

## The Festivals of Tokre Koli Tribe

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### Abstract

There are various Adivasi tribes in Maharashtra. Every tribe celebrates different festivals. Every festival has different method of celebration. The main purpose of celebrating the festivals is to believe and fear about the power of Nature. Tokre Koli tribe worships different deities at different festivals. They worship rain, river, mountain, valleys, birds and animals at the occasion of festivals. *Aakhji/Aakhaji* (Akshay Tritiya), *Kavadi Bhaji*, *Nagpanchmi*, *Pola*, *Pitar Amavasya*, *Makar Sankrant* and *Waghbaras* are their main festivals.

**KEYWORDS:** Adivasi, Tribe, Tokre Koli, Festival, Deity

#### 1. Introduction:

The Adivasi Tribes in Maharashtra are fond of Festivals. Their happiness has known no bounds. The 'Tokre Koli' tribes also are fond of Festivals. These tribes have few special festivals of their own. They, being in contact with the surrounding world, have social, cultural and educational bonds with the Hindu civilization. Their festivals have bedrock in Hindu civilization. Like other society, the Tokre Koli Tribe celebrates festivals in the huge form. Still, this tribe celebrates Festivals on their own tradition. In these festivals, they cook sweet dishes, chickens, male goat mutton with liquor drink. Without drink, they cannot conclude their festivals.

The Tokre Koli Tribes have the major festivals like *Diwali*, *Holi/Shimga*. Besides this, *Aakhji/Aakhaji* (Akshay Tritiya), *Kavadi Bhaji*, *Nagpanchmi*, *Pola*, *Pitar Amavasya* and *Makar Sankrant* are their festivals.

#### 2. Diwali:

The Festival of *Diwali* has special importance in the life of Tokre Koli tribe. This festival is celebrated in the last Marathi month of *Ashwin*. On this day, Tokre Koli pay bestow to their deity with cucumber, *Chavli* (cow pea), pumpkin etc. The major male members of the family do not eat till they give vegetables to their deity. The Tribes men-women's on this occasion dance upon the gaiety of *Tarpa* and Every house in the hamlet or mansion or villages they ask for *Fag*.

On the occasion of *Diwali*, all Tribes enlighten their hamlet, mansion, villages and houses. All different age group, rich and poor tribe peoples celebrate this festival with unity. Everywhere they place lamps in houses, cottages and cattle-enclosures, dumps. The second day the of festivals they called '*Kar*'. The tribe peoples celebrate '*Kar*'. Male goat mutton, Chicken, Fish with liquor drink are the special dishes of the day. They offer 'Naivedhya' and coconut to their deity.

#### 3. Vasubaras /Gay Diwali:

The Adivasi Tokre Koli Tribe is in related with cattle. Hence, they worship cattle. On the day of *Vasubaras*, they worship cow and its calf. This is called

'*Vasubaras*' or '*Gay-Gorani Baras*'. Affection towards Cattle is explained on this occasion.

#### 4. **Sankrant:**

The Adivasi Tokre Koli Tribe celebrates this Festival on 14<sup>th</sup> January of every year. They worship deities on this day. The Tribesmen give 'Til-gul' to their neighbours, friends and relatives by saying '*Til-Gul ghya, god god bola*'. They meet with each other on this day.

#### 5. **Shimga [Holi]:**

The Festival of *Holi* or *Shimga* is celebrated in the Marathi month of *Falgun*. The Tokre Koli calls this festival as *Shimga*. They make Holi from the wood and dung cakes brought from the Jungle.

They put a big heightened bamboo in the deep of the soil and it is surrounded with wood and dung cake. Before rowing, they make marching by worshipping this bamboo in the village. They dance with the rhythm of *Dhol*, *Dholki* and *Tarpa*. On the peak of bamboo, they offer floral circle [*fulanchi mal*], *Naivedhya*, *Sakhrecha Har*, lemon tied in red cloth. The Tribes *Padakhod* or *Bhagat* by doing adore and enlightens the *Holi*. Tokre Koli people throw wood and coconut in the *Holi*. They also offer *Kairy* [raw mango] in the *Holi*. *Padakhod* or *Bhagat* traditionally looks after the *Holi* and *gher* dances around the *Holi*.

The second day of *Holi* they worship *kul* deity. The tribes men and women jointly worship at the place of *Holi*. Especially gents wear the *Sarees* of women. They spray colored water and paint on each others. They dance with rhythm of *Dolki* with liquor and wanders through out the hamlet or village. They ask *Fag* every family in village. They take the liquor from collected money. The nature of *Fag* is in the form of grain and money.

In Tokre Koli Tribe fire, river, rain, lightening, tree, peak, steep, cattle, birds etc. are worshipped. Fire worshipping means *Holi* worship is also one of them.

The winter is on the way of leaving. Similarly the agricultural activities are in the control. Therefore, *Salgadi*, labour and farmer are happy due to availability of grains in their houses. The Marathi month of *Falgun* on the day of *Poirnima* twinkling of stars a call to the tribes. Before 5-6 day of *Holi* Tokre Koli tribes peoples singing song and dancing in moon and twinkling of stars at night.

#### 6. **Kavli/Kavdi bhaji:**

The Tokre Koli Tribe worships tree traditionally. Worshipping vegetables is also one of them. This festival is celebrated in the last week of June or the last week first week of July. The different vegetables like *Tandal*, *Chival [Ghol]*, *Fang*, *Tarota*, *Dandichi Fule* etc. and *Bhakri* are shown to deities as *Naivedhya*. After showing *Naivedhya* (offering), they eat these vegetables.

#### 7. **Akhaji / Aakhaji [Akshay Tritiya]:**

In this Tribe, *Akhaji/Aakhaji [Akshay Tritiya]* is celebrated in the Marathi month of *Vaishakh*. In the bambood *Topli*, they put soil, grain, *nagli*, *varai*, *kulith*,

*genhu* etc. After its growth, they worship it as *Dhanya*. These sprout are called as 'Dhanya'. Tribal women and girls fix *Dhanya* (Sprout) in their hairs. The girls sing the following song –

“*Sat dinna dhanya, dhanya mana bahinisna dokale*  
*Bhau kasa mhane, unhi mani bahin Akhaji Khelale,*  
*Bhaujayi kashi mhane, uni hai sadi levale,*  
*may kashi mhane, Uni mani por Aaram devale,*  
*Bap kasa mhane, uni mani lek sanjarya khavale.”*

They fill water in soiled container. Upon it, they put *lota*, *danger*, *watermelon* and *Naivedhya* and worship everything.

Before *Aakhji*, they workship *Gourai*.

#### 8. **Padva:**

This festival is celebrated in the Marathi month of *Chaitra*. In the jungle, there are new born plants in this month. They raise *Gudi* and worship it. They uses bamoo, leaves of neem tree, new cloth and *Tambya* for the pupose of *Gudi*

#### 9. **Pitar Amavasya:**

The Adivasi Tokre Koli Tribe celebrates *Pitar Amavasya* or *Pitar Pata* or *Pitru Pandharwada*. In remembrance of the forefathers, they offer cooked food to the crows. They put different cooked food on different Banyan or *Palas* or Banana's leaves. They keep these leaves on the roof of the houses. They think that if the crows eat this food, it will satisfy the desire of the forefathers.

#### 10. **Pola:**

*Pola* is the festival that comes in the Marathi month of *Shravan*. On the occasion, they decorate Oxen. They take the Oxen on the verge of the village. The sweet *Polies* fed to the Oxen and they are worshiped.

#### 11. **Nagpanchami:**

The Adivasi Tokre Koli Tribe celebrates the festival of *Nagpanchami* on the huge level. This festival is celebrated in the Marathi month of *Shravan*. Actually, few philosophers consider the Koli Tribe being of *Nagvanshiya*. On this occasion, they worship the snake [*Nag*]. From this, affection of *Nag* deity is exposed. On the occasion this festival women and girls worship the 'Varul' (ant heap). They put offering (*Naivedya*) milk, *Lahya* and takes the round around the ant heap.

On the day of *Nagpanchmi*, *Chul*(stove) remains closed. They does not put griddle on the *Chul*(stove). They did not comb. From all above activities it is said that there is no any injury to the Snake. This is tradition of the Tokre Koli tribes. Simultaneously women and girls play swing with singing a song.

#### 12. **Navratra:**

*Navratra* is celebrated in the Marathi month of *Ashwin*. It is the festival of rejoicing. The Tokre Koli Tribe put deities *ghat*. They put flame of oil or *ghee* for nine days in front of goddesses like *Bhavani*, *Kansari*, *Himani*, *Saptshrungi*, *Durgadevi*, *Mariai*, *Iyekondai*, *Pedkai* etc. On the last day, they make bamboos square trap. It is attached with fried *sanjori*. It is distributed thereafter as blessing. At night, they dance on the rhythm of song in front of goddess.

They withdraw *Ghat* with the auspicious hands of *Bhagat*. Deity inters throughout body of *Bhagat*. At that time, *Danke's* [follower] play *Danka* a musical instrument and sing *Vahi* folk songs.

### 13. Dasara:

This is the important festival in the *Navratra* Festival. They celebrate *Dasara* on the first tenth day Marathi month of *Ashwin*. They offer the leaf of *Apta* as gold to others. The statue of Ravan is fired on this day. They also cross the border of village on this day. It is called *Simollanghan*. Tokre Koli tribe people adore tree of Shami. They gather different grains together. The accumulated grain is called *Bakola*. It is prepared by *Bhagat* with enchantment. *Bokola* is thrown towards all the sides of borders of the village. It is said that due to the process of *Gavbhandhani* [throwing of enchanted grain towards the borders of the village], the village will be rescued from enchantment or black art. On the day of *Dasara*, at the main entrance of the village, the head of a male buffalo is cut by the head of the Tokre Koli i.e. *Padakhod* or *Bhagat* within a stroke of sword.

### 14. Bohada / Bhavada:

*Bohada / Bhavada* is the festival of village deity. All Koli Tribes celebrates this festival.

The Adivasi Tokre Koli Tribe celebrates *Bohada*, on the grand level. They call this festival as '*Bhavada*'. In it, different deities are commemorated and dance is made with their mask. The tribe invoke and worship deity. They disguise *Khandoba*, *Virbhadra*, *Kaloba*, *Bhairoba*, *Vetal*, *Bhairavnath*, *Ganpati*, *Ravan* etc. According to Dr. Govind Gare, "During ancient times there was a tradition that successful hunter was gifted with dress of tiger's skin or local deities were danced in the village."<sup>1</sup> From such types of rituals *Bohada* was originated.

In this festival with these disguises land lord, money lenders, shopkeepers, political leaders, Brahmins, school teachers are disguised and danced. In this celebration mythological masks of *Narad*, *Walya Koli*, *Ram-Ravan* war, story of *Shravan bal*, *Ganesh aaradhan* etc are danced. In this programme 20 to 30 artists participate. But, in this only male artists take part. This programme performed in the light of kerosene lantern or kerosene torch. At First, they pay obeisance and masks were danced serially. This programme came from ancient traditions and known as '*lalit*'. Saint Tukaram in his *Abhang* (poem) mentioned – '*Jalit zali kaya, hech lalit pandhariraya*'.

### 15. Waghbaras:

Cows, Oxen, Goats, Buffalo etc. are the assets of Tokre Koli. They protect these cattle from wild animals. Hence, they worship few wild animals like their deities to rescue their pet animals. One of its parts means the worship of *Waghdeva*.

The image of Wagh is carved on the stone or wood. This image is established at the border of the village or in the jungle by the Bhagat. The *Neivedhya* is served of chicken or male goat. In the month of Marathi *Kartik Poornima*, they worship Waghdevta. This is called Waghbaras.

Few local Festivals also are celebrated in this Tribe.

The Adivasi Tokre Koli Tribe believes in supernatural. Mr. and Mrs. Dr. Devgaonkar say that "Adivasi believes in the supernatural power. They felt politeness in front of incomprehensible natural miracles. From this worship of nature was originated. They worship the Sun, the Moon, the Stars, the Sky, the Earth, rain, fire, water, air etc. which are useful and some times which take devastating shapes, on auspicious occasions and festivals. There are festivals on which trust on ancestors and emotions of present times are invoked and exhibited. These festivals gives us glimpse of novel customs in dense forest."<sup>2</sup> In their daily life, because of these celebrations, they forget sorrows, poverty and hard work for some time and enjoy liquor, song and dance. These are salient features of festivals. From these celebrations they express fear and trust about nature, animals, birds, air, fire, rivers, clouds, sky, water, lightening, mountains, valleys, etc. and the tribe welcome tomorrow with new enthusiasm.

## 16. Conclusion:

1. The Tokre Koli Tribe culture is their life only. Their festivals, worship of deity etc. takes the shape to their life style.
2. They do not make death anniversary (*Shradda*). But in the remembrance of the forefathers, they celebrate *Pitar Amavasya* by giving fried food to the crows.
3. The Tribesmen do not eat fresh vegetables in the rainy season without offering *Naivedya* to god.
4. They celebrate *Diwali, Vasubaras, Gay Diwali, Sankrant, Holi / Shimga, Kavli Bhaji, Akhji, Padva, Pitar Amavasya, Pola, Nagpanchami, Navratra, Dasara, Bohda / Bhavada, Waghbaras* etc. They forget their hard work, poverty and sadness by celebrating nights with dances, singing songs and drink. This is main feature of festivals of Tokre Koli. They also pay believes to Nature, Animals, birds, air, fire, river, cloud, sky, water, lightening, mountain, valleys and dale etc.

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