

## RESEARCH MATERIAL

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# Thirty Korku Dancing Songs

### Abstract

Ethnically and linguistically the Korku belong to the Munda, although they live far away from any other Munda group. Some of the Korku groups have been strongly influenced by their Hindu environment while others have been able to preserve their traditional customs, especially their language. One of these groups is the Potharia Korku who live on the southern side of the Vindhya Mountains in central India. The thirty songs introduced here were collected in the late 1970s among this Korku group. They are of linguistic interest because their language is largely uninfluenced by other Indian languages. Furthermore, the songs are of ethnographic interest since they illustrate various aspects of village life and of human relationships. They are about children's games, about the longing of lovers for each other and the anxieties of brides, about village customs and the villagers' relations with members of other castes and with wandering mendicant saints.

**Keywords:** Korku—Munda—marriage customs—brother-sister relations—Vindhya Mountains—sadhu

**T**HE KORKU TRIBE, spread over the hills and valleys of the Vindhya Range in the southern region of central India (Madhya Pradesh) and Maharashtra, is nearly 200,000 strong. On linguistic and other grounds, this tribe has generally been classified as belonging to the westernmost branch of the Munda ethnic group, which probably immigrated from southern China.

The Korkus are sturdy, dark-skinned, primitive cultivators. In the past they practiced shifting cultivation, burning down the jungle and sowing their seeds into fertile ashes with digging sticks. They supplemented this form of cultivation by hunting and collecting jungle produce. Today they are forced by the government to cultivate their fields with ploughs, but not as competently as the Hindu cultivating castes.

The Korkus live in villages, the layout of which differs strikingly from the irregular village settlements of other aboriginal tribes in the region. Every Korku hamlet consists of at least two parallel rows that face each other over a wide courtyard. The houses are not separated in a courtyard or garden but are attached to each other in a closed row; thus, there is space for a courtyard or garden only at the back of the hutments.

The whole tribe is divided into several subgroups. Among these, the Deshi or Mowashi Korkus are staunch converts to Hindu beliefs and ways of life, while the Potharia Korkus have retained their tribal culture. The latter still speak their aboriginal Munda language, with some mixtures from the local dialects of Hindi or Marathi. They still practice their tribal religion and cling to their old traditions. The Deshi or Mowashi Korkus, in contrast, aspire to the rank of an orthodox and respected Hindu caste, although the higher Hindu castes are reluctant to grant them the privilege. The Deshi Korkus refuse to dine or marry with the Potharia Korkus whom they consider socially inferior.

The Potharia Korkus, like the other Munda tribes, are organized into totemistic, patrilineal, and strictly exogamous clans. Nowadays, most of their totems bear the names of plants and trees, while animal totems are rare.

These names are in accordance with their mainly agricultural manner of earning their livelihood.

The tribal Korkus have a religion of their own, though their pantheon is now strongly infiltrated by local Hindu gods. They worship many deities and nature spirits, and feel surrounded by many semi-gods and specters that they believe benefit or threaten them. They faithfully venerate their ancestors and perform in their honor at regular intervals a unique elaborate feast, which culminates in the erection of a carved wooden memorial pillar or a large stone slab at a spot outside the village. Other features of their religion include numerous seasonal feasts, fertility cults, the appeasement of malignant spirits through frequent sacrifices, and the performance of magic and divination. Lingering in the background is the belief in a benevolent but distant, all-powerful high-god to whom the Korkus offer no prayers or sacrifices.

The Deshi Korkus have succumbed largely to Hindu influence; as a consequence, they lead dreary and much inhibited lives as members of a low Hindu caste, observing strictly the many rigorous and restrictive rules prevalent among the rural Hindus that mandate the avoidance of certain foods and social relations. The Potharia Korkus, on the other hand, enjoy more freedom: they eat what nature offers them, enjoy singing and dancing with each other, and may even drink a glass of liquor. Their daughters marry when they are mature, and they are asked for their consent when their bridegroom is chosen. Still living in the comparative isolation of the rugged Vindhya Mountains, they lead a life close to nature, but they are often deprived of modern amenities that even Deshi Korkus regard as their due.

The Korku dancing songs presented below were collected about twenty years ago by an Indian Catholic priest working as a missionary at Karpur, about thirty kilometers southeast of Khandwa, the biggest town in the district of East Nimar in Madhya Pradesh. Around Karpur there exist a number of Potharia Korku villages in which the traditional dancing songs were still sung at dances on feast days and in the summer nights. These songs are still in a fairly pure Korku dialect, though in their daily conversations these Korkus nowadays mix many Hindi and Marathi words into their language. Fr. Henry Naria (SVD), the collector of the songs, had the Korku songs translated by Korkus into Hindi and their meaning explained whenever possible. Fr. Naria deserves the gratitude of the linguists who make the study of the Munda languages their special subject. Among the Munda languages, Korku takes a special position because it is the westernmost of all the Munda languages, and because it lost contact with the other Munda languages after other tribals speaking a Dravidian dialect, such as the Gonds, pushed themselves between the Korkus and the other Munda tribes.

## A NOTE ABOUT TRANSCRIPTION

In the text some diacritical signs had to be used. A “~” over a vowel or *n* indicates that the vowel is nasalized. A dot below *d* or *t* is pronounced as a hard cerebral consonant. A dot below an *r* turns the consonant *r* into a soft cerebral *r*; followed by an *h*. The bar “-” above a vowel indicates that the vowel is long. Since the vowels *e* and *o* are always long, the diacritical sign for them is omitted. A “˘” above a vowel indicates that the vowel is short.

## SONG ONE: THE KOEL

During the whole month of Srawan, in which the local monsoon is usually strongest, Korku boys and girls, imitating the Hindu village youths, use to swing each other in cloth hammocks or on square wooden platforms and to sing songs in a mildly teasing way. At the end of the month, they take their hammocks and platforms to a nearby river and immerse them there. On the return the girls sing to the boys the following song:

*Chorus:*    Īrāḥ mā,      ĩrāge ḍo,      koyal,    ĩrāḥ mā ḍo!  
                  *Come back, come back, koel, come back!*  
                  Īrāḥ mā,      ĩrāge ḍo,      koyal,    ĩrāḥ mā re!  
                  *Come back, come back, koel come back!*

(The chorus is repeated here and after each subsequent verse.)

- |    |                     |                       |                        |
|----|---------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|
| 1. | Ālāmā lāṅḍa         | jāgā sūnnā            | ṭhāṭen.                |
|    | <i>Our laughing</i> | <i>place listened</i> | <i>we from behind.</i> |
|    | Ālāmā māṅḍī         | jāgā sūnnā mā         | re                     |
|    | <i>Our talking</i>  | <i>place listened</i> | <i>we</i>              |
| 2. | Ālāmā teṅḅnā        | jāgā sūnnā            | ṭhāṭen.                |
|    | <i>Our standing</i> | <i>place listened</i> | <i>we from behind.</i> |
|    | Ālāmā sūbān         | jāgā sūnnā mā         | re.                    |
|    | <i>Our sitting</i>  | <i>place listened</i> | <i>we.</i>             |

## TRANSLATION

*Chorus:*    Come back, come back, koel, do come back!  
                  Come back, come back, koel, do so!

1. On our playing ground, we listened from behind.  
    On our meeting place, we listened from behind.
2. On our dwelling place, we listened from behind.  
    On our living place, we listened.

*EXPLANATION*

The koel (in Hindi) or *koval* (in Kor ku) is a common bird of northern India. It belongs to the family of cuckoos (*Eudynamys*). Its name is taken from its cry. It is popularly called the Indian nightingale. By nostalgically calling back the koel, the girls express their desire to prolong the “swinging season” in the monsoon. In this song, the verses are worded in such a manner that only one word has to be changed for each verse to expand the song. In this manner, the song can easily be prolonged for a long time with many repetitions.

The language of the song is Kor ku.

## SONG TWO: A WELL DECORATED GIRL

*Chorus:* Jhārimā jhānjhri pālī o jāven gorī gānvā gīlīān ṭēngne ḍo.  
*Jhārimā a meal in lap carrying girl village lane standing.*

(The chorus is repeated here and after each subsequent verse.)

1. Jemkā ūriven māyān koleyābā gorī gānvā gīlīān ṭēngne ḍo.  
*A belt wearing waist is seen girl village lane standing.*
2. Teṛiyā ūriven koleyābā gorī gānvā gīlīān ṭēngne ḍo.  
*Armlet wearing is seen girl village lane standing.*
3. Ṭāglī ūriven gerdān koleyābā gorī gānvā gīlīān ṭēngne ḍo.  
*Necklace wearing neck is seen girl village lane standing.*
4. Kīrī ūriven nāngā koleyābā gorī gānvā gīlīān ṭēngne ḍo.  
*Anklets wearing on feet is seen girl on village lane standing.*

*TRANSLATION*

*Chorus:* Jhārimā, with a meal in her lap, is standing in the village lane.

1. Wearing a silver belt on her waist,  
The girl is seen standing in the village lane.
2. Wearing a silver armlet,  
The girl is seen standing in the village lane.
3. Wearing a silver necklace,  
The girl is seen standing in the village lane.
4. Wearing silver anklets,  
The girl is seen standing in the village lane.

*EXPLANATION*

The song relates how a youth watches his beloved stopping for a moment in the village lane, carrying in her lap the meal that she is taking to the field of her people. Palli (*palla* in Hindi) is the blouse and petticoat piece-end of the

sari, the thin clothing that is worn over the head and shoulders. The ornaments that the singers mention are no longer the traditional Korku ornaments but those taken from the Hindus. The ornaments are of silver because in the opinion of the Korkus silver looks good on the dark skin of a Korku woman. Young girls often used to carry the noonday meal to the people working in the fields who did not go home to eat.

### SONG THREE

*Chorus:* Jijī, Münnī ɔ̄o īyā bāhenā āmā olen ɔ̄o tüven munnī olen.  
*Sister-in-law, Münnī, my sister, thou gone where munnī?*

(The chorus is repeated here and after each subsequent verse.)

1. Bāi nī olen ɔ̄o āmā paṭān ama ghāṭāḍūn ɔ̄o lāvālāṭhā.  
*Brother, your daughter is gone thou not meet throat hoarse.*
2. Āgāso, ābā, jā āmā ghāle īyā bāhenā jā pāṭā ghāle.  
*Heaven, father, thou reveal my sister trace reveal.*
3. Āmā bāhenā ɔ̄o ū koñjyi jūgo sāthon ɔ̄o Revā pāren.  
*Your sister daughter sadhu with Reva beyond.*

### TRANSLATION

*Chorus:* Sister Münnī, my sister, you are gone; where did you go?

1. Brother, your daughter is gone; did you not find her?  
My throat is hoarse!
2. Heavenly Father, reveal thou my sister's whereabouts, reveal it!
3. Your sister, my daughter, eloped with a sadhu  
On the other side of the Reva River!

### EXPLANATION

This song is a dialogue between a father and his son. The boy's sister has eloped with a Hindu mendicant. When the boy asks the father where the sister has gone, he replies that she has eloped with a sadhu beyond Reva!

Not all Hindu holy men (sadhus) are genuine. Simple Korku girls are sometimes enticed by fake sadhus to elope with them. Usually they end up in a city brothel.

### SONG FOUR: JHĀRĪMĀ'S DESTINY

*Chorus:* Jhārimā, jhāñjhāri sāmere bore māḍo!  
*Jhārimā, beautiful fruits of Bor cut!*

Jhārī, jhāñjhārī sāmere bore!  
*Jhārī, beautiful fruits of Bor!*

1. Sānikā cūrgī jā, ābā, hārūkī mājā,  
*Little blouse father, let make,*  
 Bore rīrīm jā, ābā, sene märe.  
*Bor plucking, father, I am going.*
2. Jemā sāthon ḍo, beṭī, senebā ḍo,  
*Whom with daughter, will you go,*  
 Bore rīrīm ḍo, beṭī, sene märe?  
*Bor plucking, daughter, going?*
3. Peṭelā bhāgīyā sāthon jā, ābā, senebā jā.  
*Headman's servant with, father, I shall go.*  
 Bore rīrīm jā, ābā, sene märe.  
*Bor plucking, father, I am going.*
4. Peṭelā bhāgīyā ḍo, beṭī, āñḍṛā māḍo.  
*Headman's servant, daughter, blind is.*  
 Āñḍṛā sāthon ḍo, beṭī, bākī märe!  
*Blind with, daughter, not go!*
5. Īñyā keromen jā, ābā, āñḍṛā mājā,  
*My destiny is, father, a blind,*  
 Āñḍṛā sāthon kā, ābā, sene märe.  
*Blind with one, father, I am going.*

(The chorus is first sung twice and then repeated after each verse.)

#### TRANSLATION

*Chorus:* Jhārīmā, cut the beautiful fruits of bor!

1. Let a little blouse be sewn, father,  
 For I shall go plucking bor fruits.
2. With whom shall you go, daughter, plucking bor fruits?  
 With whom are you going?
3. With the headman's servant shall I go, father,  
 With him I am going, father, plucking bor fruits.
4. But the headman's servant is blind, daughter.  
 Do not go with a blind man!
5. If it is my fate, father, to go with a blind man,  
 I shall go with a blind man, father.

#### EXPLANATION

The bor tree—in Korku bore—(*Zyziphus jujuba*) is a forest tree. Its fruits are

much relished by the Korkus, as also by other Indians. A *bor* tree is very fruitful and produces an abundance of small, yellowish, plum-like fruits. At the time of the fruits ripening, in April or May, boys and girls make the plucking of the fruits a feast at which of course lovers too find an opportunity to meet each other and to flirt.

The song refers to such a case. It proves also that, at least among the Potharia Korkus, boys and girls were fairly free to choose their marriage partners. The song refers also to a strange belief of the Korkus in the inevitability of their destiny. They often submit passively to adverse situations that they could easily escape with some effort. But they prefer to suffer passively, even for long periods of time.

#### SONG FIVE: A LIKELY FLOWER

*Chorus:* Järmelī, Järmelī, Järmelī, Järmelī phūl ɖo, Järmelī kā phūl re!  
*Järmelī, Järmelī, Järmelī, Järmelī flower, Järmelī is the flower!*

(The chorus is repeated and sung after each subsequent verse.)

- |                             |                          |                           |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. Ṭūnīmā doṅgrān ɖo        | Järmelī phūl ɖo,         | Järmelī kā phūl re?       |
| <i>Which jungle</i>         | <i>Järmelī flower,</i>   | <i>Järmelī flower is?</i> |
| 2. Ajom māñḍī jā, ɖāī,      | Tāvīnī gherān jā         | Järmelī kā phūl re!       |
| <i>Heard word brother,</i>  | <i>Tapti Valley</i>      | <i>Järmelī flower is!</i> |
| 3. Ṭūnīmā doṅgrān ɖo        | Järmelī phūl ɖo,         | Järmelī kā phūl re?       |
| <i>Which jungle</i>         | <i>Järmelī flower,</i>   | <i>Järmelī flower is?</i> |
| 4. Ajom māñḍī jā, ɖāī,      | Gāṅgūlā gherān jā        | Järmelī kā phūl!          |
| <i>Heard word, brother,</i> | <i>Gāṅgūlā Valley in</i> | <i>Järmelī flower is!</i> |

#### TRANSLATION

*Chorus:* Järmelī, Järmelī, Järmelī, Järmelī is the flower.  
 Järmelī is the flower.

1. In which jungle is Järmelī the flower, Järmelī the flower?
2. Rumor relates that in the Tapti Valley Järmelī is the flower.
3. In which jungle is Järmelī the flower, Järmelī the flower?
4. In the Gāṅgūlā Valley is Järmelī the flower. Järmelī the flower!

#### EXPLANATION

There are two explanations for this song. The first explanation is that a Korku youth meets at a dance a girl who strikes his fancy. And he tries to find out where her home is. He is first informed that her home village is in the Tapti river valley, and more exactly, in the Gangula Valley, leading into the Tapti Valley.

The other explanation is that some half-professional Korku middle-men who arrange marriages have found the name of a nubile girl, Jārmelī, and are now enquiring where exactly she is living. Usually they do not use her proper name in their negotiations, but a fancy-name, the name of a flower or some other name. The relatives of the girl understand of course perfectly well what the middle-men want, and reply to their questions accordingly, invitingly, or evasively.

## SONG SIX: A TEASING SONG

*Chorus:* Khāṭhā arāḥ sīrkī,      bāvān,      khāṭhā ārāḥ sīrkī, ḍo!  
*Bitter vegetables,      wife's sister,      bitter vegetables pluck!*

(The chorus is repeated here and after every subsequent verse.)

1. Āmānī sāñcīn khāmbā, bāvān,      āmā ḍhoṭā      lāmbā, bāvān.  
*Your back pillar, wife's sister,      thy husband tall, wife's sister.*
2. Āmānī sāñcīn pārsā, bāvān,      āmā ḍhoṭā      ārsā, bāvān.  
*Your back palas, wife's sister,      thy husband lazy, wife's sister.*
3. Āmānī sāñcīn ṭīmrū bāvān, āmā ḍhoṭā sīmrū, bāvān.  
*Your back Tendu, wife's sister, thy husband's nose running, wife's sister.*

## TRANSLATION

*Chorus:* Pluck bitter vegetables, wife's sister, pluck bitter vegetables!

1. The pillar in the back of your house, wife's sister,  
 Is as tall as your husband!
2. There is a *palas* tree at the back of your house, wife's sister.  
 But your husband is a lazy chap!
3. There is an ebony tree at the back of your house, wife's sister,  
 But your husband's nose is ever-running!

## EXPLANATION

The Korkus know a certain plant of which the leaves are bitter. The Korkus use these leaves in their food as a condiment. It gives them a better appetite for their rather insipid meals.

This song, too, is rather negative and unsavory and may cause some anger or hurt. Such teasing songs and remarks are more frequent among persons who stand in a so-called "joking relationship"; that is, persons who are prospective marriage partners, as a man is with his wife's younger sister (*bāvān*).

In the song *khāmbā* rhymes with *lāmbā*, *pārsā* with *ārsā*, and *ṭīmrū* with *sīmrū*; this must have inspired the choice of words. Jokes of such relatives

may be coarse, but they are not malicious.

The *pārsā* tree is called *palas* (*Erythrina suberosa*) in Hindi. The *ṭimrū* tree is called *ṭeṇḍū* in Hindi, and coromandel ebony (*Diospyros tomentosa*) in English.

#### SONG SEVEN

*Chorus:* Cāṅkī sīdā jāṭībīn ḍo īyā āyom selā āçāren gāṭhīṭhī!  
A cāṅkī food grind, my mother, in a piece of towel tie it!

(The chorus is repeated here and after each subsequent verse.)

1. Ām ṭūgāñ senebā jā, īyā kūbērā, ām ṭūgāñ sene?  
You where shall you go, my boy, you where going?  
Īṅgy seneba, senebā ḍo, īyā āyom, jā Sāvārigeṛā Cāmēlikēn ḍo ḍo.  
I will go, my mother, to Savarigadh, to Cameli.
2. Ḍījā sāthon āmā jūrī bānējā, īyā kūñverā, ḍījā ūrā hāvēlī re.  
Her with your union not, my boy, her house is a palace.  
Ama uragen girabo kojyi sobha ja, īyā kūñverā, dijaten kā jivan re!  
Our house is for poor, a poor daughter pretty, my boy, her own this  
give up life!

#### TRANSLATION

*Chorus:* Grind one cāṅkī of grain, my mother,  
And tie it in a piece of cloth!

1. Where are you going, my son, where are you going?  
I am going, I am going, my mother, to Savarigadh, to Cameli!
2. Not our type of people, my son, she lives in a palace!  
Our house is poor. A rich girl, my son, let her live in her house!

#### EXPLANATION

The chorus verse suggests that the boy's mother is very poor. She buys her grain in a cheap grain shop, grinds it herself to make flour, which she carries in a piece of her sari.

But she is a wise mother and admonishes her son that it would not be wise to bring a wealthy girl into their poor house where she would not feel comfortable. Let him marry a poor girl.

#### SONG EIGHT

*Chorus:* Ālē rāṅā bālkūñvār tānā rāgo!  
Our prince unmarried melody sing!

Ālē rāṇā bālkūñvārā gīdo re!  
*Our prince unmarried sing!*

1. Ālē rāṇākhen pūlūm jāpāy sāgemā jā!  
*Our prince a fair wife bring!*  
 Ālē rāṇā bālkūñvārā gīdo re!  
*Our prince unmarried sing!*  
 Pūlūm jāpāy bākī jojrā bārākū nejār ghaiyūbā jā.  
*A fair wife not take, outsiders sight display.*  
 Ālē rāṇā bālkūñvārā gīdo re!  
*Our prince unmarried sing!*
2. Ālē rāṇākhen kende jāpāy sāgemā jā  
*To our prince a black woman bring!*  
 Ālē rāṇā bālkūñvārā gīdo re!  
*Our prince unmarried sing!*  
 Kende jāpāy bākī jojrā lūṭī khījā dūgūbā jā?  
*Black woman not take, iron plate what will appear?*  
 Ālē rāṇā bālkūñvārā gīdo re!  
*Our prince unmarried sing!*
3. Ālē rāṇākhen sāñvlā jāpāy sāgemā jā!  
*To our prince a darkish woman bring!*  
 Ālē rāṇā bālkūñvārā gīdo re!  
*Our prince unmarried sing!*  
 Sāñvlā jāpāy bākī jojrā. Cāvlā gogaḍ senebā jā.  
*A darkish woman not take. Beans to pluck she will go.*  
 Ālē rāṇā bālkūñvārā gīdo re!  
*Our prince unmarried sing!*

TRANSLATION

*Chorus:* Sing a tune about our virgin prince!  
 Sing about our virgin prince!

1. Is our prince to take a fair woman?  
 Sing about our virgin prince!  
 Do not take a fair woman. Outsiders might want to make eyes at her.  
 Sing about our virgin boy!
2. Is our prince to take a black woman?  
 Sing about our virgin prince!  
 Do not take a black woman, looking like a sooty plate!  
 Sing about our virgin boy!
3. Is our prince to take a darkish woman?  
 Sing about our virgin prince!

Do not take a darkish woman. She will go to pluck beans.  
Sing about our virgin prince!

*EXPLANATION*

This is probably a song recited and danced for fun by women during weddings. A Korku bridegroom is called and treated like a prince at his wedding, and his bride like a princess. But only as long as the wedding lasts. For the Korkus do not acknowledge any higher authority than a village headman. Their political organization was originally very democratic.

The word *cāvlā* signifies a kind of beans or pulse (*Doliches sinensis*). It was inserted in the song because it rhymes with *sāñvlā*.

SONG NINE

*Chorus:* Selārī ɖo, selārī, sāñdī ɖāromēn, bāvān, selārī?  
*Feeling elated, elated back veranda, wife's sister, elated?*

(The chorus is repeated here and after each subsequent verse.)

1. Cojā lobhon ɖo āmkhēn ĩkhēmī ɖo, sāñdī ɖāromēn, bāvān, selārī?  
*What gain you were given, on back veranda, wife's sister, so elated?*  
Gūṛā lobhon ɖo āmkhēn ĩkhēmī ɖo sāñdī ɖāromēn, bāvān, selārī!  
*Sugar's gain you were given, on back veranda, wife's sister, so elated!*
2. Cojā lobhon ɖo āmkhēn ĩkhēmī ɖo, sāñdī ɖāromēn, bāvān, selārī?  
*What gain you were given on back veranda, wife's sister, so elated?*  
Gonom lobhon ɖo āmkhēn ĩkhēmī ɖo, sāñdī ɖāromēn, bāvān, selārī!  
*Bride-price you were given on back veranda, wife's sister, so elated!*
3. Cojā lobhon ɖo āmkhēn ĩkhēmī ɖo, sāñdī ɖāromēn, bāvān, selārī?  
*What gain you were given on back veranda, wife's sister, so elated?*  
Mūñɖo lobhon ɖo āmkhēn ĩkhēmī ɖo, sāñdī ɖāromēn, bāvān, selārī!  
*A bullock you were given on back veranda, wife's sister, so elated!*

*TRANSLATION*

*Chorus:* Feeling elated, feeling elated, on the back veranda,  
wife's sister, elated!

1. What gain had you been given on the back veranda, wife's sister,  
to make you feel so elated?  
The gift of sugar makes you feel elated on the back veranda,  
wife's sister!
2. What gain had you been given on the back veranda, wife's sister,  
to make you feel so elated?  
The gift of the bride-price makes you feel elated on the back veranda,

- wife's sister!
3. What gain had you been given on the back veranda, wife's sister,  
to make you feel so elated?  
The gift of the bullock makes you feel elated on the back veranda,  
wife's sister!

*EXPLANATION*

This wedding song of a Korku woman refers to the presents that the bridegroom's family has to hand over to the bride's family. *Bāvān*, who is addressed in the song, is the bride's elder sister, the representative of the bride's family. The bridegroom's family has to provide the provisions for the wedding dinner: sugar, grain, vegetables, etc. But the bride's family is also expected to pay the bride-price, which is always a considerable drain for a Korku family's resources. In addition to the bride-price, Korku custom demands the gift of a *mūñḍo*, a bullock, to guarantee a lasting marriage. If the couple divorces, the bullock has to be returned to the bride's family.

## SONG TEN

*Chorus:* Īñī nēvlāyī ṭūñī nēvlāyī khūñūr mūñūr bā?  
*This bluffer which deceit perpetrates?*

(This chorus is repeated here and after each subsequent verse.)

- |                     |                                 |                              |
|---------------------|---------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1. Konrāḥ           | lāgā ḍāṭen olen                 | ḍībī ḍā pūrākā bān.          |
| <i>On cock crow</i> | <i>from water to fetch goes</i> | <i>but water not at all!</i> |
| 2. Konrāḥ           | lāgā jāṭī olen                  | ḍībī kolom pūrākā bān.       |
| <i>On cock crow</i> | <i>from mill grinding goes</i>  | <i>but flour not at all!</i> |
| 3. Konrāḥ           | lāgā hūñḍār olen                | ḍībī āṭā pūrākā bān!         |
| <i>On cock crow</i> | <i>from food to cook</i>        | <i>but meal not at all!</i>  |

*TRANSLATION*

*Chorus:* What deceit is this bluffer going to perpetrate?

1. When the cock crows, she goes to fetch water, but there is no water in the house!
2. When the cock crows, she goes to the mill to grind, but there is no flour!
3. When the cock crows, she goes to cook food, but there is no meal ready!

*EXPLANATION*

In general, Korku women are quite efficient in fulfilling their household

duties. In addition, they often have to help out with work in the field. But as in other communities, there are some women among the Korkus who cannot manage their household properly. This wedding song of the women makes fun of such failures.

### SONG ELEVEN

*Chorus:* Mīñyā nī cāŭkī gūrgūṭī moñgom monoĩ ðoyā ðā ðo  
*One cāŭkī fine mung bean five gourds water*

(The chorus is repeated here and after each subsequent verse.)

1. Popsā çăkhăn tīñgī khē măthri mūñyāñ roñgoyan.  
*Rotten firewood throw away, mother, mung bean got spoiled.*
2. Hărbā hūrb lūre poyārā țălkā logoñren.  
*Quickly served boy's mouth got burned.*
3. Sānīkū genere genere kațkhomā genere genere.  
*Old women scrub, scrub dirt scrub, scrub.*  
 Sānāhkū genere genere loreñj nī boṭhīyā genere.  
*Old women scrub scrub loreñj fish scrub.*

### TRANSLATION

*Chorus:* One *cāŭkī* of finely ground mung bean pulse and five gourds  
of water.

1. Rotten firewood throw away, mother,  
The dish of pulse got spoiled.
2. It was served too quickly,  
The boy's mouth got burned!
3. Old women scrub, scrub off the dirt, scrub.  
Old women scrub, scrub the *loreñj* fish, scrub.

### EXPLANATION

The present song, composed in the Korku language, presents three different and logically disconnected fruits of village wisdom. The first proverb states that an ill-planned action leads to failure. Without a proper fire, not even the best prepared grain can be boiled! And the second proverb states that haste leads to failure: too hot a dish of pulse burns the mouth! And the third proverb states that old women are good only for scrubbing dirt and for cleaning fish.

A *cāŭkī* is an iron container for measuring grain; it holds approximately five liters of grain. *Moñgom* (*mungo* in Hindi) is a pulse much relished by

the Korkus. In the past, when the territory of the Korkus still had rivers and streams teeming with fish, the Korkus knew all these fish by name. One of them was called *loreñj*, or *maliya* in Hindi.

## SONG TWELVE

*Chorus:* Sīpnāgāh sākōm ke keramelī ḍo jhoṛiyaṅkū ḍo ṭiyageba  
*Teak leaves are tender. Birds shall break them off.*  
 Jhoṛiyaṅkū ḍo ṭiyageba.  
*Birds will break them off.*

1. Nīlā sāge kerameli peṛa sāge, ḍo kerameli!  
*Green bring weak yellow ones bring, faded ones!*  
 Ācārā reseḍe, ḍo jondra bojore jondra bojo re!  
*End of sari pierce, millet drop millet drop!*
2. Kauṅra sāge ḍo, kerameli kauṅra sāge ḍo, kerameli  
*Tender bring, tender tender ones bring, tender ones!*  
 Ācārā reseḍe ḍo, jondra bojo re, ḍo, jondra bojo re re!  
*End of sari pierce, millet drop, millet drop!*

## TRANSLATION

*Chorus:* Teak leaves become brittle, and even weaverbirds break them off.  
 Birds will break them off.

1. Bring green leaves, bring tender yellow ones, tender ones!  
 Pierce the end of the sari; drop millet, drop millet on the leaves!
2. Bring tender leaves, tender and ripe ones, tender ones!  
 Pierce the end of the sari and drop millet, drop millet on the leaves!

## EXPLANATION

If the family of the bridegroom is wealthy, its head may even distribute a small portion of grain (*joar*, a millet, for instance) to the wedding guests. This gift is being given on teak leaves. A woman fills the end of her sari with the grain and through a small hole drops the grain on each leaf.

## SONG THIRTEEN

*Chorus:* Jījī cāñdo ḍoge ḍo Cāñdniṅjī ekālī riṣenā  
*Sister-in-law, moon look Moon alone in distress*

1. Jījī, ālāmā nī gālām ḍo, jījī cārmārū khija ḍo.  
*Sister-in-law, our top-knot, sister-in-law, centiped how?*

2. Jījī, ālāmā nī koñbor ɖo,      jījī,      kăṭkhom ɖobre ɖo.  
*Sister-in-law, our body,      sister-in-law, crab how?*
3. Jījī, ālāmā nī nāñgā ɖo,      jījī,      okhārā rūbnā ɖo.  
*Sister-in-law, our foot      sister-in-law, weeding plough's handle.*
4. Jījī, sāmāmā nāñgā ka soloren      jījī, khūcūb lūcūb ɖo.  
*Sister-in-law, front foot slipped,      sister-in-law, almost fallen!*

*TRANSLATION*

*Chorus:* Sister-in-law, why are you sitting alone in distress?  
 Look at the moon, dear Candni!

1. Why is our sister's top-knot like a centiped, sister?
2. Why is our sister's body like that of a crab, sister?
3. Why is our sister's leg like the leading stick of the weeding plough, sister?
4. When our sister puts her foot forward, she will slip. And is likely to fall, sister!

*EXPLANATION*

In this song, the singers refer to a girl whose name is Candni, the moon. She is apparently in deep distress. To cheer her up, they tell her that due to her distress her hair is dishevelled, that her body is getting weak and her legs thin like sticks, too weak to carry her when she wants to put her foot forward to take a step!

*Jījī* means “elder sister” or “elder sister-in-law.” Any woman of more or less the same age is addressed as “*jījī*.”

SONG FOURTEEN

*Chorus:* Kerālā mā Kerālā Kerālā bāi rāi ɖāpā phūl ɖo.  
*Kerālā in Kerālā, Kerālā woman, princess many pods!*  
 Bāi, rāi, ɖāpā phūl!  
*Woman, princess, many pods!*

1. Esā Mohān nī rāgdā kā rīgdī gogoḍ mogoḍ bāi ɖo.  
*Also Mohan went and stopped plucking women.*  
 Radhī      gogoḍ mogoḍ bāi.  
*Radhī      plucking women.*
2. Esā bhāgīā rāgdā kā rīgdī gogoḍ mogoḍ bāi ɖo.  
*Also servant stopped plucking women.*  
 Bhāgnī      gogoḍ mogoḍ bāi.  
*Servant's wife      plucking women.*

3. Esā peṭel rāgdā kū rīgdī gogoḍ mogogoḍ bāi ḍo.  
*Also headman stopped plucking women.*  
 Esā peṭelnī gogoḍ mogogoḍ bāi.  
*Also the headman's wife plucking women.*

## TRANSLATION

*Chorus:* Kerela, Kerela, Kerela! Women! Here are pods!  
 Women! Plenty of pods!

1. But Mohan went and stopped the women plucking pods!  
 Radhi too stopped them plucking.
2. The servant went and stopped the plucking women.  
 The servant's wife too went and stopped them plucking.
3. Also the headman went and stopped the plucking women.  
 The headman's wife, too, went and stopped the plucking women.

## EXPLANATION

*Kerēla* (*karēla* in Hindi) is a creeper (*Momordica dioica*) that produces pods of various sizes. The women cut the pods into small pieces and boil them into a rather bitter but much relished vegetable dish. Owners of the *karēla* plants naturally try to save the pods for their own meals and to stop other women from plucking their pods.

In this song too, the text is endlessly repeated; the names of the acting persons only are changed.

## SONG FIFTEEN

*Chorus:* Bīḍe, bīḍe jā, bīḍe jā, rājā jā, bīḍe jā!  
*Get up, get up, prince, get up!*  
 Cīṛiyākū rā lāken, rājā, bīḍe mā re!  
*Birds have begun, prince get up!*

(The chorus is repeated here and after each subsequent verse.)

1. Īñyā bān bīḍ ḍo, rānī, ḍo ĩñyā bānābīḍ.  
*I not get up, princess, I not.*  
 Īñyā nī jībnā, rānī, dūsmān sāge!  
*I life, princess, enemy bring.*
2. Ghālē ghālē jā ghālē jā, rājā, āmā ghāle  
*Show, show, show, prince, thou show*  
 Dī jānī jān jā, rājā, ĩñyā sāge.  
*This man, prince, I bring.*

## TRANSLATION

*Chorus:* Get up, get up, get up, prince, get up!  
The birds are already singing, prince, get up!

1. I will not get up, princess, I will not get up.  
Or an enemy is to take my life!
2. Show me, show me, prince, this man.  
I myself will take this man's life!

## EXPLANATION

This is just a loving duet between two newlyweds. He pretends that his life is in danger, and she shows that she is ready to defend him.

Newly married couples usually address each other as *rājā* and *rānī*, never by their personal names. After some years, when the couple has children, they often address each other as “father of a son (or daughter)” or as “mother of a son (or daughter),” or by another kinship term, but not as “husband” or “wife.”

## SONG SIXTEEN

*Chorus:* Hāro, hāro nīlo nīlo mīnī ḍoṅgoren ikhēmī ḍo ĩñyā āyom!  
*Green, green, blue, blue such wild jungle married me my mother!*

(The chorus is repeated here and after each subsequent verse.)

1. Sāmmā ḍoge sūmcūr ḍo, ĩñyā āyom!  
*In front see a lake, my mother!*  
Ṭāũ ḍoge kūṛāpān kā bocoyān.  
*Inside see distress fallen.*
2. Māy ḍoḍūn bā ḍoḍūn!  
*Mother unseen, father unseen!*  
Mīnī ḍoṅgoren ikhēmī ḍo ĩñyā āyom!  
*In such wild jungle married me my mother!*  
Īñyā hālēkhān dāyān!  
*My distressed old woman!*

## TRANSLATION

*Chorus:* How green, how blue is this wild country!  
How could my mother give me in marriage to live in such a  
wild place?

1. In front I look at a lake, my mother!  
But my heart has fallen into sadness.
2. My mother had not seen it, my father had not seen it!

How wild the place is into which they married me!  
My mother is now a sorry old woman!

*EXPLANATION*

As a rule, Korkus do not like to marry their daughters into villages too distant from their home village. They want to keep in contact with their married daughters, visit them, and be visited by them. In this song, a young and obviously homesick young woman complains about the wildness of the place into which her bridegroom took her.

## SONG SEVENTEEN

*Chorus:* Gānjā būbūljēn mǎnēlā sīdū būbūljēn mǎnēlā, mǎnēlā!  
*Drug-intoxicated master, spirit-intoxicated master! Master!*  
Pānthārī korān jā gīṭīj.  
*On crossroad is asleep.*

1. Bīḍe jā mǎnēlā, bīḍe jā mǎnēlā, mǎnēlā! ṭāvṭen lābā ḍo lāskār hā!  
*Get up, master, get up, master, master! Behind people are coming!*
2. Īñj bāñgon lebedī, ĩñja bāñgon lebedī, lebedī!  
*I am not rising, I am not rising, rising!*  
Īyānī sātho Mogārā rānīken kōyañj!  
*My consort, Mogārā my wife call!*
3. Boḍo, jījī, boḍo mana, jījī, ālāmā rājā ḍo kokokoṣyañj!  
*Come sister-in-law, come, mind, sister, your husband is calling!*
4. Īñj bāñgon lebedī, ĩñj bāñgon lebedī, lebedī.  
*I am not rising, I am not rising, rising!*  
Rājā nī ĩñyā gīlī nī goyā ḍo dārve.  
*Husband my good name spoiled.*

*TRANSLATION*

*Chorus:* The master, intoxicated by drugs or liquor, is lying asleep  
on the crossroad.

1. (The servant) Get up, master! Get up! People are coming from behind!
2. (The master) I will not get up! I will not get up!  
Call my wife, Mogārā, my wife!
3. (The servant) Come, sister-in-law, come, sister-in-law!  
Your husband is calling you!
4. (The wife) I will not go, I will not go!  
My husband has ruined my good name!

*EXPLANATION*

Like many tribals, some Korkus are addicted to drink and, to a lesser extent, drugs. Most of them drink liquor that they distill themselves. The Korkus distill their liquor from the flowers of the *mahua* tree (*Bassia latifolia*). These flowers are collected in abundance in the hot season, dried, and ground into flour. In time of scarcity, the Korkus have often nothing else to eat but cakes baked with *mahua* flour. The flowers may also be used to produce a popular intoxicating liquor. Drug addicts usually take drugs prepared from hemp plant, either smoked (*ganja*), chewed, or dissolved in water (*bhang*).

## SONG EIGHTEEN

*Chorus:* Bällā dāi nī hejken mā ḍo, oṛā sāin ḍo sāiken mā re!  
*Outside brother has come, come in shade to the shade!*

(The chorus is repeated here and after each subsequent verse.)

1. Āmā ćūkī ghāle ḍo, bokājāyī, āmā ćūkī ḍo ghāle mā re!  
*Thy trouble disclose, sister, thy trouble disclose!*  
 Īyañi ćūkī coj ghāle, dāi, īyā ćūkī jā Bhāgvān jāne!  
*My trouble which disclose? Brother, my trouble God knows!*
2. Dūkārī bokājāyī, āmā ćūkārī āmā rājāken ḍo iñg gojej.  
*Troubled sister, you are troubled, thy husband I shall kill!*  
 Bākī mā gogāj īyā dāi īyā rājāken jā bākī gogāj!  
*No killing, my brother, my husband is not to be killed!*
3. Āmā jā dāi āchūrā māyā, rājā māyā jā jeno mā re!  
*Thy brother's is weak love, husband's love full!*  
 Bhāgo, Bhāgvān jā, dāi, dūkī sūkī jā sūćārāy mā re!  
*Go away! Bhāgvān, brother, trouble and joy will correct!*

*TRANSLATION*

*Chorus:* My brother has come from far; he invites me into the shade of  
 a tree!

1. Tell me your trouble, sister, tell me your trouble!  
 What trouble of mine to tell you, brother?
2. Troubled sister, you are ill-treated! I shall kill your husband!  
 Do no killing, brother! Do not kill my husband!
3. My elder brother, your love is deficient! A husband's love is full!  
 Go away, brother! Bhāgvān will straighten out evil and good!

*EXPLANATION*

In this wedding song, the Korku women tell the bride that a woman has to be loyal to her husband and may even refuse to accept the assistance offered by her brother. *Dāī* means “elder brother” in Korku. He is supposed to protect his *boḳā jāyī* (younger sister) when in trouble. The reference to the shade of a tree is obvious: If a brother and sister want to discuss something in private, they would have to do it outside, not in a Korku house!

## SONG NINETEEN

*Chorus:* Āmāso āñdhāri hājebā ḍo pūjo cāñdnī re!  
*New moon darkness will come, worship the moon!*

1. Ṭūnīmā devken lāṛelāṛ ḍo mǎnēmān ḍo pūjo cāñdnī re!  
*Which god to honor? To heed? Worship the moon!*  
 Āgāso āsmān lāṛelāṛ ḍo mǎnēmān ḍo pūjo cāñdnī re!  
*Sky heaven honor and heed, worship the moon!*
2. Ṭūnīmā devken lāṛelāṛ ḍo mǎnēmān ḍo pūjo cāñdnī re!  
*Which god to honor to heed? Worship the moon!*  
 Ākhli devken lāṛelāṛ ḍo mǎnēmān ḍo pūjo cāñdnī re!  
*Village god to honor to heed. Worship the moon!*
3. Ṭūnīmā devken lāṛelāṛ ḍo mǎnēmān ḍo pūjo cāñdnī re!  
*Which deity to honor to heed? Worship the moon!*  
 Sūrājo devken lāṛelāṛ ḍo mǎnēmān ḍo pūjo cāñdnī re!  
*Sun god to honor, to heed, worship the moon!*

*TRANSLATION*

*Chorus:* The new moon will arrive, worship the moon!

1. Which deity shall I honor and heed? Worship the moon!  
 Honor the heaven and the sky and heed it! Worship the moon!
2. Which deity should I honor and heed? Worship the moon!  
 Honor and heed the village god! Worship the moon!
3. Which deity should I honor and heed? Worship the moon!  
 Honor and heed the sun god! Worship the moon!

*EXPLANATION*

Occasionally, Hindu monks and mendicants visit Korku villages on their peregrinations and pilgrimages to the source of the river Narbada. When they stay over night, they often start singing religious songs in the evening and may even give some religious instruction based on the Hindu religion. Usually the Korkus listen with rapt attention to such instructions. And during

this time, they might ask the questions and receive the answers that are mentioned in this song. Often these wandering monks are not well versed in their own religion and, therefore, only urge the Korkus to worship nature gods, such as the sun and the moon and the village god. Better educated monks may be reluctant to instruct the simple Korkus in the deeper philosophical and theological doctrines of Hinduism.

## SONG TWENTY

*Chorus:* Serā hăṭin sonā dānā kălmēñ ḍo răgo beṭi!  
*In city market golden grain lift up, dear daughter!*  
 Serā hăṭin sonā dānā kălmēñ!  
*In city market golden grain lift up!*

1. Mīyā ṭiṭen sonā dānā kălmēñ ḍo, răgo beṭi!  
*In one hand golden grain lift up, dear daughter!*  
 Mīyā ṭiṭen meḍ ḍa nī ojoy!  
*One hand eye water wipe off!*
2. Ṭiṭyāṭen kā gūlām lăphṛăn bocoyăn ḍo, răgo beṭi!  
*From today husband's sway had fallen, dear daughter!*  
 Ṭiṭyāṭen kā dhīnī lăphṛăn bocoyăn.  
*From today a wife's care has fallen.*
3. Ṭiṭyāṭen kā bā lăṛelī ṭiyāyăn ḍo, răgo beṭi!  
*From today a father's love is broken, dear daughter!*  
 Ṭiṭyāṭen kā māy lăṛelī ṭiyāyăn.  
*From today a mother's love is broken.*
4. Ṭiṭyāṭen kā dăi lăṛelī ṭiyāyăn ḍo, răgo beṭi!  
*From today an elder brother's love is broken, dear daughter!*  
 Ṭiṭyāṭen kā boko lăṛelī ṭiyāyăn.  
*From today a younger brother's love is broken.*

## TRANSLATION

*Chorus:* Lift up the golden grain in the city market, dear daughter!  
 Lift up the golden grain in the city market.

1. With one hand, lift up the golden grain, dear daughter!  
 With the other hand, wipe off your tears!
2. From today your husband's authority has fallen on you, dear daughter!  
 From today a wife's loyalty is given to him!
3. From today a father's love is broken, dear daughter!  
 From today a mother's love is broken.

4. From today an elder brother's love is broken, dear daughter.  
From today a younger brother's love is broken.

*EXPLANATION*

This is a highly emotional song, revealing the feelings of the family members of the bride who is now going to leave her home forever to start a new life. The bride is not sure that she will get an affectionate reception from her new in-laws, particularly from her mother-in-law. Her success after marriage will depend on how quickly she can adjust herself to the ways and manners of a different family; she will get little assistance from her husband who is not supposed to show his love too openly. Her lot, however, will greatly improve if she gets pregnant soon and even more if her first child is a boy. Life in a joint family—the land-owning Korkus still prefer to live in a joint family—has its advantages, but for a newlywed woman it may prove a severe test.

## SONG TWENTY-ONE

*Chorus:* Goṅgauljyā rerāṅgī nāco, bhāi, māñīyo.  
*In a circle round dance, brother, mind it!*

(The chorus is to be repeated here and after each subsequent verse.)

1. Ṭūñimā gāñvā jā devtākhen rājā, bhāi, māñīle!  
*Which village's god to dance you, brother, mind it!*  
Gāñvā jā Mūthūvākhen rājā, bhāi, māñīle!  
*Of village Muthuva to dance, brother, mind!*
2. Ṭūñimā gāñvā jā devtākhen rājā, bhāi, māñīle!  
*Which village's god to dance, brother, mind it!*  
Kheṛāmā jā devtākhen rājā, bhāi, māñīle!  
*Khera god to dance, brother, mind it!*

*TRANSLATION*

*Chorus:* Dance in a circle round-about, brother, mind it!

1. To which god of the village do you mind to dance, brother?  
To Muthuva of the village mind to dance, brother!
2. To which god of the village do you mind to dance, brother?  
To Khera-deo mind to dance, brother!

*EXPLANATION*

This is a typical Korku dancing song—one or two words only need to be

changed in a verse and the singing and dancing can go on for a long time. The Korkus have many gods whom they might honor by a dance.

Muthuva-deo is the god of the Korku hamlet in every village. The god's image is erected in the center between the two rows of Korku houses facing each other over a wide courtyard.

#### SONG TWENTY-TWO

*Chorus:* Dhärtīnī—pärtīn Nāmāy nāmken ḍo, Nāmāy gārōrī!  
*On earth—on earth Nāmāy by name, Nāmāy the famous!*

1. Cūjānī sūgūn Nāmāy ghālēbā Nāmāy gārōrī!  
*Any divination Nāmāy will reveal, Nāmāy the famous!*  
 Bhalani bura sūgūn ghālēbā Nāmāy gārōrī!  
*Any bad, bad divination will reveal Nāmāy the famous!*
2. Cūjānī pata Nāmāy hadayi ja Nāmāy gārōrī!  
*Any formula Nāmāy will reveal Nāmāy the famous!*  
 Jaduni tuna pata hadayi ja Nāmāy gārōrī!  
*Divination of which formula will reveal Nāmāy the famous!*
3. Cūjānī jadu Nāmāy kuleba Nāmāy gārōrī!  
*Any exorcism Nāmāy will reveal Nāmāy the famous!*  
 Arani uba jadu Nāmāy kuleba Nāmāy gārōrī!  
*Any bad spell Nāmāy will reveal Nāmāy the famous!*

#### TRANSLATION

*Chorus:* All over the world Nāmāy has made her name— Nāmāy the famous!

1. Any divination Nāmāy will reveal—Nāmāy the famous!  
 Any magic spell Nāmāy will disclose—Nāmāy the famous!
2. Any magic formula Nāmāy knows—Nāmāy the famous!  
 Any witch's spell Nāmāy understands—Nāmāy the famous!
3. Any exorcism Nāmāy can disclose—Nāmāy the famous!  
 Any black magic Nāmāy can find out—Nāmāy the famous!

Like most tribes of central India, the Korkus also firmly believe in the occult. And they have their diviners and wizards. They believe in white and black magic and in witchcraft. Diviners and magicians, especially those who are successful healers, often acquire a wide reputation and are often called into distant places. The song, which praises Nāmāy, sounds almost like a poetic advertisement!

## SONG TWENTY-THREE

*Chorus:* Gyānā jā māñdīn jā rā dhān eñḍāy jā!  
*Wisdom's words little attention pay!*  
 Gūrū bīnā gyānā bāñējā bārāsoñ ḍāyān hēčāi jā!  
*Teacher without wisdom not in years wisdom finds!*

(This chorus is repeated here and after each subsequent verse.)

1. Sāi korān sendrā mākhān jīvān ābū ḍāūbā.  
*Straight way good then life our will be.*  
 Būrā korān jā, ḍāi, būrā ābūā ḍāūbā jā.  
*On bad way, brother, bad our (life) will be.*
2. Jīvān jīnā, ḍāḍā, mākhān āplā kāmāy ḍāye jā.  
*Life to live, brother, then our work will be done.*  
 Kāmāy sīvāi, jā, ḍāi, eṭā cārā bāñē jā.  
*Work without, brother, then way not at all!*
3. Ḍhāgā ḍhegān pūjā bākī, Bhāgāvānā pūjā ḍāye jā!  
*Stone, stone worship not, Bhāgāvān's worship should be!*  
 Ḍīkā ḍhegān pūjā bā ḍo, ḍhinṭhekā joḍūbā jā!  
*They stone worship make, of it will wipe off!*

## TRANSLATION

*Chorus:* To words of wisdom pay a little attention!  
 A teacher without wisdom gains it not even after years!

1. A straight way is good, then so will be our life, brother.  
 If the way is bad, brother, our life too will be bad.
2. If we live our life, brother, then our work will be done.  
 Without effort, brother, there is no way out!
3. Do not worship idols of stone, give worship to Bhāgāvān!  
 Those who worship stones, have first to wipe them clean!

## EXPLANATION

Though this song is composed in the Korku language, its ideology is that of Hindus. A Korku with a good memory probably composed the song after the sermon of a Hindu monk who was visiting the village. The Hindus are averse to the worship of idols of stone because they are sprinkled with the blood of animals that have been sacrificed.

## SONG TWENTY-FOUR

*Chorus:* Kīñvārū nīje, rānī ḍo, kīñvārū nīje, he rānī iñyā.  
*Door open princess! Door open, he princess my*

Hejken pārdesī jūgī.  
*Arrived foreign mendicant.*

(This chorus is repeated here and after each subsequent verse.)

1. Īñyā nī jā māy bāpū ūrāgen bānējā, he jūgī!  
*My mother, father in house not he mendicant!*  
 Jokārten kīñvār nīje?  
*How door to open?*
2. Āmā nī ḍo māy bāpū ĩñyā kvīñkār kūkā.  
*Thy mother father are my father-in-law and mother-in-law.*  
 Āmā nīje ḍo āñsāñtārī ĩñyā ka.  
*Thou open not trouble my.*

TRANSLATION

*Chorus:* Open the door, princess, open the door, princess!  
 I have come, a mendicant from far!

1. My mother and father are not at home, mendicant!  
 How can I open the door?
2. Your mother and father are like parents-in-law to me!  
 Open, do not make any trouble!

EXPLANATION

My informants stated that itinerant religious mendicants or monks (sadhus) often pass through Korku villages on their pilgrimages, during which they travel from the mouth of the Narbada or Tapti River along one side of the river until they reach its spring, and then return again to the mouth of the river on the other river bank. The pilgrims usually stay a day or two over night in a hospitable village. In the evening, they like to recite some texts or legends from the Hindu scriptures or sing religious songs that accompany the texts.

It is alleged that sometimes a man in love with a pretty Korku girl takes advantage of this situation, dresses up like a sadhu and thus gains entrance into the house of the girl, for Korkus usually treat sadhus with respect and reverence.

SONG TWENTY-FIVE

*Chorus:* Cābūnī cākhāb jā poyārā lābṛī bocoyen jā.  
*Mouth broad boy, gruel fell down.*  
 Meḍ ḍhekā jā poyārā, kāpār ḍhocayen.  
*Eye cross boy, head turned round.*

(The chorus is repeated here and after each subsequent verse.)

1. Mūñh nī pāsār jā, poyārā, jārān bocoyen jā.  
*Nose broad boy, mucus dropped down.*  
 Lūtūr pāsār jā, poyārā, gorgor bocoyen.  
*Ears large, boy, earwax fell down.*
2. Caccara joven jā poyārā lājy bocoyen.  
*Turned round boy, belly fell down.*  
 Dā nūven jā poyārā, cabū sūlāyen.  
*Water drunk boy, mouth choked.*

TRANSLATION

*Chorus:* The boy's mouth is broad, his gruel dropped out!  
 The boy is cross-eyed, his head is turned sideways!

1. The boy's nose is broad, mucus flows from it!  
 The boy's ears are large, earwax drops from them!
2. When turned around on the spot, the boy's bowels are moving!  
 When he drinks water, the boy's mouth gets choked!

EXPLANATION

This song describes the fate of an orphan boy; it is not a nice picture that is painted. And indeed, in Kor ku society the fate of an orphan boy is not enviable: If his mother dies in childbirth and there is no other woman in the family to take care of the child, he is often utterly neglected. If his father is still alive, he may not be able or willing to take care of the child and will simply allow him to die. For then, the father may marry another woman and raise children with her.

SONG TWENTY-SIX

*Chorus:* Īñyān nī resām kor dhūtī yī ĩlī ḍo!  
*My silk hem loincloth hand over!*  
 Benā sār kārī kūvān āñgūlūj senē.  
*Bathe government well bathing I go.*

1. Sār kārī kūvān āñgūlūj bākī mā sene, ḍāī!  
*In government well bathing not go, brother!*  
 Kīrsānā konjyī ḍā hīnḍā sene.  
*Farmer's daughter water to fetch goes.*
2. Ālāmā ḍāromēn sonā pālki bīlken jā, ḍāī!  
*On our veranda a golden carpet is spread, brother!*  
 Nāyāḥ nāyāḥ gen āñgūlūjāja ḍāī!

- Strongly, strongly take your bath!*
3. Ālāmā ābā nī bholā jā, ḍāī,  
*Our father has said, brother;*  
 Āṭhvā gūnāḥ jā bākī sāsā!  
*Violent sin not cause!*

TRANSLATION

*Chorus:* Hand over my loincloth with the silken hem!  
 I am going to bathe at the government well.

1. Do not go to the government well to bathe, brother!  
 For the Kisan's daughter is fetching water there.
2. On our veranda a golden carpet has been spread.  
 There you take a thorough bath!
3. Our father has always said, brother,  
 Do not cause any trouble!

EXPLANATION

The government of India has dug wells in many villages. In theory any man or woman may use such a well; but in fact the dominant village castes have usually appropriated the government well and do not permit untouchables (or tribal people like the Korkus) to fetch water from the government well. The Korku boy referred to in the song now intends to assert his legal rights. But his sister persuades him to desist from this revolutionary step. His father was also always against any trouble!

SONG TWENTY-SEVEN\*

*Chorus:* Dāī, sāñdīn ḍoḍkā joken ḍoḍkā ḍo goḍo remāy ḍoḍkā goḍo.  
*Brother, rear plaster break plaster break house, break.*

(The chorus is repeated here and after each subsequent verse.)

1. Rāvṭī, ūrāṭen ḍāṭhom sāle ḍāṭhom ḍo cīrāy!  
*Smith, from house sickle bring, sickle sharpen!*  
 Remāy ḍoḍkā ḍo cīrāy!
2. Kūmrāḥ, ūrāṭen khūbṛī sāle, khūbṛī ḍo ṭokāy!  
*Potter, from house earthen pot bring, pot bring!*  
 Remāy khūbṛī ḍo ṭokāy!
3. Tīlī, jā ūrāṭen sūnūm sāle, sūnūm hūndārē!  
*Oil presser, from house bring oil bring, oil prepare!*  
 Remāy sūnūmṭen hūndārē!  
*From house oil prepare!*

## TRANSLATION

*Chorus:* Brother, in the rear break the plaster of the house!  
Break the plaster!

1. Smith, bring a sickle from your house, sharpen the sickle!  
Cut down the plaster from the rear of the house!
2. Potter, bring an earthen pot from your house, form an earthen pot!  
Cut down the plaster from the rear of the house!
3. Oil presser, bring oil from your house, press oil out!  
Cut down the plaster from the rear of the house!

## EXPLANATION

It is interesting that the chorus, which is repeated after each verse, has often no logical connection with the verses sung and recited in the song. Here, again, the smith, the potter, and the oil presser are in no way concerned with the repair of the house.

It appears that the singers are living in a mixed village, together with Hindu artisan castes whose services they require.

## SONG TWENTY-EIGHT

*Chorus:* Gǎngāy ɖo Golǎn bǎi, Gǎngāy Golǎn bǎi.  
*Gǎngāy the Gaoli woman, Gǎngāy the Gaoli woman.*

(The chorus is repeated here and after each subsequent verse.)

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| 1. Gǎngāy Golǎn ken coyjmā sāge,<br><i>Gǎngāy, Gaoli woman, what to bring?</i>   | Gǎngāy Golǎn bǎi?<br><i>Gǎngāy, Gaoli woman!</i>     |
| Gǎngāy Golǎn ken cǔrgīmā sāge<br><i>Gǎngāy Gaoli to a blouse bring, to</i>       | Gǎngāy Golǎn bǎi.<br><i>Gǎngāy the Gaoli!</i>        |
| 2. Gǎngāy Golǎn ken coyjmā sāge<br><i>Gǎngāy Gaoli to what to bring?</i>         | Gǎngāy Golǎn bǎi?<br><i>Gǎngāy, the Gaoli woman.</i> |
| Gǎngāy Golǎn ken leŋgmā sāge.<br><i>Gǎngāy Gaoli to a petticoat bring, to</i>    | Gǎngāy Golǎn bǎi!<br><i>Gǎngāy, Gaoli woman!</i>     |
| 3. Gǎngāy Golǎn ken coyjmā sāge?<br><i>Gǎngāy, the Gaoli, what to bring?</i>     | Gǎngāy Golǎn bǎi?<br><i>Gǎngāy, the Gaoli woman?</i> |
| Gǎngāy Golǎn ken lǔbūmā sāge,<br><i>Gǎngāy, the Gaoli to a sari to bring, to</i> | Gǎngāy Golǎn bǎi.<br><i>Gǎngāy, the Gaoli woman.</i> |

## TRANSLATION

*Chorus:* Gǎngāy, the Gaoli woman, Gǎngāy, the Gaoli woman.

1. What to bring to Gǎngāy, the Gaoli woman?  
Bring a blouse to Gǎngāy, the Gaoli woman!

- To Gāṅgāy, the Gaoli woman!
2. What to bring to Gāṅgāy, the Gaoli woman, to Gāṅgāy, the Gaoli woman?  
Bring a petticoat to Gāṅgāy, the Gaoli woman, to Gāṅgāy, the Gaoli woman!
3. What to bring for Gāṅgāy, the Gaoli woman, to Gāṅgāy, the Gaoli woman?  
Bring a *sari* for Gāṅgāy, the Gaoli woman, to Gāṅgāy, the Gaoli woman!

*EXPLANATION*

The professional cowherd of a Korku village is usually not a Korku but a member of one of the cowherd castes, either a Gaoli, an Ahir, or a Gond. Every morning he collects all the cattle of the Korku hamlet, the cows and calves, and the bullocks not used for fieldwork during the day, and grazes them until late in the afternoon. In the evening, he returns from the grazing ground and the animals are sent off to the houses of their owners. On feast days, the cowherd, as other village servants, receives a customary gift of garments: a shirt and loincloth, and occasionally a shirt, petticoat or *sari* for his wife. The song refers to such a gift.

SONG TWENTY-NINE

*Chorus:* Bāñjārā kūñvārā kon jā—Lākho Bāñjārā re  
*The Bāñjārā's unmarried son is Lakho, the Bāñjārā.*

(The chorus is here repeated, as also after each subsequent verse.)

1. Bāñjārā kon khen çoz mā sāge – Lākho Bāñjārā re?  
*Bāñjārā's son which bring – Lakho the Bāñjārā?*  
Bāñjārā kon khen dhūti mā sāge – Lākho Bāñjārā re.  
*Bāñjārā's son a loincloth bring – Lakho the Bāñjārā.*
2. Bāñjārā kon khen çoz mā sāge – Lākho Bāñjārā re?  
*Bāñjārā's son which bring – Lakho the Bāñjārā?*  
Bāñjārā kon khen kūrta mā sāge – Lākho Bāñjārā re.  
*Bāñjārā's son a kūrta bring – Lakho Bāñjārā.*
3. Bāñjārā kon khen çoz mā sāge – Lākho Bāñjārā re?  
*Bāñjārā's son which bring – Lakho Bāñjārā?*  
Bāñjārā kon khen pāgṛī mā sāge – Lākho Bāñjārā re!  
*Bāñjārā's son turban bring – Lakho Bāñjārā!*

*TRANSLATION*

*Chorus:* The Bāñjārā's unmarried son is Lakho, the Bāñjārā.

1. What do you let the Bāñjārā's son bring—Lakho, the Bāñjārā?  
Let him bring a loincloth—Lakho, the Bāñjārā's son!
2. What do you let the Bāñjārā's son bring—Lakho, the Bāñjārā?  
Let him bring a long shirt—Lakho, the Bāñjārā!
3. What do you let the Bāñjārā's son bring—Lakho, the Bāñjārā?  
Let him bring a turban—Lakho, the Bāñjārā!

*EXPLANATION*

In the past, the Bāñjārās or Lambadis were the baggage carriers and camp followers of the Moghul and Maratha armies. Now they are scattered all over central India (Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh), earning their livelihood as farmers, farm servants, road and dam builders, and by many other jobs. Not so long ago several Bāñjārās were even the chief ministers of Maharashtra.

This dancing song refers to the Korku custom of asking a Bāñjārā residing in the village to go to the weekly market and buy for them articles they require. Of course, the Bāñjārā will take a small commission for the service, but he will get a bargain, while the Korku will pay the trader the full price without any bargaining. *Dhūtī*, *ķürtā* and *pāgrī* are Hindi words, but the rest of the text is in Korku.

## SONG THIRTY

*Chorus:* Ṭūṭhū bñyā nī pīrānī ḍo kñḍīnyāñ āri.  
Ṭūṭhū snake's bite a scorpion's sting.

(The chorus is repeated here and after each subsequent verse.)

1. Ūṛāten jom ḍo, bhāgnī, cūrūten ḍā ḍo!  
*From plate rice give, servant, from jug water give!*  
Kālī gūvāñlīn khññṭī ṭālān dhāmīn mākhān ḍo sīyūbā.  
*Only a village woman field in a dhāmīn may lift up.*
2. Kūlākū ḍobā bhāgnī ṭokoḍā joṭā ḍo.  
*Tigers bullocks as servants, lizard as yoke.*  
Kālī gūvāñlīn khññṭī ṭālān dhāmīn mākhān ḍo sīyūbā!  
*Only a village woman field in a dhāmīn snake may lift up!*
3. Señgojī hāṭī bā ḍo beñgoli ojēbā!  
*Husband to market goes, wife lifts up!*  
Kālī gūvāñlīn khññṭī ṭālān dhāmīn mākhān ḍo sīyūbā!  
*Only a village woman field in a dhāmīn snake may lift up!*

*TRANSLATION*

*Chorus:* The ṭūṭhū snake bites, the scorpion stings.

1. Give rice from a plate, maid servant, and water from a jug!  
Only a village woman may lift up a *dhāmīn* snake in a field.
2. Turn tigers into bullocks, maid-servant, and the *ṭoḱoḱā* lizard  
into a yoke!  
Only a village woman may lift up a *dhāmīn* snake from a field.
3. The husband sells it in the market, but the wife lifted it up!  
Only a village woman may lift up a *dhāmīn* snake in a field!

#### EXPLANATION

This sounds like the song of Korku feminists! The women show in the song how much they contribute to the prosperity of the family. They not only prepare the meals and fetch the drinking water, often they are also asked to contribute to the purchase of bullocks and farming implements. And by catching a *dhāmīn* snake, a woman may provide her husband with some ready cash because he can sell it in the market!

The *ṭūṭhū* snake could not be identified. The *dhāmīn* snake is also called “rat snake” (*Zamenis mucosus*). It is a large non-poisonous snake, the flesh of which is used for medicinal purposes. It is believed that it can cure leprosy. The *ṭoḱoḱā* is a big lizard.

This song refers also to the legend that a Gond cultural hero turned tigers into bullocks and used a snake as tie for a yoke.

#### \*EDITOR'S NOTE

Stephen Fuchs had entrusted me with the manuscript of this article shortly after he left India for Austria. He was eager to see it in print as a tribute to the Korku who had welcomed him among them and transmitted to him their songs. Unfortunately, the production of the article proved to pose more problems than at first anticipated. Since the author's weakened eyesight did not allow him to read the text closely and check it for possible or necessary amendments, we had asked Dr. Traude Pillai-Vetschera for help in preparing the text. Dr. Pillai-Vetschera and Mr. Alfonso Pillai (Dipl.-Ing.) had graciously agreed to take on the task and spent many hours carefully going over the text. After they were finished, however, the author felt he owed it to his Korku informants and especially to his mentor, the Korku teacher who helped him transcribe and translate the texts, to leave the manuscript in the form he had submitted it. We regret, therefore, that we could not honor the dedication of Dr. Pillai-Vetschera and Mr. Pillai, but we can assure them that Dr. Fuchs was very appreciative of their selfless work.

The linguists among our readers and others familiar with Korku language will find shortcomings in the translation and transcription of the texts presented. Particularly in *Song Twenty-Seven*, discrepancies between vernacular text, interlinear translation, and the final English version are evident. Fuchs, however, thought that his explanation would solve the puzzle sufficiently. In spite of such problems, we hope that readers will view the work as a sign of the author's sincerity and dedication toward the Korku.