

Guru Gomke Pundit Raghunath Murmu: the Inventor of *ollchiki* and the forerunner of Santali Renaissance.

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Out of 62 different tribal Communities of Odisha 55 are found in the district of Mayurbhanj¹. Among them Santal constitute the third largest², ethnic, tribes of India who speaks the independent tongue Santali. Maxmuller was the first to distinguish Munda and Dravidan languages and he placed Santali under Munda language, while Peter W. Schmidt named the Munda language as the language of Austro-Asiatic language family³. At present they spread over a wide areas of Bihar, West Bengal, Odisha, Assam, Chhatishgarh, Tripura as well as in the neighboring countries like Bangladesh, Nepal and Bhutan. Though they are found in other districts of Odisha, but the district of Mayurbhanj is peopled largely⁴ by the Santals whose numerical strength is 894764⁵.

Among the great Santal personalities of the district namely Sunaram Soren, Ram Chandra Hembram, Ghasiram Sandil, Kalia Majhi, Sauna Murmu, Muniram Baskey, Ram Chandra Tudu, Samra Charan Tudu, Sundar Mohan Hembram, Kaliram Soren, Shyam Sundar Hembram. The name of Raghunath Murmu stands prominent. Like many other tribes they would have remained unnoticed in the oblivion, like other ethnic people had they not been fortunate to get Raghunath in the Santal Community. His emergence in the Santal Community gave a distinct, identity and solidarity for the invention of the nature based alphabet called "*Ol Chiki*" and his literary achievements.

Though, their culture, language, tradition and movement have drawn the attention of number of researcher a little work has been done on the founder father of "*Ol Chiki*.", hence an humble effort has been made to focus on Raghunath Murmu and his role as the founder father of "Ol Chiki" as well as his contribution in the Literary horizon in a broader historical perspective.

Raghunath Murmu was born on 5th May, 1905 on the day of *Baisakhi Purnima* in a Santal village called Dandbose (Dahardihi). It is five kilometers from Rairangpur. Nandalal was his father and Salma was his mother. Chunu was the nick name of Raghunath. He passed the upper Primary from Bahalda School which was located 11kms. away from his village. He completed his

matriculation from M.K.C. High School in 1928 in second division.⁶ He was married to Neha, the third daughter of Dashmat Baskey of Jamjola village, under Kuchoung pir of Jharkhand.

While he was working as an apprentice in Baripada Power House, his innovative talents surprised Wellwood, the State Chief Engineer⁷. Murmu pointed out certain defects in the blue prints of an installation. His idea of using new technique for producing and furnishing qualitative carpets attracted the attention of P.K.Sen, Dewan of the State. Murmu was sent to Calcutta for the Industrial Training. On his return he was appointed as a Instructor at Purna Chandra Industrial Institute, Baripada in 1933⁸. After the death of his father, he sought a transfer to the nearby place and was posted as the Headmaster of Bodamtolia Model School⁹. His maternal uncle Sauna Murmu was also a teacher of that School. There, he took a very keen interest in discovering the Santali script.¹⁰

By that time the need for the Santali script was felt by many. B.B. Hembram says, "The Santali language has its own original existence, its own identity. Bengali language cannot be written in English and vice-versa. Similarly if anybody ventures to write the Santali Language in English or in Bengali or in Hindi or in Oriya script, he is just going to put a garland on the neck of a red hot statue and If it happens, within a short period, the Santal language will be phonetically deformed. Consequently it will lose its glamour, beauty and in the long run this resourceful language will be compelled to live a crippled life among the healthy languages of the other people of India."¹¹

Raghunath Murmu had truly realized the message of Fakir Mohan Senapati and Madhusudan Rao who speaks,

*"Bhasahinjibonisaktijatimanonkara
Jeunjati bhasahino sejati barbar."*¹²

It means: Language is the nucleus and the source of life for a community.
 A race without language is savage.

Murmu had realised that the Santals were held in low esteem by the non tribals and that was largely due to the absence of their education. Without a deep awareness for their own language and literature, tradition and culture, they will always be despised and looked down upon by the non-tribals. As a community it must grow, prosper and deserve the respect from others. To him, script is the only means through which the culture of a race can be tied. A race cannot progress without a

script. All the problems can be solved in a peaceful tongue (Language and script) and hence a separate script is an indispensable¹³. In his book *Lakchar Serenjhe* (Cultural Music), he writes:-

*"Oll menah tama rol menah tama
dhoraom menah tama aamhom menam
Ollem adrele rolem adrele
Dhoromem adlere aamhom aada ."*¹⁴

It means: So long as script is alive, your language is alive; so long as *Dhorom* is alive you are alive.

The moment you lose your script, your language will be disappeared. The moment you lose your *Dhormo*, You will meet your final end.

In the absence of a script, Santali speaking people of Bengal, Bihar Odisha and Assam would remain isolated from different zonal groups. The need was to find an alphabet which could encompass all the Mundari speaking people. He got the ideas for discovering the alphabet out of four things namely from the tattoo marks, branding of cattle, stone marks of the forest and the various sound pattern, of the horns and bugles¹⁵. Ultimately he designed nature based alphabet in 1925 called "*Ol-chiki*" or "*Ol Chemet*" means *learning of writing*.

According to Murmu '*Ol*' means only drawing the picture of the thing in mind without creating any sound and '*Chiki*' means pictorial representation. When Murmu devised the script he carefully selected the shapes of the script from the nature and the surroundings which are very common and familiar to the Santals. The script was exhibited in a grand Adivasi meeting held at Chemenjudi of Bihar on 6th April, 1928, to create a consciousness among the Santals. Murmu also made a wooden handpress in 1935¹⁶. The shapes of *Ol Chiki* letters are based on the shapes of the objects or actions which the sounds for the letters represent or with which sounds for the letters are in some way or other is associated. Generally the shapes of the letters are in the shapes of soil, fire, water, air, sky and environments that surrounds the earth. Most of the letters are round or oval shaped and are written from left to right.

About the structure of the Script, The German Scholar Norman H. Zide says¹⁷ "The letters of the *Ol Chiki* are arranged in scientific way. The alphabet which consists of 30 letters is arrangeable. The letters are so arranged that each row begins with a vowel. The sounds of the letters in each column have a phonological features in common¹⁸.

The new script symbolised a return to the great tradition of the past. Murmu got the help from many in discovering the script and the press. The prominent among them were his own

maternal uncle Sauna Murmu and Muniaram Baskey (a trainee return from England). Script is the career of language and the wheel of progress, and the identity of a race. The discovery of a script is a whole part of process of reform revivalism and revitalization of tribal culture. It is a spring of creativity endeavours. The objective being the preservation of the pure and pristine elements of their culture. It is argued that Santali, one of the oldest language of the country has now its own script. Always there was a communication gap among the Santals of various regions for want of a common script. It served as the medium of communication to reunite the population irrespective of their geographical boundaries.

The script contains thirty letters with six vowels and twenty four consonants, linked to each vowel. All these letters are based on either some objects, activities of the body or particular sound pattern and feeling etc. which they resembled¹⁹. The fundamental relationship between a word, and its meaning gave a new dimension in the enrichment of vocabulary. In Santali all the vowels can be short as well as long.

In Santali most of the words function as nouns but there is nothing in the word themselves formally to show that they are nouns. Every Santal word may function as verb and the base word itself is not altered. Verb is the most important item of grammar. There is no real verb as distinct from other class of words. By simply adding 'a' any word can be turned into a verb viz. 'atu' and 'retret'. Every independent word can perform the function of a verb and every verbal forms can be used as noun or adjective²⁰. In the words of J.M. Macphail²¹ 'in Santalia'- "Their language is the most remarkable possession that this people, exceptionally poor in this world's goods, can boast of. It is a triumph of complexity, with moods and tenses all its own, a language which is only to be learned by living among the people who speak it, but which, once learned, is peculiarly expressive and convenient. It is a agglutinative or compounding class of languages, consisting of roots rather than words, the root serving as substantive or verb adjective or adverb; according to the necessities of the case. It is very rich in terms for all natural objects and for all things, which touch the common life of the people.

The uniqueness of the language is that it has a 8 types of names of the *prahara* i.e. *Setaa*, *Basiyam*, *Tikin*, *Tarasin*, *Singaal*, *Aayub*, *Nidaa*, *Simrah* etc. of the day and night . It cannot be found either in Hindi or any other languages. Each of the *prahara* contains duration of 3 hours.

Since the bygone days Hindi has been influenced by number of indigenous and foreign languages. Hence it has a lot of adaptability and can digest other languages easily. After the independence

Hindi was recognized as *rastra bhasa*. But Santali is an exception. It has a very rich vocabulary. It has borrowed a very few words to express spiritual and ethical ideas and to denote some modern words like *amins*, churches, magistrate, post and pins etc. from Hindi or Hindusthani. For each noun or word Santali has a specific verb, which does not repeat for the second time as well as it requires shortest words to frame a sentence. While Hindi has no specific verb, hence it requires more words to frame a sentence. For example;

Table-1²²

<u><i>In Hindi</i></u>	<u><i>In Santali</i></u>
a. <i>Sakha Katdiye</i>	- <i>Dar do mag keyako.</i>
b. <i>Sakha apneap tutkar gir gaye</i>	- <i>Dar do ajtege rapud ena.</i>
c. <i>Sakha apneap tutkar pedme latakgaye</i>	- <i>Dar do lotoj ena.</i>
d. <i>Sakha tutkar samne jamen par aagaye</i>	- <i>Dar do samnaset nur ena.</i>
e. <i>Kisine Sakha ke agrbhag ko todkar alag kardiya</i>	- <i>Dar do tengoj keyako.</i>
f. <i>Sakha apne ganthase dobhag me bantgaye</i>	- <i>Dar do peter ena.</i>
g. <i>Do daloki bechse dobhag hogay</i>	- <i>Dar do chagal ena.</i>
h. <i>Dalko dolok milkar tukde tukde karrahe hain</i>	- <i>Dar do hesa eyako.</i>

From the above example it can be said that along with G.A. Grierison the views of P. Mitra, is to be taken into consideration to state that Santals are not only the aboriginal, Proto-Austroloid and Ethnic tribes of our civilization but also Santali language is the base of world language as well as the base of the World heritage²³. Moreover, there are an equal number of names for rice, according to the various forms in which it is found seedling in the ear husked rice, boiled rice, etc.

Santali, Grammar has three numbers and two genders. Any word may function as adjective, two or more words may be placed side by side one acting as the noun, the other as an adjective as a rule but not necessarily word functioning as an adjective precedes the noun. The personal pronouns have separate forms for the dual and plural. Moreover the pronouns of the first person has two forms each in the dual and in the plural, one excluding and one including the person addressed. Demonstrative pronouns are used as personal pronouns of the third person. There is also a pronoun called 'self' which can be considered as personal pronoun of the third person. Verbal adjectives are used as relative pronouns²⁴.

In course of time Suchindra Nath Das, the Superintendent of Education of the state inspected the model school, where Murmu was serving and Das was highly impressed with Murmu's efforts

for discovering the script and the hand press. The script and the press were exhibited in the Annual state Exhibition in Feb. 1939. Though Maharaja Pratap Chandra Bhanjadeo (1928-1947) of Mayurbhanj was impressed with his achievement but the advice of his Dewan Khitish Chandra Niyogi was very encouraging. Murmu was allowed to popularize the script in the Orissa, Bihar Bengal and Assam. Subsequently, he was transferred from Bodamtolia to Rairangapur on promotion. However, he resigned from the service in 1946 for personal grounds²⁵. Under the efforts of Raghunath Murmu and Muniram Baskey Chandan press was established in 1946 for the publication of the books and the journals in *Ol Chiki* script. '*Nel Jong Lagid Oll*' (writing to see) was the first book of Murmu which was published from that press.

Murmu moved and attended a number of meetings held at different places of Bengal, Bihar and Odisha to popularize the script as well as for the development of language and literature. Sunaram Soren, Samara Charan Tudu, Masang Tudu, Sundar Mohan Hembram, Muniram Baskey, Ram Chandra Tudu, Lakhan Marndi and Kaliram Soren had extended their help for its propagation. Murmu had an intense desire to promote Santali language. Like Madhusudan Das, and Gangadhar Meher he says.

*"Janam Ayodo rengej rehon unige hara ai,
Janam roldo nidhan rehon anatege marang a
Senaem mened Khanem parsi manag senayem
Parsi senaem mened khan oll manag senayem tam"*²⁶.

It means:

The breeding mother may be poor but she rears her child, One's mother tongue may be low, but it makes one great. If you want to be great then enrich your mother tongue first. If you want to develop your language, then develop your script first.

Murmu has number of creative works²⁷. His most popular dramas are *Bidu Chandan* (Oriya-1942), Bengali-1947, *Kherwar Veer* Oriya-1944, Santali 1952, *Dalege dhon* (health is welth) (Oriya, 1948), (Santali-1966) got wide popularity among the Santals. *Hital* (Religious advices) part-I and II (unpublished) contain the songs in praise of the creator. *Bakhen* (Ritual songs) contains songs of invocation meant for specific occasion. His other works are *Hor Serenj* (Collection of Poetry) (1936), *Nel Jong lagit oil* (Writing to see), *Ol Chemed* (Learning of Script), *Elokha Potob* (Arithmetic) in 1966, *Parshiapaha* (Children Literature), *Parshi apad* (Youth Literature), *Sid*

Kahani (Cultural Music), *Lakchar Serenj* (Collection of folktale), *Ol Upurum* (Introductory Letters), *Ranal* (Grammar) *Parsidars* (Branch of Literature) and *Parsi Gajal* (Literature of Dance), *Baha Serenj* (Spring Songs) etc. In his writings he has projected the image of the glorious heritage of the Santals along with certain predominant socio-cultural issues like drinking of rice beer, intra-sept marriage, the propitiation of Gods, individual morality and social ethics etc.

Murmu's impact was basically on the socio-cultural and religious front. He always remained on the background from the ideological and organizational point of view for influencing, rather than actively pursuing the objectives of identity and social solidarity.

The *Oll Samiti* of Mayurbhanj gave the proposal for the formation of Adivasi Cultural Association in a meeting at Nakibagan of Bamanghaty Subdivision on 14th March, 1954. The meeting was held under the Presidentship of Lakhan Marndi and Vice-Presidentship of Ghasiram Sandil. It was the direct outcome of his inspiration. The association was renamed as the Adivasi Socio-Education and Cultural Association (ASECA) in 1962, though it was registered in 1964²⁸. As a versatile genius he has been the most potent spiritual leader. The Mayurbhanj Adivasi Mahasabha honoured him with the title *Guru Gomkey* (The great preceptor) for his unparalleled service to the community. The Dhumkaria in Ranchi conferred the D.Litt. degree on him in 1958 for his outstanding contribution to Adivasi Literature. M.D. Jullias Tigga, the education minister of Bihar called him a great inventor and dramatist. The popular Tribal leader Jaipal Singh called him an Anthropologist and Pundit. C.L. Mukharjee described him as the priest of Santal tribe. Martin Orans (USA) called him the Spiritual Guru of the Santals. Ranjit Singh Bariah, the ex-minister of Odisha called him a great orator with charming voice. For his literary contribution, Sahitya Academy has awarded him, as the founder of Santali language and inventor in 1978²⁹. Jyoti Basu, Hon'ble Chief Minister of West Bengal honoured him as *Oll Guru* at Kendvola village (Purulia) in 1979³⁰.

As a champion of education, the first Santali School was established by him at Bet Kundari village of Midnappur in February, 1977. He also laid the foundation of a Santal University at Bet Kundaridahi of Jhargram in West Bengal on 21st February, 1977³¹ for the effolence of Santal culture and language.

Pundit Murmu was died on 1st February, 1982. The dreams of Pt. Murmu has been materialized. The language and the script has largely been popularized in West Bengal, Bihar and

Assam. The Government of West Bengal recognized the *Ol Chiki* in 1979 for imparting education at the primary level. The Ranchi University has introduced Santali language in Degree course and in Post Graduate course in 1981. Similarly the Tilka Majhi University has introduced the Santali Language in Post Graduate Courses in 1989. In 1991 the then Government of Odisha has instructed to impart teaching in *Ol Chiki* script in the primary level in the districts of Mayurbhanj, Keonjhar and Sundargarh on experimental basis³². Thirty teachers were appointed by the Government in 1992 for imparting *ol chiki* in the primary levels. The language was inducted in the VIIIth Schedule of the Indian Constitution with other twenty one languages in 22nd December 2003. One hundred community mobiliser were appointed by the Government in 2010 for imparting *ol chiki* in the primary levels.

During the post independence period number of press were established. Number of researcher, Santali writer, poet and the dramatist were emerged from the various states like Bengal, Bihar, Odisha and Assam who have contributed a lot to enrich the Santali language, culture and literature. To promote the linguistic study of Santali, Bengali and Maithali a Central Institute Of Indian language has been established at Bhubaneswar with a view to translate the other languages CIIL in to Santali language.

Though the script have been widely acclaimed by the tribals, there has been general reservation regarding the functional relevance. There should be determined and co-ordinated efforts at the national level to respect the susceptibilities of these communities in this respect to undertake a scientific evaluation of their script and build up a literature in their own language to ensure the observance of Article-29 of the Constitution in the letter and spirit which will enjoy the protection of the interests of the minorities and their right to conserve distinct language, culture and script of their own. At present Santali language has occupied a very good position in mass media and communication. The All India Radio, Kolkata is relaying a daily news bulletin in it's half an hour programme. Similarly, other AIR Centres like Cuttack, Baripada, Jamshedpur, Ranchi and Chaibasa are relaying other cultural programme. Further Kolkata Doordarshan Kendra is also relaying half an hour Santali Programme once in a week. At present Unicode and Wikipedia system have been developed in Santali language by the efforts of Manik Singh, Subash Murmu, Mario Suiten Murmu, Suhagini Hansda of Bangladesh ,Shidu Murmu, Bijay Murmu and Maino Tudu of Nepal and R. Aswini Banjan Murmu, Subhashis Pani, Biram Soren, Ranjit Marndi, Biswamitra Kisku, Phagu Baskey, Durga Soren, Dulal Kisku of India in 6th August 2018 .

Pt. Murmu was neither a political nor religious leader, but his efforts and literary contributions are highly appreciated for his love and affection towards Santali culture. As a genius and multifacets personality he appears as dramatist, writer, poet, essayist, mathematician, grammarian, moralist, inventor and a painter. He played a very significant role for the awakening of cultural renaissance of Santals through his prolific writings. Hon'ble Chief Minister of Odisha inaugurated a bronze statue of Pt. Raghunath Murmu at Rairangapur on 2nd October, 1989 in the commemoration of such a legendary and spiritual Guru.³³

The literature created by Pundit Murmu is a reinterpretation of Santal myth and tradition. Through his creative writings, plays and compilations, he has sought to socialise and culturise the entire concept of Santals identity and solidarity. He has used myths, histories in his own idea to project a great tradition and called upon his tribe to follow it. He tried to create an awareness and a sense of identity. Thus the Santals have tried to create, maintain and fight for the identity as well as their worldview in diverse ways through a selective borrowing of culture traits. They have been able to retain the essential features of their social and moral order without denting themselves the benefits of new development efforts. The world view of Santal is Characterized by both continuity and change. The resilience is manifested in their values, attitude and behavior.

Conclusion :

Thus, it can be concluded that Pt. Murmu is no more but his works that mad him immortal. The *Oll Chiki* has become the symbol and the identity of the Santals. It could serve as a line among the Santals of various states who had a common distinct culture which faces the danger of extinction. The rapid development of language and literature has brought immense change in the life of the Santals. it has created a sense of unity among them. Now they can realise the inner values of their own language, culture and script.

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