APPENDIX - I

English Rendering Of Asur Myth
S.C. Roy Version

There were twelve brothers Asur-thirteen brothers Lodhars: day and night they would smelt iron. Dharmes’ horse (named) Hansraj-Pankh Raj does not eat fodder (i.e. they did not get fodder to eat). Then the Dhichua (otherwise known as) MangruMahato went to warn (the Asurs): “O brethren, do not smelt iron day and night.” They said, ‘We twelve brothers Asurs-thirteen brothers Lodhars smelt iron day and night. We ourselves (are) gods; we ourselves (are) kings. Let us seize (this fellow).’ (As) the Dhichua began to fly, (they) caught (its) with iron-pincers (and) cast charcoal-dust (at it). Thus, the Dhichua’s tail became shortened, and the Dhichua turned black. After this Dharmes told the kerketta (also known as) Jhagru Bhandari (steward): “If they will listen to your words, warn (them).” (The kerketta told them), O ye friends! Why do you smelt iron day and night?’ (They said): “We twelve brothers Asurs-thirteen brothers Lodhars, -we (are) lords (masters of all), we (are) kings. Let us seize (the kerketta) by the throat with pincers (and) cast ashes on (the kerketta’s) chest. Dharmes, in order to hinder iron-smelting, become leprous (i.e.; assumed the appearance of a boy full of sores) and sat on a road (leading) to a spring. Then the wives of the twelve Asur brothers-thirteen Lodhar brothers-came to fetch water (from the spring). The itch-covered boy told them, “Give me water, O Mother!” Their wives said, ‘We are the wives of the twelve Asur brothers, thirteen Lodhar brothers. We evacuate fire; we emit sparks of fire; we wear broad and wide beautiful red clothes. Shall we give him water (i.e.) shall we give him water to such a vagabond)’?” There was a widow amongst them. To her he said, “Give (me) water, mother” (she said), “Oh son. Where do you come from? Here the twelve Asur brothers-thirteen Lodhar brothers are notorious. (They) kill people. “Then (i.e.; after saying this) she gave him water, he drank (it) (and said), “To their house I will go, O grand-mother.” Thereupon
that old woman says, “I work (as) a field-laborer, (I) work as a sweeper (on other people’s threshing-floors); and thus I maintain myself. What work will you do (for me)?” Then he says, “I shall guard (thy) house; guard (thy) paddy (unhusked rice when laid out to dry).”

From that time (He) gathered rice from (other) people’s threshing floors. By the time she returned (home) (the boy got the paddy thus collected dried in the sun) and husked. Then the old woman came (home and asked :) “Has (the paddy) dried? Will you go to husk (the rice?). Have you stolen (the rice) from anybody, O son?” “No mother: your business is only to cook and eat. (All) People’s threshing has been finished. All (men) have taken (their) rice home. Only the Naega’s (village-priest) is left (on the threshing-floor).” “Go, bring straw (i.e. rice in straw) to the middle of the threshing-floor and thresh (it).” The rice and straw become equal (in quantity). Then that old woman having come to him and said, “You are an itch-afflicted boy (just as I am an old woman): the rice and the straw have become equal (i.e. equally large in quantity): who will carry (them home now)?” The sense is who has strength for the work?) I too (am) an old woman. He said, “Go: Summon maidens and bachelors (as laborers); they will carry it. (Do) You cook rice and curry. Go to sew up leaf-plates (to it from).”

Then the iron of the twelve brothers Asurs-thirteen brothers Lodhars-got spoiled. Then (they) went about in search of a spirit-doctor. Nowhere did they find a spirit-doctor. Then they come to him (and said :) “O friend! Do you know spells?” “I know a little, don’t know a little.” ‘Come then, the twelve brothers Asurs are calling (you).” “I won’t go. They will kill me” Then they (i.e. the messengers) said among themselves. “Go ye seize (and) bring him.” Then he asked, “What has happened, o friend?” They said, “Our iron got spoiled: - do your spells”; he said.” (He said,) “Place me (in) the iron furnace (then) plaster it up, and blow away (with your bellows) for seven days and nights. (Then) Bring water in new earthen pitchers.’
(And) with mango twigs sprinkle (the water) (on the kiln). (Then) open the floor (of the kiln) with *reeds of utpunri grass.* They did as the itch covered boy directed. Ten he came out covered with gold and silver. They said, “O friend (lit. Brother) where did you get these?” “(Ever) here, in (this) kiln, I found (them). You are many (in number). You will find more.” “Then may we enter too?” Do enter then.” All (of them) entered (the furnace). The twelve *Asur* brothers thirteen *Lodhar* brothers-entered; they told their wives to plaster up (the furnace). (He) told them, “Blow away”. They blew (with their bellows). (Then) all (of them) writhed in death-agonies. Their wives asked (him), “O son! What is happening?” He said, “They are saying, ‘we shall take a good deal for (our) wives and children’. “Therefore they are quarrelling amongst themselves.” All of them died. (When) no sound was audible (water) with *Sinduar* twigs; and open the doors.” They opened (the furnace); bones fell, clattering in large numbers. (The women said) “O son, what hast thou done?” Then he says, “At that time (i.e. previously) that twelve *Asur* brothers-thirteen *Lodhar* brothers-said (used to say): ‘We bind down fire, we emit sparks, we put on long and flowing clothes!’ (i.e. this is the punishment for their pride and disobedience). Go away, I am going.” *Dharmes* rode on (His) horse and began to move away. The women went (forward) and stopped Him. (They said) “Tell us (what shall be our) means of subsistence: Then he said to the oldest, “(Do thou) become *Chala Pachcho.*” To the younger ones (He said :) “Be *Deswali Khunts* (sept-spirits), *Chiros, Rampawans, Asalgos* (Do ye) way-lay men. Men will offer you sacrifices (i.e. on which you will live).”

English Rendering of the Asur Myth -

John Lakra's Version

*Dharmes* (God) divided mankind into 12 professional castes. To the twelve He assigned an occupation. But one was left out. One was left extra. He became the *agrialohar*.

The *agria lohar* said to *Dharmes*—“You gave very good jobs to everyone. You could as well give me, too, some work or other.”

Then *Dharmes* said (to himself)—“I gave very good profession to all. Now what profession should I give to the remainder?”

*Dharmes* said to the *Lohar* -- “Go work on the furnace for smelting iron ore, emit sparks. Thus you will subsist.”

These (people) became the twelve *Asur* brothers (and) the thirteen *Lodha* brothers.

The twelve *Asur* brothers (and) the thirteen *Lodha* brothers began to smelt iron day and night. The whole earth was filled with the smoke of the furnace. The smoke ascended high, even up to heaven, and filled heaven. Being suffocated by the smoke *Dharmes’* horse, *Hansraj-Pankraj* neither eats corn nor drinks water. Then *Dharmes*, in order to forbid them, to stop them smelting iron, sent his servants to them.

In the beginning He sent the *Dhichua Kotwar* in order to stop (them from smelting iron). The *Dhichua* went to them and said –“O men, brethren, do not smelt iron day (and) night. You smelt iron during the day do not smelt iron at night. *Dharmes’* horse, *Hansraj-Pankraj* is unable to eat corn and drink water.”
Then they told him (king crow) – “The twelve brothers Asurs, thirteen brothers Lodhas, we smelt iron day and night, we eat iron, we emit sparks. We ourselves (are) gods; we ourselves (are) kings. Who is there greater than us? This fellow, Dhichua, has come to forbid us! Seize him, men!”

As the frightened Dhichua was trying to run away they caught him by the tail with the pincers, then they threw charcoal-dust at him. At that very time the tail of the Dhichua became furcated and the Dhichua became black. The Dhichua returned to Dharmes and told Him everything.

After that He sent the Ba’kila. They caught him by the neck with the iron-pincer and stretched it. Thus the neck of the Ba’kila became long, and even to this day it is long.

At the end Dharmes said to the Kerketta, Jhagru-Bhandari—“Go and forbid them. They may listen to you.”

Kerketta went to them and said- “O men, brethren, why do you smelt iron day and night? The smoke has reached up to heaven and Dharmes’ horse, Hansraj-Pankraj is unable to eat corn, to drink water.”

They said –“(We) twelve brother Asurs, thirteen brothers Lodhas, we ourselves (are) gods, we ourselves (are) kings. Who is a greater God than we that we should obey his orders? Seize (him) fellows,” they said and they caught the Kerketta by the throat with heated pincers and threw ashes at his chest. Then its throat became red and the chest became white, and even up to this day it is like that (red and white). Having done this they said-“Go and report (it) to your God and Lord. We are not afraid. We shall not obey Him.”

Then the Kerketta returned to Dharmes, and told him whatever had happened. When they (the bird-messengers) failed, then Dharmes Himself found out a means. He came
to this earth in order to spoil the iron-smelting work. Taking the form of a boy full of itching sores, he came and sat down on the way to the *tusa*. The wives of the twelve *Asur* brothers and thirteen *Lodha* brothers came to fetch water.

The itch-sore covered boy said to them – “Mother, please give me water (to drink).”

The wives of these said (to him) - “Twelve brothers *Asurs*, thirteen brothers *Lodhas*: We evacuate fire, we emit sparks. We wear beautiful, good-bordered *Saris*. Are we going to give him water?”

In that village there was an old widow. He went to her and asked for water- “Give (me), O mother, water”

“Oh son? Whence did you come? Here the names of twelve brothers *Asurs* and thirteen brothers *Lodhas* are known for their notoriety. They kill people.”

Then she gave him water and he drank.
Having drunk water he said -“I’ll go to your abode”.

Then the old woman told (him) - “I work for daily wages, I go to do *barha* work. Thus I support myself. What work will you do (to help me)?”

Then he said – “I’ll guard the house, I’ll guard the (parboiled) paddy (spread out on the mat for drying).”

She took him to her house and washed –cleaned him, anointed him with oil; then she went out to do *barha* work. They began to live as mother and son.
The old woman went for the *barha* work. By the time she returned he dried the (parboiled) paddy and husked it.

When the old woman returned, she said – “Is the paddy dry, my son? You better go to husk (it).”
“No mother, (no need), just cooking and eating is the work (to be done as yet).”

The old woman went for the barha work, and then more paddy than usual was found. She used to carry home as much paddy as she could carry and she use to pour out the paddy in the house. Then the paddy used to increase (and become) double the amount. This used to happen everyday. Then the old woman asked him if he were not stealing (and) brining the paddy (home) – “O son, do not steal other’s property. It will bring trouble. (Whatever) I bring after the barha work, which will be sufficient for us.”

Then the boy said – “Do not accuse me, mother. I have not stolen from anybody. I’ll show (it) to you. Today you remain right here. You take two measures of paddy for husking and likewise I’ll take (two measures of paddy).”

They did exactly (as he said). The boy brought back double the amount of rice. Then the old woman saw it and was perplexed and said – “Son, I did not believe, but now I see (for myself).”

The house of the old woman began to be filled with paddy. And those who formerly were rich began to be poor. Then with the advent of God to this earth the iron-smelting of the twelve Asur brothers and thirteen Lodha brothers began to fail. They went about in search of a sokha (spirit-doctor) who could divine the sprit, which spoiled (iron smelting), but none could be found.

Then one of them said – “We tried to look for a sokha but none was found. There is a boy full of itching sores staying in the house of an old widow. Perhaps he might know.”

They went to him and said – “O brother, do you know sorcery? Our iron-smelting work got spoilt. Come then, the twelve Asur brothers have sent for you.”
I’ll not go, they will kill me.”

Then they spoke among themselves – “Go, men, seize him (and) bring him.”

They brought him there, and then he asked – “What happened?”

They said – “The furnace is not working. We go on blowing (the bellows), iron does not get formed. Our iron is spoilt. Please do some sorcery.”

He divined (the spirits) and said – “A spell has been cast on your furnace. A human sacrifice will be needed (in order to cast away the spell).”

Then the Asurs went about to look for a human being, (but) no humans were available. No one was ready to give himself or his children to be sacrificed.

They returned and said – “What to do, we could not find anyone”

Then the boy said – “Do not worry. Why trouble yourselves? I have neither mother nor father. After all I am dying because of sores. How long should I go on festering due to sores? Now I am fed up with life. I myself will enter the furnace. You make a big iron furnace, then put me in the furnace and plaster it. Then blow the furnace (with your bellows) for seven days and seven nights. Then fetch water in new earthen pots, sprinkle (it) with mango leaves, put out the fire, open the door (or the furnace) with utpunri reed.”

They began to blow the furnace (with their bellows) day and night. The boy is dashing about inside. Then they say – “He is dying. Now our iron-furnace is getting all right.”

They did as he had instructed (them). Then they opened the furnace. Then the itch-sore infected boy, adorned with gold (and) silver, in glory (and) honour, comes out (of the furnace) ridding the horse Hansraj-Pankraj.

They, however, saw (him) and were wonder-struck, and asked him – “Where did you get all this gold (and) silver”?
“Inside the fire (furnace)"
“Then we, too, shall get in.”

“If you want, get in then. I (in spite of being) only an itch –sore infected man and alone could find so much gold (and) silver. You are healthy and so many. You will be able to gather more.”

Then they got ready to enter and got into the iron-furnace. The boy told their wives to plaster (and) close the furnace and to blow the bellows. When the fire was set ablaze, then they began to get burnt inside, and they started to shout in pain, to writhe in agony.

Their wives asked (him) – “What is happening to them that they are shouting?”
The itch –sore infected boy said – “They are fighting among them-selves saying, ‘We’ll take a lot for our wives (and) children’.

After some time, when they were burnt to death, then their shouting, flinging themselves about, ceased.

Then the boy said –“Fetch water in new earthen pots and sprinkle (it) with the Khonkho leaves open the door.”

They opened the door. What (a horrible sight)! Instead of coming out adorned with gold (and) silver they were all burnt and were reduced to ashes, just the charred bones remained scattered.

Then the wives said – “What have you done? You killed our husbands,” saying so they are weeping-crying.

Then Dharmes (the boy) said–“Because of your iron-smelting day and night my horse, Hansraj-Pankraj, could neither eat corn nor drink water; then I sent
(messenger) to forbid you, but you did not give heed (to my words). At that time you said —“Twelve brothers Asurs, thirteen brothers Lodhas, we eat fire, we emit sparks; we ourselves (are) kings. Who is there greater than us?’ Therefore you are punished for this. Now I go.” Having said this Dharmes mounted his horse, Hansraj- Pankraj, and made a move to go away.

Then those women stopped Dharmes and did not allow him to go and they said – “You deceived our husbands and you made us blow them (in the furnace) .You will have to supports us. We shall not leave you (we shall not let you go). Give (lit .tell) us some means of livelihood.”

Then Dharmes accepted defeat (concede to them and said to those women-“you go to the jungle (named) Ranban-Bijban (thick forest-deep forest).” He said to the elder – “Become Chala Paccho.”

To the younger ones He said – “Become Deshwali, become Khunt, become Chiro, become Kaisago, become Ranpawan , and when people come to close (to you) then you scratch them; when scratching , blood will come ; that itself will be sufficient for you (All of) you go amongst the Uraons. They will offer you sacrifices.”

That’s why even to this day when people go to the forest they get entangled with the Kaisago plant. It scratches their feet and makes them bleed. God has endowed it with power that’s why on the Karam festival (they) plant together Kaisago plantsand Tela plants in the fields (in transplanted paddy fields and cotton fields). While planting they pour on it liquor or good rice beer.

The Asurs persecuted the Dhichua and the Kerketta and sent them back,then Dharmessaid – “You go among the Uraons. They will plant the branches of Tela and Kiro. You perch on it and you catch and eat locusts or anything that will come there flying.”
APPENDIX-III

Ferdinand Hahn’s Version (Edited by A. Grignard)

One day twelve Lodha brothers and thirteen Asur brothers smelt iron in the furnace and the smoke reached heavenly (sky). Dharmescould not bear it and he sent a king-crow (Dhichua) to dissuade them. They did not listen to it. They said, “This stupid king-crow has come to forbid us.” They caught its tail with iron pincers. That time its tail became bifurcated (forked) and remains so even today. After that Dharmes sent Bakla bird. They caught its neck by the pincers and pulled it. So its neck became longer and it remains so even today. After that he sent Kerketta (woodpecker). It came began it dissuade them. They did not listen to it too. But (instead) they caught its throat with (red-hot) pincers and pressed it. From that day Kerketta’s throat became black and even today it remains black. Thus Dharmesfailed to dissuade them and he himself took the form of a boy full of sores and went the place of iron smelting furnace. Then, what does he see? The women of the twelve Lodha brothers and thirteen Asur brothers were busy bellowing the furnace.

The boy full of sores said to them, “How is that you bellow the furnace and iron does not smelt? Let me go inside the furnace.” Having said this he entered (the furnace). Before he went in he had said, “When the fire blazes well bring water in new pots and sprinkle it (over red hot charcoal).” As he had told, they made fire with charcoal and the bellowed the furnace well and as the fire blazed they brought water in new pots and sprinkled and bellowed the furnace. In this way when all the charcoal got burnt and was reduced to ashes, they opened the furnace. Then, Dharmes who had entered the furnace as a boy full of sores came out laden with gold and silver. He said to them, “Look how you were not able to bellow! See now I have found precious stones and have come out laden women will work on the bellows.” Then all the twelve Lodha brothers and thirteen Asur brothers entered the furnace. Then their wives filled the furnace with charcoal and fire and bellowed the furnace. When the fire blazed they
began to get burns and they shouted inside the furnace angrily and writhed in pain and suffocation hurling them to the ground. Dharmes said to the women, “Bellow the furnace well. Now they are talking and shouting to collect more and more (precious things) for themselves.” So, as the bellowed the furnace more and more, they (men inside the furnace) writhed in pain more and more. Later on when all the charcoal became ashes, they opened the furnace and saw that all of them had got burnt and had become ashes.

Then their women caught Dharmes and would not allow him to go and they said, “You have cheated our husbands and made us to burn them in the furnace, now you will have to look after us. We will never leave you.” So, Dharmes relented (conceded defeat) and said to those women, “now you go to the forest and become kaisago plant, then you will get food. He ordered them in this way. So those women went to the forest and became kaisago plants.

That’s why even today when people go to the forest entangled with kaisago plant. It scratches their feet and blood comes out. Dharmes had given them the blessing, that’s why people on the karma festival day plant kaisago and tela plants together and at the time of planting they pour a little rice beer over it. They plant it in the cotton field or in the transplanted paddy field.

The world devastated by fire looked like copper. The 12 brothers *Asurs* and the 13 brothers *Lodhas* were busy at their furnaces smelting iron. The smoke ascending to heaven was so thick and suffocating that *Hansraj Pankraj Bhagwan’s* horse (Viz., God’s horse), got sick and could not eat the corn or drink water. God sent *Kerketta Jhagru* (a bird resembling the hedge sparrow) and the king crow *Mahru* to the 12 brothers *Asurs* and the 13 brothers *Lodhas* to carry his message to them. The *Kerketta* went and first told them: “O brothers *Asurs* and *Lodhas*, keep your furnaces going during the day and stop work at night. God’s horse *Hansraj Pankraj* is sick and cannot eat his corn.” The 12 brothers *Asurs* and 13 brothers *Lodhas* impudently answered, “Who is he that forbids us? We won’t receive any orders from anyone. We don’t recognize any master. Here we are kings and subjects (i.e., we are all equal). This is our own kingdom. Though we work day and night, we eat only hot melted iron, and the effects of digestion are disastrous to our clothes; and still we have to receive orders.” They got in a fury and said, “Let us catch the fellow.” They rushed upon him, by them as an evil, whilst his wings got reddened with iron dust. Though before that the *Kerketta* was white, from that time his head is flat and his wings reddish and his cry is Ket! Ket! Ket!

Having been treated in this way, the *Kerketta* returned to his master and said to him, “God, I delivered to your message to the *Asurs*, and see how they have treated me! They replied, ‘Here we are the masters. In this kingdom we are all kings and subjects; we eat only hot melted iron…; go, we are not afraid of anyone.’ See now how they have maltreated me! They have caught me by the neck with their pincers and flattened my head on their anvil.’ After this God sent the king-crow and told him, “Go and try to persuade the 12 brothers *Asurs* and the 13 brothers *Lodhas* to stop; tell them that
my horse *Hansraj Pankraj* cannot eat his corn nor drink water.” The king-crow went and said to them, “Brothers *Asurs* and *Lodhas*, work during the day and stop during the night! God *Hansraj Pankraj* is sick and cannot eat his grain. The 12 brother *Asurs* and 13 brother *Lodhas* got into a range and gave him the same answer as to the *Kerketta*; caught him by the tail with tier pincers and rolled him in black iron dust; from that time, the king-crow is black and is divided into two parts. The king-crow returned to his mater and told him how he had been treated and what they had said.

Then God said, “I will go myself.” He took the form of a man full of sores and put round his loin strips of the bark of the *Simul* tree and came down upon earth. He went first to the rich and said to them. “Oh, you that are rich will not keep me in your house?” They answered, ‘Go, we won’t keep you. What! If you were to remain here, our servants seeing your purulent sores would disgust and would not be able to digest their food. He thus went to three different houses and got the same answer. At last he went to the house of an old widow and said to her, “Mother take pity on me and keep me in your house.” The old widow answered,” Come in, my son. You can stop in my miserable hut. I have nothing to eat. I get my daily food by working for others, but I will keep you all the same.’ The old woman immediately washed him and anointed him with oil. The next morning she went as usual to work and got much more than usual, just as much as she could carry; and when she poured the grain out of her basket she found that it had doubled. Then *Bhagwan* unhusked the paddy and for two measures of paddy got two measures of rice. This went on for several days. Then the old woman began to suspect him and said to him, ‘My son, do not steal the property of others. This will bring trouble. I beg of you not to do that. I get my food by working everyday: let us be satisfied with that. *Bhagwan* full of sores answered, “Mother! Don’t accuse me; I never stole the property of others. I will prove it. Remain here today, take two measures of paddy to husk and I will do the same.” They did so, and he brought in twice the amount of rice. When she saw this he old woman exclaimed, “My sin, I did not believe it, but now I see.”
The paddy began to accumulate in all the corners of the old woman’s house, whilst those who rich before became poor, and from the time Bhagwan came down to earth, the furnaces of the 12 brothers Asurs and 13 brothers Lodhas began to fall in and they could not repair them. They looked everywhere for a sorcerer to find out the bhut who was the cause of the misfortune; but no one succeeded. At last they assembles in council and one of them said, “We have called all the sorcerers of the world and all to no purpose; there is that man full of sores living in the house of that old widow; let us call him, perhaps he will know.” Then two or three brother went and said to him, “Brother we have come to you on a very important matter. See! Our furnaces are entirely destroyed; it may be you know the cause.” Bhagwan answered, “It may be I know something about it.” Then he began to pretend to look for the omens and said, “Now that will do: light your furnaces and blow.” From that time everything went on all right.

Some days after Bhagwan went, looked at their furnaces and asked them, “well now, is it all right?” They answered, “Yes everything is all right, but what sacrifice do we offer?” Bhagwan told them that only a human sacrifice would do. They looked everywhere for a victim, but no one was willing to sacrifice himself or his children; they came to Bhagwan in despair and said to him, “What are we to do: we cannot find a victim?” Bhagwan answered, “Never mind, and don’t fret about it. I am alone in the world, I have no father, no mother, and I am full of sores. How long am I going to rot? I am disgusted with life. Since you can find one, I will offer up myself to you. Build a great furnace and throw me in, work the bellows for seven days and seven nights and after that bring first water in new earthen pots, cut branches of mango tree, dip them in water and extinguish the fire.”

They did so, opened the furnaces, and Lo! Bhagwan who had gone in alone full of sores came out riding on his horse Hansraj Pankraj loaded with silver and gold. They
opened their eyes wide and asked him, “Where did you find all this?” He answered, “In the furnace of course.” Then they said, “In that case, we want to go in also.” Then Bhagwan said to them, “Of course you may go in also. You see how much old and silver a poor man like me, full of sores, has brought out; how much more gold and silver you will not bring out, you who are full of health.” Some of them shouted, “We will go, we will go.” Bhagwan, however, said this would not do so, as some went and others remained, there would be a great disturbance when questions of dividing the silver and gold come up. “No,” said he, “Listen to me: build a very great furnace in which all of you will be able to enter; and all go in.” They did so, and Bhagwan called a woman that was pregnant to work with the bellows, promising to give her a share of the gold and silver. They went in and Bhagwan set fire to the furnace and told the woman to work the bellows. Immediately they began to howl and kick, and the woman got frightened and wanted to stop, but Bhagwan said to her, “Go on, go on, they are only fighting and quarreling about eh silver and gold.” The woman worked the bellows for one day and one night. Then when Bhagwan opened the furnace, they found only charred bones.

Mahali Livins Tirkey’s Version of Asur Myth

Once upon a time, there were notorious iron-melting tribes called the Asurs and the Lodhmas. They were human giants, black and burly, with blood-shot eyes and unkempt knotty hairs, Day in and day-out their women folk were busy with huge bellows blowing air into the furnaces, while the menfolk with pincers and hammer kept pounding the iron mass. While others were ravaging the rocky sides of the hills for iron ores (‘lette pakhan’). Each of their workshop complexes covered an area of 12 x 12 Kos (= 24 x 24 miles). The gigantic furnaces were belching out dark thick smokes up in the open sky and were releasing red glowing iron, pig iron (‘gera’) and pure liquid red iron (‘panna’) continuously. As a result, there spread thick layers of black dusty clouds all over the hemisphere. The air was completely polluted. The surface of the soil grew hot. God Dharmes in heaven was much worried because his white-winged horse that used to fly down on earth for green pastures could not find green grass and was starving. So Dharmes first sent the crow to tell the Asurs to stop bellowing their iron-melting furnaces. The crow approached the Asurs who were busy at their workshops and told them to close their furnaces because the white-winged horse of Dharmes was starving for want of green pastures on earth. Much annoyed at what the crow said, they caught hold of the bird and tried to strangle it to death. But the crow managed to slip off the clutches of their black dusty hands. It escaped, but was completely besmeared with black shoots and lost its voice while shouting for help.

God Dharmes then sent a small but intelligent bird called Dhenchuwa to the Asurs with the same message to be delivered. The bird reached the Asurs at their workshops and tried to dissuade them from continuing with their work and asked them to stop polluting air, water and the soil, because the white horse of Dharmes refused to eat
and drink anything. At this the Asurs were much irritated. While one of them threw dust on the bird, the other tried to catch it with red hot pincers. The bird's tail was caught by the pincers and got burnt - but it managed to escape. Since then the Dhenchuwa is all black and its tail is split permanently like a two-pronged fork. The bird flew back to Dharmes screaming "dhenchu choo, chee chee chenchu choo".

God Dharmes became angry with the Asurs and Lodhmas because they disobeyed him and ignored his orders to close down their furnaces and stop polluting the whole atmosphere. He finally decided to descend on earth and tackle the arrogant Asurs and Lodhmas himself. He came down on earth disguised as a teenage village boy. He walked a long distance on the hot dusty land - without even a blade of grass; he crossed rivers with little streams of murky waters most undrinkable, passed through forests of leafless stems and branches broken and blackened. Hot winds lashed the surface of the earth. The God-incarnate boy was sweating, thirsty and exhausted. His feet turned red and blue with blood oozing from blisters. But he walked and walked. Suddenly he sighted a humble hut, and there at the door-steps was an old lady sitting in a pensive mood and tears in her eyes. He approached her for a glass of water to drink.

This kind old lady led the boy in her cottage, gave him food and drink, washed his blistered feet and put a little oil thereto. She then narrated the miseries the Asurs and Lodhmas had brought upon the earth, its verdant forests, green meadows, fertile soil and springs of sweet water from the mountain sides. Under the obnoxious smokes vomited out from the innumerable furnaces, the air was polluted, the rain clouds had disappeared, and grass and trees of the forests were burnt out. Everything looked dead, dry and dismal. This old lady aroused in the heart of the boy a deep pity for the earth. And she requested him to do something to save it from complete destruction. And as pity is akin to love, he fell in love with the Earth and decided to save it at all cost. The old lady's name was Chala.
The next morning the village boy, the God-incarnate, took leave of his kind hostess *ChalaPaccho* and went to meet the *Asurs* and *Lodhmas*. On the way he put on an ugly figure, full of foul smelling boils (*'Khasra-khusru'*) all over his body.

When he reached the workshops of the *Asurs*, they turned away their faces in disgust and spat at him telling the boy to get away from there, as he was stinking. The boy, however, told them that they should better throw him into the open furnace, because he was capable to bring out tons of gold instead of iron. He also told them that once they threw him into the furnace, they should put in more charcoal and close the door, and let their womenfolk blow air with the bellows for two hours. Thereafter they had to open the door of the furnace and allow him to come out with a huge amount of gold. They caught hold of the boy and threw him into the furnace not because they believed in him, but because they rather wanted to get rid of him and his foul smell. Some of them, however, had some curiosity in what he had said.

An hour or two later, the *Asurs* told their womenfolk on the bellows to stop bellowing. They opened the side-door of the furnace. Lo and behold..! The boy came out golden, handsome, smart and shining and behind himself pulled out tons of pure glowing gold. The *Asurs*, both men and women, rubbed their eyes in disbelief. But it was real. They tested the gold with their pincers and hammer. They admitted that it was true gold. The boy gave away all the gold to them and said that they too could likewise bring out much more tons of gold than he himself could bring. Once they had a huge amount of gold, they would not have to labour day and night just for a little bit of iron mass.

The *Asurs* were overcome by greed. They agreed to enter into the furnaces voluntarily. The boy told them that there was one condition: all the male members without exception had to jump into the furnace, and the womenfolk had to blow air into the furnace with their bellows for two hours. At the appointed time all the male
members of the Asurs and the Lodhmas climbed to the top of the furnace and jumped inside. Their women folk laboured on the bellows. As the fire began to be intensified there came noise of screaming and shouting and crying. The women got panicky. But the boy told them that it was the noise of their excitement at the sight of huge amount of gold they were reaching out for. After two hours the women opened the side doors of the furnace. To their horrors, instead of gold, along with red burning coal, there rolled out burnt bones of their dead husbands. The women wailed, crying and howling in utter distress and sorrow. Some of them furiously looked for the treacherous boy to tear him into pieces. But the boy had already disappeared into thin air.

Thus came the closure of the innumerable furnaces of the Asurs which had turned into their death traps. In the course of time, the fire of the furnaces cooled down. The smoke ceased to rise to the sky. The dark black and polluted clouds in the sky vanished. Soft rays of the sun beamed down on the earth. Cool refreshing breezes blew. Subsequently white fleecy clouds sailed through the blue sky. And in no time thick rain clouds hovered low and burst with thunders into heavy showers that drenched the whole earth for several weeks. Healthy blades of grass grew everywhere. New sprouts sprung out on every branch of the trees. Insects, birds and animals came out from their hidings. The whole earth was once again abounding with buds, new sprouts, and new babies of birds and animals. The Sun had tenderly touched Mother Earth with his hands of soft warming rays, and thereby fertility in her womb was caused. Such was the result of the love of Sun God and Mother Earth.

And there lies the unique significance of Chala Paccho, the great Lady of the Environment who brought God Dharmes and Mother Earth (Dharti Ayo) together. This is the Oraon tribals' belief regarding the environment, and this is why they give a central place of veneration to Chala Paccho in their Sarhul or Xaddi festival.

It is interesting to observe the Oraons offering their prayers and sacrificing
chicken to their God Dharmes at the Sarna, the sacred grove, during the Sarhul or Xaddi festival. The 'naigas', the village priest, and his assistant pujar have to be on fast the previous day. In the early morning the priest leads all the menfolk to the Sarna. At a prepared place under the Sal tree in the Sarna, the priest feeds a white cock and a black hen with rice (‘*abda tixil’*). When they peck grains merrily, people say that Dharmes is pleased with them. The priest anoints the forehead of the cock and the hen with specks of vermillion. Thereafter the offering of the white cock is made to Dharmes by slitting its neck. The black hen is then offered to Dharti Ayo or Mother Earth in a similar fashion. Holding the two bleeding birds by their legs, the priest allows the blood of the cock and the hen to drip on the same spot at the foot of the big Sal tree in which the spirit of ChalaPaccho is supposed to reside. As the blood of the white cock and the black hen mix together, it is assumed that God Dharmes and Dharti Ayo are now married. Fertility takes place and new life is now conceived in the womb of Mother Earth. The Oraon farmers will then bring the seeds from their houses for sowing in the fields.

The priest now turns to the big Sal tree (*'Jhakra mann'*, meaning a tree with huge branches stretched out on all sides). In this tree, it is believed, ChalaPaccho, the Lady of the Grove or the Lady of the Environment, dwells. It is this lady who is the person to bring about the matrimony of Sun God Dharmes with Dharti Ayo or Mother Earth. ChalaPaccho is the mediator. Hence Oraons venerate her on this great day of Sarhul or Xaddi. To give her the highest public honour, the village priest marries her under the Jhakra Sal tree and gives ChalaPaccho the honoured place of a bride.

But ChalaPaccho, the Lady of the Environment, is now only a spirit and not a person of flesh and blood. Therefore the priest puts vermillion on the tree instead, as if he is putting vermillion on the forehead of the new bride. Three times he goes round the tree winding it with a fresh red thread symbolizing the offering of a new
bridal saree to his bride ChalaPaccho, the Lady of the Environment. He then offers a red hen to her by slitting the throat of the bird with a knife and drips its blood in the spot next to the one he dripped a little ago the blood of the white cock and the black hen, the offerings for God Dharmes, the Supreme Being, and Mother Earth, respectively. After this is over, several hens are offered to different benevolent spirits deputed by God to protect the village borders at five or six strategic passes or places. In addition, a few more hens are offered to the guards (‘darha’) of the paddy fields, the water springs, and to those who look after the welfare of the village. Above all this, the ‘naigas’ or priest thanks Dharmes Baba, the Supreme Being, because He is the ultimate source of life and prosperity. At the end, the meat of the chicken is cooked with rice which is called ‘Suri’ or ‘xer lette’ (chicken pulao). They eat it as ‘prasad’ and return to the village.

The priest, his assistant and the male members of the village then enter the village with lots of Sarai flowers of the Sal tree. The priest offers these flowers to every woman in each house, which she receives with much reverence. Meanwhile the pujar pours a little water from the pitcher he carries over the low roof of each house while the priest invokes Dharmes to bless them with good rainfall. The lady of the house receives the water dripping from the roof into her winnowing basket (‘soop’) and a leaf cup (‘dona’) to sprinkle on the rice seeds (‘dhan’) kept for sowing in the fields. As far as the puja part is concerned, the main function is over now. The Villagers young and old have a good meal and drinking and out they are in festive dress and head gears bedecked with Sarai flowers to their village ‘akhra’, the dancing place. Young men in particular have ‘mandar’ and ‘nagara’ drums, and girls joined hand in hand enjoy Sarhul singing and dancing for the whole night and whole day. They rejoice because now God Dharmes is happy with them.

APPENDIX – VI

Boniface Tirkey’s version of Asur Myth

Twelve Asur brothers and thirteen Lodhar brothers smelt iron day and night, and the whole world was sooted and scorched. There was no vegetation left, no grass was found for the horse of Dharmes. He sent his messengers to tell the Asurs and the Lodhars to stop smelting during the night. But they were arrogant, maltreated Dharmes’ bird-messengers and did not desist from their destructive pursuits.

Then Dharmes appeared to them in the disguise as a leprous boy. The Asurs and the Lodhars rejected him. There was a widow however, who took pity and brought him to her house. There he did wonders for the needy. He saw for himself that the Asurs and Lodhars, both men and women, were very haughty; they would listen to nobody. Finally, using his divine power Dharmes destroyed their iron. The Lodhars then came to him asking for help, "Do you know some sorcery?" Dharmes next offered himself to be sacrificed so that their iron might be restored. He entered their furnace and told them to work on their bellows, for seven days and seven nights, and to bring water in a new earthen pitcher and sprinkle it on the furnace with mango leaves. When the fire had died out they opened the furnace, and He came out laden with gold.

The Asurs and Lodhars were a greedy lot. Seeing the gold they wanted it for themselves. So the men entered their furnaces hoping to collect the precious metal aplenty but they all were trapped inside. Next Dharmes told the women to bring water in black earthen jars and to sprinkle it with sindur twigs, and then open the doors again. When they were opened the Asur and Lodhar women found only the charred bones and ashes of their dead husbands. Dharmes got on his horse and made to go away. The women clung to his feet and said, "Show us a way to live". He turned all into spirits and told them, "Men will offer you sacrifices".

The Oraon wisdom is found and expressed through folklore, riddles, proverbs, tale, myth and legends. The Oraon is prone to be easy-going and light-hearted but he / she knows what life is. He/she may therefore try certain reckless adventures - without abandoning all caution. There is thus an Oraon proverb:

*Dahrē ēkoi hole, sange sange ēkke; eks' ānim okkoi hole, kapperke ki okke; nannār guyā kāloi hole, cihutti ra'ake.*

**English Translation:** "If you travel, travel in company; if you sit down, look where you sit; if you go to strangers, be on your guard."

This attitude is described well in the following story:

**Ort Cihut Āalas: A Cautions Fellow**

"If you travel, travel in company; if you sit down, look where you sit; if you go to strangers be on your guard".

In order to test this proverb a man set out on a journey. At one spot he halted for a drink of water. He caught sight of a crab in a puddle and thought. "The proverb says: 'If you travel, travel in company'. Now, I have no one with me", he said to himself. With these words he picked up the crab and thrust it into his headgear, in order to have a travelling companion. Some distance further he lay down under a tree and went to sleep. Meanwhile a huge Cobra, disturbed by this traveler, advanced to swallow him up. The nearer it came, the wider did it dilate its jaws. The crab in the turban noticed the snake. As the reptile came closer and closer, the alarmed crab moved out opening its claws wider and wider. Just as the snake was on the point of
biting the sleeping man, the crab struck out and pinched its open hood. The snake writhed in agony and then died on the spot. Upon awakening, the man saw the dead cobra and realized that this saving deed was done by the crab. He resumed his journey, saying: "One part of the proverb is tested. And proven: 'If you travel, travel in company'."

Later on he came to a place where some dangerous thugs were waiting to catch an unwary traveler. The robbers invited him to sit down with them and take a rest. What had they done? After covering a well with leaves sown together, they had spread a mat over the top of the well, while they themselves squatted all around the rim.

They invited unsuspecting victims to sit in the centre of the mat, so that they would plunge into the deep well. Then the robbers would carry off whatever luggage the victim left behind. Now, when they invited our traveler to sit in the centre, he suddenly pulled the mat by one end to look underneath. Caught unaware all the thugs fell into the well. The man thought, "True is the saying: 'Wherever you sit down, look on what you sit'."

He proceeded further and came to a village just as the sun was setting. He decided to stop there for the night. He went to a potter's house to ask for pots and pans. What does he find there? The potter's family were all crying and wailing. They told him: "Oh, to-day we have no pots for sale. We are miserable because to-day our son must die". "Why is that", the traveler asked. Then they told him the whole story. "The king has a daughter who is a cursed person. A number of young men from this hamlet have, one after the other, been married to her and she has killed them all on the very first night of the marriage. Today our son will marry her and then he shall die. This is why we weep and wail." The traveler said: 'I am a bachelor. Allow me to marry the king's daughter in place of your son'. The potter readily agreed, rejoicing that his son's life would be saved. In gratitude the potter gave the brave traveler whatever he needed: food, drink and fine clothes. Soon after nightfall the wedding party started
off for the palace, and the marriage ceremony took place. The bride and groom retired to their room for rest. But at midnight two poisonous snakes began to emerge from the nostrils of the princess. The wary traveler always on his guard saw this and he quickly cut off the snakes' heads with a pair of scissors. The dead bodies of the reptiles fell to the ground and this freed the princess from her curse after many years. Early next morning the people all assembled at the palace, waiting to take away the corpse of the dead bridegroom. Surprise of surprises! Instead of a grieving princess on this morning, after an unusual delay, she came out smiling arm in arm with her husband! And so the traveler learned how wise the rest of the proverb is: "If you go to strangers, be on your guard". And so this cautious fellow went home happily with his new wife.

Note: - The Oraons tell yet another tale of a simpleton who through his cleverness earns a fortune and of a Tailless Crafty Jackal who was given a good lesson by the Oraon old couple.

Appendix-VIII

Ancient Tales of Oraon Tribal Traditions

The Fort of Rohtas, or, The Kurux Ruler of Rohtas (*Ruidās tā Kurux Bēlas*)

There once lived a king and a queen. The royal couple had only one son. The king was a bhagat; a righteous man who gave generous alms to the blind, the deaf and the dumb. He never sent any beggar away empty-handed from his court. If one asked for a little something, the king gave him much; if one asked half measure, he gave him a full helping. The king made no distinctions and discriminated against none, neither did he talk ill of others. Every morning he bathed and purified himself, and then gave to the poor and the needy. In a word, the king was just and religious-minded, a real model for monarchs.

One day *Dharmes* (God) taking the form of a beggar, came and stood at the palace gate and begged help. Presently the king himself came and enquired: "What do you want? Ask and I will surely give it to you." "O king," said *Dharmes* in disguise, "I hesitate to tell you, because I am not sure you will be able to give it." The king replied "what is it? If I cannot give, then who can? I have everything: I have been giving alms to so many beggars; shall I not be able to give to you too? Asked whatever it be and I shall give you right now!" Then the divine beggar asked the good king for so much that he was unable to fulfill the request. How was the king to keep his promise? He sold off his palace, his cattle, buffaloes, horses and elephants—everything he owned. Even then it was not enough. In the end he even sold his wife, the queen. His only son he sold to a *Teli* and himself to a *Dom*. With these he finally had enough to fulfill his promise.

After a long while it so happened that the son of the king fell very sick: and one dark night the boy died. The servants of the Telis carried the child dead body to the Doms to cremate; for, in those days it was the Doms who consigned dead corpses to the fire.
This was the custom there. The Queen accompanied the corpse, wailing all the way out of grief. At midnight they arrived the Dom's house and called to them. The head Dom arose from his sleep and demanded a fee from the queen. She had no money but her master paid it for her. The Dom next aroused the king-servant himself to do this cremation. Unsuspecting, the king took some fire with in, and followed party to the cremation ground.

Hearing the grieving cries of the mother the king felt pity for the woman, and enquired about her son—even then he failed to recognize his wife, for her clothes were dirty and soiled like those of the Telis themselves. Since the day king and queen had been sold they had never met. She could neither make him out, because he looked very wretched. Full of tears she told him everything about her husband, the good king turn beggar. Hearing all this, the king also began to wail. With tears and sobs he identified himself to the queen. "I am that very unfortunate king of whom you speak!" he said. And the two of them broke down with their sorrowing.

At that moment Dharmes appeared again in the form of that same beggar. He said to them: "You had so great love and regard for me, therefore, now give you great blessings." There upon Dharmes restored the son to life and returned to his parents saying: "Take your son, Ruidas, and go. You yourselves will be great rulers!" Then the father and mother took the boy and went off. They built a new fortress in the name of their son Ruidas. It stands there to this day. And this family happily ruled a long time and died in peace.

Appendix-IX

Additional Maps and Photographs

STATEWISE TRIBAL POPULATION IN INDIA -2011
Loordipa, Kurukh Language School, Jharkhand

Indigenous People’s Day

Karam Puja