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MELCHHAMUNDA AND MUCHALINDA: A STUDY OF LINGUISTIC EVOLUTION AND CULTURAL EXCHANGE

*¹Dr Kamala Kant Bhoi, ²Dr Chandrika Bhoi, ³Alfa Anupama Priyadarshini Barik, ⁴Shreekant Barik

¹MBBS, MD, DM, (Neurology), Neurologist, Shri Balaji Institute of Medical Sciences, Raipur, Chhattisgarh, India

²Lecturer, BA, MA, Ph D, (Education), Women's College, Padampur, Odisha, India

³BA, MA (History), PGDCA, Lecturer, Bolangir College, Odisha, India

⁴Software Engineer, MCA, HCL, Noida, Delhi, India

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*Corresponding author: Dr Kamala Kant Bhoi,

ABSTRACT

India This study explores the linguistic and cultural connections between Melchhamunda and Muchalinda, examining their etymology, historical significance, and cultural exchange. The research reveals that Melchhamunda's name originates from Odia and Munda languages, while Muchalinda's prefix 'Mucha' has Sanskrit and Pali roots.

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INTRODUCTION

Melchhamunda, situated in Odisha, India, has a rich cultural heritage. This study delves into the linguistic evolution and cultural exchange between Melchhamunda and Muchalinda.

Etymology of Melchhamunda: Melchhamunda's name originates from Odia and Munda languages [1]. The name comprises three parts: Mel (ମେଲ), meaning 'High' in Odia; Chha (ଛା), meaning 'Top' in Odia; and Munda (ମୁଣ୍ଡା), meaning 'Chief' in Munda [2]. Thus, Melchhamunda translates to 'chief/hilltop village.'

Geographical and Historical Significance: Geographically, Melchhamunda is near a hill or elevated area, holding an important position in the region. Historically, it was a chief's settlement, reflecting Odisha's linguistic diversity and cultural exchange between Munda and Odia communities.

The Prefix 'Mucha' in Muchalinda: The prefix 'Mucha' in Muchalinda has Sanskrit and Pali roots. 'Mucha' (मुचा) means to

liberate or protect [3]. In Buddhist mythology, Mucha signifies the serpent's role as a protector of the Buddha [4].

Suffixes 'munda' and 'linda': The suffix 'munda' in Melchhamunda originates from the Munda language and ethnic group, native to eastern India, meaning 'head', 'chief', 'hill', or 'settlement' [2]. The suffix 'linda' in Muchalinda has Pali and Sanskrit roots, meaning 'serpent' or 'naga' [3].

Cultural Significance and Similarities: Melchhamunda and Muchalinda share similarities due to linguistic evolution, geographical proximity, or cultural exchange between Munda people and Buddhist/Hindu communities.

Buddhist Relics in Ganiapali: Ganiapali, near Melchhamunda, has yielded significant Buddhist relics [5]. The site is near the convergence of the Ang and Magar rivers and is identified with ancient Muchalinda, a center of Buddhist learning [6].

Art Historical Significance: The Muchalinda image in Ganiapali was first discovered by art historian Charles Fabri in 1961 [4]. Fabri dated the image to the 5th-6th century AD and noted its rarity in India [4].



Figure 1. Muchalinda Buddha Vihar, Ganiapali



Figure 2. Two Buddha deities inside the Muchalinda Vihar, Ganiapali

CONCLUSION

Melchhamunda's name might be a local adaptation of Muchalinda, reflecting Odisha's rich cultural diversity.

Conflicts of interest: None.

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