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Editorial

The month of June and date 30th has a special place in the hearts and minds of Santal people as they remember the great heroes and heroines of the Santal Hul which took place in the year 1855. The nostalgia with which this occasion is remembered is truly unparalleled. The length and breadth of the of the country with Santal habitation be it in the State of Jharkhand, Odisha, West Bengal, Bihar, Assam or elsewhere, the celebration is organized with same enthusiasm and with genuine focus. Over a period of time people tend to forget the misery and deprivation associated with such uprising. But Santal Hul has not been erased from the memory of the people. The casualties and sacrifice are significant in the history of India. Gradually, the occasion is being celebrated at the Official level. To give some basic information, the uprising was led by four brothers Sido, Kanhu, Chand, Bhairav and equally supported by their sisters Phulo and Jhano. May be these are the names which are officially recorded so these names are only being carried forward in the pages of the history. Otherwise, equally heroic significant contributions were there from those about 30000 unsung heroes and heroines who mustered courage to face the British empire when rest of the people of the country are entirely under its domination. The uprising started from a village called Bhognadih presently in the Sahibganj district of Jharkhand. The supreme sacrifice in terms of life is unparalleled not only in the history of India but also in the world history. There is not a single family in the world which has sacrificed six members for the cause of the society and common cause.

The official as well as other sources depict this uprising as the first freedom fight and curtain raiser to the Sepoy Mutiny which took place in the year 1857. The accounts of many sources mention about the highest level of ethics being maintained by the Santal people and their associates. Never ever, they attacked the British soldiers or their agents from

the back or treacherously whereas they were the victim of such betrayal. People from within were used to catch Sido to eliminate him and to silence the voice of dissident and apathy. This is one lesson to be learnt from the Santal Hul. The best tactics and perhaps maneuvering were employed by the educated and people at the helm of affairs to tame the illiterate and indigenously armed people. The collective genuine demand did not find an initial positive response as so many hegemony or monopoly of vested interests were challenged by the native people. This perhaps was the main concern of the other Indian people who covertly or overtly helped and collaborated with the establishment to suppress the rebellion.

The atrocities and exploitation are a natural phenomenon in the human existence. This usually surfaces in some form or the other. One can see the level and nature of protest in the modern time that is in the post independence era. The important fact to bring to the knowledge of everyone about the nature of protest of the Tribals in general and Santals in particular now-a-days. It is heartening to note that the style is the same. People used to carry bows, arrows, sickle and axe along with their traditional musical instruments at the time of staging protest. The dialogue process is always sabotaged and people are being instigated or otherwise to turn violent and in turn the officials take extreme steps, police open fire on the teeming protestors. Now-a-days for the sake of development, Tribal people are being displaced from their age old native places for mining, power plant, industrialization purposes. People have started sabotaging the dialogue process and initially illiterate people are being instigated to turn violent so that they can derive mileage or benefits from such disturbances. Ultimately, in most of the cases people are being evacuated by use of force without being compensated and as people are not organized for the

purpose of negotiation or dialogue process, they are always at the receiving end.

Time has come one has to change the methods considering the changing and emerging situations. Every time Tribals should not protest to a process but should be a part of that process. One needs to be vigilant and adequately informed about any new projects and the rehabilitation and resettlement package being offered by the project proponent. Always protest is not good that also being influenced by the vested interests from within as well

as outside their social framework. To protest after knowing full fact is always welcome and so far it is not established whether protests are being staged after fully knowing the facts about the project or the benefits out of that project.

Going by various present day protests by the affected people including the Tribals against projects, it is a matter of concern. Official intervention should be intense and friendly for confidence building measure as well as to convince them to be partner in the making of a better and stronger India.

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 May 2016 issue}

Meanwhile Bosomunda was in hot pursuit. When he came to the thorn tree, the tree swayed its branches and caught him with its thorns, but he cut down the tree and freed himself; he went on a little way and met the goat which ran at him with its horns, but Bosomunda sang:—

“Do not fight with me, goat,
I will cut off your legs and cut off your head
And take them to the shrine of Mahadeo.”

So saying, he killed the goat and cut off its head and tied it to his waist and went on. Next the ram charged him but he sang:

“Do not fight with me, Ram,
I will cut off your legs and cut off your head
And take them to the shrine of Mahadeo.”

So saying he killed the Ram and took its head. Then in succession he was attacked by the bull and the buffalo and the elephant, but he killed them all and cut off their heads. Then he came to the paddy bird, which pretended to be busily engaged in picking up insects and gradually worked its way nearer and nearer. Bosomunda let it get quite close and then suddenly seized it and gave its neck a pull which lengthened it out considerably; “Thank you” said the paddy bird, as he put it down “now I shall be

able to catch all the fish in a pool without moving.” Thereupon Bosomunda caught it again and gave its neck a jerk and that is why paddy birds have necks shaped like a letter S.

Bosomunda continued his pursuit and caught up Chandaini Rani just as she was entering her father’s house; he seized her by her hair and managed to cut off the edge of her cloth and pull off one of her golden anklets, and then had to let her go.

He took up his abode at the *ghat* of a tank and began to kill every one who came down to the water. The citizens complained to the Raja of the destruction he was causing and the Raja ordered some valiant man to be searched for, fit to do battle with the murderer; so they sent for a Birbanta (giant) and the Raja promised to give him half his kingdom and his daughter in marriage if he could slay Bosomunda. So the Birbanta made ready for the fight and advanced brandishing his weapons against Bosomunda. Three days and three nights they fought, and in the end the Birbanta was defeated and killed.

Then the Raja ordered his subjects to find another champion and a Birburi was found willing to undertake the fight in hope of the promised reward; and as he was being taken to the field of battle his mother met him with a ladle full of curds and told him to do a war dance, and as he was dancing round she threw the curds at

him; he caught the whole of it on his shield except one drop which fell on his thigh; from this his mother foresaw that he would bleed to death. In the fight, so she took some rice and ran on ahead and again met her son and told him to do the war dance and show how he was going to fight; and as he danced his sword shivered to atoms. His mother said, "Is this the way in which you intended to fight, of a surety you would have met your death." Then she made him gather together the pieces of his sword and cover them with a wet cloth, and in a few minutes the pieces joined together; then she allowed him to go to the fight.

When the battle began the Birburi's mother kept calling out "Well, Bosomunda, have you killed my son?" This enraged Bosomunda and he kept running after the old woman to drive her away, and this gave the opportunity to the Birburi to get in a good blow; in this way they fought for seven days and nights and at the end Bosomunda was defeated and killed. Then the Raja gave half his kingdom to the Birburi and married him to his daughter Chandaini Rani.

After their marriage they set out for their new home and on the way they met Sahde Goala who had come in search of his missing wife. "Hulloa" cried Sahde Goala "where are you taking my wife to?" "I know nothing about your wife" said the Birburi "this is the Raja's daughter whom I have married as a reward for killing Bosomunda; he has given me half his kingdom from Sir Sikar to the field of the cotton tree." Then Sahde Goala told him to go his way, so the Birburi and the Rani went on and Sahde Goala caused a flooded river with the water flowing bank high to cross their path. As they waited on the bank Sahde Goala made the Birburi an offer that, if he could carry the woman across the river without getting the sole of her foot wet, then she should belong to him and if not Sahde Goala should take her. The Birburi agreed and tried and tried again to get the Rani across without wetting her, but the flood was too strong, so at last he gave in and Sahde Goala took her back with him to their former home. There they lived and in the course of time Chandaini Rani bore a son and she named him

Dhonontori, and after the birth of their son the family became so wealthy (dhon) that the Hindus revered Dhonontori as a god. And so ends the story.

XXX. The Raja's Son and the Merchant's Son.

Once upon a time the son of a Raja and the son of a merchant were great friends; they neither of them had any taste for lessons but would play truant from school and waste their time running about the town. The Raja was much vexed at his son's behaviour; he wished him to grow up a worthy successor to himself, and with this object did all he could to break off his friendship with the merchant's son, as the two boys only led each other into mischief; but all his efforts failed and at last he offered a reward of one hundred rupees to any one who could separate them. One of the Raja's concubines made up her mind to earn the reward, and one day she met the two boys as they were going out to bathe. The Raja's son was walking ahead and the merchant's son a little way behind; the woman ran after the merchant's son and threw her arms round him and putting her lips to his ear pretended to whisper to him and then ran away. When they met at the river the Prince asked the merchant's son what the woman had told him, his friend denied that she had said anything but for all his protestations the Prince would not believe this. They quarrelled about it for a long time and at last the Prince went home in a rage and shut himself up in his room and refused to eat or be comforted. His father sent to enquire what was the matter with him and the Prince replied that food should not pass his lips until the merchant's son had been put to death.

Thereupon the Raja sent for some soldiers and told them to devise some means of killing the merchant's son. So they bound the youth and showed him to the Prince and said that they would take him to the jungle and kill and bury him there. They then led him off, but on the road they caught a lamb and when they got to the jungle they killed the lamb and steeped the clothes of the merchant's son in the blood that they might have something to show to

the Prince and then went back leaving the boy in the jungle. They took the bloody cloth to the Prince and told him to rise and eat, but when he saw the blood, all his old friendship revived and he was filled with remorse and could not eat for sorrow. Then the Raja told his soldiers to find out some friend to comfort the Prince, and they told him that they would soon set things straight and going off to the jungle brought back the merchant's son and took him to the Prince; and the two youths forgot their differences and were as friendly as before.

Time passed and one day the Prince proposed to his friend that they should run away and seek their fortunes in the world. So they fixed a day and stole away without telling anyone, and, as they had not taken any money, they soon had to look about for employment. They found work and the arrangement their masters made with them was this: their wages were to be as much rice each day as would go on a leaf; and if they threw up their work they were to forfeit one hand and one ear; on the other hand if their masters discharged them so long as they were willing to work for this wage the master was to lose one hand and one ear. The merchant's son was cunning enough to turn this agreement to his advantage, for every day he brought a large lotus leaf to be filled with rice; this gave him more than he could eat and he soon grew fat and flourishing, but the Raja's son only took an ordinary *sa/* leaf to his master and the rice that he got on this was not enough to keep him alive, so he soon wasted away and died.

Now the merchant's son had told his master that his name was Ujar: one day his master said "Ujar, go and hoe that sugar cane

and look sharp about it." So Ujar went and instead of hoeing the ground dug up all the sugar cane and piled it in a heap. When the master saw his fine crop destroyed he was very angry and called the villagers to punish Ujar, but when they questioned him, Ujar protested that he was bound to obey his master's orders; he had been ordered to hoe the sugar cane, not the ground, and he had done as he was told, and so they had to let him off.

Another day a Hindu neighbour came to Ujar's master and asked him to lend him his servant for a day. So Ujar went to the Hindu's house and there was told to scrape and spin some hemp, but Ujar did not understand the Hindu language and when he got the knife to scrape the hemp with, he proceeded to chop it all up into little pieces; when the Hindu saw what had happened he was very angry and called in the neighbours, but Ujar protested that he had been told to cut the hemp and had done so; and so he got off.

Ujar's master had an only child and one day he told Ujar to take the child to a tank and give him a good washing, so Ujar took the child to a tank and there proceeded to dash the child against a stone in the way that washermen wash clothes; he knocked the child about until he knocked the life out of him and then carefully washed him in the tank and brought the body home and put it on the bed. Next morning the father was surprised not to hear the child running about and, going to look, found the dead body. The villagers assembled but Ujar protested that his master had told him to wash the child thoroughly and he had only obeyed orders; so they had to let him off again.

(To be continued...)

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