

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

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Korkus and Their Festivals in Melghat

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Abstract:

Far away from the modern civilization and residing in hilly satpuda ranges for centuries, Korku tribe believes superstition, as they are far away from modern education. There are various references which indicate that their culture is very ancient and much can be found out from the living style. studies and researches are needed for this purpose. French thinker Rousseau described lifestyle of tribes as simple and satisfied the researches on the life style of the tribes began in 19th century and scientific studies on the lifestyle of tribes started in 20th century. Dr. G. S. Deogaonkar, Dr. shaileja Deogaonkar, Dr. Vinayak Tumram, Dr. Abhay Bang, Dr. Bhau Mandaokar, Dr. A. D. Pauhar have contributed to studies of Korku tribe in Melghat.

Keywords: Korku, Festival, Malghat, Dharni, Chikhaldara, Maharashtra.

INTRODUCTION: -

Satpuda ranges in Maharashtra where various river such as Tapi, Gadga, Sipna etc. flow and junction at a point, are called Melghat. It is a thick forest. For administrative functioning Melghat has two tehsils - one Dharni and the other Chikhaldara. Korkus are the original inhabitants of Melghat. Gond Bhilala, Basod, Bhil, Pardhi, Mongiya, Banjara, Balai, etc. are the other communities which reside in Melghat. The korkus are the major tribe in Melghat which has the rich historical and archaeological heritage. Gawilgadh in Chikhaldara tehsil and Amner Fort in Bhokarbardi village in Dharni tehsil situated at the cost of Tapi and Gadga river are to of the oldest forts. Melghat has mythological background. the pandawas of Mahabharata after losing the bit, were punished to get disguised. The pandawas preferred to live in the then kingdom of king Virat in Melghat (Now in Chikhaldara tehsil).

Bhima of Mahabharata assassinated Kichak and washed his hands full of Blood in the pond which is name after Bhima, now called "Bhim Pond" (Bhimkund) in Chikhaldara Tehsil. I



opine that various historical and mythological findings can be brought out in the archaeological excavations and surveys, if made.

Korkus is the major tribe of Melghat. There are various opinions about the genetic origin of Korkus. According to Hiralal-Russel, Korkus has the Munda genetic origin, Ravindra Mukherji says that korku belong to negro branch of austric genetic origin. Stephen Funch agrees to Hiralal -Russel. Dr. Grierson says “The Korku are the western most Munda tribe’ ’On the basis of the physical appearance of the Korkus – the thick dark hair, hard black lips, and dark skin colours – the social anthropologist opine that the Korkus belong to Negroto origin.

The Korkus in Nimad of Madhya Pradesh believe that they are the worshipers of Nag Devata. The Korkus believe that the word Korku is derived from Korav which refers to Kauravas of Mahabharata. One regiment of Kauravas while returning from the battlefield of Mahabharata decided to reside the Melghat and they are the ancestors of Korkus. The opinion of the anthropologist on the basis of physical appearance shows that the Korkus are the original inhabitants before arrival of the Aryas in India. the deprival of the word Korku from ‘korav’ and relatively “Kauravas” of Mahabharata shows that the Korkus are the Aryans as the Kauravas were Aryans. These two different opinions create paradox which is a point of debate and research. Korkus is divided in four sects – Ruma potadya, Dulariya bodai, Korkus believes in Gotra system. Korkus also believe that bride and bridegroom should be from different Gotras (Sects). The korkus have no written script for communication. They are believers of multi-Gods. They believe in Ravana, Meghnath and kumbhakaran. Sun, moon, stars, Rivers, trees etc have status of God among Korkus.

The Korkus of Melghat very Joyfully and enthusiastically celebrate all their festivals even in poverty and take loans from local money for this purpose. They believe that their Gods shower blessings and prosperity comes from various Gods they believe in. Village worshipping is also rooted among them. In summer almost all of the villagers gather and worship the village. In the guidance of Bhumka and Padiyal, the spiritual leaders, the sacrifice ceremony takes place. They believe that due to animal sacrifice the sorrows disappear. After Gudi puja, Akhadi pooja, Mata pooja, Kheda dev pooja, Wagh dev pooja etc take place their main festival begins.

Festival has very important place in the lives of Korkus. Traditionally they celebrate the festival such as Rand Bhave, Chikhal Bhave, Jaroti, Pola, Dasara, Diwali and Phalgun (Holi).

**Rand Bhave: -**

In the Jeshtha month of Hindu calendar Randbhave is celebrated at full dark night for the purpose to welcome rain and monsoon. In the early morning on that day the youth go to the forest, cut the green bamboos, peel them and the prepare the ropes from the peeling. The peeled-out bamboos and the ropes, which are used for sowing the seeds after rain, are worshiped. They believe that they can get good harvest by following this tradition. To, please water God, the young boys and girls carry frogs in the pots and beg for Dedar (begging) in the village.

Chikhal Bhave: -

The Korkus believes that the ancestors are worth worshipping. This festival is celebrated by eating and drinking wine to recall the memories of the ancestors.

Jiroti: -

Jiroti is a very crucial feast in Korku tribe. It is celebrated in the evenings during the month of Shravan. they worship Jiroti devi on this day and they all eat together. Day of Jiroti Kar festival is celebrated on the next day. The young boys and girls sing a song, swimming on Dolaars (swings). Jiroti is a symbol of the beginning of cultural activities of Korkus.

Pola: -

Agriculture is the main occupation are Korkus and animal farming is the part of them, this festival Pola is celebrated for the animals on the new moon night in the month of Bhadrapada. As cultivation is done with the help of bullocks. Pola is celebrated to please the bullocks. bullocks are bathed and decorated on the eve of this festival, bullocks horns are also coloured Later Khichadi is given as a food to them and also sweets are made for the bullocks. The Chillari is sung by the Korkus during Pola festival.

Dasara: -

Dasara is celebrated in a very different way. On this day the nose of the male buffalo is cut and the buffalo is moved in the whole village with its nose bleeding to please the local deity. For the whole night all the villagers are awakened with a view that they attempt to awaken the Kumbhakarna, who has been sleeping for last various months, they believe.



They intend to awaken Kumbhakarna. Next day they pray for the prosperity of Lanka. As they are followers of Ravana, unlike other Hindu communities in India, they pray for Ravana's victory, against Rama the Lord.

Diwali: -

Diwali is the festival included recently. Previously the Korkus did not celebrate this festival. By coming in contact with the other communities of Hindus, the Korkus also joyfully celebrate Diwali festival which is very famous in Indian society. their houses are cleaned up on this day. There is work for them on that day. People offer a coconuts and obeisance to the cows along with other animals too. Cows are given food like khichadi and the rest of khichadi is distributed in the koraku tribe as prasadas. the lamps are lit up in their locality as Hindus do at night.

Phalgun (Holi): -

Last but not list Holi, last in the Hindu calendar, is the most important of all festivals, celebrated by the Korkus very enthusiastically and happily. For harvest the farmer Korkus resides at the farms for some months with families. After harvest, earlier to phalgun, they come back to the villages and start preparation to celebrate Phalgun, this festival continuously for five days. Unlike other communities of India, they celebrate Holi by singing songs., dancing, eating and drinking for whole day and night. They stich new garments with turbans. On the first day Holi festival is inaugurated by giving fire to a huge heap of longs with the hands of the leader of the village called Patel. Loud clapping can be heard when the whole heap of logs is burnt out. They then greet each other. On that Holi place they dig and plant a "Temru" or "Arandi" tree. All males sing and dance by playing Dhol, Jhanj. After that Korku headman Patel make obeisance and light the fire. They sing a song on that day, these songs are called as "Ganguliya Geet".

As Holi is the festival of colours, next day, which is called Dhorandi, like other communities in India, throw Gulal (colours) on each other and get pleased with this activity. No one take objection on throwing gulal (colours). On the contrary they are pleased. The most important feature of Holi, celebrated by Korkus, is that men, women and children by making groups ten to twelve, move in the whole village and surrounding areas for begging which is called Phagavaa and collect money for collective dinner. The dust of burnt logs is thrown in the nearest river on the last day.



CONCLUSION: -

The lifestyle of Korku tribe Melghat of Satpuda Ranges attracts the cultured and civilized people by means of their festivals and traditions. The festivals have a great impact on the life style of Korkus. Korkus should take efforts to preserve their ancient culture.

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