



# SOCIO-CULTURAL MOBILITY AMONG KORKUS OF MADHYA PRADESH

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**Abstract:** Socio-cultural mobility is a concept about the changes which occur in society in the form of social, economic and political aspects to the structure and behaviour pattern of society. As stratification refers to the stable aspect of the division of society, mobility is a part of stratification; where a person shifts himself from one position to another, one place to another, upward to downward and downward to upward. Sanskritisation is a process which describes the socio-cultural mobility. This paper is a contribution to how to understand the relation between culture and society. The immense changes taking place in the society is categorized into the process namely Sanskritisation, Westernization, Modernization and Industrialization. These processes reflect the amount of mobility within the framework of the caste system. This paper is also talking about the socio-cultural changes among the tribals. The present paper aims to understand the scenario of the changes taking place in the tribal society of India. One can notice changes in the living standard, food habits and lifestyle of the tribal community. Therefore, it is imperative to examine the determinants of such changes. Social change is the alteration of cultural practices, social structure and social behaviour for such people in society. Social-cultural mobility is the concept which gives us the ideas about what are the changes taking place among the Korkus.

**Index Terms:** Korku, Social mobility.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

India is a land of diversities woven together into a complex culture. The process of change in the Indian society has entered into a qualitatively new phase. Changes are bound to come in society. In some, it is rapid and fast while in others they are slow. "In the wake of Modernization and globalization, the process of social mobility, the nature of demographical change and increase in urbanization and industrialization have bought significant changes in the society" (Mondal, n.d).

India is also a land of tribal people scattered all over and they form a considerable number of population. They are not homogeneous, they are heterogeneous groups at different levels of integration with the mainstream of society. They also represent many different racial and linguistic stocks and are a different level of socio-cultural and economic development.

Tribes have their own festivals and celebration. Some of them share patriarchal culture ties and some of the tribal society is matriarchal. However, somewhere Christianity and Hinduisation have brought some change that can be termed as total transformation in the tribal lifestyle and outlook particularly in the North-Eastern states of India. Despite the several changes in numerous aspect of tribal life, still tribals want to preserve their own tradition and culture. Moreover, one has to notice shifts and changes in the development of this stereotype.

As stratification refers to the stable aspect of the division of society, mobility is a part of stratification, where a person shifts himself from one position to another, one place to another, higher to lower and lower to higher. In today's world, Individuals are moving from rags to riches. Mobility is a concept which gives us the idea of positional change. It can also be seen as shift, change and movement. With all the rigid and social division and characteristics of a society, we are living in a far more mobile society. Sorokin was the first sociologist who wrote a book 'Social and

Cultural Mobility'. "He opines that, there is no society which is closed (caste system in India) and no society which is completely opens (class system)". He further stated that both the societies are exactly same in order to allow for the movement (Samikha, n.d.). An individual living in closed society spend his life in the society to which he is familiar with, but it becomes difficult for the person living in the open society due to the unfamiliar condition new norms and new values of the society. He also said that the rate of change depends upon the level of modernization of a given society. As defined by Barber, social mobility either refers to movement, upward or downward between higher or lowers social classes; or more precisely, movement between one relatively full time, functionally significant social role and another that is evaluated as either higher or lower.

Prof. M.N. Srinivas on talking about cultural mobility in the traditional caste structure of India, "Sanskritization is the process by which a low Hindu caste or tribal or a group changes its custom, rituals, ideology and the way of life in the direction of a high and frequently 'twice-born' caste" (Shuani, n.d.). Gradually such changes are followed by a claim to a higher position in the caste hierarchy than that traditionally conceded to the claimant caste by the local community.

"Sanskritization is not confined to Hindu caste, but also occur in tribal and semi tribal group such as the Bhils of western India, the Gonds of oraoon of central India and the Pahadis of the Himalaya, this usually results in the tribes undergoing sensitisation claiming to be caste and therefore Hindu in the tradition. It broadens the connotation of the term "Sanskritic" to include both sacred and secular elements of culture. Yogendra Singh says that it may result in strains on the social system. The concept of Sanskritization has given rise to De-Sanskritization there are also some instances where the higher caste is imitating the behaviour pattern of the lower caste. For instance, Brahmins have started taking meat or liquor. This process is called as De-Sanskritization (Shuani, n.d.).

Sanskritization and social mobility both are accompanied by either a change in the economic position through the acquisition of land or change in the power by a change in the marital status. Srinivas says that two factors are responsible for the process of Sanskritisation in traditional India. The first was the economic factor, and that was the availability of the marginal land, and the second is the political factor that is the volatility of the political system without being any centralized authority (Husain, 2008).

M.N. Srinivas deconstructs the meaning of 'westernization' as the uneven blending of western influences brought by various institutions and technological advancements. By focusing on specific diverse groups of the 'model' country and 'borrowing' country, he highlights the emergence of new Indian elite who had direct contact with the small population of Europeans through education, bureaucracy, and trade (Srinivas, 1995).

Hinduisation is another traditional process of cultural change among the tribals. G.S. Ghurye (1963) calls the tribal as 'Backward Hindus' after observing the impact of Hinduism on tribal. N.K. Bose (1953) calls this as 'Hindu method of tribal absorption'. Hinduisation is not necessarily conversion and is also understood as a continuous process of borrowing Hindu cultural traits from the neighboring Hindus. In this manner, they are been accommodated into the larger fold of the Hindu Society. This assimilation of the tribal population into the mainstream has been taking place throughout the period of history (as quoted in Xaxa, 1999).

In the traditional System, the only way to be a Hindu is to convert into a caste, mobility is seen only in a group, not in an individual or a family. It has been also a major process of cultural change a process of cultural and social mobility in the Indian society, which can be seen when a lower caste tries to adopt the lifestyle of the upper caste. Tribals who are converting and claiming themselves to be Hindu are all adopting the cultural pattern and lifestyle of the "Hindu" society. It also helped in expressing the change in marriage and family values. Love marriage is now seen in the tribes who is latter accepted by the family, the family system is also changing as joint families are less in number.

Westernization has also a great impact on Indian society over 150 years of British rule. British rule produces a radical and lasting change in the Indian society it started with the frantic efforts of the Christian missionaries to convert as many as possible Indians into Christianity, coming of East India Company for trade and later increase its power in India. The term subsuming changes occurring at many different levels in technology, beliefs and values, ideology, institutions which become a major source of social mobility for individuals as well as groups. Westernization has also an impression on tribal people as all the western trends are now adopted by the tribal people. It is a simple concept when a non-western country had undergone because of prolonged contact with the western one. It not only includes the introduction of a new institution but also as a fundamental change in the old one.

Although these forces overlap with the notion of modernization, M.N. Srinivas (1952) prefers the word 'westernization.' The factors that are responsible for the tribal transformation in recent times include urbanization,

industrialization, tribal development schemes, health institutions, financial institutions (banks), modern education, improved communication (virtual and physical), administrative system, governmental changes, migration, missionary activities, etc. are of paramount importance in understanding 'tribes' in transition. No talk on social change can be complete in the 21<sup>st</sup> century without reference to 'Globalisation.' Yogendra Singh (2000) points out to the growing interdependence between different people, regions and countries of the globe as social and economic relationships come to spread worldwide. With the process of globalization along with the fast spread of information technology and mass media in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, tribal people have started increasingly participating in a wider, more generalized culture and in the plural social community.

As participation and mobility reduce the degree of social cohesion of the tribe and tribal commitment of the individual, we may observe the fast-emerging process of 'detrribalization' It can also be asserted by the recent studies conducted by a number of scholars, a large number of tribes have converted to different religions leaving their tribal identity behind just to get redemption from exploitation that they faced and in order to elevate their status and stripped honour (Singh, 2020).

## 2. Material and Methods Used

This paper is based on the secondary data sources collected from many different journal articles, Books etc. Only Secondary sources have been adopted or the competition of the paper

## 3. Tribal

Today's tribals, after 60 years of Independence are in the transition phase. At a time, before they were hunter-gatherers and were dependent on the forests for their survival. According to 'Darwin's theory of evolution,' the tribe were in the condition of 'Survival of the Fittest' as the food was not available to them so they need to search food and gather it for their survival on a daily basis (Simpson, 1959). Gradually time passed and the transition phase took place among the tribes after the intervention of the Britishers in the forest area. The tribal was forcefully thrown out from the forest area so they started migrating to different town and villages. This resulted in shift of tribals in search of livelihood, where modernization and Sanskritisation had a greater impact in changing their lifestyle and sources of livelihood. "Korku" is the Scheduled Tribe (S.T.) community predominantly found in the East Nimar (Khandwa and Burhanpur, Betul and Chhindwara) District of Madhya Pradesh and adjoining areas in Melghat region of Maharashtra in India speaking the Korku language which is a member of the Austro- Asiatic language family.

## 4. Korkus

Korku have derived their name from the combination of word "koru" meaning man and 'Ku' which maps it plural, meaning tribal man (Russel and Hiralal, 1916). The Korkus are a branch of great tribe, the Gonds (Deogaonkar et al., 1990). Korkus are initially believed to be residents in the forest of Satpura ranges on either side of the Tapti River. The Korku tribes live in small groups of huts made of grasses and woods. Korku people are Sanskritized as they have adopted the culture and patterns of the people living nearby. Korkus is also known as the people living in the forest area, as they are still they are living in the forest area of Betul in Madhya Pradesh and Melghat in Maharashtra. Gradually with the intervention of the British in the forest area, Korkus lost their livelihood and started shifting to the forest nearby villages and towns. They have adopted the culture, traditions, beliefs and norms of the other community and at the same time, they are following their own culture. Food habits, attire, beliefs and norms of the community have changed. They are also modernizing along with the Sanskritisation process.

## 5. Mobility

Merton (1968) defines social mobility refers to change in social status. Science is a social system in which resources tend to accumulate among a few individuals and a few institutions as quoted in Müller & Pollak, 2015. There are different ways to define mobility. Mobility in the present context can be understood from a socio-cultural and economic point of view. The oxford dictionary defines "mobility as the movement of individual or group between different positions within the system of social stratification in a society" (Barla, 2017). There is a different type of

mobility: upward mobility, downward mobility, intra-generational and inter-generational mobility or career mobility. It can also be structural and non-structural mobility. Upward and downward mobility are included in vertical mobility and must be distinguished from horizontal mobility. In horizontal mobility, an individual or a group changes its occupation and adopt another occupation with similar status (Husain, 2008). Every society is mobile in nature. Tribals are also mobile in nature, their society is dynamic rather than static. That is because of the influence of Modernization and Sanskritisation. Social mobility according to Barber refers to the "movement either upward or downward or between higher to lower social classes, movement between one relatively full time, functionally significant social role and another that is evaluated as either or lower" (Samiksha, n.d.). Social mobility is also an attractive field of investigation as it can be studied from various dimensions i.e rates, causes, process or consequences (Kumar, 2013).

In the present era, there are many factors that have brought mobility among various strata of society, like the government and the non-government institutional programs and schemes, constitutional safeguards, education, new technology, agricultural development and other schemes specially meant for the weaker section of the society (Kumar, 2013).

Sanskritization and Modernisation have affected the lives of the Korkus in many ways. As intergenerational mobility marks changes in the occupation from one generation to another that is from father occupation to son occupation (Husain, 2008). There are many other institutions that affect the mobility of tribal education, livelihood, family and marriage system, prestige and power, migration

According to the researcher, There are two types of mobility among Korkus i.e. Educational and Occupational. One is connected to the vertical social mobility and the other is related to the horizontal social mobility. Mobility in the education and the occupation of the korkus have been observed. Before Korkus used to be a part of the forest and the hilly areas and they use to do zoom irrigations, but after the intervention of Britishers in the forest area they started shifting from the forest area to the nearby villages. The zoom cultivation is then shifted to the new cropping and agricultural pattern adopted by the Hindu society living nearby them. The process of shifting cultivation to the other occupation such as growing the rabi and kharif crop in the farmland, working as the wage and the farm labour under the other community people. The occupations of the Korkus are now shifted to private and government sector jobs. Mobility among the Korkus can also be season due to the seasonal migration of the Korkus to the nearby cities and town for cutting of grains or the wage and farm labour work. One can also notice the effect of occupation mobility as it facilitates for the member of the family in terms of education and a better job (Kranthikumar & Kalyankumar, 2017). Based on this we can say that the occupation of the Korkus has changed in the form of horizontal social mobility. It says that the occupation of the individual or the group changes but the status remain the same. The economic condition of Korkus is still weak. They are still depending on the big contractors or the farmers those who can hire them for their daily wages

Education is one of the ways to achieve better social position in society. Education influences upward movement in vertical social mobility, Education is seen as a social escalator by functional structural thinkers. Education not only provides knowledge to the people but also provides them the ability to achieve higher position in the society (Nazimuddin, 2015). Formal and In-formal education plays a very important role in the society as better educated people can gain higher social status and position in society (as quoted in (Paramitha, Supriyadi, & Zuber, 2018)).

Education plays a very important role among the Korkus. As mentioned in the census of India 1981 there were all-together only 3% literate Korkus. They have achieved a literacy rate of only 6.45% as recorded by the 1981 census of India, whereas the literacy per cent has been increased to 74.04% in 2011 Census of India. The Korkus are now mobile and are moving out from the villages to the nearby cities and town for higher education and they even understand the importance of education. The literacy percentage of Korkus in Madhya Pradesh has also increased; the enrolment of the children in the primary school has also increased after the implementation of the rules as free and compulsory education to the children in the early childhood.

Living standard and the lifestyle of the Korkus have also changed they are now more mobile. Modernization, sanskritization and Westernization are some of the factors through which social mobility is attained among the Korkus. They have adopted the customs, rituals and traditions of the Hindu caste living nearby their town. Family and marriage are also affected due to the social mobility of the tribals. The joint family is changing to nuclear family as people are migrating to the nearby cities and town in search of their livelihood sources. The food habits of the Korkus have now shifted from the consumption of traditional *koda kutki* crop to wheat, rice and other cereals. The attire of the Korkus have changed to jean and t-shirts for male and sarees and lehngas chunni for females (Fuchs, 1988).

## 6. Conclusions

Korkus have undergone progressive changes for the enhancement of their own status. The individuals or the families have changed their occupation, lifestyle, food habits etc. in orienting the upper caste Hindu in order to improve their standard. They are now living in houses, huts, they are now using the policies and program run for them, transportation facilities has reached until them. They have now started consuming goods available in the weekly market and are enjoying the modern way of life. However, they are few in numbers

Burt until Largely Korku peoples those who are living a hard life. They are neither sensitized nor modernized nor are they westernized. They are still living a poor life with meagre resources. Still, changes are been noticed in them. These changes cannot be explained by one theoretical model. In this regards the researcher and academician should look in the issues of the tribe in terms of social mobility.

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