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Prolegomena to the Identity of Mal Paharia of Jharkhand

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Abstract

The present research paper aims at delineating the identity maintenance of the Mal Paharia, a PVTG of Jharkhand. The people of Rajmahal Hills and Jungleterry, are living in the hill forest ecology and sharing the same ecology with Kumarbhag, and Saoria Paharia. In the plains their neighbours are the Santal, people of Hindi and Bengali speaking caste based communities, traders from different regions, and religions of India. Historically, the 'Maler' was referred to as a community of that region, who spoke northern Dravidian language 'Malto' (Vidyarthi 1963). The Mal Paharia, Saoria Paharia, and Kumarbhag Paharia, who are earliest settlers of the region apparently, maintain three separate nomenclatures to introduce themselves that might have originated from the 'Maler' ancestors. The present paper has made a modest attempt to know common institutionalized customs in practice among them. They share the same ecological niche and came under influence of the neighbouring communities because the place known as Rajmahal hills is considered as the gateway of Bengal from the side of northern India. The hill passes were important to traders from the ancient past. At this background the present paper aims at discussing Identity Maintenance of the Mal Paharia and their relations with the other Paharia. The word 'Paharia', is in earlier records written as 'Pahariya', 'Pahariaa' also. However, the field data are referred to in the present paper; and in a few discussions for comparative analysis secondary data sources are utilized.

Keywords: *Mal Paharia; Pahria; Maler; Malto; Kumarbhag; Ultimogeniture; Identity Maintenance; Social Ecology; Gungleterry; Rajmahal hills;*

Introduction

Every community has a name and that may change over a period of time. The origin of each nomenclature of a community is either given by outsiders (i.e. exonym) or the word is rooted to the community's own language and culture (i.e. autonym). The name(s) of a community carries

the history of social ecology. During ethnic movements in post-colonial situations in India many tribal communities shifted their nomenclature from exonym to autonym. For example, from Abor to Adi; Dafla to Miji; these are a few instances in which communities disapproved of exonym for their derogatory meanings (Chaudhuri and et.al 2008:75-77). Other exonyms are there which were given by neighbours but remember the beautiful social history of the remote past. For example, there are two neighbouring communities 'Miji' and 'Aka' in Arunachal Pradesh; and in the Aka language the word 'Miji' means 'fire givers' (Chaudhuri Ibid). In a personal communication, Maniram Mosahari, the Bodo Sahitya Sabha President of Assam (1993) said that in the Bodo language the word 'Bangla' means 'the land mass emerged from the riverine alluvial soil. This word is an exonym for the Bengali. The topography of present Bangladesh which is one of the cultural ecologies of Bengalis really matches with that meaning. Therefore, it can be said that the root word of Bengali is 'Bangla'. The word 'Mal Pahariya', the nomenclature of the community under study, creates a scope to discuss it further. The word 'Mal' originates from 'Maler' a word of Dravidian origin. The word 'Paharia' is rooted to the Indo-European Linguistic origin. The social ecology of the Mal Paharia is revealed through the nomenclature. These words originated from two separate linguistic families, and i.e. the Dravidian meaning of the word 'Male' means 'A Man of Hills' and 'Maler' means 'Men of Hills' (Vidyarthi 1963:1). In Indo European language the word 'Pahariya' means 'hill dweller'; whereas both the parts of the word 'Mal Pharia' have the same meaning and that is people of hills. Vidyarthi (1963) identified the 'Maler' as settlers of Rajmahal hills who speak the Malto language. This language is identified as one of the northern Dravidian languages. He found that the people speak Hindi as well. Vidyarthi (1963: 1-2) identified two more social groups other than 'Maler' under a generic category 'Paharia'. Those he mentions as 'Mal' and 'Kumarbhag' Paharias. He wrote that the others speak a mixed language of local 'Maghi' version of Hindi and mixed with Bengali vocabularies. The Mal Paharia, Kumarbhag Paharia and Saoria Paharis/ Maler are surrounded by those Hindi (Magahi), Bengali, and Santali people in the foothills. The Mal Paharia people speak Bengali, Hindi (Maghi), Khorta, and Santali. The Munda, Oraon, Birhor; present study finds use of words in the vocabularies of the Mal Paharias similar to Dravidian languages (See Chart-1). Their neighbours in the state the Oraon speak Kurukh language and belong to the northern Dravidian linguistic group, like 'Malto'. The Mal Paharia predominantly settled in the districts, Dumka, Pakur, Godda, and Sahib Gunj of the state of Jharkhand. Those settlement areas are hilly and historically the region was referred to as Rajmahal hills, gateway of Bengal in northern India. As per land relations the Mal Paharia has comparatively larger community land ownership (Jama-Bandi) than the Santal. The distinct feature of their habitat is villages are mostly on hill forests; uni-ethnic and traditionally their ancestors were shifting hill cultivators. They refer places as forests are located on higher

altitudes of their settlement areas and having Sal forests (Fieldwork: 2024 in Amlagarhi and Kerabani Dumka district). The Mal Paharia villages of that region are situated in the altitude and at the height of 140-170 meter. In villages the people stay in a homogenous situation despite the foothills and plains villages of the Rajmahal hills are dominated by the population of the Santal, the second largest tribes in India, and caste based Hindu communities. In the Dumka and other towns of the Rajmahal hills people from religious beliefs and faiths like Hindu, Islam, Jains and Christian live. The dominant religious festivals in that region are predominantly Hindu origin. At this background the present paper presents the identity of the Mal Paharia. This is a particularly vulnerable primitive group (PVTG). However, the habitat of the people is located in the north-east corner of the Deccan Plateau and its higher hilly region in the north and eastern sides of that plateau is divided from plains of Bengal by the rivers Ganga and Bhagirathi.

At this background Objectives of the present paper

1. To study shared social customs, institutions, and religious faiths of the Mal Paharia with other two Paharia social groups.
2. To understand the identity maintenance process of the Mal Paharia.
3. To study the probable reason behind the construction of the nomenclature Mal Paharia.

Methods of the Present Study

Both the primary and secondary sources of data are the basis of this writing. Primary data is referred here is based on fieldworks are conducted in three villages of two districts of Dumka and Pakur of Jharkhand in August-December 2024. Those are Amlagarhi and Keirabani villages of the district Dumka and Boro Pahar of the district Pakur. All villages under Dumka and Pakur are uni-ethnic and villages of Dumka smaller in size in comparison to the Boro Pahar, which has four hamlets. The inhabitants of the Boro Pahar village have identified themselves as Kumarbhag Paharia/Paharia, while people in two villages in Dumka identified themselves as Mal Paharia. Present study refers to writings of Vidyarthi (1963) who said that the non-tribal local people refer to Maler as Sanvaria and Saoria Paharia also (Ibid Appendix-1, p-180).

Nomenclature- Mal-Paharia: A Colonial Construction

The 1891 Census mentioned the 'Mal Pahadia' speaking people belonged to the Dravidian linguistic families and the ratio of speakers is 1: 1000 (p-136) (Census of India 1891-A General Report, Manas Publication Delhi, 1985 (Reprinted). In the chapter introduction of his book entitled, *The Maler: A Study in Nature-Man-Spirit Complex of a Hill Tribe of Bihar*, by Vidyarthi (1963) preferred the word 'Maler' to refer to a tribe of Rajmahal plateau of the Santal Pargana. In

footnote (Vidyarthi 1963:1) author refers the word “Pahariya” as a ‘common name of the ‘Maler’ and further added that earlier authors (references nil) mentioned the people as ‘Saoria’ and local people refer to them as ‘Sanvaria’. He mentioned a chart on population distribution that might be showing Census data (Appendix-1:180), entitled, “A Chart Showing the Comparative Figures of Maler, Mal and Kumarbhag Paharias in the various parts of Santal Parganas”. The first column indicates Census year & Place names; Second column is as follows: ‘Maler or Sanvaria’ and at the bottom of this ‘Saoria’; Third column ‘Mal Paharias’; Fourth column ‘Kumarbhag’. The last column is indicating the total population of all these groups. This chart shows that the first category ‘Maler or...’ is not found in places like Deoghar, Jamtara, Dumka from 1872-1951. They were found in the places like Rajmahal, Pakur, Godda. The Mal Paharias were found at Rajmahal, Pakur, Godda, Deoghar, Jamtara, and Dumka. The Kumarbhag people in between 1872-1931 are not found in any of those places mentioned above. They were not found in Rajmahal and Dumka in 1941 and 1951. They were found in places like Pakur, Godda, Deoghar, and Jamtara in 1941 and 1951. Reason of invisibility of the Kumarbhag Paharia is not discussed by Vidyarthi (ibid). He identified each of these groups as an endogamous social group having linguistic variation. The word ‘Pahadia’, ‘Pahariya’ and ‘Paharia’ are found with variegated spelling in the colonial and post-colonial literature (Census of 1891, 1951; Sahay 1957; Vidyarthi 1963; Panda 2021; DRMTWRI 2024). The Paharia/Pahadia/Pahariya is a word of Indo- Aryan Bengali, Magahi, Hindi origin. So, East India Company (EAC) and Colonial administrators coined the word from their Indian counterparts. Why did the people in hills become so important to EAC officials for which they created an exonym (Paharia/ Mal Paharia) for the people and Cleveland proposed the first tribal policy as per Panda (2021)?

The Pahariya as a Subject of British Jungleterry

Panda (2021) refers to the East India Company’s invasion of the “Jungleterry” (erstwhile Rajmahal hills). She elaborated British and Paharia relations during the East India EIC regime. That clearly helps to understand the formation of the concept “Pahariya”, which is later prefixed to the word “Mal” in Censuses 1891 and 1951. Panda (2021:1) wrote, “The ‘aboriginal’ inhabitants/tribes in the hilly part of Jungleterry had been considered a threat to the newly established regime. Those people did not surrender their land as well as autonomy to become loyal subjects.” She Quotes Bradley-Britt (1905: 16), “For centuries this land and the contending races who had made it their battlefield had gone without a written history, with scarce a record even in annals of their conquerors, to show what manner of things befallen them, and what they accomplished during all the years of turmoil and unrest”; Bradley Britt ends this description with a kind of glorification in support of the British administrators, but Panda (2021) felt that Cleveland’s policy to some extent

could stop the rebels who were referred as the 'Paharyias'. Cleveland as referred to in Panda's article (2021: 20) received praise for his far sighted contribution to the birth of a tribal policy. Cleveland "devised a comprehensive strategy to neutralize resistance of the indigenous people against consolidation of the company's authority at Jungleterry. He designated his stratagem to transform insubordination into loyalty and trust" (Panda 2021:21). For that he travelled a lot among Pahariya people in remote hills, created a native Militia consisting of Pahariya 'Sardars' and 'Chief'. Cleveland offered them a lucrative salary and Pension. Through this strategy he aimed to create a group of loyal families. Such a strategy has a positive result. In his second move he established a Hill Assembly, a native Judicial Body of Pahariya Chiefs to probe criminal cases in which the Collector was ultimate authority. Under this provision revenue increased in which Hill Archers (Pahariya Police) had contributed to maintain law and order. All these developments happened in 1779-1782. Pahariya people denied only one of Cleveland's proposals and that was occupying rent free plain lands leaving hill forest settlement. This denial of Pahariyas invited the Santals to occupy those lands to begin settled cultivation (Ibid 2021: 20-22).

The Mal-Pahariya: Their Participation in Resistance Movements

In 1766 Ramna Ahadi, Changrun Sanwariya, Pachge Domba, Paharia and Kariya Pulhar –Pahariya leaders protested against aggressive behaviours of the EAC officials ("Pahariya Rebellion, History, Pahariya Revolt, and People" <https://www.studyiq.com>, date of access, 07.01.2025). The Pahariyas under leadership of Zamindar Jagannath Deo led a protest against intervention of EAC and their taxation policy (1778).

Ashok Das, interviewed of Prof. Lakshman (e channel, dalit dastak@gmail.com, date of access 05.10.2024) says that due to the taxation policy on the peasants and farmers they revolted against East India Company after 1765, Jamindars in the Rajmahal hills (1772-1778). To control the Pahariya rebellion against taxation policy of the British Governor General Warren Hastings (1778) established "Hill Corps" and recruited around 800 soldiers from the Pahariya. To control rebellious Pahariyas the then Collector Cleveland established Hill Rangers in 1781 and recruited 1300 Pahariya men in this troop by the permission of the East India Company. Das says that Mr. Jabra Pahariya was the Commander/ Chief of the Hill Rangers.

The Mal Pahariya: Their Political Economic Relations with Muslim Rulers and Jamindars before the Advent of East India Company

Dr. RamDayal Munda, Tribal Welfare Research Institute (DRMTWRI) states, *"During Muslim rule in Bengal, the Mal Paharias were brave warriors who maintained their independence from government control but developed a relationship with local landlords. Under this agreement,*

Mal Paharia lands were divided into two "Tappa" headed by Sardar, Who in turn had authority over the Majhi: village head. The Sardar acted as a law keeping force among the Mal Pahariya in return for this they were given a certain amount of land by the plains people. Passes leading to the hills are guarded by the Mal Pahariya outposts as well as forts of the plains people. This system ensures a relatively friendly relationship between the hills and plains people. Once a year, the arrangement was renewed with a feast in the plains between the landlords and the Sardars." During the Bengal Famine 1770s the treaty of the Sardars and Jamindars got disturbed. "The Mal Paharia was not affected due to their reliance on the forest product, so they were able to raid without much resistance."

Panda (2021:6-8) mentioned ruins of Muslim dynasties in the Rajmahal hills. This region was ruled by Khilji, Hosen Shah, Mughals and at last Nawabs of Bengal. After the defeat of the last Nawab of Bengal to the East India Company Mir Kashim shifted his capital to this region and very soon East India Company defeated him. Panda (Ibid) states that this region was not invaded by Sher Shah. East India Company after receiving "Forman" from the sitting Mughal Ruler and after defeating Nawab of Bengal paid whole attention to expand trades and RajMahal hills drew attention to them for its huge natural resources. They identified this place as the district-Jungleterry.

The Mal Pahariya: Their Political Economic Relations with East India Company

East India Company officials, collectors posted to the area of Rajmahal hills, which was referred to by them as Jungleterry district to fulfill the aim of creating sources of revenue collection for high profit. The first officer Captain Browne posted to this post was unsuccessful for his prolonged violent encounter with the Pahariya and a few Jamindars. He was removed soon (Panda 2021:1). EIC implemented direct administration to Jungleterry in 1772. Panda quotes Brit (1905) who described that hilly and forested territory by the side of the river Ganga was remarkable for its tangible and aesthetic resources and distressing for its human resource and that the Pahariyas. All British administrators acknowledged this fiercely independent people who according to the colonial gaze were not civilized. The territory of Jungleterry changed with the administrative decisions. Therefore, places like Bhagalpur, Mongyer, Kharagpur, some portions of Maldah, Birboom, were earlier within and later outside of the Jungleterry. To exploit the natural resources properly EIC created databases on the Jungleterry district- topographic, political Maps, paintings, mapping of natural resources and mining resources, and they had created archival records to exploit resources properly (Panda Ibid:8-9). In writings of all EIC officers a common subject was on the inhabitants of the region their pitiable situation, backwardness, despite EIC officers faced resistance continuously from the Pahariya people, they considered them wild people. Among all

Panda quotes Brit who appreciates collector Cleveland for his policies, which worked in support of imperialism and controlled the Paharias for a certain period. Paharias organized protests during Brownie's time period (1773-1774). His book *Indian Tracts* (1788) described food resources, and different tribal knowledge in practice. Buchanan (1794-1815) documented resources with full detail. He found people are in poor living conditions, despite the resource-rich Jungleterry; he studied linguistic affiliation of people to Dravidian languages. But his framework of comparison was between savages and civilized to judge the Pahariyas. Buchanan noticed the religious characters of this region. He discussed influences of Islam and Hinduization to the territory of the Jungleterry. Panda (2021:16) refers to Oldham (1930) to discuss the distinct influence of Hinduism on the different sections of the Pahariyas. Among all administrators, Panda (2021:21-23) stated that Cleveland (1779-1782) by his policy framing could bring them under control. Cleveland to control uncouth Sardars among Pahariya proposed salary and pension policy; to control all sections of Pahariyas, proposed to create and recruit Light Infantry Corps or Hill Police. Cleveland proposed to use the military instinct of the Pahariya in favour of the Company. Cleveland's policy really helped in the making of the colonial state in its early period. However, such policies of EIC gradually opened up possibilities to exploit natural and mining resources of the Pahariya territory peacefully. Those plans had changed the demographic features of Jungleterry district forever. The novel, entitled, *Harmawoa Ato* (1946), written by R.R. K. in the Santali language, a book on the Santal Insurrection (1855-1856) mentions the "Pahariya" people, the neighbour of the Santals of Dumka in the hills. The first chapter of this book describes the efforts of the headman & people of Harma village protecting Bund for storing water. Harma and his people are of Santal community origin and states that the Pahariya from hills attempted to destroy the Bund of the Harma's village. Description of the incident wrote that people of both the communities went for meetings and conversations to stop such unlawful acts at intercommunity level. This book originally translated from the book, entitled, *Harma's Village*, written by Robert Carstairs, a Deputy Commissioner posted in the Santal Pargana in between 1883-1897 and felt the Santal people's emotive expressions of the "Santal Hul". The first chapter of the book, *Harmawoa Ato* (1946), written by R.R. K. Rapaz began with the polemic relation between the Santal and Mal Paharia reflecting the dominant presence of the latter in that region. In this context East India Company's initiative for establishing the Pahariya Regiment in the Bhagalpur division in the last part of the eighteenth century was significant to understand the Mal-Paharia ethnic identity of the present.

The Mal Pahariyas are settled in West Bengal and trace their ancestors' migration from Rajmahal hills settled in the district Bardhaman since East India Company began Indigo Plantation. The Mal Paharia people worked as labourers for the plantations and later they settled there (Sumahan

2000). Vidyarthi (1963:182) in the Appendix -2 (i)- documented biographical interview of a Maler woman who was 90 years old at the time of interview. This interview discusses the social situation of the people. Two aspects are significant among all topics of the interview. One is frequent occurrences of smallpox endemic and large number of deaths; second is her narration on people's protest against imposition of tax on the Paharia. She narrated that her father told about Paharia's struggle and that they marched to Patna under the leadership of the Sardar of Bhatibhanga. She remembered that the Paharia equipped with bow and arrows didn't fight the enemy as they armed with guns and returned back. These things happened in the first of the nineteenth century.

The Mal Paharia Identity Maintenance Process: Discussion

Sahay (1957: 193-198) in *Vanyajati* wrote the article entitled, "Malpaharia Religion, Festivals and Deities". This article discusses the influence of Hindu religious practices on the Malpaharia belief system. He quotes the 1938 Santhal Pargana Gazetteer that refers to the Mal Paharia as a Hinduised section of tribes. Sahay observed that the people like to refer to themselves as Hindu and sacrifice hens, goats, eggs, pigs, and offer liquor to "deota", "dev", "Mata", "Gosain". Some of male gods are Bhui-Dev, Siv, Rasdeo, and Manadana. The female goddesses are Singwahini, Kali, Dhartimai, etc..

Food as Identity Marker

Our interaction with people of Amlagarhi, on the first day village men Mr. Jit Ahari and Rajendra Ahari said that you may call us 'Pahari', 'Ahari' or whatever but we are not 'beef eaters'. In this discussion group women (Ms. Shamlata Devi and Seema Devi) were mute participants (dated, 11.08.2024). They distinguished their own identity from the 'Sauriya Pahariya', referring that others are 'beef eaters'. Mr. Biswanath Paharia and Ms. Drothi Malto of the Bodopahar shared the same opinion. (dated, 13.08.2024). They do not maintain a marriage relationship with the 'Sauriya Pahariya'.

Marriage Distance and Marriage Relations

Earlier writings (Vidyarthi 1963; Sarkar 1938; tribejharkhand.in/en/mal-paharia, dated, 12.12.2024) discusses about Mal Paharia, Sauria Paharia, Kumarbhag Paharia, who are referred as endogamous social group within the Pahariya. Data on Marriage Preferences and Marriage Distances of the Bodopahar, Keirabani and Amlagarhi show that Mal Paharia prefer to marry within and nearby villages. Keirabani and Amlagarhi people have marriage relations with the people Sikaripara, Golpur, Valki, Pokhriya villages of Dumka. Earlier didn't prefer marriage relations from the other side of the river Basloi. At present, marriage relations are there with Mal Paharias of Pakur, Godda, They marry with the Kumarbhag Paharia and avoid Sauria Paharia.

The surnames of the people of these two villages are Pujhar, Deori, Dalai, Singh, Giri and they do not maintain any restriction to marry members from any other families with these surnames and Paharia surname.

Bodopahar villagers are Kumarbhag and use the surname Paharia. Maximum marriage relations are confined to the different hamlets of the same village or to nearby areas like Dumarchi, Poklo, Sundar Pahari and they have marriage relations with Mal Pahariya. All villagers marry Kumarbhag Paharia and Mal Paharia but not Sauria Paharia. (Data collected August-December 2024). Bodo Pahar, Telopara, are villages of Kumarbhag Paharia and Asan Pahari, Amlagarhi, Keirabani people are Mal Paharia. All of these villages have marriage relations. One young woman of the Bodo Pahar married a Sauria Paharia of Sahib Ganj and parents accepted the relation.

Poon Taddi Festival: A Quintessence of Social History

The festival Poon Taddi and its two days long rituals observed one after another transform the village space as a place where this uni-ethnic village transients its boundary. This ephemeral journey connects ritual of neighbours in which neighbours engagement is highly symbolic and negligible. Officially no outsiders are invited. Most significantly words and meaning of different rituals happen in separate altars, ingredients used for rituals are signatures of untold history in practice. For those two days, the village space synchronized ritual elements of aggressors with whom probably they had to contest for survival.

Poon Taddi is a festival observed in the month of February. This festival is performed collectively by the community after harvesting of Bjra (Millet). Different rituals of this festival take place at various sacred sites in the village, all these locations are known as *Goreya Odho, Taddi Tungpo, Jaher Than, Shiv Kutti, Gangaram Puja, Tigo-Muge, Mian Puja*. The Headman convenes a meeting after the Bajra harvest (January). He asked Goraith, the village messenger, to inform everyone in the community. Goraith by playing the dholak (percussion instrument) invites all the male villagers to gather at the designated location. During the meeting, Goraith announced dates of the upcoming festival, which would take place after the Bajra harvest was complete. The gathering was called by the headman about three weeks to one month before the festivals. The village head ensures arrangements for the events. No committee was formed for this festival; those interested persons from the same village assist the Nado (Priest); there are persons who volunteer to assist Nado; some of them by playing instruments.. No other women are involved in the ritual except that Nado's wife prepares raw rice powder used for decoration of altars in all phases of the festival; and when Malto Goshni visits different residences, he visits Nado's home and wife of Nado washes Malto Goshni's feet. She puts oil on the hair and feet on the Malto Goshni. Wife of

Nado is the only woman, who performs only one custom among all women of the village. Women and girl children can be spectators of all events. Neither women nor girl children have entitlement for participation in the feast on the first and second day. Only the Ghosni and Goshai sath Guraro (Ghosni's assistants), along with other participants of the festival and the male members of the village, can take part in the feast at the Nado's house, where they consume Pochoye (millet beer) and Surwa (stew of goat heads), and cooked Ghangra (a local bean).

Essential tasks associated with the festival, such as cleaning of the work area, tidying up the Gorja Odho, and preparing all the weapons and sticks used during the rituals, are performed by the male members of the village. While the cleaning of individual homes is the responsibility of the women in the household, it is not mandatory for all of them to do so. During various rituals, the villagers actively engage in playing instruments, enhancing the ceremonial atmosphere. It typically occurs at key moments, such as the beginning of the ceremony, the arrival of Ghosni(s); at the transition from one ritual to another; and while moving to different worship locations. There are no designated musicians, anyone in the village, who has the desire and skill to participate and contribute to perform. During this festival men manufacture Pogali, a blowing instrument made by palm leaves and gifted to Goshnis. The process of making the Pogali occurs during the arrival of Malto Ghosni.

Animals and birds are sacrificed in the festival like goats, cock and chick; Men participants cooked goat meat, head of goats, and Surwa. Surwa is a dish of stew, which is served to the participants in the feast in the house of Nado at the beginning of dining. This party happens in the courtyard, not inside rooms. These foods cannot be shared with outsiders of the village. Therefore, no one is invited to this festival. The two days festival happens in different phases. In every phase the ritual starts from the possession of Ghosni to the body of 2-3 villagers. Such action happened at Goreya Odho. The Nado, his associates go to respective altars of the village with the Ghosni to perform rituals. Alters are painted by *chawal gundi* (raw rice powder), *sindoor* (vermilion). Offerings like *pochoye* (millet-based liquor), *tapan* (rice-based liquor), goat (*patha*), *chuwra* (flattened rice), *gur* (jaggery), *khapra* (earthen bowls), *furuw* (Cups made of sal leaves), containing *otaro* (sediment from millet liquor), eggs (*pan*), bel patta (bael leaves), banana leaves, milk, chilli, Ginger, brass plate, *chuwra*, tender bamboo sticks, raw rice (arwa chawal), betel nut (*supari*), mats, clothing for Ghosni, battle axe (*farsa*), conch shell, mustard oil and Odho Pup, (a particular type of flower) goats, chiks, cock for sacrifices.

Table-1

Poon Taddi –A descriptive Table on Performance

Name of rituals	Alter	Ingredients used	Role of Priest (Nado) Nado and his assistants	Role of Goshni	Role of Villagers
Goreya Ordho	Goreya than	Chawal gundi (Row rice powder), Sindur (Vermilion), Khapra (Earthen pot), pochoye (millet based liquor), tapan(rice based liquor), patha (goat) chuwra (flattened rice), gur (jiggery), bent (tender bamboo stick)	They carry all ingredients to alter. Nado decorate the place with the rice powder and vermilion arranges earthen pots filled up with pochoye. After possession of goshni the Nado hand over a bamboo stick to the the hand of each goshni.	Goshni arrives in the body of a few men; they may be any one from community present there. After possession Goshni all proceed to <i>Jaher than</i> .	All the men of the village gather at Goreya than and wait for the goshni (spiritual entity and non -physical representative who can see past and future) by playing instruments to create the ambience.
Jaher Than	A stone at Jahir than	Chawal gundi (Row rice), 2 Khapra (Earthen pot), pochoye (millet based liquor), Sindur (Vermilion), water, Patha (he goat), tapan (rice based liquor), Chuwra (flatted rice), Fursa (Daau)	The Nado decorates the alter by chawal gundi and vermilion. Khapras filled up with pochoye(millet liquor) and tapan(rice liquor) are offered. Nado sprinkaled water on the he goat and sacrifice it. Assistants carry small cock, an egg , raw rice and a glass of Mahua liquer at the ritual sight.		Everyone hold chuwra((flatted rice)) in their hands and remembering their ancestors by praying happiness and peace they offer the chuwra((flatted rice)) to goat before sacrifice the goat. After this ritual all return to Goreya orho.

Tadi tungpo	A place situated at the far end of the village.	Chawal gundi (Row rice powder), Sindur (Vermilion), Bel patta (Limonia acidissima), 2 khapra (earthen pot, pochoye (millet based liquor), furrow (bowl made by Sal leaves), Patha (he goat), tapan (rice based liquor), Otaro (the sediment of the millet liquor), 2 pan (eggs)	Nado create a symbol of 14 rectangular cambers equally divided by two rows. Decorate these cambers by sinder, chawl gundi his assistants covers sinder by bel patta by each cambers. 2 khapra filled pochoye are offered. Nado place 7 furrow of millet liquor in each camber of upper row. Prayers are offered to the ancestors for the prosperity and wellbeing of the village. Nado sprinkle water on the goat put vermilion and flower on his body and 9 sacrifices him. Nado and his assistants prepared 2 furrows containing otaro and placed two eggs on the otaro. Vermilion applied on the egg. Priest and his assistants proceed opposite direction to the village to north and south. Place furrow at those places end of the habitation known as Pan chutpo.	Goshni places 7 furrow of millet liquor each cambers of the lower row. After returning goshni adorned with vermilion and flowers. Goshni pay his respect at the goreya than by bowing down. Goshni seated under the Manda (A temporary Shade) and started conversation with villagers in pahariya Language with that Goshni (spiritual entity) departs from the villagers body.	Villagers attend the ritual at spectator. After placing Pan chutpo all returns to Goreya Orho. Before entering goreya orho participants snack hands and embrace each other. Conversation with goshni.
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Prolegomena to the Identity of Mal Paharia of Jharkhand

Shiv kutti	Shiv kutti(wooden stain of 2ft. is installed permanently).	Chawal gundi (Row rice powder), Sindur (Vermilion), Bel patta (Limonia acidissima), pochoye (millet based liquor), Patha (He goat) chuwra (flattened rice), gur (jiggery), bent (tender bamboo stick), milk, banana leaves, 4 earthen bowls.	Nado draw 4 circular patterns with chawal gundi and decorate each with vermillion. An assistant covers patterns with bel patta. 3 earthen bowls placed in the circle filled up with tapan. Outside the circle 1 earthen bowl filled up with milk is placed. Nado sprinkle water on the goat applies vermillion to the goat then sacrifices him in the shiv kutti.	Before sacrifice goshnis offer salutation on the goat. After ritual is over the shiv kutti goshnis and nado comes back to goreya orho and placed their sticks down for salutation and bowing their heads at goreya orho.	All villagers after attending the ritual came back to the goraya orho with the nado.
Gangaram puja	Nala(small flowing water source)	Cinder : Sacred fire, red cock, an egg, brass plate, 4 banana, chopped onion, chilli, ginger, chuwra, Bamboo stick, vermillion, sword, row rice powder, 2 earthen bowl, rice liquor, milk	Nado go to the alter carry all essential maintained beside Nala the alter is consists of 2stones. Nado decorate stones and draw symbol of 4 rectangles in 2 rows with chauwal gundi and vermillion from time memorial used as a place to release snakes. Two khapra filled up with tapan and another one filled up with milk placed on design. Nado sprinkle water on a red cock and sacrifice it. The blood is offered at the ritual side.	Goshni run with the fire. After returning goshni consumed the milk. After that goshni departs from the body.	All comes to goreya orho.

Tigo muge	Goreya orho	Wooden polls, rope, onion,chilli, ginger, chauwal gundi, khapra, cot, cracked egg.	After rest nado preparation of tigo muge(monkey sprits). Two wooden polls fixed in a ground and rope is tight between them. On this rope he suspends onion,chilli, ginger. Human figure (Kut padipo) its decorated by vermilion before coverd by bel patta is drawn on the ground by roe rice powder. Nearby a cot (machiya) placed.	After placing cot goshni sit here. A khapra containing a crack egg is placed nearer by goshni when tigo muge arrives they consume offerings play around with laughter and merriment and eventually leave. Whole action is purfored by goshni.	Villagers attend rhe ritual at spectator.
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Prolegomena to the Identity of Mal Paharia of Jharkhand

Mia Puja	Manda	Red cock brought by Santal man, chauwal gundi, vermilion, 2 earthen bowl, banana, water, chuwra	Nado conducts prayer and offer things to ancestors. Small portion neck of cock is cut using a sword the cock does not die. Some of blood mixed with rice liquor (tapan) and the cock is released. After hunting the cock nado performs the ritual at goriya orho. He decorates the goreya than by using chawal gundi, vermilion; 6 bananas, a banana leafs, 6 lhapras, bel patta, raw rice(arwa chauwal), milk, bottle nut(supari) scarified goat. After decoration its covered by bel patta. At the top most stairs banana leaf is placed and bananas, khapra bowls are arranged in all three layers. Each khapra contains Rice liquor.Arwa chauwal mixed with milk on the banana leaf is offered mixer of this is refered Pulash Rakhna bottle nut is placed on the top. Nado sprinkle water on the goat marked with vermilion flatted rice then sacrifices goat,its blood collected in same khapra with containing pochoye.	At this point one individual proceed with goshni and communicates with the nado to comments ritual. Khapra bowl offers goshni filled up with tapan,goshni consumes pocheeye mixed with milk. After offering prayer leaves this time.	Pahariya and santal individual chased the cock together in a symbolic hunt expedition if pahariya catches the cock they receives 1 leg as a share. If santal individual catches it then pahariya do not receive any portion of it. After having meal all participants return to goreya orho. group of people stay with the first choosen goshni known as gosainath gurarow they carry mat, cloths battle axe, musical instrument, corn seal. They spread mats to all for seat wait for mal to goshni.
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Malto goshni	Goreya orho	Bamboo stick,Pogali,Mat,Coornseal, cloths, battle axe, musical instrument	When goshni appers Nado gives cloths and other items to primary goshni. He distribute all to other goshnis. Nados assistants make Pogali(Palm pipe wind instruments)Which goshni play.	Goshni wear garments, distributed all things among themselves. Persons under the influent by goshni speak malto language. The goshni dances and sings when all proceeds to nados house.	Usually villagers of Bodo pahar do not speak and understand malto. They are only familiar with the word malto.
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Table -2**Village-Amlagariya, Panchayat- Rajbandh, Block-Dumka**

Sl. No.	Ritual/Festival	Related to	God/Goddess	Offer to/Sacrifice	Place	Season/Month	Gender Role
1	Aambhadai-	Mango	Kul Devta (Ancestral)	Cock and Pigeon	Household	Fagun/March	Male
2	Mohul Bhadai	Mahua flower	Kul Devta (Ancestral)	Cock and Pigeon	Household	FagunMarch	Male
3	Gurundi Bhadai	Maize	Kul Devta (Ancestral)	Cock and Pigeon	Household	Bhadrapad/ September	Male
4	Karam	Karam Tree	Karam Devta	Jhinga and Khira leaves	Village	Bhado Ekadasi/ September	Unmarried girls and women
5	Khet Bandha puja /Asadh Puja-	Before ploughing field	Dharti Basmati	Patha (Goat)	Field	Asadh/June or July	Male
6	Newani Puja	Before harvesting paddy	Pahad Thakur	Bhed (Sheep)	Under Sakhua/ Simal tree	Kartik/October or November	Male
7	Bitcha puja'	Before harvesting Barbati, Gangra, Lahir	Pahad Thakur	Cock, Kabutar, Mahua daru, khaini	Pahad Khet	Aghan/November	Male
8	Jog puja		Jog Devta	Two Patta and two cock	Forest	Paus/December	Male
9	Lawani Puja	Before consuming rice and barbati	Kul Devta (Ancestral)	Flower, fruits, paddy, Barbati	Household	Paus/December	Male
10	Surja Puja	If someone mansik (wish) full filled	Surja Devta	Bhed (Sheep), Patta (Goat)	Village	Chitra/March	Male priest
11	Gawali Puja	Welfare of village	Pahad Devta	Bhed (sheep), Murga (Cock), Kabutar (Pigeon), Patta (Goat)	Forest	Magh/January	Male priest

Prolegomena to the Identity of Mal Paharia of Jharkhand

12	Sarojini puja	Welfare of village and agriculture	Sarojini Devi	Patta (Goat)	Forest	Aghan/November	Male
13	Kali Puja	Related to Hindu calendar	Kali	Patta(Goat)	Kali Mandir	Aghan/November	Male
14	Durga Puja	Related to Hindu calendar	Durga	Patta(Goat)	Household	Kartik/October	Male

Source: The fieldwork (August –December 2024) among Mal-Paharia of Amlagaria, Keirabani

Table -3

Ritual Calendar of Village Keirabani

Sl. No.	Ritual/Festival	Related to	God/ Goddess	Offer to/Sacrifice	Place	Season/Month	Gender Role
1	Aambhadai-	Mango	Kul devta	Cock and Pigeon	Household	Fagun/March	Male
2	Mohul Bhadaï	Mahua flower	Kul devta	Cock and Pigeon	Household	FagunMarch	Male
3	Gurundi Bhadaï	Maize	Kul devta	Cock and Pigeon	Household	Bhadrpad/ September	Male
4	Karam	Karam Tree	Karam devta	Jhinga and Khira leaves	Village	Bhado ekadasi/ September	Unmarried girls and women
5	Khet Bandha puja /Asadh Puja-	Before ploughing field	Dharti Basmati	Patha (Goat)	Agriculture Field	Asadh/June or July	Male
6	Newani Puja	Before harvesting paddy	Pahad Thakur	Bhed (Sheep)	Under Sakhua/ Simal tree	Kartik/October or November	Male
7	Bitcha puja	Before consuming Barbati, Ghangra, Lahir	Pahad Thakur	Cock, Pigeon, Mahua daru, khaini	Pahad Khet	Aghan/ November	Male
8	Jog puja		Jog devta	Two Patta and two cock	Forest	Paus/December	Male
9	Lawani Puja	Before consuming rice and Barbati	Kul devta	Flower, fruits, paddy, Barbati	Household	Paus/December	Male
10	Surja Puja	Well-being of family or someone mansik (wish) full filled	Surja devta		Village	Chitra/March	Male priest
11	Gawali Puja	Well-being of village people	Pahad Thakur	Bhed (sheep), Murga (Cock), Kabutar (Pigeon), Patta (Goat)	Forest	Magh/January	Male priest
13	Telpada	Before consuming Kathal and Mahua flower	Kul devta	Cock/Pigeon	Household	Fagun/March	Male
14	Kali Puja		Kali	Patta	Kali Mandir (Village)	Aghan/ November	Male Priest
15	Durga Puja		Durga	Patta	Household	Kartik/October	Male

Source: Fieldwork: August- September in Keirabani 2024

Dumka and Boro Pahar of District Pakur revealed that people of those villages speak a language and they said that is ‘Mawro’ language (Madan Dalai, Keirabani September 2024). That might be a link language which Vidyarthi identified as Magahi (1963:1-2); people use many Bengali words also due to their territorial vicinity. Most importantly vocabularies collected during fieldwork among all at least twenty words are there which are pronouncing nearer to Dravidian words. These are identified with the help of Dr. M. Ramakrishnan, who is a Tamil language .speaker and linguist. In the Chart-1 vocabularies are mentioned

Chart 1

Mawro/Paharia Words of Dravidian Origin

Sl. No.	Mawro/Paharia	Dravidian Syllable	English
1.	Pupdu	Poo	Flower
2	Kosambi Pup	Poo	Marry gold
3	Chapa Pup	Poo	Chameli
4	Porda Pupdu	Poo	Lotus
5	Binke	Vinmin	Star
6	Makdu	Matu	Beef
7	Bekdu	Uppu	Salt
8	Mindu	Min	Fish
9	Atokolo	Atukkalai	Kitchen
10	Ato	Atuppu	Stove
11	Modraii	Marati	Forget
12	Tetli	Puli	Tamarind
13	Neme Mandu	Maram	Neem
14	Paroya	Pura	Pigion
15	Kara	Katai (if it's a shop)	Store
16.	Toddy Tudpo	Palm grove in the Telugu language	Sacred Place In the Bodo Pahar
17.	Pun Toddy	Toddy stands for sap of palm tree in the Telugu and other Indian language	Religious Ritual
18.	Perwa	Pura	Dove
19.	Mouna/Manjir	Mayil	Peacock
20.	Kodwa	Kollu	Millet

Source: Fieldwork August- December 2024. The data is analysed with the help of Dr. Ramakrishnan

Analysis and Conclusion

The Mal Paharia and Kumarbhag might have social distance from Saoria Paharia (referred as

beef eaters by the others) in terms of food taboo but these three groups have linguistic affinities (see Chart-1). The fieldwork data from the Mal Paharia and Kumarbhag Paharia/Paharia villages collected and the comparative analysis of the data has shown that at least 20 words used in the dialects of the communities have similarities with vocabularies of Dravidian origin. Vidyarthi identified the dialect of the Saoria Paharia as 'Malto', the language of the 'Maler', which is a northern Dravidian language. The utilization of the Malto language in the Poon Taddi rituals and its presence in the cognition of the Kumarbhag Paharia/Paharia people of the Bodopahar finds connectedness to the Malto language. Words referred as Mowro vocabularies have Dravidian affiliation (Chart-1). Ritual presence of Malto language in the festival of the Bodo Pahar and its symbolic uses signifies their linguistic affinity at cognitive level. The Malto language connects these three communities as per usages of words and as well as in terms of ritual usages.

No less important is the similar inheritance pattern of household property follow the custom of ultimogeniture by the Mal Paharia, Kumarbhag Paharia and Saoria Paharia. This custom is uncommon among all neighbouring communities of them in the region. Other sons inherit cultivable lands. In absence of sons daughters inherit the same and in that case the son in law and his family get settled in the village of the father in law. Vidyarthi reported this tradition present among Maler, whom he refers as Saoria Paharia (1963) and fieldwork finding of this project located the same custom among Mal Paharia and Kumarbhag Paharia (2024) among people of Amlagarhi, Keirabani villages of district Dumka and Bodopahar of the district Pakur.

The 1766 protest movement of the Pahariya, the leaders involved from all sections their surnames are testimony. Those surnames are Pulhar, Ahari (found among the Mal Pahariya at present in the Amlagarhi and Keirabani villages); Sanwaria, Domba (among the Saoria Pahariya) reveal that leaders belong to Mal Paharia and Saoria Paharia. That helps to understand the construction of the 'Paharia' identity of the three social groups. As per field data the Mal Paharia & Kumarbhag are connected to each other by marriage relations.

Their preference for ecological niche, patterns of subsistence activities and staple food show similarities with the tribal people of the neighbourhood. That indicates the age-old traditions of the Mal Paharia in practice. Vidyarthi (1963) identified the Maler as Maize eaters. Present study shows that the Mal Paharia of Dumka are maize eaters and Kumarbhag Paharia Millet eaters. Sahay (op.cit) mentioned that the Mal Paharia exposed to Hinduized religious beliefs. People of villages of Dumka shared the similar behaviours (Tables 2 and 3). Differences are found in the worship of certain rituals and practices which set them apart from Hindu traditions (Tables 2 and 3). The 'Poon Taddi' as an annual festival of the Bodopahar village has a very significant presence in the identity maintenance process of the Paharia. People of this village identify their language 'Paharia' (Chart-1) but 'Malto' language is symbolically memorized during Poon Taddi festival

in a ritual in which the Malto Goshni possessed a villager in person. Under the control of Goshni the villager speaks Malto. Tables (1,2, and 3) reveal the influence of Hindu beliefs and faiths on the people under study.

The Mal Pahrias were struggling to establish their rights of living two centuries back. Rulers and other communities dominated them. This Poon Taddi festival became a site of remembrance of that history of relations with neighbouring communities. They worship forest environments –‘Jaher than’ a concept of their Santal neighbours but the neighbours are not participants in this ritual. Ganaganarayan Puja (happen beside spring), Shiv Kutti in a strict sense of the term neither be perceived as appropriation of Hindu beliefs and practices nor assimilation. The structural and functional aspect of the Poon Taddi has created unique patterns of rituals to fortify their identity. In the 2 days of the Poon Taddi festival 7 rituals are performed. Among them six rituals are performed in the six separate altars. Worshippers go to each altar for worshipping and come back to a central altar (Goreya Ondo). Music creates the ambiance of the rituals and persons under possessions of separate Goshnis constantly narrate the past and future of the fortunes and failure of the villagers. Poon Taddi as an invention of the festival of the Mal Paharia describes the centuries old history of interaction between them with others.

Influence of Hinduism on the Maler and Mal Paharia is least discussed by Vidyarthi (1963) and DRMTWRI (2024). Anyone visiting the districts Dumka and Pakur will see the nature, level and extent of marginality of the Mal Pahariya in their own cultural niche. This is similar for Sauria and Kumarbhag too. The Deoghar, a popular Hindu religious tourist spot and massive number of pilgrims visit that region every year, a source of revenue generation. Bengalis of adjacent states, people of Bihar and of other states are settled as traders, in white colour jobs and agriculturists in the whole region. All these belief systems influenced Mal Paharia. Every community maintains their marriage preferences. But when that is communicated within short conversation to the unknown outsiders who have very little knowledge on any social relations of the different groups, it sounds more as a political phenomenon.

However, this research could delineate a few social traits and systems and moreover marriage relation of two groups. Vidyarthi’s observation on the absence of Kumarbhag people in the census up to 1941 creates a scope to analyse that further. Findings of the present study identifies the Mal Paharia as an off-shoot of the Maler, who in the social ecology of the Rajmahal hills created a distinct identity to sustain and survive with the dominant communities.

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