

Impact Factor: 6.017

ISSN: 2278-9529

# GALAXY

International Multidisciplinary Research Journal

## Special Issue on Tribal Culture, Literature and Languages

National Conference Organised by  
Department of Marathi, Hindi and English

Government Vidarbha Institute of Science and  
Humanities, Amravati (Autonomous)

**13** Years of Open Access

Managing Editor: Dr. Madhuri Bite

**Guest Editors:**

Dr. Anupama Deshraj

Dr. Jayant Chaudhari

Dr. Sanjay Lohakare

[www.galaxyimrj.com](http://www.galaxyimrj.com)

About Us: <http://www.galaxyimrj.com/about-us/>

Archive: <http://www.galaxyimrj.com/archive/>

Contact Us: <http://www.galaxyimrj.com/contact-us/>

Editorial Board: <http://www.galaxyimrj.com/editorial-board/>

Submission: <http://www.galaxyimrj.com/submission/>

FAQ: <http://www.galaxyimrj.com/faq/>



## **Traditional Celebration of Holi Festival among the Korku Tribe in Melghat**

**Urjayani N. Kamble**  
&  
**Jivan A. Solanke**  
Independent Scholars.

### **Abstract:**

This research paper explores the traditional celebration of the Holi festival, known locally as Fag, among the Korku tribe in the Melghat region of Maharashtra. The Korku tribe, one of the prominent indigenous communities in Melghat, has preserved its unique cultural practices and rituals surrounding the Holi festival for generations. This study aims to document and analyse the significance, rituals, and socio-cultural aspects of Holi as celebrated by the Korku tribe, highlighting the festival's role in reinforcing community bonds and spiritual beliefs. The research covers various facets of the Holi celebration, including the distinction between Jinda Holi (Living Holi) and Goj Holi (Dead Holi), the rituals involved, and the community's engagement in these traditional festivities. Employing a qualitative framework, the study is based on ethnographic observations, interviews with tribe members, and a review of existing literature on Korku traditions. The findings reveal the deep spiritual and communal importance of Holi, underscoring its role in maintaining the tribe's cultural heritage and social cohesion.

**Keywords: Korku tribe, Melghat, Holi festival, Fag, traditional rituals, qualitative study, indigenous culture, community celebration.**

### **Introduction**

In the culturally rich and diverse region of Melghat, the indigenous tribes hold on to their traditions and rituals with a sense of pride and reverence. Among these traditions, the Holi festival, locally known as Fag, is celebrated with deep spiritual significance and a strong sense of community. Unlike the more commonly known urban celebrations of Holi, the Korku tribe's observance of this festival is rooted in ancient customs that have been passed down through generations, retaining their original form and meaning. The festival of Holi is not just an annual



event for the Korku tribe; it is a profound expression of their cultural identity and connection to the natural world.

The Holi festival in Melghat stands as a testament to the enduring traditions of the Korku tribe, one of the primary indigenous communities in the region. The celebration of Fag among the Korku people is a rich tapestry of rituals, songs, dances, and communal gatherings that strengthen the bonds within the tribe and reinforce their spiritual beliefs. This paper explores the traditional practices of the Korku tribe during Holi, highlighting the significance of Jinda Holi (Living Holi) and Goj Holi (Dead Holi), and examining how these rituals reflect the tribe's connection to their ancestry, spirituality, and environment.

## **Content**

### **Fag (Holi): A Cultural and Spiritual Celebration**

The Korku tribe, like many other indigenous communities in Melghat, is known for its love of festivals and celebrations. Holi, or Fag, is the most important of these festivals, observed annually according to the lunar calendar. The celebration of Holi among the Korku is unique, marked by a deep spiritual connection to their environment and a strong sense of community. Unlike the urbanised versions of Holi, which often focus on colour throwing and revelry, the Korku's Fag is a time of sacred rituals, traditional music, and dances that have been preserved for centuries.

### **Jinda Holi (Living Holi)**

The Korku tribe's celebration of Holi begins with the observance of Jinda Holi, also known as Bhimal, Bhival, Timb, Dhota, Khata, and Mahadev Holi. This form of Holi is considered the most significant and is marked by rituals that honour both life and the natural world. On the first day of the festival, villagers venture into the forest to collect wood, which will be used in the HolikaDahan, the ritualistic burning of a bonfire. The honour of performing the Holi ritual is bestowed upon the Ada Patel, a respected elder in the village, who plays a central role in the ceremonies.

Alcohol consumption is intricately linked with many religious rituals of the Korku tribe, and the Holi festival is no different. As evening falls, the village elders gather to celebrate Jinda Holi. A pavilion made of Jamun branches is erected, and five round stones, brought from the river, are placed inside to represent Mahadev and Parvati, deities revered by the Korku. The Ada Patel leads the worship, invoking the deities and lighting the sacred fire that will burn



throughout the night. This fire is central to the Jinda Holi ritual, symbolising the triumph of good over evil and the renewal of life.

In some villages, this Jinda Holi fire is not only lit in a central location but is also replicated in every household, where offerings are made on the roof in preparation for the Goj Holi (Dead Holi) to be celebrated the next day. Children who prepare for the Dead Holi offer these rooftop offerings to the central Holi fire and accept it as *prasad*, a gesture that signifies the sharing of blessings and communal harmony.

### **Goj Holi (Dead Holi)**

The following day, the Korku tribe celebrates Goj Holi, also known as Japay Holi, Sani Holi, Rari Holi, and Parvati Holi. While larger in scale, Goj Holi holds slightly less importance than Jinda Holi. This form of Holi is akin to the Sindoli ritual, a five-day ceremony that the Korku tribe performs in memory of deceased individuals. The Goj Holi ritual involves the erection of wooden memorials, similar to those used in Sindoli, outside the village or in nearby fields. These memorials serve as a focal point for the tribe's remembrance of their ancestors and their connection to the spiritual realm.

The ritualistic preparations for Goj Holi are elaborate. Five Saag pillars are erected near two tendu wood pillars, and the base of these pillars is adorned with wild vines, Jamun branches, and Palash flowers. In the evening, the village comes alive with the sounds of santur, flute, and drums, as the villagers invite the Ada Patel for the Holika worship. The Ada Patel, after performing the necessary rituals, lights the Goj Holi fire, and the entire village participates in a night of singing, dancing, and communal celebration.

The lighting of the Goj Holi fire is accompanied by traditional dances and music, with the villagers applying the sacred ash from the fire to their foreheads. This ash is believed to bring health and protect the village from illness and evil spirits. The ritual of applying the ash is deeply symbolic, representing the cycle of life, death, and rebirth, and reinforcing the tribe's belief in the protective power of their rituals.

The Goj Holi also involves a communal dance known as the Gadhali dance, performed at the Ada Patel's house as the villagers return home. This dance, accompanied by the rhythmic beats of drums and flutes, is an expression of joy and unity, bringing the community together in celebration of their shared heritage. From midnight, the men of the village engage in Fagnay songs, a form of folk music that is deeply intertwined with the Korku's cultural identity. The women, meanwhile, perform the Khenjara dance, moving in circles and going door-to-door to ask for Fagwa, a traditional offering that symbolises goodwill and prosperity.



### **Rituals and Symbolism in the Fag Festival**

The Korku tribe's Fag festival is not only a celebration of Holi but also a time for various other rituals that hold deep significance for the community. On the third day of the festival, the ritual of extinguishing the Holi fire is performed at dawn by the village elders. The ashes from the extinguished fire are collected in a bamboo basket, which is then carried through the village in a ceremonial procession. This procession is led by a member of the Kale clan, who carries a stick adorned with bells, symbolising the cleansing of the village and the protection of its inhabitants from evil.

As the procession moves through the village, women play a vital role in the ritual by preventing the elders from entering certain areas, using ropes tied across the path. This act is symbolic of the protection and purification of the village. The elders, in turn, offer donations in copper vessels to gain permission to proceed, signifying the exchange of blessings and the reinforcement of social bonds within the community.

During the Fagun festival, the practice of Fagwa begging holds special importance. This ritual involves women singing Fagnay songs, which are rich in the essence of love and devotion, and entertaining travellers with dance. The Fagnay songs are a form of storytelling that transcends the physical realm, allowing the women to connect with the spiritual and emotional aspects of their culture. During this time, the women forget their bodily consciousness, immersing themselves in the joy of the festival and the communal spirit of the Korku tribe.

### **Meghnath Pooja**

Another significant aspect of the Fag festival is the worship of Meghnath, a deity revered by the tribal communities of Melghat. Meghnath worship reaches its peak on the third day of the Holi festival when a grand ceremony is organised in villages like Kara, Dharni, Jarida, Hatru, Kajaldoh, and Katkumbh. A Teak pillar, symbolising Meghnath's active presence, is painted with red ochre and adorned with primitive symbols and images carved with lime. This pillar becomes the centre of worship, where people flock to fulfil vows, shop for toys, utensils, clothes, and jewellery, and participate in a fair organised for this purpose.

The ritual offerings to Meghnath include a chicken's head, sacrificed as a symbolic gesture to appease the deity and ensure the well-being of the community. The ceremony also involves the participation of Bhoomka and Palihaar, spiritual leaders who bring patients and afflicted villagers to the pillar for healing. During the ritual, Bhoomka and Palihaar enter a trance-like state, climb the pillar, and perform a symbolic spinning around a horizontal wooden beam at



the top. This act is believed to alleviate the sufferers' pain, demonstrating the deep spiritual connection the Korku tribe maintains with their rituals and deities.

The culmination of the Fag festival is marked by the spreading of Panchsheel Holi ashes around the entire village. This ritual is performed with the belief that the ashes will prevent evil and other calamities from entering the village, ensuring the safety and prosperity of the community for the coming year. The Holi festival, with all its rituals, dances, songs, and communal gatherings, holds extraordinary importance in the lives of the Korku tribe and the other tribal people of Melghat. It is a celebration that reinforces their cultural identity, spiritual beliefs, and connection to their ancestors, making it an integral part of their existence.







## Conclusion

**The traditional celebration of Holi, or Fag, among the Korku tribe of Melghat, offers a rich tapestry of cultural and spiritual significance.** Beyond its festive elements, the festival serves as a conduit for preserving ancient traditions, reinforcing community bonds, and fostering a deep connection to the natural world. The rituals of Jinda Holi, Goj Holi, and Meghnath Pooja, each with its unique symbolism and purpose, highlight the intricate ways in which the Korku tribe has integrated their beliefs and practices into the fabric of their lives.

**In conclusion, the Holi festival among the Korku tribe stands as a testament to the resilience and adaptability of indigenous cultures.** It is a celebration that transcends mere revelry, serving as a reminder of the enduring power of tradition and the importance of preserving cultural heritage. By studying the Korku tribe's Holi celebrations, we gain valuable insights into the complex interplay between spirituality, community, and nature, offering a glimpse into the rich tapestry of human experience.

## References:

Choudhary, H.R., and E.P. Abdul Azeez. "The Korku Tribe of Melghat: An Ethnographic Study." *Oriental Anthropologist*, vol. 20, no. 1, 2020, pp. 97-112.