

Khasi Tribe

April 6, 2021

About Khasi Tribe

Location: The Khasis inhabit the eastern part of Meghalaya, in the Khasi and Jaintia Hills. Khasis residing in Jaintia hills are now better known as Jaintias. They are also called Pnars. The Khasis occupying the northern lowlands and foothills are generally called Bhois. The Khasi people are an indigenous ethnic group of Meghalaya in north-eastern India with a significant population in the bordering state of Assam, and in certain parts of Bangladesh. The Khasi people form the majority of the population of the eastern part of Meghalaya, and is the state's largest community, with around 48% of the population of Meghalaya.

Constitutional Status: Under the Constitution of India, the Khasis have been granted the status of Scheduled Tribe.

Dress: The traditional Khasi male dress is "Jymphong" or a longish sleeveless coat without collar, fastened by thongs in front. Now, the Khasis have adopted the western dress. The Khasi traditional female dress is rather elaborate with several pieces of cloth, giving the body a cylindrical shape.

Food & Drinks: The staple food of Khasis is rice. They also take fish and meat. Use of rice-beer is a must for every ceremonial and religious occasion.

Social Structure: They are among the few Austroasiatic-speaking peoples in South Asia. The Khasis, the Jaintias and the Garos have a matrilineal society. Earlier in the conservative Jaintia non-Christian families, however, the father only visits the family in the night and is not responsible for the maintenance of the family.

Inheritance: Khasis follow a matrilineal system of

inheritance. In the Khasi society, it is only the youngest daughter or “Ka Khadduh” who is eligible to inherit the ancestral property. If ‘Ka Khadduh’ dies without any daughter surviving her, her next elder sister inherits the ancestral property, and after her, the youngest daughter of that sister. Failing all daughters and their female issues, the property goes back to the mother’s sister, mother’s sister’s daughter and so on. The Ka Khadduh’s property is actually the ancestral property and so if she wants to dispose it off, she must obtain consent and approval of the uncles and brothers.

Marriage: Marriage within a clan is a taboo. Rings or betel-nut bags are exchanged between the bride and the bridegroom to complete the union. In the Christian families, however, marriage is purely a civil contract.

Religion: The Khasis are now mostly Christians. But before that, they believed in a Supreme Being, The Creator – U Blei Nongthaw and under Him, there were several deities of water and of mountains and also of other natural objects.

Khasi Tribe Festivals

Nongkrem Dance

- Nongkrem Dance is a religious festival in thanksgiving to God Almighty for good harvest, peace and prosperity of the community.
- It is held annually during October/ November, at Smit, the capital of the Khyrim Syiemship near Shillong.
- The dance is performed in the open by young virgins and men, both bachelors and married.
- The men form an outer circle and dance to the accompaniment of music of flutes and drums.. An important feature of the festival is the ‘Pomblang’ or goat sacrifice offered by the subjects to the Syiem of Khyrim, the administrative head of the Hima (Khasi State).

Shad Suk Mynsiem

- One of the most important festivals of the Khasis is Ka Shad Suk Mynsiem or Dance of the joyful heart.
- It is an annual thanksgiving dance held in Shillong in April.
- Men and women, dressed in traditional fineries dance to the accompaniment of drums and the flute.
- The festival lasts for three days.