

# Was Dakshin Rai a true God or a representative of a particular class of the Sundarbans Society? : A Historical research.

**Dr. Sujit Mandal**

Assistant Professor in History & Head, Department of History, Kalna College, Purba Bardhaman  
West Bengal, 713409

Received: June 25 , 2018

Accepted: August 02, 2018

## ABSTRACT

*Sundarbans was spread across Jessore, Khulna, Barisal, Bakherganj and almost the entire part of 24 Parganas between Hooghli and Meghna. In the study of folk culture many folk goddesses are found there. One of them Dakshin Rai. My research work is Dakshin Rai's influence on the society of Sundarbans. His father was, Danda Baksha, who was the ruler of the 'Atharo Vatr Desh' and mother was Narayani. Dakshin Rai was the ruler of Hijli. There is a lot of controversy about Dakshin Rai, as a god. Many scholars believed that worship of tiger as a man in Astro-mangoloid group. Dr. S. K. Chatterjee said that, "In South Bengal in the cult of Dakshin Raya, the God of tigers probably an Austric cult in origin." B. Mustafi thinks about Dakshin Rai was a non mythology forest god. Researchers wanted to prove Dakshin Rai as a historical figure. Dr. D. C. Sen tried to prove that Dakshin Rai was a historical figure, and mentioned the story of Kalurai and Champati. A statue was found in Chandraketurgh sitting on the tiger's back. Researcher thinks that statue was Dakshin Rai and his Mother Narayani. All these observations are seen that there is a history connection with Dakshin Rai. So I think he is a "Man" than forest deity. Later on he was transformed into god of tiger for his heroism and unequal bravery. In fact, the lower caste Hindus and poor communities were forced to accept Islam from the persecution of Muslims. As a protector of Hinduism, people of this region honored and worshiped him with gratitude. I think his overall activities created a dark phase in the society's life. His unwanted rights and greed had disturbed the normal life of this region. There was no deity in any form of Dakshin Rai. It is time to understand the need of history today, who is Dakshin Rai? I think that he is the central character of Rabindranath Tagore's "Bisrjan" drama "Raghupati". Dakshin Rai was a replica of Raghupati. "Raghupati" is a real character in the 'Atharo vati' of this region, who established the rule of the entire region by capitalizing the metaphor of the name 'God'. But last was not saved, his empire has been destroyed.*

## Keywords:

Sundarbans was spread across Jessore, Khulna, Barisal, Bakherganj and almost the entire part of 24 Parganas between Hooghli and Meghna.<sup>1</sup> After the partition of India, the area of Sundarbans in India is 9630 sq km. This is an island region. In the study of folk culture many folk goddesses are found in this region. Folk goddess has occupied a special place in the society of this region. Here is my research work is Dakshin Rai's influence on the society of Sundarbans.

The identity of the Dakshin Rai, we know from the various sources that his father was, Danda Baksha, who was the ruler of the 'Atharo Vatr Desh'. His mother was Narayani.<sup>2</sup> He was the ruler of Hijli. His residence in the Khania and his royal palace was in Khanri.<sup>3</sup> The inhabitant of the Sundarbans, imagined him as a warrior. The people of this region also imagined him a forest god or as tiger-god. He was also known as "Bararai" or man-eater tiger. In the Sundarbans, Dakshin Rai and his followers, whose character as tiger also worshiped. There is a lot of controversy about Dakshin Rai, as the god of any religion. Many scholars and researchers believe that in the primitive society, there was a tradition of worship of the Tiger as a man in Astro-mangoloid group.<sup>4</sup> Dr. Suniti Kumar Chatterjee said that, "In South Bengal in the cult of Dakshin Raya, the God of tigers probably an Austric cult in origin."<sup>5</sup> Bomkesh Mustafi thinks Dakshin Rai was a non mythology forest god. His worship and rituals influence by Dravid-mangoloid.<sup>6</sup> Sharat Chandra Mitra considered, this worship was the lower caste people of the Dravid- mangoloid.<sup>7</sup>

From the above discussion it seems that the worship of the tiger god was influence non mythological rituals, but the people of Astro-mangolian have been worshiping it for a long time. In the primitive society, statues of animals were used as symbols of different groups.<sup>8</sup> "Tiger" may have been symbols such a primitive clan, and since then Tiger is holding the seat as god in the society. Such plans are designed to eliminate the fear of tiger from the human mind. In the wild environment people had to live near tigers. Both humans and tigers have wanted to influence each other. For this reason, the tiger may be worshiped as symbol "tiger-man.", mentioned in the original Ramayana.

Dakshin Rai is worshiped various places in the Sundarbans, as in the village, on the road side, in the fields, under the trees and in the forest. The worship materials of Dakshin Rai is very common, such as incense, sugar, sweet etc. Anyone can worship him. Sometimes goat or hen was sacrificed in this worship. If

the idol making was not possible then only the beheaded head would be worshiped. It is usually worshiped in night of the Bengali month Poush.

Many scholars and researchers wanted to prove Dakshin Rai as a historical figure. One of them, Dr. Dinesh Chandra Sen. He said that Dakshin Rai was a historical figure.<sup>9</sup> In this context, he mentioned the story of *Kalurai and Champati*. By conquering Mukta Roy, he married her daughter, Champabati. Dakshin Rai was the commander of Mukut Ray. Although, Kalurai converts Makut Roy, but he did not Dakshin Ray. He established him as a forest god. Archaeologist Sudhangshu Roy said that Dakshin Rai is the ruler of South Bengal during pre-Maurya era.<sup>1</sup> In this context, there is mention of Baghtatimandal and worship of Tiger in Devpal's Nalanda copper plate. The Baghratotimandal is likely to be the Sundarbans area of South Bengal. In north 24 Parganas a statue was found sitting on the tiger's back in Chandraketurgarh.<sup>11</sup> Researcher thinks that statue was Dakshin Rai and his Mother Narayani.

Barakhan Gazi fought with Dakshin Rai in Khania. Here Mukut Ray's dighi (big pond) and his ruins house are seen. From historical information, it is assumed that it built up during the Sena Period. There is a graveyard of Barakhan Gazi and Chanpa Bibi at Chandipur. About 400 years old mosque and the tallest wooden statue of Gazi is seen in Khanri. All these observations are seen that there is a history connection with Dakshin Rai. So I think he is a "Man" than forest deity. Later on he was transformed into god of tiger for his heroism and unequal bravery.

There is no historical evidence of the battle of Barakhan Gazi with Dakshin Rai in *Raymangal Kavya* yet a trend can be followed in the history of political and economic evolution of the Early Pathan Era. With the rise of Muslim domination in Bengal, there is considerable enthusiasm for spreading Islam. In fact, the lower caste Hindus and poor communities were forced to accept Islam from the persecution of Muslims. This conversion, the god of the Muslims, Dakshin Rai, was worshiped as a Hindu deity. Probably he was the king of Hindus. Perhaps, he fights against Barakhan Ghazi to protect the Hinduism. As a protector of Hinduism, people of this region honored and worshiped him with gratitude. In this way, Dakshin Rai may have been promoted to the deity.

Dakshin Rai was the king of south Bengal. The word "Roy" literally means "king", landlord or the title of noble person. Many kings, zamindars, or noble families of lower Bengal were title "Rai". Such as Kedar Roy, Pratap Roy etc. The word "king" comes from the Sanskrit word "Rajan". So 'Dakshin Rai' means the king of Southern region. His heroism and functions has actually become the symbol of tiger. Dakshin Rai's 'Tiger Army' has been mentioned in *Raymangal kabhya*. Vrumlal army and Crocodile army belonged to his army in Rudra's *Mangal Kavya*.<sup>12</sup>

Mention of all these Tiger soldiers, it seems that they were not four-footed, they were two-footed human soldiers. Dr. Panchanan Mondal, mentioned in the fourth volume of his literature publication, calls the tiger army as 'Dom' biped human sepoy. There are many references to the conventional Rhymes in the Sundarbans region. For example, the "*Aqadom Bagdome Ghoradom saje, dhak, dhole, kansor baje, bajte bajte chollo dhuli...*" "agdome" means a road or tunnel, "baghdome" means the infantry troops as speed of tiger, Ghoradom means cavalry. In other words, playing with drum etc., those forces proceeded to their expedition. Sharat Chandra Mitra said that, "They are (Infantry) not the beast of that name, but are the Mallas a wild Tribe of man living in the sundarbans." People belonging to 'Bagh' title dominated communities in Jessore, 24 Parganas.

Barakhana Ghazi was fighting with Dakshin Rai. In this battle Barakhan Gazi kills him cutting down his head. This beheaded head is '*Baramurti*' which worshiped. The symbol of the Dakshin Rai is '*Baramurti*' by removing the greatness of the god imposed upon him; many scholars discussed his historical presence as a person. Folk deity Dakshin Rai not only Bengal but all over India discussed in many ways. The beheaded head of the Dakshin Rai has come across the whole world since ancient times. Plato said that "The human head is the image of the world" A small statue of terracotta has been found in Mohenjodaro that is similar to the 'Baramurti'. In the Kootnaber in Arcot District; Bisalmari beheaded head was worshiped along with Dakshin Rai and Narayani. In this regard, Kalidas Dutt said that 'Bara Thakur' is the symbol of Dakshin Rai. We know from old Bengali literature that during the Muslim rule of Bengal, Dakshin Rai was born with folk goddess, Olababi, Banabibi, Ghazi.' In many parts of the world the statue of beheaded head is worshiped. With the worship of '*Baramurti*' it is said to be rich in agricultural prosperity. Thus, '*Baramurti*' worship' means the prosperity of the agrarian people in that region. Dakshin Rai was the landlord of *Atharo Vatir Desh*. He was a skilled diplomat landlord of the exploiter class. He consciously deprives common people of this region from all resources. People are plagued by his rule and exploitation. Yet the son of the soil of this region was entitled to enjoy all the resources, because they sacrificed themselves for created this area.

Scholars, researchers, poets, who do not judge the Dakshin Rai's verdict, I think his overall activities created a dark state in the society's life. His unwanted rights and greed had disturbed the normal life and rhythm of human civilization. "Class" emerged in the form of social evolution. Its creator was classes of clever man ,who are enjoy everything. There was no deity in any form of Dakshin Rai. Help of his predecessors, he created a dictatorship and tried to scare in people's minds, was promoted to the god and captured all the resources.

The *Atharo Vatir Desh* is full of natural resources. Dakshin Rai himself considered to be the master of this area. Even after analyzing his various aspects, I would say that Dakshin Rai was a clever man. Knowing everything, he forcefully occupied this area's natural resources. Actually, he seems that this region was his father's property. Dakshin Rai was the so-called 'Bangladeshi' leader of the upper class, the exploiter and the landlord. Many people have been crushed by his rule, exploitation and oppression. In the eventful chapter of Dakshin Rai and Banabibi, Dakshin Rai is the symbol of the liberation of the oppressed people of *Atharo Vatir Desh*, and 'Banabi', In order to get the right of the people of this region; she appeared as a maternal power and protector. She awakened the people of the Sundarbans by her message of consciousness.

The *Atharo Vatir Desh* or sundarbans is not a private property of anyone. Everything is nature's donation. So the residents or the son of soil of this region have the right to enjoy only. Because they are the creator of this region. However, Dakshin Rai was involved in a heinous act of Abduction of rights of the common people.

In the story of Dhona Mona, it is seen that they entered into the forest without worshipping the Dakshin Rai. This is their fault, and for this reason, Dakshin Rai directs to Dhona and Mona that their village related nephew child named 'Dukhi' will have to give him. Actually, what is this worship? This is nothing but a kind of 'tax' or an 'entry tax' for enters into the forest. It was an unjustified tax to impose on the people of this region. If they did not do this 'tax', may be Dakshin Rai would have killed them by his artificial 'Baghsena'. There is a protest in the story of Dhona Mona that is against the tyranny of Dakshin Rai. He does not wants to be well-established the common people of this region. They should always be under his feet - this is what they wanted. Therefore, once the common people of this region protested against the exploitation of the Dakshin Rai. They denied of his mastery.

It is time to understand the need of history today, who is Dakshin Rai? What is his surname name? I think that he is the central character of Rabindranath Tagore's "*Bisrjan*" drama "*Raghupati*". Dakshin Rai was a replica of Raghupati. "Raghupati" is a real character in the '*Atharo vati*' of this region, who established the rule of the entire region by capitalizing the metaphor of the name 'God'. The successor of the Dakshin Rai was so-called high-caste people - Jotedar, Zamindar, Mahajan. All of them follow up on the path of Dakshin Rai. They created a group of intellectual those were involved in concealing the real truth in exchange for free land, food, clothes, shelter, money and other facilities. They are writers, Kathak Thakur, novelist, courtpoet, Puthis writer (manuscript writer) etc. They were engaged in secret work with their miraculous thoughts. But the last was not saved. Dakshin Rai was also killed in clashes with Barakhan Gazi. In fact, this conflict was the contemporary class society with the contemporary people's society. At last to established the class of 'proletariat'. Those writers used to comprehend the work of "Mangal Kabhya" to erase the history of "class struggle". But they could not resist the history of class struggle. Whose trend continues today in this region.

## Referances

1. Shashanka Mandal, Btitish Rajatte Sundarbans (Sundarbans in the British Raj) (in Bengali), Calcutta, 1995, page 1
2. Abdur Rahim, Bonbibir Jahuranama, (in Bengali), 1393 BS, Calcutta, BS, page 2
3. Nirmalendu Das, Sundarbaner lok Sahitya (Folk Literature of the Sundarbans) (in Bengali), 1996, pages 52-53
4. Sukumar Sen, Islami Bangla Sahitya (Islamic Bengali Literature): Atharo Bhatir Panchali (Eighteen Bhatir Panchali) (in Bengali), 1358 Bangla, page 95
5. Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal vol. XVI, 1950, p. 210
6. Bomkesh Mustafi, Raimangal Probondho cited in the Krishnaram Das's Raimangal (Raimangal Article), Sahitya Parishad Magazine, Calcutta, 1303 BS, Kartik Sonkha
7. Hindustan Review, Allahabad, 1925, cited in Gopendra, Krishna Basu's Bangalar loukik Debota, Calcutta, 1966, p. 157
8. Nirmalendu Das, op cit, page 50
9. S.K. Chatterjee, The Cult of Dakshin Raya in Southern Bengal, Calcutta, 1983, p. 41
10. Sudhanshu kumar Roy, Pre-historic India and Ancient Egypt, Calcutta, 1989, pp. 82-83
11. Dilip Kumar Moite, "Chandraketugarh" Probondho (article), 24 Parganas (N), 1992, page 18
12. Sahitya prokashika (fourth volume), Visva-Bharati University, 1966, page 157 cited in Gopendra KrishnaBasu's Bangalar loukik Debota.