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Editorial

Essence and observation establish the presence. The celebration of birthdays, anniversaries and important events in the Tribal milieu is being witnessed gradually. People have learnt to pay respect, homage and celebrate the events in a more befitting manner. The absence of official patronage has not dampened the spirit rather the celebration is bold and beautiful in the absence of official interference and support. The love from the core of the heart has been the sole ingredient, which shapes the mood and methods of celebration. Adivasis of India are not lagging behind in remembering their heroes, heroines and eminent personalities of the yesteryears and this is seen as a bold and positive development. Gone are those days when there are very handful names, which are only remembered, in the social common parlance and in that list members from the weaker sections of the society hardly find any place and mention. The way things have evolved is a matter of research to find out the mood and mental development in the overall social thought process and social knowledge base. The events, which have directly impacted the Adivasis' lives, have been remembered with élan and every time there are improvements and betterment in the organization and participation. The celebrations, however, are mainly confined to the community level only and hardly there are any plan or programme for promoting or understanding the virtues and values of the great personalities from these communities through the official machinery. There are many citadels and statues in the memory of various personalities but there is hardly any attempt from the official side to erect befitting statues of the heroes and heroines, patriots, scholars, freedom fighters from the Adivasi community. There are multiple statues of single personalities whereas there are many who are not counted or considered. This is the

unfortunate flaw, which needs to be rectified as well as plugged.

The mood and methods of celebration in the Adivasi community certainly deserve an analysis. There are many reasons why events, anniversaries are celebrated across the length and breadth of the Adivasi localities in India. There is a yearning for comparison of virtues and people love to place their social leaders in the same footing and standard like others. A new kind of consciousness has evolved by which people can establish a comparison. There is an urge to find a position in the comity of societies. It is also an opportunity to establish a group's presence and above all an occasion to marry making and social get together as well as to promote culture among the people.

It is observed that there is some kind of confusion and conflict in such celebration in some places. The dilemma, however, is not on the basis of reasons but it is apparent that it is coming from the very idea of competition to establish oneself in the locality. The very purpose of coming together and celebration in a unique way becomes secondary and people covertly indulge in silent war for the supremacy in the locality. The changing mood and the divergent aspirations make the unique event a source for jealousy and jeopardy. The intelligentsia has failed to evolve a acceptable programme for everybody to follow rather it is observed that that group is not existing or people have not thought of forming or accepting such formulation or group. The idea remains the same but the path has been different resulting in confusion and chaos.

Few days back Mr. Dhuniram Hansdah from Kolkata had raised his deep concern on the observance of birth anniversary of Pandit Raghunath Murmu on two different days that is the day (Baisakh Kunami – full moon day) and the date that is 5th May by associations/formations. The organizations who

follow the day call it Guru Kunami and the few other groups or formations on the 5th of May for the celebration. This variance has been a bone of contention since quite a few years without any solution. Due to this very fact the celebration has become a source of confusion and conflict rather than an inspiring occasion for solidarity and uniformity. He also has requested to write about the issue for wider circulation and dissemination so as to bring about a consensus on the long overdue issue. It is a matter of pride and profound satisfaction that the celebration is being organized in city centres as well as in the rural places. But the point remains to be resolved is the day or date for the celebration. Though majority follow the day that is the full moon day of Baisakh but a minority groups still follow the date that is 5th May. Initially, it was thought that let people organize as per their convenience and at least the occasion be celebrated. Let essence be allowed to prevail over the dichotomy. It was expected that naturally people will understand the difference over a period of time and soon collective decision and wisdom will be merged for the truth and betterment. But as everyone experiences this continues to be happening till to date.

This issue of celebration was very well deliberated during the birth centenary celebration of Pandit Raghunath Murmu in the year 2005 and it was decided through wide consultation including the consultation with the family members of Guru Gomke to follow the day instead of the date. But fervent request to the groups who were celebrating the birth anniversary of Guru Gomke on 5th May to shift to the day did not yield any result and they continue to stick to the date only. The logic and reasons are very clear in favour of celebration on the Baisakh Kunami (full moon day) but as always seen there are groups who prefer isolation to a process of unification. It is observed that the celebration on 5th May is not due to any kind of misinformation or no information as everybody knows that there is a decision to observe it on Baisakh Kunami and it is also the desire of the Guru Gomke. The groups supporting the 5th May argue that it is the birth date of Guru Gomke. The point to be considered here is that Guru Gomke himself has preferred Baisakh Kunami as his birth day to the date as date has been written by the school teacher and as per family memory he was born on Baisakh Kunami in the year

1905. It can also be seen that 5th May was not the Kunami of that year. In spite of all available sources and pieces of information, the attempt to glorify the 5th May is not seen in a right perspective and order. There are many shades of opinion in any issue but the same principle cannot be and should not be adopted in an important occasion like celebration of birth anniversary of a great Guru.

One needs to understand the psychology of people. There is no iota of doubt that people who are celebrating in two different days have less or duplicate reverence. It is presumed that various groups in a locality with may be different level of people find it difficult to celebrate in a single day. The frustration and friction due to some other issues are being channelized during this occasion to showcase that theirs is the different, dynamic and dignified form of celebration.

It is not known why people are so rigid to a point of conflict and not accommodative to a process of conciliation for a greater and better future. What is expected to be achieved through this process? A little bit of introspection and thorough discussion with an open heart are enough to come to a common conclusion. It is unfortunate to see that people who are being accepted as who is who in the society also follow the easy path by not trying to resolve the issue. Rather they prefer to participate in both the formations as guests and notably this attitude is also responsible for maintaining and lingering the conflict. These sections of intelligentsia should have seen the reasons and advised them accordingly regarding the virtues of celebration in a single day. Instead of becoming a pillar in the decision making their participation is perceived as supporting both the concepts and ideas which of course is detrimental to the process of unification, solidarity and uniformity.

The scale usually is an indicator in any event of its end result. It is the scale and level of involvement which influence the decision making process by the people at the helm of affairs. The level of development of Santali language, literature including the use of the Ol Chiki betrays the outcome of such initiatives. It is a common experience that people who pursue Santali academically still have their share of complaint that Santali has not been provided with same kind of care and facilities as are being available to other languages be it in Schools, Colleges and Universities. It is a serious matter to

ponder over. We do not see social participation and commemoration of Language Day or the celebration of birth anniversary of a Great Guru which is exceptionally in the social life and milieu of Santals but the result is not forthcoming as per the expectation. This amply points to a reality that our all endeavours and activities are not reaping the due results may be due to the fact that we do not celebrate with right kind of purpose or others see weaknesses in such engagements.

It is noticed that some Members of Parliament, Ministers, Members of Legislative Assembly also complain about the sorry state of affairs of Santali language, literature, use of Ol Chiki

during such occasions. So it can be safely concluded that there is little hope from such representatives on these issues and rather focus should be directed towards generating public pressure for the appropriate decisions and plans of actions by the people at the appropriate level. It is essentially for achieving some result in this regard, there is a necessity to channel available resources and foster indomitable bonding within the community for a greater and germane cause. And celebration of Baisakh Kunami as per the wish of the Guru Gomke is the right kind of tribute, homage and approach towards achieving fraternity, unity and feeling of oneness.

Folklore of the Santal Parganas

Translated by Cecil Henry Bompas of the Indian Civil Service, 1909

{ASECA CHANNEL intends to publish the stories in order to familiarize the stories among the general public for their better appreciation}

{Continued from August 2015 issue}

XXIII. The Boy Who Found His Father.

He journeyed on all day and at nightfall he came to a village; there he went up to the house of an old woman to ask for a bed. He stood at the threshold and called out to her "Grannie, grannie, open the door." "I have no son, and no grandchildren to call me grannie," grumbled the old woman and went to open the door to see who was there, and when she opened the door and saw him, she said "Ho, you are my grandson." "Yes," answered he, "I am your grandchild." So she called him inside and gave him a bed to sleep on. The old woman was called Hutibudi; and she and the boy sat up late talking together and then they lay down to sleep; but in the middle of the night he heard the old woman crunching away trying to bite his bow to pieces. He asked her what she was eating: "Some pulse I got from the village headman," "Give me a little to try" he begged. "I am sorry my child, I have finished it all." But really she had none

to give, however she only hurt her jaws biting so that she began to groan with pain: "What are you groaning for, Grannie?" said the boy; "Because I have toothache" she answered: and in truth her cheeks were badly swollen. Then he told her that a good cure for toothache was to bite on a white stone and she believed him and the next morning got a piece of white quartz and began to bite on it; but this only broke her teeth and made her mouth bleed so that the pain was worse than before: then the boy jeered at her and said. "Did you think, Grannie, that you could bite my iron bow and arrows?"

So saying he left her and continued the search for his father and his road led him to a dense jungle which seemed to have no end, and in the middle of the jungle he came to a lake and he sat down by it to eat what was left of the provisions he had brought: as he sat, he suddenly saw some cow-bison coming down to the lake: at this he caught up his bow and arrows in

a hurry and climbed up a tall *sal* tree: from the tree he watched the bison go down to the water to drink and then go back into the jungle. And after them tigers and bears came down to the water: the sight of them frightened him and he sang:—

“Drink your fill, tiger,
I shall not shoot you.
I shall shoot the giant rhinoceros.”

and they drank and went away. Then various kinds of birds came and after them a great herd of rhinoceroses and among them was one which had the dried up body of the boy’s father stuck on its horn. The boy was rather frightened and sang

“Drink your fill, rhinoceroses,
I shall not shoot you
I shall shoot the giant rhinoceros.”

and when the giant rhinoceros with the body of his father stooped its head to drink from the lake, he put an arrow through it and it turned a somersault and fell over dead: while all the other rhinoceroses turned tail and ran away. Then the boy climbed down from the tree and pulled the dead body of his father off the horn of the dead animal and laid it down at the foot of a tree and began to weep over it. As he wept a man suddenly stood before him and asked what was the matter, and when he heard, said “Cry no more: take a cloth and wet it in the lake and cover your father’s body with it: and then whip the body with a *meral* twig and he will come to life.” So saying the stranger suddenly disappeared; and the boy obeyed his instructions and behold his father sat up alive and rubbing his eyes said “I must have been asleep a very long time.” Then his son explained to him all that had

happened and gave him some food and took him home.

There was once a poor but industrious oilman; he got a log of wood and carved out an oil mill and, borrowing some money as capital, he bought mustard and sesame seed and set to work to press it; as he had no bullock he had to turn the mill himself. He was so industrious that he soon began to prosper and was able to buy a bullock for his mill. By and bye he got so rich that he was able to buy some land and a cart and pair of bullocks and was quite a considerable man in the village. One day one of his cart bullocks died and this loss was a sad blow to the oilman. However he tied up the surviving bullock in the stable along with the old oil mill bullock and fed them well. One night it chanced that one of the villagers passed by the stable and hear the two animals talking and this is what he heard.

The young bullock said “You came to this house first, friend; what sort of treatment does one get here?”

“Why do you ask me?” said the other. “Oh, I see your shoulder is galled and your neck shows mark of the yoke.” The old bullock answered “Whether my master treats me well or ill I owe him money and have to stay here until I have paid him off. When I have paid him five hundred rupees I shall go.” “How will you ever pay back such a sum?” “If my master would only match me to fight the Raja’s elephant for five hundred rupees I should win the fight and my debt would be cleared; and if he does not do that I shall probably have to work for him all my life. How long do you intend to stay?” “My debt will be cleared if I work for him two years” answered the new comer.

{To be continued....}

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