

# **Kondh**

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## CHAPTER - I

Sub Headings of the Ethnographic Report will be in the following manner

1. Introduction (Present demography, Origin, Migration, History etc).

Present demography of the Kondh

**Origin** – The Kondh are Indigenous tribal groups of Indian. They live in Orissa, a state in Eastern India. Their highest concentration is found in the blocks of Rayagada, Kayagada, Kashipur, Kalyansinghpur, Bissamcuttack and Muniguda. The Kondhas are believed to be from the Proto-Australoid ethnic group. Their native language is Kui, a Dravidian language written with the Oriya script. The Kondha are adept land dwellers exhibiting greater adaptability to the forest environment. However, due to development interventions in education, medical facilities, irrigation, and plantation and so on, they are forced into the modern way of life in many ways. Their traditional life style, customary traits of economy political organization, norms, values and world view have been drastically changed over a long period of time

A Dravidian tribe found in some of the Orissa Feudatory States, in the Berhampur Agency Tracts, and in the Khondmahals Sub-division of the Angul District. The Khondmahals Khonds call themselves Maliah Khonds, as distinguished from the Beniah Khonds dwelling about Gumsur in Berhampur Ganjam.

The Khonds call themselves Kui-loka or Kui-enja. Risley thinks the name Khond is derived from the Uriya Khanda meaning a sword, which is said to be the totem or distinguishing mark of the tribe.

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**Physical appearance**-The Khonds are of strikingly fine physique, which Risley suggests may be due to their admitting to their community members of other stocks, always however excepting the despised Pans, Domnas and the sweeper Haris.

## 2. **Linguistic affinity** -

### 3. **Physical features**

#### 1. **Material culture** –

**Use of forest materials** – Forest materials play a significant role in the construction of houses of the Kondh tribe. They use wooden pillars, bamboos in the erection of shed, kotha and roof, doors, windows etc.

The forest material are used for making the household furnitures such as khatia, chouki, bench, chair, table, tools, chatai, machia.

The forest products are also used in kitchen such as belana, chilohi, handle of chaku, chouka. Household implements such as oria, jhapi, supa, dheki, rassi, dali etc. are prepared from the product of forest.

Agriculture implements are also made up of forest materials like hal, juath, haris, kudal, hasua etc.

Musical instruments such as dhol, nagra, basuri are of forest products.

2. **Occupation (Economy, Livelihood, pattern)**- They have a subsistence economy based on foraging, hunting & gathering but they now primarily depend on a subsistence agriculture i.e. shifting cultivation or slash and burn cultivation or Podu. The Dongria Kondh are excellent fruit farmers. The most striking feature of the Dongria kondhas is that they have adapted to horticulture and grow pineapple, oranges, turmeric, ginger and papaya in plenty. Forest fruit trees like mongo and jackfruit are also found in huge numbers, which fulfill the major dietary chunk of the Dongrias. Besides, the Dongrias practice shifting cultivation or "Podu Chasa" as it is locally called, as part of an economic need retaining the most primitive features of underdevelopment and cultural evolution.

The Khonds are shy and timid, hating contact with the people of the plains. Like many other wild tribes they are in the habit of clearing patches of land by jhuming, abandoning their plots after two years of cultivation and clearing other spots by firing the jungle.

Agriculture is their sole pursuit, and none of them have taken to any sort of trade. They claim full proprietary rights in the land they have cleared of jungle, though in some cases, there is joint ownership by the muta.

3. **Food habit** – The staple food of the Kondh tribe is boiled rice.

4. **Village life (type of village)** – The general character of the country where the Khonds are found is wild and mountainous; a confused succession of ranges covered with dense sal forests; the villages are scattered and the population sparse. The village consists of 30 to 50 houses. A burial ground is kept outside the village. Their household belongings consist of a few important agricultural implements, earthen pots and brass utensils. They consider cooked rice and vegetables in earthen ware much more delicious than food cooked in metal pots. The Kondh village is more or less self sufficient economic unit. There is village market where vegetables, fowls, eggs, and lac produce and food grains are sold. There is a village head known as gaonbura (headman). He is appointed/ selected by the villagers to look after the village issues.

**Village setting-** The pattern of the houses of the people has undergone considerable change. The houses are two sloped and thatched with wild grass wall being made of upright sal logs placed side by side. Now, the wild thatched has been given away to paddy, straw and the walls are built of mud.

The houses are kept clean by regular plastering with mud and cow dung solution. The houses have a rectangular ground.

**House** – All the houses are made of mud walls. Some houses are made of Kuchcha bricks plastered with the mud. The roofs of the houses are made of bamboos. The floors of the houses are usually mud. Sheds are erected with the help of wooden poles and thatched with bamboo, leaves and bushes. There is no separate kitchen room. Many of them have to sleep in the same houses along with chickens, ducks, goats etc.

5. Dress & Ornaments

6. Art and Craft It is through this endeavour their cultural self-image and aesthetic sensibilities are visualized. The artistic skill of the tribal people is not only manifested in their dance and music but also in their dress and ornaments, wall-paintings, wood carvings and decorations, etc. The beautiful wall-paintings and floral designs of the Santals and the ikons of the Saoras which depict geometric designs and stylistic figures of plants and animals are the best example of tribal art. The multicoloured designs and relief figures of animals and human beings which decorate the walls of Mandaghar in Juang society are indeed works of very high order. Similar wall-paintings and decorations are also very attractive.

7. **Social organization (Society, Clan system)** – The Dongria family is often nuclear, although extended families are found. Female family members are considered assets because of their contribution inside and outside the household and women are on equal footing with the male members in constructing a house to cultivation. Women do all the work for household ranging from fetching water from the distant streams, cooking, serving food to each member of the household to cultivating, harvesting and marketing of produce in the market. Due to this, the bride price is paid to her parents when she gets married which is a striking feature of the Dongrias. However, the family is patrilineal and patrilineal. The Dongrias commonly practice polygamy. By custom, marriage must cross clan boundaries (a form of incest taboo). The clan or "Puja" is exogamous, which means marriages, are made outside the clan (yet still within the greater Dongoria population). The form of acquiring mate is often by capture or force or elopement. However, marriage by negotiation is also practiced. The Dongrias have a dormitory for adolescent girls and boys which forms a part of their enculturation and education process. The girls sleep at night in the dormitory (Daa Sala) and learn social taboos, myths, legends, stories, riddles, proverbs amidst singing and dancing the whole night, thus learning the way of the sacred feminine.

The Dongrias are great admirer of aesthetic romanticism. Their personal adornment is unique with each male and female member using hair clips, ear rings neck rings, hand rings made up of brass, iron and Hyndalium prepared by themselves as well as purchased from local markets. Body tattooing is practiced by both sexes

Every village has its headman, the office being hereditary. There is besides in each muta, a Hindu Superintendent or Bissoya, men who are believed to have been appointed by the Khonds themselves to act as intermediaries between them and the Hindu Rajas of the neighborhood; they are endowed with grants of lands, and extort a large share of the produce of each field.

**Dance** - Kondh dance is mostly confined to unmarried boys and girls and free mixing of the sexes is allowed during dancing. The dances are performed especially when the boys or girls of one village visit another village. The dance forms an item in the daily routine of the Kondh, when the boys and girls in their dormitories meet after the day's toil. No instrument accompanies the dance of the Kondhs of Koraput. The girls dance in lines and the boys dance behind and in front of them. The dance of the Phulbani Kondh is more colourful. The girls wear sarees in two pieces and bangles on their ankles. They dance in rows, facing rows of boys who sing songs and play on hand drums. Songs play a very important part in the dance. Special dances are performed during buffalo sacrifice, called the Kedu festival.

8. **Rites and Rituals** – The Kondhs observe a number of rituals in connection with birth, puberty, marriage and death, with specific folk dances and songs for each occasion. They believe in the existence of gods and spirits, both benevolent and malevolent. The song here is sung at the death of a person beseeching the spirit of the dead to stop troubling the living. It is based on the Kondh belief that people love their homes so much that their souls are reluctant to leave the hearth even after death. These spirits, though generally kind, can become harmful at times since they are now unable to participate in earthly life. It is, therefore, customary to make generous offerings to the spirit. The song begins by saying that the dead spirit will be able to receive offerings only if the others in the family continue to live and prosper. They reveal their willingness to do anything to make the spirit happy but, in return, the spirit must also promise not to trouble them with its visits.

**Beliefs**-The Khonds are firm believers in witchcraft of the usual aboriginal type. They have a system of trial by ordeal of those who are suspected of the black art.

**Skills** – The Kondhs are keen sportsmen, and show remarkable skill in the use of very primitive weapons,

9. Life cycle (Birth, Marriage & Death)

**Birth-**

**Marriage** – The custom of exogamy is strictly observed among the Khonds, the tribe being divided into fifty gochis or septs, each of which bears the name of a muta, or village, instead of the usual totemistic animal or plant.

A Khond may not marry into his own gochi, which is transmitted according to the father's side. Relationship on the female side does not operate to prohibit marriage, except between first and second cousins.

Marriage is usually adult, and women wed men of their own choice, after a regular process of courtship; considerable license is allowed to the young men and maidens of the tribe, and sexual intercourse before marriage is tacitly recognized. Infidelity after marriage is said to be rare, but marriages may be dissolved by paying back to the aggrieved husband the cost of his marriage. A bride's price is paid, widow marriage is allowed, but it is considered right and proper that the widow should marry the younger brother of her deceased husband.

**Death-**

10. **Political life (Customary law, Kinship) -**

11. Religion - The Dongria have syncretic beliefs combining animism. Their pantheon has both the common Hindu gods and their own. The gods and goddesses are always attributed to various natural phenomena, objects, trees, animals, etc. They have a god or deity for everything and anything. The Dongrias give highest importance to the Earth god (Dharani penu), and Niyam penu (Niyamgiri Hill) who is held to be the creator and sustainer of the Dongria. For instance, in a house, there is a deity for back and front street, kitchen, living room, implements and so on and so forth. In the Dongria society, breach of any religious conduct by any member of the society invites the wrath of spirits in the form of lack of rain fall, soaking of streams, destruction of forest produce, and other natural calamities. Hence, the customary law, norms, taboos, and values are greatly adhered and enforced with high to heavy punishments, depending up on the seriousness of the crimes committed. As with any culture, the ethical practices of the Dongria reinforce the economic practices that define the people. Thus, the sacredness of the mountains perpetuates tribal socio-economics, whereas outside cultures that neglect the sacredness of the land find no problem in committing deforestation, strip-mining etc. For social control in the village and at Muttha level (regional), there are hereditary religious leaders like Jani (religious head), Mondal (secular head), Bejuni (sorcerer), Barik (messenger) to co-ordinate, decide by holding a meeting where the punishment is awarded along with appeasement procedure is followed with sacrifices of buffaloes and cocks. The punishment may be in cash or kind and may lead to ostracism from the community if not obeyed.

The Khonds recognize three principal gods, Dharma Pennu, Saru Pennu and Taru Pennu. Dharma Pennu is worshipped in the case of illness or at the birth of a first child; he may be described as the god of the family and of the tribe itself. Saru Pennu is the god of the hills, and is a jealous god, disliking trespassers on his domain, and the chief object of his worship, is to induce him to protect from the attacks of wild animals those whose business takes them among the forest clad hills, and also to procure a plentiful yield of forest produce which the Khonds use so largely for food. Taru Pennu, is the earth god.

## 12. **Line of descent**

### 13. **Disposal of death** -

Points to be considered for the Ethnographic Study?

#### A. Name, Identity, Origin and History

1. Name of the community, other name, name referred by other communities, meaning associated with the name.
2. Name mentioned above are considered derogatory in any manner?
3. Traditional demography.
4. History of origin of your community
5. Myth and legends, if any, associated with the origin and migration of your community.
6. Any other information.

#### B. Habitation pattern

1. Type of village
2. Whether mixed with other communities/religious Groups etc.
3. Neighborhood pattern

4. Dwelling unit. Ground plan of the dwelling unit i.e. rectangular/square/oval/circular/any other.

5. Any other information.

#### C. Food and drink

1. Type of utensil used for preparing and serving food and drinks.

2. Staple food.

3. Food items.

4. Drinks and types of drinks.

5. How many meals take everyday.

6. Any other information.

#### D. Dress and Ornaments

1. Type of dress worn by a) Adult male/ Adult female – i)

head gear, ii) Upper garment, iii) Lower garment. b)

Male child/Female child – i) head gear, ii) Upper

Garment, iii) Lower garment.

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2. Uniqueness of the dress pattern.

3. Type of dress worn during festivals/special occasion etc.

4. Type of dress used by the Priest, Headman and Medicine man.

5. Ornaments worn by male and female and parts of the body where worn.

6. Materials used for preparation of the ornaments.

7. Any other information.

#### E. Family, Clan and other Analogous division

1. Type of household

2. Where a couple does usually reside after marriage

3. Traditional practice of descent.

4. Role of family members.

5. Sub caste/sub tribes.

6. Etymological significance of name of each sub castes/sub tribes.

7. Myth and legends associated with sub castes/ sub tribes.

8. Traditional occupation of sub castes/ sub-tribes.

9. Clan/ Gotra of the community.

10. How clan regulates marriage.

11. Any other information.

#### F. Economic activities

1. Traditional occupation, main occupation pursued now a days and other occupation.

2. Main crops produced.

3. Months of the following activities i.e. Ploughing, sowing, weeding & harvesting.

4. Activities usually performed by adult male, adult female, male child, female child.

5. Magico-religious ceremonies performed during

ploughing, sowing & harvesting.

6. Implements used for ploughing, sowing & harvesting.

7. Any other information.

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#### Fishing & Hunting

1. Where & how do you fish and how?

2. Implements used for fishing & hunting.

3. Any other information.

#### G. Life style

1. Beliefs associated with conception. Barrenness, prolong delivery, delivery of dead child & maternity death.

2. Restriction imposed on mother during pregnancy on – Diet, Work, Visiting any place.

3. Who provides assistance during delivery.

4. What type of instruments is used to sever umbilical cord?

5. How placenta is disposed off.

6. Duration of confinement of mother after delivery.

7. Any other information.

#### Marriage

1. Age of marriage

2. Type of marriage (elopement, capture, service etc)

3. Whether following practices are prevalent – Child Marriage, widow marriage, widower marriage, Remarriage, polyandry, polygyny, levirate, sororate and divorce.

4. Custom and practices associated with marriage.

5. Dowry and Bride price.

6. Any other information.

#### Death

1. Beliefs associated with death.

2. Rituals performed and ritual objects used at the time of disposal of the dead body.

3. Place where dead body is disposed off.

4. Manner in which dead body is disposed off – Cremation, Infant, accident death.

5. Who prepares the site for cremation.

6. How the dead body is placed in the grave/pyre/

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7. What are the offering made to the deceased.

8. Rituals performed at the time of disposed off.

9. Duration of pollution period.

10. Restriction observed during pollution period.

11. Who officiates in performing death rites?

12. Any other information

#### H. Religion

1. Supreme deity.

2. How supreme deity is associated with the life of the

people?

3. When this deity is propitiated?

4. Village deity.

5. Clan deity

6. Malevolent spirit

7. Ancestor worship.

I. Traditional system of social control

1. Traditionally recognized agency/traditional/political organization (eg Customary law, Panachayat, etc. ) If yes, are there any permanent set of office bearers.

2. Functions of traditional/political recognized agencies.

3. Any other information.

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CHAPTER – II

Five Criteria

1. Primitive traits.

2. Distinctive culture

3. Shyness of contact with the community at large

4. Geographical isolation

5. Backwardness

Conclusion

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CHAPTER – III

Replies to the queries made by RGI/National

Commission for SC/ST

CHAPTER – IV

Conclusion