

## **Sorath Rai Diyach and Ror-vansh - A Dynasty that Counters History**

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### **Abstract:**

The research paper proposes to initiate a case study of a warrior dynasty's position in history that got overshadowed by the elites' urge to maintain a smooth narrative that conforms to its symmetrical structure. Ror-vansh, an Indian Kshatriya Dynasty that once ruled Sindh with exemplary efficiency, now sits outside the matrix of the Indian Historical narrative and counters the mainstream history by its anecdotes that have been passed on through generations by the bards and their folklore ballads.

An anecdote, whether it is in the form of a written record or 'word of mouth', has the potential to break the chain of historical events, although it does depend on the magnitude of the anecdote, and the contrast it might create with respect to the mainstream history. New Historicism provides an opportunity to question and analyse the story and contextual background of the source by omitting the lines that divide the literary and social constructs. Here, the anecdote of *Sorath Rai Diyach* from the famous collection of tragedies of Sindh, 'Shah-Jo-Risalo', by Shah Abdul Latif Bhittai shall be used to identify the place of Ror-vansh in the course of history that doesn't embrace the dynasty due to "lack of evidence".

*Keywords: Anecdote, Counter-history, Ror, History, Indian-history*

### **Introduction:**

The Ror-vansh is an elite clan of Kshatriya origin that belonged to Ikshvaku dynasty. Rai Diyach, also known as Ror Kumar or Raja Dhaj, was a descendant of Ror-vansh, whose glory stood unfazed in the face of testing times, and lives on through verbal anecdotes, one of which was penned down by the Sufi poet of Sindh, Shah Abdul Latif Bhittai in his collection of tragedies of the seven queens of Sindh.

The anecdote covers the tragic story of King Rai Diyach and his Queen Sorath, who fall into the arms of death due to the one promise the king made to the minstrel Beejal as a reward for the "heart-piercing" performance by the latter. This anecdote shall be used to shed light on the various elements related to Rai Diyach, the political and geographical context which will serve to initiate and motivate further research to solidify the claim of the Ror Dynasty's position in the wide spectrum of history through counter-history.

### **Anecdotes and Counter-history**

*"New historicists deliberately departed from the literary-historical practice of creating embrasures for holding texts inside of established accounts of change and continuity; we used anecdotes instead to chip away at the familiar edifices and make plastered-over cracks appear."*

– Stephen Greenblatt and Catherine Gallagher (2)



The history of a nation, just like other ideological constructs, is looked after by the authorities in order to maintain a sense of coherence, which helps to provide a narrative that makes the diverse sections of that country stick together with a feeling of belongingness towards the nation. The historiographers require concrete records as proof in order to maintain the historical narrative, and sometimes, even with the availability of abundant evidence, the narrative remains unchallenged and unchanged, as those potential changes might not sit well with the narrative that the authorities wish to promote. However, there's another possibility, independent of the controller's perception of the consequences of addressing the change, directed by the negligence towards the cause of the section of the society, as the section amounts to a minority. In any case, mending a well-structured narrative appears to be a challenge that the authorities prefer avoiding unless the forthcoming changes seem beneficial to their own cause. As a result, the truth remains hidden, unless, an anecdote of considerable magnitude surfaces and questions the historical narrative. The coming forth of a source of private information that complicates or contradicts the existing narrative is what Lionel Gossman calls "Counter History".

*"Not surprisingly, the friends of power, those concerned with maintaining public images and decorum, have generally been fearful of anecdotes and have lost no opportunity to denigrate them, while at the same time enjoying them in private and, when necessary, using them against their own enemies."*

– Lionel Gossman (1)

### **Sorath Rai Diyach**

The love story of Rai Diyach, the King of Girnar, Junagadh (presently in Gujarat) and his Queen Sorath, is one of the seven tragedies of Sindh, compiled in 'Shah-Jo-Risalo' by the poet of Sindh- Shah Abdul Latif Bhittai, the Sindhi philosopher, Sufi scholar, mystic, saint, and poet. The anecdote that was verbally passed on, travelled to Bhittai who recorded it in Sindhi language, and even today, the anecdote breathes and rests in the library of Sindhi Adabi Board, in the form of a book titled 'Sorath- Rai Diyach and Heer- Ranjha' written by Dr. Nabi Bakhsh Baloch.

When we listen to the anecdote, we witness King Rai Diyach, seated on his throne of glory with his Queen Sorath by his side, lost in the sublime effect of the musical notes being played by Beejal, the well renowned musician of the time. Mesmerized by the Ragas, the Queen seeks the support of her King's arm, comforted by whom, she closes her eyes. The King looks at her face, thinking about how the mightiest of swords in the world were ready to clash against each other to win over the heart of the most delicate yet maddening of all beauties of the time. Hypnotized by her charm, he recalls how he himself, happily embraced animosity with another King to whom she was promised, by marrying her despite all odds. Enchanted by her beauty, his eyes are locked on her face, and enchanted by Beejal's music, his mind is free from all predispositions. The smile of the Queen alludes to the success of Beejal's artistry. Now, Beejal feels confident to execute the final stage of his plan. He stops playing, and the whole court appreciates him for such an ecstatic performance. The King, overjoyed by the experience, tells Beejal that he may ask for whatever reward he wants, and he shall get. Beejal asks for his majesty's head. The Queen offers her own instead, but Beejal stands firm on his demand, and so does the King, on his word. Walking towards Beejal, the King lets the world see how a leader keeps his word, as he slices his throat with his sword. The

head falls in Beejal's feet, who, upon realizing the gravity of his deed, puts a knife to his throat, and pays the price for penance. The Queen, losing the will to live, burns herself to ashes on her husband's pyre.

### **Ror Vansh and Rai Diyach**

Ikshvaku King Roruka and his successors established their kingdom in Sindh during post Vedic period. Their descendants eventually spread out to different parts of Gujarat and Rajasthan.

The community, of roughly about 8 lakh people, primarily operates as agriculturists and landowners in North Indian states, with a majority of them residing in Chaurassi region of Haryana. The written historical manuscripts of the dynasty are said to have been burnt to ashes by the Islamic invaders, as was the practice of the ones seeking power and control over the subjects, by removing the previous layer of ideological constructs, in order to impose new ones.

Rai Diyach, also known as Ror Kumar and Raja Dhaj, ruled over the province of Sindh and established the city of Rori Shankar in Sindh during his reign, where the Ror Dyansty reigned for one thousand years.

Historian Dr. Raj Pal Singh mentions the impact of Raja Dhaj and his anecdote in his book, 'Ror itihaas ki jhalak' -

*“Raja Dhaj occupies an extremely important place in the history of Rors. His name is commonly on the tip of every Ror's tongue and he has become the popular subject of many swaang episodes and songs, which are heard with great admiration by people of all castes in North India even today.”*

The anecdote, as mentioned by Historian Dr. Raj Pal Singh, has made its own mark in the cultural constructs through folklore ballads and the regional dramatic art form- “Swang”. The tale has travelled and flourished in all the areas that the Rors spread out to and made their own. From Sindh in Pakistan to Haryana, Uttar-Pradesh and Rajasthan, the legend of Sorath-Rai Diyach still resides in the conscious mind of the people.

The precise dates of Rai Diyach's reign have not been confirmed yet, as the historians have deduced varying dates with respect to his rule. Shri Ram Das, in his book, 'Ror Vansh ka 5000 Varsh Ka Itihas' mentions 1758 BCE as his year of birth.

Beejal, as per the anecdote, strategized to compel Rai Diyach through his overwhelming musical performance, to make a 'Dashrath ka Wada' or an unconditional promise, so that he can ask for his head. A wish, colder than the cold sword with which the King sliced his own throat.

The name Rai Diyach is a Sindhi name, which was given to Ror Kumar after the self-sacrifice. “Diyach” means “giver”, the one who gives, the generous one.

*“If I had millions of heads on my shoulder,  
I would behead myself millions of times over,*

*That also be not measure to the ecstasy of your string!"*

(12)

Raja Dhaj and Sorath's marriage gave birth to six sons, Kunak, Takshak, Prasenjit, Kardhman, Raghu and Sharanjit. Their names echo in the history of regions from Sindh to Lucknow, as they moved out to establish their own rule, except Kunak, who succeeded his father and became the Monarch of Sindh. Such anecdotes provide enough information to form a sense of structure. The anecdotes talk about the people, although they may or may not reveal the "statistics".

*"But if the meaning of an anecdote were to be sought less in its factual accuracy than in what it conveyed about states of mind and general trends, then even when its factual veracity was in doubt it might still be thought of as in some way illuminating historical reality."*

- Lionel Gossman (1)

### **Sorath**

The Queen and the leading lady of the tragic anecdote turns out to be the one who suffers the most out of all the characters involved. Born with the gift of all the qualities of a royal princess, the highest of virtue was said to be her wisdom. It was the legend of her beauty, much before the tale of her tragedy, that spread out to all directions like wildfire. Renowned as she was during her lifetime, it was her tragic fate and her decision to end her life after the demise of her King, which immortalised her. This may not provide us the details like date of their marriage or death, but does instill their presence in our minds through their behavioural patterns and choices.

Shah Abdul Latif Bhittai, in his 'Shah-Jo-Risalo' has mentioned thirty Surrs. The word Surr, derived from sanskrit word Swar, means a mode of singing in this context. The Surrs are methods, just like Ragas from Indian Classical music. Out of the thirty Surrs mentioned by Shah Bhittai, one is named by him as Sorath Surr. The Surrs comprise of Bayts, or the stories of Shah Latifi's heroines'.

*"While relaxing in a palace, Rai Diyach heard the melodious tune of Tanpura. He immediately summoned Mangarhar and asked him about his purpose with secrecy. Have you come here to beg for money and property? Or, do you really demand my (slain) head? On that, Mangarhar answered by pointing his finger towards the neck of the Rai Diyach."*

(Surr Sorath, 2/11: translated from Baloch by Ghulam Hussain (2016)) (14)

The tragic turn of events turned the incident into an everlasting echo, a representation of the Ror Dyansty, a bullet with a potential to pierce through the walls of narrative.

### **Beejal**

The Minstrel, who himself was a Ror of royal descent, born to the sister of Rai Diyach, was prophesied to become the cause of his uncle's death. Caught up in the dilemma of whether to protect her brother or to be the responsible mother, she submitted her son to a river. The boy was raised by a shepherd named Dami, in Annirai's kingdom. The instrument Beejal is known for playing, was made from dried up intestines of a deer that was killed and hung up on a tree by the hunters. The melodious sound that originated from the strings that Beejal

made from those intestines mesmerized the wild animals and birds, and drew them near Beejal whenever he struck the strings with his bow. Hunting and feeding his family became easy for Beejal, who also got famous for his musical artistry.

The notes released by the strings made from dead deer's intestines, coincidentally, resonate with the ballads of this anecdote sung by the people. The details shared about the instrument bears a resemblance with famous stringed instruments found near Sindh, Gujarat and Rajasthan, like Sarangi, and Ravanhatha. The undeniable similarities between the instruments and socio-cultural practices allude to the relevance of this anecdote in context to the regional settings of Sindh and some parts of Punjab.

### **Junagadh/ Junagarh**

The stronghold of Rai Diyach, Junagadh plays an important role in unfolding the stream of connecting events and facts. The historical map of Sindh does mark the presence of the regions named Roruka, Rori and Junagadh. Roruka, the name itself alludes to its connection with the race, and Rori or Rori Shankar was the city established by Raja Dhaj himself, but the lack of admission of any such information in an official manner seems to be misleading. The mention of Junagadh and the presence of Ror rulers at the province, serves as a supportive argument from the anecdote. The departure of Raja Dhaj's sons Takshak and Raghu to Lucknow and Pune-Satara region, respectively, adds to the logical causes behind the spreading of these anecdotes to North Indian states. Gopal Chowdhary, in his book - 'Farce of History' addresses a similar issue of illusions created by socio-political powers.

*"It would not be digression to mention that Indian social and political elites have developed unique art of marginalizing the personality, the period, the eminent historical figures and the trends having the potentiality of threatening their untrammelled and unquestioned hold on the power and the superior position."*

(9)

### **Conclusion**

The history of Sindh, though mentions the name of Roruka and Rori, pays no attention to the name of the Dynasty responsible for the origin of those cities. The same goes for the history of Indian states like Rajasthan and Haryana. In order to extract information, one must undertake the quest of going through the anecdotes that convey the hidden truths, the ones burnt and buried by the old-day invaders, and neglected by the current-day institutions, all for the sake of forceful imposition of a new ideology, and conveniently maintaining the functional one that serves their purpose, respectively. Those truths might be the missing pieces to someone's puzzle of origin or existence. The individuality of a person depends on many factors, out of which, ethnicity and origin play a pivotal role. The perspective or the outlook that needs to be upheld while dealing with anecdotes requires a seeker's perseverance, and not just a fact-checker's judgement, as the anecdote would never be able to provide complete factual certainty that the historiographer seeks, but the biographical aspect of the anecdote is self-sufficient in projecting information more valuable than mere dates and figures. The insight provided by anecdotes brings one face to face with the historical personages and their circumstances, and calls forth the complexities of those circumstances. The anecdotes serve as links that connect the dots and complete the sequence that evolves

into counter-history. In this paper as well, the story of Rai Diyach provided the mark of Junagarh, from where the dots got connected to the Sufi poet Shah Abdul Latif Bhittai, who emerged centuries later, but through his written record, a connection was built from Sindh to North India, as the people realised that the legends of the same people are being sung at both places. Anecdotes, are not only supposed to be used to Counter-history, but to re-align it, in order to create harmony and uproot the deep-rooted unrest from the minds of the people concerned.

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