

HISTORICAL LEGENDS ON THE ORIGIN AND SETTLEMENT OF THE TRIBALS OF RANCHI DISTRICT, JHARKHAND

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Abstract

Legend is a form of modern folklore in which stories told are thought to be true but are likely untrue or distortions and exaggerations of the truth. It is a popular form of modern folklore in today's society. They are generally fascinating rumors and corporate misdeeds with harrowing details that exhilarate and sometimes instigate their audience. While often containing just a fragment of truth or perhaps none at all, they are generally accepted as factual and enjoy rapid circulation. They are often rooted in local history and popular culture. Legends are a way for us to make sense of the world and manage threats in a safe. In the case of legends, history suggests they will find ways to develop and succeed. The legends are often enhanced and altered to fit a particular region or situation. Folklore, myths, and legends play a predominant role in the lives and life courses of tribes all over the world. The Oraon and the Munda are the major tribes inhabiting the Ranchi district. There are various legends related to these tribes. This paper will discuss the stories outspread about the origin, migration, and settlement of the tribal of Ranchi district. The paper draws its inference from both primary and secondary data. The primary data has been collected from an ethnographic field study in the Ranchi district of Jharkhand. The secondary data has been gathered from published and unpublished sources.

Keywords: Folklore, History, Legend, Myth, Narrative, Tribal

Introduction

Legends are a type of contemporary folklore in which the stories that are being recounted are believed to be true but are probably creations and exaggerations of the truth. In today's society, it is a widely used type of contemporary folklore. The majority of them include horrifying corporate scandals and rumors that thrill and occasionally stir up their audience. Even though they frequently only include a small amount of truth, or even none at all, they are widely circulated and considered to be true. They frequently have roots in popular culture and local history. We use legends to manage concerns and make sense of the outside world. Legends are a source of amusement as well. History shows that legends will find a way to advance and be successful. The legends are frequently improved upon and changed to fit a particular locale or circumstance. Legends, myths, and folklore have a significant impact on the lives and development of tribes all over the world. The two main tribes that live in the Ranchi district are the Oraon and the Munda. These tribes are the subject of many legends. The stories that are widely circulated regarding the tribal people of the Ranchi district's origin, migration, and settlement will be covered in this paper.

Methods

Both primary and secondary sources have been used to write the research paper. The literature related to the concepts and topic has been studied in depth. The primary data has been collected from an ethnographic field study in the Ranchi district of Jharkhand, secondary has been collected from various sources including published and unpublished research papers, magazines, newspapers, and websites.

Ranchi

Ranchi is situated in the middle part of Jharkhand surrounded by eight districts Hazaribagh, Ramgarh, Chatra, Latehar, Gumla, Khuti, Saraikela, and the eastern part of the district is surrounded by the state of West Bengal. According to the census of 2011, the total population of tribals in Jharkhand is 86, 45,042 and the population of Ranchi is 2914253, out of which 1042016 are scheduled tribe and 152943 are scheduled caste. The district comprises of two sub-divisions: Bundu and Ranchi Sadar. There is a total of eighteen blocks in the district: Kanke, Bero, Lapung, Namkum, Chanhoo, Silli, Ratu, Angara, Ormanjhi, Bundu, Burmu, Tamar, Sonahatu, Mandar, Nagri, Khelari, Itki, and Rahe.

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Legend

Legend is a major sub-genre of folklore. Verbal lore configures culture all around history. Legends are prose narratives that delineate the occurrences of the remote and recent past. However, the valuable elements are carried in the narratives that are requisite for human life. A legend may be described as a single, short episode of traditional, narrative with historical essence, which is carried out in a mode of conversation. Tangherlini describes that Legends are Eco typified and shed light on the folk beliefs among groups of their traditional aspects. Etiological and Eschatological legends, Historical legends, and legends of the history of civilization, Supernatural Beings and Forces or Mythological legends, and religious legends or Myths of Gods and Heroes are the different categories of legends contain enormous traditional knowledge and wisdom that grants extremely in the field of folk literature. Besides these types of legends, in the twentieth century, a new form of legend emerged urban legend or contemporary legend and became popular in the present era. Folklorist Wayland D. Hand says folk legend appears countless and not so simple to verify and classify. However, the primary concern legends have been classified into five different groups. (a) Religious legends, (b) Supernatural legends, (c) Urban legends, (d) Personal legends, and (e) Local legends. (Brunvand, 1986, 1978, 1968)

In 1963, an international committee drew up four tentative categories of legends based on available collections:

- 1) Etiological and Eschatological Legends
- 2) Historical Legends and Legends of the History of Civilization
- 3) Supernatural Beings and Forces or Mythical Legends
- 4) Religious Legends or Myths of Gods and Heroes

Historical Legends and Legends of the History of Civilization

Local Historical accounts are incorporated into narratives based on a segment of national history. Each locality develops its own body of folk history, composed partly of local events passed down in family tradition as home educational matter and partly of written sources absorbed from schoolbooks, chapbooks, and newspapers and like sources. Among the historical legends two kinds are the most popular; stories about national and social heroes (e.g., righteous rulers and outlaws), and stories about events that affected the lives of local communities, such as an enemy attack, cruel lords, or the Black Plague. Other kinds include stories about the names of places, rivers, and hills and the origin of prehistoric ruins and mounds (Dorson, 1982).

The study on the context of the Adivasi creation legends has been divided into two parts of the convenience of analysis the first part forms their cosmological understanding while the second deals with their notion of time, space, and demography. (Sen, 2018).

Literature review

According to Dr. Kishore Bhattacharjee (2007) *The legend: Conceptual Issues and Pragmatics of Telling* Legend is a genre that shows extreme diversity. Further, he mentions that there are different types of stories ranging from family narratives to supernatural experiences or incidents, miracles, saints' life stories, and short narratives about local history. Legends are micro-stories and not mega narratives like myths or epics. Nevertheless, the legend is a genre that occupies an important place in Indian folklore system because it interconnects high and popular religion and describes popular views about nature, place and local history, social heroes and saints' moreover legends are closely connected with popular beliefs. It is observed that in the west, legends are more involved with ghosts and spirits but, in India, it is supernatural incidents related to place, saints and kings that constitute majority of the legends. The study of Indian Legends raises interesting points. The scholars who worked in India often identified legends based on their exaggerated/hyperbolic or miraculous historical content encased in the context of long bardic narrative.

Timothy R. Tangherlini (2007) in *Rhetoric, truth, and Performance: Politics and the Interpretation of Legend* explains that Legends, whether in current condition or conscribed to the dusty confines of the archive, reveal a great deal about the traditional participants and their relationship to each other and the world around them. Earlier he proposed that legends can be characterized as "a traditional, (mono) episodic, highly Eco typified, localized and historicized mode." It is also suggested by him that legend reflects the tradition it belongs to, a suggestion that points directly at the deeply political nature of these folk narratives. Further, he mentions that neither the economic implications nor the political impact of legend should be underestimated. These stories are deployed incessantly in economically charged encounters, in local politics, in international politics, and in everything in between; they can have a profound effect on the way in which people behave.

Ashok Kumar Sen (2018) in *Indigeneity, Landscape and History Adivasi Self-fashioning in India* noted that the study on concept of the Adivasi creation Legends has been divided into two parts for the convenience of analysis. The first part forms their cosmological understanding, while the second deals with their notion of time, space, and demography.

Findings and Discussion

Both Munda and Oraon traditions depict that they later immigrated and peacefully coexisted with the former in Chota Nagpur plateau. Traditional Oraon history explains that from their stronghold Rohtas, Cheros or Kherwars drove them.

Subsequently, one of their branches settled in Palamau. The Munda informant also said, 'we allowed the Oraons of Ruhidas (the modern Rohtas, a famous fortress about 150 miles north-west of Ranchi district) to come to occupy the country in peace'. Whereas the traditional history of Munda explains that in search of a new place, they came and settled in the Chota Nagpur region. Here is the story about their origin and settlement collected from the study area.

1. The legend behind the origin and the arrival of the Munda tribe to Ranchi

The Munda tribal community is from southeast Asia. From there they migrated to the coast of Odisha and then after in the search of new place they started to move towards the northern part of Odisha and reached to the southern part of Jharkhand and settled to Ranchi. The cosmological Munda Legend narrates that dry land and animals were created first. After that, a giant stroke laid two eggs out of which emerged a boy and a girl. Since they lived like brother and sister in order to multiply creation, Haram (Their highest deity who created the earth, plants, human beings and animals in order to forge a symbiotic relation between the spirits, man and nature) taught them to prepare 'bnaria' (rice beer). After they drank rice beer, the procreation of human race started. (Sen, 2018)

There is a legend that is popular among the peoples living in the district and states too about the settlement of the Munda tribe in Ranchi. The legend is that the Mundas were in search of 'Sona Leka Dishom' that means the living area like gold. For this wish, they worshiped their God 'Sing-Bonga.' During worship, for the happiness of 'Sing-Bonga' they collected wood and kept a rooster upon that. That wooden pile (heap) burnt for seven days and seven nights. On the seventh day, they saw that rooster fluttered wings upon the wooden Ash, clucked, and then after, he started to move in one direction. The leader of the Munda tribe 'Risha Munda' followed that fowl and behind him, the whole troop of the Munda tribe with a 21000-population walked with him in the same direction. As in Ramayana, they used to do Aswamedh Yagna releases the horse and the area which the horse circulates those all are captured under the empire, who has released that horse. There also the horse runs in the forefront and the army of that empire behind the horse. If someone catches the horse he has to fight with the army behind the horse, otherwise, he has to accept the subordination of that empire. In the same way, they released roosters in the place of a horse. Following the rooster, they passed the Singh hum region and reached Chotanagpur (6th century B.C) that place is considered the entry gate of Jharkhand. From there the Munda tribal entered Jharkhand. It was the time of autumn when they reached here and the festival of Sarhul. The whole region was fully covered, with the blossoms of Saal flowers that were of golden yellow color seemed like the country of gold. As they were in search of a golden country i.e., 'Sona Leka Dishom.' When they saw the golden yellow flowers all around, they considered that this was the golden country and settled there. This is legendary in history about the arrival of the Munda tribe to Jharkhand.

2. The Legend about the first Munda ruler:

According to one legend, their first settlement was at the village of Omedanda in the Ranchi district of Nagpur. Another tradition reveals that Satyomba was revered by the whole tribe as the bassinet of the race there was another story about the bassinet, the story depicted that Risa Munda, the legendary culture hero moved towards the east with 21,000 people and settled in Murma village. One of his followers Korumba set up the village after his name Korumba same as one another follower Sutia founded the village Sutiambe.

The local peoples of the district say that after finding their Sona Leka Dishom, the Mundas settled at Murma-Mandar of Ranchi district in Chhotanagpur region. It is believed that Mundas had participated in the Mahabharata Yuddh. Jarasangh was friend of the first Munda ruler 'Madra Munda' and Pandavas had killed Jarasangh so in Mahabharat Yuddh Mundas fought with Kauravas against the Pandvas. Thus, the Mundas are ruling in the chhotanagpur region from B.C period and Madra Munda was their first king.

3. The legend about migration of the Oraon tribe:

In the Oraon Legend, we do not find the crystallization of the concept in its full dimensions. It merely relates the genesis of mankind, the institution of agriculture, discovery of Iron and the origin of the gods and spirits. It is silent on the territorialisation of the landscape putting more emphasis on the conversion of the physical landscape into a cultural one, where humankind pursued agriculture and Iron smelting technology (Sen, 2018).

The original homeland of the Oraons is said to be the Konkan region. According to the Scholars S.C Roy, P. Dehlon and Colonel Dalton the Oraon used to live on the western coast of Deccan and from there they traveled to the Narmada coast and towards Narmada they went to the son valley through Vindhya ranges and reached to the Shahabad district. They settled at Rohtas for 800 years and from there in invasion of Cheros they left that place and some of them went down the Ganges and settled in the Rajmahal hills. Some others sold down in Palamu and the northwest of Ranchi district.

4. The legend about settlement of the Oraon Tribe in Ranchi District

Murma Jatra is an annual tribal festival of tribal communities living in Ranchi, Jharkhand. It is celebrated in Murma, located about 23 kilometers away from the capital city Ranchi. It is a two-day festival celebrated by the Oraon and Munda tribe of Jharkhand.

It is believed that Murma Jatra is celebrated in the commemoration of the meeting of the Oraon and Munda tribe. There are several legends related to this festival. One of them is that after the Oraons were defeated by the Turks, they had to flee to the Chotanagpur region, which was the place of the Munda tribe. It was Murma where the Oraons and Munda met. They had a dance war for the land and the losing tribe had to leave the land and move to south, now Khunti region. The Mundas lost to the Oraons and had to leave the land and move to the south. This was the place of social and cultural accord between Oraons and Mundas.

Whatever the history is through various oral narrators over, today Murma Jatra is the dancing, worshiping and meeting place for the Oraons and Mundas. People from the three Parhas, forty villages take part in the annual Murma Jatra. The ritual begins from the house of Pahan (the village priest) where people gather, and a woman carries the Kharsa (the sacred earthen pot) on their heads and walk towards the Jatra place. The people follow them, playing drums, Mandar and Nagada, dancing in joy. The people from the village carry their Parha flag with their special symbol to the Jatra and dance around the Shakti Khuta, which means the pole of power or strength. The Shakti Khuta is the most sacred place of the Murma Jatra. Only the Pahans enter the area for rituals. It is believed that Dharmesh resides in the Shakti Khuta.

With the passage of time, there have been various changes in the Murma Jatra. Earlier huge trees surrounded the place of Jatra. There was no permanent construction at that place. But now the number of trees has also gone down. The Murma Jatra spreads in the nearby area in an irregular manner. Earlier the rides which only included the giant wheel would only start after the worship of Shakti Khuta is over. However, now they all start even before the worship starts ignoring the primitive traditions. Even the forty Parha villages do not participate with full enthusiasm, with dance groups and religious symbols. It is organized at Murma of Mandar block of Ranchi district. At this place the war of music and dance was held for seven days and seven nights between the Munda and the Oraon. There was a challenge that who will get defeated in this war will have to leave this place and the victor will settle here permanently. According to proof, the Munda was the first to come and settle there. However, they both took part in that competition. The Munda got defeated in that music dance competition due to not having a "Mandar." As per the contest, the Mundas have to leave that place. Hence, they left Mandar and went to Khunti.

Conclusion

From all the above narratives, we get an idea about the history of the tribes living in the Ranchi district. However, the legends are considered as narratives that are distortions and exaggerations of the truth. Nevertheless, from the study, we may come to the conclusion that every legend spread in society has relevance and they all have some message for human culture.

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