

# Indigenous *Khasa* People of Nepal in Crisis

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## Abstract

*The study relates to the Khasa people, who have lived in Nepal since ancient times and are considered indigenous due to their history of settling and cultivating land in western Nepal. The Khasa people have a rich history dating back to the nomadic period when they migrated from the Caucasus region of Babylonia in West Asia to the Himavatkhaṇḍa and Karnali regions of Western Nepal. However, Hinduization in the Middle Ages and Westernization in modern times has threatened their traditional customs and nature-worshiping religious culture. The purpose of the study is to highlight the identity, tribalism, and current crisis faced by the Khasa people and to advocate for their recognition as indigenous inhabitants of Nepal. Based on secondary sources, this research can guide the state to recognize the Khasa people as indigenous.*

**Key Words:** Tribal, Nomadic, Caucasus, Cacas & Masto.

## Introduction

The *Khasa* caste is one of the oldest and most prominent castes among the various groups living in Nepal. They have lived in Nepal for thousands of years, making them an indigenous caste among the many castes of Nepal. The *Khasa* people have a long history of living in Nepal, with roots dating back to the nomadic period when they chose Nepal as a permanent home. They have also made the *Himavatkhaṇḍa* region their primary place of Residence since ancient times, and their heritage, language, religion, and culture continue to thrive in this region (Adhikari, 2011). Before the development of Vedic civilization and the spread of Hindu culture by the Aryan people in India, the *Khasa* people were the chief inhabitants of the *Himavatkhaṇḍa* region. This makes them a pre-Vedic caste, and they have been the tribal people of the Himalayas for centuries. Over time, the *Khasa* people have spread to various parts of South Asia, including Nepal, *Uttarakhaṇḍa*, West Bengal, and Sikkim (Sarkar, 1967). Given their long history of living in Nepal, it is clear that the *Khasa* people are indigenous to the country.

The word *Khasa* is not a racial term but a common term that refers to a group of people with similar tribal origins in Nepal. This group comprises various castes, including *Chhetri*, *Thakurī*, *Bāhuna*, *Kāmī*, *Damai*, *Sarkī*, *Bhata*, *Vadī*, *Gaine*, and *Sanyasī*. People of the *Khasa* community are known for their clean clothes, high foreheads, high and large noses, light black or brown hair, and eyes that match the color of the hair. In Nepal, there

are also *Khasa* castes within the Newar community. While the culture of caste was later adopted among the *Khasa*, some tribal traditions have been preserved gradually (Adhikari, 1988). The word *Khasa* itself refers to a group of people with shared tribal ancestry, and it is believed that the *Khasa* people first developed their religion, culture, and social traditions in *Himwatkhandā* around 2500 BC. (Turner, 1961). At that time, animal husbandry was the main occupation of the nomadic *Khasa* people due to the region's dense forests and hilly terrain; the *Khasa* eventually migrated to the Kathmandu Valley (Baldauf, 2000). Some historians believe that the first rulers of Nepal were from the *Khasa* caste, as they were likely the ones who brought animal husbandry to the valley. In this way, it seems that the castes that expanded to the valley by grazing animals at that time must have been Gopālas or Mahiṣapāla (Acharya, 1969). Thus, the accounts say the first rulers of Nepal were *Khasa*.

The *Khasa* people were a diverse group at the time of their migration to the Kathmandu Valley, with some members engaged in cattle breeding and others as nomads. Archaeological evidence from various sites in Nepal, such as Lower Mustang, supports this fact, as artifacts and remains from people living in the northern hilly areas, riverbanks, and caves have been found. These were probably *Khasa*, as no other human communities lived in such remote places (Mishra, 1994). In ancient times, the *Khasas* were one of the major castes in Nepal, and the kings of Kapilvastu were also members of this caste. Buddhism spread from Kapilvastu to the West *Khasa* region during this time, and the *Khasa* rulers of the medieval period also embraced this religion. However, they later adopted Hinduism, which also influenced the local population. *Khasa* also had a notable presence in Tibet; Kailāśa, Mānsarovara, and Muktināth are considered sacred by both Hindus and Buddhists due to their historical association with the *Khasa* people.

The *Khasas* are a type of ancient Aryan people who are considered the founders of Nepali culture and civilization. They were known for their co-existence, coordination, and tolerant culture and were led by the Gopālas and Mahiṣapāla of the first ruling dynasty of Nepal. The *Khasas* are one of the oldest caste groups in Nepal and have a history of being warrior-like and living in the Himalayan foothills and hilly areas (K.C., 2013). They have traditionally eaten fish and meat and drunk alcohol, which led Indian Arya Hindus to label them as non-Aryans. Despite this, the *Khasa* later adopted Hinduism and the caste system, even though it is mentioned in the Manusmṛti that they were initially excluded from these practices due to their failure to follow religious duties (Sadhana Pocket Book, n. d.). But later, they gradually adopted Hinduism as well as the caste system.

The *Khasas* are an ancient community that has lived in western Nepal and northern India for centuries, with several subgroups, including Kashi, Kosala, Malla, Gandhara, Kamboj, Panchal, and Chedi (Pokharel, 1998). They are also known as the Pavai, derived from the steep hilly plains below the Himalayas where they reside (Joshi, 1971). Writer AlatauTamchiboulacAtkinson (1974) described the *Khasa* as a strong Aryan race similar to the Nāga people and noted that they migrated to Nepal from various parts of Asia, including Kashgar, Hindukuśa, Kashmir, and Kumaon. As the indigenous inhabitants of Nepal, the *Khasa* have a long history in the region and have traditionally followed their religious

traditions and culture (452). However, due to mixing with people of other castes and acculturation, these traditions and cultures are now facing challenges. The main objective of this study is to introduce the *Khasa* people as an indigenous caste group of Nepal and expose the cultural crisis that has occurred in this caste at the present due to the changes in their culture and traditions. The field of this study is the *Khasa* community, their origin, development, expansion, and indigenous traditions as well as the cultural crisis in the present movement. The importance of this study is to draw serious attention to this issue because the government of Nepal made a wrong decision by including the *Khasa* people into other caste groups, who have been living in Nepal since the ancient period.

### Material and Method

This study is a historical research project that utilizes a qualitative research design based on secondary sources such as books, articles, and documents. This study focuses on the history of the *Khasa*, an indigenous and tribal community that came to Nepal during the nomadic period and settled in the western part of the country. The research aims to understand the introduction, settlement, expansion, and cultural deviation of the *Khasa* people in Nepal. The study uses descriptive and analytical methods and follows APA Seven guidelines for parenthetical notes and references. It should be noted that the culture of the *Khasa* has undergone some changes over time due to acculturation, and the community is currently divided into two groups: traditionalists and reformists. This has led to a crisis in *Khasa* culture. The research paper has been prepared using necessary sources and adhering to the guidelines of the publication's editorial board.

### Results and Discussion

#### Origin, Development, and Expansion of the *Khasa*

The *Khasas* are a group of tribes whose origins and expansion into Nepal are still not fully understood. Despite ongoing research and study, scholars have not reached a consensus on the history of the *Khasa*. According to some interpretations of the Vedas, the *Khasa* may have originated from a mountain region called *Kakesas* or *Kakasa* in Central Asia, known as the Caucasus till now. It is believed that around 4000 years ago, the Aryan-type *Khasa* migrated from Central Asia. (Welch, 1922). Many scholars seem to agree on the origin of the word *Khasais* derived from *Kakes*, *Kakas*, or *Kas*. *Khasawas* known as the *Kas* in Babylonia in West Asia. They maintained their empire in that area for a long time. But since the word *Khasa* and the *Khasa* language were not used anywhere outside the Hindukuśa region, it shows that they came to be known as *Khasa* people only after they had come to the Hindukuśa region. In Vedic literature, the word *Karaskar* is used similarly to the word *Khasa*. In the ancient period, some areas inhabited by people of *Khasa*, called *Kaskar*, *Kasmir*, *Kashgar*, etc., were the former form of the word *Khasa*. From those areas, the *Khasa* expanded to *Himavatkhanda* in the ancient period (Kshetri, 2013). The *Khasa* expanded to those areas before the development of Vedic civilization in India.

The *Himavatkhanda* is a mountain range located in the western part of the Himalayas that stretches across Central and South Asia. It includes the Hindu Kush hill

range and has a total length of 3500 km, extending across eight countries: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, China, India, Nepal, Myanmar, and Afghanistan. The *Himavatkhanda* is considered a part of the Indian subcontinent and extends to the Tibetan Plateau region. Before the development of the Vedic civilization in India, the *Khasa* people had already settled in this region. (Tucci, 1956). The *Khasais* like the Kashmiris and Darads of the Aryan Race of people. They were on the upper side of the Sutlej River and around Lake Mānsarovara around 1400 to 1200 BC, and later they gradually expanded to Nepal (Shepherd, 1954). Because of this, when searching for the ancient site of *Khasa*, one has to reach from the western border of Nepal through Kumaon, Garhwal, Kashmir, and the Hindukuśato the Qusai Empire of Babylonia. At that time, it was called 'Casa' in West Asia. At that time, they were called *Kasa* in West Asia (Adhikari, 1996). In this way, it seems that *Khasa* spread from Babylonia to the northern part of India in BC and gradually came to Nepal too. The *Khasa* people have lived in the region surrounding the Hindukuśa mountain range for centuries. Some places associated with the *Khasa* include the Kashgar Valley, Kaskar, Kazakhstan, Kasmir, Khasadar, and Kumaon. There is still a significant *Khasa* population in the Chitralaya region of present-day Pakistan, especially in a place, like Kaskar. In Nepal, the traditional homeland of the *Khasa* people lies in the area between the Trishuli River and the Mahakali River to the west, also known as the Karnali region. (Bajracharya, 1971). Thus, in the ancient period, the people of the *Khasa* expanded to the Hindukuśa of *Himavatkhanda*, Kashmir, Khari, Kailas, and Mānsarovara region of Tibet and later entered Nepal.

### **The Arrival of *Khasa* People in Nepal**

By the time the Aryan civilization developed in India, the *Khasa* people were originally nomadic and had already expanded to the northern part of the country. They had migrated eastward and southward through the hill regions from the northwest. Due to this, the contact between the *Khasa* and the Indian Aryans, who established the Vedic civilization in the plains of India, was relatively late. The *Khasa* people's territory stretched from the Caucasus to the southeast, covering a distance of approximately 4000 kilometers from northwest Nepal (Prichard, 1826). The rule of the Kushan dynasty began in China's Tarim Valley between the first and second centuries AD. They established a new kingdom called Kashgar, and the *Khasa* had been expanded in that area. The *Khasa* borrowed the Brahmi script from the same Kasagar state. After that, *Khasa* made a new state to make the capital city the Taklakot in western Tibet (Franke, 1995). In The Tibetan language, it is called Taklakhar. That area is located in the south part of Kailash peak now. The Taklakhar area has been a trading post since the ancient period. There are no settlements of *Khasa* in the north of that area. Over time, some *Khasa* were nomadic, and some had taken up animal husbandry. Practicing Shamanism in the Taklakhar region was developed by *Khasa*. The shamans were witch doctors who performed religious ceremonies (Adhikari, 2013). In the western area of Nepal, the *Khasa* who followed the *Masto* worship tradition are still following that practice.

In ancient times, the *Khasa* people's territory extended to the far western zones and Karnali regions of Nepal. By the middle ages, they had also settled in the Mechi river region on the eastern border of Nepal. Over time, they gradually expanded across the Mechi river and settled in Bhutan, Sikkim, Assam, Meghalaya, and western Myanmar. As a result, many places in the *Himavatkhaṇḍa* region reflect the language and culture of the *Khasa* people (Pande, 1997). Although the *Khasa* expanded in the Karnali region in ancient times, it was only in the middle ages that they kept their language in writing and maintained their history. The oldest written document is an inscription of the *Khasa* language incised by Aśoka Calla (1255-1278), the *Khasa* ruler of the Karnali region. *Khasa* was also the official language in the *Khasa* kingdom of the medieval Karnali region (Pokhrel, 1998). Hamilton mentions that the area between Kathmandu valley in the east and Kashmir in the west is that *Khasa*Pradesh and its inhabitants are called *Khasis*, and the dialect spoken there is called the *Khasa* language (2014, 113). Yogi (1998) referred to the areas as *Khasa* state around, below, and above Manasarovara and Kailash hill. He also mentioned that the western border from Krishna Gandaki (Kali) is called *Khaṣadeśa*. The *Khasas* have been expanding in different parts of Nepal since the ancient period and was concentrated in the Middle Ages, especially in western Nepal. The Vedic Aryans came much later to the mountainous region of Nepal. Before their arrival, the *Khasa* had spread through the mountains of Central Asia from Gilgil to the Kali river and then to the eastern border of Nepal, having matching facial and physical features. The land of the residents of *Khasa* is a large area. At any time, these *Khasis* extended from Kashgar (Khasagir) to almost the entire *Himavatkhaṇḍa* (Sankrityayan, 1959). The same period is considered the time of arrival of *Khasa* to Nepal.

### ***Khasa* as Indigenous People**

Indigenous people are those who have lived in a particular region or land since its earliest settlement. The term 'indigenous' comes from the Latin word 'indigena,' which means 'native.' From a semantic perspective, the term refers to people who have a deep connection to the land and have lived there for generations (online etymology dictionary, 2021). The English word indigenous which was derived from the Latin word Indigena means to differentiate between people who are born in a certain place and those who come from somewhere else. Such words are also used in languages like France and Germany. The meaning of all of them is the first or the beginning of which time is given importance. Initially, the term indigenous was used to distinguish the cultural activities of people arriving in different parts of the world based on colonization and the cultural activities of local people (Dess, 1996). Indigenous living in a particular area or land from early settlement. The term 'indigenous' comes from the Latin word 'indigena,' which means 'native.' From a semantic perspective, the term indigenous refers to people who have a connection to the land and have lived there for generations (online etymology dictionary, 2021). The English word indigenous comes from the Latin word Indigena, which signifies distinguishing between people born in a fixed place and who came from elsewhere. Such words are also used in languages like France and Germany. All of these mean the first or beginning of which time is given importance. Initially, the term tribal was used to

distinguish the cultural activities of people who came to different parts of the world based on colonialism and the cultural activities of local people. (Dess, 1996). As per historical evidence of human remains discovered in Nepal, this area is considered for human development. Despite this, the fact that the descendants of those ancient human ancestors lived in Nepal or migrated elsewhere has not been discovered. When Nepal was uninhabited in primitive times, Aryan and Mongol people from different places expanded to Nepal. They engaged in animal husbandry, but they did not settle permanently at that time. The Mongols from the northeastern region and the Aryans from the northwest area expanded to Nepal. In this sense, Caucasians and Mongols arrived in Nepal around the same time and met here (Gurung, 2005). Based on this description, it seems that the *Khasais* the most ancient inhabitants of western Nepal. When the *Khasa* came to Nepal, there was no settlement of people of any caste in west Nepal.

In ancient times, there were two castes, *Khasa* and Kirants, who came and settled in Nepal before the formation of a strong society. This has been confirmed by the family traditions and rituals they have been following. Like the tribals or indigenous people living in different parts of the world, the primitive inhabitants of Nepal were also unknown to the gods and goddesses. Therefore, they worshipped the air, plants, rivers, vegetation, birds, snakes, scorpions, etc., present in their surrounding environment, they offered to the invisible forces such as ghosts, ghouls, monsters, demons, etc. to protect them from natural disasters and obstacles. They used to worship with the help of a shaman (*DhāmīJhākrī*) (Regmi, 2009). Such traditions are still found in the *Khasa* castes. Based on this, it seems that the *Khasa* are the indigenous people of Nepal. Like the various tribes such as Kirants and other indigenous living in Nepal, while treating the sick or worshipping, the *KhasaDhāmī/Jhākrī* was called and worshipped Vayu (air), *Bhuiyar* (land), etc. (Sharma, 2012). The tradition of spreading *Dhāmī* of *Khasa* is similar to the *Semani* tradition of Gurung, Magar, etc. *Masto* tradition is a living tradition of the *Khasa* caste of Karnali region even at present. It is also found in the hills of Brahman, Chhetri, and Thakuri of Nepal. *Masto* tradition is related to physical objects of nature like air, sun, fire, etc. If the *Khasa*, Brahmin, and Chhetri of Nepal came later from India, the Vedic culture with language prevalent in India should have been brought in abundantly with them. But the *Khasa* culture differs from Vedic culture, so it must have been living in Nepal for a long time (Gurung, 2005). The research and study conducted in Nepal regarding indigenous have shown that people who have their own distinct and original language, culture, religious beliefs, and nature worshipers are considered indigenous. In the same way, people who do not care about traditional rituals, their social values are despised, they have equality in their internal society or gender differences are reduced and people who claim that their group is indigenous are said to be indigenous people (K.C., 2013). As all these things exist in the *Khasa* community, it seems that the *Khasa* are the primitive inhabitants of Nepal.

MatwaliKshetris living in Tibrikot and Jajarkot areas of western Nepal are traditional *Khasa*. They drink alcohol, eat chicken, and don't wear sacred thread (Janai). But their surnames are similar to other chetries like Budha, Bohra, Basnet, Thapa, Khadka,

Rawal, Bhandari, etc. They speak the traditional or original *Khasa* language. They build a traditional *Munda* (roofless) house. They use sheep and goats to carry their goods. They worship *Masto* as a deity. Apart from this, they also worship *Malika*, *Bhuihar*, ghosts, etc. On the days of Oct-Nov and March-April of full moon day (Purnima), they change the pole (lingo) at the place of the deity. Flags are also tied to a such pole. They take the mourner outside their village and feed them with meat, rice, and wine (Sharma, 1976). As other *Khasa* living in Nepal later adopted Hinduism, the culture of the indigenous *Khasa* is in crisis. It was only then that the Brahmin-Chhetri of Nepal started to say that they are not indigenous when they are Hindus.

In the local laws made by King Ram Shah of Gorkha, it was arranged that the death penalty should not be given to Brahmins to ascetics, but *Khasa*, Newars, Magars, etc. should be given the death penalty according to the punishment (Sherchan, 2004). Based on this law, it is understood that *Khasais* also indigenous people of Nepal like Newar, Magar, etc. In the ancient period, they spread in Nepal from the Tarim Valley of Tibet and the surrounding area had extended to the Kathmandu valley by the medieval period (Franke, 1998). Language is also a strong basis for how far the *Khasa* people have expanded in Nepal. The *Khasa* language, known as the Nepali language at present, is a language developed in the Karnali region. Since there were people who spoke this language as far as in the Kathmandu Valley in the medieval period, it seems that the *Khasa* had expanded to Kathmandu and the areas east of it by the medieval period. Before military unification in Nepal, linguistic unification had already taken place. Until the Medieval period, the Nepali people living in one corner of the country did not understand the language of the Nepali living in the other part of the nation. Linguistic unification took place in Nepal only after the *Khasa* gradually expanded from the west to the eastern border (Vaidya, 2067). So, the *Khasa* language has a great contribution to the linguistic integration of Nepal (Livi, 2006). In this way, the *Khasa* language has been known in Nepal since the ancient period, so it is felt that this caste is the indigenous people of Nepal. If the people of the *Khasa* caste entered Nepal later, it would have been impossible for the language of this caste to spread throughout the country.

The *Khasa* language was expanding throughout Nepal in the thousands of century AD, and it had taken the place of the official language mostly in the western part of Nepal (Khanal, 2011). By the late Malla period, the settlement of *Khasa* had expanded in areas like Kavrepalanchok, Dolakha, Sindhupalchok, etc. in the Kathmandu Valley and the eastern parts. In that region, during the Malla period, *Khasa*Thapas lived as *Umraus* (local administrator). The *Khasa* were prominent in the Malla kingdom as security soldiers (Acharya, 2004). The treaty between King Prithvi Narayan Shah, the king of Gorkha, and JayaprakashMalla, the king of Kantipur in 1756 was written in the *Khasa* language. Similarly, the document of King JagajyotiMalla of Bhaktapur regarding the GunduAnantalingeśvara dated 1632 was also written in the *Khasa* language (Regmi, 2013). During the regime of RatnaMalla, the first ruler of Kantipur, he was unable to resist the attack of *BhateDewans* called *Kuku* in the valley, so he took military help from King MukundaSena of Palpa. The soldiers who came as helpers were *Khasa* and Magars. They

managed to drive the *BhoteDewansKuku* out of the valley. After that, RatnaMalla established a settlement of the *Khasa* on the outskirts of the urban settlements of Kathmandu and Patan (Shrestha, 2002). When the *KukuBhotes* attacked the Kathmandu valley, there was a settlement of *KhasaThakuris* in Nuwakot. Since the business of the valley was under their control, when RatnaMalla interfered in that business, the *BhoteDewans* of the *Kuku* caste got angry and attacked RatnaMalla's kingdom and plundered it. So, RatnaMalla had to take the help of the *Khasa* army. This evidence further confirms that the *Khasas* have been the inhabitants of Nepal since ancient times as indigenous people.

### ***Khasa* Culture in Crisis**

*Khasa* culture has been developed by the *Khasa* people who have been living in Nepal since the ancient period. It is not a culture followed by any other group or community. The people of *Khasa* have been a nature-worshiper since the ancient period. *Masto* (clan god), *Vanadevatā* (forest god), *Goṭhadevatā* (sheds god), Soil, *Dubo* (sacred grass), *Vara* (banyan tree), *Pipala* (holy fig tree), *Tulsi* (basil), *Jaladevatā* (water god), *Jhānkri* (shaman), *Surya* (sun), etc. were the deities believed by the people of *Khasa* (Kshetri, 2013). *Masto* is the special religion of the *Khasa*. 12 *Mastos* are mainly worshiped there. They are *DhandarMasto*, *Khappara (Khaptada) Masto*, *TediMasto*, *Kawa Masto*, *Kala Sill Masto*, *RunalMasto*, *BuduMasto*, *TharpaMasto*, *GuroMasto*, *DahreMasto*, *DudheMasto* and *BabiroMasto* (Karki, 2018). *Masto* is an old word that has been used since the ancient period by *Khasa*. *Masto* is a word stuck in the life of people in the Karnali region (Joshi, 1971). The history of the Karnali region is considered incomplete without the mention of the word *masto*.

The *Khasa* extending from *Mānsarovara*, *Kailāsa* to Karnali were casteless since the ancient period. To some extent, they embraced the traditions of Shaivism and *Dhāmījhankri* (shamanism) (Adhikari, 2004). At that time, they had contact with the Kirants. Along with the *Khasa*, the Kirants were also becoming true Shaivites. As the *Khasa* were the indigenous of the *Himavatkhanda*, they did not have to fight with any other people. In many religious books written later than the Rigveda, the *Khasais* are discussed as an irreligious race (Adhikari, 2011). The *Khasa* started adopting Hinduism in the 8th century AD. After this, some groups of *Khasa* people were called Rajputs, who were under Chhetri. The Brahmins, Thakuris, Hamals, Khatris, *Khasa*, Bhats, Rana, etc. who are currently in Nepal are descendants of *Khasa*. Today, *Khasa's* religion and culture are going through a crisis due to the attempt to show themselves big by adopting Hinduism (Sharma, 2001). From the beginning, the *Khasa* had their art of war. They used to fight with swords and spears as well as stones. In the Mahabharata, the *Khasais* are called the impure caste. It was said so because they were not Vedic. The *Khasa*, who have developed their original culture since the ancient period, did not adopt Vedic Hinduism and they are mentioned in mythological texts as uncivilized and wild people. After the Aryans of the Gangetic coast of India developed the Hindu religion and culture, that religion and culture expanded to *Himavatkhanda*. By the medieval period, the Hindu religion expanded in such a way that even the *Khasa* were forced to adopt that religion. Due to this religion, the *Khasa* started to be considered a modern caste group.



Because of this, their cultural identity from tradition was getting destroyed. Even so, some of their traditions such as *Masto Puja*, *Devālī* tradition, etc., remained alive. The custom of offering sacrifices to the clan gods is also a tradition of the *Khasa*. Among the *Khasa* in places less affected by Hinduism, there is still a tradition of treating women as the head of the household and not discriminating based on sex, just like other indigenous or ethnic groups (Wist, 2000). All kinds of worship in the *Dhāmī* tradition (shamanism) of the *Khasa* are based on the *Khasa* tradition. Shiva is a classical deity. Therefore, the Kirants and *Khasa* of *Himavatkhaṇḍa*, before the Vedic Aryans, considered Shiva as the main deity. The *Khasa* used to offer sacrifices while worshipping Shiva as Bhairav (Sharma, 2012). In this sense, Shiva is Nepal's primordial god, and the *Khasa* and Kirants are his worshippers.

Historical study over the past 2000 years suggests that the *Khasas* existed as indigenous for centuries. *Khasas* were initially influenced by Buddhism and later by Hinduism from the medieval period. In the *Bhote* genealogy, it is mentioned that *Nāgarāja* and *Devarājā* two brothers of the *Khari* state were Buddhist monks (Adhikari, 2013). *Khasa* king Aśoka Calla and Aditya Malla also assumed the title of Buddhism and later they also adopted Hinduism. By the 14th century, the influence of Hinduism was increasing in *Khasa* Province. Even so, some of the traditional customs of the *Khasa* had become mixed. The custom of marrying within one's group is still maintained among the *Khasa*. They do not marry Terai Brahmins or Indian Brahmins. This tradition is also maintained among people called *Dalits* of the *Khasa* community. One of the main bases for *Khasa* to become *Dalits* is Hinduization. After adopting the Hindu religion and culture, some of their traditional cultures were destroyed and some became cultured in a mixed manner. Some of the rituals that remain among the *Khasa* are not worshipping to make the soil gods, eating with caps off, everyone in the family eating together, father, son, and grandson not eating on the same plate, not bathing during the day, etc. (Gurung, 1998). Widow marriage is accepted in the *Khasa* community. There are special rituals such as filling *Khukurī* in marriage, worshipping the daughter as a deity, honoring the niece, giving a share to the maternal, etc. Making a roundhouse, throwing bread from the roof while building a house, protecting the house by wearing a ferry at night, etc. *Khasa* tradition is also found to be influenced by other castes of Nepal (Acharya, 2003). At present, the identity of *Khasa* has been eroded by Indian culture and other foreign cultures.

## Conclusion

The word *Khasa* is believed to have originated from the word *Kakesas*, which may have evolved from *Kakas* or *Kasa*. Right now the place is known as 'Caucasus'. This word is also thought to be the root of the word 'Caspian', which is the name of a sea in West Asia where the *Khasas* were known as *Kasa*. The *Khasas*, who were a group of people living in the western Tibetan region, expanded into the *Himavatkhaṇḍa* region and Nepal before the Vedic Aryans developed civilization in India. Over time, the word *Khasa* came to be used to denote a caste, and the *Khasa* and Kirants are believed to have entered Nepal around the same time. While the *Khasas* are indigenous to western Nepal and the Kirants are indigenous to eastern Nepal, both groups have been influenced by the Vedic culture of the Indian

Aryans. Some *Khasahas* fully adopted Hinduism, while others have blended Hindu and *Masto* traditions. However, the traditional culture of the ancient *Khasa* in Nepal is being lost due to the influence of Western and Indian Vedic culture. The government of Nepal has even referred to the *Khasa* as non-indigenous, which has contributed to a cultural crisis among this group.

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