

REFERENCES OF ROMANI PEOPLE IN SELECT CULTURAL TEXTS FROM THE DIALECTS OF HINDI

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Abstract: The Roma people are facing many patterns of socio-cultural exclusions. There are reports that the members of other communities badly treat them. There is a need to know more about the Roma population across the globe. The reference of Romani people is sporadically seen in India popular culture, especially in folklore. The present paper is informative in nature, and shows two Indian cultural texts offering the references of Roma people in the territories of India. These Indian tales on Roma people are inclusive in nature, and stand quite significant as far as the linkage of Roma with India is concerned.

Keywords: Roma, Romani, Galem Galem, Cultural Texts.

Introduction:

Roma or Romani people, considered Indo Aryan ethnic groups, are gipsies and ethnic groups. Their population is seen across different European countries. On their origin, standing and life there are many a misconception. The Encyclopaedia Britannica writes on Roma people:

Roma, singular **Rom**, also called **Romany**, or **Gypsies (considered pejorative)**, an ethnic group of traditionally itinerant people who originated in northern India but live in modern times worldwide, principally in Europe. Most Roma speak some form of Romany, a language closely related to the modern Indo-European languages of northern India, as well as the major language of the country in which they live. It is generally agreed that Roma groups left India in repeated migrations and that they were in Persia by the 11th century, in south-eastern Europe by the beginning of the 14th, and in western Europe by the 15th century. By the second half of the 20th century they had spread to every inhabited continent. (<https://www.britannica.com/topic/Rom>)

Romani people have their anthem .It is known as “Gelem Gelem”. I have procured the translation of “Gelem Gelem” **by Ron Lee from a web source –“euronews.com”**. It is given below:

I have travelled over long roads
have met fortunate Roma
I have travelled far and wide
I have met lucky Roma

Oh, Romani adults, Oh Romani youth
Oh, Romani adults, Oh Romani youth
Oh, Roma, from wherever you have come

With your tents along lucky roads
I too once had a large family
But the black legion murdered them
Come with me, Roma of the world
To where the Romani roads have been opened
Now is the time – stand up, Roma,
We shall succeed where we make the effort

Oh, Roma adults, Oh, Roma youth
Oh, Roma adults, Oh, Roma youth
(Source: <https://www.euronews.com/2017/08/01/who-are-the-roma-people>).

This emotional anthem is a saga of Roma existence, life and their relationship with other ethnic groups. It calls for their unity and self-esteem. The reference of Romani people is also seen in India popular culture, especially in folklore. The present paper discusses two cultural texts from the dialects of Hindi language in India. These texts offer references to the acts and stay of Roma people in the territories of India. I have found these significant cultural texts while exploring the folklores from North and Central India. They narrate the story of the Roma people. Both the texts to some extent sing the same tale. The first text is recorded from an old man called Shri Het Ram (80) residing in a small village near Reeve, Madhya Pradesh. It is a tale concerning the origin of Romani people in India. The second text has been recorded from Shri Saligram Lodh(87) also a senior citizen, residing at Baishan Purwa Village, District Barabanki, Uttar Pradesh. Both the texts are presented below for reference.

Cultural Text 1

Ramani au Romi bahut nik laagain

The following is a script recorded from Shri Het Ram (80). It narrates the story of Roma couple in India, and mentions how they had to go out of country at their own fault. For a feeling of orature, the original script is given. The English rendition follows.

Ramani au Romi bahut nik laagain
Aai dhare nava bhes
Pahunchi uin doonav
Rja ke lorat
Bolin ki hum ka kales.

*Suni kai bani Raja dravit bhe
Deeninh unika dus gaon,
Neeke suke ab rahav hiyna ab
Banike tum parja hamar.*

*Lekin uyi Ramnai Romi rahe shatir
Kihin bada visghat
Kihin bada visghat re.
Jantar mantar jaadu tona
Aankhin kera unke pher re
Aankhin ke unke pher.
Pakar pakar ke goru bakheru
Deeninh alag pahuchai,
Deeninh alag pahuchai,
Raja jhankhen bade piresani
Aayi fakir maharaj
Ho aaye fakir maharaj.
Kahin ki dekhav eei chasma se
Furhane sabay ho dekhay.
Raja dekhin bhe bhavchakke
Ramani Romi dey sab uday.
Dey sab goru uday.
Bedhab raha vakya ivv saab
Raja krodh bhare paglai.
Rokin unka mahraj fakira
Kahin ke dev desh nikala
Inka dev tum desh nikar.
Tabse gaye bahir sab Romani
Bahir desh birarayi....
Bahir desh birarayi.*

Explanation:

The narration is in Bagheli-Awadhi dialect of Hindi. The song is explained thus:
Long - long ago, there lived a great king in the central part of India. He was generous, brave and kind. One day a man came to him with his wife from the coastal regions of the Indian subcontinent. He was fair and slim. Quite exasperated and perplexed, he kneeled before the king, and narrated to him that he was a tradesman. While coming to Hindustan (India) from across the sea he was robbed by pirates. He told his name as Romi, and his wife's name Romini. Since on the way, his goods and vessel have been looted by the pirates; therefore he had come to the court of the King for some help. He also asked for the shelter in the king's empire. The so-called tradesman also called a woman to the court of the king, and introduced

her as his wife. The king believed in the veracity of the tale, and granted him a big piece of land with meadows, cattle, farm and orchards. It was a very lovely piece of land. The king said, "Hey good looking man, you can live at this beautiful place with your beautiful wife." The immigrant lived happily for some time and after getting familiar with the people around, started popularising black magic in the locality. Also, he got involved in many wicked practices. Romi and Romani had tremendous powers to get mixed up with the people in the community. They showed up the values and traits of empathy, precondition, retrocognition, psychometry and others, to mesmerize and create awe amongst the people with their power of magic and illusion. They also practiced the patterns of communicating and channelising with spirits and likes. In fact, they were the practitioners of black magic. Under the spell of their latent power they transported the moves and chattel of the neighbours to some other land. They stole the goats, sheep, mule, calf and heifer too for their staple food. The issue was reported to the king. The king investigated the matter, but no culprit was found behind the cattle-stealing in the neighbourhood. Many innocent farmers, tradesmen, and even the holy men got punishment by the state on the happening around but no one could find the real cause.

One day a strange Faquir (hermit) appeared in the court of the King, and claimed that he could help the king towards investigating the issue and finding out the real culprit. He prepared the sets of unique glasses for the king, and the senior investigating officers of the kingdom, and advised them to guard the area during the midnight hours. The investigation team took the charge, and under the spell of the glass, the king found the reality behind the strange case of Romi and Romani. They were conjuring a lot of cattle and poultry, even very small calves, mules, heifer, and many other items of the state to some other region under the magical spell. The king turned furious, and proceeded to give capital punishment to the Roma and Romani couple immediately by beheading them, and he dragged the sword. The Faquir immediately stopped the king from doing so, and advised him to banish the couple away from the state immediately, with a curse that they would never find peace at one place. The King followed the advice and executed it verbatim. The couple got banished from India, and they went to other countries. Later they and their clan were known as Romani population.

Cultural Text 2

Roma Romani ki Baanki Jodee

(Recorded from Shri Saligraam Lodh, Baishan Purava Barabanki)

The following is a script recorded orally from Shri Saligraam Lodh (87). In the line of the Text I, It narrates the narrative of Roma couple in India, and mentions how they had to go out of country at their own fault.

*Roma romaanee kee baankee jodee
pahunchee raajaajee ke paas.
raaja baith rahen chinta ma*

*raha malin darabaar.
romaanee ke pahunchee chaundha lauka
aisa bha ujjyaar.
gabaroo marad au alhad joroo
jaisan utare seedhe sarag se.
raaja chaunke yee kahaan se aae
sapana hai ya sareehan baat.
roma baitha bolai raja jee
sunav vipatiya mor.
ham sab door des se aaye
hain vaipaaree log.
loot lihin hain hamaka lutere
ab saran ma ham tumhaare aay.
raaja turataih unase bole
rahav khusee hamare des.
khusee se baanchhai unakee khil gayee
man khusee bhava laharai.
kuchh din neek sook se beete
phir rang dihan phaharaay.
jaadoo tona ke uee gyaata
rahee pharebee unakee chaal.
le bisvas lihin jab raaja aur sabai darabaar.
kaala jaadoo aapan phekis
sangha saamaan choraay.
badhee jab ghatana aisee bahutain
raaja ge ghabaraay.
samajh kou na paava bilakul
kaun raha raaj jharihaay.
ek achaanak din bhai vaanee
sarag se dihis sunaay.
yahike roma romaanee paachhe
jaun hoi raha paap.
raaja turatahi garaja bola
haajir hov doonav aay.
turat nikaaris tega aapan
kee dey oo sees hataay.
phir se bhay vaanee saragan se
inhain des se dev bhagaay.
bhaagat bhaagat ee sab rahihain
na thaur thikaana paen.*

Explanation:

The narration is in Awadhi dialect of Hindi. The song is explained thus: One day a King was sitting in tensed mood with his courtiers. He was concerned with some serious issues of the Kingdom. Suddenly a lovely couple entered the court and stated that they had been robbed. They were tradesmen, coming from some foreign land. The King got impressed with their personalities and allowed them to stay in the kingdom. For some time they lived peacefully, thereafter started doing mischievous acts, and theft. Since they were the masters of black magic, no one could guess their involvement behind the criminal acts. The King and his men became utterly tensed and worried. One fine day the king heard an oracle that mentioned the Roma couple to be at fault. The king's rage found no bound, and he called them for capital punishment. Again the oracle was heard forbidding the King from capital punishment. It directed the king to give them banishment. From that very time, they are moving hither and thither without any permanent settlement.

These Indian tales on Roma people are inclusive in nature, and show the generous attitude of Indians. There is no much valid record of Roma people in Indian literature and culture. I could not find other authentic records on Roma in India, yet in Roma folklore found across the countries, we have quite pervading and popular references of India. Roma people across the globe have rich folklore, myths and stories. These stories have been recorded and published by the anthropologists and writers in print and electronic forms in different languages. 'The Creation of the Violin', 'The meaning of and Misconception on Devla', 'The Golden Stag', 'Vampire pumpkins and watermelons' are the most popular in the series, and they have sporadic association and references of India.

The Roma people are facing many patterns of socio-cultural exclusions. They are sometimes badly treated by the members of other communities. There is a need to know more and more on the Roma population across the globe. The governments, societies and different non-government organizations should come forward to help them coming to the main stream.

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