

Tribal Language: an ethno - Power and Authority in historical approach in Manbhum Region

Dr. Pradip Kumar Mandal

Abstract

Language is an instrument of culture and identity. It is a powerful marker trait for group identity. Therefore, language is essential in the very survival of culture of cultural communities. Language is also an important of any curriculum. It has, of course, always been the medium of the common place pursuits of a people. Tribal people through their linguistic authority make contribution in national movement as well as regional language movement.

Key Words: - *ethno-historical approach, ethnic dialect, tribal language, Manbhum, community solidarity.*

Introduction

Human communication as plethora of human development and social tradition transmit and preserve experience, skill, rationality and perception from generation to generation. Un-codified language of the people of little tradition (here the tribal people) have more importance to continue their activities and achievements. Ethnic dialect of tribal people gives them solidarity, identity, sharing their age-old ancestors and great personalities of hereditary stock. Now we will analyze how the people of Manbhum region reacted to get their right of language. In this context we will discuss two language movements of this region. One is Bengali language movement of 1948-56, another is Olchiki movement of the Santhals after independence.

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Manbhum district was formed by the British Government in 1833.¹ This district was situated at the border area of South-West Frontier Bengal. But during the time of the Partition of Bengal in 1905,

this Bengali speaking district was included in the state of Bihar and Orissa. Till independence Manbhum district remained in Bihar. But after the progress of great language movement, Manbhum district was divided into two parts in 1956. Dhanbad sub-division remained in Bihar and Purulia sub-division consisting of 16 police stations transferred to West Bengal.²

Tribal people through their linguistic authority make contribution in national movement as well as regional language movement. This district is inhabited by a notable number of tribes like the Santal, Kharia, Munda etc. As per census report of 1901 we see that the population of Santal community was 1,94,730 and the Bhumij was 1,09,016.³ They used Bengali language for all purpose. But after independence the people of Manbhum district was bound to use Hindi language by the administrative decision of Bihar Govt. The Sabar, Santal and other tribal people also took part against the Bihar Govt.

In this language movement some eminent tribal leaders were Lochhu Sabar, vill-Jahanabad, P.S.-Barabazar, Dist-Purulia; Kandu Majhi, Bandwan; Hiru Sing Sardar, Vill-Latpada, PS – Barabazar, Dist-Purulia; Gobardhan Majhi, Vill- Herbana, P.S.-Barabazar, Dist- Purulia; Basudeb Majhi, Sukdeb Majhi and others. Under their leadership the tribal people of Manbhum district actively participated in *Bhasa satyagraha*, *Food Satyagraha*, *Tusu Satyagraha* and in *the Banga Satyagraha of 1956*. Through this movement we see the emotion, fellow feeling for regional language of the tribes of Manbhum area. I asked Lachhu Sabar why you and your community joined in this Bengali language movement. He answered, ‘we considered Bengali as our mother language also and our medium of education and other activities were in Bengali. We also participate in Bengali festivals. So we were against Hindi language of Bihar Govt.’⁴

The next tribal movement was Olchiki Movement of the Santals. Olchiki is the script of santali language. This movement continued about 50 years after independence in West Bengal, Bihar and Orissa for government recognition of this language. In the 19th century European sense of word, ‘nationalism’ referred to a political movement or a process of growing self-consciousness based on a feeling of common ethnically. Of the several criteria of ethnically, a common language has been the paramount one, with religion coming the second place. So when we speak on European nationalism, we mean primarily the growth of political consciousness by people sharing the same language. In this sense of the word ‘nationalism’ which may be called sub-nationalism in the Indian context. Most of the Indian states fall into a single typological set like ‘nation state’ or ‘ethnic state’. Majority of the Indian states, whether they share the common ethnically or not, share one of its major components – a common language. But Santali was the minority language of minority populations in West Bengal, Bihar, Orissa and Assam.

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Before independence the Santali language movement was started by Pandit Raghunath Murmu. He invented a new script that is known as 'Olchiki' in the year 1925. He wrote over 150 books comprising vast range of subjects. His drama '**Bidu Chandal**'(1942) was famous for Olchiki propaganda. He also established Chandan press and *Sagen Sakam* magazine to spread the new concept this script.⁵ After independence the Santals were divided into two linguistic areas – (a) Northern Santali,(b)Southern Santali. According to G.A.Grierson, 'The purest Santali is spoken in north, especially in the Santal Parganas and Manbhum. The dialect spoken in Midnapore, Balasore, Singbhum and Orissa tributary states is mixed and shows of yielding to Aryan influence.'⁶ According to the 1961 Census bilingualism of the Santali population in Assam is 41.89%, Bihar 20.48%, Orissa 65.48% and in West Bengal 41.08%. So unless the status of Santali language is equal to those of the official languages the process of standardizing this language is bound to suffer. The political fragmentation of the of the Santali language community and the resultant distribution of their speakers in different states adversely affected almost all the process of language standardization.⁷

Olchiki movement was developed when the Bihar government published one Santali magazine namely '**Har sambad**' in the year 1947. Many Santali poets and writers became famous from their writings in this magazine. One of the great poets was Sarada Prasad Kisku. His poems, stories and other books like **Laha hor re, Salam Latam, Bedai Bera, Sangitika** etc. were very important in Santali literature.⁸ In the 1960s the Santal elites were more active and have taken the lead. They formed an organization named Adibasi Socio-Educational and Cultural Association (ASECA) to spread Olchiki script and Santali language. It was formally registered only in 1964. In West Bengal Olchiki movement spread its highest level. Joyram Murmu, Kusal Baskey, Baidyanath Saren, Nabin Besra ,Bahamoni Baskey and others were the main leader of this movement. They spread this movement from village to district and from district to Kolkata. And at last the government of West Bengal recognized Olchiki script and Santali language in this state in 1979.

On the other hand the Santal intellectuals were started to develop Santali literature by writing story, novel, drama etc. Even they started to translate the famous books of Bengali language. In 1983 Purulia '**Santali Sahitya Parishad**' was established. Its President was Sarada Prasad Kisku and other important members were Mahadeb Hansda , Kalendra nath Mandi, Gomosta Prasad Saren and others. Magazine publication started from Purulia. The important magazines were *Jharna, Umul, Tatre , Sili* etc. The activity of this organization inspired the intellectuals of the others states and finally in 1988 All India Santali Writers Association was formed to spread Santali language and literature all over the country.

This movement took a new shape when Mr.Salkhan Murmu, M.P. of Jamshedpur formed a new organization named '**Santali Bhasa Morcha** ' in Jamshedpur in the year 1997. Under his leadership

this movement turned as a violent movement. He took the programmes like *bandh*, *rail rokho*, *Delhi abhijan etc.* By those programmes he turned this Olchiki movement as a national issue.⁹

It is noted that constitutional process also started to recognize Santali language. In West Bengal assembly under the leadership of minister Upendra nath Kisku a team met the Prime Minister to demand the recognition of Santali language under the 8th Schedule of the Constitution. From the year 2000 to 2003 we see a series of debates in the parliament. Finally on 22nd December 2003, a bill was passed in the parliament regarding inclusion of 'Santali' Language in the eighth Schedule of the Constitution.

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