



The Social Science Review

A Multidisciplinary Journal

ISSN: 2584-0789

(Open-Access, Peer-Reviewed, Refereed, Bi-Monthly, International e-Journal)

www.tssreview.in

THE KHADIA TRIBE OF SUNDARGARH DISTRICT, ODISHA: A REFERENCE TO THEIR SONGS AND DANCE FOR CULTURAL EXPRESSION

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Abstract

The Khadia tribe is an indigenous ethnic group of the tribal society. Their arrival in India and settlement have been narrated by several authors and are mostly accepted. Their early settlements are found in the states of Bihar, Jharkhand, Odisha, West Bengal, Maharashtra, Tripura, Assam, and the Andaman Islands. The Khadia culture is enriched by their socio-economy, language, traditions, beliefs, songs, dance, etc. However, the legends and oral traditions are given much more importance than the historical perspectives of the Khadia tribe. The songs and dance are placed in significant positions by which the meaning and narrations are expressed by the Khadia Tribe. In Sundargarh District large number of Khadia population are found. By adopting and practicing Christianity, changes have been found in their beliefs, identity, customs, and traditions. On the other hand, Songs and dance are performed and practiced in the traditional way among the Khadia communities to preserve and promote their rich cultural identity.

Keywords: *Khadia Tribe, Culture, Songs, Dance*

Introduction

The Khadia Tribe is an indigenous ethnic group in India. They belong to Austro-Asiatic Tribal ethnic group from central India.¹ The Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Orders (Amendment) Act 1976 enlisted 62 tribal communities in Odisha and the Khadia (kharia) tribe is one of them. It is also one of the major populated tribes in the Sundargarh district. From 1880 to 1903 many foreign authors such as Dalton, Haunter, Hisalun, and Grieson started writing on Khadia (kharia) language, escorted by them, Indian authors. In the year 1973 Sarad Chandra Ray and Ramesh Chandra Ray published the book "The kharia". In the year 1981 Fr. Anthony Dung Dung SJ. Published 'The Kharia of Chotanagpur'.² At present many contemporary writers and researchers working to bring out new aspects of Khadia culture, social significance, and other aspects. However, the paper evolves the origin, identity, and nature of the Khadia Tribe and has focused on their songs and dance which are significant in cultural expression.

The Khadia Tribe has been subdivided into three groups.

1. Delki Khadia
2. Dudh Khadia
3. Pahadi Khadia / Hill Khadia

Even though the Khadias were a single Tribe, the situations forced them to live separately. The Delki and Dudh Khadias have lived very much close to each other in Sundargarh but despite that their social and

Published by:

Pather Dabi Educational Trust, (Regn No: IV-1402-00064/2023), Under Govt. of West Bengal, India.

cultural aspects define them independently. On the other hand, the Pahadi or Hill Khadia group from all aspects geographically, socially, culturally, and economically remained distinct. This group of people is found in and around the Similipal hills of the Mayurbhanj district.

Perhaps, the Dudh khadia are more advanced than the other two types of khadia Populations. The Socio-Cultural aspects and various activities of Dudh Khadias, and their movements from place to place have been described through Oral traditions. Since there was no script to write, they recorded and preserved the songs, and to bring life in it, they started to dance along with the songs. Not only do these songs and dances are part of their entertainment but also give a real historical perspective.

The term 'Durang' is most likely to be a song but it is sung without musical instruments. Mostly it is sung in the series of social ceremonies like Chhati (Thread Ceremony) which is mostly welcoming the baby in the Khadia communities, Lotta-dah (Engagement Ceremony), and Marriage Ceremonies. There are some other types of folk songs among the Dudh Kharia Tribe, which are mostly sung on different occasions, at the time of harvesting, hunting, at the time of collecting forest products, etc. They sing each song having wonderful meaning and narrations about particular occasions and events.

Dance is another interesting aspect of their Culture. The Khadia Community people with a rejoicing and vibrant mood come together holding hand in hand, in a circular direction properly connecting to the beats of the traditional music. There are other dance forms according to the festivals which are much slower as well as faster in tempo. The children, women, men, and elderly people dance to the beats of the music collectively. The musical instruments like Dholki, Nagara, Fetchka, Jhanj, and Mandar could be seen playing while dancing on different occasions.³

The word 'Khadia'

It is interesting to know that in the Khadia language the word Khadia does not exist as it means nothing and seems a like just a word to the language. It is said that the proper knowledge of the understanding of the origin of the work Khadia is lacking and various interpretations of the origin of this word. Now the word Khadia has become an identity for a community that has a common history, practice, world views, and similar cultural practices. It lets people be closer and can identify as similar beings in the world.⁴

Migration of Khadia people - Historical Perspective

The migration of the Khadia people from the cultural and historical aspects, a good number of narrations, and an explanation are done by different writers through their writings. It took time to understand, reflect and promote the coming of the Khadia Tribe. As mentioned earlier Khadias do not have a script and they carry out the Oral tradition, so the history is being narrated in every Lota dah: i.e., engagement ceremony and in Kaman. It's been many years since history is being narrated and we see that many of the facts are diluted especially the chronological data on settlement in various places. The history of the Khadia community is also stated in various songs and narratives, where they talked about the places they had settled and the memorable events they went through. The beautiful narration of sorrow and happy moments have perfectly been mentioned, remembered, and passed on from generation to generation. History consists of two different versions of origin.

There are two most prominent persons, Fr. Joseph Kullu and Fr. Anthony Dungdung, who have done research work in this field for eleven years. They have different opinions over the coming of the Indigenous Khadia tribe in India.

According to Joseph Kullu, Khadias came from Central Asia, through Khyber Pass (Ghat). Whereas, Anthony Dungdung writes that these people came from Mongoloid through Tibet Ghat. As per the second opinion, the word Tibet (khapaga) means pressing with the palm, the Khadia people claimed over Tibet

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Pather Dabi Educational Trust, (Regn No: IV-1402-00064/2023), Under Govt. of West Bengal, India.

Mountain to reach India. There is a beautiful song that claims that while climbing the mountain the Khadia people sang the song.

Song: *Tibet Biru depna depna*
(*Bah: rumkub: roh: ki*)²
Aay bar se kimin kiyar
Kayebar, Abarga melaye.....

The song goes on narrating the incidents on their movement till crossing the mountain Tibet. This song has a beautiful meaning and as per the act of the song, it is a conversation between the father-in-law and the daughter-in-law.

According to Fr. Paulus Kullu, the history of the arrival of khadia to the Indian nation is mentioned in his book *khadia religion and history* described that they came from the middle of Asia continent to India through China, Tibet, Himalaya, Kullu Ghat, Turiagarh, Delhi, Ayodhya, Mohenjo-Daro, by the crossing of Ganga River, Ruidas Patna, Chhotanagpur, Gumla, Sisai, Nao Ratangarh and finally to Odisha.⁵

In Odisha, the Khadias' population spread and was settled in different districts like Sundargarh, Sambalpur, Deogarh, and Mayurbhanj. Later on, with the growing populations, Khadias are found in some other districts too. In Sundargarh, the earlier settlement areas were the northern part of the districts and now in the current scenario, Khadias have well settled and are much more advanced in their every aspect of lives.⁶

Songs

(a) Identity

The word 'Aalong' means 'song' and another term 'Durang' usually means songs without musical instruments sound. The selection of Aalong and Durang is related to mood and situation. Aalong is usually sung with musical instruments as well as accompanied by dancing. It is really important to understand the time of Aalong. Aalong is sung rejoicing the moment collectively accompanied by collective dancing. Aalong is not sung alone but the collective happiness of the community is expressed by Aalong.⁷

It is equally important to understand the essence of Durang and the moments when Durang is sung. Durang is much slower in tempo than Aalong and is a symbolic representation of a deeper philosophical understanding of the moment, reality, world views, history, and narratives of the people. Usually, there are two groups of people singing the Durang as it consists of two parts: the introduction and the conclusion. Mostly the introduction would raise questions about the realities of the world and the conclusion would focus on the question.

(b) Significance

The Songs or Durang in the Khadia community are sung at the times of social ceremonies like Chatti (Purification Ceremonies), Lota: dah (Engagement), and Marriage. Because in every Lota: dah and Marriage, it is bound to sing and if not, as per the customary law fine would be imposed. Thus, from both sides, elderly people are invited to social ceremonies to sing. Elderly people play a major role in such social ceremonies and young people are welcome to join them. Apart from these, during their work in the field, way to the forest, time of the funeral, and during other social activities, they sing to cherish the memories of their ancestors. They also have seasonality songs, making them fun during their leisure hours.

Therefore, the Khadia society gives the cultural songs its priority in every aspect of their life. The most important thing is that every cultural song represents its meaning and is sung according to the occasion. As mentioned earlier the song speaks a lot about their cultural aspects and therefore, steps have been taken at different levels to look into the matter. In their point of view, the songs are left forgotten and not many initiatives are taken to restore their originality. Young minds have taken up the world of modernity.

Therefore, it is like an emergency call to the young people to revive their history, world views, customary laws, etc. through songs or Aalong.

Dance

Kharia or Khadia Dance is a typical tribal dance of North and Western Odisha found in the district of Mayurbhanj, Sundargarh, Jharsuguda, Deogarh, Sambalpur, and Keonjhar. It is a great thing that, most of the primitive, tribal and traditional dances are found exclusively in these districts. The same format of dance seen in other local and peripheral areas next to these districts is just an effect or influence of the original Khadia tribal dance. The native Kharia dance has a separate identity.⁸

Khadia dance is being danced by the Khadia youths of both sexes' male and female. It is completely a native, indigenous tribal dance of the Khadia tribe. Mostly, the dance is danced by the Khadia youths, but, people and dancers from all age groups can perform this dance, even old men and women also take part in the dance. Khadia dance is freed from the restrictions of age boundness.

The dance has an intrinsic purpose of serving the social relationship, particularly in the field of matrimonial issues. The youths dancing together of the same Khadia tribe, find a chance for likeness and opt for their life partners. It provides a beautiful platform for matching, finding, negotiating, and understanding each other's sentiments. They have every chance of finding a bond of love, romantic or social relationship during the learning or displaying of the dance.

(a) Forms of Dance

Khadia Cultural dance is found broadly in five divisions or classes namely;

- Hariaro (Liner)
- Kinbhar (Round)
- Halka (waist)
- Kudhing (jumping)
- Jadura (dual)

These are the various dancing posture, actions, and modulations of Khadia cultural dance. Hariaro is the linear display, Kinbhar is the circular display, Halka is the swaying of the waist, Kudhing is the jumping style and Jadura is the dance found in duet or group form. The individual presentation and setup of the dance have an attractive eye-catchiness.⁹

(b) Dancing floor or Akhada

The most important aspect of Dance is the Dancing floor. So, what is the Dancing floor or the Akhada and why is it given so much importance among all the Tribal Communities? Well, before getting to know about the Cultural dance of the Khadia Tribe, one has to be well informed about the Akhada or the Dancing floor.

Akhada or the Dancing floor is a place where people gather to perform cultural dance. Does the question arise why the Akhada and where should it be? The structure of the Khadia villages and houses are very close to each other. The most interesting among the Khadia villages is that their Dancing floor would be in the centre of the village. The Akhada or the Dancing floor is well prepared and decorated with natural decorative tools of trees and their leaves and flowers. On the floor, they mopped with mud and cow dung. They are decorated with such things because the dancing floor is considered holy and believed in the presence of God. They offered prayers before dancing. The other aspect while dancing is that of systematic and uniformity in dancing on the Dancing floor and the very first thing is that Dancers and persons playing musical instruments enter the Akhada barefoot.

Conclusion

This cultural journey of understanding the Khadia culture and the meaning of cultural expression has left many thoughts for discussion. The pace of Modernization has affected the minds of the younger generation. This is a harsh reality in the Khadia community that if it continues and the cultural aspect is not encouraged among its members, the identity and the history of the Khadia tribe may disappear. In terms of culture, it needs to be practiced not just recorded in writings. There are different organizations and experts behind the promotion of the Khadia culture and that is some sort of positivity. However, the paper has mostly focused on the Socio-cultural aspects of the Khadia Tribe. It has explored the realities and analyzed the visible cultural elements in depth. Various aspects of culture would be experienced in depth through the ethnographic journey and gaining knowledge through participatory observation. Interviewing the lived experience of the people opened many perceptions of reality. Furthermore, the research on different aspects of Khadia Culture would be taken up along with historicizing it to be more precise and authenticate the facts and narrations.

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