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## Impact of changing livelihood patterns on socio-culture life of Korku, Betul District, Madhya Pradesh

**Professor, Dr.Rajshree Shastri, Archana Kujur (research scholar)**

*Department of sociology & social work, Barkatullah University, Bhopal*

### ABSTRACT

*This research article attempts to set the current changes that are taking place in socio-cultural life of Korku tribe, Now, the tribals are in the process of transformation. It may have many reasons but this article elaborates how the adopted new livelihood pattern is distressing the socio-cultural life of Korku. This research article is divided into four sections. Section I presents the impact of new livelihoods in their family, festivals, traditional dance, songs, cultural and religion have been discussed. Sections II discuss the changes in their dressing pattern: traditional dress, ornaments and tattoos. Section III elaborates the impact in their life cycle ceremonies and rituals like birth, naming, marriage ceremony and death cremation.*

### INTRODUCTION

The livelihood structures of Korku have the direct reflection on their social status. Those who are engaged in government and private job are having better social status than agriculturist. Their socio-cultural life is acculturating by others. Many changes can be observed in their social life. Now, the Korku tribal are in the process of transformation. As we all of us know, there is nothing stagnant in the world. Everything has its own reflection or impact. Hence, the changing livelihood patterns of Korku people are having positive as well as negative impact on them. There are certain indicators which will be focused to measure and understand the impact. In order to analysis impact quantitative and qualitative methods have been used. Socio-cultural impacts cannot be quantified; however, observation methods and focus groups discussion played the major role to see what changes have taken place in family structure, social status, dressing pattern, religion, belief system, way of celebrating feast and festivals.

### Size of Sample population

There are 132 villages across the Shahpur block. Among it 125 are revenue villages and 7 forest villages. Out of that, 10 per cent of villages have been selected for the research study, which consist 13 villages. Multi stratified sampling methods has been applied to conduct the research so as to see whether livelihood structure of Korku differ from place to place or whether those who are living near the town are having better livelihood option than interior area. The villages were divided into two sectors, according to the distance from Shahpur block headquarters. These villages were distributed by census mapping scale in Shahpur block census map (2001). The blocks headquarter to 16 k.m. come under Sector –A. The villages situated 16 k.m. to 32 k.m. and above were coming under Sector –B. From each sector proportionate village numbers of sectors were selected, which consist 6 villages from sector A and 7 villages from sector B.

In order to investigate the research problem the multiple stratified random sampling methods have been used so as to see whether livelihood structure of Korku differ from place to place or whether those who are living near the town are having better livelihood option than interior area.

Apart from this, observation, case study, FGD and interview methods have been applied. For the households studies semi-structured interview schedule had been used to get the households information. In sampled villages, all the Korku households were listed and every second households were selected as sampled for household studies. From each village 24(twenty four) Korku households were personally interviewed and information were collected by the semi-structured interview schedules regarding their family, education, income, expenditure, livelihoods, festivals, and dressing patterns, except in the methods of cultivation, irrigation facilities and using technology equipments in agriculture. In order to get in depth information on Korkus, the focus group discussion (FGD) were organized. The main participants of FGD were key person, women and youths of the villages. Case studies have been done to enrich the data and to show the real picture of it. The observation is an important tool in research. There are some attributes which cannot be questioned, it can only be observed. Secondly through the observation only data can be verified whether respondent is giving correct answer or not.

The study covered the 1619 Korku population, out of them 829 (51%) males and females 790 (49%) were covered. However, the sex composition of thirteen study villages has not been biased

### **Impact on Socio-Cultural Life of Korku**

The qualitative impact of present livelihoods on social life of Korku cannot be measured or quantified. To see the changes in their social and cultural life, the observation method, focused group discussion and interview scheduled have been used as tools to see how the changing livelihoods pattern is affecting their social life.

#### **1. Impact in Family**

Family is an informal institution of society. In a family as the income level increases, it directly reflects on social status of family. Those who are engaged in government and private job their income is far better than landless and agriculturist family, which reflect in their social status. One of the positive things has been observed in Korku family that women are given equal chance to take decision on family matters. Those who have strong bonding and good financial condition as compared to other have, they play a vital role in decision making process of community development or any village issues. Poor section possesses low position in community and social order. The laborers families always listens the upper class people. The seasonal migratory labourers work has become new phenomena during last ten years. They are earning good amount but another side, it is dazzling negative impact also. Their family is breaking. If a married person migrates alone to the city, slowly it is creating conflict among the couple. If, married couples migrate along with their children's future get affected. Seasonal migratory families are influenced by urban culture as well as rural. Their life is hanging between two cultures. They have dual nature. In their family social bonding looks very poor. Somehow they are in a process of transformation; meanwhile they are going away from their originality

#### **2. Impact on Religion**

Religion is an organized collection of beliefs, cultural systems and world views that relate humanity to an order of existence<sup>1</sup>. In tribal society, many of them adhere to traditional tribal

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<sup>1</sup> While religion is difficult to define, one standard model of religion, used in [religious studies](#) courses, was proposed by [Clifford Geertz](#), who simply called it a "cultural system"

religions, often concretized with one or more of the major religious traditional of Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam and Christianity and often under ongoing pressure of cultural assimilation. The religions often involve ancestor worship or worship of spirits of natural features. Similarly, the Korku are by product of Hinduism. They considered themselves as Hindu. They celebrate almost all important festivals of Hinduism like Dipawali, Dashera, Holi, and Shiv Ratre. Hindu influence is also obvious on their mythological folk-lore. Like all other tribes, the Korku too have many gods and goddesses. Although they celebrate the Hindus' festivals, however, they worship their traditional devi (ancestral gods) and deota. The livelihood transformation of Korku doesn't have any impact on religion.

### 3. Impact on Festivals

Every tribal group has unique traditional festivals. It can also be noticed that tribal festivals are depending upon their religion importance. Korku tribe also has important traditional festivals such as Jeroti, Polla, Rand Bhave, Baisakh, and Nagpanchami. Apart from these, Dasehra, Holi, Dipawali and rakshabandhan are also being celebrated although these are main feast of Hindus. Nevertheless they considered themselves as Hindu, however, they feel, it is their rights to celebrate all the festival of Hindus. India has a multi colour of festivals; a person can celebrate any festival as he/she wishes. The changes of livelihood of Korku does not matter in celebrating the festivals, perhaps the income level of a family restrict to celebrate festival sometime. Whatever may be the situation but traditional festivals of Jeroti and Polla are being celebrated followed by Dashera, Dipawali, Holi and Rakshabandhan. Celebration of non-tribal festivals have no relation with livelihood structure of poor Korku, however the educated and job holder families celebrate some non-tribal and non-Hindu festivals like Christmas and Easter, because these people have more interaction with multi-cultural and multi religions people.

### 4. Impact in Traditional Dace and Songs

The traditional dances and songs are integral part of tribals. The traditional dance and songs make more colorful to the tribal society. There are special songs for different seasons and festivals and different dances form as well. In each traditional dance form and songs the cycle of nature is being reflected. It makes them different from others and gives unique identity. Previously, traditional dance and songs were the only source of recreation, where all the community people were gathered and through the dance and songs they were sharing their happiness and love. These dance and songs have bonded them in a strong community feeling. As the time passed by, tribal society is being influenced by globalization, modernization and westernization; many means of entertainment are available to their life through internet. Now, because of many reasons tribals are losing their attachment towards traditional dance and songs. The new generation is not following it; they are more influenced and fascinated by western songs and dances. Especially in marriage ceremony, instead of traditional dance they like to dance to film songs. With the traditional dance the use of traditional instruments are also decreasing. Now, the dholak and chimt rarely are found. The new generation (less than 25 years) youths are not very much ken and interested to learn to play traditional musical instruments. As of now their

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(Clifford Geertz, *Religion as a Cultural System*, 1973). A critique of Geertz's model by [Talal Asad](#) categorized religion as "an [anthropological](#) category." (Talal Asad, *The Construction of Religion as an Anthropological Category*, 1982.)

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traditional dance and songs are followed and initiated by elder people. It is needless to say that only in marriage ceremony traditional dance and songs are performed, which has been pledged by 100 percent respondents. Ziroti is celebrated as main festivals which are celebrated first week of July. In some villages with this occasion also they perform dance and songs.

The scenario of Korku is not giving the positive indication of future of tribal culture. Now, slowly they are detaching themselves from their traditional dance and songs whereby they will lose their identity in future.

## 5. Impact on Culture

Culture is the characteristics of a particular group of people, defined by language, religion, cuisine, social habits, music and arts. A culture can spontaneously adopt a different belief system be it older and richer. One culture forcibly integrates with other weak cultures. A new culture and new attitudes toward the origin of new culture are obtained through contact and communication. Now, the Korku are immigrating in terms of job, study and other purpose. Their life is being acculturated by non-tribal culture. Cultural changing is not simply a one-way process. The interactions with multiculturalism, cultural assimilation are the different factors of changes in Korku culture.

It is good that Korku are adopting new livelihood option however they go city to work and acculturate with non tribal culture, which is degrading their original culture.

## 2. IMPACT ON DRESSING PATTERN

### 2.1. Dress

The change in dressing pattern of Korku is not only the impact of adopted livelihood pattern and economic growth. There are many other factors, which directly or indirectly affect these changes. Traditionally, the Korku men were putting on a loin cloth and a wisp of turban coiled on the top of the head in which they used to put a brass chain. Keeping the head uncovered was considered to be a bad sign. Now, also wherever they go, they put one white cloth, even it may be torn. The women also had own traditional dress. The women like to wear boarder sari with bright colour. Because of modernity their dressing pattern is changing. In the age of modernization those who get opportunity to interact with urban society, wear urban dress like pant and shirt, etc. The girls wear salwar, saris and blouse. Those who are above 60 years of age they are still continuing with traditional dresses. Changing in dressing pattern depend on their income level. Specially those who are in government service, they had totally adopted new modern dressing sense. They want to be separate from their community.

### 2.2. Ornaments

Generally in all the society, women love ornaments. The Korku women are also not different from the habits of general society. It is found that the Korku also use different kinds of ornaments according to their own capacity. At the same time they have been using some traditional ornaments which used to be made locally by local jewelers. The *Stephan Fuch* has mentioned in his book Korku boys were also wearing some ornaments like silver ring (Bali) in ear-lobes and finger rings (mundi). When a Korku boy was completing the sixth year of his age, his ear-lobes was pierced; a piece of reed was inserted in the holes to prevent them from

growing together'. For the occasion of traditional dance, they had different ornaments like feathers of peacock, and other seasonal flowers. In the hair over the forehead they were often wearing a silver ornament. Often two silver chains were fixed in the hair behind the ears or on the neck. Now, nobody wears such kind of ornaments in the village. Possessing ornament is also depends on income level of the family. Those households are having good income are possessing ornaments, it is too expensive for landless people. The table no -7.1 is showing the possession of the traditional ornaments in Korku society.

**Table No-1**  
**Possessing of Traditional Ornaments**

Sl.No	Kinds of Ornament	Sector-A		Sector -B		Total	
		Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
1	Kada	100	38	113	35	213	36
2	Chuda	104	39	122	38	226	39
3	Khangwari	43	16	59	19	102	18
4	Bajuban	19	7	24	8	43	7
	Total	266	100	318	100	584	100

(Source: Primary data)

The Kada, Chuda, Khangwari and Barjubad are the important traditional ornaments of Korku women. But now, the drastic change has been seen in possessing of ornaments. Silver has become too expensive hence they prefer to have light weighted ornament. Out of total female population 76 per cent Korku women have traditional ornaments. The most feminist ornaments used by Korku women are Kada, Chuda, Khangwari and Bajuban. There are 36 per cent of them who are having Kada, if we see in sector wise, there is not much differences. The second most used ornament is Chuda which at least 39 per cent of the Korku women have it. Khangwari is also equally important ornament but since it has become expensive they are not able to afford. It is found that only 18 per cent of women have Khangwari ornament. Bajuband is also becoming less important because of many reasons, only 7 per cent Korku women are having Bajuband. The possession of ornament table has drawn in sector wise, because it has assumed that Korku of sector B are more traditional and attached to the traditional dress up. But there is not much difference shown by this table. Now, the poor families cannot afford to buy their traditional ornaments, it has become very expensive some of them have already sold out these ornaments to meet their daily needs.

### 2.3. Tattoo

Tattoo does not have any relation with livelihood structure. It comes under their belief system. Previously almost all Korku women were having a wavy line in the form of tattooed on their forehead. Because they had a belief that it was their ritual, without tattoo they won't get entry in heaven. Previously tattoo process was very painful; they were pricking by needle then applying the marking-ink. The marking-ink was made by the bhilawan tree (*Semacarpus anacardium*)<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Fuchs Stephen, The Korku of the Vindhya Hills, 1988, pg.-68

**2.3.1. Importance of tattoo:** Tattooing was part and parcel of Korku life style. Korku women have tattoo by many reasons. Some think that it is their ritual they should follow it, among the total women (769) only 36 per cent have tattoo on their body. Among it 64 per cent are having tattoo as their ritual, 28 per cent women are forced by parents and very few which 8 per cent are having tattoo with own interest. Some of them think this is an old fashion.

**Table No – 2**

**Reason of Making Tattoo Mark**

Sl. No.	Reasons	Frequency	Percentage
1	Ritual	174	64
2	Parents force	78	28
3	Own interest	21	8
	Total Response	273	100

(Source: Primary data)

**2.3.2. Tattoo and New generation:** Tattoo is one of the traditions that Korku used to keep up. This is one of the ways of keeping their identity. The importance of the person in their society was more according to the kind and number of tattoo in his or her body. The new generations of Korku girls do not like to make tattoo because of many reasons. Here the new generation means under the age group of 25 years. They have been influenced by the modernization and westernization. In the research study, it is discovered that now only 16 per cent of them have tattoo. The rest 84 per cent do not have tattoo for many reasons. They see hands become black, and it does not look nice. It shows that, they are becoming beauty conscious. If we see in modern context many film stars like to have tattoo and it is considered as a fashion. But, if a tribal girl has tattoo in her body, then the society looks as social taboos. Tattoo has become an identity. Some time it has positive and negative sign for them. They feel that tattoo keeps them separate from the non tribal.

**3. IMPACT ON CEREMONIES AND RITUALS OF KORKU**

**3.1. Life Cycle Rituals**

Rituals and Ceremonies have an important role in the life of tribal communities. The Korku tribal are rich in their culture, custom and rituals. In their day to day life they interact with non tribal and other people. They may be influenced by the new culture but they do not compromise with their custom and rituals. In Korku’ life, birth, marriage, and death are the important ceremonies having important rituals. It has been observed that there are not many changes in their ritual rather than ceremonies. During the research study it has been observed that there are some changes in their way celebrating ceremony among the migratory labourer and those who are engaged in government service. In this way there some positive and negative impact are being observed among the Korkus.

### 3.2. Birth Ceremony

The process of giving birth is called '*Japa*' in Korku dialogue. Among the Korku tribe it has been seen that usually the senior, old and experienced woman (*Dai*) conduct the delivery. Dr. Narayan Choure has mentioned in his book that 'if the newly born child was a boy his umbilical cord was cut by a knife and if the born child was a girl her umbilical cord was cut by a knife made of bamboo'. But now this practice has changed. The 'dayee' (midwife) has a special knife by which she cuts the umbilical cord of the child. They are trained by local officer of women and child welfare department. Korku do not discriminate between a girl and a boy child. Now, ASHA worker are motivating the tribal women to do delivery in the government hospital. Initially this programme was very successful. In order to control the mortality and maternity rate tribal rural people were encouraged to come to government hospital, where they can have safe delivery but there also they are exploited. They follow all the rituals related to birth ceremonies.

### 3.3. Naming Ceremony

Naming the child is a part of birth ceremony. It begins on the ten day after the birth. Here they find *mitay*, all of them sit in front of 'Ghar deota' (house god). In front of them they keep a cup and a pot made of leaves with water in which they drop wheat and Jowar grains respectively and start taking possible name of the family members. They go on dropping grains till two grains come together. When two grains come together, as dropped in the cup of water, the name is given according to her/his soul met.

### 3.4. Marriage Ceremony

The Korku marriage can be visualized and considered as a social contract, accompanied by religious rights between a man and a woman. It is also a union for a life companionship for begetting children to make their family. For Korku the marriage usually is a companionship. Man gets married to woman to cook, to look after, and to help him in his house. The Korku speaks strongly about two kinds of marriage: The arranged marriage by parents and the love marriage. In their opinion love marriage is more successful than the arranged marriage. There are not much impact on their ritual of marriage ceremony but there is drastic change has been seen in the way of celebrating marriage ceremony. They do all puja and ritual which is to be done during marriage. Specially, it is a matter of affordability. Those who are economically well off, they follow the Hindu celebration. Sociological point of view, they try to be different from their community

### 3.5. Ritual of Marriage Ceremony

The Korku fix the time and day for marriage according to the planet position in horoscope. As the time is decided upon, bride-groom takes '*Barat*' to the bride's house. In their community they don't have a restriction of number of people attending the *Barat*. For the marriage ceremony '*SEHRA*' is the traditional dress, which cover the face and head made of khajur (dates) leaves. But while studying these ceremonies it has been found that now most of them do not wear '*SEHRA*'. It is difficult to get a traditional '*SEHRA*' as it is expensive. Now a day, they wear an ordinary dress for marriage ceremony.

Mandap is made of 'palash' branches. The villagers go to bring the branches in procession. They take some rice, 'sindur' and 'haldi' to perform rituals before cutting the branches. Still this ritual has been practiced very honestly. Once the branches are being cut down, they put in bullock cart. There are five persons appointed to hold the branches and take to Mandap. Before planting in the hole dug in the centre of the Mandap the bride comes and put one 'supadi' in the hole. After this the bride put 'haldi' on branches. And in this way their Mandap gets ready. On the same day they apply 'haldi' to the bride and in the evening the parents of bride do 'puja' to the 'ghar deota' (house God).

When the *Baratees* come, they are washed their feet and are told to sit under the 'Mandap'. After sometime the bride comes and throws the yellow rice on the bride-groom as well as all 'Baratees'. The bride-groom gives marriage dress and ornaments to the bride to get ready for marriage ceremony. Bride gets ready and sits behind left side of bride-groom in 'Madap'. Then 'Bhumka' does the 'puja' by reciting some 'Mantras'. When the 'Puja' is finished the family members of the bride come and mark the feet of the bride-groom with 'haldi' and present the gift to the bride. This ceremony is called "Paon Purj". During this ceremony some old persons of the village keep record of the gifts, so that the parents of the bride could return the gifts to the same person in their daughter's or son's marriage. During this ceremony bride has to cry loudly to remember her journey of life in her parent's house. After all this the 'Barat' people including the bride-groom and bride take special food. For this occasion they prepare meat dishes of pork, mutton, beef and chicken.

While doing research and study it has been observed that the Korku are still continuing with traditional dances and songs during the marriage ceremony. They dance whole night and in the early hours of morning around 4 a.m. parents of bride give 'bidayee' (farewell). For 'bidayee' (farewell) ceremony Korku don't have any specific rituals. During research study research scholar has attained two Korku marriages. It has been observed that there are changes on dressing and food and way of celebration and but do not compromise with rituals.

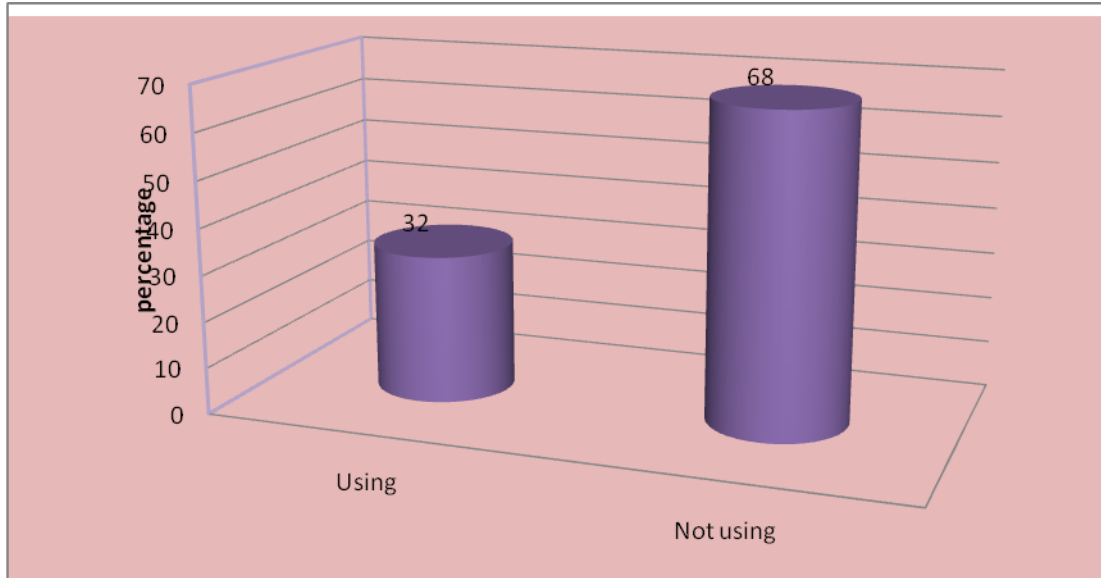
### 3.6. Impact on Marriage Ceremony

Korku has traditional dress called SHEHRA for marriage ceremony. Wearing SHEHRA is considered as prestigious. But today it is not practiced as earlier because it is expensive and looks unfashionable. The SHEHRA which they make out of palm leaves are not found everywhere. Today, those who prepare the SHEHRA are not found in all the villages. And, it has become expensive. Now, the cost of SHEHRA is Rs.6000/- to 7000/-. The study reflected that there are 32 percent respondents were responded that although it is costly but they prefer traditional dress for marriage. It is very difficult to find and very less people know to make SHERA. Rests 68 per cent do not bother about traditional dress. They like to wear Kurta pajama or pant and shirt in the marriage.



Figure No -1

Using of SHEHRA in Marriage Ceremony



3.7. Death Cremation

The livelihood structure has not any impact on death cremation. Every poor and rich Korku people follow the same ritual of death ceremony. There is not much changes has been observed in the ritual of death ceremony. The ritual of death cremation is very important for Korku people. For example when people near to death bed Him/she is given rice or water to drink. Dead body is lifted up by his relatives and lay on the ground. Then all the family members and relatives put wheat or jowar on the feet of the corpse (this is called sarat). The corpse is undressed and all ornaments are taken off from the body and given bath and haldi and oil is applied. If the corpse is of a married woman, she is covered with red cloth and husband puts 'sindoor' for the last time. On the hand, the corpse of the male is covered with a white cloth.

Thus, the dead body is taken out from the house for funeral. It is placed on the bier made of bamboo. When they proceed for burial the house owner takes food in leaf and fire in a mud pot. Normally the Korku tribes have their own graveyard near the village. According to their custom and belief women are not allowed to go for burial. The grave is dug according to the length of the corpse. During the burial ceremony the family members put mud on corpse first and later on the relatives and villagers join and fill it. After the burial they start moving towards house. If they get a 'ber'(banyan) tree in between the family members take a stone along with 'ber' leaf and they make seven rounds of the 'ber'(banyan) tree. In this way they try to get out of the memory of the dead person.

After three days of the burial the family members go to the graveyard to give food in Marbel leaf plants. Apart from this 'theratvi' is one of the important customs after the death ceremony. On this occasion head of family and 'Bhumka' do 'Puja' in graveyard and offer food. From here onward the dead person is included in 'purkhoti puja'. Stephen Fuchs has radically described the ritual of death ceremony in his book. To understand the death ceremony research had interaction

with old person of village. Finally, study found that livelihood structure has nothing to do with death cremation. At any cost they do not compromise with ritual of death cremation.

## CONCLUSION

In the above impact of new livelihoods on socio-cultural of Korku are being discussed. There is a positive and negative impact as well. The adaptation of new livelihood is integrating them with other, meanwhile they are going away from their originality. It is a process of change that cannot be stopped. It has been explained above, how the adopted new livelihood activities are putting positive and negative impact on their socio-cultural life of Korku. Perhaps, the changing is a sign of development; however, they should not be away from the originality. Every person should maintain his/her own identity. The identity can be upheld by preserving the original culture, beliefs and thinking pattern.

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