what I have sadness for." Here, Rani is experiencing a profound sadness for a relationship she does not have, but can thoroughly imagine having. Her inability to have this relationship is directly tied to her inability to pay for the ceremonies necessary to ask for one's hand in marriage, and thereby host the marriage. In this manner, her poverty prevents her from fulfilling an agreed upon obligation. In turn, she frequently complains about the lack of a daughter-in-law, upon whom she can assert authority over; in this manner, Rani's dissatisfaction with her status quo is linked between her financial situation and her social customs.

This pain runs deeper as Rani lacks not only a relationship, but one where she can exercise authority over another, one where she would be provided for by another. She experiences the pain most profoundly when imagining that her would-be daughter-in-law would cook and feed her, sit and chat with her, listen to her grievances and largely do what she would ask her to do. This lack, when put into context of broader social hierarchies, sharpens the edge of the pain Rani feels from being the object of social hierarchies (as a tribe member, and sometimes, as a woman), as will be elucidated in subsection 2. However, at this point, this

example serves to adequately describe how poverty contours Rani's life, both in terms of limiting livelihood, as well as limiting ability to form relationships.

Next, Rani's behavior in social situations indicates the shame she experiences due to her poverty. For instance, when I indicated interest in walking with her to her house, she responded, "Oh if you go, you'll be scared of what you'll see! You'll say '*Didi (older sister)'s house is like this?!'* You'll run away." This statement indicates Rani's awareness of myself being from a rather affluent family, likely by her observed connection of myself and the Yadav, the local landowners. Furthermore, this statement clearly indicates the shame Rani feels in her 'poor' living circumstances, and her reluctance in showing someone else her living circumstances. Rani repeats this particular statement often. Additionally, she explicitly said, "I experience such pain when any big person comes to the house." She experiences a profound shame due to her poverty, and correlatedly, her inability to host someone, particularly someone on a higher status, well at her home.

More interestingly, Rani actively brings attention to her poverty consistently and often, as a means of indicating awareness of social norms, and therefore, her own respectability. I was able to reach this conclusion through the following roadmap: I first observed her acute awareness of social norms, particularly when it comes to hosting guests. By extension, she not only was aware of such social norms, but valued them herself, and she believed such valuing of these norms indicated respectability and civility. However, most interestingly, consciously or not, amid an inability to carry out these social norms, Rani actively *indicated* to the listener that she had such social norms by redundantly reminding the listener of her inability, but desire, to fulfil such social norms. This statement is further confirmed by her explicit mention of identifying herself

as a ‘respectable’ Korwa; such analysis will later serve to indicate how Rani draws boundaries between herself and other Korwa.

I first observed her acute awareness of social norms, particularly when it comes to warmly hosting guests, a value that is particularly important in Indian culture. For instance, on our way to her house, she insisted on getting tea leaves. This was accompanied by comments along the lines of “When you see my house, you will run away” indicating the shame she felt at her poverty. Such accompanying statements insinuated she felt that even if she couldn’t do much, let me at least make you some *chai* (tea) when you come. As the most common social norm when a guest comes over, making chai may even be considered an unsaid social obligation in Indian culture (interestingly one that other tribe members did not seem to emphasize). She ended up asking for tea leaves from a nearby store owner, who ended up giving it to her for free (upon the encouragement of the Yadav son standing close by). This insistence on acquiring tea leaves before getting to her house, indicates her awareness of such social norms.

Rani is not only aware of such social norms, but believes that participating in such norms indicate respectability, an attribute she considers herself to have. She indicates such belief when she comments, quite convicted, “When I bring a daughter-in-law Pinky, I will get her married with you there. We’re not like a [unclear] Korwa. We’re *respectable* Korwa. But when they treat me like a dog, right. That’s what makes me upset” In this quote she draws a direct connection between a social norm and respectability, indicating the value she has for certain social norms. Not only does Rani value such social norms, but she draws a boundary between herself and other Korwa based on following such social norms. She utilizes such social norms as a standard for evaluating respectability. She indicated that she meets this standard by inviting me to attend a socially meaningful event (i.e. her son’s wedding). She claims that certain Korwa would not

meet this standard, and therefore draws a distinction between herself and such Korwa. In expressing her valuing of such social norms, Rani indicates her respectability.

However, beyond explicitly indicating respectability, Rani indicates it through her subtle mention of social norms that she is unable to meet. This phenomenon is analogous to when an individual apologizes for an incident, particularly one they had no control or an ability of, but does so to indicate a certain value. For instance, when the host apologizes for another individual being loud on the train, they do so not because they believe they are responsible for the loud individual, but to indicate to the listener they are attentive and considerate of their comfort and needs. In a similar fashion, Rani indicates she has the values of respectability through her mention of her *inability* yet intention of fulfilling such social norms. At multiple instances Rani said, without any prompting, "*Oh re*, if there was a chair or something I would at least have you sit, I'm having you sit on this mat!" In one sense she brings attention to her poverty, likely because she actively experiences shame. In another sense, she vocalizes such inabilities, possibly sub-consciously, to remind the listener that she indeed has such values of social norms and values of respectability. In this manner, Rani is an agent, grappling with a desire to illustrate her respectability, while living in impoverished circumstances that she feels do not indicate she has such values.

Furthermore, Rani redundantly reminds the listener of these values she has, indicating that these reminders serve not only to fulfil social obligations of indicating respectability, but also indicate a sort of obsession, anxiety, and state of mind oriented around indicating such respectability. Throughout multiple instances, Rani repeated a similar version of "Now I haven't bathed, nor have I eaten, I've just been sitting like this in front of you and chatting." These

quotes were repeatedly said despite my reassuring her that it was okay that she didn't have such things, that they in fact didn't matter.

Interestingly, such reassurance was met with further repetition of such comments emphasizing her poverty. This begs the explanation that perhaps such comments were made not purely out of a desire to indicate values, but a genuine feeling of sadness of an inability to do more. With each reminder, Rani posits herself as an insider due to her respectability – via her intention of fulfilling social norms – and yet posits herself as an outsider due to her inability of fulfilling such social norms. Hence, Rani experiences a sort of dissonance with the principles she subscribes to, and the social hierarchy in which she is ultra-aware of her being perceived a tribe member, associated with the same characteristics she deems lacking in respectability.

To this end, Rani captures this dissonance by carving out her own identity, drawing boundaries between herself and the other Korwa, who by her standards are not respectable. She did so in the quote listed earlier where she states "We're not like other Korwa, we're respectable Korwa." In addition, she proceeds to characterize the other Korwa as always fighting, and never meeting people nicely. In one part of the interview, she said, "All they do is fight. That's what I've said. The men fight so much. I have cows, I have buffaloes, otherwise, I would go with you. Where would I not go? That's how I feel." In distinguishing herself from such Korwa on the grounds of respectability, Rani carves out her own identity as distinct in a particular way from the group she is aware she is recognized by others by. It is particularly interesting that she uses "respectability" as the metric of distinction; this is the same value that often non-tribal members in India use to distinguish themselves with those of lower caste, or tribal status. In this manner, similar to how landowners distinguish themselves from those of lower caste or tribal status, Rani

distinguishes herself as well. While Rani does not use poverty as the medium of comparison, she does assert a difference in respectability by medium of behavior, and the values they exemplify.

Rani draws these boundaries between herself and other Korwa on the basis of human values of connection. Specifically, she stated, “I’ll come forth and meet people. Then only would they understand my sadness, my struggles. If I don't meet someone, then how would they know? Are you understanding me, when I’m saying, what would they know?” She rubs her face, and turns to the side, frowning. “No one will be able to know,” She grumbles and looks around, not maintaining eye contact. I ask her, “Do you find people who meet one another? Nowadays?” She looks at me for a moment and responds, “*Where* would we find them?” She says, quietly but assertively, “They’re all the fearful ones.” After pausing, she demands in a louder voice, “Did you find or see a single Korwaein? Did you find one? Or did you not find one?” Rani here illustrates the discontent she feels living in her society, feeling as though the individuals from her group do not value human connection between one another. She feels a great discontent in the lack of someone to listen to her struggles and complaints. Furthermore, she draws a clear boundary between herself and other Korwa, whom she describes as ‘fearful’. This is interesting because as we will observe in the next paragraph, this ‘fearful’ behavior stems from a fear of authority in the social hierarchy present.

The forms of boundary making detailed above take on additional meaning when understood in the context of the social hierarchy that encourages such boundaries to be drawn. Rani’s dissatisfaction with other ‘fearful’ Korwa ultimately stems from her disapproval of the social hierarchy, of the authority to which Korwa tribe members are fearful of. This is made clear by observing the section of the interview that occurred right before the interaction described in the last paragraph. Rani told me a story of how when my car drove into the area of Jam Paani,

she saw many Korwa tribe members running and ducking away into their homes, out of fear of the newcomer in the car. In a later part of the interview, I reference this story, and ask Rani "So what's the difference, [between you and] those who get scared? Why didn't you get scared [to meet me]?" She responds, clearly but softly. "I won't get scared. Why would I get scared? You're a human too, and I'm a human too." She says, assertively. She nods her head. This particular segment of the interview illustrates how beyond distinguishing herself from the 'fearful' nature of other Korwa tribe members, she directly associates this fear as a response to inequality between persons. This is observed in her response she states with a hint of rebellion: "Why would I get scared? You're a human and I'm a human too." This response indicates that she observes the social hierarchy at present to be a reason for Korwa's fearful reaction to outsiders, to seemingly authority figures. Her response illustrates that she rejects such a fearful response, that indeed, fear should not be there because "you're a human and I'm a human too."

This dissatisfaction with the social hierarchy is further illuminated in observing how Rani characterizes the more affluent, wealthier group. While expressing the struggles of poverty, Rani simultaneously asserts disdain for wealth and how it transforms people into selfish and self-centered individuals, thinking themselves as superior to another. She says, "No one should be *this* poor in life. Nor should one be so rich. If you become too rich, then you say, 'Hell, get rid of these people!'" She continues to murmur, mimicking said person cursing someone out. Mimicking a 'rich' person's voice, her voice drips with exasperation. She finishes, "That's how they do it. And if you're poor, you feel, if God just gave a handful, then you'd sit at home and eat." In this quote, Rani explicitly outlines her disdain for inequality. Unclear whether she herself would accept a large amount of wealth, she characterizes those currently with wealth as unkind and inhumane. It is interesting that the words she uses when mimicking a 'rich' person, is to put

down “these people”. Beyond unkind, she directly associates wealth with a perspective of viewing others as inferior. This perspective reveals a clear suspicion for the hierarchy economic inequality creates, particularly rooted in how individuals change their behavior towards one another.

Interestingly, Rani appears to criticize rich individuals's lack of respect for others, while maintaining that other tribe members are not respectable themselves. In the last paragraph’s quote, Rani asserts that rich individuals look down upon others, deeming them as unrespectable. However, she articulated her own standards of respectability, ones that other Korwa do not meet on account of their disregard for social norms and violent behavior (referenced in earlier paragraphs). In this manner, one observes how in context with the wealthier, she places herself in the ingroup that is treated without respect, yet when speaking to her own group, she distinguishes herself as respectable while the others of her group are not. This pattern of drawing distinctions within one’s own ingroup that match to some extent with the distinctions made by outgroups exists throughout the Korwa’s narratives. Consciously or not, Korwa tribe members apply the same metrics of boundary-drawing, whether it is economic lifestyle or respectability, that individuals of other groups (i.e. landowners) do to distinguish themselves from the Korwa (as we will observe in the second section). Hence, in looking down upon the ‘fearful Korwa’, it is interesting that Rani’s dislike for the social hierarchy, ultimately takes the shape of disdain for other tribe members. In this manner, though Rani is taking issue with the social hierarchy she is thrust within as a result of modernization, this dissatisfaction also takes the form of criticism towards her own tribe.

This subsection has illustrated how Korwa tribe members, particularly on the poorer side, draw distinctions within their own in-group in response to changes brought about through

modernization. Even in cases where one's economic lifestyle does not match with that of one further along the modernization process, that individual still seeks to draw boundaries between themselves and other tribe members on the basis of respectability and values. This insight is profound because one can observe where even an individual suspicious of the social hierarchy they have come into closer contact with - as a result of modernization - ultimately draws boundaries within their own tribe. The effects of such boundary drawing are associated with changes in social customs and practices, that is, ways of living, that may result in conflict. This is the very phenomenon we will observe in the next subsection.

Section 1.3: Boundary Drawing on the Basis of Hindu-Influenced Social Customs

Korwa tribe members narrate changes in their social customs, often influenced by broader social entanglements with the local Yadav landowners. These changes are sometimes modeled after the social customs the Korwa observe the Yadav to have adopted. For instance, upon asking the time when people get married, Bhirav responds, "*Now* we do it at age 18, before we used to do it when they were even younger, but now we only do it after 18." Upon being asked why they wait longer now, he responds, "Before we used to do it even when they're younger. But now, well, seeing everything, everyone, the Yadav folks, we do it at 18 years. Otherwise, before Pahadi Korwa used to even do it when the kids were young. But now unless they're above 18, we don't do it." Bhirav's answer illustrates a particular awareness and adoption of social norms amongst landowners, specifically marrying children after the age of 18. When compared to other tribe members who exhibit very little knowledge of age or years based on the Gregorian calendar, the particular mention of "age 18" is a clear indicator of Bhirav's entanglement with groups outside of the Korwa tribe. More specifically, Bhirav himself

associates ‘everyone’ with the Yadav, displaying a particular inclination to be influenced by the Yadav’s practices. Bhirav makes this sentiment explicit when he states, “*Bhai* living in the village, after observing for a while, it feels like the world is doing it, so we should also slowly, slowly, go about it.” He explicitly outlines here how upon living in villages, with more agrarian lifestyles, they have observed others adopt practices of marriage over age 18 and have modeled after them.

Interestingly, Bhirav has also indicated they have modeled after the Yadav and adopted the marriage customs of dowry, where the bride’s family provides a ‘gift’ to the groom’s family, often obligatory and significantly greater in value than the groom’s gift. The practice of dowry is extremely prevalent in South Asia, where over 80% of marriages in India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh include a dowry payment.[2] Specifically, in Bhirav’s case, he states, “Seeing the Yadav’s, we’ve also gotten the hang of it. They do things like dowry and all, and based on that, we do it too *bhai*, like cases and boxes, whatever we need to do on the girl’s side, we do it.” In this example, Bhirav clearly explains how they have modeled the dowry practice from the Yadav’s. His tone of voice has a tone of assuredness, as though what he is saying is obvious, indicating the extent to which he sees adopting the Yadav’s way of social customs as the clear course of action.

Interviews with other Korwa tribe members illustrate that Korwa traditionally have different marriage traditions than Hindus (including the Yadav’s). In one of my first encounters with Rani, she explained how driven by love, she eloped (*dhuku)* with her current husband, and only introduced him to her own mother after she had already borne a son. She also mentions a brief period of time where her partner left her for another wife due to certain complications, but is clearly living with her now. This latter situation is not necessarily a divorce, but rather an

[2] https://docs.iza.org/dp16135.pdf

informal practice of adopting different partners over time. These practices differ from traditional Hindu marriage practices where eloping is heavily discouraged, and the vast majority of partnerships remain together (no divorce). Furthermore, Bhirav explains that one is allowed to remarry if their partner passes away; this practice contrasts from the traditional Hindu practice where the widow does not remarry after her husband's death. These differences in social customs contextualize the differences in traditional Korwa practices and the traditional Hindu practices (of which the Yadav's practice).

However, despite such differences in traditional marriage customs between Korwa tribe members and Hindu tradition, certain tribe members indicate a greater awareness of how their social customs are perceived, and are more likely to emphasize how they have changed to be more similar to Hindu practices. For instance, upon asking Bhirav whether young members of his community first find a partner and marry them later, Bhirav immediately responds with "No" while his wife Kunti responds with an affirmative "Ho!" or "Yes". Bhirav then revises his statement, and says "Well sometimes it happens. Sometimes. But not everyone does it that way. Sometimes it happens." His response illustrates a reluctance to admit that certain tribe members have a waiting period in between meeting someone and marrying them, otherwise what in Hindu tradition is understood to be an informal, and sometimes frowned upon casual relationship. It is at this time that Deepak, the young Yadav who accompanied me, jumped in and clarified "the *manga* system is gone?" Bhirav confirms, "Yes it's gone. Now it's direct marriage." Bhirav explains to me, "Like before, in our society, once you find a girl, you bring her over and leave it [as is], and then you get married [later]. Now, well, it's not like that. Now it's, you find a girl and you immediately get married." This interaction indicates how social customs have connotations attached to them; in this context, direct marriage is associated as the more mainstream and proper

way to do things; hence the interest exemplified by Deepak Yadav in clarifying the practice's presence, and Bhirav's willingness to assert that the practice has diminished. Bhirav's wife, Kunti, on the other hand, illustrates a slightly different account than Bhirav – one that insinuates tribe members wait before marrying their chosen partner. This difference in behavior matches along with Bhirav's general behavior throughout the interview where he often draws boundaries between himself and older Korwa, and is intentional in announcing his social connections with the landowners. Hence, this account now only illustrates how social customs have been influenced by Hindu, or specifically, Yadav traditions, but also how certain tribe members who are particularly connected in a broader social network across groups are more intentional about illustrating their social customs to be reforming and changing with the times.

A final story illustrates how Korwa tribe members are grappling with evolving social customs that come from adopting agrarian lifestyles, where despite being in the majority, they are adopting the customs of the Hindu landowners. In the state of Chhattisgarh, it is illegal under the Chhattisgarh Agricultural Cattle Preservation Act of 2004 to slaughter cattle including cows. However, Korwa tribe members have traditionally eaten cows (beef), yet under this law, are not allowed to kill cows. As Rani confirms, "I'll let them know that my cow died. So they'll come and take it separately." This is an example of how tribe members are able to eat beef after the cattle has died of natural causes. Rani tells a story where the law was disobeyed by a man who killed a cow, and the following infighting amongst the Korwa that followed. Rani whispers, "Someone killed a cow. In front of the house. They got caught. They caught them and said '*bhosdike*, you all eat cows or what?!" So they went to the police station and filed a case. They filed a case at the station, so they all got put into jail." In this story, Rani has described a Korwa tribe member who was caught killing a cow. Interestingly, she goes on, "So that man says to me:

'You told on me! You got me caught'. That's what they said, these boys." Rani adds, "He's a Korwa. He said to me, 'You did this, you did that! You told the police. You told the authorities.' So because of his accusations, it's been bad. So I tell him too, '*bhai* let's go. Fight. I'm not scared.'" In this account, Rani is faced with accusations that she reported the Korwa tribe member who killed a cow to the police. This story illustrates how infighting occurs due to entanglement of traditional social customs, of eating beef, with the law of the land where Korwa members have settled into agrarian and feudal lifestyles.

Rani's backstory of her evolving dietary customs offer an explanation as to why other Korwa tribe members suspect her in filing a case with the police; this explanation illustrates how social customs are grappled with on a personal and in-group level, sometimes causing infighting within the tribe. Specifically, Rani explains in a later part of the interview, that she does not eat cows. Specifically, she states that the cow is *Laxmi*, the Hindu goddess of wealth, whose sacred animal is the cow. Her explanation resembles the explanation often given by Hindus as their reasoning for not eating beef. Rani further reveals, "When I was little then *bhai* my mom and dad would eat it…When the desire wasn't there, then they didn't eat. So *bhai* if we don't want it then why eat it." Upon being asked when she stopped eating it, she says, "When I was little. I just didn't want to eat! You'll come and see my cow now." In this explanation, one observes how Rani's shift in dietary habits occurred when she was young, implying that it occurred within the past thirty to forty years. Rani's adoption of differing dietary habits from her fellow Korwa tribe members indicates an initial reason as to why the accused Korwa tribe member suspected her as the person who reported the killing. This example, even at this initial level of analysis, illustrates how tribe members who face changes in their social customs can face instances of conflict with other tribe members who follow their traditional customs.

A second layer of analysis of this story illustrates a socio-economic factor in such changes in dietary social customs, indicating further distinctions amongst Korwa tribe members who do or do not eat beef. For instance, Rani clarifies, "Yes, we don't eat [cows]. I myself have cows. Would I eat it? I drink its milk. I get money through it. If we herd cows, do we earn money or not? We do earn money." Here, Rani introduces a socio-economic factor in the reasoning behind her adopting a practice of not eating beef; to her, cattle is a means of livelihood. In traditional Hindu feudal societies, cattle is respected as the means of life and livelihood, as it is the source of milk. Hence, it is often regarded as a symbol of life and warmth. For Rani, this is the case, given that cattle is indeed a source of livelihood for her family, as they both drink its milk and earn money through herding cows for others. Furthermore, upon being asked whether other Korwa who *do* eat beef keep cattle at home, Rani clarifies, "No. Nothing. They don't keep [cattle]." This allows one to observe how there lies a distinction between those Korwa tribe members for whom cattle is an economic source of livelihood, and hence place significance on the animal's life, compared to those tribe members who do not rely on cattle as sources of livelihood. Interestingly, this pattern does not necessarily map in terms of the wealthy or poor, given that Rani is amongst the poorer of tribe members. This offers an additional insight into the sources of infighting amongst Korwa; there may be an economic distinction between those who killed the cow and those like Rani who own cattle and do not kill them. In this manner, changes in social customs due to adopting agrarian lifestyles as well as Hindu cultural values have introduced an economic medium through which conflict occurs amongst Korwa tribe members.

The third layer of analysis reflects how certain Korwa tribe members draw boundaries amongst themselves regarding dietary social customs that invoke broader notions of disgust, ultimately as a means to distinguish oneself as different from the tribe. This case is true in two

examples: eating beef and drinking liquor. Specifically, Rani states, “I don’t eat [cows]. My family doesn’t. We don’t drink liquor. We don’t drink *madi*. Do you know *madi*? Rice is used to make it. We don’t drink that too. All we want is *daal bhat* (lentils). Go to the others! Find out what they all eat. Ask them. Us - nothing.” Upon saying, “the others…”, Rani immediately responds, “Yes the others! The Korwa eat everything. Eat everything.” In this scenario, Rani draws a clear distinction between herself and other Korwa. She is very assertive about distinguishing herself as someone who doesn’t eat beef and doesn’t drink, unlike the “others”, who she names as “The Korwa”. Furthermore, by appealing to her “only” desire being lentils, often understood as a staple necessity, she characterizes herself as someone who doesn’t want much, doesn’t want extravagance, but rather only wants what is necessary to get by. Rani further reinforces the difference between herself and other Korwa when she asserts her belief in the sacredness of the cow: Upon being asked “Why do you consider the cow [sacred]?” She responds, “How would I not consider it [sacred]? It’s *Laxmi* (goddess of cows).” I responded, “But the others Korwa don’t consider it?” To which Rani responds scathingly, with an attitude, “They don’t consider it, that’s why they eat it up.” This response illustrates how Rani associates with the practice of beef-eating a sort of lack of cultural values of belief, of sacredness. Rani’s attitude when speaking of the other Korwa’s eating habits is quite similar to those of Yadav’s or other middle class Hindus who speak of tribe members’ eating habits as a means of noting their otherness, or wildness, where they often and redundantly make note of how tribe members’ eat cows. This illustrates another example of how shifting social customs driven by adopting agrarian lifestyles and living in a feudal society with Hindu landowners has shaped the way Korwa tribe members grapple with their social customs; while not all necessarily shift their customs, those who do often distinguish between themselves and others of their tribe on that

basis. Furthermore, Rani's disdain for other tribe members who do eat beef may inform her relationships with them, offering yet another explanation for the infighting and suspicion of the other Korwa tribe member when accusing her of reporting the case to the police. This serves to inform our understanding of how shifting social customs create further infighting amongst the Korwa tribe members, as each have their own perspective on the adoption or lack thereof of normative values.

This overall section has illustrated how Korwa tribe members respond to the changes in lifestyle and social norms brought upon by modernization by drawing boundaries, that is, differentiating between themselves and others of their tribe. These boundaries are drawn by certain tribe members to indicate that they themselves are literate, respectable, and believe in the same values, marriage customs, and dietary customs that the Hindu minority landowning group does. These are all a variety of indicators certain Korwa tribe members adopt to assert their own values in a social context; values which are ultimately embedded in the fluid notion of modernization. Ultimately, because these indicators are adopted on a disproportionate basis, and by a variety of tribe members with varying degrees of interaction with the Yadav (social capital), amount of wealth, and affinity to participate in the process, the uneven adoption of such indicators creates conflict within the Korwa tribe.

Section 2: Landowner Recognition of Korwa Tribe Shapes Identity

Now that we have understood how modernization has shaped the intra-tribe social relations of Korwa tribe members, the next section will make clear the broader inter-group social hierarchy *within* which the Korwa tribe members sought to draw the boundaries outlined in the first section. In other words, this second section will elucidate how the Korwa tribe is *recognized*

by the landowning groups they live amongst, and how this process of recognition further embeds the Korwa tribe's identity in the process of modernization. First, we will observe the social hierarchies in the rural hillside where Yadav's and Korwa tribe members live together; this social hierarchy will allow us to understand how Korwa tribe members are increasingly embedded in intimate ties with landowners, who simultaneously hold positions of authority over them. This provides us with the context within which the identities of Korwa tribe members are recognized. Consequently, we will observe the language of such recognition: how landowners utilize language of modernization to recognize Korwa tribe members, hence embedding their identities further in the process of modernization. Such language will include reference to two characterizations often used to describe Korwa tribe members: 'poor' and 'jungli' as well as 'progressing', illustrating how seemingly contradictory references to the Korwa tribe are consistent in their embedding the Korwa identity in the process of modernization. During this analysis, we will observe that the reason for each particular framing often depends on how the landowners *themselves* are embedded in the process of modernization, hence shaping how they recognize, and thereby form the identities of the Korwa tribe.

Section 2.1: Observed Social Hierarchies between Korwa and Yadav

Until now, the hierarchy has been referenced in vague terms; in the next few paragraphs, I will characterize the social hierarchy I observed through a series of paradigms; this subsection serves to provide the reader with context regarding the social hierarchies within which Korwa tribe members are forming their social identities. Firstly, I will characterize it through the paradigm of subtle authorities – the authorities one has to ask something of someone, or to

interact with them in a specific manner. This analysis is based on observing how individuals in the field communicated with one another and with myself, as well as the level of formality (or informality) with which they conducted themselves; it looks not so much at explicit descriptions, but rather at manners of behavior.

Subtle authorities are defined here as requests, statements, commands, or other manners of behaviors that indicate a broader authority or 'right' one has over another. In Indian culture, each individual is often embedded in a web of social relations. One navigates these social relations based on social norms that dictate how one is to interact in each relationship. These subtle authorities vary by the age and group one belongs to as well as the context of interaction. Such subtle authorities are clear in a culture where many social norms exist, even amidst subaltern groups; for instance, a domestic worker may speak to their employer with much greater respect than a tribe member, who is independent of a relationship involving servitude. The word 'subtle' is employed to illustrate that these authorities are observed in interaction and are as natural as breathing; they don't always refer to a command, but rather that one *can* or is within their socially acceptable abilities to call upon or ask someone else of something. An example in the context of this study is when Rani interacts with her neighbor she calls her 'Aunt', who belongs to another tribe. At a basic level, even such labelling of 'Aunt' indicates a social authority one has: to refer to someone who is not related to you or your own family. Furthermore, when Rani and I were chatting, I observed Rani call out to her Aunt, urging her to "Come! Listen to the stories!". Such encouragement illustrates a form of social authority Rani has over her aunt; She is within her rights to informally call over her Aunt. This example demonstrates the informal relationship Rani has with a member from another tribe, with whom she has formed a close relationship. This interaction indicated to me that there is a social

hierarchy one can further understand by observing the subtle authorities that inform how individuals act with one another, and the social hierarchies they indicate.

Subtle authorities are plentiful between the Korwa tribe members and the Yadav's. Such subtle authorities largely involve informal interaction between both groups; both groups have authorities to speak to one another quite informally, and if not informally, then directly. For instance, the way I met Rani was where Yadav Baba saw her walking by and yelled to call her over. She responded by yelling back, and did not immediately agree to coming over. This indicates a mutually understood, informal relationship, where one is not required to immediately defer to the calls of another. That being said, upon being encouraged to come over, Rani eventually does come over despite her reluctance. Rani, similarly exerts subtle authority over Yadav sons, informally calling over at them to explain something to me. Specifically, when I did not understand what she meant by a word she used, she called over to the Yadav-son sitting 15 feet away and said "Explain it, could you!" This particular relationship is potentially also associated by age; Rani is approximately 15 years older than the Yadav son, hence may feel comfortable calling an instruction to someone younger. That being said, it still illustrates that in this context, the two groups speak relatively directly and informally to one another, making small requests.

In other interactions, it appears that many Korwa tribe members share a level of comfort with the Yadav landowners, and regard them with the same informality as one would a family member; this illustrates a mutual subtle authority to speak freely with one another as confidantes. For instance, when I first met Rani when Yadav-baba called her over, I observed her have an extensive conversation with Yadav-baba, telling him stories in her own language (the Korwa language of Kuruku) which Yadav-baba also understood. The two spoke animatedly to one

another. Upon being asked to tell us what they talked about, Rani explains a story of an incident that happened a while back. At the end of explaining the story, she points at Yadav-baba and yells indignantly, “Then the village people will gossip! Things will get messed up.” Everyone laughs, including Yadav-baba. This interaction illustrated the familiarity that some of the tribe members had with the local landowners, particularly Yadav-baba, who had been in the area for over 50 years. This familiarity was illustrated in their informal and free manner of speaking to one another, often sharing personal stories, and going as far as to point at one another and make fun. These sorts of interactions illustrated an intimate tie between the elder Yadav and Korwa tribe members.

This subtle authority that Korwa tribe members have in freely speaking and confiding with the Yadav existed to some extent with the younger Yadav sons as well, who were largely in their 30s. This observation was confirmed by the comfort that Bhirav’s wife indicated she had with the Yadav sons. When I insinuated that she could talk freely despite the presence of the Yadav sons, she immediately responded with “Oh, them?! We all sit together often with these guys and hang out. Why would we be shy with them?” Hence, this illustrates that the Yadav sons and certain tribe members have a relatively informal relationship, one that at least superficially, allows free expression.

At the same time, Korwa members indicated deference, or a willingness to agree with the Yadavs, or with other landowning, respected individuals. For instance, there were multiple instances where Bhirav simply agreed to or reiterated the statements made by the Yadav-son in his presence.. Although Pranav did not agree to all statements, he also illustrated a polite deference and highly respectful manner of behavior to Maanya and Chohan. This behavior was often reciprocated by these individuals. These trends specifically indicated a change in behavior

for tribe members who were more connected with local community leaders or landowners; Bhirav was regarded by Arun as a Korwa member who he described as being a Korwa who was "able to speak to me". Pranav was regarded as a teacher, someone that Maanya reciprocated a "namaste", a respectful greeting to when he greeted her first. These interactions indicate how the subtle authorities of direct communication, though often reciprocal in their directness, become more nuanced should the Korwa tribe member receive more respect from the landowner, often because of being more socially connected. In Pranav's case, this point indicates a sort of mobility that the Korwa tribe members have; as they have greater social capital, they are in certain ways, receiving greater respect than less educated tribe members. However, in Bhirav's case, a greater willingness to agree with the Yadav's, as well as view them as a role-model group as we'll explore later, indicates how embeddedness in social capital also may result in the tribe member having more deference to the other individuals of other groups.

Furthermore, Rani, as an elder, exerts subtle authorities over me. She gives me her blessings, stating with conviction, "You will get admitted to a very good job posting! If you ever climb up to a high position, you'll say, 'Rani gave her blessings'!" In this grandiose manner of giving blessings, Rani fully exerts her authority as an elder to provide me with her blessings. She does so in the classic manner that many elders in Indian culture bestow blessings upon others. Furthermore, she clearly embodies this authority, given her reference to herself "Rani" as the person I will recall when her blessings are fulfilled. Additionally, the Yadav-son Rahul standing nearby viewed her blessing as legitimate, observed by his clarification to me: "She's giving you her blessings! That you'll get a great job." This indicates that such subtle authorities of offering blessings to a younger person is broadly understood and legitimized within this feudal culture by both Yadav's and Korwa tribe members. Her husband, though not as grandiose, similarly gave

me a proper blessing upon my time to leave. In this manner, both tribe members exhibit their subtle authority to provide a younger individual, despite one belonging to another group, with their blessings.

There are certain explicit subtle authorities that the landowning class explicitly exerts on the Korwa tribe members; these subtle authorities are not reciprocal. The following example characteristically illustrates the subtle authorities the Yadav have over the Korwa, illustrating a broader social hierarchy placing them in a superior position. Yadav Baba asks Rani to dance, to perform her tribal dances for the guests, including myself and the individuals I came with. He is encouraged by Manisha, Maanya, and other Yadav sons standing close by. He says, “Show us some of your dancing! Come now.” Rani is hesitant at first, but comes around to dancing upon further encouragement. On this occasion, I volunteer to dance with her, and she grasps my hand and walks me through the steps as she is singing the folk song. This instance illustrates a scenario where the Yadav are within their rights to call upon Rani, as a tribe member, to dance and to sing. This interaction may also have a gendered aspect, as there was another occasion where the Yadav sons asked Kunti, Bhirav’s wife, to sing a song for me (in this scenario, she did brush it off and refuse). The manner of speaking is analogous to when older family members ask the young children to dance or sing for them; yet in this scenario, these transcend age norms; Individuals younger than Rani who belonged to the Yadav group or more broadly, were middle class members from the town, were comfortable in asking Rani, an older tribal woman, to dance and sing for them. The manner of speaking is not derogatory, nor said with malignance, yet illustrates a certain authority they have. The existence of such a non-reciprocal subtle authority suggests there is a broader social hierarchy in which tribal members are understood to be below the landowning Yadav group.

Rani explicitly experiences disdain for this social hierarchy in which she is obligated to dance when a Yadav, particularly an older one, asks for it. Her reaction to it indicates she feels such demands are lacking in genuine respect and human connection. For instance, referring to the Yadav's place, Rani states, "You see, chit-chatting is not what they ask me to do, they just make me dance over there. Over there, where you are staying. The *dada* (older brother) folks. They make me dance." She then says in a louder, weary tone, "I get tired. I get tired. I get tired. Of dancing." The tiredness she expresses indicates she wishes to let go of such obligations; to retreat to an environment where she can talk to individuals perceiving her as an equal. Furthermore, Rani does not display hesitation to sing or dance when she feels there is not a social obligation; for instance, in the midst of the interview, she abruptly began singing a folk song on her own accord while talking about the ceremonial traditions of *Jitiya Karma*, a tradition Korwa celebrate. This suggests that she does not necessarily hesitate to sing or dance her traditional customs, but rather has disdain towards an obligatory performance of it.

Rani experiences this disdain due to the underlying social hierarchy, in which she feels her dancing is observed as an indication of inferior status, with a sort of mocking or patronizing gaze. For instance, referring to when she and I danced together while Yadav-sons took videos of us, she states "They all took so many photos! They look at it, they get a laugh out of it." This characterization of what occurred illustrates Rani's disdain for how the Yadav's perceive her dancing.

However, in the same vein of thought, Rani displays an awareness that the social hierarchy is not embedded in the dancing between tribe member and outsider itself, but rather depends on the viewer's perspective. Right after asserting how Yadav would get a laugh out of the videos, her voice transforms into one with a curious tone of voice. She asks me, "But when

you take these photos, and you show it out there, what will you say? 'I'm also dancing with her', like that? Will you say that?" Once I affirm that I will indeed say that, that I will say, "She taught me how to dance," Rani grunts affirmatively, satisfied. This example illustrates how Rani can imagine a paradigm where one does not assume she is of inferior status, but rather can see that she and I are dancing together, as equals. This is powerful because it indicates that Rani does not internalize the social hierarchy, but rather can imagine a world where this specific hierarchy does not exist.

This section illustrated how an intimate social hierarchy may co-exist between landowners and tribe members, where landowners have certain authorities tribe members do not. Hence, it is the nature of such intimate yet subordinate relationships that position Korwa tribe members in a place to be particularly vulnerable to how landowners recognize them. The next section will outline this recognition process: how landowners recognize Korwa tribe members through their consistent placement of tribe members alongside the modernization spectrum, and how this process feeds into the ways in which Korwa tribe members' identities are socially formed.

Section 2.2: The Language of Recognition

Given that identities are socially formed, rooted in how others recognize an individual, this subsection seeks to take an alternative approach towards understanding how Korwa tribe members' identities are formed: by analyzing the narratives of those who often recognize them: local landowning groups. Landowning groups serve as the broader term to describe an individual who comes from a non-tribe status, who inherited land from their parents (at minimum in the last century). As we observed in the last section, by increasingly involving oneself in market

economies, the Korwa tribe comes into increasing contact with the landowning groups nearby, whether that is the Yadav or those living in the closest town. Analyzing the rhetoric employed by such groups in describing the Korwa tribe reveals how they consistently recognize the Korwa tribe on the basis of their placement along the spectrum of modernization. Specifically, we will observe how depending on the context, landowners will describe the Korwa tribe either in terms of '*jungli*' (wild-ness) or their poverty, and otherwise, in terms of their 'advancement' or 'progress'. These two terms can be imagined to be on opposite sides of the imagined axis of modernization. Analyzing the context where landowners describe Korwa tribe members to be on either side of the spectrum reveals the landowner's grappling with their *own* position in the process of modernization. One observes a fluctuation between said characterizations of Korwa tribe members that in turn reflect landowners' own conflict with their position or stake in the process of modernization. The context in which landowners describe Korwa tribe members as being *jungli* or poor, or whether they are *moving* from that end of the spectrum to a state of 'progressing', respectively reveal factors such as the landowner's own conflict with their social mobility, their adoption of the Korwa tribe's modernization as an extension of their own national project, as well as their perception of their own *role* in helping the tribe. In analyzing each of these cases, this subsection will ultimately illustrate how the language of recognition for the Korwa tribe, regardless of which end of the spectrum, is consistently embedded in the language of modernization, retaining its unstable, constantly in flux nature. At the end, we will observe how the Korwa tribe members are often responding to such recognition, illustrating how such cases of interaction not only reinforce and reproduce the Korwa tribe member's identity as one embedded in modernization.

Firstly, landowners regard the Korwa tribe to be strongly tied to the forests, or in their own words, the 'jungle', and in certain cases this is a high regard; understanding this tie provides the initial basis on which landowners view the Korwa tribe. During one of the first interactions I had with Rani, when Yadav-Baba called her over, she said, "Our life *maiya*, it's not relaxed…" She continued to talk about lifestyle in the jungle, which Yadav-Baba translated as, "She said, us here, whether we are big people or small people, as in whether we are wealthy or poor, whether you eat well or not, unless we go inside the dense jungles and hills, we won't be able to make it. Because we get wood, leaves, and vegetables. Even when the Gods spent their exiles in the jungle, all they ate was vegetables too!" After offering this explanation, Yadav-Baba points at Rani and proudly exclaims, "These are the people whose ancestors offered the Gods food when they were in the jungle in exile." In this exclamation, Yadav-Baba is referring to the legend that posits the Korwa tribe were living in the forests long ago, during the time of the Gods incarnated forms roaming the land. This remark illustrates how the regard Yadav-Baba has for the Korwa tribe, particularly drawn from rooting the people to the forests where their ancestors roamed for centuries prior. This remark indicates how the Yadav associate the Korwa tribe with a history of living in the wilderness, and a sort of sacredness of this relationship; they hold this history in high regard.

Certain landowners, such as the elderly Yadav, claim to share this tie to the jungle and hence, recount their relationship with the Korwa in terms of an intimate and historical relationship; this creates a shared bond he believes he and the Korwa share. Yadav-Baba, the oldest living member of the Yadav group, recounts his time in the hillside to over 50 years. He himself was brought to this land by his father who passed away not long after, and claimed land through the Settlement survey offered by the government from the mid 20th century. He recounts

the history of observing the Korwa throughout this time period. For instance, where 'Ahir' is the former word for 'Yadav', he states, "The main folks are Korwa people [here]! Who does work. Understand that the Korwa are the main thing here. Wherever there are Korwa people settled, there are Ahir people settled there too. Where there are Ahir people settled, there are Korwa there too." In this statement, Yadav-Baba makes clear the pastoral long-standing relationship the Yadav and Korwa people have for the past 4-5 decades settling in the same hillside land. He continues to recount the history, "So the Ahir caste would see where there is a jungle, and we'd go there and get settled with cows. And so we started getting *matta* (buttermilk) and milk. So then four households of Korwa would go there and settle too. They also started getting *matta* and milk. To drink and eat. And they become our support system too. A little like "bring a little wood here *ji*" or "do a little bit of this *ji*". So they're the ones that did it. And we did it for them. And *now*, the Korwa people, they have become educated." In this narrative of the past few decades, Yadav-Baba closely tied the settlement of the pastoral group he belongs to alongside the Korwa tribe. He illustrates the informal means of labor that existed, where they, upon necessity, called upon Korwa tribe members to do labor for them. He refers to this labor with a sort of nostalgic regard, illustrating his gratitude to the former order of labor divisions.

Furthermore, he considers himself and his parents to have had an intimate relationship with the Korwa, where he regards them highly for their labor. He explains, "At the very beginning, when my father's folks didn't have anything, when they didn't have cattle, land, or a house, they herded cows and got here. Then they kept earning and earning and earning, so it makes sense that they saved up some money right." When asked how they earned money, he states, "You know, herding the cows and selling its ghee and milk…so out of that, they'd buy one or two cows, then the Korwa people were the first to mow the land! So that's why we didn't let

go of the Korwa, nor will we! Because you tell me - the person who, from the beginning, worked at our homes, at the very beginning mowed our land, isn't that person our 'main' [person]. For instance, if you, until your last breath, did some work, then wouldn't I consider *you* my 'main' [person]. Our father's side had a truly great relationship with the Korwa, and us too, ours is great." He continues, referring to another tribe living closeby, and explains that even today, they'll ask him for money, and he says "Take it. Go. Eat and drink!" This statement illustrates the sort of intimate, paternalistic relationship Yadav-Baba continues to have with the tribe members, including the Korwa tribe members, living in the hillside. This analysis provides us with an understanding of the shared bond the elderly Yadav claim to have with the Korwa tribe in this particular hillside area, creating the stake the Yadav feel they have as calling the Korwa a group they are attached to, or "would not let go of". This paragraph sets up the background knowledge of understanding how the Yadav view their own economic progress in relation to the Korwa, even historically *needing* the Korwa, hence creating an intimate reason for the Yadav to care about the relational status of the Korwa. The following paragraphs will illustrate how the Yadav experience the Korwa's social mobility through modernization to be a rift in such an intimate relationship.

The elderly Yadav characterize the Korwa of elder generations as *jungli* or wild, to rhetorically illustrate how 'far' the Korwa tribe has since come, a process they have been witness to. In doing so, they consistently recognize the Korwa tribe in regards to who they were and who they are becoming, as a sort of unitary identity. For instance, Yadav-Baba states, referring to what he says was 10 or 20 years ago, "At that time, well, if you saw what they ate and what they wore, then you yourself would be lost in thought about how these guys were living their lives. Like what are they doing?! And how these *jungli's* would eat everything, including me as well -

so I can't stay here any longer!" In this specific statement, the word"jungli" is employed to evoke a sense of a wild creature, someone who "eats everything". Yadav-Baba's insinuation that the Korwa were so *jungli* that they would eat me as well serves to hyperbolically emphasize how *jungli* or wild the Korwa were. Yadav Baba continues, "But *now* they're not like this! Now, car, horse - they have it all. Two or three bikes. Someone got a tractor, someone else got a car. Someone became a master, someone became something else." These two contrasting descriptions of the Korwa tribe, both generalizing the whole tribe, occur within the same sentence. These statements are made with a dual sense of humor and awe: evoking a humorous astonishment at "at how far they have come". This characterization, first, reaffirms why - as observed in section 1 - many Korwa tribe members take great care to draw boundaries between themselves and the tribe members of their past. Because they are often recognized by landowners in contrast with their elders' *jungli* or 'wild' nature, tribe members take greater care to distinguish themselves from their elder generations.

It is important to note that this characterization of *jungli* or wild is not one belonging entirely to the past; it is evoked in the present, placing the Korwa in a state presently relatively to their former *jungli* self. When asked for clarification on whether his reference to the Korwa as *jungli* was, say, 50 years ago, Yadav-Baba exclaims, "Oh no! This is like 10 or 20 years back…they've only now become educated!" This statement not only illustrates the recentness with which the tribe is perceived to experience lifestyle changes, but also how their status of being 'educated' is temporally unfixed, in the "now". "Now" is an indefinite period of time, not necessarily rooted in a specific time or year. Furthermore, as we come to observe other instances where the tribe is *not* characterized as being 'educated' in the 'now', we will observe how this

'now' is a precarious state of being, inconsistent, and in fact, very much dependent on the paradigm adopted by the recognizer, in this case, the landowner.

To this end, the complete picture of how the elderly Yadav perceive, and hence recognize, Korwa tribe members, and why they make such rhetorical contrasts regarding their 'progress', is best understood in context of the Yadav's own grappling with access to social mobility - that is, their own position in the broader process of modernization. Understanding that the Yadav (formerly Ahir) caste is listed as one of the Other Backward Castes in the state of Chhattisgarh, while being regarded as having a powerful presence in state politics, illustrates that the Yadav are embedded in their own process of being recognized as a 'modernizing' caste. In this specific case, one observes that references to the Korwa tribe's progress are made while expressing discontent by claiming how their own people are not getting access to the same (or as many) opportunities provided to the Korwa tribe. While this study is not concerned with the politics of the reservation system – the government's policies intended to safeguard government jobs and higher education for historically marginalized populations such as tribes, through the use of quotas – it brings up the comments landowners make in reference to the reservation system in order to indicate how they are embedded in their own conflicts regarding the modernization process. Specifically, Yadav-Baba mentions an example of a Korwa tribe member named Jadhoor, who is now a peon in the Rajpur school located on the road closer to the town of Ambikapur, with a population of 243,000. He explains that he studied and got transferred there. He elaborated, "Now consider this - he's making a house with 6 rooms. A *pucca* (permanent house, typically made of brick or cement). He's earned the money for it. There's a carpenter who makes the bed, chairs, and furniture for it. He's a money guy. His son studies in Bharatpur in the middle, no high school there. His son goes there everyday on the motorcycle. Now well if [a

Korwa] studies and all, they have reservations for them. If he gets a job secured, well, no one can remove them." At the end here, he is referring to the government policy which provides safeguards for tribal populations to have jobs. In referring to this policy, he states, "So in doing this, the government has removed everything for us…There's no jobs to be found. If you work continuously then perhaps one might stick. Even then, just assume that a lot of money was thrown at it. Otherwise, well, either there aren't high enough marks, or there isn't this, or there isn't that." He explains, referring to his son Vivek, "He doesn't have anything. He doesn't have a job." This narrative illustrates how in the Yadav's perception the Korwa tribe has experienced significant change, in part due to pursuing education, but also in part as a result of government policies safeguarding jobs for such tribe members who, as Yadav-Baba claims, "have passed the 8th grade". In this narration, Yadav-Baba simultaneously regards Jadhoor as a tribe member who has "earned the money for a [house]" while in a later part of the interview, exclaiming, "But *we* don't get jobs!" This illustrates the complexity of Yadav-Baba's personal conflict; his entire narrative illustrates he perceives a sort of 'leap' in how the Korwa tribe have come about, one that in receiving assistance from the state, he experiences as threatening his own children's access to jobs, or more broadly, his own children's position in the broader process of modernization. Yadav-Baba insinuates he feels a sort of abandonment, where the group that was once unquestionably performing labor for them, (a relationship he refers to intimately), now has access to opportunities his children do not. He feels this change is unjustified. In the same breath, he brings up the Korwa's formerly *jungli* nature, such as to emphasize that his group and the Korwa group are not the same in their origins (despite mutually sharing the jungle and needing one another for sustenance), and to further evoke awe at how such a formerly '*jungli'* group now has access to opportunities his children does not. His contrasting of their originally *jungli* nature

serves as a backdrop for how he articulates recent changes (i.e. access to reserved jobs) that threatens his own children's access, creating a paradigm that views the Korwa tribe's progress with discontent. This illustrates how certain landowners may recognize the Korwa tribe in terms of their drastic movement from a *jungli* nature to progressing, and how this paradigm is embedded in their own hopes and desires ultimately rooted in their own position in modernization.

There are differences in how the younger Yadav refer to the Korwa tribe as well, deviating between literate and illiterate, again illustrating how their recognition of the Korwa as 'progressing' or being 'educated' is fickle and precarious. Arun Yadav is a younger Yadav in his 30s, and he accompanied and suggested to me which Korwa tribe members to interview (one such suggestion was Bhirav). Arun explains, "I'm trying to take you specifically to meet people from whom you can get the opportunity to learn something. With those who can talk well, who can tell you something. Now with the folks who can't even talk – what will you learn from them." Here, Arun is illustrating how he distinguishes between Korwa who are literate and those who are not; this illustrates the pendulum nature of the distinctions made between perceiving the Korwa as *jungli* or illiterate, and perceiving them as educated. It shows itself in his choice to have me meet Bhirav, someone who has amassed greater social capital, is involved in local politics, and is quick to identify himself with his connections to landowners. This example illustrates how such recognition of the Korwa is fickle, and discriminates between tribe members; hence, further creating the context in which they drew boundaries amongst themselves as shown in section 1.

Next, we can observe a case where a different kind of landowner, due to his own position in the course of modernization, may adopt a lens of recognizing the Korwa not as becoming

educated and progressing, but as being *poor* and progressing. This particular case is of Neelbaba, a landowner belonging to the Rajput caste, generally considered to be amongst the high-castes. He is highly regarded as a community leader in the town of Shankargarh and in the surrounding tribal areas (including Jam Paani, where Bhirav, and Rani of the Korwa tribe as well as the Yadav's in this study live). Bhirav's first words in his interview were that he was "Neelbaba's man", while Arun Yadav shared how much he reveres Neelbaba: "Our heads will always bow down at Neelbaba's feet". He continues, "You can find Pahadi Korwa who care so much for him. He really cares for them the same amount. He'll come and listen to their stories." Other Korwa tribe members encountered would at minimum know of Neelbaba or speak relatively highly of him. This characterization of Neelbaba provides some context for how he is a well-known figure within the community for his efforts to help tribe members; in the following paragraph, we will observe the context in which a landowner with his specific background recognizes Korwa tribe members to primarily be *poor* while also progressing.

Specifically, Neelbaba frames himself in contrast to other power-holding, or as he calls it, 'corrupt' members of the community, as someone who is an honest man 'helping the poor'; it is this adoption of a purpose in the broader process of modernization, as a helper of the needy, that frames why Neelbaba is more likely to recognize the Korwa as primarily being poor. This doesn't necessarily mean that he doesn't recognize the lifestyle changes Korwa tribe members have experienced, but rather that he frames his recognition of the Korwa tribe as centralized in their poverty. For instance, Neelbaba states, "So you know the Yadav and all, they're quite exploitative. They'll milk them [the Korwa]. So when they exploit them, then they come to me. The poor, the Scheduled Tribes, Scheduled Castes, whoever – the people of the lower categories of caste. I help them." In other parts of the interviews, he claims the middlemen or government

employees engage in bribery, and that is the reason the poor don't get what they need. Here we observe a case where a community leader belonging to a General caste recognizes the Korwa tribe primarily on the basis of their perceived poverty. This ties into Neelbaba's own positionality; he views his own purpose as that of someone helping the poor, even if it is in their efforts to overcome the exploitative effects of other landowners: "I don't believe in [caste]. I want to uplift the poor. I want them to be given their rights." Now interestingly, Neelbaba frames himself as being different from the Yadav in that he is an honest helper of the poor, and to this extent, he frames the Korwa primarily as being poor. He states he has been doing public service since 1972, having adopted the mission of helping the poor castes and tribes in the village community, he has in some ways adopted the modernization project as his own. This adoption has created a particular viewpoint of centering himself as the do-er of such a process, of educating, of helping tribe populations, and hence contributes to why 60 years since he started serving the community he continues to frame the populations as being poor. This framing illustrates how the way a landowner such as Neelbaba views their own purpose in the community shapes how he frames the Korwa tribe; this is notably different from the Yadav who as people living amongst the Korwa and sharing an order they feel is being directly threatened, are more likely to frame the Korwa in terms of their leaps of 'progress'. This difference is not cause for social antagonism however, as the Yadav still consider themselves to be closely connected to Neelbaba, coming to visit him and talk often. Furthermore, it is important to note that Neelbaba's views on the reservation system are also complex and critical, hence, that issue alone is not enough to pinpoint differences between Neelbaba and the Yadav. However, there does lie a difference in generally framing the Korwa tribe as one they are seeking to help (due to their poverty) and one that has reached significant progress in the past couple decades. Hence, these

differences within landowners positionality in the modernization process complicates how they frame the Korwa tribe, and how they recognize the Korwa tribe.

Now, finally, a third example of a landowner's perspective of the Korwa tribe illustrates how one gains a stake in how the Korwa are perceived by the outsider, and hence is more likely to frame the tribe in terms of the *efforts* of modernization. Maanya is another landowner belonging to a caste within the General castes. She often emphasizes the efforts the government is taking to build facilities and make accommodations for the Korwa tribe, and the resources they are being offered; she consistently advises me to include such information in my research as well. She states, "And now the [government] is giving importance to their education. I told you, right, the government opened a specific school for them, a Korwa school, where they're given all the facilities so that they can send their children to school and have them study. Have them change and become independent. That no one mistakes them for a fool. That they can count money. Then, they've made a special hostel (dormitory) just for them. Only Korwa students can live there. And India's President has adopted them as her *dattak putra* (adopted children)." This last phrase, translates to "adopted son", and is an indicator of the special recognition and attention the Indian President Droupadi Murmu had given the Korwa tribe. They are often recognized or referred to by this name. When asked about the Korwa tribe, these facilities are the first thing Maanya brings up. She speaks of such facilities with emphasis and vigor, as though these are necessary to know. She continues, "We'll show you how the Collector (District Magistrate) has done so much for them, they have their own special rooms made, two at a time. In my own department, the posting that I am in, it is connected to just that. To teach them the alphabet, which many women have not yet learned. They have not been able to go to school. So we want to give them literacy." Maanya's narration may sound similar to Neelbaba's perspective,

however it contains a key difference: Maanya appears to be emphasizing the work of the *government*, in their efforts in providing facilities and resources for the Korwa tribe. She invokes the title the Korwa tribe has received from the President to indicate her special notice of the tribe. Her specific mention of *showing me* all the facilities the Collector has established indicates how she takes a personal interest in providing the contents of my research in light of what is being done *by the government* in furthering the process of modernization for the Korwa tribe. This differs significantly from Neelbaba's narration: Neelbaba points to government employees (and the bribery they indulge in) as a reason for the Korwa tribe's continued poverty, while Maanya shifts the focus entirely to how government programs are seeking to provide for the Korwa tribe. This narrative illustrates how Maanya has a personal stake in conveying to me (the outsider, the researcher, or in other words, the person controlling the narrative) how the government is invested in providing resources for the Korwa; in this manner, Maanya appears to have a stake in how the Korwa tribe is represented in my research. Her invocation of the national through local level of government involvement illustrates her desire to illustrate that the project of modernization is one that they take seriously. She frames the Korwa as progressing, but through the lens of the efforts of the government in their adoption of modernization as a nation-wide project; she believes in this project and seeks to convey that to the viewer (whom she is aware belongs to an international audience). Hence, we observe a third manner in which the Korwa identity is embedded and recognized in the context of a broader, government-led project.

These many viewpoints are not necessarily unique or unilaterally representative of the individuals who shared them. In fact, there were instances in which various landowners took up any one of the three frames: 1. Korwa as a rapidly 'progressing' group, moving rapidly from *jungli* people to civilized employees; 2. Korwa as a 'poor' group in need of help by individuals

who defy the corruption in the status quo; 3. Korwa as a component, as proof of the endeavors of the national project of modernization. Indeed, the three landowners listed, though primarily adopted the narratives listed, still fluctuated between the three narratives. This fluctuation illustrates how the Korwa can be recognized as poor or progressing in various contexts, yet the constant throughline between these narratives is that they are 1. Dependent on the landowner's own positionality in the process of modernization, and 2. Serve to primarily articulate the Korwa tribe member's identity *in terms of* modernization. Interestingly, there does not appear to be an end time to this process; it is not as if when the Korwa tribe member reaches a clear point of having a particular job that they cease to be recognized in terms of this process; in fact, we observed the very opposite - regardless of where on the spectrum of job-wielding, literacy, or level of engagement with others, tribe members are consistently recognized in the language of modernization.

To illustrate the broader complexity of such modernization projects, interestingly, both Neelbaba and Maanya articulate cases of "falsification" or "corruption" involved as barriers to the Korwa tribe's education or ability to acquire land. However, the two localize the issue in differing ways: one points to dishonest middlemen, and the other points to ineffective government incentives. These differences illustrate how the project of 'modernizing' the tribe becomes on its own, self-defined, project with multiple stakeholders; in this manner, the process of modernization is no longer about the actual lifestyles of Korwa tribe members, but more so how people perceive their own roles (and responsibilities) in a larger purpose, employing the identity of the Korwa tribe in such projects. When I ask Neelbaba why a woman like Rani isn't actually receiving her share of the government's benefits to unemployed women in her bank account, he responds, "That is because, you see, there's a lot of bribery here. What is here is that,

government employees will say, 'Bring the money. Bring the money.' Now brother, how would the poor have money?!" He later explains that the process of claiming land – certain state policies, such as the Forest Right Act 2008 provide avenues for tribe members to claim a few acres of land – is impacted by middlemen susceptible to bribery. He states, "2 acres, 3 acres, or 5 acres maximum. The government provides it…I have distributed a lot of land. From the years '80 to '87. A lot of poor people got their rights to land. There would be a lot of money involved but I never took any." In this example, Neelbaba makes it clear, it is quite easy for middlemen to pocket money or reject the land claims on the basis of someone's inability to offer money first. Neelbaba goes on to state that the way to solve such a problem is electing honest leadership. He says, "The minister at the high level - he becomes honest. The secondary one, the Collector, if they become honest. The Chief Minister. Because if employees get scared – that if I take a bribe and will be punished for it – then no one would do it." In this narrative, Neelbaba points to dishonest individuals as the root cause for issues of bribery and reasons why government policies granting forest land to tribe members are not being fulfilled.

On the other hand, Maanya's narrative points to a misalignment of incentives as the root cause for falsification and corruption in the efforts to help Korwa tribe members (particularly non-school aged people) become literate. Specifically, she says, "What happened was that a while back, there used to be two educated teachers from the village, one man and one woman, who would take up the duty. They would get a salary of 2000 rupees from the government. But this bastard government, they ended this posting. So now there's nothing. So now you have to find teachers for free! The *sarpanch* (village head) has to find people for free. Now who has this much time, that they would teach people for free? Not even 1 rupee, nothing at all! Now we're running this department. So it's inevitable that people will falsify this process: so if government

officers come for a check-up, someone just gathers the villagers [and stages the classes].” In this account, Maanya illustrates another case of falsification, this time central to one of the same programs she stated the government employs to educate Korwa tribe members amongst other Scheduled Tribes and Castes. However, she pinpoints the root issue to be in the government’s removal of the cash incentive in this program. She explains that the reason they continue to report false improvements in literacy rates is because there is a lack of cash incentives in having teachers teach. This perspective differs from that of Neelbaba who pinpoints the issue to dishonest individuals. However, more broadly, these differing accounts serve to illustrate how the process of “educating” tribe members, programs such as *Saakshar Bharat* (Literate India), or the process of allocating forest land to tribe members, are the modes through which the individuals who are *not* tribe members, in fact become involved in directly shaping the narrative of tribe members.

Ultimately, for the scope of this study, the reason why the analysis above is important is to illustrate how landowners recognize Korwa tribe members in an iterative, dialogical manner, resulting in a response from Korwa tribe members: hence, the pendulum between poor and progressing is reproduced with each interaction, reinforcing how the Korwa tribe member is aware of how they are recognized, and may even agree with the description. Section 1 illustrated many instances where Korwa tribe members drew boundaries between who they were and who they weren’t, drawing boundaries between themselves and elderly hunter-gatherer Korwa as well as unrespectable, fighting Korwa. These narrations are in part responses to the recognition Korwa tribe members may receive from landowners. These are also exhibited in dialogue: Bhirav responds to a question about what the children of tribe members do when their parents are working jobs in the closest town: “They’d play there. Where we were doing work, they’d play

there. By evening the whole family would go to their room and cook food and stay there." Deepak, a Yadav standing close by listening adds in, "Even today these guys don't send a lot of kids to school. Korwa people." To this, Bhirav elaborates, "Mmm, brother, those who have kids, even today, those who are smart send them [to school], those who are fools, they won't send them, even today." Here is a case where a young Yadav illustrates a particular recognition of the Korwa tribe: one characterizing them as 'still' not sending some of their kids to school, hence positioning them again somewhere along the earlier portion of the spectrum of 'progressing'. Bhirav, quite pragmatically, agrees in his response, explaining that yes, 'some are still fools who won't send them, even today'. In this manner, one can observe a kind of narration that is not only illustrated from landowner's perspectives, but is dialogically *reproduced* with interactions between Korwa tribe members and landowners. While there are differences in the extent to which various tribe members may adopt these forms of recognition as their own, this very difference of some who do more so, and some who do less so, is part of how modernization shapes a dynamic changes in how one perceives themselves and others with whom they are recognized to share an identity with. In these instances, it appears certain tribe members reiterate and reproduce the narratives through which landowners recognize members of their own tribe, while drawing distinctions within the tribe of those who match the description – the example of being fools who don't send their kids to school – and those who don't.

However, sometimes, there are instances where one may even be aware of how they are recognized, but is more empathetic in their response to the reality of why Korwa tribe members may not, for instance, send their kids to school. Interactions with other Korwa members illustrated this instance, where one, belonging to a different area, responded to my question on whether the kids go to school, with, "The other parents man well, if they send their kids, then

they send ‘em. You know what it is - the kids just start playing somewhere halfway on the way to school. How’s the parent going to do anything about that.” His response indicates a different kind of pragmatic answer; he is not as concerned about putting anyone on a particular side of the boundary, despite being very aware of how landowners (and society at-large) perceives the importance of education. He brings a very honest take: what are parents going to do if their kids start playing halfway there. This answer captures the essence of certain tribe members’ attitude as well, where they are caught up in a narrative they may not champion themselves, but they must respond to anyway, and hence they do so in a manner that simply gets at the reality without morally connoting the action.

Along this train of thought, the last section of this paper will address how Korwa tribe members are agents, responding to these dynamic changes in identity with actions that illustrate how they navigate a changing social structure that modernization has brought along with it. This section is last as the two sections before it illustrate how Korwa tribe members mentally respond to changes, and what are the forms of recognition they respond to; now, the last section will explore *how* it is they respond in terms of actions.

Section 3: Agents within Structures of Modernization

In a multitude of ways, Korwa tribe members illustrated a desire to take control of the reins of change, from the micro-level of family, to community, to broader notions of uplifting their group identity. This section will cover the various levels listed at which Korwa tribe members exercise agency in shaping their lives, often in regards to attaining what they see as social mobility in the social hierarchies they are a part of. This section will also illustrate

instances where Korwa tribe members provide reasons for acting differently from the trend that modernization may typically take, such as moving to a town for greater income, for reasons of prioritizing their own livelihood and happiness. These cases all illustrate a complex grappling with the decisions one can make based on the structure they are immersed in, often as means of becoming agents of modernization in various ways.

On a micro-level, Korwa tribe members illustrate desires within their personal lives, indicating a reaction or emphasis on attaining greater control in their personal lives. For instance, Rani asserts throughout her interviews, that the most looming obstacle she faces is the lack of a daughter-in-law. While this is a means through which Rani can celebrate her son, and in her eyes the completion of her family, it is also a means through which Rani can gain an intimate bond, particularly one where she has greater authority. This is revealed through the nature of her complaints: Rani states, “She will fill up water for me and give it to me. She’ll cook food for me. That’s what I have sadness for”. Given that both of these tasks are highly laborious, both involving walking to get water or rice, this indicates Rani’s desire for someone who can take up these roles. Her son and husband already provide a large portion of this work, however Rani desires the personal nature, the feeling of being attended to by her daughter-in-law. This is illustrated further in a separate part of the interview where Rani reminisces about her own mother-in-law. She describes, “So what we’d do, both of us, we would just yap yap yap, and pass the days. When the evening comes, then my mother-in-law would say, "Where's the water?” She also adds, “So if the mother-in-law started talking right, I would just keep quiet.” These statements offer some insight into Rani’s own past relationship with her mother-in-law. It illustrates how she had an intimate bond with her mother-in-law, one where they would chat all day, yet also one where she attended to her mother-in-law’s needs. Upon being asked what her

mother-in-law passed away from, Rani asserts, “[Because of] old age. Even I am old! When will my daughter-in-law come, so I can be happy too?” This clearly illustrates that Rani feels she has gone through enough of her life laboring, and now desires someone who can share her burden and can attend to her needs. She desires a daughter-in-law, which is an intimate relationship subordinate to her. In this manner, one’s own personal networks of relationships offer a pathway for Korwa tribe members to gain greater authority over another, and hence improve the quality of their life. This phenomenon is not unique to this time period, however, serves to illustrate how one’s economic conditions may exacerbate the loneliness and desire one feels for such a relationship.

Next, there are instances where Korwa tribe members navigate avenues of leaving the hillside to the closest town Ambikapur to earn more money, then carrying that decision forward or, in certain cases, choose to leave behind the town and come back to the hillside. For instance, Bhirav explains, “[Male and female tribe members] go there to [Ambikapur] to work – when there isn’t work in the village. If there's work in the village, then well, they wouldn’t leave. They just do work in their own village.” Bhirav, however, expresses a strong dislike for working in the nearby town of Ambikapur. He states, “We’re earning our money here so why would we go to the town? If we’re working so hard here then we’ll get money here only. If we go to the town, working at someone else’s place, listening to their scolding, it doesn’t feel good right. They’ll say, you don’t know how to work like this, or work like that. Better than that is we work at our own house, with our kids, and eat, drink, sleep, sit – that is good.” When asked for his rationale for going at first, he says, “At that time, we didn’t have much money, right. As in, other men were saying that you get more money there [in Ambikapur] compared to the village. That if you get 250 rupees there, you get 100 rupees here. There’s no difference between 250 rupees and 100

rupees. What you get from 250 rupees, the cost is also higher. Now if we live in our town, then brother, in 100 rupees, if nothing else, we'll get our house-related necessities done." Clearly, Bhirav illustrates a logical thought process that has shaped his decisions contrary to what traditional urbanization patterns illustrate - that upon migrating from a rural to urban area in search of higher incomes, individuals continue seeking such a result while sending money back to their hometown. Instead, Bhirav illustrates his agency in making the decision he felt was better for his family. It is fascinating still that the element he mentions turning him away from migrating to an urban area was the element of social behavior – the "scolding" he would receive – in such areas. It suggests a dislike of the social behaviors and encountering of inequality that comes from living and working as a tribe member in the town. Bhirav expresses his preference for living in the hillside with his ability to maintain control of his own farming and land. It is important to note that Bhirav is not necessarily representative of all tribe members, as there is an overall pattern of rural to urban migration in India. Many of the tribe members I spoke with illustrated an awareness of individuals they knew who had left the hillside to seek urban work. However, this example serves as a profound example of how tribe members are agents, navigating the patterns set up through modernization.

Finally, there are Korwa tribe members who have pursued education as the means to achieving social mobility. In their narrative, they emphasize points in time where they took initiative to pursue opportunities. For instance, Pranav speaks to a time when the local school did not offer classes past the 6th grade due to a shortage of teachers. He states, referring to the schools set up by Christian missionaries, "Then I ran away to the 'mission'. I studied there for free. I'd get all the food and all there. The 'dress' and all. I studied all of 'high school' there." Here Pranav frames himself as the doer who despite obstacles where schooling was not readily

accessible, he pursued continuing his education. His use of the phrase ‘ran away’ illustrates how he views his choice to be unconventional, emphasizing that he actively had to *choose* a path of education.

His journey is further shaped by the social capital he builds with middle class townspeople, particularly through the community leader Neelbaba. He explains that his first job was connected to him by Neelbaba in 2013. “Yes, I was in school then. So I got a job here [in Shankargarh]. The commissioner was here, so [Neelbaba] said, you should meet with him. I had already passed 10th grade at the time. Then later, I did private, higher secondary, then I passed BA too. Private. Then I had private schooling through Guru Ghasidas in Ambikapur…Hindi literature.” It appears that after passing the 10th class, the added component of social connections assisted him in finding his first job, from where he catapulted into a series of education.

When asked for his motivation, he illustrates a desire that was borne out of seeing others who pursued education, and the changes in their life that it brought about. He explains that he was 6 or 7 when he went to school. “I was herding cows and goats for others. Then I ran away to school.” When asked why he was motivated to, especially when kids don’t often feel like studying, he responds, “No, I don’t know what it was with me. I used to look at others. Another person. That they’d wear nice clothes, a pants shirt, well worn. They’d wear this. So I thought that I will also study, and get some sort of job, so that I will also dress well and all that.” In this narrative, he illustrates an example of how he was drawn to education, as a young child, due to both the material value education could bring as well as the social connotation. He was exposed to others who carried themselves with the social status that dressing in a pair of pants and shirt can bring (as opposed to the dhoti, or towel wrapped around the lower waist often worn in the

village side). This drove him to act as an agent and take the path of running away from his home, and pursuing education, even as a child.

Such tribe members adopt a cause of promoting education in their community, illustrating how they operate within such structures of modernization to be an agent within their community. For instance, Pranav explains that he teaches around 15 kids, many of whom are Korwa tribe members as well. He explains that there are kids who just don't want to study, and so certain kids don't attend class. He explains that he sometimes goes to the kids' houses and asks their parents why their kids are not attending school, and encourages them to send their children. Upon being asked for the reason why parents don't send their children, he responds, "It's that once they start doing labor for someone, like herding cows and goats, the family has them do it. Like that is how the kids are not able to come. Then we contact the parents, where we hold 'meetings' from time to time. We say, 'Send, brother, the kids.' We say, 'if you've already registered the kids, if you send the kids, then only will they learn'." He explains, "Now there's a rule from the government, an instruction, that the kids who are to study should not be working, or have work being done by them. That's why we search and search for those who are capable of studying, and we write their names in the village. We run a 'survey'." Ultimately, Pranav says he would convey the following instruction to children: "We can give facilities. If one isn't studying, we'll tell him, 'we have studied well, so we are eating and drinking well. You study well too, look at us, if you study well, then like us, you'll be well. Your lifestyle will change too.' This is the suggestion we'll give." In his narration, Pranav clearly illustrates how he has become an agent within the system that modernization has set up: he has become a teacher and goes door-to-door encouraging parents to send their children to school. His statements were spoken quietly, but with belief behind what he says, illustrating his adoption of the project as his own, as a medium through

which he can act and actively shape his community's identity, as tangled up in the processes of modernization, through the structures set up by modernization itself.

Discussion

This study does not seek to make claims regarding how one should live – this question lies beyond the scope of this study. This study does, however, seek to illuminate how the way in which one lives becomes more than simply the way in which one lives. Rather, it takes on additional meanings, that is, assigned meanings: meanings of social status, meanings of respectability, meanings that become tangled up in, even become the premise, of one's sense of self worth. These meanings are *indicated by* forms of behavior: affording to have a chair for a guest to sit on, sending your children to school and being certain they got to the entrance, choosing to not eat cows due to belief in its sacredness, wearing a shirt and pants instead of a *dhoti* (loincloth). Notice how some of these examples *feel* more trivial than others, the cow example may even feel foreign, depending on your own positionality as a reader: thus indicating how each of our realities are shaped by socially constructed meanings determined by how modernity played out in our specific society. The forms of behavior listed, though certainly can serve a utilitarian function, take on additional meaning: this additional social meaning is what guides how others recognize you and your wholeness as a being, and even how you recognize yourself.

Individuals are a part of collective identities: that is, identities that individuals belong to, are recognized by, and shape the trajectory of their life: in this study, for instance, one being a Korwa tribe member ties into a certain collective identity they are now attached to in so far that

they are recognized by others through it, and it shapes their own life trajectories. As Anthony Appiah states, "Collective identities, in short, provide what we might call scripts: narratives that people can use in shaping their life plans and in telling their life stories." In this particular study, we observe the very formation of these scripts taking place: some tribe members assert that their life-scripts are *different* from their parents and grandparents, insofar that they farm, live amidst four walls, wear a shirt and pants, don't eat cows, etc. This process of renegotiating one's life script is motivated by a desire to have one's story make sense. As Appiah states, "it matters to people that their lives have a certain narrative unity; they want to be able to tell a story of their lives that makes sense. The story - my story - should cohere in the way appropriate by the **standards** made available in my culture to a person of my identity." Key here is that the Korwa tribe members observed in this study, have already experienced a shift in these standards - posited by modernization - and hence, they are *in the midst* of cohering their story in accordance with these standards.

On the other hand, the elderly Korwa tribe members observed in Gaur and Patnaik's study, *Who is Healthy amongst the Korwa Tribe?,* published 14 years ago, still held a set of *different* standards – such standards matched with their hunter-gatherer lifestyles. In the process of shifting to agrarian lifestyles later in life, revealed ruptures in the narrative unity of their own stories: their new, agrarian lifestyles did not meet the socio-cultural standards of their former hunter-gatherer lifestyles. Comparing the elderly tribe members' account to the tribe members of this study, born into agrarian lifestyles, illustrates the power of modernization: in that, with each generation, it shifts the very socio-cultural standards by which one makes sense of their own story.

We observe in Gaur and Patnaik's study that elderly Korwa tribe members who were pushed to shift from mountainside hunter-gatherer lifestyles to agrarian lifestyles in lowland villages, experienced a shift in their life script; their new lifestyles did not make sense on the basis of the social and cultural *meanings* that their former lifestyles – hence former life scripts – carried. The social and cultural meanings of their former lifestyle were no longer in accordance with their new lifestyle: hence, these elderly Korwa tribe members experienced disturbance in their health and wellbeing. For instance, in reference to their hunter-gatherer lifestyles, Gaur and Patnaik state, "In addition to autonomy, the forest also generated a sense of abundance of resources implying that they had not only enough to eat all the year round but also to care for social and religious obligations. The ancestors were kept in good humor and so were the guardian deity and family deities by offering fowls and grains regularly to each of them. These deities in turn provided protection against all misfortunes including illness." Gaur and Patnaik explained that the Korwa tribe members were no longer able to fulfil these social and cultural meanings due to their forced resettlement into agrarian and wage-labor based economies: a tribe member recounts, "Now we encounter a variety of people and rulers around us, in the same way we face a variety of diseases. When we were in the forest I offered just five or six fowls for sacrifice (healing ritual) in a year but now I offer more than that in just a month." Another tribe member states, "We cared for each other and fulfilled our duties toward our ancestors…nowe we don't get to offer fowls in time (to deities)." Here one observes how Korwa tribe members experienced a disjuncture as their former *methods* of fulfilling their cultural obligations (i.e. keeping ancestors in good humor), which in turn offered fulfillment, were no longer possible in their new lifestyle. More concretely, in the forest, the tribe members' economic livelihoods were in accordance with their beliefs towards nature, keeping them close to their ancestors which was

no longer possible after resettlement: in the new space, Korwa tribe members were jettisoned into a society that labels them as the bottom of the socioeconomic rungs, and found themselves working as wage laborers to sustain their livelihood, where "in spite of working hard, they languish in abject poverty and frequently fall victim to unscrupulous money lenders who usurp their land. The scarcity of resources, by leading to failures in social and religious duties, has ruptured their relationship with the supernatural and social worlds." In other words, the social and cultural meanings by which their life scripts made sense, no longer had a place in their new agrarian and wage-labor based lifestyles.

This picture varies drastically from the younger Korwa tribe members interviewed in this study. Rather than experiencing a misalignment of their former social and cultural meanings with the current lifestyle, the Korwa tribe members at-present adopted entirely new social and cultural meanings – that which are posited by modernization. This is made clear in the way each set of interviewees characterized *jungli*, or the notion of a wild, forest-based lifestyle. 90-year-old tribe member Naan interviewed in Gaur and Patnaik's study stated, "Korwa is jungli. He will perish outside of the jungle just like a fish without water." In this statement, it is clear he embraces the notion of jungli, of living and deriving meaning from the jungle. As we observed, this is in fact the very narrative, Korwa tribe members at-present reject and *distance* themselves from, in favor of adopting a different set of social and cultural meanings that prescribe living in permanent houses and seeking education, or those prescribed by modernization. Hence, recalling Appiah's words: "The story - my story - should cohere in the way appropriate by the **standards** made available in my culture to a person of my identity." We now observe that Korwa tribe members, in a matter of a generation, have undergone a shift in the standards by which their story "makes sense". They are *still* undergoing this shift; but in a matter of as little as a single generation, the

shift is so significant that it has turned the standard of living *jungli* in the forest around on its head, turning it into the very standards one *rejects*, and hence seeks to have their story "make sense".

In replacement of the standards rejected, certain Korwa tribe members at-present pursue indicators, that is, markers, illustrating that they in fact have adopted the new standards posited by modernization. However, this is a conversation, a negotiation, much like Raka Ray and Seemin Qayum's illustration of the modern Indian middle class reconciling traditional practices with ideas of modernity. Ray and Qayum illustrate how the middle-class has adopted domestic servitude – one that could be referred to as a 'traditional' practice – into a legitimized indicator of belonging to the 'modern' Indian elite class. It does so by distinguishing a class of employers, those destined to lead India to modernity, and a class of servants, rooted in traditional Indian culture and dependent on the middle and upper classes for their well-being and avenues of social mobility (Ray & Qayum 2009, p.2). This illustrates an implicit negotiation that took place over time, embedded in the social and cultural context of India, of reconciling one's practices with modernity, such that they are not necessarily different but rather find a place – such that one's story makes sense. In Ray and Qayum's example, it was such that domestic servitude *makes sense*, and is not only in alignment with the social and cultural meanings attached to the middle-class, but is in fact, an indicator of it. In this study, we observed Korwa tribe members doing something similar, negotiating the boundaries and actions, the adoption of certain indicators, in pursuit of having their story make sense. Whether it be, in Pranav's case, going door-to-door, encouraging tribe members to send their children to school, or whether it be, in Rani's case, scoffing at the eating habits of other Korwa tribe members, these are all examples of social interactions that suggest a negotiation of indicators. Even the more counterintuitive cases,

where Bhirav chose to reject working in urban environments due to the 'scolding' received and living conditions, indicate a negotiation between acquiring more income while working in greater subordination or living on one's own terms in the hillside. All of these cases were examples of how Korwa tribe members are in the midst of negotiating indicators that allow them to pursue the standards that are posited by modernization - the idea of being educated and modernized. It is key however that this negotiation is not entirely parallel to that described of the middle class in Ray & Qayum's book; rather, this negotiation is done in the shadow of the middle-class, who as we observed in the second section of the study, recognizes and spearheads the process of modernization.

Hence, in the tribe member's case, this process of adopting indicators in pursuit of the standards, or social and cultural meanings, instilled by modernization, yields the tribe member to indefinitely be defined by this negotiation process itself. Assuming the adoption of the social and cultural meanings, or standards, that modernization (in its specific form here) assumes, the tribe members are now in process of pursuing the changes that would allow their stories to make sense: that is, pursuing the *indicators*, whether it be the ability to call oneself literate or have a chair for a guest to sit in, that would allow for their stories to align with the new set of standards. In an interesting way, at present, the tribe members' stories are primarily defined by this shift: as we observed, even when they acquire a government employee job, the narrative may still be framed by their "leap" from *jungli* to money-wielding, by the controversy and antagonism certain landowners may have towards state-endorsed job benefits for people of this *'jungli'* background. In this case, even when the tribe member has acquired a clear indicator of modernization, they are still recognized entirely in terms of their former '*jungli'* position in the modernization process. Examples like these place the tribe member indefinitely in a process of

"making their story make sense" given that in reality, many times, their story is recognized, and importantly, *mis*-recognized – by other individuals, by the country – in terms of them being a group that continuously and supposedly needs to undergo modernization.

The complexity borne from this indefinite process is one that future studies can delve deeper into: for instance, one can study how various groups categories within marginalized groups, yet have their own pre-existing social hierarchy, react to the process of modernization. For instance, as we observed, the Yadav framed the Korwa in terms of their progress, in an antagonistic way, as they themselves are a rural, non-elite group seeking better jobs. The two groups for the past 50 years at minimum had a relationship where Korwa was subordinate to the Yadav, and hence modernization introduced complexity to this relationship as both groups feel they are independently navigating their way in the structures of social mobility brought about by modernization – yet they do so in a dialogical way, each interacting with one another.

Hence, overall this study indicates the importance of studying modernization framed not only by the middle-class, the class that champions it (and is borne from it), but how modernization is experienced within the many groups that are increasingly striving to be a part of the middle-class. These many groups may have distinct differences in how they each experience modernization, especially in relation to one another as each seeks mobility within it. Such research would significantly draw upon and expand upon the results found in this study.

Conclusion

This study is intended to ultimately illustrate, particularly at the micro-level, how one's very identity, and the sense of purpose, self-worth and ability to be recognized by others, is entangled with notions of change, progress, and other products of modernization. More

specifically, this study illustrates how such entanglement of identity, specifically the formation and reproduction of identity, occurs in the span of a short period of time to a formerly isolated group: a tribe in the post-colonial context of rural India. This short period of time illustrates the power of modernity. And finally, this study illustrates how the national context of such change prescribes the vocabulary by which such identities are formed, in this case, the Indian national project of modernization.

While those are broad level phenomena, what this study really shows is how people negotiate and grapple with living a life that makes sense by the standards of modernization. In this particular case one observes how such processes lead individuals to refer to their grandparents as backwards, distancing themselves from the social and cultural meanings their grandparents' lived by. How such processes invigorates and spurs agency, motivating tribe members to operate within the structures of modernization to uplift - and also, further embed - their fellow people in the process of modernization. Ultimately, one observes the complex process of adapting to social and cultural standards in our world saturated in notions of modernity, where such processes ultimately shape how one finds notions of worth in oneself.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A. Oral Consent Form

INFORMED CONSENT SCRIPT

सूचित सहमति

University of Chicago

Study Title: Understanding Conceptions of Modernization in Rural India: A Study of the Korwa Tribe

ग्रामीण भारत में आधुनिकीकरण की अवधारणाओं को समझना: कोरवा जनजाति का एक अध्ययन

Lisa Raj Singh, fourth year undergraduate student is conducting a research study to learn about tribes in rural India. You have been asked to participate in this study because you are a Korwa tribe member or a middle class townsperson living in Shankargarh. There will be approximately 15 participants in this study. I will be taking notes and audio recordings. I will transcribe them as

soon as possible and store them on UChicago Box. I will destroy the original notes as quickly as possible. Identifiable data will never be shared outside the research team. De-identified information from this study may be used for future research studies.

चौथे वर्ष की स्नातक छात्रा लिसा राज सिंह ग्रामीण भारत में जनजातियों के बारे में जानने के लिए एक शोध अध्ययन कर रही हैं। आपको इस अध्ययन में भाग लेने के लिए इसलिए कहा गया है क्योंकि आप कोरवा जनजाति के सदस्य हैं या शंकरगढ़ में रहने वाले एक मध्यम वर्ग के नागरिक हैं। इस अध्ययन में लगभग 15 प्रतिभागी होंगे। मैं नोट्स और ऑडियो रिकॉर्डिंग करूँगी। मैं उन्हें अनुलेखित करने के पश्चात् UChicago Box पर संग्रहीत करूँगी। अनुलेखन के पश्चात्, मैं मूल जानकारी को रिकॉर्डिंग उपकरण से नष्ट कर दूँगी। पहचान योग्य डेटा कभी भी शोध दल के बाहर साझा नहीं किया जाएगा। इस अध्ययन से पहचान रहित जानकारी का उपयोग भविष्य के शोध अध्ययनों के लिए किया जा सकता है।

Purpose

The purpose of this study is to understand the lives and experiences of tribal members living in a small village town in rural India.

इस अध्ययन का उद्देश्य ग्रामीण भारत के एक छोटे से गांव में रहने वाले आदिवासी सदस्यों के जीवन और अनुभवों को समझना है।

Duration

This audio recorded interview will be a conversation lasting from 30 minutes to 90 minutes.

यह ऑडियो रिकॉर्डेड साक्षात्कार वार्तालाप के रूप में आयोजित किया जाएगा और 30 मिनट से 90 मिनट तक चलेगा।

Risks associated with the study

Discomfort: Though the scope of the conversation will be limited to what the respondent is familiar with, the respondent may feel discomfort when accounting experiences. If the respondent feels significant stress, the interview may be terminated.

Confidentiality: Risk of confidentiality breach is mitigated by anonymizing all interviewees and keeping information in a secure location.

असुविधा: हालाँकि बातचीत का दायरा उत्तरदाता की परिचितता तक ही सीमित होगा, लेकिन अनुभवों को दर्ज करते समय उत्तरदाता असहज महसूस कर सकता है। यदि उत्तरदाता को महत्वपूर्ण तनाव महसूस होता है, तो साक्षात्कार समाप्त किया जा सकता है।

गोपनीयता: सभी साक्षात्कारकर्ताओं को गुमनाम रखने और जानकारी को सुरक्षित स्थान पर रखने से गोपनीयता भंग होने का जोखिम कम हो जाता है।

Benefits

There is no direct benefit to participation in this study. However it will contribute towards increased public knowledge regarding the experiences and narratives of tribal members.

Participation in research is entirely voluntary. You may refuse to participate or withdraw or refuse to answer specific questions in the interview at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are entitled. If you decide to withdraw from this study, any data already collected will be destroyed.

इस अध्ययन में भाग लेने से कोई सीधा लाभ नहीं है। हालाँकि यह जनजातीय सदस्यों के अनुभवों और आख्यानों के बारे में सार्वजनिक ज्ञान बढ़ाने में योगदान देगा।

शोध में भागीदारी पूरी तरह से स्वैच्छिक है। आप बिना किसी दंड या लाभ के, जिसके आप हकदार हैं, किसी भी समय साक्षात्कार में भाग लेने से इनकार कर सकते हैं या वापस ले सकते हैं या विशिष्ट प्रश्नों का उत्तर देने से इनकार कर सकते हैं। यदि आप इस अध्ययन से हटने का निर्णय लेते हैं, तो पहले से एकत्र किया गया कोई भी डेटा नष्ट कर दिया जाएगा।

Compensation

In compensation for your time, you will receive sweets and INR 200 for your participation in this study at the end of the interview. There will be no cost to you for participating in this study.

साक्षात्कार के अंत में आपको इस अध्ययन में भाग लेने के लिए मिठाई और 200 रुपये मिलेंगे। इस अध्ययन में भाग लेने के लिए आपको कोई शुल्क नहीं देना होगा।

Questions and Concerns

If you have questions or concerns about this study, you can contact Lisa at +15712134755 or lisarsingh@uchicago.edu or her principal investigator Tessa Huttenlocher at +12487788862 or tessahutt@uchicago.edu.

यदि आपके पास इस अध्ययन के बारे में प्रश्न या चिंताएं हैं, तो आप लिसा से +15712134755 या lisarsingh@uchicago.edu पर या उसके संकाय सलाहकार मार्को गैरिडो से +12487788862 या tessahutt@uchicago.edu पर संपर्क कर सकते हैं।

Appendix B. Interview Guide

Interview Guide

December 2024

30 - 90 minutes

Shankargarh Resident (Tribe Member and Middle Class Member)

This is a general interview guide largely based on a narrative of life history interview, as well as a focus on present daily practices. As this is a semi-structured interview, there will likely be major deviations from this structure based on the interviewee's answers.

Note: This guide will be translated into Hindi - the language understood in Shankargarh.

Part I: Korwa Tribe Member

Background

- Confirm background: What is your name? What tribe are you from?
- Where in Shankargarh do you live? What areas have you lived in?
- Who do you live with? Who are the elders in the house? Who are the children?
- How long have you been living in this particular house? What brought you or your family before you here?

Lifestyle

- What occupies your time every day?
- How do you acquire food? What would those be? आप खाना कैसे लाते है ?
    - If farming: what crops do you farm? How is farming going in recent years? How has it changed?
    - If gathering: what kind of food do you gather? How has the supply of food changed in recent years?
- What supplemental means do you use for food? For example, do you use fishing nets? Do you use gas cylinders or wood for cooking? Oil baskets?
- Do you go to the local market? If so, for what purpose? How often?
- Do you have a job? Who do you work for?
- How do you find the quality of your living space to be?
- What kinds of things do you make with your hands to assist with living? For example, baskets, blankets, oil baskets?
- What crisis events may occur? Weather? Snake bites?

- How do you resolve these issues as they come up?

Social Life

- Who do you spend the most time with on a daily basis? Describe a typical day in terms of who you interact with?
- What activities do you all do when social?
  - If drinking, at what time do you all start drinking? How often?
  - Who provides the drinks at a social event? Who provides the food?
- If married:
  - How long have you been married? When did you get married compared to the typical time of marriages?
  - What customs come along with marriage? Who lives with whom?
  - "Dhuku" marriage?
- If have children:
  - How many children do you have? When did you have them?
  - Do they attend school? Why or why not?
  - How are they different from one another? What do they spend their time doing?
  - What responsibilities do each of them have?
  - What do you see your children growing up and doing?
- Other than tribe members, who else do you regularly interact with?
  - What contexts do you typically see these people in?
  - What were some of the recent encounters you had with people living in the town?
- For what purposes, if at all, do you go into the town for?

Religion and Customs

- What special days do you celebrate, if at all?
- What are the customs during these special days?
- How do you observe religion? (Likely asked in reference their observance of nature as divine)
- In practice, when praying, what rituals do you follow?

Interaction with Government

- Do you know of a government here? What is their role? Which are you more or less familiar with (local panchayat, Shankargarh, etc)
- How often do you see people from the government here?
- Do you know of anyone from your tribe who is in or interacts with the government?
- What services do they provide you with? Do you use them; why or why not?
- What difficulties have you encountered with the government?

Part II: Middle Class Townsperson

Background

- Confirm background: What is your name? What village and/or caste do you come from?
- Where in Shankargarh do you live? What areas have you lived in?
- How long have you been living in this particular house?
- Who do you live with? Who are the elders in the house? Who are the children?

Lifestyle

- What occupies your time every day? Describe an average day.
- Where do you get necessities from?
- Do you go to the local market? If so, for what purpose? How often?

Social Life

- Who do you spend the most time with on a daily basis? Describe a typical day in terms of who you interact with?
- What activities do you all do when social?
    - If drinking, at what time do you all start drinking? How often?
    - Who provides the drinks at a social event? Who provides the food?
- If married:
    - How long have you been married? When did you get married compared to the typical time of marriages?
    - What customs come along with marriage? Who lives with whom?
- If have children:

    - How many children do you have? When did you have them?
    - Do they attend school? Why or why not?
    - How are they different from one another? What do they spend their time doing?
    - What responsibilities do each of them have?
    - What do you see your children growing up and doing?
- Do you have interaction with Korwa tribe members? If so, to what extent?
    - What impression do you have of the tribe members? What was the last interaction you had with them?
    - What do you know about their history? Has their presence changed at all in recent years?

Interaction with Government

- Do you know of a government here? What is their role? Which are you more or less familiar with (local panchayat, Shankargarh, Surguja, state-level, federal, etc)
- How often do you see people from the government here?
- Who is in the local government? Are there people from your group involved? Are tribe members involved in the local government?
- What services do they provide you with? Do you use them; why or why not?
- What services do they provide tribe members with living in Shankargarh? What do you think about these services?
- What difficulties have you encountered with the government?

India and Modernization

- How often do you watch the news? What sort of news do you primarily follow (ie channels, local/federal, etc)?
- How would you describe how India has changed in the past few decades?
- Have you seen those changes in this community and to what extent?
- Is there anything you would want me to convey to foreigners who read this research?