

A Study of the Literary Contribution of Pandit Raghunath Murmu

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Abstract

Pandit Raghunath Murmu was a great tribal scholar, writer, and social reformer who made an unforgettable contribution to Santali literature. He is best known as the creator of the Ol Chiki script, which gave the Santali language its own identity. His literary work played a major role in preserving and promoting the culture, language and tradition of the Santali community. He also respectfully known as Guru Gomke, was a great literary figure, linguist, and cultural reformer of the Santali community. His literary activities played vital role in preserving, developing, and modernizing Santali language and literature. Through his creative writings and educational efforts, he gave Santali a written identity and laid the foundation for its growth as a rich literary language.

Pandit Raghunath Murmu born 5 May 1905 and passed away 1 February 1982. At that time stands as one of the most influential literary and cultural figures in modern Indian history, particularly for the Santali community. A writer, educator, and visionary linguist, Murmu fundamentally transformed Santali language and literature through his creation of the Ol Chiki script. His literary contribution not only preserved centuries old oral tradition but also laid foundation for a modern written literature that would empower generations.

Keywords: Pandit Raghunath Murmu, Santali Literature, Ol Chiki Script, Tribal Literature, Guru Gomke

Introduction

Literature serves as a mirror of society and plays an essential role in preserving culture and language. Among the pioneers of tribal literature in India, Pandit Raghunath Murmu occupies a unique position. Before the invention of the Ol Chiki script, the Santali language was written using Roman, Bengali, Odia, or Devanagari scripts, none of which accurately represented its sounds. Recognizing this limitation, Murmu developed the Ol Chiki script in 1925, laying the foundation for modern Santali literature and education.

Pandit Raghunath Murmu was not merely the inventor of a script; he was also a visionary writer, dramatist, educator, social reformer, and cultural leader. Understanding that a script alone would not ensure the growth of a language, he devoted himself to producing original literary works in Ol Chiki. He composed dramas, songs, poems, educational textbooks, grammar books, and instructional materials that introduced readers to the new script while promoting literacy and social awareness. His writings addressed themes such as education, unity, morality, cultural pride, social reform, historical consciousness, and the preservation of tribal customs and traditions. Through literature, he inspired the Santali community to value their language and cultural heritage while embracing education as a path toward social progress.

The present study seeks to examine the literary contribution of Pandit Raghunath Murmu by analysing his major literary works, educational writings, and cultural initiatives. It explores how his writings contributed to the growth of modern Santali literature, strengthened the use of the Ol Chiki script, preserved indigenous cultural traditions, and inspired generations of writers, educators, and social reformers. Through this analysis, the study highlights Murmu's enduring legacy as a pioneering literary figure whose contributions continue to shape the cultural and literary landscape of the Santali-speaking community.

LITERATURE REVIEW: -

Ram Chandra Murmu-2004 **“Guru Gomke Pandit Raghunath Murmu”** A Santali Book on the Biography of Guru Gomke Pandit Raghunath Murmu, the inventor of Santali script “Ol CHIKI”

Dr. Duli Hembrom, in-2019 has researched on the topic **“Pandit Raghunath Murmu jiyon kardhani”** award of Ph.D. from Vidyasagar University. she has written about life story is about Guru Gomker's life and work. Arts and Humanities Language and Linguistics Pandit Raghunath Murmu

Tudu, Manoj Kumar, 2022 has researched on the topic **“A study of Pt Raghunath Murmu s contribution in Santali literature”**. award of Ph.D. from Visva-Bharti University Pandit Raghunath Murmu and Ol Chiki Script, Necessity regarding invention of Ol Chiki Script, Santali Culture and Ol Chiki, Contribution of Pandit Raghunath Murmu to Santali literature.

Objectives of the Study

- To examine the literary contribution of Pandit Raghunath Murmu.
- To study the significance of the Ol Chiki script.
- To analyze his major literary works.
- To evaluate his contribution to the development of Santali language and culture.

Research Methodology

This study is based on secondary data and sources, including books journal articles, publication, and related book and information of pandit Raghunath Murmu .

Life and Background

Pandit Raghunath Murmu was born on 5 may 1905, on the occasion of baishak kunami (Baisakhi Purnima), in Dandbose village, near the Rairangpur town in Mayurbhanj. In Odisha. His father Nandlal Murmu, who had served as the Majhi (village headman) and mother named Salma Murmu , mother who had an important role for child, nurturing his moral values and cultural consciousness. At birth, according to Santali tradition, they named grand generation name, so he was named Chunu Murmu, but he cried very much, so named was change Raghunath Murm. From an early age, he showed a interest in language and education, dedication script for Santali. He devoted himself to creating a writing system that reflected the in Santali language. He became widely respected as a writer, playwrights, educator, and cultural reformer.

Background: The Need for a Script

He received his primary education at a school in his local area. At that time, there were no textbooks in the Santali language; students had to write Santali using the Odia, Bengali, or Roman scripts. This practice compromised accurate pronunciation and the language's authentic character. This issue raised a profound question in his mind: "We have our own language, but why do we not have our own script?" This question

changed the course of his life. Pandit Raghunath Murmu invented the Ol Chiki script in 1925. Prior to this, the Santali language was written using the Bengali, Odia, Roman, or Devanagari scripts. Since the Ol Chiki script was created with the phonetic characteristics of the Santali language in mind, it gave a new direction to the development of Santali literature.

Literary Contributions

1. Creation of Ol Chiki Script

The most significant literary contribution of Pandit Raghunath Murmu was the creation of the Ol Chiki script in 1925. Before this, Santali existed mainly as an oral language, and was written using other scripts that did not properly represent its sounds. Ol Chiki was specially designed to suit the phonetic structure of the Santali language. This script became the foundation for the development of Santali literature and education. Murmu realized that without its own script, Santali literature could not flourish. Ol Chiki was designed scientifically to suit the sounds of Santali and reflected tribal culture and life. This invention made it possible to write, read, and publish Santali literature in its original form.

2. Development of Santali Literature

After creating the Ol Chiki script, Murmu devoted his life to producing literature in Santali. He wrote extensively in various genres such as poetry, drama, songs, grammar, and textbooks. His writings aimed to educate people, preserve cultural traditions, and awaken social consciousness among the Santali community.

Some of Murmu's most notable literary contributions include:

1. **Nel Jong Ladig Ol** ; - 'Nel jong Lagid Ol' is the first book in the Santali language printed in the Ol Chiki script. It was authored with the aim of familiarizing everyone with the nature and practical usage of the new script. This book is the first book of the 'olchiki' text. He demonstrated the visual form of the Ol Chiki script. Raghunath Murmu himself hand-drew and prepared all the characters and illustrations printed in the book. This book was published by 'Kherwal Jarpa Somiti' in 1946 from Chandan Press.
2. **Ol Upurum- (Introductory Letters)** ; - This is the second book of the Ol Chiki script; it was printed at the Ol Press in 1954.
3. **Ol Chemed** ; - This is a primary textbook for learning the Ol Chiki script. It presents the characters, pronunciation, and writing methods in a simple manner. 'Ol Chemed' means 'learning the script' (literacy). It serves as an introductory book to the Ol Chiki script of the Santali language. While generally suitable for learning, it was first printed in 1947 at Chandan Press in Tata Nagar by the 'Kherwal Jarpa Samiti'.
4. **Parsi Poha**- A textbook detailing the essential elements of the script. This book was created to teach children how to read after they had been introduced to the alphabet. It appears to have been printed in 1968 at Dulai Printers, Tata Nagar, on behalf of the Board of Santali Education, Rairangpur. It contains nine poems and ten prose pieces.
5. **Parsi Apad**- This book is written for children. This book is written for children with the aim of imparting knowledge. It was first published in 1992 by ASECA (Rairangpur) through 'Dulai Print' of Jamshedpur. The book comprises 18 topics, featuring six poems and twelve prose pieces.
6. **Parsi Etun** - 'Parsi' means 'language', and 'Parsi-itu'n' means 'language learning'. A compilation of the topics discussed during a workshop—organized by Pandit Raghunath Murmu at Baripada in 1975 to

orient and train teachers regarding his writings—was published as a book. It was printed and published in 1975 at Kichakeswari Printing Works in Rairangpur, through the efforts of members invited from Rairangpur and Chakulia (Bihar).

7. **Elkha Potob** – it is a mathematics book. This book was first published by ‘adibasi sawta seched lakchar semled’ Rairanpur in 1966. It is a basic mathematics book for the learning children. It is a mathematics textbook written in the Santali language. It exemplifies his vision of teaching mathematics in the mother tongue.
8. **Ronal** - This is a foundational work on Santali grammar. It provides a systematic explanation of phonology, word formation, sentence structure, and grammatical rules. The book has played a significant role in the standardization of the Santali language. It was printed and published by Jam Dulai Printers in 1976 on behalf of ASECA, Rairangpur.
9. **Bakhen** - Bakhen' is a collection of prayers and devotional songs. It embodies messages of gratitude towards the Creator, the importance of a moral life, respect for nature, and social welfare. The term 'Bakhen' refers to the mantras recited while invoking deities to seek happiness, peace, and good health. Pandit Murmu collected and compiled the mantras chanted to invoke collective well-being, good rainfall, and bountiful harvests into the book titled 'Bakhen'. This book was printed and published in 1982 by ASECA, Rairangpur, at 'Semled Press', Rairangpur.

Poetry and Songs

Murmu composed many Santali poems and songs that reflected nature, tribal life, emotions, and moral values. His famous work Hor Serenj is a collection of songs written to teach Ol Chiki letters and promote literacy. These songs made learning easy and enjoyable, especially for children and new learners.

1. **Hital** – "Hital" is an invaluable work by Pandit Raghunath Murmu. It is a significant text for understanding the origins, religion, culture, philosophy of life, and perspective towards nature of the Santal community. The book has made a remarkable contribution to the development of Santali literature and the Ol Chiki script. It encompasses the Santal community's cosmology, religious beliefs, and mythological traditions, playing a pivotal role in giving written form to Santal religious thought. Hital is a philosophical and religious text by Pandit Raghunath Murmu. It discusses the Santal cosmology, the origin of the earth and humanity, and the relationship between nature and the Creator. Part I – The first part was printed in 1957 at the 'All Press' in Rairangpur. It was titled 'Sarna Dharam Hitlai Arban Hital'.

Part II – The first and second parts were combined and published in 1969 by Marshal Press at Kidukacha.

Part III – The first, second, and third parts were combined and published in 1983 by Kichakeswari Printing Works, Rairangpur.

This is a book concerning the cosmology, religious beliefs, and mythological traditions of the Santal community. It has contributed significantly to giving a written form to Santal religious thought. Hital is a philosophical and religious work by Pandit Raghunath Murmu; it discusses the Santal theory of creation, the origin of the earth and humanity, and the relationship between nature and the Creator.

2. **Hor Serenj** – collection of songs, noted as one of his early significant contributions to literature. "Hor Serenj" is known as the first poetry collection by Pandit Raghunath Murmu. It is an anthology of songs that portrays Santali folk music, culture, and traditions, capturing aspects of Santal life—such as nature, love, culture, labor, religion, and social unity. Through these songs, he popularized the Ol Chiki

script and ushered in a new era for Santali literature. Raghunath Murmu's poetry book "Hor Serenj" was published in the Bengali script in 1936. Later, the book 'Hor Sereng' was published in the Ol Chiki script in 1993.

3. **Lakchar Serej** – Pandit Raghunath Murmu composed these poems to foster a cultural awakening within the Santal community. It was published by ASECA, Rairangpur, in 1988 and printed at Dulai Printers in Jamshedpur. 'Lakchar Serenj' is a collection of forty-two short poems authored by Pandit Murmu.
4. **Baha Serenj** – In the Santali language, the word 'Baha' means 'flower'. The Baha festival is a major spring festival of the Santal community, dedicated to nature, new blossoms, and the renewal of life. The traditional songs sung during this festival are known as 'Baha Geet' or 'Baha Serenj'. This book was published by 'All Samiti', Rairangpur, in 1954.
5. **Adivasi Rak Andal** – Subsequently, a small book of poems titled "Adivasi Ra Andol" was published in the Bengali script in 1947. The book chronicles the courageous movements launched by tribal communities against the injustices, exploitation, and encroachment upon their forests and lands under British rule. This collection of poems gives expression to the heroism, sacrifice, self-respect, and yearning for freedom that characterized that struggle. These poems narrate the story of the tribal people's lives, their culture, their love for nature, and their indomitable struggle against injustice.
6. **Jharkhand Sangeet'** – Guru Gomke authored a small songbook titled 'Jharkhand Sangeet' in the Bengali script, which was subsequently published by the 'Ol Press'. He published this booklet with the aim of encouraging the Santal community—who were accustomed to using the Bengali script—to successfully learn the 'Ol Chiki' script. The 'Jharkhand Sangeet' booklet contains 12 songs. This clearly indicates that Guru Gomke possessed extensive knowledge of the Bengali language and script as well.

Dramatic Works

Pandit Raghunath Murmu was also a pioneer of Santali drama. His plays such as Bidu Chandan, Sidhu Kanhu, Kherwal Bir, and Dare Ge Dhon are important literary works. These dramas portray Santali history, heroes, myths, and social issues. They strengthened cultural pride and encouraged unity among the people.

1. **Bidu Chandan :-** It was first published in 1942 in odia script as a 1st Drama book of Santali literature. Then it was published Bengali in 1948 script. Later it was published by ASECA, Rairanpur in 1952 Olchiki script. This is a legendary play. This play was written for the purpose of spreading the 'Olchiki' script and for social harmony. Drama is a medium, It can easily touch hearts of common people. Therefore, pandit Raghunath Murmu adopted drama as a medium to spread and establish 'Olchiki', A play depicting love, tradition, and social values within Santali society.

In ancient times, there were two kingdoms named 'Chainagaal' and 'Mangal'. In due course, Enmity arose between these two kingdoms. Seeing this, the god of heaven 'lita' sent Bidu and Chandan to the mortal world. His aim was to establish permanent peace between these two warring kingdoms and to reform the society. Accordingly, Bidu appeared in the form of an orphaned boy. At that time, the only daughter of chaigaal majhi swept away in the river. And a search was going on for her. 'Chandan' took the form of the said majhi's daughter and was found sleeping under a sandalwood tree by the people of majhi. Since this girl was found under a sandalwood tree. She was named 'chandan'. After that, Bidu Chandan performed in human form.

2. **Kherwal Bir** –
Kherwal Bir" is a renowned Santali play authored by Pandit Raghunath Murmu. This play symbolizes

the valor, self-respect, unity, and cultural consciousness of the Santal community. Its primary objective is to raise awareness among the Santal tribe regarding their history, traditions, language, and culture, and to instill a sense of pride within them.

It was published in the Bengali script in 1957, and subsequently in the Ol Chiki script in 1990. This play portrays the valor, self-respect, and cultural heritage of the Santal community. It fostered a sense of national consciousness, self-esteem, and social responsibility among the Santal youth. This play portrays the valor, self-respect, and cultural heritage of the Santal community. It fostered a sense of national consciousness, self-esteem, and social responsibility among the Santal youth. A patriotic play highlighting the heroic tales of the community. Focuses on the identity and unity of the Santali people.

3. **Dale Ge Dhon** – the meaning of ‘Dale Ge Dhan’ is ‘Health is Wealth’. It is a fictional social drama. Through the character of Dinu, the play conveys that the strength derived from virtuous deeds and good character is greater than physical strength. This book was published in 1966. ‘Dale Ge D’ is the third play by Pandit Raghunath Murmu. The play highlights social issues, moral values, family relationships, and the importance of collective life. It emphasizes the need for cooperation, discipline, and mutual respect within society. Highlights social issues and moral values.
4. **Sido Kanhu Santal Hul** – On June 30, 1855, the Santhal warriors Sidhu Murmu and Kanhu Murmu declared a rebellion against the British government in the village of Bhagnadihi, and these heroic Santhal warriors were martyred. Raghunath Murmu had previously gathered extensive information regarding the Sidhu-Kanhu Santhal rebellion. Within a short time, he authored a play (a historical drama) titled "Sidhu Kanhu Santhal Hul" (The Sidhu-Kanhu Santhal Rebellion). This play is based on the lives and struggles of Sido and Kanhu, the heroic leaders of the 1855 Santal Hul (rebellion). It keeps the memory of the Santal community's freedom struggle alive while awakening a spirit of patriotism and unity. The play was published in 1996, following Raghunath Murmu's death, through the efforts of his eldest son, Siddhilai Murmu, and Furlal Kintu (from Karanati, Dhaheer-tola, East Singhbhum, Jharkhand). It is a historical and patriotic play.

Apart from this, Raghunath Murmu authored books such as "Parsi Dare," and "Parsi Gajala"; however, the two books "Parsi Dare" and "Parsi Gajala" have not yet been published.

Themes in His Literature

The principal themes in Murmu's writings include:

- Cultural identity
- Social reform
- Tribal unity
- Patriotism
- Education
- Moral values
- Preservation of indigenous traditions

Educational and Grammar Books :- To support formal education, Murmu wrote textbooks and grammar books in Santali. Works like Ol Chemed helped learners understand the Ol Chiki script, while other writings explained grammar, mathematics, and general knowledge. These books were essential in introducing Santali as a subject in schools and academic institutions.

Promotion of Literary Culture :- Apart from writing, Murmu actively promoted Santali literature by teaching Ol Chiki, organizing cultural programs, establishing libraries, and encouraging others to write in

Santali. His efforts led to the growth of a strong literary movement that inspired many Santali writers and scholars.

Contribution to Santali Literature :- Pandit Raghunath Murmu wrote many books, plays, poems, and essays in Santali using the Ol Chiki script. His writings helped people learn reading and writing in their mother tongue. Some of his well-known literary works include “ learning book, essay, prose, poetry, epic, and several dramas based on Santhal life and values.

Promotion of Culture and Values :- Through his literary works, Pandit Raghunath Murmu highlighted Santhal history, customs, moral values, and social unity. His dramas and songs were often performed in villages to educate people and spread awareness about cultural pride, discipline, and social reform.

Educational Impact :- His literary activities inspired the inclusion of Santali language in schools and universities. Today, Santali is recognized as one of the scheduled languages of India, and Ol Chiki is widely taught and used in books, newspapers, and official work.

Cultural Impact and Legacy :-

Murmu’s efforts went beyond writing. He actively taught the Ol Chiki alphabet across Santali-speaking regions, authored songs to illustrate phonetics, and established institutions to support language education. He oversaw the printing of literature using a press he set up, and initiated a magazine and library to proliferate Santali literacy. These initiatives gave rise to what many scholars describe as the Ol Chiki Movement, a cultural revival that redefined Santali identity and ensured the survival and spread of its written literature.

Murmu’s contributions have been recognized at national and regional levels. Today, the Santali language is included in the Eighth Schedule of the Indian Constitution, and many educational institutions offer courses in Santali literature using Ol Chiki. Various awards, holidays, colleges, and cultural honors bear his name, reflecting the enduring respect for his work.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the literary contribution of Pandit Raghunath Murmu is massive and life changing, revolutionary and grand breaking. It means having a power to make a big and important change. Through his writings and the invention of the Ol Chiki script, he not only embellished Santali literature but also empowered an entire community. His legacy continues to inspire cultural pride and intellectual growth among the Santali people. Pandit Raghunath Murmu’s literary contribution was transformational not merely in artistic output but in language empowerment and cultural identity. By creating the Ol Chiki script, he made great productive for the Santali literature. he enabled the Santali community to document, preserve the heritage. ; it was a mission to preserve language, culture, and identity. Through the invention of Ol Chiki and the creation of a vast body of literature, he transformed Santali from an oral tradition into a respected written language. His literary legacy continues to inspire generations and holds a permanent place in Indian tribal literature .Pandit Raghunath Murmu’s literary activities were not only creative but also revolutionary. He transformed Santali from an oral language into a rich written literature. His work continues to inspire writers, students, and researchers. He will always be remembered as the father of Ol Chiki and a pioneer of Santali literature

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