

# Munda Folktales of Jharkhand: A Study in Sociocultural Discourse

Laxmi Kumari<sup>1\*</sup>, Md. Mojibur Rahman<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Doctoral Research Fellow in English discipline

Indian Institute of Technology (ISM) Dhanbad, Jharkhand (India).

laxmi.nishi@gmail.com

<sup>2</sup>Associate Professor, Department of Humanities and Social Sciences,  
Indian Institute of Technology (ISM), Dhanbad, Jharkhand (India).

\*Corresponding Author

**Abstract-** *The present study aims at discourse analysis of Mundari Folktales of Jharkhand using sociocultural features. Discourse Analysis acts as an umbrella term for a rapidly growing field of research covering a wide range of different theoretical approaches and analytical emphases. It is assumed that different constructions of the world are represented in a number of ways. To understand different constructions, one needs to understand the factors that drive and shape the behavior of the people as individuals and collectively. The sociocultural discourse analysis focuses on the use of language as a social mode of thinking. The work of sociocultural theory is to explain how individual mental functioning is related to cultural, institutional, and historical context. This method will not only analyze words, sentences, expression, form and meaning but also analyze all kinds of social and cultural factors related to discourse. The intention behind the study is contribution to the repertoire of knowledge on Mundari folktales as an area which has remained unexplored over years. Despite being one of the major tribes of Jharkhand, these indigenous lives have not been a part of scholarly research yet. The tales are collected by different people and they are translated also but discourse study of the tales has not been dealt yet. Through the study of the tales one can learn their customs, culture, rituals, social activities and way of living. The emphases will be on analyzing people, their culture and society through the language used in the text.*

**Keywords-** *Discourse Analysis; Folktales; Sociocultural; Indigenous*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The present study aims at discourse analysis of Mundari Folktales of Jharkhand using sociocultural features. The intention behind the study is contribution to the repertoire of knowledge on Mundari folktales as an area which has remained unexplored over years. Despite being one of the major tribes of Jharkhand, these indigenous lives have not been a part of scholarly research yet. The tales are assembled by different people and are translated into devanagri script but, discourse study of the tales has not been prodded yet. The study decodes their customs, culture, rituals, social activities and way of living through their folktales. The emphases are on analyzing people, their culture and society through the tales used in the text. Several ethnographic studies have been done on this tribe but textual analysis of the tales have not grabbed much attention of the researchers. The re-visiting of tales with sociocultural perspective shall add new dimension to this area of research.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Discourse means anything penned or verbal in communication. The term 'discourse' describes a formal way of thinking that can be expressed through language; it

is a social boundary that defines what statements can be said about the subject. It is embedded in different rhetorical genres and meta-genres.

Discourse Analysis acts as an umbrella term for a rapidly growing field of research covering a wide range of different theoretical approaches and analytical emphases. It is a broad term for the study of the ways in which language is used in texts and contexts. It is concerned with "the use of language in a running discourse, continued over a number of sentences, and involving the interaction of speaker (or writer) and auditor (or reader) in a specific situational context, and within a framework of social and cultural conventions" (Abrams and Harpham, *A Glossary of Literary Terms*, 2005). Discourse analysis has been described as an interdisciplinary study of discourse *within* linguistics, though it has also been adopted (and adapted) by researchers in numerous other fields in the social sciences. It is assumed that different constructions of the world are represented in a number of ways. To understand different constructions, one needs to understand the factors that drive and shape the behavior of the people as individuals and collectively. Ferdinand De Saussure says that it is the structure itself that determines the significance, meaning and function of the individual elements of a system

(Saussure, 2011). Sociocultural approach means to understand people and their culture. The sociocultural discourse analysis focuses on the use of language as a social mode of thinking.

The work of sociocultural theory is to explain how individual mental functioning is related to cultural, institutional, and historical context. It describes the social process and the origination of human intelligence in society or culture, and it suggests that social interaction plays an integral role in cognitive development. This method insists that the speaker as an individual and one entity of society not only want to transmit information or expresses thoughts, but also attempt to engage in certain social activities in different social situations and social institutions. (Penuel & Wertsch, 1995)

Some major work done on Munda, one of the major tribes of Jharkhand are on language, culture, custom and tradition. One of the prominent books 'Encyclopaedia Mundarica' states that according to the General, Anthropological Survey of India, The Mundas are one of the oldest settlers in India, with their concentration in the area of Bihar, Madhya Pradesh and Orissa. This encyclopaedia explains all the characteristics of their language, poetry, music and dances, dwelling, furniture, medicinal and poisonous plants with their Mundari names. The book Encyclopaedia Mundarica is in 16 Volumes written/authored/edited by Hoffman, S.J. John, Artur Van, S.J. Emelen; foreword by K.S. Singh', published in the year 2009. Singh (1992) book is the tale of the Mundas' comprehension of their own reality, their innovation with iron, and their relationship with the Asur tribe. The epic is natural for their social framework and character. It is an attestation of their confidence in themselves and their reality. The harmonious relationship of man and environment is restored in Munda social framework. Standing (2017) in his thesis has tried to investigate and correspond linkages between certain strict and social changes found to be occurring among this tribe. The adjustments in social association is discussed. These progressions are connected with changes in religious associations and beliefs. Religion is viewed as a sanction of importance as well as a reflector of social and financial changes and limitations. It is a result of history, and specific attention is given, to the historical memory and conventions in moulding present philosophies.

### **3. MUNDA TRIBE (CONTEXT OF THE STUDY)**

The early history of the Kolarian aborigines of India is one of those obscure tracts that have hardly been rescued from the darkness of oblivion. A dense crust of mystery droops over the relics of these prehistoric tribes. Of their real origin and their primitive abode, there is utter darkness of their successive migrations in ancient times through different parts of India. It is said that there is no such written record and whatever is known does not have its authenticity. A total absence of historical traditions

regarding the antiquities of these tribes is silently assumed to exist by writers on Indian History. Not even a chapter of decent length is allotted to these people in any standard work on the history of India. The Kols are an ancient tribal community, one of the original inhabitants of northern and central India. From the traditional history, one important section of the Kol is the Munda tribe now inhabiting in the highlands of Chotanagpore. The name Kol occurs as a generic category in Sanskrit literature along with the names of the other prominent forest tribe like the Bhil and Kirat. Reference of the Kol people is found in medieval texts such as Ram-Charita-Manasa written in the late 16<sup>th</sup> century by the Hindi poet Tulsidas.

Most primitive tribes who spoke the Austro-Asiatic language (like the Santhal, Munda, Ho, Bhumji, Kharia, Kharwar, and Korwa tribes) were labeled as the Kol. These languages were placed in same family of languages, better known as the Mundari or the Austro-Asiatic language group. Incidentally, this distinctive family of languages bears many resemblances to the one spoken by the aborigines of Australia. During the colonial British period the name Kol acquired a negative connotation. It became a synonym for savage, lowly, militant and aggressive and for those performing menial jobs. Munda is a typical representation of the great Kol race. Mundas are the tribal communities from the south East Asia. They are dark brown almost black in colour, short in height but sturdy in their limbs, with irregular features, scanty beards, thick lips, broad nose, a low facial angle, with a head long than that of the average Dravidian's.

There is a thick curtain of mystery regarding this tribe. There is no such ancient document written about this tribe. In some text it is said that they are immigrants and they settled in India after the Aryans. But the epics of Hindu mythology have the reference of these tribes be it Rig Veda, Mahabharata and Ramayana. The names such as the Shudras, the Asuras, the Danavas, and the Daityas and so on are all related to this tribe. These names are often taken in the great Hindu epics. As it is said in our epics that the Rakshas (the black, tall figures) in ancient time were large in numbers and they have often for some time conquered the universe but the Gods who were limited in number fought with them and they were defeated and send to the crust of the Earth. These defeated tribes are said to be forefathers of the aboriginal tribes. Through these evidences it is said that Tribal are the early settlers of the human existence. The Aryans came to India after the Tribal had settled but being from a strong origin and background they ruled the country. But all these things said above have no authentic proof and so the research is in ongoing process. There are many more unknown facts which are not explored and people are working to bring out as much facts as they can.

The modern tribe has lost its essence and they have adopted different language and culture from their neighboring Hindu, Bengali and other customs. They believe in marrying only within their own tribe or clan. They prefer adult marriage. Common mode of acquiring

mate is through negotiation. Monogamy is the common form but polygamy is also permitted. The custom of Junior levirate and junior sororate are also allowed. Different customs survive like if a bride is illegal then her son won't get the father's property. The system of widow marriage also takes place known as *sagai*<sup>1</sup> and the putting of vermilion is done by left hand. Divorce is also allowed and the women are allowed to marry again.

Succession among Mundas is governed by their own customs, which appear to have been little affected by Hindu law. Properties are distributed only among the sons. According to the ancient and universal tradition the central land of Chotanagpore was originally divided into *parhas*<sup>2</sup> comprising of ten to twenty-five villages and over provided by a divisional chief called the *munda*<sup>3</sup> of a *parha*. But in the modern times this practice no longer prevails and Munda is now known as the head of the family. But still there are some officials who make necessary arrangements for the large parties which take place at certain seasons of the year.

The Mundas are divided into thirteen sub-tribes, such as Kharia-Munda, Mahili-Munda, Oraon-Munda they resulted as neighbouring tribes while others like Bhuinhar-Munda and Manki-Munda, have reference to the land and communal system of the tribe.

Munda are mainly *sivalinga*<sup>4</sup> worshippers with the philosophy of nature. Mundas have their own religion known as Sarna but later because of the survival difficulties many of them converted into Christians. Sarna stresses on the belief of one God. Mundas believe in the Supreme Being known as the Sing Bonga, which means the Sun God. According to the Singh (1992), Sing Bonga saves them from the external enemies and troubles of life. They say Sing Bonga punishes them if they break the law of marrying in their one's tribe. In Sarna the Mundas worship the nature. The Mundas are highly superstitious people. The Sarna people do not have any written code of moral laws.

Mundas have remained hunters for centuries. But now they have been converted into the settled agriculturist. Most of them do not have land of their own. They are largely dependent on the labour work in the fields to earn their livelihood. Mundas have been the animal eaters for the long time. They usually eat frogs, snakes, rats, earthworms, shells and snails. They prefer having Tari and Haria wine on the various occasions. The Mundas are in close touch with the Hindu society.

The Munda tribe celebrates several festivals like Mage, Phagu, Karam, Sarhul, and Sohrai. Sarhul is the important

festival of Mundas, which is celebrated in the month of March-April. It is a festival of flowers. On this occasion Sal flowers are brought to the Sarna and Pahan propitiate all Gods of the Mundas. Mage is celebrated in the Full Moon Day of Paush month (in December). The spirits of deceased ancestors are the main objects of worship. Phagu festival is celebrated in the month of February-March. Sohrai is celebrated in the month of October-November. In the night, lamps are lighted. On the following morning, the cattle shed is washed and sprinkled with rice beer.

#### 4. MUNDA TALES AND ITS ANALYSIS

The tales taken for study are from "Munda LokKathayein" by Shree Jagdish Trigunayat. At a glance the history, culture, custom, religion and festivals are dealt in brief about the munda tribe.

In the Mundari history there are many myths and legends carried from one generation to another by their remote ancestors. The name Munda is of Sanskrit origin. It means headman of a village. The Munda myth of mankind tells us how the self-existent primeval deities Ote Boram and Sing Bonga created a boy and a girl and kept them together in a cave. They were too innocent to understand what was expected of them, so the God show them how to make rice beer, which brings passion in their life. In due course of time their family reached the respectable number of twelve of either sex. The myth tells that the children were divided into pairs and Sing Bonga<sup>5</sup> offered before them various kinds of food to choose, and on the basis of their choice of food, depended the fate of their descendants. So, the first and second pair took bullocks and buffaloes flesh and they originated as Kols and Bhumji tribes and similarly other pairs also took their share and were classified under different tribes.

Before the origin of human being there is a myth regarding origin of the earth and creation of other living beings. It is said that the world was surrounded by water with God, being the only living soul, on the universe. The first story is named as *Dharti and Manushya*<sup>6</sup>, it portrays how gradually *Sing Bonga* created the Earth, the living beings such as humans, trees, animals and birds' and made this a beautiful place to live in. The speaker narrates that the universe was surrounded by water and only water creatures. The universe was in utter dark. One day Sing Bonga said to Goddess *Lakshmi*<sup>7</sup> that all day long we sit on the leaf and move in this universe in idleness. We neither get time to take rest nor do we suit with these water animals. There is nobody to sit or interact with us, so we should create earth and human beings and make this universe a better place to live in. With this thought Sing

<sup>1</sup> Sagai is a Hindi term for engagement, this term is also used by kharia tribe, this shows the influence of other language on Kharia tribe.

<sup>2</sup> Small groups of people living in one area, similar to small village

<sup>3</sup> Here Munda mean headman of a village

<sup>4</sup> It is an abstract or aniconic representation of Hindu Deity 'shiva'.

<sup>5</sup> Sing Bonga in Munda tribe is referred to Sun God or Sun Spirit, he is the creator of the universe. (Singh 1992)

<sup>6</sup> First tale taken from Jagdish Trigunayat's book Munda Lok-Kathayein. Dharti means land and manushya means human being.

<sup>7</sup> In Munda tribe also there was concept of worshipping female God as described in Singh (1992).



Bonga first created sun, moon and stars then he made the system of day and night and started thinking the ways to create earth. The very first animal he asked for help in creating earth was *raghowang*<sup>8</sup> fish. The fish gave her consent to do the task but till she returns back Sing Bonga have to take care of her house. Sing Bonga agreed to her and fish went inside the water to collect mud but on the way, she was blocked by creatures living beneath the water. She said that she won't bring anything from inside so they should let her go. On hearing this *rakshas*<sup>9</sup> gave her the permission to go inside the water. The fish went inside and gathered lot of mud in her mouth but before coming out of water all the mud dissolved in water and she was helpless in front of Sing Bonga. The fish said that from now onwards I won't be a part of my caste community. On this god said that you will be a part of your caste but some of your body features will be changed. Similarly, god went and asked crab to help him in creating earth; crab also said the same thing as the fish told him. Crab went deep inside the water and kept mud in his *suudh*<sup>10</sup> and started coming out of water but as he was coming out all the mud dissolved in water and he even broke his leg. After coming out from the water crab said to god; he failed in creating earth and because of his broken leg he will be discarded from his community. God said that he will not be outcaste from his community rather the whole species of crab will have broken leg and it won't disrupt them from walking. The next water creature god asked for help was tortoise he also said the same thing as the crab said and went deep into the water. As he was going, he was also interrupted by the devils of water he answered them as "I don't have limbs so how can I bring things from inside" so, he was allowed to get inside the water. He carried a lot of mud on his back and started coming up but as he was arriving, he found that all the mud again immersed in water and his back also got flattened. After coming upward, he told to Sing Bonga that he failed to help him and he will even be outcaste from his community because of his flattened back. On this Sing Bonga answered that he won't be outcaste from the community rather the whole species will turn like him. The deity also said that this species will always carry the whole body on his back and nothing can harm him.

The next animal Sing Bonga sent was *sundi*<sup>11</sup> fish she also went inside the water and tried to make earth. As she went deep inside the water, bubbles were formed, sing Bonga hoped that *sundi* fish will do something but she also came helpless and was covered with mud. When Sing Bonga saw her dedication to do the work, he blessed her with his hands on the body and the print of god's hand is still there on the body of the fish. He said that she will always be in muddy area hidden by everything. Fish told Sing Bonga to ask from Earthworm, thus the deity went and ask

earthworm to help him in making earth. Earthworm also replied the same as the other creatures did, as he went inside, he was also obstructed by the devils of water, he said that he doesn't have any hands or legs so how can he bring anything from inside so the devils allowed him to go inside. As he went inside the water, he started eating mud and thus his body stretched and became long. He was eating mud from one side and excreting mud from the other side; hence it is said that there are four directions in the universe in which one portion became land where earthworm was excreting mud. God became very happy and asked earthworm to come and live on the land and hence shall always stay on earth and will always eat mud. Sing Bonga was pleased to see the creation of earth, he asked goddess Lakshmi to make the earth a better place to live in. Goddess Lakshmi was asked to make a plain land and places, where she couldn't make it plain it became mountains and rivers. Now God wanted the earth to be filled with some living beings and animals. The first creation of god was Horse. As soon as God made horse, he created a man and a woman and kept them in the patio of the house but later horse destroyed both man and woman. Seeing this god made a dog to protect human and later at night horse again came to destroy everything, as dog saw the horse he started barking and Sing Bonga woke up from his sleep and cursed horse that humans will always sit on your back and your mouth will always be covered with iron bars.

*Asuras*<sup>12</sup> were the next creation of God they were very strong and were growing in large numbers. For their livelihood they began melting stone into iron bars. They worked day and night very rigorously, and started sweating, because of the heat produced in melting stone. The millet plants and the paddy field were getting destroyed due to immense heat and the *Kapila*<sup>13</sup> cow was not able to survive. The survival on earth was getting difficult, so man and woman ask Sing Bonga that how will they survive without food on earth. Sing Bonga replied that they need to cut forest and start making lands for farming. After preparing the land Sing Bonga gave the human being bulls to plough the fields and seeds of paddy and millet to start their cultivation. Both man and woman told Sing Bonga that they don't know how to make shovel for ploughing the field. On this Goddess Lakshmi said Sing Bonga to make shovel from the jungle and bring it for the people. As soon as Sing Bonga went to jungle, he cut a tree and tried to make shovel from one branch of a tree. He didn't return after seven consecutive day and night so Goddess Lakshmi sent mosquitoes to disturb him and to bring him back from the jungle. In return Sing Bonga made small flies from the branches of the tree and send them to the mosquitoes to kill them. The second animal Goddess Lakshmi sent was Tiger, it started roaring so that

<sup>8</sup> A kind of fish described in the book given in footnote 2.

<sup>9</sup> Devil creatures

<sup>10</sup> Small trunk like feature.

<sup>11</sup> Kind of fish described in the book footnote 2.

<sup>12</sup> Asuras were the enemy of Munda, they wanted to destroy them explained in Singh (1992).

<sup>13</sup> It is a special breed of cow with high medicinal values, its milk has healing properties.

God gets frightened and goes to his people. In return God sent Dogs to harm the tiger, the dog started barking more loudly and even started biting the Tiger and the tiger then ran away. The third animal Goddess sent was a snake, it started hissing loudly, seeing this Sing Bonga sent eagle and the snake flew away.

Later as Goddess saw that nothing can bring back God, she herself went into the jungle and saw that Sing Bonga is making shovel with one big log of wood. Goddess said that in this way we can never make a shovel and the condition of human being will become miserable day by day. We need to make shovel in parts so that human being can use it and it can be carried as well. Sing Bonga after listening to Goddess Lakshmi followed her instruction in making shovel. After making shovel Sing Bonga gave it to the human beings and they started ploughing the field. And the other sides the Asuras were busy in melting Iron bars. The earth started heating up due to the heat produced in the furnace, the sky turned dusty and cloudy, flora and fauna were also affected because of the immense heat and living organism started dying. Then the human beings on earth went to Sing Bonga for complaining about the situation on earth and prayed for their survival. Later, listening to the complains of the human beings Sing Bonga sent two birds to the Asuras to talk about the problem they are creating on earth. The two birds are *Lipi*<sup>14</sup> and *Crow*; they are instructed to go and talk to Asuras and on the way Lipi shall eat the grains that fall from the vehicles which are carried for transportation and Crow shall eat the insects that survive on the roadside.

The birds went to the Asuras place and sat on the Peepal and Banyan tree. While they were sitting on the tree the dogs saw them and started barking on them. Seeing this Asuras gathered near both the tree and inquired about their presence. The birds said to Asuras that their rigorous work of melting iron is troubling the people on earth and the place is becoming too warm for the plants to survive. So, Sing Bonga has sent them to make you all understand that they should work according to day and night and should stop working either in day or in night. The Asuras got angry and said that they don't know any God and that they themselves are God. They said that they are so strong that they can chew the God at once. The Asuras were very proud of their muscular body; so, they hold the bird with the tongs and beat them with hammer, from then onwards Lipi and Crow became black.

Then God send *Dhichua*<sup>15</sup> and *Kerketta*<sup>16</sup>, they were also treated same as Lipi and Crow. God again sent his disciple in the form of birds but the Asuras ignored his messages again and again. Hence Sing Bonga decided to go by himself, on the way he saw a shepherd who was suffering from skin disease. He saw that the person was in a miserable condition so he gave his skin to the suffering person and vice versa. So, he entered in the Asuras

community in disguise and asked for work. One old man and women kept God in their house for some household work.

On a certain day the iron melting furnaces of Asuras stopped working and their work was stopped, they come to a conclusion that they need to sacrifice one human being then the furnace will be in control, therefore they went in search of a human being. For this work Sing Bonga in the form of *Khasra*<sup>17</sup> came and said that he is ready to get sacrificed. The people locked Khasra in the furnace and started burning it. When the Asuras opened the furnace Khasra turned into Gold and carried much Gold jewelry with him and came out of the furnace. Seeing this the Asuras were in a shocking state, khasra said that there is much gold jewelry inside he could bring only this much and so all the Asuras went inside the furnace and Sing Bonga locked the furnace and the women started burning the furnace. After three days the fire stopped and when the furnace opened the whole Asur community turned into ashes and the ladies of the community went in anger to the God. God threw the women Asuras in different directions, one was thrown in the water body and she turned into *Ikir Bonga*, other on the mountains she turned into *Buru Bonga* and the third turned into *Bangoli Bonga*. These Bongas till today are treated as bad or good spirit.

In due course when all the Asuras went in the furnace to collect gold one man came out and hide oneself in the bushes, so with that one man the Lohar community came into existence.

The second story *Chand Suraj*<sup>18</sup>, both Chand and Suraj were residing in their own place. They had several wife and children. One day Chand told to Suraj that "though we are busy in following God's order, I want to visit your house." Suraj accepted Chand's proposal and he came to Suraj house the next day. For the feast Suraj killed all his children and welcomed Chand. Chand ate all of them. The next day Suraj went to Chand's house but Suraj was not welcomed as Chand was welcomed. Suraj was not applauded as Chand and so Suraj got angry and he took one big stick and started running after Chand. Chand took his children and wives and started running towards a big mountain. In result, in front of Chand was dark and behind him was light. This is the depiction of the formation of day and night. It is said that Suraj is still chasing Chand and he says that "the day I will catch Chand, he will be killed and the whole world will be finished."

The third story is *Raat aur Din*<sup>19</sup>, it is about the functioning of day and night. When Sing Bonga created Earth, he thought that "I made this earth but it is not looking beautiful," so he made one human being. After giving life to the man he asked him to plough the field and grow crops for his living, man made three to four big ploughing fields. Sing Bonga asked him that "when did you make this?" Man replied that "I made it today". After

<sup>14</sup> Kind of bird described in the book in footnote 2

<sup>15</sup> Kind of bird

<sup>16</sup> Kind of bird

<sup>17</sup> A man suffering from measles

<sup>18</sup> Second story taken from the book described in footnote 2.

<sup>19</sup> Third story is also taken from the book described in footnote 2

some time, the deity again came asked the same question to the man and he got the same reply. Sing Bonga came again and again and asked the same question and he got the same answer. In due time Sing Bonga thought that this will not work, and the man have to take rest otherwise the whole life he will spend working. Thus, God created Day and Night, and told man to take rest and have his meals on proper time or else he won't have any proper way of living. Sing Bonga vanished after saying this and after some time, it became dark and the man was not able to work as he could not see anything. So, he went home and slept. After long time, he could see light and the sun rising, so he woke up had his meals and went to work. Since then consequently Day and Night formation started.

The fourth story *Dharti ki Beti*<sup>20</sup> is about Mother Earth and her daughter. The daughter was very beautiful and was known by the whole world. Mother Earth had one servant to look after her daughter. When she uses to go and perform her duties on the earth the servant used to take care of her daughter, she used to put the daughter under the circle of fire, in order to avoid any mishappening. One day the servant forgot to make the fire circle and got busy into work. The child went to play with other children on the bank of the river. She saw one lotus in the river and went to take it and she got drowned in the river. When Mother Earth came home at evening, she got worried not seeing her daughter. She asked her servant about her daughter she said that she was playing here with other children. When mother earth inquired about her daughter the children said that she went inside the river to see the flower and got drowned. Mother earth lost her beautiful daughter the loss of her daughter took her into great grief. She stopped doing her regular duty and so the environment and the surrounding started to suffer a lot, rivers and ponds were becoming dry, animals, plants and aquatic animals were losing their lives. Human being started to suffer because of no water. The whole earth was going to die so they started praying to God and God appeared on the earth and asked mother earth that why she is not performing her duties? She replied that she is in pain as she lost her daughter and so she is not executing her duties and she even said that she won't do her duties until she gets her daughter back. On listening this God said that he will talk to *Yamraj*<sup>21</sup> of getting her daughter back. When God went and asked *Yamraj* to return the daughter of mother earth, he said that he can't return her as there is a custom that when one enters *yamlok*<sup>22</sup> can't return back to earth because *yamraj* said that after having food of *Yamlok* one can't leave the place and go. So, God and *Yamraj* brought a middle path that the daughter of mother earth can be in earth for half of the year and the rest half she will be in *Yamlok*. God returned on earth and said this to Mother earth and she agreed on this as she was happy that at least half of the

year her daughter will be with her. Therefore, on being happy, she again started to perform her duties and because after long time mother earth was happy, she all over again made the earth and the environment green and trees started blooming with flowers and fruits. Thus, the environment and surrounding was green and happy, this was the commencement of *Sarhul* festival. People started celebrating this festival as beginning of new crops and flowers. Consequently, half of the year there are crops and flowers blooming and half of the year there is less crop and water in the surrounding; because mother earth remains unhappy in absence of her daughter when she is in *Yamlok*.

## 5. FINDINGS

The first story itself gives an account of all the primary invention of God. It started with the creation of earth, human beings, different animals and their association with the community and culture. The story is portrait in such a way that the whole creation of earth is told in one story. The narrator in its narration has tried to give all the possible knowledge of the beginning life of human survival as well as of animals.

The story starts with the Gods discussing about creation of Earth and it is seen that before the creation of earth the whole universe was covered with water all around. The mention of water body is even discussed in the book *The Mundas and Their country* by Sarat Chandra Roy. It is observed in the story that *Mundas* deity *Sing Bonga* made *Ote Dishum* i.e. Earth with the help of Tortoise and Leech. These pictures and illustrations helped us to portray the picture of past and hence give us proof of the creation of earth in Munda tribe. There is a myth even in Hindu mythology, that the earth is situated on a snake "Shesh Nag" and before the creation of Earth the whole universe was surrounded by water.

The image of different kinds animals shows their existence from the past to the present day. The significance of different kinds of creatures and animal like *tiger*, *crow*, *lipi*, *dhichua*, *kerketa*, *sundi fish* and many more is pictured in the story to prove their existence. In the present day also, it is seen that crab can move both front and backward, tortoise carry the burden of its body on the back, so the characteristics of the illustrated creatures are same. Further the description of horse is also stated and it is said in the story that the horse is cursed by God that the human species will always ride on it and its mouth will be covered with iron bars, which is still practiced in this current generation. The significance of dog and its features are similar in the present society too. Through this written document one can at least have the idea of some species of animal and reptiles which were acknowledged by Munda tribe.

As represented in the story that God made Human being by its own, but in the history book of Munda tribe, there is a different story regarding creation of Humans. According to Roy (1912) In Munda tribe, the evolution of humans

<sup>20</sup> Fourth story is also taken from the book described in footnote 2

<sup>21</sup> He is lord of death, according to Hindu as well as Munda mythology

<sup>22</sup> Abode of the death and sinners.



was from the egg of a swan. Hence, in the narration the evolution myth of humans is entirely different. According to Hindu and Christian mythologies the humans were created by the Deities. Aryans were the stronger tribe than the Munda tribe, they spread very rapidly in the region. So, there is high chances that at the time of this story being recorded the people of Munda tribe were influenced by the Aryans. Hence, influence of different culture was possible at time also.

Later after the creation of Humans and animals, God also created Asuras. The Asuras started melting stones into iron bars and this created immense heat on earth and survival of humans became difficult. It is discussed in the Roy's (1912) book *The Mundas and Their country* that there are two types of Mundas; one group work with iron and are called Lohars and the other group are settled agriculturists. In the story it is revealed that God asked the humans to clean the forest and start growing crops i.e. it is a symbol of settled agriculture. The people were not able to plough the field so god went and helped them in making shovel by which they can plough the field. But God was not able to make the shovel so Goddess came to help him. This is an example of equality among men and women in Munda society. This practice is even seen today in this community where the world is fighting for equality, this community always believed in equality among men and women. Today also one can see that Munda women are very active and they equally perform the duties in their household work. And by this example one can say that it is true that Munda's practiced agriculture since long.

Further it states about the cruel and brutal nature of the Asuras, the Asuras want to sacrifice human for the smooth working of the furnace to melt irons. The ritual of sacrifice prevails in their culture from the beginning and it is still practiced in the form of animal sacrifice. There are certain rituals in which animal sacrifice is compulsory. Like the festival of *Batauli*<sup>23</sup>, in Munda the pahan<sup>24</sup> sacrifices three fowls at the *jaher Sarna*<sup>25</sup> of his village and with offerings of rice-beer, leaves of the millet plant, *gandhari saag*<sup>26</sup> and the sacrificed fowls, worship all the *bongas* and deities of the Munda. The fowls are cooked and other food items are prepared at the *sarna* where all the Munda men of the village have a sumptuous meal with rice-beer.

At the end God turned all the Asuras into ashes in their burning furnace. And the women of Asuras in anger attacked God and God threw one of them in water and she turned into *Ikir Bonga*<sup>27</sup>, the other was thrown on the

mountains and she turned into *Buru Bonga*<sup>28</sup> and the third turned into *bagoli Bonga*<sup>29</sup>. It is said that these Bongas still exist in the society in the form of good and evil spirits. The Munda tribe worships these Bongas, they don't worship any idol and it is their belief that the spirits stay in their home and they are blessed by them.

The second story deals with moon and sun. It is said that both are disciples of God and work according to his instructions. They have many wives and children, 'many wives' shows the custom of polygamy in the Mundari social set up. The sun and moon are conversing of visiting their homes which shows that social interaction also prevails from long time in the society. The very next day moon visits Sun's home and for the feast moon sacrifices his own children and moon have them as his meal. The sacrificing of human being on the sake of worship was practiced since long in the society. Tradition of blood offering to god is also prevalent in the society since ancient time. There is lack of love for the sake of rituals. The custom of animal eating also prevails since long in the society. Next day Sun visits Moon's home but moon didn't follow the ritual of praising Sun. He didn't follow the tradition of sacrificing his children. In result sun took a long stick and started running towards Moon, Moon took his family and ran towards a mountain and Sun was running after him. In front of the moon there was light and behind him was dark, from this day, day and night formation was created.

The second story finishes on the note of sun still running behind him and it is said that the day sun catches moon, it will be the dooms day, and everything will come to an end. Moon not sacrificing his children is the sign of love for his family. One can also see that for saving his family moon goes against the tradition of sacrificing his children and this shows that there were people at that time also who don't perform any task just for the rituals and traditions. The sign of revenge is also there, sun immediately going to moon's house shows his revenge. The end note of the story is still believed, that the universe will come to an end. The story is the depiction of some customs and rituals which is still practiced in not only Munda community but in other communities as well.

The third story is about "Raat aur Din" i.e. "Night and Day". This story shows that how a human work according to the day and night. The story says that when the God Sing Bonga created earth he thought that the earth is not looking beautiful and so he made a man and send him to earth. After sending him to earth he told him to plough the fields and grow crops so that he can survive on earth. Then the man harvested three to four fields. This story also gives us evidence of agriculture in the Munda culture, which at the same time proves Munda's as settled agriculturists. The story shows us the development made by the God for the

<sup>23</sup> It is celebrated before re-ploughing and levelling begins, it is celebrated to protect the villagers from tigers and snakes, it occurs in August month.

<sup>24</sup> Head of the panchayat committee.

<sup>25</sup> Sarna is the place of worship, a sacred grove and it is called Jaher than or Jaher gar.

<sup>26</sup> Kind of leafy vegetable boiled and then squeezed to cook further in a pot.

<sup>27</sup> As told earlier that Bonga are referred to as spirit in Kharia tribe, so *Ikir Bonga* is water spirit.

<sup>28</sup> *Buru Bonga* is spirit which stays on mountains, but the tribal communities' worship good and evil spirits.

<sup>29</sup> Type of good or evil spirit.

survival of human to survive on earth. This story conveys how Sing Bonga thought to create day and night. And he formed Sun and Moon and created day and night so that when it becomes dark, the man automatically goes to sleep and when the sky is clear, he will wake up and perform his duties. He showed the path of harvesting the land and grows his own crops. The system of agriculture is visible since man came on earth for the first time. Through these practices only man learnt to live his livelihood on earth. These stories are the source to give a picture of Mundari's way of living.

The fourth story named as "Dharti ki Beti" is about mother earth and her daughter, and also describes her servant, who take care of her daughter and helped her in house hold work. Keeping servant for help was in practice in the society since long. The connotative meaning can also be taken as practice of slavery also prevails in the society. Mother Earth was a busy lady; she had lot of responsibilities to take care like giving rain to earth, keeping the environment green like blooming of flowers, water filled ponds and lakes, taking care of the crops and field, the flora and fauna and all. This specifies women' position in the society and how much responsible she is since the creation of this earth. Hence, demonstration of such women character expresses the view that in primordial era, female was equally important as male member. With the modernization and development, and the influence of other communities, the importance of women decreased with time.

According to Munda tribe their Mage festival is also known as sarhul. In Trigunayat's collection of tales there are two adaptation of sarhul festival, the first adaptation can be seen in the fourth story 'Dharti ki beti' which is about mother earth and her beautiful daughter. The festival started because mother earth was happy to get her daughter for half of the year and she made the earth green after long time so sarhul was celebrated as coming of flowers and fruits after long time. The tale depicts the culture of celebrating the coming of first fruit. This also shows that this tribe worships nature since beginning.

The second adaptation of the story regarding sarhul festival is about king Dashrat and his three wives, it is said that the king was very sad as his wives were infertile. So, one day the king went to the priest and told him about his wives. The priest gave the king an apple for his wives to eat when king gave the apple to his wives the wives divided them into three pieces and ate them. After nine months all the wives gave birth to sons; one wife was blessed with twins. On this occasion there was a four-day celebration for the sons of the king. The last day was the day of flowers so it is said that sarhul is celebrated for four days. This adaptation is according to the Hindu rituals and mythology, this is an example of the influence of Hinduism, which existed since long.

The first adaptation is considered more because, this is the belief of the people of Chotanagore and the second adaptation is believed by small group of people and it is so because the second adaptation is followed by Hindus so, it

is said that when Hindus came to this region the Tribals got influenced and celebrated this aspect of Sarhul.

## 6. CONCLUSION

The sociocultural approach is an effective tool to study the cultural aspect of any tribe. The culture, belief and practices are reflected through the tales. From the tales studied above, one can connect the fables with the history, the origin as well the way of living of the tribes. The stories are evidence that the tribe wants to be in green surrounding. Their society is classless because we have seen God and Goddess both performing their duties. They want to be in social group and community as we have seen Chand and Suraj invites one another to visits one's home. From the first story one can get the glimpse of the evolution of earth, of mankind, the survival of mankind, different stages of survival of mankind through agriculture. The development of different kind of species and their existence from the past till present. The second story portrayed the social set up of the community. The beliefs regarding sacrifice of human or animal blood, this belief is also seen in the first story. The third story is about formation of Day and Night and the way of living which comes from the ancestral history. The fourth story gives an account of the main festival of the tribe Sarhul, its significance and importance are explained.

These symbolic illustrations, beliefs and images have traces in the Munda community since beginning and are practiced till today. As a researcher, I have found the evidences in the early history books or in some article or blogs which proves that these tales are the representation of these cultures, beliefs and history. The implication of the story is that today many people who have moved forward into the modernized world have forgotten their own identity of their existence so these tales act as a tool to keep the culture and origin alive.

## 7. LIMITATION OF THE STUDY

The study is very limited as few tales are only analyzed and in one article all the aspects can't be dealt with. These written documents which have been taken for study are not written before this decade so one can't challenge that these facts are original. As it is said in the book *The Mundas and Their Country* that the history of this tribe lies in dark oblivion so one need to explore as much as one can to keep this culture and history alive. The study will show path to do such studies in future.

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### Author's Bibliography

**Laxmi Kumari** (Corresponding Author) is Doctoral Research Fellow in English discipline at Indian Institute of Technology (ISM) Dhanbad, Jharkhand (India). She is presently working on Social and Cultural Study of Tribal Tales of Jharkhand: A Discourse Analysis under Dr. Md. Mojibur Rahman. She pursued her M.Phil. in Linguistics under the guidance of Dr. Md. Mojibur Rahman from Indian Institute of Technology (ISM) Dhanbad, Jharkhand (India). Her area of interest includes 'Discourse Analysis', 'Sociocultural Studies' and folktales. E-mail: [laxmi.nishi@gmail.com](mailto:laxmi.nishi@gmail.com) ORCID ID 0000-0002-5276-6070

**Md. Mojibur Rahman** is an Associate Professor at Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, Indian Institute of Technology (Indian School of Mines), Dhanbad, Jharkhand (India). He has fourteen years of experience in teaching English Language Skills to the students of Science and Technology. His areas of interest include: ESP, EST, ELT, Language Testing, Translation Studies, Language Studies and Communication Skills Development. He has edited two books and published 25 research papers in several national and international journals and contributed chapters to various books of language and literature practices. He has also published book reviews. Email: [mrahmanelt@gmail.com](mailto:mrahmanelt@gmail.com). ORCID ID 0000-0002-8454-0981