# **ENDANGERED CULTURES AND** LANGUAGES IN INDIA



K. JOSE SVD

# ENDANGERED CULTURES AND LANGUAGES IN INDIA

### **EMPIRICAL OBSERVATIONS**

Edited by
Gautam Kumar Bera
K. Jose SVD

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### INVENTION OF AL CHIKI SCRIPT FOR SANTALI LANGUAGE: AN ATTEMPT TO PRESERVE AN ENDANGERED TRIBAL DIALECT

#### Basanta Kumar Mohanta

Language is one of the important aspects of a culture. There are about 700 tribal groups residing in different parts of the country. Although most of them use their own dialects for communication but only few have their own scripts. Santal (Santhal) is one of the dominant tribal groups of eastern India, residing in Jharkhand. Odisha, West Bengal and parts of Assam. They are also found in other parts of the country as well as some neighbouring countries like, Bangladesh, Nepal and Bhutan. The language of these Santals is called Santali (Santhali) which belongs to the Mundari group. There are about 5.8 million people in India who speak this language. Because of the impact of Sanskritization, modernization, westernization and other related factors, the Santals were forced to incline towards the regional dialects and scripts and their language was in endangered condition. Initially, this Santali language did not have any script. At that time the Santali texts were written either in Devnagiri, Odia, and Bengali or in some extent Roman scripts but it was very difficult to express the exact feeling, meaning, pronunciation of Santali with these scripts. Hence, Pundit Raghunath Murmu, a school teacher from Santal tribe, felt the necessity of a separate script for the Santali language. He started thinking for inventing a script for their language and finally he achieved his goal in 1935-36. The newly invented script for Santali language is later popularized as Al Chiki. The shapes of the letters

used in this script are inspired basically by the surrounding nature and daily activities. The attempt of Pundit Murmu helped the Santals to preserve their language, which was gradually declining from their life and culture. In this present paper an emphasis has been made to describe the reason behind the origin of this script, sources, symbols and its role for the development of the Santali language.

#### \*\*\*

#### Introduction

Language is one of the important tools of communication which used to convey messages from one to another. At the time of describing the meaning and function of language, Raman and Sharma (2004:5) have mentioned 'language employs a combination of words to communicate ideas in a meaningful way. By changing the word order in a sentence, you can change its meaning, and even make it meaningless'. Similarly, according to Haviland (1989:302) language is 'a system of communication using sounds that are put together in meaningful ways according to a set of rules'. On the other side, script is a mechanism to spread and preserve a language, which requires for the survival of a particular community. But, when we discuss about the survival of a particular language, it is found that because of the various factors, a group of people speaking a particular language is forced to incline towards the other popular language of the region. While analyzing the survival of a particular language, Haviland et. al. (2009) have rightly stated 'anthropologissts predsict that the number of languages still spoken in the world today will be cut in half by the year 2100, in large part because children born in ethnic minority groups no longer use the ancestoral language when they go to school, migrate to cities, join the larger workforce, and are exposed to printed and electronic media. The printing press, radio, setelite television, interent, and text messessing on cell phones are driving the need for a shared language that many understand, and increasingly that is English'. They (ibid.: 120) have further mentioned, 'perhaps the most powerful force for linguistic change is the domination of one society over another ... In many cases, foreign political control has resulted in linguistic erosion or even complete disappearence, sometimes leaving only a faint trace in old, indigeneous names for geographic features such as hills and rivers ... While a common language allows people from different ethnic backgrounds to communicate, there is the risk that a global spread of one language may contribute to the disappearence of others. And with the extinction of each language, a measure of humankind's richly varied cultural heritage, including countless insights on life, is lost'. Similarly, UNESCO has also tried to find out the basic causes of endangerment of a particular language and stated that the declining numbers of speakers, discriminatory governmental policies, nonliteracy, and insufficient means for language education – a key issue is the impact electronic media, internet, etc are the key factors for endangerment status of a language. According to their report on this issue, there are only 50 per cent of the languages available today would be spoken by the year 2100. Social scientists believe the death of a particular language is not only a deletion of a particular dialect or language but also a death of a vital part of the culture, which is a severe loss to humanity itself.

There are about 700 tribal groups residing in different parts of the country. If we discuss about the script, language and literature of the Indian tribes, it is thought that most of their languages are in endangered conditions which are on the way to extinction. Earlier, most of the tribal groups had their own language but only a few had their specific script which they used to write their literature. Usually the tribals used to write their literatures by using the scripts of that locality from where they belong to. Most of the times, the tribal literatures are written with other languages and scripts which are partly known or completely unknown to that particular tribal group. But because of the impact of sanskritization, modernization, westernization, industrialization, urbanization, education, dominant castes / groups and wide popularity of electronic communication systems have forced the

tribal people of India to implement the language / dialects of other people in their daily life. Santal (Santhal) is one of the dominant tribal groups of eastern India, residing in Jharkhand, Odisha and West Bengal. They are also found in other parts of the country as well as some neighbouring countries like, Bangladesh, Nepal and Bhutan. The Santal are very rich both in tangible and intangible cultural heritages. They had their own language, folklore and literature. The language of these Santals is called 'Santali' (Santhali) which belongs to the Mundari group. There are about 5.8 million people in India speak this language. There are number of works done on different aspects of the Santal tribes (Bodding, 1942; Datta-Majumdar, 1955; Biswas, 1956; Mukerji, 1982;, Sen, 1984; Singh, 1994; Ghosh, 2010) but a very few have focuses on the script and language of this tribal group (Besra, 1996; Murmu, 2004; Nayak, 2010). Initially, this Santali language did not have any script. At that time the Santali texts were written either in Devnagiri, Odia, Bengali or in some extent Roman scripts but it was very difficult to express the exact feelings, meaning, pronunciations of Santali with these scripts. Hence, Pundit Raghunath Murmu, a school teacher from Santal tribe, felt the necessity of a separate script for their Santali language. He started thinking for inventing a script for their language and finally he achieved his goal in 1935-36. The newly invented script for Santali language is later popularized as 'Al Chiki'. The shapes of the letters used in this script are inspired basically by the surrounding nature and daily activities. This Al Chiki' script is also known as Al Cemet (Ol Cemet), Al Script (Ol script), Al Chiki script and Al (Ol). It is a combination of two Santali words, 'Al' and 'Cemet' where the word 'Al' stands for writing and 'Cemet' means learning. Hence, the word 'Al Cemet' or 'Al Chiki' means 'learning of writing'.

Since, the present author is born and brought up in a Santal dominated multi-ethnic village in Mayurbhanj district of Odisha, which is about 15 kms from the village of *Pundit* Raghunath Murmu – the inventor and propagator of *Al Chiki* script – he got an opportunity to study for some time at Bahalda, the same place where *Pundit* Murmu

got his middle school education. He is keenly interested to know more and more about the Santali language and this 'Al Chiki' script and this present paper is a partial outcome of that. In this paper an emphasis has been given to describe the reason behind the origin of this script, sources, symbols and its role for the development of the Santali language and literature.

### Objectives and Methodology

The objectives of the present paper are (a) to describe the factors responsible for invention of *Al Chiki* script; (b) to define and estimate the sources, symbols used and classification of script; (c) to examine the process of development of *Al Chiki* script; (d) to evaluate the impact of *Al Chiki* script in the life, culture, language, literature and education of the Santal people.

Data for this present paper are collected through interview and questionnaire. Personal interviews are made with the grand sons of *Pundit* Raghunath Murmu and other teachers actively engaged in teaching of Santali language in '*Al Chiki*' script. Audio-visual and photographic documentation of publications and other related materials are done during different field visits.

Difficulties with other scripts and the causes of invention of Al Chiki

As discussed earlier, prior to growth of *Al Chiki* script some Indic scripts, like Odia, Bengali and Devnagiri or Roman script were used to write Santali language. For this some basic problems occured with these Indic languages which includes, the absence of some phonetics like checked consonants; no mechanism to represent the unique Santali sounds; the presence of less number of vowels in Indic scripts unable to represent all the Santali vowels; Santals frequently use Glottal stop which neither possess in Indic scripts nor with Roman script. Besides, in Santali, the long vowels are pronounced much longer than Odia, Bengali, Hindi or English. While the Roman script clearly represents the checked consonants it can not distinguish the short and long vowels. Therefore, it was not possible to maintain the beauty,

clarity, specialty, peculiarity and sweetness of the Santali language by using any Indic scripts like Odia, Bengali, Devnagiri or Roman script. Hence, it was essential for Santals to develop a separate script for their language which can only be able to represent all sounds of their language accurately of clearly in a natural way and it was *Pundit* Raghunath Murmu who fulfilled the dream of the Santal population by inventing *Al Chiki* script.

There are various factors responsible for change of a dialect or a language of a particular group or tribe. Similar cases happened with the Santals. There is a long history behind the invention of Al Chiki script. Pundit Raghunath Murmu (Chunu) - the inventor of Al Chiki script was born on 5th May, 1905 in a small tribal dominated village Dahardihi (now Dandbose) in Mayurbhanj district of Northern Odisha. His primary education started in 1913 at the age of eight at Gambharia U. P. School which is located about four kms from his village, across the river. The medium of teaching in that school was Odia and the books taught were printed in Odia scripts. Since, the mother tongue of Raghunath Murmu was Santali, it was too difficult for him to understand this unknown language and hence he decided not to go to school. But it was his father who forced him to go to school. At that time, it came into Pundit Raghunath Murmu's mind that 'why they (the school teachers) are not teaching in Santali'? He asked this question to his friends and got the same reply from everybody. The answer he got from everybody was 'since the Santali language neither has any script nor any books, it could not be possible to teach them in Santali language'. Hence, he was forced to learn in Odia language. But, the lack of Santali script always roamed in his mind and pained him each and every moment. Since that time, he was always thinking to develop a script for their language. In his later life, with the growth of age, this attempt helped him to invent a script and finally he got success to develop a script for their language at the age of only 20 years. The detail of scripts developed by Pundit Raghunath Murmu is given in Table-1.

Vowels	<b>ð</b> (Lo)	(La)	7 (Li)	(Lu)	(Le)	(0)
Consonanats	( <u>O</u> t)	( <u>O</u> k)	<u>3</u> ( <u>O</u> n)	( <u>O</u> I)	b (Ak)	(Ac)
	(Am)	<b>9</b> (Aw)	(Is)	(Ih)	Q (In)	(Ir)
	(Uc)	(Ut)	(Ur)	(Uy)	<b>I</b> ( <u>E</u> p)	( <u>E</u> d)
	<b>?</b> ( <u>E</u> n)	<u>3</u> ( <u>E</u> r)	(Ot)	(Op)	(Own)	(Oh)
Sound symbols	(Ohot)	(Gahla)	(Mu)	(Rela)	(Pharka)	
Numericals	0 (0)	1(1)	2(2)	3 (3)	4 (4)	5 (5)
	6 (6)	7 (7)	8 (8)	9 (9)		

### Sources and Classification of Symbols

This Al Chiki script has 30 letters which includes 06 vowels and 24 consonants. Besides, 05 sound symbols are used to control sounds. The alphabets are written from left to right (Besra, 1996; Murmu, 2004). Presently, there are a number of books, printed in Al Chiki script, covering grammar, poem, story and other subjects and are available in the market. Some schools are specially established for the development of Al Chiki script. Besides, special type writers and fonts for computer are developed which accelerates the growth of script in a faster way.

One of the interesting features of Al Chiki is the source of scripts. Pundit Raghunath Murmu has taken the familiar signs and symbols, some actions, objects and words which are usually used by a common Santal or a rural people in his day-to-day life. A large number of words are derived from the natural sounds. The letter of Al Chiki scripts are also inspired from the surrounding natural environment as well as the daily used materials which includes hills, trees, birds, bees, plough, sickle, etc. The symbols used in Al Chiki scripts with their derivation and meanings are described below.

#### (1) Vowels

There are six vowels present in Al Chiki scripts, which are as follows;

### (a) 8 (Lo)

This letter stands for the vowel, O/A. It has been modified from a picturesque of 'LO' (burning/flame) and pronounced as letter 'O'.

### (b) ? (La)

This letter stands for vowel 'A/U' and is pronounced as 'A'. It is modified from a picture sketch of 'LA' meaning digging of earth with a spade.

### (c) 7 (Li)

This letter stands for vowel 'I' and is pronounced as 'I/E', which is derived from the word 'Leuwid' (bending). This symbol is taken from the outline of a sketch of a branch of a tree bent with fruits.

### (d) 5 (Lu)

This letter stands for vowel 'U' which is pronounced as 'U/Uu/Oo'. This letter is modified from a picture of 'Lu', meaning taking of water by dipping a ladle or pitcher.

### (e) **Z**(Le)

This letter stands for vowel, 'E' and pronounced as 'E/A'. This letter is taken from the Santali word 'Ley/Lay' which means over flow of liquid/fluid. Hence, this letter is originated from the out sketch of a symbol showing the rolling down of liquid/fluid from a container.

### (f) 3 (O)

This letter stands for vowel 'O' and is pronounced as 'O/Oo' (low pitch on O). It is modified from a picture of a slightly opened mouth when the tongue so positioned while pronouncing the low pitches vowel 'O/Oo'.

#### (2) Consonanats

This script possesses 24 consonants. The shape of these consonants are basically inspired from activities and surrounding environment. A brief description of these consonants is given below.

### (a) (Ot)

This consonant following \( \mathcal{D} \) which is an equivalent of 't' is pronounced as 'Ot'. In Santali language 'Ot' means earth. This letter has been taken from the shape of the earth.

### (b) (G (Ok / Og)

This letter is pronounced as 'Ok/Og' and is modified form of following two activities. (i) The outline of an opened mouth which is noticed at the time of vomiting of a person when sounds like 'Oh/Og' come out. (ii) Opening of a partly broken earthen pitcher which is used to catch rats from hole by blowing smoke through this pitcher.

### (c) (3 (On / Ong)

This letter is equivalent of 'N' and is pronounced as 'On/Ong'. In Santali 'Ong' means blasting or blowing of air with mouth. It has been taken from the rough sketch of the small opening of a mouth where the air is coming out between upper and lower lips.

# (d) (OI)

This letter is equivalent of 'L' and is pronounced as 'Ol' which means to write. It is taken from the picturesque of a pen in hand (in writing pose), located in between the thumb and index (fore) fingers.

# (e) (Ak)

This letter is equivalent of 'K' and is pronounced as 'Ak' which is modified from a rough sketch of a bird "Ak" (duck). This bird also sounds like 'Ak-Ak' during flying/walking.

## (f) (Ac/Aj)

This letter reads as 'Aj' which means He / She. It is modified

from an outer line drawn on a person who is pointing to a third person.

# (g) (Am)

This letter is equivalent of 'M' and is pronounced as 'Am' which means 'You'. It has been modified from a sketch roughly drawn on a person pointing to another person with his right hand.

# (h) **(Aw)**

This letter is pronounced as 'Aw'. The sound is expressed to denote one's fear, amazement and curiosity together. This letter has been modified from the outer sketch of the lines of hands of a person expressing his fear, amazement and curiosity all of a sudden.

# (i) **½** (Iss)

This letter is equivalent of 'S' and is pronounced as 'Iss' which refers to the plough beam. It has been modified from the symbol of a plough.

# (j) ((Ih)

This letter is equivalent of 'H' and read as 'Ih' which is used to denote a hateful word of a person. This letter is modified from the outline of a rough picture of a person utter the word 'Ih'.

# (k) Q (In / Inj)

This letter is pronounced as 'Inj' which means 'I'. It is modified from a rough picture of a person pointing himself with his right hand.

# (1) $\sqrt[3]{(Ir)}$

This letter is equivalent of 'R' and pronounced as 'Ir' which means a handful of grass or paddy stalks in a sickle mow. This letter is taken from the rough sketch of a sickle with paddy stalks.

# (m) [ (Uc)

This letter is equivalent of 'C' and pronounced as 'Uch' means something erected. This letter has been modified from the outer sketch

of an Ant-hill.

# $(n) \mathcal{D}(Ut)$

This letter formed in combination with a vowel or check valve. The shape of this letter is modified from a picture of a wild mushroom which is called as 'Ud' in Santali.

### (o) (M) (Ur)

This letter is equivalent of "R" and is pronounced as 'Unn'. It has been derived from the 'murmuring' sound of bees. Hence, this letter is modified from a picture of a 'bee wings' which is also considered as good-omen by the Kherwals.

# (p) (C (Uy)

This letter is equivalent of 'Y' and read as 'Uy'. This letter is embodied from the sketch of a person (in action) answering to the call using his hands in a particular fashion.

### (q) **1** (Ep)

This letter is equivalent of 'P' and pronounced as 'Ep'. It is taken from a Santali word 'Epre' means missing a chance of meeting face to face, especially when two persons walking through a reversible path. Hence, this letter is modified from a picture of two persons standing in front of each other having separate path to move.

# (r) () (Ed)

This letter is equivalent of 'D' and is pronounced as 'Ed' means pointing out a particular place. It is modified from a sketch of a fist with finger pointing towards a particular place of meeting.

# (s) **?** (En)

This letter is equivalent of 'N' which is modified from the outline of a human figurine threshing of grains with the help of his two legs.

This letter is equivalent of 'R' and pronounced as 'Err/Ell' means to avoid. It is modified from a picture of a turning in a sub-chord path which turns to avoid an obstruction or a danger.

## (u) 1) (Ot)

This letter is equivalent of 'T' and pronounced as 'Ot/Oot' meaning Udar / Ut-utu rakab which is invented from the pose of an animal when it gets up from his sitting position. It is modified from a picture of a camel.

# (v) (Op/Ob)

This letter is similar to 'B' and pronounced as 'Oob' means hair. Hence, this letter is modified from the out sketch of coiled or bun of hair of a Santal woman.

# (w) 2) (Own / Oown)

The nearest pronunciation of this letter is 'On' and pronounced as 'Own/Oown'. It is modified from a sound of crying of a new born baby which sounds as 'Oan, Oan'.

### (x) & (Oh)

This letter is equivalent of 'H' and pronounced as 'Ooh'. It is a combination of two letters, i.e.,  $\langle \lambda \rangle$  (Ih) and X (Ohod). It is used at the end of consonenet.

#### (3) Sound symbols

There are five sound symbols present in Al Chiki script.

- (a) **9** (Ohot)
- (b) (Gahla tudah)

It is used after vowel a signification of low pitch.

### (c) (Mu Tudak/u-tudah)

It is used at the upper line after a vowel A (A/U) to get the low pitch sound of this vowel.

### (d) (Rela)

Rela means prolonging of sounds. Hence, it is used after vowel for prolongation of the same sounds.

#### (e) \_(Pharka)

Pharka means gap/space. Hence, this pharka is used to separate two words or between a vowel and a word.

The symbols used in Al Chiki scripts can be divided into following five groups, i.e., (a) Symbols from the nature, (b) Symbols from the daily life and activities, (c) Symbols from the physical postures, (d) Symbols from the animal kingdom and (e) Secret Symbols (Nayak, 2010:41). Brief analyses of these symbols used in Al Chiki script are given below.

#### (a) Symbols from Nature

Since the tribal people are very much dependent with its surrounding ecology and environment, it influences in their life and culture. Therefore, the inspirations of some natural objects are visible in Al Chiki scripts. The following four symbols are taken from the surrounding nature, (1)  $\bigcirc$  (Ot) - earth, (2)  $\bigcirc$  (Ut) - wild mushroom, (3)  $\bigcirc$  (Lo) - burning/flame and (4)  $\bigcirc$  (Uc) - ant-hill/hill.

### (b) Symbols from Daily Life and Activities

The Santal and the neighbouring tribal and folk people of the region are very industrious in nature. They remain busy in their day-to-day life which includes their domestic as well as agricultural related activities. If one observes Al Chiki scripts carefully, it will be evident that the shape of following six letters shows some similarities with the shape of their daily activities. The letters influenced from their daily life and activities includes, (1)  $\mathcal{D}(Ol)$  - holding a pen during writing, (2)  $\mathcal{L}(Is)$  - a plough, (3)  $\mathcal{L}(A/U)$  - digging of earth with a spade, (4)  $\mathcal{L}(Ir)$  - a sickle, (5)  $\mathcal{L}(En)$  - threshing of grains with two legs and (6)  $\mathcal{L}(U)$  taking of water by dipping a ladle.

### (c) Symbols from the Physical Postures

Some symbols of Al Chiki scripts are taken from different physical postures like, (1)  $\mathfrak{g}$  (Ok/Og)- position of mouth during vomiting, (2)  $\mathfrak{g}$  shape of mouth and tounge, (3)  $\mathfrak{g}$  (On/Ong) - coming out of air from mouth, (4)  $\mathfrak{g}$  (Aj) - pointing to a third person, (5)  $\mathfrak{g}$  (Am)- pointing to a person with right hand, (6)  $\mathfrak{g}$  (Inj) - pointing himself, (7)  $\mathfrak{g}$  (Op/Ob) - coiled hair, (8)  $\mathfrak{g}$  (I/E) - bending position, (9)  $\mathfrak{g}$  (Uy) - position of a person during answering the nature of call and (10)  $\mathfrak{g}$  (Aw) - expressing fear.

### (d) Symbols from the Animal Kingdom

Some scripts show the impact of animal kingdom which includes, (1)  $\eta$  (Ot) - an animal (camel), (2)  $\eta$  (Ak) - a bird (duck), (3)  $\eta$  (Ur) - wings of honey bee.

### (e) Secret Symbols

The secret symbols used in Al Chiki scripts are (1)  $\omega$  (Ih) - danger or hate, (2)  $\Omega$  (Ep) - meeting face to face, (3)  $\Omega$  (Err) - to avoid a danger and (4)  $\Omega$  (Ed) - a particular place.

### Growth of Al Chiki Script

After invention of the scripts, it was a great challenge for *Pundit* Raghunath Murmu to circulate it among the people and its acceptance by the society. Since, the Santal were residing along with the Hindi, Odia and Bengali speakers and had already adopted Devnagiri, Odia, Bengali and Roman scripts for writing their literature, this newly invented script was immediately not accepted by others. Hence, he had to take a lot of pain for its popularity. Personally he had tried and worked day and night for its development. Of course, in later stage he received an institutional support, which helped him a lot to popularize this script. Therefore, the attempt to spread this script may be divided into two types, i.e., (a) personal level and (b) institutional level (Nayak, 2010:9-13).

At the personal level, initially he taught to the school teachers, friends and educated persons and created interest among them to learn and use this script. Since, the letters were hand written, he could not get much successes, as he required. Hence, in 1938 he made a wooden hand printing press using brass letters. For printing, one had to move the wooden handle of this printing press. This hand press was later exhibited in 'Mayurbhanj State Exhibition' in 1939, where he had printed the Santali translation of two famous Odia poems written by Madhusudan Rao and Gangadhar Meher. The first poem i. e. 'Matrubhumi Matrubhasha ubhay janani, sewo tanku bhakti bhre diwaso rajani' (both the mother land and mother tongue are our mothers; one should serve them day and night with respect) was written by Madhusudan Rao. The second poem written by Gangadhar Meher was 'Uccha hewa payin karo jebe aasa, uccha karo aage nijo matrubhasha' (if you hope for your development, first of all you have to develop your mother tongue). These translated poems are printed in Al Chiki script and the printed matters were distributed in that exhibition. Maharaja Pratap Chandra Bhanjdeo, the then king of the Mayurbhani State, appreciated those printed matters and encouraged him. At that time Mayurbhanj was a Federal State and therefore it was necessary to take a formal permission for any important work. Hence, Pundit Raghunath Murmu personally met Maharaja and requested to get a formal permission for spreading this script among the people. Maharaja felt the necessity and implication of this script and permitted him to go ahead. Since at that time the country was ruled by the British, he also required permission from the British government for printing book in Al Chiki script. An advocate from Calcutta helped him a lot to get necessary permission from the court. Since dance and music are the two integral parts of the life and culture of the Santal, Pundit Raghunath Murmu adopted both as a medium of spreading of that newly invented script. He started writing book in Al Chiki script and wrote over 150 books covering a wide range of subjects.

Different organizational supports were also received by *Pundit* Raghunath Murmu to fulfill his goals. In 1946, with the help of 'Kharwal Jarpa Samiti' of Jamshedpur, a printing press was especially established

at Tatanagar for printing of books in Al Chiki script. The name of that printing press was Chandan Press from where Nelion Lagit Ol – the first book in Al Chiki script was printed in 1946. After that the popularity of Al Chiki script was increased. They started printing different books and magazines in Al Chiki script. After few years, in 1952, an organization named Al Samiti was formed at Rairangpur, about 05 kms away from the native village of *Pundit* Raghunath Murmu and in the same year they started a printing press named 'Al Press' for printing of books in Al Chiki script. Late, in 1964, the name of that organization Al Samiti had been changed into 'Adibasi Socio-Educational and Cultural Association' (ASECA) and the name of the organization was registered. The branches of this organization are opened at different parts of West Bengal, undivided Bihar and Assam for wide spreading of the script. In 1979, the government of West Bengal had awarded Pundit Murmu for inventing this script and gave recognition to use this script at Primary Level education. Following it, later in 1992-93, the Government of Odisha had also taken necessary steps to introduce this script at primary level education on experimental basis. As a result, this script is taught in 30 primary schools in Odisha. Out of the total selected schools 20 are located in Mayurbhani district and each 05 are present in the districts of Keonihar and Sundargarh. Presently, ASECA is running schools at different places for development of Santali language and Al Chiki script. A 'Santali Board of Education' has been constituted having its headquarters at Rairangpur. Students are appearing Board examinations twice a year.

#### Writings of Pundit Murmu

As mentioned earlier, *Pundit* Raghunath Murmu has written over 150 books in *Al Chiki* script, covering a wide range of subjects. Out of these books, some are published and some are still in manuscript form. His writings can be grouped into two divisions; i.e., (a) to learn *Al Chiki* scripts and (b) the popular writings. *Pundit* Raghunath Murmu had given much more emphasis on invention and spread of *Al Chiki* script.

His books covered the area of grammar, novel, drama, poetry and story. His books *Neljon Lagit Ol* (writings to see) for learning *Al Chiki* script can be divided into four groups; i.e., (a) *Neljon Lagit Ol* (writings to see), (b) *Al Chemed* (learning of script), (c) *Parsiapoha* (children literature) and (d) *Parsiopad* (youth literature). Similarly his popular writings include, (a) *Hor Serenj* (collection of poetry), (b) *Baha Serenj* (spring songs), (c) *Bakhen* (ritual songs), (d) *Hital* (religious advices), (e) *Laktar Serenj* (cultural music) and (f) Drama: *Bidu Chandan* – 1942, *Kherwal bir* – 1952, *Dalegedhan* (health is wealth) – 1966, etc. are some of his important dramas.

#### Conclusion

Literature is considered as a mirror of the society and it can serve properly, if it is formed with its own language and written in its own script of the same community or group or tribe. It is too difficult to express the meaning of all the words of a parrticular language clearly or to pronounce accurately with the help of a foreign language which is not familier to a particular tribe or group. Therefore, to enrich a particular language and literature, it should have its own script. Although, there are about 700 tribal communities, belonging to different linguistic families, residing in India, most of them do not have their own script to write their literature. Because of that their traditional literature is written with the help of other scripts, which may or may not be familiar to them. Earlier, the Santal, the 3<sup>rd</sup> largest tribal group of India, did not have their own script. Santali literature was written either in Odia, Bengali, Devnagiri or Roman scripts or for hence, the Odia, Bengali, Hindi or English languages were basically used. Since, Santali is the language of the Santal tribe which belongs to the Mundari group, the proper feelings, meaning and pronunciations of this Santali language were not expressed accurately by the use of any other languages to the Santal. Even in schools and offices, the Santal were forced to use these above nonpopular (to a Santal) languages and scripts for teaching and other purposes. Therefore, they were facing a lot of difficulties to share their

views and express their feelings. Apart from these, the text written with these foreign scripts always unable to express the exact pronunciations of the Santali words. The Santal have overcome these problems with the invention of *Al Chiki* script by *Pundit* Raghunath Murmu in 1935-36. Presently, this script is getting recognition by the different government and non-government agencies and different literatures are being written with this scripts which helped to bring a revolution in the culture and literature of the Santal society. Inspired from this *Al Chiki*, some other tribal groups have also started developing their own scripts.

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