
**A Study of Socio-Economic Condition of *Surjapuri* Community:
An Ever-Charming Community of Bihar residing in Chicken-
neck Region of the Country**

Md. Mudassir Alam¹

¹Public Relation Officer,
Central University of South Bihar, Gaya
Email: mdmudassiralam@gmail.com

*Abstract:*The state of Bihar is as diversified as India in its culture, tradition, language, dialect, food, lifestyle, etc. Between the states of Bihar and West Bengal, a sandwiched region of the country, a community called ‘Surjapuri’ is residing since ages. This region resided by ‘Surjapuri’ people is somehow less explored, less industrialized, less developed, and backward in many government’s socio-economic indexes of the country. Situated in the famous ‘chicken-neck’ region of the country, as the gateway to seven-sister north-eastern states of India ‘Surjapuri’ area is mainly comprised of the four districts of north-eastern Bihar namely, Kishanganj, Katihar, Araria and Purnea. It also includes some parts of neighbouring Uttar Dinajpur district of the state of West Bengal. ‘Surjapuri’ region is known mainly for its unique dialect called ‘Surjapuri’ itself and distinct charming culture and traditions. As per the Census of India 2011, the number of Surjapuri speaking people was 2,256,228 that may have gone roughly upto 3,000,000 as of 2024.

Keywords: Dialects of India, Language, Surjapuri Language, Surjapuri Community etc.

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Introduction

“*Surjapuri*” – the word sounds a bit less common and it represents a community of people living in *Surjapur* area that sprawls in the four districts of Bihar and Uttar Dinajpur district of West Bengal. The economic condition of the people of Surjapuri area is quite depleted on

A Study of Socio-Economic Condition of *Surjapuri* Community: An Ever-Charming Community of Bihar residing in Chicken- neck Region of the Country

development indexes in comparison to other parts of the country. The livelihood of the Surjapuri people are mainly based on farming (cultivation) and only a sizeable population of the region in government jobs or other regular occupations. Even after 75 years of independence the per-capita income of the Surjapuri is far behind in comparison to other parts of India. Be it literacy, employment, health and sanitation, in almost every index the region legging distant behind. Despite such disappointing facts and figures, the Surjapuri people believe in living full of life and following a distinct life style and speaking a warm language called ‘Surjapuri’. Situated in the north-eastern part of Bihar the Surjapur region has adopted a distinct dialect over the years. People of the area speak Surjapuri language which is actually a combination of languages like *Hindi, Urdu, Bangla, Oriya, Nepali* and other languages spoken in different part of the country.

History of Surjapuri Community & Dialect

Surjapuri dialect is spoken since a long time, exact history of origin of the dialect is not documented properly. Although some research work is carried out on the Surjapuri community and dialect but there are missing links in the documental record. Some say that it is spoken since the Mughal era, while some say the language came into existence during British period. Based on the statements and records it can be said that Surjapuri dialect has deep roots and represent the rich past of the Surjapur area. Despite many difficulties, people of Surjapur area are humble and lively in nature. Setting aside all the difficulties and problems, people of the area have learnt to move ahead with the time. Fact is that, not only in education but in many other fields like medicine, engineering and technology, journalism, management, social work, law, etc. people of the area have started to make their special mark.

Long demand for Central level OBC Reservation for Surjapuri Community

Sadly, but true with the development of country and world, the Surjapur area didn’t develop at the fast pace as per the socio-economic indexes. Even majority of the population in Surjapur area are illiterate and facing problems like unemployment, poor road communication, depleted health and sanitation, and poor financial condition. Based on the socio – economic condition the demand for OBC reservation to Surjapuri community started way back in 90s. After a long struggle of the activist groups like Surjapuri Development Organisation (SDO), the Surjapuri community was given the BC-2 level reservation by the government of Bihar. Further demand for providing OBC status to Surjapuri community from Central government is pending since decades. The Surjapuri community is still optimistic to achieve the OBC reservation one fateful day at Central level and dreaming for upliftment of the economically backward community.

A Study of Socio-Economic Condition of *Surjapuri* Community: An Ever-Charming Community of Bihar residing in Chicken- neck Region of the Country

Surjapuri People & Lifestyle

Surjapuri region is melting pot of many cultures influenced from neighbouring states of West Bengal and Orissa. Besides Muslims, Hindus, Sikhs, Christians, Jains and people of other religions live and perfect harmony and brotherhood. Over the decades people from different parts of the country migrated to Surjapuri region for trade and establishing their business. The Marwaris (from the state of Rajasthan) moved to this region in the post-independence era and made their strong presence in business. Since past several decades the Marwaris is like ruling business class and they have their presence in almost all trades. The locals follow age-old culture and traditions that can be experienced in common lifestyle, eating habits, dress sense and fairs and festivals. The people of the area are very simple in appearance and that can be observed in their language, dress sense and eating habits. The people of the area are known for simple lifestyle, loving and caring nature, helping attitude and warm hospitality.

Clothing

Usually the males in village areas wear lungi with *banyan* (vest) and *kurta* (shirt), while women wear *saree* or *salwar suit* inspired from Bengali culture. Along with *lungi* / *dhoti*, males living in the district headquarters wear paint and shirts, other wear modern dresses like jeans, T Shirts. Likewise, married females wear Saree and unmarried wear Salwar Suit or Jeans /T Shirts.

Cuisines (Meals)

Rice is the staple food of the local people and rules over all the cuisines. *Murhi* (puffed rice), *chura* (beaten rice), *chana* (gram), *panta bhat* (boiled rice overnight kept in water) and *sabzi* (overnight kept vegetable dishes) are the common items usually ate in the breakfast. During the lunch time and dinner people savour Bhat (boiled rice) with *salan* (vegetarian and non-vegetarian dishes). *Bhakka* (an idly like dish) and *Peetha* is a special winter dish, which is savoured at a large scale at frequent intervals in the early morning during winters. *Chipri Wala Paratha* (a local version of Lachcha paratha) is also a local specialties which is ate with *Kheer* (Milk and Rice / Sewai made sweet dish) or non-vegetarian dishes made from chicken or mutton. Thakwa, Puri, Litti/ Chokha are other famous delicacies of the region.

Fairs & Festivals

Festivals are one of the finest ways to observe and understand the culture, traditions and lifestyle of locals. Likewise, you can observe the distinct culture and tradition of the local people during famous festivals and events. People celebrate many festivals round the year that are marked by colourful celebrations, eating, merry making and other interesting activities. Among the regional festivals of *Baisakhi* (also called *Survaa* locally) and *Balu*

A Study of Socio-Economic Condition of *Surjapuri* Community: An Ever-Charming Community of Bihar residing in Chicken- neck Region of the Country

Bazaar (Sand Market) are very popular. Urs of Kadam Rasool, Shiv Ratri Mela and Khagra Mela (Kishanganj) are some of the famous fairs and events of Kishanganj. Visiting the area during the noted fairs, festivals or events, and experience the charming culture and traditions of the district and its people. Most importantly, despite religious differences the locals respect festival of each religion and also participate in the celebrations. Setting aside the cast and creed, people greet each other with open hearts and enjoy the festival at the fullest.

Surjapuri Art & Crafts

Art & crafts give a distinct flavour to any region. In fact, many places have become famous worldwide due to its unique art & crafts. An example is Madhubani painting of Bihar is highly acclaimed across the globe. Likewise, the exclusive bed-sheet handicraft (called as *bhutia*, *dagla* or *dagli*) is a masterpiece and portrays the skilled craftsmanship of the Surjapuri women. The extra talented women of Surjapuri area use all their skills to stitch a *Bhutia (Dagli)*, which can give a tough fight to almost all famous handicraft of India and world as well. With essential things namely 12 to 14 meters long cloth including saree, strings (*dhaga*), marking colours and dyes of clothes, the *bhutia (dagli)* is stitched. Most importantly, the hard labour and master craftsmanship of the women plays a significant role in stitching a *bhutia*. The ladies stitching the *bhutia* give beautiful patterns to their design with the help of dyes and multi-coloured strings (*dhaga*). It takes several weeks to stitch a *dagli* and it costs around Rs. 300-400 for stitching a *bhutia*. Of course, there is no any synonymous and alternate of the Surjapuri handicraft, but hardly the residents of the region give proper value to the talent and hardships of the ladies stitching *bhutia*. The hard work, dedication and skilled craftsmanship of Surjapuri women stitching such *bhutias (daglis)* can't be measured in few hundred bucks. Only the proper attention and encouragement to the ladies stitching the *bhutias (daglis)* can take the age-old Surjapuri handicraft ahead.

Surjapuri Vocabulary

Some of the words from Surjapuri Dialect with English translation

- ❖ *Ek shees kauni, gota ghore dauni* = No work, too much noise / Beating own trumpet
- ❖ *Kattheya Tori Dhattheya Sonn* = It is better to make a standing deal of the raw crop
- ❖ *Beti Aaginer Potli* = Concern of the parents before the marriage of their young daughter.
- ❖ *Chuva se Besi Chuvar Gu Bhari* = Extra-expenses are costlier than Parenting
- ❖ *Nati Pusle Natija, Bhanga Phuta Bhatia* = Own is own, Others are others
- ❖ *Beta Beche Paan, Beta Shahruk Khan* = For gully boys roaming here and there
- ❖ *Lamba Garhol* = Unprecedented tall man
- ❖ *Kalka khova* = When fed up with someone / usually a stubborn child, mother says while scolding

A Study of Socio-Economic Condition of *Surjapuri* Community: An Ever-Charming Community of Bihar residing in Chicken- neck Region of the Country

- ❖ *Khochaat Mudhi Ni Foka Badka* = Belonging to financially weaker family but demands are high /Pockets are empty but having distant dreams

English	Surjapuri
Relations	
Man	<i>Marad</i>
Woman	<i>Betichuwan / Betchaani / Berchaani</i>
Boy	<i>Betachuwa / Chhura / Chhaura</i>
Girl / Daughter	<i>Mai / Churi</i>
Child / Son	<i>Nunu</i>
Father	<i>Ba</i>
Mother	<i>Maa / Amma</i>
Wife	<i>Kaniya / Mogi / Mair Maa / Nunur Maa</i>
Husband	<i>Mair Baa / Nunur Baa / Ghorer Lok / Bhatar</i>
Friend	<i>Dos</i>
Same Name / Namesake	<i>Meeta</i>
5 W's and One H	
What	<i>Ki / Ki Hol</i>
Where	<i>Kunhiya</i>
Who	<i>Ke</i>
When	<i>Kunkhuna / Katkhuna</i>
Why	<i>Kehen / Kiyan</i>
How	<i>Kemhen Karen</i>
Name of Colours	
Black	<i>Kalua</i>
White	<i>Goro / Saffa</i>
Yellow	<i>Haldiya</i>
Orange	<i>Santola</i>
Light	<i>Ujet / Saffa</i>
Formal Talk	
What's Up	<i>Ki Hochhe / Ki Hocche Re</i>
Now	<i>Ale / Abla / Aabhi / Ala</i>
Not now	<i>Ale Ni / Abla Ni / Aabhi Ni / Ala Ni</i>
Never	<i>Koikhuna Ni</i>
I don't know	<i>Mui Ni Jaani / Hamak Pata Ni Chhok</i>
Hey Dude	<i>Ki Beta</i>
Done	<i>Hain Gail</i>
Not done	<i>Ni Hale, Ni Hol</i>

**A Study of Socio-Economic Condition of *Surjapuri* Community:
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Let him go	<i>Jaba De Wahak</i>
Come here	<i>Yahan Vos, Hayan Vos, Ichhan Vos, Ithin Os</i>
Go there	<i>Wahan Jaa, Uchhan Jaa, Utthin Ja</i>
Get lost	<i>Bhaglo ki Ni, Bhaag Icchan Se / Bhaag Yahan Se</i>
Stay here	<i>Tharo Roh / Hayan Tham / Icchin Ruk</i>
Don't be smart	<i>Besi Kabil Mat Ban</i>
Resolved	<i>Saltaye Dinu</i>
Same to same	<i>Eke Kism / Eke Kismer / Eke Mandi</i>
Animals	
Ox	<i>Goru / Gru</i>
Mouse	<i>Chika / Dhara / Dhariya</i>
Cow	<i>Gauru / Gauru</i>
Rat	<i>Musa</i>
Cat	<i>Bilai</i>
Some other Words	
Leg	<i>Paa / Theng</i>
Hand	<i>Haath</i>
Smooth	<i>Laram</i>
Soft	<i>Laram</i>
Dark	<i>Anhar</i>
Hot	<i>Garam</i>
Salt	<i>Nun</i>
Bitter	<i>Titto</i>
Spicy	<i>Jhaal</i>
Cold	<i>Thandah</i>
Less	<i>Kom</i>
Sun Light	<i>Dhup</i>
Moon Light	<i>Channi</i>
Fog	<i>Sit</i>
Bag	<i>Jhola / Jhola Jhanta</i>
Door	<i>Kebari / Get</i>
Finger	<i>Angul</i>
Box	<i>Baksa / Peti</i>

A Study of Socio-Economic Condition of *Surjapuri* Community: An Ever-Charming Community of Bihar residing in Chicken- neck Region of the Country

Conclusion

Previously researchers have worked on the socio-economic condition of Surjapuri community. However, significant change has not been observed based on the earlier published research works. In this research the author has intended to explore the somehow unexplored facets of the Surajpuri community and its socio-economic situation. Since the major business avenues are lying with Marwari community, it is one of the reasons behind the depleting financial condition of the region. The region has also not a major chunk of industrial setups of the government, so the job opportunities are comparatively less. Surjapuri region is also behind in literacy percentage indicators especially in higher education due to lack of Central government funded Universities or higher educational institution. In the health sector also the Surjapuri region is lagging behind due to absence of any reputed hospital with good doctors. The unprecedented rains followed by heavy rain also causes huge financial loss that in turn worsen the socio-economic condition of the people of the region. Only with the proper attention of policy makers about the key development indicators, the socio-economic condition of Surjapuri region may be improved. The simple people of Surjapuri region needs attention of government and corporates to be in par with other developed region of the country.

Notes &References

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