

## Legends of Harisankar and Nrusinghanath

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The ethos of people is known from the legends and myth regarding their race. Family ties were fostered by age old customs and ancestral ideologies from their clan. They acquired supreme faith in all powerful clandestine providence. This faith of theirs is a Superior being manifested itself in their love for a tree, stone, an animal, a river, hill, forest, sun, moon, celestial bodies, air, earth and fire etc. There are four examples from the book 'Sri Harisankar and Sri Nrusinghanath' authored by me which would elucidate how the faith of human being manifests as the activities of Supreme Being representing the crux of a legend.

People believe that severe drought, flood or cyclone are interpreted as a punishment for sins, the result of Divine Wrath. Rain, the giver of new lives and saviour of Earth is also worshipped. The folk sing songs in group offering prayers to God like Indra to shroud the skies with the thickest rain bearing clouds and send down torrential showers. They sing songs to invoke rain. From the book Sri Harisankar, first legend and myth describes the worship of the God Ganesh as Indra (rain-God) on the foot-hill of Gandhamardan at Harisankar is the district of Bolangir. The tribals of the area take the dancing Ganesh idol from the precinct of the temple in a procession to the Harisankar spring and bathed the idol in the spring water so that the God Indra in shape of Ganesh

invoke rain. In this context, it is further stated that they catch a big frog and tie it alive with a string. The frog is decorated with vermilion and turmeric paste. They go on a big procession with much clamour and noise and force the frog to make dance, They sing the song;

*'Bengali nani paean de  
paean nain dele dhan theye  
Inder rajar mausi maru  
Joar nallia badhee naun'*

The tradition of dancing of frog is also prevalent in other parts of Odisha since long to invoke rain. They also sing 'Benga mundare sindura dhalipaka Indara'. It is a natural phenomenon in rural areas that the croaking of frog envisages the advent of rain. In the Vedic age, the Rigvedic hymn about the frog croaking was sung to invoke rain-fall. Religious rituals were also performed in different parts of Odisha to welcome rain.

The second legend and myth of the above book is regarding warfare between Patna and Baster states, in fourteenth century AD. Batsaraj Deva of Chouhan dynasty was the king of Patna. His capital was Patanagarh in the present district of Bolangir, Ramai Deva, the founder of Chouhan dynasty was the grandfather of the former's father. At that time Patna kingdom comprises Patna,

Gangapur, Banoi, Baud, Khemandi and Nandapur. A legend was prevalent among tribals regarding Patna how the king conquered its Bastar state so easily ?

Maharaja Batsadeva had a beautiful daughter, the princess of Patna. He wished to get his daughter married to Nag prince of Bastar. He sent the royal priest to Baster for negotiation. The king of Bastar welcomed the priest and was very much pleased with the marriage proposal of his son with the daughter of Batsadev. He heard about the 'Ramai khanda', the holy sword of Ramai Deva, the founder of Chauhan dynasty with help of which the king of Patna was winning all battles in past. Baster king asked the priest of Patna, if the Patna king would agree to hand over 'Ramai Khanda' not as a dowry but as a token of love, then he would agree to the proposal.

The king of Patna became furious and did not agree to the proposal. As 'Ramai Khanda' was the only source of power of Patna kingdom which was also a glory to the throne, it was not possible to spare the sword. The princess of Patna in the mean time decided to marry the prince of Baster and she started worshipping him as her revered husband. She told her mother, the queen of Patna that if she did not marry him, she would commit suicide. The queen knowing all these, requested the king to give Ramai Khanda' as dowry at the time of marriage. At last the king of Patna, agreed to the condition imposed by the Baster king.

The marriage was performed with pomp and revelry. Bride returned to Bastar with the 'Ramai Khanda'. This sword was brought in a palanquin over an elephant, when the king of Baster had lifted the 'Ramai Khanda' from the palanquin, one cobra started biting it with raised hood. The king thought that it was the treachery of Patna king.

Out of anger, the Bastar king gave the name of his pet dog as 'Batsadeva'. He also harassed the princess of Patna in many ways, Batsadeva declared war against Baster. At the first instance, the soldiers of Bastar retreated from the border, Patna soldiers followed them upto their capital. Baster soldiers remained in side their fort of Dantewada for several months.

King of Patna thought that it was very difficult to maintain their soldiers due to shortage of food stuff. King Batsadev prayed the Goddess Dantesvari, the family deity of Baster to save them from the future danger. But the Goddess appeared before the soldiers as a female fruit-seller. Those who took the sweet fruits from her they died. The Senapati, military general of Patna investigated the matter and came to know that this type of mischief was done by the Goddess Dantesvari herself.

Hearing from the general the king of Patna prayed the Goddess Dantesvari with devotion and offerings. She was pleased with the king and appeared before him saying : Oh king if the king of Baster was not there, who would worship the Goddess ?

Batsadeva boldly assured the goddess that he would worship her with much care. Then the deity in the name of 'Bastaren' was worshipped in his kingdom except proper Patnagarh. The Goddess Dantesvari was pleased with him and told "the morrow morning while the door of Dantewada fort is opened by a pregnant woman your soldiers would enter inside the fort".

Actually, it happened in the next morning, when the Goddess Dantesvari in the form of a pregnant woman came out from the fort, then all the soldiers of Patna entered inside the fort. Bastar king was defeated and killed. Then the king of Patna was able to recover the prestigious 'Ramai Khanda', the glory of Patna. From that time, the

deity remains at Jaypur as Chandi-Basteren at Jesil Titilagarh sub-division and also as Basteren-Mouli at Titilagarh proper.

The third legend and myth from the above book is about appearance of Lord Harisankar in the foot hill of Gandhamardan mountain range in present Khaprakhol Block of Bolangir district. Legend prevalent in that area is that one Kondh family lived near the hill side of Harisankar Nallah. They went to the forest to procure some roots of medicinal plants. While digging the root, their crowbar struck on a stone in form of 'Siva linga'. The 'Siva Linga' was found bleeding profusely.

On that night, the husband Kondh dreamt that the 'Siva Linga' he found was the God Harisankar himself. The God instructed him to construct one temple for him. All the Kondh of that area went to the then king of Patna, Ramei Deva, the founder of Chouhan Dynasty. When the Kondh couple described all these, the king himself expressed that he also had dreamt the same episode. By the help of the Kondhs king Ramai Deva constructed the temple of Harisankar at the foot-hill of Gandhamardan on the right side of the spring.

The fourth legend comes from the book 'Sri Nrusinghnath' written by the same author. The legend and myth about the appearance of God Nrusinghnath is that more than five hundred years ago, the hill track of Nrusinghnath area was inhabited by the Khondhs. There were two Kondh families Hari and Sahadeva, two brothers living at Manbhang, at the outskirt of Nrusinghnath nallah. Yamuna and Rodana, their wives went to dig the roots of edible creepers called 'Pitha Kanda' i.e. near the Nrusinghnath Nallah which is also called 'Papaharan. 'Nallah' that creeper was coiling over one Bael tree (Aegle marmelos). The Kondh women while digging a little blood came out from a stone idol, struck by their crow-

bar. Both the Kondh women were astonished with the phenomenon and immediately returned home. They narrated the incident to their husbands. Both couples rushed to the spot and found that the hole had been filled up with milk instead of blood.

They heard some voice from the heavens "Hariah"; I am very much pleased with you. You construct a temple for me and install me there. I am Narayan Vishnu, I have come to the earth to kill the 'Musikadatya' (rat demon) for which I had to incarnate myself in the form of Marjar Keshari (cat-lion) known as Nrusinghnath. Then one idol as cat-lion made of black granite stone forged out of that hole. The Kondh brothers Hari and Sahadev along with others went to Patna and apprised the Maharaj Baijal Deva, the then king of Patna. They requested the king to construct a temple at the spot where the God 'Marjarkeshari' had appeared.

King Baijal Deva constructed one temple on the left side of the 'Papaharan Nallah' on the foot-hill of Gandhamardan range near Paikmal in the district of Bargarh in Odisha and installed the deity there. Kondh people were worshipping the 'Marjar-Keshari' by offering some fruits like mango, narangi (jungle orange), Jack fruits and many kinds of roots from that time. But, now one unmarried Brahmin boy is used to worship the God Nurshinghnath being appointed by the temple committee.

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