

The Historical Significance of Rohtasgarh and Oraons

The district headquarter of Rohtas district of Bihar is Sasaram. It lies on the bank of the Son River, which shares its boundaries with Palamu district of Jharkhand, Aurangabad district of Bihar as well as Rohtas district of Bihar.

Rohtasgarh is a historical place of significant value for the Oraon tribe. The Oraon, or Kurukh, are one of the largest tribal groups in Eastern India. There is some geographical situation in this mountain towards Son River where several descending roots descend down from up. These roots called as Ruih in Kurukh/Oraon language. So the mountain become famous as Ruih Parta and residents of this mountain called as Ruih Parta Ta. Gradually Ruih Parta Ta/tas become Ruihtas in there Kurukh language and King or Kabila Head become popularly named as Ruihta Be:las. **Ruih Parta Tas become Ruihtas in Kurukh language. Ruih is a the name of descending root or roots in air from the stem of big tree.** People also told that Ruihta was the the name of Oraon King . Another story depicts that *Ruih tas Gadhe* (रूईह तस गढ़े) or the present name Rohtasgarh is derived from Rohitaswa, the son of King Harishchandra.

Rohtasgarh Fort has a rich history, having been governed by various rulers over time, including Kherwar, Oraon, Chero, Hindu rulers, Mughals and the British, before coming under the Government of India as per the display board of Archaeological Survey of India in the past.

For the Oraon community, Rohtasgarh holds a special place in their cultural and historical identity. It is said that the Oraon tribe celebrates the *Raaji Bisu Sendra* (रा:जी-बिसुसेन्द्रा) - a conference of traditional social, administrative and judiciary management system which occurs in every 12 years, which lasts for a week. During this occasion, all adult and young males of the village go to the jungle, leaving the women and children at home. A dairy woman who supplied milk to the fort was aware of this tradition.

It is important to understand that Traditional Oraon Tribe is still following their three-tier social customary governance system ie. – 1. Padda 2. Parha 3. Bisusendra. In previous times, Raaji Bisusendra happened in every 12 years and Regional Bisusendra happened in every 3 years. Under special circumstances, Bisusendra is either organised by the decision of JURY members or collectively by more than two Parha Be:l/Parha Raaja.

Note: Bisusendra is the supreme council of Traditional Oraon Tribe and Parha Be:ls/Parha Raaja are Jury members of Bisusendra.

The fort became the site of a legendary defence led by Oraon women. When the enemy planned to attack the fort on **Vaishakh Full Moon** night. The Oraon women, under the leadership of **Singi Daii** (सिनगी दई), **Kaili Daii** (कईली दई), and **Champu Daii** (चम्पू दई), daughters of the **Ruihta King** (राजा रुईहता), wore **male clothes** and valiantly fought the enemies. They successfully repelled the enemies **twice**, using **Guerrilla War** techniques and bows-arrows, sticks, swords, spears, chili, and stones to protect their fort.

However in the morning, while the brave women warriors were washing their faces using both hands, the enemies realized, from information shared by the dairy woman (*mahra mukka*), that their opponents were women since the men usually wash their face using one had. They attacked again for the **third time** but this time Singi Daii, Kaili Daii, and Champu Daii led the women in saving the elder people, children, and other women, guiding them through a secret passage into the dense forest.

Thus, the Oraon warrior people were protected under the leadership of Singi Daii, the elder daughter and princess of the Ruihta King. This courageous defence of Rohtasgarh by Oraon women has cemented the fort's importance in the community's history and heritage.

Even today, every 12 years, the women of the Oraon community dress up as men and perform *Mukka Sendra (Jani Shikar)* to show gratitude towards their ancestors who saved their community from enemies. This tradition reinforces the enduring significance of Rohtasgarh (Bihar at present) for the Oraon people, symbolizing their bravery, resilience, and unity.

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