



Socio-Cultural Practices Among The Kharia Tribe: An Indian Context

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Abstract- The tribes in India have diverse cultures and populations and live primarily on land and forests. The tribes are close to nature on a socio-cultural, and physical level has greatly influenced how they are conceptualized in addition to having their unique languages, customs, and beliefs, which they live in a small community. Whereas, there are up to 62 different tribal communities with 75 Particular Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) spread across the different parts of India. There are some indigenous ethnic groups within the tribal society one of the most intriguing facets of India's tribal history is the sociocultural life of the Kharias. The Kharia tribe is generally classified into three types, such as Dudh, Dhelki, and Hill, Sabar, or Erenga Kharia, although some authors and scholars have divided them up into numerous sections and named them according to their regional places. The more interesting is that the Hill Kharias practices hunting, and gathering and they depend mostly upon forest and land resources. Hill Kharia is also known as Pahadi or Sabar Kharia. Whereas, the other sections of the Kharia Dudh and Dhelki are advanced and have taken to plough cultivation and are better off than the Hill-Kharia. The Paper will articulate socio-cultural practices among the Kharia Tribe in different parts of India, such as Jharkhand, Chattisgarh, Odisha, West Bengal etc. The paper mainly focused on: -

Keywords: - Kharia Tribe, Kharias Nomenclature, Origin and Identity, Religion, Marriage, Prohibition/Purification, Totem and Mahadoklo.

Introduction:

The tribals are commonly known globally as the aborigines or the indigenous people who first settled in the continents of Africa, America, Asia, and Australia. In the Indian context, they are known as “Adivasis” meaning the first settlers of the soil. “Stephen Fuchs”, the Anthropologist says that they are called ‘primitive tribes or Adivasis’ or scheduled tribes’ (Tirkey,2015) The term “tribe” has been employed by various scholars with diverse designations. For instance, Thakkar Bapa, a prominent tribal leader, referred to them as “Adi Praja”. In contrast, scholars such as John Henry Hutton, Emile Durkheim, and Taylor used

the term “primitive.” Meanwhile, Virginius Xaxa and Verrier Elwin identified them as indigenous peoples. Notably, G.S. Ghurye, a renowned Indian Sociologist, characterized the tribal population of India as “backward Hindus.” (Panigrahi, 2020). According to the 2011 census, India is home to 10.43 crore Scheduled Tribes, comprising 8.6% of the country's total population. Despite constituting a relatively small proportion of the population, this group encompasses a diverse array of ethnicities, showcasing the rich cultural tapestry of India. (Mohanta,2016) The tribal population in India, though numerically in a small minority, represents an enormous diversity of groups. They vary among themselves concerning language and linguistic traits, ecological settings in which they live, physical features, size of the population, the extent of acculturation, dominant modes of making a livelihood, level of development, and social stratification. The eastern, central, and western belt, which includes the nine states of Odisha, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Rajasthan, Andhra Pradesh, and West Bengal, have a majority of the ST population. Approximately 5% of the people live in the South, and 12% of the population live in the Northeast, of the Northern States. There are some communities referred to as "tribes," but they are not listed among the Scheduled Tribes. Whereas the two other significant governmental classifications of tribes named them as de-notified, nomadic, or semi-nomadic, and especially vulnerable (Ministry of Tribal Affairs Government of India,2014). Initially, as per the 2011 census, there were 75 PVTGs out of which 705 Scheduled Tribe in India Odisha has the largest number of PVTGs with 13 officially and the Kharia Tribe is one of them (Nibedita & Subhendra,2024). According to the 2011 census, the Kharia language has approximately 2,97,614 speakers in India (www.censusindia.gov.in,2021). In Odisha, the total population of the Kharia tribe is 1,88,331, making them one of the major Scheduled Tribes in the state, they inhabit the north-western region of the state comprising the districts like Sundergarh, Sambalpur, Mayurbhanj, and Jharsuguda. In addition to Odisha, the Kharia tribe is also found in the states of Chattisgarh, Bihar, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, and Maharashtra, where they are recognized as a Scheduled Tribe (Ota,2016).

Kharias Nomenclature:

The Pahari Kharia (Hill Kharia), the Dhelki Kharia (early comers), and the Dudh Kharia (Pure Kharia) are the three social groups of the Kharia Tribe. These three social groups have been identified as three sections of the tribe and are distinct from one another. (i) Along with the practices of primitive culture and rudimentary cultivation, the Hill-Kharia represents the hunting and food-gathering stage of economic life (Ota & Sahoo, n.d.) (ii) The Dhelki Kharias, who reside in the western region, is somewhat advanced, while (iii) the Dudh Kharias currently appear to be more advanced than the two other groups. They are aware of their needs and the importance of civilization. (Vidyarthi,1980) The "Adivasi" communities, including the Mundas, Kharias, Santals, and Ho's, are linguistically and ethnically classified as belonging to the "Austro-Asiatic sub-family of Austric language, (Kiro, et al.2023) The word “Kharia” is written as “Khadia” in Devanagari script and “Khariya” in Roman Script. Most anthropologists have used the word “Kharia” because of the Roman Script, whereas the people of the Kharia tribe prefer to call or write themselves “Khediya” (Joachim,1999). The Kharias are an ethnic group within human civilization. The

term “Kharia” originates from the word “Khad-Khadi,” which translates to “palanquin” or “Doli” in Hindi. Historically, the Kharia people used palanquins to carry their kings, signifying their traditional role as royal bearers. (Dung Dung,2017) According to the people of Manbhum the word "Khaida/Kheda" is etymologically derived from the rabbit. They were unexpectedly referred to as "kheda" by the general people of Manbhum. (Nilanjan,2018).

Inhabitation & Migration:

The major tribes of Chhota Nagpur Plateau and Central India like Santhal, Kherwar, Munda, Kharia, and Korku migrated from East Asia to India about five thousand years ago (Himanshu,2022). It is believed, that they were the earliest among the present inhabitants of the country. (Vidyarthi,1976) From, Central Asia, the ancestors of the Kharia, together with the other tribes of Proto-Australoid group, came to the Chinese land perhaps via Tibet “One of the legends says that the Kharias came Tibatga Delkimaye” (They reached to Tibet). Here in the Chinese land, the Proto-Australoid was divided into two sections: Austro-Asiatic and Austronesian. Later they marched ahead and reached Indonesia, the Philippines, and Australia. The former turned towards Burma and through some of the 12 hill passes of the Himalayan ranges came to India. With the other tribes of the “Kolarian” or the Munda group, the Kharias crossed the north-east Himalayan ranges “The Kharia songs recall “Loreng Biru” (sacred mountain) through some of the 12 hill passes and wandering through the Himalayan foothill jungles the Kharia songs recall as “Railong Kinir” (Railong forest) for many years and finally they reached Ruidas-Patna and settled down there. (Antony,1981) According to the book of Fr. Paulus Kullu, “Kharia Dharam Aur Sanskriti Ka Vishleshan,” the Kharia people are believed to have originated from the Asian continent and migrated to India through a circuitous route. This route allegedly passed through China, Tibet, the Himalayas, Kullu Ghat, Turiagarh, Delhi, Ayodhya, and Mohenjodaro before crossing the Ganga River and continuing to Ruidas Patna, Chotta Nagpur, Gumla, Sisai, Nao-Ratangarh and finally settled in Odisha (Paulus,2000). According to the nationwide, the large population of Dudh Kharia inhabits the states of Jharkhand, Bihar, and Odisha. The districts like Gumla, Singhbhum, Ranchi, and Simdega districts are the majority population of Dudh Kharia in Jharkhand. In Odisha, the Kharias are primarily found in the districts of Sundergarh, Sambalpur, and some portions of Deogarh. The Dudh Kharia concentrates largely in the districts of Sundergarh, Sambalpur, and Deogarh. Whereas, the Dhelki Kharia resides in the block of Bargaon, Kutra, Hemgir, and Lephripada district of Sundergarh (Dung Dung, 2017).

Origin & Identity:

The tribal groups have maintained their identity in terms of practicing their unique and distinctive rituals, cultures, and values. During the pre-colonial period, the tribal communities remained isolated from the rest of the world practicing primitive methods of living and sustaining within the offered resources by the natural environment (Horo et. al,2021) The Kharia tribe's origin story bears a striking resemblance to that of the Mundas, suggesting that the Kharia may be an older branch of the Munda Tribe. According to their traditional narrative, the Kharia people's original occupations were palanquin-bearing and tilling the soil. Furthermore, Dalton's records document the following conventional foraging practices. (Fagu,2017)

According to the Hill-Kharia's legendary folk tales that tell the account of their origin, and how they came into being. God created first the sky and the earth and then a pea-hen which laid an egg. The egg burst, and from the shell of the egg issued "Adi-Kharia" the ancestor of the Hill-Kharia; from the white of the egg the first Purana (a tribe found in the Mayurbhanj State); and from the yellow of the egg the ancestor of the ruling Bhanja family of Mayurbhanj. (Doong Doong,1981) The Dudh Kharia have given the word "Delki," to Dhelki Kharia (which comes from the Kharia root "Del" to come), and they indicate that the Dhelki came first from their ancestral home "seng delki"(came early). Later immigrants who said to have adopted the name "Dudh Kharia" (i.e., Kharia pure as "dudh" or milky) These kharias were more stringent about their diet and refused to eat beef or accept cooked rice from the members of their tribe (Roy,1937). whereas the book "Chottanagpur ke pahadi kharia" mentions Pahadi Kharia is also called Sabar kharia, The Dudh and Dhelki Kharia also calls them Sabar Kharia as "Erenga kharia" and it's divided into three parts i.e.; Munda kharia, Odiya kharia, Sada kharia (Joachim,2013) In Bankura and Purulia, Kheria communities have been found who generally call themselves and use the surname "Shabar" Not only that the local administration of these two districts and the CRI census report notify them as "Shabar" but their caste certificate depicted them as Kheria. (Roy,1921)

Theoretical Framework:

Pierre Bourdieu's theory can be applied to analyze how the socio-cultural practices of the Kharia tribe in India contribute to the accumulation of cultural capital within their community. It can help explore how their traditions, rituals, and customs shape their social status, power dynamics, and symbol hierarchies within the tribe in India contribute to the accumulation of cultural capital within their community. It can help explore how their traditions, rituals, and customs shape their social status, power dynamics, and symbol hierarchies within the tribe. Cultural capital, according to Bourdieu, refers to the knowledge, skills, and practices that individuals or groups possess and use to gain social status and power. Overall, applying Bourdieu's theory of cultural capital to the socio-cultural practices of the Kharia tribe can provide insights into how their traditions and rituals contribute to the formation of social capital, power dynamics, and symbolic meanings within their community. It can help shed light on how cultural resources are mobilized and utilized by the Kharia people to navigate their social world and assert their cultural Identity.

According to Emile Durkheim, totemism, also known as the totemic religious system, is a practice in which a clan symbol, often an animal or plant, is revered. Durkheim considers totemism to be the most basic and ancient form of religion, characterized by the worship of natural phenomena and objects through ritual practices, often associated with primitive or indigenous societies. (Ritzer,2019) The Kharia Tribe is distinguished by its rich cultural practices, religious beliefs, and totemic traditions. The tribe identifies itself with animals and plants through totems, with each clan bearing a sacred totemic object. As a result, Kharia clans are named after various plants, animals, or material objects. The tribe comprises nine totemic exogamous clans, where the sense of social solidarity within each clan is closely tied to indigenous knowledge and shared cultural heritage.

Livelihood of Kharias:

The tribal communities of India rely on a variety of natural production and procurement patterns, their traditional use of natural resources made their livelihood system more or less sustainable in the past. Customary rights over natural resources, such as land, forests, and water, play a major role in governing the tribal communities in the traditional livelihood systems. (Rao,2021) Among these, livelihood has a significant impact on a tribal group's eating habits, lifestyle, and mobility. Every tribe has a specific way of life, such as gathering forest products, rearing cattle, and shifting cultivation (Sasidharan,2017). The Pahari, or Hill Kharia, reside atop hills surrounding forests and depend on forest-based resources for their livelihood. In contrast, the Dudh and Dhelki Kharia tribes have adopted plain-based agriculture as their primary means of subsistence. (Saumya,2021) Agriculture is the main economic activity among the Dudh Kharia, to support the family economy they also depend upon secondary sources like char, mahua flowers, small leaves, honey, etc, apart from that the forest products prefer hunting on special occasions. (Dung Dung, 2017) The people of the Dhelki Kharia community usually take flat rice and vegetables as a staple food in their daily lives along with the “Handia” (Rice Beer) for drink. Apart from this, many Dhelki Kharias currently prepare different types of curry in their home with different types of vegetables. They eat rice with fried vegetables, without any kind of curry (Sahoo,2006). The Hill Kharia consume forest products that they collect from the jungle and greatly enhance their eating habits from one season to another. For centuries, they have relied on forest products as a primary source of sustenance. Their diet is balanced and diverse, consisting of various roots, tubers, and small game hunted from the forest, which provide them with essential nutrients. They eat fish, meat, roots, fruits, and all kinds of green leafy vegetables. Kusum (tol), Jam kuli (blackberry), Kendu (tendu), Saiteema (guava), Panas (Jackfruit), Aam (Mango), Mandaar (custard apple), Joda (Papaya) and other seasonal fruits they consume once in a while. They cultivate a kitchen garden within their courtyard, where they grow a diverse array of leafy greens, including various types of spinach (saag), including sojana saag, poi saag, khosala saag, sunsusnia saag, leutia saag, and others, as well as pumpkins, chilies, ivy-gourd, and bitter guards, etc (Maharana & Nayak,2017). On the other hand, the primary food consumed by the Sabar Kharia of Manbhum are fruits, frogs, snakes, and chicks. Their primary food sources are reptiles which they capture and eat, also they collect honey from beehives as well. Furthermore, the Sabar Kharia devour rabbits, cats, foxes, and other animals and they have a close relationship with nature (Nilanjan,2018)

MARRIAGE TRADITION: -

Marriage is a cornerstone institution in Kharia society, with a strong preference for adult marriages. The typical age of marriage eligibility is 16 for boys and 18 for girls. A distinctive feature of Kharia culture is the emphasis on mutual consent, particularly the bride's consent, in the marriage process, ensuring that both partners have the freedom to make their own choices. (Ota,2016). Marriage marks the entry point for both men and women into family life. This lifelong union grants couples the right to establish biological ties and raise children together. The Kharia society adheres to a monogamous tradition, where one man is married to one woman. The following steps outline the fundamental process of a Kharia marriage.

- Identifying a suitable partner through family members or mediators.
- “Yoyo Dae” (Pre-engagement meeting, Seeing the bride)- The boy and girl accept themselves in front of their family as a life partner and decide to get married.
- “Ho Yona” (Bride side visit to the bridegroom’s house)- Here, the “Dulha” (Bride groom) groom’s family members pay a visit to the “Dulhin” (Bride) bride's house, and the family members of the bride welcome them by washing their hands.

Engagement (betrothal) at a girl's home

(The term "laam" in the Kharia language refers to an engagement ceremony).

- “Maha Gotia” (Reception before marriage)- Visiting the boy's house for the second time.

(The visit is commonly referred to as "Danda Oeng," which means "return of bamboo stick" or "large feast.")

- The girl's house hosts the marriage and “Barat”, while the boy's house hosts the reception. After nine days, the custom of marriage will come to an end. We call that "Bahurat." (returning of the bride after marriage).
- Inter-tribal marriage between Oram, Munda, and Kisan is not socially acceptable in the Dudh Kharia community (Dash,2020).

The most important occasion in the life of Hill Kharia is marriage and its entirely endogamous group. It is strictly forbidden to get married outside of the tribe. When a Hill Kharia marries a non-Kharia, they face harsh punishment and are frequently shunned by the community. In addition, there are several exogamous clans in the Hill Kharia, and it is a grave offense to marry within the same clan since it is equivalent to incest. Some types of marriages practiced by the Hill-Kharias are Negotiation marriage, elopement marriage, love marriage, capture marriage, intrusion marriage, service marriage, and widow re-marriage is allowed and divorce marriage is also permitted. The bride price is paid to the bride by the groom's party. Although polygamy is not forbidden, monogamy is preferred and practiced commonly (Ota & Mohanty,2015)

Religious Belief and Practices of the Kharia Tribe:

The religious life of “Adivasi” lies in the belief in supernatural power on the kind spirit that resides in land, trees, stones, flora, and fauna that controls and govern the life of human beings and nature (Lakra,2020) Not only every stage of life associated with rituals for the tribal people but religious rites and ceremonies also permeate every stage of social and economic activity. (John,2006) The Kharias celebrate a variety of religious rituals. Their faith combines the beliefs and practices of tribalism and Hinduism. Thakur Deo, Brun Deo, Nag Deo, Fire God, Jal Deo, Dharti Deo, Burha Burhi, and other deities are worshipped by them. (Ekka,2013) The Kharias recognize God by the name of “Ponomosor” or “Dharam Raja” or “Deota”, and worship the Sun God visibly. They also worship and propitiate their ancestral spirits, “Pat-Spirits”

(spirits of the native hills and Jungles) and the “Khunt-spirits” (village spirits). In addition to these, they propitiate the “Dubos” (malevolent spirits). (Doongdoong,2007) As a result, the Hill-Kharia acknowledges the spirits of one or more notable hills close to his settlement as the ultimate spirit, symbolized by the Sun and the Earth-goddess or Mother-Earth (Basuki Mata). These hill spirits, whom he refers to as "Pats," seem to be the Mundas' "Buru-Bongas" equivalents. At each puja, the Hill-Kharias of Mayurbhanj invoke their three main deities: Pat, Dharam, and Basuki, also known as Thakurani or Basu-Mata. In contrast, the Hill Kharias of Dalbhum and Manbhum only know Dharam, Pat, and Baram and no longer know "Basuki" or Basu-Mata. "Ishti Pat" and "Baram" are their primary village deities. (Roy,1937) The people of the Dhelki Kharia community mainly worship “Dharma” the Sun God, the ancestor, “Devdevi”. Who resides in “Demul” (Pilgrimage place) on the outskirts of the village, “Ru. Devdevi” Khut and “Gramshri” Thakurani residing in “Demul” (Pilgrimage place) on the outskirts of the village. (Sahoo,2006) Hill-Kharia call their religious leader “Dihuri or Dehuri, Danria or Pujari. Among Delki and Dudh Kharias, they are known as Kalo, Baiga, Mahato, Pahan, and Kartaha. (Kerketta,2007) The following deities which is worshipped by them (i) **Giring Bero (Sun God)**-The Kharia population worshipped the Sun God. When the Sun rises, the Kharia stands or kneels with hands joined to bend their forehead and hail the sun by reciting some mantras. (Paulus,2000) In 1885, the renowned British philosopher and sociologist Herbert Spencer coined the term "ancestor worship," which he claimed had more to do with animistic beliefs in the souls and spirits of the deceased ancestors than it did with the ritualized summoning of departed family members. Ancestor worship is a type of religious devotion (Mathew & Kasi,2019) The Kharias engage in a form of ancestor worship known as "Burha Burhi" or "Mari Masan." The deceased ancestors are revered at all religious ceremonies (<https://kharia.org> >pkf-kharia-com). iii) Mountain Spirits: The deepest and highest ideals and aspirations of Kharia's cultures and traditions are linked to mountains, which are considered sacred manifestations of a deeper reality. "Sacred mountains"—have deep-rooted systems of legends, beliefs, and (Bernbaum,2006) the names of the hills where the mountainous spirits live. They pray harder before hunting (Narmadeshwar,1961). At the head of their system “Baad Pahad” (great mountain spirit) to whom buffaloes and cocks are offered, it brings neither good nor evil to mankind. Kharia has probably been borrowed from the Mundas or Oraons (Handbook of Castes and Tribes,1922).

Festivals of Kharia’s Linkage with Environment:

Tribal people live close to the natural world and its life close to nature among human communities. The relationship between the tribe and nature is bound by the fact that the earth is home to a variety of natural objects, including humans, animals, birds, water, air, and sunshine. Most of the natural forces and powers that the Kharia tribe feels are the immediate surroundings amid nature (Roy,1937). Furthermore, the Adivasi believe in the Supernatural power of nature which regulates their existence on the earth, leading to the observation of a large number of religious festivals, among these festivals, the Sarhul, Sohrai, and Fagu have their due importance and are celebrated more pompously (Lakra, 2020) The Kharias celebrate several common festivals related to the environment; the festivals of the Kharia Tribe are closely related to their everyday lives and range from those celebrated at the lineage, family, and individual levels. (i)

“Dimtang Sung” The "Dimtang Sung" festival, which takes place during the Hindu month of Baisakh, involves purifying cattle sheds, and another name for the celebration is "Baisakhi Puja." The sacred specialist is the head of the clan or family. For this occasion, drawings of cows, and oxen, are subsequently worshipped. The purpose of the festival is to honor the services rendered by the Kharia's cattle (www.indianetzone.com). (ii) **“Sarhul”** or Fagun-Puja” itself is called “Jankor” This festival is celebrated at the same time when the saal trees become laden with flowers and start falling after becoming fully grown. This festival can be celebrated on any day of the week. (Mathias,2013) In the “Jankor” festival, worship and sacrifice are offered to “Ponomosor” (God). A white chicken is sacrificed in this festival. One drop of blood is sprinkled on a heap of rice and one drop is sprinkled on the water in the plate. While dropping blood the “Kaalo” (a village priest) recites “mantras” and says “O durate Baru unem, kosu Ranga Abu Terem.” (to keep the house safe and away from diseases). The work of worship is done by the family and the meat is also eaten by the family (Dung Dung,2013). On the other hand, the Hill Kharia of Purulia celebrates the “Sarhul” ceremoniously by presenting fresh fruits to supernatural beings. The deities of Sarhul are worshipped with boiled "mohul" (*Basia latifolia*), green mango kul (*Zizyplus*), and five different types of flowers, including jamun (*Eugenia sp.*), sal, mango, and palas (*Butea frondose*). (Sinha,1984). (iii) **Sohrai (Bandoi)** The Dhelki and the Dudh Kharias celebrate this festival in November (Kartik). The cow-shed is cleaned with water and cow dung. Cattle are grazed from morning till noon and then brought back home after making them drinking water. Cattle are then washed with water and their horns are besmeared with oil, their foreheads are rubbed with vermilion and garland. In the case of buffaloes, these acts are done on the preceding night. (iv) **Karam-** Among the Dhelki and Dudh Kharia communities, the Karam festival is a significant celebration held in August-September (Bhado). The entire village participates in this festive event. As part of the tradition, eligible girls observe a fast on the preceding day, while the boys prepare the dancing ground (akhara) by sweeping and leveling it with fresh mud. (Antony,2007)

Kharia Tottem (Clan and “Gotra” (Lineage)

The tribal people never go out to collect or eat plants because they think that they have a mysterious relationship with them, and they never go out to kill or eat animals. Furthermore, those specific plants or animals became their totemic objects and derived from their clan names. In the tribal religious life, totemism has played a significant role among the tribal population, and all of these tribes hold their totemic plants and animals in high regard and do not destroy them because they believe that they have aided or protected their respective clan ancestors or have proven to be of some unusual use or service by not consuming their respective flowers or fruits (Timung, 2016). A mystical or ceremonial bond between a particular social group and a species of plant or animal is known as totemism. Totemism gives respect to the totemic animals or plants and does not allow them to kill or eat them. (Amrithalingam,2014). “Frazer” in the book "Totemism and Exogamy" (1910), claims that “Totem” originated as a belief and whereas the belief of Kharias points out that after the death of human beings, the souls resided in plants, trees, animals, birds, etc. were possessed by the souls of deceased people and was strictly forbidden to eat or kill those items respectively. Kharias started to show their respect for the plants, trees, animals, or birds as a sacred object and consider them as a totem. (Upadhyay,1993). Thus, among the Kharia tribe, there are some

totemic exogamous clans. Dudh Kharia has a different clan such as Soreng, Kerketta, Dung Dung, Kullu, Bilung, Tete, Kiro, Baa, T: opo, and their totems are Stone, One kind of bird, Fish, Tortoise, Salt, One kind of bird, Tiger, Paddy, One kind of Bird respectively (Table 1). Table 2 & Table 3 also highlight clans and totems of Dhelki Kharia like- Hansda, Mudhu, Soren, Barliha, Mail, Samad, Bage, Topno, Bagh, and Surin, and their totems are Jellied eel fish, Tortoise, Stone, Paddy, Dust, Deer, Birds, Tiger. Whereas, Table 3 & Table 4 shows the Clan and Totem of Pahadi Kharia of Mayurbhanj and Manbhum district of Odisha and West Bengal and the clans are Saal, Ashok, Saluk, Balya, Saru, Nag, Guliya, Bhuiya, Jaaru, Bidiya, Tesa Abusari, and their Totem is Fish, Tree, Birds, Tubers, Snake, Saal Fish, Mouse.

Dudh Kharia

Table 1 Clan and Totem of Dudh Kharia

Sl. No	Clan	Totem
1	Dung Dung	Fish
2	Bilung	Salt
3	Kiro	Tiger
4	Kerketta	One kind of bird
5	Kullu	Tortoise
6	Tete	One kind of bird
7	Soreng	Stone
8	Baa	Paddy
9	T: opo	One Kind of Bird

(Joachim,1999)

Dhelki Kharia**Table- 2 Clan and totem of Dhelki Kharia of Odisha and Jharkhand**

Sl.No	Clan	Totem
1	Hansda	Jellied eel fish
2	Mudhu	Tortoise
3	Soren	Stone
4	Barliha	Paddy
5	Mail	Dust
6	Samad	Deer
7	Bage	Birds
8	Topno	Birds
9	Bagh	Tiger

(Joachim,1999)

(Dung Dung,2013)

Pahadi Kharia**Table 4 Clan and Totem of Pahadi Kharia of Mayurbhanj, Odisha**

SL.No	Clan	Totem
1	Saal	Fish
2	Ashok	Tree
3	Saluk	Birds
4	Balya	Fish
5	Saru	Tubers
6	Nag	Snake

(Joachim,1999)

Table 3 Clan and totem of Dhelki Kharia of Jashpur, Chhattisgarh

Sl.No	Clan	Totem
1	Samad	Bird
2	Surin	Stone
3	Mudhu	Tortoise
4	Chardah	Bird
5	Barliha	Paddy
6	Kiro	Tiger
7	Mail	Dust
8	Hansdah	Eel fish

Table 5 Clan and Totem of Pahadi Kharia of Manbhum, West Bengal

SL.No	Clan	Totem
1	Guliya	Saal Fish
2	Bhuiya	Fish
3	Jaaru	Mouse
4	Bidya	Tubers
5	Tesa Abusari	Birds
6	Hembram	Betel Leaf

Prohibition and Purification of Kharias:

Death Rituals: After the burial, the villagers go to the river, pond, or well and wash their hands, feet, and face before returning home. Those who go to the river also catch fish and bring it back. The fish is ground with turmeric and mustard oil is added to it. If there is a photograph of the deceased, then the photograph is kept in the courtyard. Turmeric mixed oil is kept in front of it. The villagers come in turns. They rub oil on their hands, feet, and heads and purify themselves. A plate is kept beside it. People donate money of their own free will in the name of the deceased. This

money is used to bear the expenses of “Nahna” (Purificatory observance) and “Kamaan”. (Dung Dung, 2013)

- I. **“Chhatiyari” (Purification rites after six days):** After cleaning the navel, both the man and woman fast for three hours. The act of fasting is called “Kanna” or “Kanasodonna”. The midwife brings the root of the Berani plant. She grinds the root and applies it to the mother’s head. She also applies it to her mother. Both become pure by this act. The act of purification is called “Kanasod-sudhom”. That day the mother boils the clothes with ashes. She cleans them with water from the river. She comes home after taking a bath. Guests are also invited. A rooster is slaughtered in the evening. Both the men and women are fed. This hospitality is done to celebrate the new life. After the navel falls, mats, rags, etc are burnt. (Dung Dung, 2014)
- II. **Restriction of women on stable:** A grown-up Kharia girl is prohibited from entry into stables/byres.
 - (a) A grown-up Kharia girl cannot enter into the stable of her parents.
 - (b) Married Kharia girls can enter into the stable/byre of their husbands and progeny.
 - (c) Married Kharia girls/ women of other tribes cannot enter into the stables/byres of the Kharias.

Kharias believes that if any of the above three rules are violated, the ‘Gorea’ (Spirit regulating the health of cattle in the stable/byre) would be displeased because it does not like the entry of women/ girls into the stable/byre.
- III. A grown-up Kharia girl is prohibited from taking meals in the house(s) of another tribe (s). If she does so, she is considered to have become impure, and then she has to undergo the process of purification. In such cases the process of purification is simple. She has to undergo hair shaving and bathing with the simple Water. (Antony, 2007)

Kharia Mahadoklo (Big Assembly of the Kharia tribe)

The Kharia tribe has an ancient traditional legal system that has been passed down through generations. This system relies on communal decision-making, where community members gather to discuss and reach a consensus on matters affecting the tribe, ensuring collective agreement and harmony. All intellectuals of the Kharia community try to give correct justice in the meeting. Men play an important role in making decisions on any matter in a social meeting. All the intellectuals of Kharia society sit together and discuss what is called “Doklo” in the Kharia language. “Kharia Doklo” is made by combining two words. The word Doklo is formed by combining Doko + Aalo. Here both the words have different meanings. The meaning of the word “Doko” is to sit and the meaning of the word “Aalo” is to separate. There are some social traditional laws and orders of the Kharia tribe as follows. (i) Kartaha Doklo (Village level organisation) (ii) Khunt Doklo (Panchayat Level Organisation) (iii) Pahta Doklo (Block level organisation) (iv) Pargana Doklo (District level organisation. (v) Raij Mahadoklo (State level Organisation) (Kerketta, 2017) To improve and advance Kharia society, Kharia Mahadoklo or “Kharia Mahasabha” (A meeting which is conducted by the Kharia tribe community largely) was established (Patnaik, 2013). Mahadoklo was a yearly event. On behalf of the Nagpur Kharia Sabha, a Kharia Committee was established

to address the issues of language and literature. The creation of the Kharia Sahitya Samiti was discussed at the Kharia Mahasabha in Simdega, Jharkhand, on September 18, 1975. Kharia Sahitya Samiti's task was to liberate all kinds of Kharia-related literature, including poetry, articles, and historical accounts. Thus, an effort was made to preserve the Kharia language, culture, and history traditions. (Sanjay,2022) In this Doklo presence of Mahto, Pahan, and Kartahas is essential. The President of this Sabha is called "SOHOR". Mahto, Pahan, and Kartaha of nine clans are required to be present in this Mahasabha. (Kerketta,2007)

CONCLUSIONS:

The preceding discussion underscores the conclusion that the Kharia's socio-cultural practices across various regions of India are connected to their traditional way of life. It serves as the foundation, that possesses a distinct and unique culture and Identity of the Kharia Tribe. The Kharias are an indigenous Austroasiatic ethnic group native to east-central India. They are further categorized into three distinct subgroups: the Hill, Dhelki, and the Dudh Kharia. The Origin and Identity of the Kharia tribes are rooted in legendary folk tales, which narrate their creation story in this way "According to Hill-Kharia folk tales, their origin story narrates how they came into being. The creation story of the Kharias portrays their unique traditional knowledge or the philosophy of life which is inherent in their socio-cultural practices. Furthermore, they engaged themselves in the collection of forest resources like hunting, gathering, and agriculture for their livelihood. Marriage is a vital institution in Kharia's culture, where both men and women can become integral members of a family through matrimony. This sacred bond is a lifelong commitment, granting couples the right to establish a family and form biological ties through the birth of children. They adhere to traditional religious customs, which encompass ancestor worship, a belief in benevolent and malevolent spirits, animism, and the veneration of deities such as "Giring Bero," the sun god, and "Baad Pahad," the mountain spirit. These deities are appeased through various sacrificial rituals. Additionally, the Kharia tribe celebrates several eco-friendly festivals, including Sarhul, Dimtang Sung, Bandoi, and Karam, which reflect their profound connection with nature. The Kharia people have a strong clan and ancestral heritage and they also observe a totemic tradition, wherein they revere specific plants, trees, animals, and birds as sacred symbols, attributing spiritual significance to these natural elements. Ultimately, this underscores the establishment of the Kharia "Mahadoklo" (a social organization) dedicated to inspiring younger generations to preserve the Kharia language, culture, history, and traditional way of life for posterity. On the whole, the above discussion highlights the sociocultural practices among the Kharias across various regions of India, providing valuable insights into the history of one of the indigenous tribal groups inhabiting the central part of India.

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