

**02 – 08 – 2022**

**News: Draupadi Murmu**

- Droupadi Murmu recently took charge as the 15<sup>th</sup> President of India is a truly momentous event. She is the first person belonging to the Scheduled Tribes (ST) community and the second woman to occupy the highest constitutional post of the country. She is also the youngest person to be elected as the President and the first to be born in Independent India.
- Ms. Murmu was born in a village in Mayurbhanj district in Odisha and belongs to the Santhal tribe, one of the largest ST communities in India.
- The selection of Murmu as the President candidate is accused by the opposition as a political gimmick by the ruling government to appease to the Santhal Community.

**Santhal Tribes**

- Santhal is the third largest scheduled tribe community in the country after Gond and Bhil.
- The word ‘Santhal’ is derived from two words; ‘santha’ meaning calm and peaceful and ‘ala’ meaning man.
- In the past, the Santhals were leading a nomadic life.

- Gradually they came to settle down in the Chota Nagpur plateau.
- Towards the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, they migrated to the Santhal Parganas of Bihar and then they came to Odisha.
- Presently, Santhals are majorly located in the states of Jharkhand, Odisha and West Bengal.
- Their major occupations are Cultivation, Industrial Labour, Mining, and Quarrying.
- They are nature worshipers and pay their obeisance at Jaher (sacred groves) irrespective of the positions they hold.
- Santhals speak Santhali which has its own script called 'OL chiki' invented by Pandit Raghunath Murmu.
- Santhali in OL-Chiki script has been included in the Eighth Schedule to the Constitution.
- The common types of marriages permitted in their society are by negotiation, by elopement, by intrusion and by service.
- Junior livirate, sororate and remarriage of widows, widowers and divorcees are also permitted in their society.
- Santhal houses called 'Olah' are distinct and can be identified from a distance.
- They are large, neat and attractive with multi-coloured paintings on the outside walls.

- The bottom of the wall is painted with black soil, the middle portion with white and the upper portion with red.
- Of late, the Santhal's Phuta Katcha pattern saree and dress, sold through e-commerce sites, are widely accepted in the community.

### Major Festivals & Rituals

- Erok-sim : For sowing seeds
- Hariham-sim : At the time of Sprouting seedling
- Iri-guldi-sim : Offering small millets to deity
- Jantal : First eating of rice
- Saharai : Cattle worship
- Magha-sim : Dancing and merrymaking
- Baha : Ritual for first fruit of Mahua and ceremonial hunting.

## Santhal Rebellion

- The 19<sup>th</sup> century witnessed innumerable movements, but the ones like the Santhal revolt hold a significant position, in India's struggle for freedom.
- The Santhal rebellion was a rebellion in present day Jharkhand, Eastern India against both the British East India Company (BEIC) and zamindari system by the Santhal.

## Background to the Rebellion

- In order to control the vast territory of India, East India Company began to implement revenue policies, law and order rules to be followed by the countrymen, from the time they began consolidating, after Battle of Plassey in 1757.
- In 1793, Lord Cornwallis introduced the Permanent Settlement in some parts of the country like Bengal, Bihar, and Orissa.
- Under the permanent revenue system, landlords had perpetual and hereditary rights over the land as long as they paid fixed revenue to the British government. If the peasants were not able to pay their rent, the British auctioned away large tracts of land belonging to the Santhals, to anyone who would pay them fixed revenue and so in this process, several tribal lands were sold.
- In this process, the Santhal lost control over the land, and their old tribal systems and political structures that had continued for generations came to an end.
- The Santhals were the tribal people inhabiting the forest of Rajmahal hills. In 1832, East India Company demarcated the Damin-i-Koh from the region of Jharkhand and gave it to Santhals, to settle with a promise of non-interference in their land.

- But with **changing times and the rising demand of the Britishers**, the rent to the **Santhals raised to an exorbitant rate**.
- Ultimately, the **Santhals were trapped in a situation where they had the only option to revolt against the Britishers and the Zamindars**.
- Another reason cited for the **Santhal rebellion** was that the Santhals followed the **barter system** and they faced trouble paying the zamindars in cash, and as a result, they had to borrow money from the moneylenders at an exorbitant rate, which ultimately trapped them into a vicious cycle.
- To **come out of this cycle and save the identity of the Santhals**, the only **solution was to revolt** against the British policies.

## **The Rebellion**

- The Santhal revolt (also known as the Hul revolt) started on 30<sup>th</sup> June 1855, with the help of prominent leaders like Sidhu, Kanhu, Chand, and Bhairav, and also their two sisters Phulo and Jhano.
- The depressed and anguished Santhals **engaged in guerrilla warfare** against the Britishers and **formed their own troops** which included the farmers, villagers, and the women.
- In this quest, they were **able to capture large parts of land** including Rajmahal Hills, Bhagalpur district, and Birbhum.

- They militarized over 10000 Santhal people. The villagers put to fire the storehouses and the warehouses and all forms of communication lines were disrupted.
- The government applied all possible means to suppress the movement. In order to curb the rebellion, Britishers used heavy loaded weapons against bows and arrows used by the Santhals.
- The landlords were in the support of the government whereas the local people supported the Santhals in full vigour.
- Unfortunately, the duo brother Sidhu and Kanhu were arrested and the revolt had a brutal end.
- The Santhals were repressed and the movement came to an end in 1856.

## **Difference between Santhal Rebellion and other revolts**

### **Organized movement**

- The Santhal uprising was an organized movement with good leadership qualities. In a short period of time, it was successful in uniting about 60,000 people.

- If we look at the other spontaneous movement of that time, we find that **none of the movements was that well-arranged as the Santhal revolt**. The unity of the Santhals shook the nerve of the Britishers.

### **Use of weapons & Tactics**

- **Despite the Santhal using bows and arrows against the weapons and artillery used by the Britishers, the guerrilla tactics, which was a new occurrence for Bihar to fight against the Britishers, gave Santhals an upper hand.**

### **Trained leadership**

- **The prominent leaders of the war, Sidhu, and Kanhu in a short span of time, were successful in mobilizing a huge number of people to fight against the cause.**

### **Blow on British powers**

- **The Santhal rebellion was a blow on the British powers. It was such a fierce movement that Britishers had to implement martial law to quell the powers of Santhals.**

## **Growth of Revolutionary Nationalism**

- The **Santhal revolt** fostered a sense of unity among the Santhal tribes.
- It was **seen as the beginning of larger wars to free the people from the oppressive British rule.**
- This **movement resulted in a feeling of nationalism which helped to mobilize people for further wars, like the Revolt of 1857.**

## **Identity of the tribal people**

- The **Santhal rebellion** gave birth to the modern Santhal identity.
- It also **promoted the tribal people to protect their culture and tradition from any kind of destruction and interference.**

## **Successful movement**

- It was seen that the **Britishers did acknowledge their follies**, despite the Santhals being defeated.
- Further, after the end of the war, the **Santhal Paraganas Tenancy Act was enacted which provided the tribes some protection against the oppressive British Rule.**
- This was **successful in inculcating nationalist feelings among the people.**