



## Ethnography of Kulhaiya People in Araria – Holistic Approach

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**Abstract:** kulhaiya community is economically marginalized communities. The Kulhaiya community resides in the northeastern part of Bihar. The Kulhaiya are mainly found in Araria, Kishanganj, Purnia and Katihar districts. A sizeable population also resides in Morang district of Nepal. After independence many sincere and concremented steps were made for the economic and educational development of marginalized communities. Despite these efforts and endeavor the educational status of Kulhaiyas is much lower than the any other communities in India. According to 2011 census the total population of this community is 25 lakh. The Kulhaiya population is concentrated largely in Araria, Purnea, Katihar and Kishanganj district of Bihar. According to 2011 census, kulhaiyas constitute 42% in Araria district, 43 percent in Purnia district, 32 percent in Katihar district and 26 percent in Kishanganj district. Physically they are classified as Hadhrami-origin tribe of Yemen settled who came as mercenaries to North-east Bihar via Sindh and Kutchh, on the invitation of the Bengal Nawab. As the research on Kulhaiya study suggests that the policy makers and stakeholders approach paid attention to culturally linked education. This has led to drop outs and directly impacted their educational status.

**Key Word:** Hadhrami-origin, Mercenary, Kulhaiya. Seemanchal Region.

**Introduction of Araria District:** Araria district is situated in North-East part of Bihar. It is a part of Purnia division. The district occupies an area of 2830 Kilometer square. Araria district has two sub-division and 9 blocks. There are six State legislative assemblies in this district: Araria, Jokihat, Raniganj, Narpartganj, Forbisganj, and Sikti. All of these are part of Araria lok sabha constituency. According to 2011 census Araria district has approximately 28 lakh population. The sex ratio of district is 921 and population growth rate is 30 percent.

**History of Kulhaiya Community:** The Kulhaiya is found in the Purnia division of Bihar as we as the terai region of South-East Nepal. This community people migrated from Yemen on the coast of horn of Africa. On the invitation of the Bengal Nawab this kulhaiya

entered Purnia. The mercenaries started marrying local Rajput Jain Parsi lady in large numbers. In the latter stages, The Gujjar from Kutchh, Jats of Sindhand Kurmis of U.P migrated here who were famous for their agricultural skills by local powerful landlord and vassals. The term "Kulhaiya" is a Persian term which means Kul mean complete and Haya mean modesty. Most of the customs and traditions followed by Kulhaiyas are embraced from local communities. That's why kulhaiya has a unique and distinct culture due to its combined with local and migrant ethnicities. Bengal Nawab Saif Khan appointed Kulhaiyas to protect Indian border from Nepali Gurung and Gurkha invaders. The original member of this community was Arab solider and mercenaries and sellswords from Hadhrami tribe of Yemen. They migrated to the North-east region of Bihar from Kuchh and Sindh region and permanently settled and married with local women from different castes. During Bengal sultanat period, some efficient and elite people became landlords. Later this landlord invited Gujjar herders from Gujrat state, Jat Farmers from Sindh, And Kurmis from Utter Pradesh because of their agricultueal skills and availability of abundant pasture and arable land. When kulhaiya got high status and power in the society due to military and agriculture skills, the other upper caste of Hindus got into this community by converting to Islam. Kulhaiya belongs presently in extremelybackwardclasses (EBC) categories list in Bihar and In Other Backward classes (OBC) in central category list.

**Distribution of Population:**The Seemanchal region exists in North-Eastern Bihar. It is close to the border of Nepal and Bangladesh. It is landlocked region consisting four districts; Purnea, Araria, Kishanganj and Katihar. The region is disassembled from the rest of the state and the country. Seemanchal is different from the rest of Bihar. The clearest difference is the demographic profile of the region. The Population of Kulhaiya in Seemanchal region is approximately 25 percent whereas Bihar's state-wide Muslim population 16 percent. The total population of kulhaiya is 2.5 million in Seemanchal. Most dense population of kulhaiya community is in Araria district. Araria Block and Jokihat block of Araria district has more than 70 percent of kulhaiya population so politically this community is dominant. Presently, in both state assemblies constituencies have Kulhaiya M.L.A.The sizeable population also dwells in Morang district of Nepal. 70 Percent of the population is rural-based and involving in primary sector.

**Language of Kulhaiyas:**Kulhaiya migrated in Seemanchal region from Hadhramaunt region of eastern Yemen. They were soldiers and worked with the Faujdars of Purnea, who ruled in this region headquarter at Purnea and the surrounding places. Kulhaiyas later

started to work in the field and became agrarian community and marrying with locals and settlers from other corners of the country. As a result of different linguistic influences, Kulhaiya dialect is mixed than the other communities. Kulhaiya had to suffer a great deal during the British period and were declared criminal tribes by the colonial rulers. The community speaks Kulhaiya, which is modified Maithili-Bengali in dialect. The Dialect has large number of Arabic and Persian loanwords. With a different culture and tradition as well as Maithili and Kutchhi based lingua franca the community speaks Kulhaiya language.

**Dress Pattern and Ornaments:** The kulhaiyas have been much influenced in dress, ornaments by Arab culture and Local tradition. Kulhaiyas of older generation use very simple and scanty clothes, men use only lungi and Kurta. Older lady generally wear saree. Now-a-days women of younger generation wear Salwar Suit and saree. Women wear several ornaments on their wrist, ankles, ears, nose and neck.

**Habitat Settlement & Housing:** The kulhaiyas inhabit in the plain area and catchment area of Kosi River, Bakar River, and Parmar River. This area is made by river carried soil is called alluvial soil. This region is comprised of vast bamboo and shisham forest. This region has an elevation of approximately 154 feet. From north to south the elevation gradually diminishes. The entire river has flow from north to south region. Mostly, the access to the kulhaiya villages is narrow footpaths of Kachha type and brick pattern. Most houses made of tree branches and bamboo, which are thickly plastered with mud. The roofs are made with a type of wild grass, locally known as Kasi ghash. The houses are made rectangular in size and portioned into rooms by walls of bamboo and mud. A verandah runs almost on front sides of the house. Kulhaiya people make a separate house for the guest is called known locally Bethak. This area is an agricultural area so most villagers keep and pet goats, cows, and buffalo. Animal husbandry is a sources of income of local and villagers. The most houses of Kulhaiya are mostly Kaccha. Their house pattern is not systematic and uniform style. The house pattern is unsystematic so it is very difficult to connect all houses with main road. New house is seen concreted and cemented in remote area. Their courtyard and darwaza is made with mud which is very beneficial in the view of point of health. Presently, the economic condition is becoming better of this community so people start constructing concreted house but this is negligible in size. Majority of houses is still seen traditionally made with bamboo and muds. This area is the

most backward region of India as well as of Asia. So, migration issues of this region are a big challenges and problems.

**Cultural and Social Life of Kulhaiya:** Culture in sense denotes the totality of learned behavior transmitted from one generation to next generation. The Kulhaiya of Seemanchal are said to have migrated from Yemen long ago. They are distributed in all four district of Purnea division. The Kulhaiya follow endogamy at community level. Girls are married around 18 to 22 years age and boys 20 to 25 years. Marriages are arranged through negotiation by elders and guardian. Monogamy is the current form among Kulhaiya people. After marriage the couples live in the patrilocal house. The status of women in the Kulhaiya community is secondary after men decision. The women do work mostly household work as well as in the agricultural field. They also help their man in harvesting and cropping. The first delivery takes places at the woman's native house. This is unique culture of Kulhaiya community people. The Kulhaiya are Muslims. They follow all principle of Quran and Sunnat. There are small businessmen who do trades and run shops in local area in the Kulhaiya community. There are school teachers and some in government jobs. A few are white-collar job holders, administrators, doctors and engineers. There are many political leaders at the local level among this community. The Kulhaiya favour school and formal education. They generally study upto Elementary level, but boys and girls dropout rates is very high due to poverty in boys and girls due to onset of puberty and many other reasons. The leaders and elders of the Kulhaiya community state that they are the warrior and invited by Bengal Nawab to protect from Nepali invaders in the border. Man is social human beings he wants to associate with others. For this, he intermingles with the society and agrees to embrace the rules and regulations of the community. Kulhaiyas are Muslims but their caste is Kulhaiya. There are many castes among Muslims in Seemanchal area among the Muslims. Kulhaiya don't marry with other caste Muslims. It is assumed that Kulhaiya has high position and status in the society. Kulhaiya community people are very co-operative and supportive nature wise. They help to the people selflessly. In the past, they used to live very closely to each other. They used to think that they are different from the other community people. The economic condition has been weakling day by day due to bad economic and agricultural policy of government. Kulhaiya people depend on agriculture. There are many landlords and honors from this community. Most agriculture land is under this community people. They are compelled to give up to cultivation due to less benefit from their crops. Kulhaiyas life is

very simple and plain. They don't like lavish life and exposed. Their living condition is very traditional and natural. They prefer to live in their paternal village.

**Economic Activities of Kulhaiya:** As we know that India has been primarily a rural country, where two thirds of its population still dwelling in rural areas. Currently, India's 70 percent workforce still survives in rural areas. It can say that true India lives in her villages. Rural economy of India is backbone of the country's economy. The Indian economy is characterized by the mainly of agriculture. 60 percent population of India is still engaged in agriculture activities for their livelihood. However, there has been a moderate shift in the rural occupation from agriculture to non-agricultural activities. It is assumed that Indian economy will reach by 5 trillion dollar by the year 2025. To achieve this target the rural economy is utmost importance. So, rural economy will play a key role in making the Indian economy a 5 trillion dollar. The main source of income of Kulhaiya people depends on agriculture. The main crop of Seemanchal is paddy, maize, jute and makka. Jute production was very high by in the year 2000. It is a cash crop but the cultivation of jute is gradually reducing. This belt is a flood-prone area so the condition of agriculture is not beneficial for famers. Every year Kosi and its tributaries bring flood in this region which destroy crops as well as affected badly human chain. Farmers unwilling to work in their field and looking towards substitute for their livelihood. Many farmers left their village and migrated to different other cities for their source of income. Due to many reasons this region becomes push factor in migration. Youth and women from this community are migrating from here to other places. Many study revealed that there is much migration here than other place of the country. Children are compelled to work in shops, factories, field and houses. Mahatma Gandhi Employment Guarantee Act 2005 is an Indian labour law and job security and right to work by UPA government but it didn't change the plight of the labour and daily wages workers. Kulhaiya people mainly engaged in cultivation and primary sector activities. Their perception regarding education is not more important than their traditional and parental occupations. Income is more important for them. Some Kulhaiya people are engaged in animal husbandry and fishing activities. They make Pokhar (Like Pond) where they pet fishes and after few months fishes are sold to fish traders. Fox nut (Local name-Makhana) an aquatic crop is unique and highly nutritious cultivated in Araria, Purnea, and Kishanganj and Katihar districts. It is a cash crop. The demand of the fox nut is increasing rapidly. Bihar state accounts 80 percent Makhana production in the country. Seemanchal region contribute two third production of

this production. Makhana seeds are called black diamond. The seeds are popped and consumed as roasted as well as used in preparation of various kind of recipes.

**Political Status of Kulhaiya:** Kulhaiya have been very active politically since independence. At the time of freedom struggle Kulhaiya peoples actively participated in kisan sabha movement. This movement originated against the land-lordism and agricultural economy. During 1940-41, the kisan sabha movement merged into the National Congress Movement under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi. Kulhaiya peoples actively participated in all movements of freedom. Nagpur Session of congress in 1920, where congress adopted Non-Cooperation movement under the leadership of nation of father. Historians and text did not find kulhaiyas sacrifices for Indian freedom despite kulhaiyas dedication and sacrifices in Quit India Movement and blind supporter of Gandhi's idea and philosophy. First Member of Parliament from Kulhaiya community is late Md. Tahir Hussain during 1957-1967 from Kishanganj lok sabha constituency. He was a great educationist and good orator. He was very close with first Prime Minister of India, Jawaharlal Nehru. Second Member of Parliament from Kulhaiya community was Jamilur Rahman from Congress party between 1971- 1977, 1980- 1984, and 1984-1989 in Kishanganj Lok Sabha Constituency. He was a very close to Prime Minister of India Indira Gandhi. Indira Gandhi visited many times Araria district and Kishanganj district. Most powerful and mass leader of Seemanchal area from Kulhaiya community is Mohammed Taslimuddin. He ruled more than 40 years actively. He had huge popularity and capacity to turn vote for any political party. He was himself a political party. He never made any political party but which party he joined the Kulhaiya voters casted their vote in favour of that party. He started his politics as a grampanchayat in sixty decades. First time he became sarpanch from Sisona panchayat. Mohammed Taslimuddin started his political career as a sarpanch. He became a mukhiya before being elected to the Bihar Assembly in 1969 for the first time. He was elected as Janata Dal candidates from Purnea district. He became union minister of state for home affairs in HD Deve Gowda in the year 1996. Taslimuddin had a strong grip on Seemanchal region. The kulhaiya people had decisive factor in winging more than 6 state legislative assemblies and Araria, Purnia, Katihar lok sabha seats. As far as state assembly is concerned, the Jokihat and Araria vidhan sabha has Kulhaiya M.L.A, because it consist more than 70 percent kulhaiya voter. So it is very difficult to win for Non-Kulhaiya candidates. At the local level and panchayat level, Kulhaiya has dominant position in elections. All National political party and state

level political party always try to convince kulhaiya voter in favour of them. At the panchayat level there is 33 percent reservation for female candidates as well as in municipality election.

**Educational Status of Kulhaiya:** Education is one of the key for man-making and nation building. It is essential for development of human resources. Education imparts skills, knowledge and character. Indian constitution advocates inclusive growth, but due to lack of quality education and skill development, the marginalized groups are not becoming part of the inclusive education. India is one of the most illiterate countries in the world. According to 2011 census the literacy rate of India is 74.04 percent where literacy levels are expectedly higher for males than for females. The male literacy level is 82 percent and female literacy rate is 65 percent. The literacy is also higher in urban areas than in rural areas. The literacy rate of Bihar is far below than the other states and national average. The literacy rate of Bihar according to 2011 census is 64 percent, where the literacy rate of Araria district is 53.53 percent. The Kulhaiya community is one social group in Seemanchal that faces the many challenges in all levels. Kulhaiya is very backward social group educationally. The literacy rate is approximately 25 percent. It is seen that the gap between male and female literacy rate is very huge. Kulhaiya people were not more serious about formal and school education for their female child. But currently, it is observed that the perception and opinion regarding their girl's education is changing drastically. It is also observed that they are sending their female children to big cities for their quality and higher education but this are very few in numbers. Literacy rate of Kulhaiya is lower than the scheduled caste and scheduled tribes which are supposed to most marginalized and vulnerable social groups of the Indian society. There are many reasons behind lower literacy rate of the kulhaiya community. The Seemanchal region geographically is distinct comparatively other region. Regional disparities in educational development by and large correspond with physical diversity (Ajageka and Masal, 2011). Physical features and remoteness of a region play important roles in keeping it backward in terms of education and literacy. It is a flood-prone area which disturb the life cycle of the people more than four month. Most time Kosi river and their tributaries bring devastating situation for human population. Favorable climate is essential for educational attainment. Religion and faith are a key important determinant of educational attainment. Muslims have been found to be lagging behind other religious in terms of educational attainment in the country. This Seemanchal region has many madrasa and maktab where children learn religious education

as well as basic talim for hindi and mathematics. Madrasa have been played a significant role in educating kulhaiya children. The condition of government's schools is very pitiable due to many reasons.

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