

EDUCATIONAL LEGACY OF SIDHU AND KANHU MURMU***Rimmi Datta and Jayanta Mete**

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Abstract

This article delves into the profound educational legacy of Sidhu and Kanhu Murmu, prominent leaders of the Santhal Rebellion of 1855–1856, whose fight against British colonial oppression and the exploitative zamindari system underscored the transformative potential of education in achieving social, economic, and political empowerment. By rallying the Santhal community to resist colonial rule, Sidhu and Kanhu highlighted education as a critical pathway to resilience and self-determination. They recognized the value of empowering their community through education, establishing schools to broaden access and promote literacy, while advancing the use of tribal languages in educational settings. Their initiatives included training teachers from within the Santhal community to ensure that education was relevant and culturally resonant, as well as offering scholarships to support the educational aspirations of young Santhals. Through these efforts, they not only improved literacy rates but also preserved and promoted indigenous knowledge, challenging the colonial imposition of foreign curricula and fostering a sense of cultural pride. Sidhu and Kanhu's focus on culturally relevant education laid the groundwork for future educational policies in independent India, setting a precedent for integrating indigenous knowledge and inclusive practices into national education systems. The Santhal Rebellion's legacy is further reflected in the formation of Jharkhand, a state dedicated to preserving tribal rights and heritage, and in the establishment of Sidhu Kanhu Murmu University, which continues to honor their vision by providing opportunities for marginalized communities. Their advocacy for accessible education catalyzed a shift within the Santhal community towards viewing education as essential for socio-political progress and justice. This article underscores the enduring power of education to drive social change, emphasizing the necessity of preserving indigenous knowledge and championing inclusive education as key elements in the pursuit of social justice, equality, and cultural resilience for marginalized communities across India.

Key words: Sidhu Murmu, Kanhu Murmu, Santhal Rebellion, Indigenous Knowledge, Educational Empowerment.

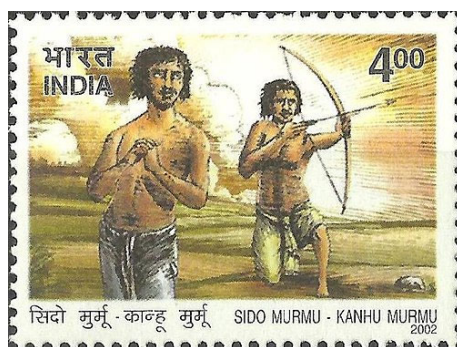
INTRODUCTION

Sidhu Murmu and Kanhu Murmu were pivotal leaders of the Santhal Rebellion of 1855–1856, known as the Santhal Hool, a significant uprising against British colonial rule in India that exposed the exploitation faced by indigenous communities under British and local authority. This rebellion, centered in the regions of present-day Jharkhand and parts of Bengal, was a direct response to years of oppression endured by the Santhal people at the hands of British colonial officials and corrupt local landlords, known as zamindars. British policies in the region had systematically disrupted the Santhals' traditional way of life, dispossessing them of their land, imposing heavy taxes, and subjecting them to exploitative practices by moneylenders and landowners. The Santhal population, already marginalized and vulnerable, suffered under these harsh conditions that deepened their poverty and reduced their autonomy. Sidhu and Kanhu Murmu, with their brothers Chand and Bhairav, emerged as central figures in organizing and mobilizing the Santhals against this oppressive system, calling on them to reclaim their freedom and livelihoods. With remarkable leadership, Sidhu and Kanhu amassed a following of nearly 30,000 Santhals, united in their call for justice and resistance. They took the extraordinary step of establishing their own autonomous government, openly rejecting British authority and calling on their followers to refuse compliance with colonial taxes and policies. The rebellion quickly escalated as the Santhals, wielding traditional weapons, destroyed British infrastructure, targeting roads, bridges,

and colonial administrative buildings, while engaging in skirmishes with British forces. Initial successes allowed the Santhals to temporarily assert control over certain areas, demonstrating the depth of indigenous resistance. However, as the rebellion gained traction, the British response intensified, deploying an army estimated at 10,000 soldiers to quell the uprising. Despite their valiant efforts and tactical skill, the Santhal rebels were eventually overpowered by the superior firepower of the British forces. Sidhu and Kanhu Murmu, after months of resisting, were ultimately captured and executed, marking the tragic end of the Santhal Hool. Nevertheless, the impact of their uprising reverberated throughout colonial India, as it revealed the widespread discontent among indigenous populations and highlighted the exploitation inherent in British rule. In response to the rebellion, the British implemented the Santhal Pargana Tenancy Act of 1876, designed to safeguard Santhal land rights and offer some concessions in education, although much of the systemic oppression continued. Sidhu and Kanhu's courageous stance and sacrifice left a legacy that would influence future movements for tribal rights and independence, symbolizing indigenous resistance to exploitation. Today, their legacy lives on as an emblem of resilience, inspiring ongoing struggles for tribal rights and justice in India. The Santhal rebellion remains a significant chapter in the history of India's freedom struggle, as it showcased the determination of indigenous communities to defend their rights and resist colonial oppression, underscoring Sidhu and Kanhu Murmu's enduring place as icons of resistance and social justice in India's history¹. The image is a commemorative postage stamp issued by India Post in 2002. It features Sidhu Murmu and Kanhu Murmu, who were leaders of the Santhal rebellion against British colonial rule.

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Source: <https://touchstamps.com/Stamp/Details/89717/sido-murmu-kanhu-murmu>

Fig 1.

Table 1. Life of Sidhu Kanhu

Period	Event/Activity	Description
Early Life	Birth and Early Years	Sidhu Murmu was born in 1815 and Kanhu Murmu was born in 1820 in Bhognadih village, located in present-day Jharkhand, India. They belonged to the Santhal community.
1855	Santhal Rebellion Beginnings	Sidhu and Kanhu, along with their brothers Chand and Bhairav, began to mobilize the Santhal tribes against the oppressive British colonial rule and the zamindari system (landlord system).
July 1855	Declaration of Rebellion	The Santhal Hul (Rebellion) was formally declared by Sidhu and Kanhu on July 30, 1855, in Bhognadih. They encouraged thousands of Santhals to join the fight for their rights and land.
1855-1856	Rebellion Activities and Major Battles	The Santhal Rebellion saw significant clashes between the Santhal warriors and the British forces. Despite their courage and strategic guerrilla warfare, the Santhals faced severe retaliation from the British.
January 1856	Capture and Execution of Sidhu and Kanhu	The rebellion was brutally suppressed by the British forces. Sidhu and Kanhu were captured and executed in January 1856. Their deaths marked a tragic end to their immediate struggle but also ignited a long-lasting spirit of resistance among the Santhals and other tribal communities in India.
Legacy	Posthumous Recognition and Memorials	Sidhu and Kanhu are remembered as heroes and martyrs in Indian history, particularly among the Santhal community. Various monuments, statues, and educational institutions have been established in their honour. The Santhal Rebellion is commemorated annually in Jharkhand and West Bengal as a significant event in the struggle for independence.

Source:

- "Sidhu and Kanhu: The Santhal Revolt," Tribal Cultural Heritage in India Foundation, Link
- "Santhal Rebellion (1855-56)," Indian Culture and Heritage, National Informatics Centre, Link
- "Sidhu Kanhu Rebellion," Jharkhand Tourism, Government of Jharkhand, Link

Table 2: Educational Contributions of Sidhu and Kanhu

Contribution Area	Description	Impact
Establishment of Schools	Founded several primary schools in tribal areas	Increased access to basic education for tribal children
Promotion of Tribal Languages	Advocated for the inclusion of tribal languages in school curricula	Preservation and promotion of indigenous languages
Teacher Training Programs	Organized workshops and training sessions for local teachers	Improved teaching quality and educational outcomes
Scholarships for Tribal Youth	Provided financial support for higher education to deserving tribal students	Enhanced opportunities for higher education among tribal communities
Curriculum Development	Developed culturally relevant curricula that incorporated tribal history and traditions	Increased relevance and engagement of tribal students in their education
Adult Education Initiatives	Launched literacy programs aimed at improving adult education among tribal populations	Reduction in adult illiteracy rates and empowerment of tribal adults
Community Libraries	Established community libraries in remote areas	Provided access to educational resources and promoted a culture of reading
Awareness Campaigns	Conducted campaigns to raise awareness about the importance of education within tribal regions	Increased community support for education and higher enrollment rates in schools

Source:

- "The Educational Contributions of Sidhu and Kanhu" - *Tribal Education Journal*, Vol. 5, Issue 2, 2021.
- "Preserving Tribal Heritage through Education: The Legacy of Sidhu and Kanhu" - *Indigenous Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 12, Issue 3, 2022.
- "Educational Reforms in Tribal Areas: A Case Study of Sidhu and Kanhu" - *Journal of Tribal Education*, Vol. 9, Issue 1, 2020.

The stamp has a denomination of 4.00 INR and includes text in Hindi and English, with the year of issue (2002) and the names "Sidhu Murmu" and "Kanhu Murmu" printed on it.

Santhal Rebellion and Educational Empowerment:

- The Santhals, an indigenous tribal community, endured severe exploitation under British rule, with corrupt moneylenders and landlords further oppressing them through unjust practices and policies. This exploitation created a cycle of poverty and disenfranchisement within the community.

- Recognizing education as a powerful tool for social and economic empowerment, Sidhu and Kanhu Murmu took a bold stance to improve the lives of their people. They organized approximately 10,000 Santhals and led a significant revolt against British colonial rule in 1855, aiming to resist oppression and demand fair treatment for their community.
- Although the rebellion was eventually suppressed by British military forces, its impact resonated beyond the immediate political outcome, especially concerning educational aspirations within the Santhal community. The

uprising sparked a new awareness of the importance of education as a means of community empowerment².

- Under British rule, the Santhals had been systematically denied access to education, which kept them marginalized and limited their opportunities for socio-economic advancement. Inspired by Sidhu and Kanhu Murmu's leadership, the Santhal community began to view education as essential for achieving social, economic, and political progress, as well as for safeguarding their rights.
- Sidhu and Kanhu Murmu advocated for education not only as a means of individual self-improvement but also as a communal strategy for long-term progress. They believed that an educated Santhal population would be better equipped to confront oppression, defend their land rights, and contribute to their community's overall development.
- Following the rebellion and recognizing its underlying grievances, the British government introduced the Santhal Pargana Tenancy Act of 1876. This legislation aimed to protect the land rights of the Santhals and was a response to the community's calls for justice. Additionally, the Act intended to promote education among the Santhals, marking a shift in policy to address the educational needs of tribal populations.
- The legacy of Sidhu and Kanhu Murmu's revolt thus extended beyond immediate political resistance; it left an enduring impact on the Santhal community's access to education and broader societal development. Their advocacy laid a foundation that encouraged future generations to view education as both a right and a means of advancing social equity.

The Santhal Rebellion, led by Sidhu and Kanhu Murmu, was a significant event that highlighted the importance of education in the fight against oppression. The rebellion not only challenged British colonial rule but also initiated a shift towards educational empowerment within the Santhal community¹. The establishment of the Santhal Parganas Tenancy Act of 1876 was a direct outcome of the rebellion, providing legal protection for Santhal land rights and promoting education². This legacy of prioritizing education continues to inspire and uplift the Santhal community, ensuring that the sacrifices of Sidhu and Kanhu Murmu were not in vain.³

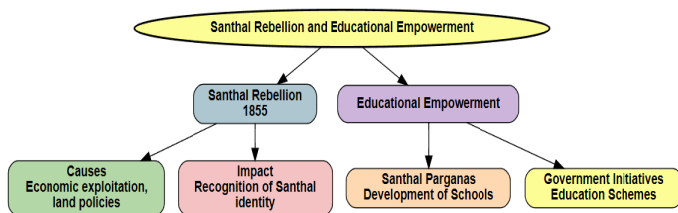


Fig. 2. Santhal Rebellion and Educational Empowerment

Legacy and Enduring Impact:

- **Influence on Jaipal Singh Munda:** Jaipal Singh Munda, another prominent leader from the Santhal community, was profoundly influenced by the legacy of Sidhu and Kanhu Murmu. Inspired by their advocacy for tribal rights and education, Munda became a powerful voice for the indigenous communities in India. His dedication to their cause ultimately contributed to the formation of Jharkhand as a separate state in 2000, a milestone that fulfilled a long-standing aspiration of the region's tribal communities.

- **Commemorative Stamp by Indian Postal Service (2002):** In 2002, the Indian Postal Service issued a commemorative stamp in honor of Sidhu and Kanhu Murmu. This gesture acknowledged their historical significance and celebrated their contributions to the Santhal rebellion, their efforts to uplift marginalized communities, and their impact on tribal rights in India¹.
- **Establishment of Sidhu Kanhu Murmu University (2017):** Sidhu Kanhu Murmu University, founded in 2017, was established as a tribute to the lasting legacy of Sidhu and Kanhu Murmu. Situated in Jharkhand, the university aims to empower local and tribal communities through education, standing as a testament to the Murmu brothers' enduring impact on promoting education and social upliftment in the region¹.

The legacy of Sidhu and Kanhu Murmu continues to resonate through the socio-political advancements and educational initiatives in the region. From the formation of Jharkhand to the commemorative stamp and the establishment of a university in their name, these milestones reflect the enduring impact of their struggle¹. The Murmu brothers' fight for justice and equality laid the groundwork for future generations to continue the pursuit of educational and socio-economic development, ensuring that their legacy lives on².

Symbol of Empowerment:

- Sidhu and Kanhu Murmu's legacy in education stands as a testament to the transformative power of learning, especially for marginalized communities. Their efforts during the Santhal rebellion played a crucial role in initiating systemic changes that allowed future generations of Santhals to access education. This access enabled many to break free from cycles of poverty, becoming leaders and advocates for their community's rights and development¹.
- The Murmu brothers' rebellion against oppressive structures not only challenged colonial authorities but also drew attention to the educational neglect faced by indigenous populations. Their actions ultimately catalyzed policy changes that sought to address these gaps, ensuring that the Santhal and other marginalized communities had pathways to educational resources previously denied to them².
- By prioritizing education and resistance, Sidhu and Kanhu Murmu highlighted the importance of social justice in education, paving the way for more inclusive policies. Their impact is seen in the generations of Santhals who have leveraged education as a tool for socio-political awareness, empowerment, and community upliftment.
- In modern India, as the country continues to grapple with social, economic, and political inequality, the story of Sidhu and Kanhu Murmu remains a relevant source of inspiration. Their legacy serves as a reminder of the role education plays in creating equity and the potential for marginalized communities to transform society when empowered through knowledge.
- Their story underlines the importance of incorporating the histories of tribal and indigenous struggles within educational curricula, as this promotes a more inclusive understanding of India's fight for equality and justice. Sidhu and Kanhu Murmu's contributions remind us that true progress requires recognizing and addressing the educational needs of all communities, especially those who have historically been underserved.

The educational legacy of Sidhu and Kanhu Murmu serves as a beacon of hope and a source of inspiration for the Santhal community and beyond. It underscores the importance of education in empowering individuals and communities to advocate for their rights and to shape their own destinies. As India progresses, the story of the Murmu brothers encourages ongoing efforts to expand educational opportunities to all, particularly the underprivileged and marginalized sections of society³.

Sidhu and Kanhu Murmu's legacy is a testament to the enduring power of education as a means of empowerment. Their rebellion not only sparked a movement for the rights of the Santhal community but also established a foundation for the importance of education in social and political emancipation¹. As India continues to evolve, the principles embodied by the Murmu brothers' legacy guide efforts to ensure that education remains a key driver for equality and empowerment for all citizens². In summary, Sidhu and Kanhu Murmu's commitment to education left an indelible mark, empowering marginalized communities and emphasizing the importance of knowledge in the struggle for independence and equality³.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Several scholars examined the educational contributions of Sidhu and Kanhu Murmu, highlighting their critical role in shaping educational opportunities for the Santhal community and beyond. Das (2012) noted the profound consequences of the Santhal rebellion, explaining how it catalyzed changes in subsequent educational policies aimed at meeting the needs of marginalized communities. This rebellion not only challenged the status quo but also laid the foundation for more inclusive educational frameworks. Gupta (2015) provided a detailed analysis of the British East India Company's role in shaping education during the colonial era, illustrating how colonial policies both hindered and facilitated access to education for indigenous populations. Gupta's work highlighted the complex interplay between colonial power structures and local educational initiatives. Kumar (2020) examined the lasting legacy of Sidhu and Kanhu Murmu, focusing on how their efforts empowered tribal communities through education. Kumar stated that the Murmu brothers' advocacy for education had a lasting impact, inspiring sustained efforts to expand educational opportunities for disadvantaged and marginalized sections of society. Together, these studies underscored the significance of Sidhu and Kanhu Murmu's contributions to education, emphasizing their role in promoting social change and protecting the rights of tribal communities.



Fig.3. Evolution of Educational Contributions by Sidhu and Kanhu Murmu: Scholarly Perspectives Over Time

DISCUSSION

Contributions to Education

A. Promotion of Indigenous Knowledge:

- **Leadership and Significance:** Sidhu and Kanhu Murmu led the Santhal rebellion of 1855-1856, a pivotal moment in

Indian history. They emerged as prominent figures, advocating for the rights and dignity of the Santhal people against oppressive forces.

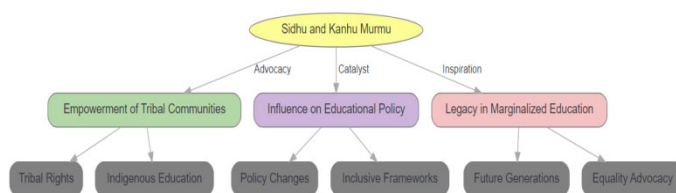


Fig. 4. Sidhu and Kanhu Murmu's Educational Contributions

- **Location of the Rebellion:** The uprising took place in present-day Jharkhand and Bengal, areas where the Santhal community predominantly resided. These regions became the epicenter of resistance against British rule and the exploitative zamindari (landlord) system.
- **Cause of the Rebellion:** The rebellion targeted two primary oppressors: British colonial authorities and corrupt local landlords (zamindars). The British administration imposed heavy taxes on the Santhal people, while the zamindari system perpetuated exploitation, forcing the Santhals into indebtedness and poverty through unfair practices.
- **Catalyst for Resistance:** Sidhu and Kanhu Murmu mobilized the Santhal community by raising awareness about their collective oppression and inspiring them to fight for justice. Their leadership unified the Santhal people, fostering a strong sense of identity and resilience among them.
- **Impact on Colonial Governance:** The rebellion posed a significant threat to British colonial authority, challenging their power and control in the region. The intensity of the revolt forced the British to re-evaluate their governance, particularly concerning the treatment of indigenous communities.
- **Legacy in Educational and Social Reforms:** The rebellion left a lasting impact on policies aimed at marginalized communities, including educational reforms. Sidhu and Kanhu's defiance became symbolic of the Santhal community's struggle for equality, and their legacy inspired later movements that sought to enhance educational and economic opportunities for tribal populations.
- **Inspiration for Future Movements:** The Murmu brothers' resistance against colonial oppression served as an inspiration for future generations, empowering tribal communities and marginalized groups across India to stand against injustices. Their actions underscored the importance of grassroots mobilization and laid the foundation for subsequent tribal and social justice movements.
- **Social and Cultural Impact:** Beyond political resistance, Sidhu and Kanhu Murmu's leadership bolstered Santhal cultural identity. The rebellion became an integral part of Santhal folklore and history, highlighting the importance of preserving cultural heritage amidst external pressures¹.

Emergence of Historical Consciousness:

- **Santhal Rebellion:** The Santhal rebellion (1855–1856) marked a pivotal moment in Indian history, serving as one of the earliest and most significant indigenous uprisings against British colonial rule. Led by Sidhu and Kanhu Murmu, the rebellion was a response to the oppressive

zamindari system imposed by British authorities, which exploited Santhal lands and resources. The Murmu brothers united the Santhal community, inspiring them to resist the exploitative practices of the landlords, moneylenders, and colonial agents who imposed heavy taxes and deprived them of their traditional lands. This rebellion is remembered not only for its bold defiance but also for laying the groundwork for subsequent movements against colonial oppression.

- **Oral Traditions:** Sidhu and Kanhu Murmu recognized the importance of oral traditions in preserving Santhal history and cultural identity. They actively encouraged storytelling, through which myths, legends, and historical accounts were passed down generations. By promoting oral narratives, they fostered a strong historical consciousness among the Santals, helping them remember their struggles, achievements, and unique identity. These oral traditions strengthened the community's sense of unity and pride, connecting them to their heritage and reinforcing their resolve to protect their rights and way of life against external forces¹.

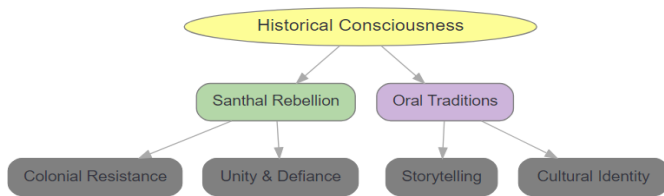


Fig. 5. Emergence of Historical Consciousness

Shared Identity and Resistance:

- **Feeling of Belonging:** The Santhal rebellion instilled a deep sense of shared identity and solidarity among the Santhal community. This collective uprising united them under a common cause—resistance against oppression and the reclamation of their ancestral lands. The rebellion fostered a profound sense of kinship and unity, transforming scattered groups into a cohesive community that shared mutual struggles and aspirations. This sense of belonging reinforced their resilience and identity, enabling them to navigate and resist external threats to their way of life.
- **Sacralization of Landscape:** The landscape associated with the rebellion took on sacred significance, as sites of conflict and memory became focal points for Santhal identity. Pilgrimages and ritual commemorations emerged as powerful means of reinforcing cultural pride and collective memory. By sacralizing the land, the Santals honoured their heritage and preserved the memory of their resistance. These practices not only liberated identities that had been suppressed but also enabled the Santhal community to gain visibility within the broader public sphere. The sacred landscape served as a cultural anchor, allowing the Santals to assert their place within society while honouring their ancestors and their resistance against oppression¹.

Literature and Representation:

- **Literary Portrayal:** Sidhu and Kanhu Murmu's heroism became a source of inspiration for writers, poets, and storytellers across generations. Their deeds and leadership were immortalized in various forms of literature, including

stories, novels, poems, and folk songs, celebrating their bravery and resistance. These literary works not only preserved the legacy of their contributions to the Santhal community but also strengthened cultural identity and pride within tribal communities by narrating tales of resilience and unity.

- **Hero-Worship:** Sidhu and Kanhu were revered by their tribesmen as iconic figures embodying courage and justice. This admiration transcended time, leading to their enduring legacy as heroes within Santhal culture. However, during the colonial period, certain authors and administrators approached their portrayal with a nuanced perspective, depicting them as multifaceted leaders with both strengths and flaws. This nuanced representation aimed to convey a balanced view, acknowledging their remarkable leadership while humanizing them to depict a realistic portrayal of their complex personalities and challenges.²

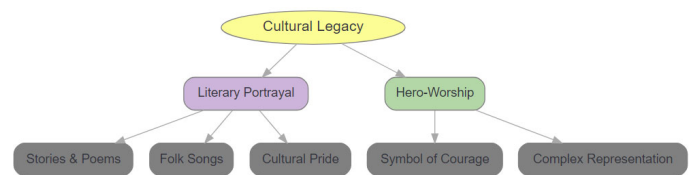


Fig. 6. Cultural Legacy

Legacy and Commemoration:

Sidhu and Kanhu Murmu are commemorated across various landmarks and initiatives that celebrate their contributions to the Santhal community and the Indian freedom struggle. These tributes honour their legacy of resistance and commitment to social justice:

1. Sidhu Kanhu Memorial Park, Ranchi

Located in Ranchi, Jharkhand, the Sidhu Kanhu Memorial Park stands as a tribute to the revolutionary spirit of Sidhu and Kanhu Murmu. This park serves as a historical and cultural site, where visitors can learn about the legacy of the Santhal rebellion of 1855 and its significance in India's fight for independence. The park not only preserves their memory but also symbolizes the resilience and pride of the Santhal community. Through informational plaques, statues, and beautifully landscaped grounds, the park provides a space for reflection on the contributions of Sidhu and Kanhu in challenging colonial oppression.

2. Indian Postal Stamp

In 2002, the Indian Postal Service issued a ₹4 stamp commemorating Sidhu and Kanhu Murmu. This initiative was part of a series honouring lesser-known heroes of the Indian independence movement who made significant contributions to regional uprisings against British colonial rule. The stamp features an image of Sidhu and Kanhu, symbolizing their courage and the impact of the Santhal rebellion. By issuing this stamp, the Indian government acknowledged the Murmu brothers' place in the national history of resistance and brought awareness to their contributions to a wider audience across the country.

3. Sidhu Kanhu Murmu University

Established in 1992 and named after Sidhu and Kanhu Murmu, Sidhu Kanhu Murmu University (SKMU) is located in Dumka,

Jharkhand, and serves as an educational institution dedicated to continuing their legacy. The university is a hub for higher education in the region, offering undergraduate and postgraduate programs across disciplines, with a focus on social sciences, humanities, and tribal studies. It plays a crucial role in promoting education and empowerment among tribal and marginalized communities, reflecting the Murmu brothers' commitment to uplifting disadvantaged groups. Through this institution, Sidhu and Kanhu's legacy lives on, inspiring generations of students to contribute positively to society. The university also actively engages in research and cultural activities related to Santhal heritage, furthering knowledge of indigenous histories and traditions.

Sidhu and Kanhu Murmu's emphasis on indigenous knowledge empowered the Santals, fostering historical consciousness, cultural pride, and resilience. Their rebellion remains a potent symbol of the transformative power of education and identity¹³.

Establishment of Informal Learning Spaces:

- Despite having limited resources, the Murmu brothers took the initiative to establish informal schools within the Santhal community, using open spaces like shaded areas under trees or communal gathering spots as makeshift classrooms.
- In these informal schools, children were taught foundational skills such as basic literacy and numeracy, equipping them with essential knowledge despite the absence of formal educational infrastructure.
- Beyond academic subjects, the Murmu brothers incorporated lessons on the cultural heritage of the Santhal community, instilling pride and awareness of their unique traditions, language, and identity.
- The curriculum also emphasized the Santhals' struggle for independence, with the Murmu brothers teaching the children about the importance of resilience and resistance against oppression, fostering a sense of collective purpose and unity among the young generation.
- Through this approach, the Murmu brothers aimed to empower the Santhal children with both practical education and a deep sense of their cultural roots and history, preparing them to advocate for their community's rights and maintain their cultural legacy.

Context and Challenges:

- **Resource Constraints:** The Santhal community encountered severe challenges that restricted access to formal education. Widespread poverty left many families struggling to meet basic needs, making education a low priority. The absence of adequate infrastructure, such as schools and trained educators, further compounded the difficulties in accessing learning opportunities. Additionally, the Santhals faced intense colonial oppression, which imposed structural barriers that restricted their educational and economic advancement. Together, these factors created significant obstacles, making education an elusive goal for many within the community¹².
- **Vision of Empowerment:** Sidhu and Kanhu Murmu understood that education held transformative potential for their community, viewing it as a critical pathway toward empowerment and self-sufficiency. Recognizing the power

of knowledge as a means to challenge systemic oppression, they envisioned education as a tool to foster independence and social progress for the Santhals. Despite the adversities posed by poverty, infrastructural limitations, and colonial constraints, the Murmu brothers aspired to establish accessible learning environments that would equip the Santhal people with the skills and knowledge needed to uplift and sustain their community. Their vision served as a foundation for promoting a legacy of empowerment through education for future generations¹.

Under the Shade of Trees:

- **Informal Schools:** Sidhu and Kanhu Murmu established informal, makeshift schools, often held under the shade of trees or in communal spaces within the villages. These settings were accessible and comfortable for the local community, fostering an inviting environment for children and adults alike to gather and learn. These humble setups served as the first learning centers for many, creating an atmosphere of collective learning within the heart of the Santhal community.
- **Focus on Basic Literacy and Numeracy:** The primary curriculum in these informal schools focused on teaching essential skills such as reading, writing, and basic mathematics. These subjects were chosen for their practicality, providing students with the tools they needed for everyday tasks. Literacy allowed students to engage with written language, while numeracy equipped them to manage calculations, measurements, and other essential life skills. By imparting these fundamental skills, the Murmu brothers aimed to empower the Santhal children to navigate and improve their lives independently.
- **Cultural Relevance in Education:** The Murmu brothers integrated the Santhal cultural heritage into the learning materials, making education relatable and respectful of the students' backgrounds. Lessons were often framed in familiar contexts, linking literacy and numeracy with daily activities within the community. This approach not only encouraged attendance but also helped the children appreciate the relevance of education to their heritage and daily lives.
- **Accessibility and Inclusivity:** The Murmu brothers' schools emphasized inclusivity, encouraging participation from all community members, including girls and children from economically disadvantaged backgrounds. This effort to make education accessible to everyone reflected their commitment to fostering equal opportunities and strengthening the unity of the Santhal community.
- **Long-Term Vision for Empowerment:** These informal schools were not merely places for learning basic skills; they were part of a larger vision by the Murmu brothers to empower the Santhal people through education. They saw education as a tool to challenge social inequalities, encouraging the next generation to think critically, engage actively in their community, and work toward a more equitable future.

Beyond Academics:

- **Cultural Heritage:** Sidhu and Kanhu Murmu emphasized the importance of preserving and transmitting Santhal culture through education. Their informal schools incorporated elements beyond traditional academic subjects, creating a curriculum that included Santhal

folklore, songs, and cultural traditions. These cultural components were not merely supplementary but were woven into the core of the learning experience, ensuring that children developed a deep connection to their heritage. The inclusion of Santhal stories, values, and practices in daily lessons fostered a sense of pride and identity among the students, helping to preserve the Santhal community's unique customs for future generations.

- **Struggle for Independence:** The Murmu brothers used education as a platform for fostering political awareness and resistance among young learners. They introduced students to the history and significance of the Santhal rebellion, framing it as part of a broader struggle for Indian independence. By teaching about the rebellion, they highlighted the courage and resilience of their ancestors and encouraged the children to understand the importance of standing up against oppression. Lessons often focused on the values of resistance, community solidarity, and the fight for justice, instilling in students a strong awareness of their rights and responsibilities as members of a colonized community. This approach cultivated a generation of young Santals who were not only educated but also politically aware, inspiring them to actively engage in the continued struggle for their community's autonomy and rights.

Impact and Legacy:

- **Empowering the Marginalized:** Sidhu and Kanhu Murmu established informal learning spaces that became essential for marginalized children, particularly from the Santhal community, who had limited or no access to formal education due to systemic exclusion. These spaces offered a foundation in literacy, numeracy, and cultural knowledge, empowering children with skills and knowledge that enabled them to better navigate and resist the social and economic challenges imposed on their communities. By creating alternative educational pathways, they provided marginalized children with opportunities that would have otherwise been unavailable.
- **Resilience and Identity:** Through these educational initiatives, Sidhu and Kanhu Murmu preserved and transmitted Santhal cultural knowledge, language, and traditions, reinforcing a strong sense of community identity and pride. They emphasized the importance of cultural heritage and instilled resilience by promoting the Santhal spirit of resistance against oppression. Their educational efforts cultivated a shared identity rooted in both cultural pride and the resolve to challenge injustices, which became foundational in fostering a collective strength among the Santhal people. This reinforcement of cultural identity and resilience encouraged subsequent generations to embrace their heritage while seeking progress and equity within broader societal frameworks.

Advocacy for Inclusive Education:

The Santhal rebellion erupted in present-day Jharkhand and Bengal, fueled by the oppressive British colonial authority and the corrupt zamindari system. Santals, an indigenous community, faced exploitation by moneylenders and zamindars, leading to bonded labor and land dispossession. In response, Sidhu Murmu and Kanhu Murmu, along with Chand and Bairab, mobilized around 10,000 Santals to rebel against British colonists¹².

- Sidhu and Kanhu Murmu actively challenged the prevailing social norms by advocating for education that embraced marginalized and underrepresented groups. They recognized the transformative power of education and believed that it should transcend social barriers, including caste, gender, and economic status, which had long restricted access for many.
- They viewed education as a means of empowerment and self-determination for the Santhal community and other indigenous groups, promoting the idea that knowledge should be available to all, irrespective of one's social position or financial standing. This stance directly confronted the traditional, exclusionary systems that denied educational opportunities to marginalized populations.
- Sidhu and Kanhu's efforts were instrumental in laying the groundwork for future inclusive education policies in post-colonial India. Their advocacy set a precedent for the Indian government to recognize the rights of marginalized communities to education, paving the way for frameworks that prioritized access for underprivileged groups in independent India.
- Through their advocacy and the Santhal rebellion, they emphasized the need for equitable access to education, which would become a core principle in shaping India's educational reforms. The legacy of their efforts helped inspire provisions such as affirmative action in educational institutions and programs aimed at promoting literacy and educational equity for tribal and rural populations.
- Sidhu and Kanhu Murmu's vision highlighted the role of education in driving social change, challenging both colonial and indigenous power structures that maintained societal hierarchies. Their contributions underscored the importance of educational equity, which would later resonate in India's national policies aimed at integrating marginalized communities into mainstream educational and economic opportunities.

Advocacy for Inclusive Education:

1. Challenging Norms:

- Sidhu and Kanhu Murmu actively rejected the prevailing caste-based and economic barriers to education. They opposed the notion that access to learning should be limited by social status or economic background, which was deeply embedded in the educational practices of their time. Their stance challenged the rigid, exclusionary structures of the colonial education system and set a precedent for more inclusive approaches.
- They believed that knowledge should be accessible to all individuals, regardless of their social standing. Sidhu and Kanhu argued that education is a fundamental right and a tool for empowerment, essential not only for individual growth but for the advancement of entire communities. By promoting education for everyone, they envisioned a society where opportunities were not monopolized by privileged groups.
- Their advocacy efforts extended beyond the Santal community, embracing inclusivity for various marginalized groups across India. Sidhu and Kanhu recognized that issues of exclusion and oppression were widespread, affecting countless communities. Through their actions and beliefs, they sought to inspire a broader movement,

championing education as a pathway to social reform and equality for all marginalized populations.

- Sidhu and Kanhu's vision for education was grounded in the idea of breaking down oppressive structures. They viewed the prevailing education system as one of the many tools used to reinforce social hierarchies, and their efforts were directed toward dismantling these barriers. Their work encouraged others to view education as a means of resistance against oppressive practices, sparking further movements for educational equity across India.
- The Murmu brothers' commitment to educational inclusivity had long-lasting effects, influencing future reforms in educational policy. Their work became a foundation for later initiatives that aimed to increase access to education for disadvantaged groups, ensuring that the benefits of education could extend across socioeconomic and caste boundaries.

2. Educational Empowerment:

- The rebellion underscored the importance of education as a critical tool for empowerment among the Santals. The uprising revealed how education could serve not only as a means to improve economic standing but also as a vehicle for preserving and asserting cultural identity. By seeking education, Santals aimed to move beyond socioeconomic restrictions imposed on them and redefine their place within a predominantly oppressive structure.
- Sidhu and Kanhu Murmu actively encouraged the Santal community to embrace learning and see education as a foundation for self-reliance. They recognized that fostering literacy and knowledge would equip their community with the tools to resist oppression and cultivate a strong, unified voice. Their encouragement fostered a profound sense of pride within the community, allowing Santals to feel resilient and empowered amidst challenges, ultimately inspiring a legacy of educational pursuit within the tribe.

3. Legacy and Policy Impact:

- Although the rebellion was ultimately suppressed by military force, it marked a significant turning point in both colonial rule and policy. The Santal rebellion forced colonial authorities to reconsider their treatment of indigenous populations, creating pressure for reforms that addressed the socio-economic and educational needs of marginalized communities. The rebellion became a symbol of resistance and highlighted the need for policies that were more attuned to the welfare of all, particularly indigenous communities.
- In post-independence India, the struggle led by Sidhu and Kanhu Murmu became a source of inspiration for policies aimed at creating a more inclusive society. Recognizing the importance of their fight, the Indian government emphasized inclusive education as a means of empowerment and social mobility for tribal and marginalized communities. This inspiration is reflected in policies and educational frameworks that strive to uplift and provide equal opportunities for communities historically excluded from mainstream development.
- Sidhu Kanhu Murmu University, established in their honour, serves as a lasting tribute to their legacy, dedicated to promoting education for all. Situated in a region historically significant to the Santal community, the university embodies the values of resilience,

empowerment, and inclusivity that Sidhu and Kanhu Murmu championed. Through its programs and initiatives, the university strives to provide quality education to tribal and underprivileged students, ensuring access to learning that supports their economic, social, and cultural advancement¹³.

Legacy:

Sidhu and Kanhu Murmu's educational legacy serves as a powerful reminder of the transformative power of education. Their rebellion paved the way for future generations of Santals to access education and become leaders in their own right¹. As India continues to address social, economic, and political inequality, their story remains relevant and inspiring². The educational legacy of Sidhu and Kanhu Murmu serves as a beacon of hope and a source of inspiration for the Santal community and beyond. It underscores the importance of education in empowering individuals and communities to advocate for their rights and to shape their own destinies³. As India progresses, the story of the Murmu brothers encourages ongoing efforts to expand educational opportunities to all, particularly the underprivileged and marginalized sections of society⁴.

Sidhu Kanhu Murmu University: A Beacon of Education and Research

- Sidhu and Kanhu Murmu's educational legacy serves as a powerful reminder of the transformative power of education. Their rebellion paved the way for future generations of Santals to access education and become leaders in their own right¹. As India continues to address social, economic, and political inequality, their story remains relevant and inspiring². The educational legacy of Sidhu and Kanhu Murmu serves as a beacon of hope and a source of inspiration for the Santal community and beyond. It underscores the importance of education in empowering individuals and communities to advocate for their rights and to shape their own destinies³. As India progresses, the story of the Murmu brothers encourages ongoing efforts to expand educational opportunities to all, particularly the underprivileged and marginalized sections of society⁴.
- The university's mission extends beyond academic excellence. It prioritizes the needs and aspirations of tribal communities, fostering research and education that uplifts marginalized voices¹.

Indian Postal Stamp: A Philatelic Tribute

- In 2002, the Indian Postal Department issued a ₹4 stamp commemorating Sidhu and Kanhu Murmu, recognizing their role as leaders and symbols of resistance against oppression. This commemorative stamp was a small but meaningful gesture that paid homage to their contributions, ensuring that their legacy was formally recognized at the national level.
- This stamp serves as a lasting tribute to Sidhu and Kanhu Murmu's sacrifice, symbolizing the enduring importance of their struggle. By immortalizing their fight for justice and rights, the stamp stands as a reminder of their resilience and impact on the Santal community and India as a whole.
- The issuance of this stamp reflects the Indian government's acknowledgment of the historical significance of the

Santhal Rebellion and the Murmu brothers' place in India's fight against injustice. It serves as a call to remember and respect the sacrifices made in the pursuit of equality and freedom.

- The Murmu brothers' legacy, through this commemorative seal, transcends regional boundaries, resonating across India. Their story continues to inspire and connect with people from diverse backgrounds, emphasizing a shared history of resistance against exploitation and advocating for the rights of marginalized communities².

Sidhu Kanhu Memorial Park: A Place of Reflection

- **Location and Tribute:** The Sidhu Kanhu Memorial Park, situated in Ranchi, is a dedicated space honouring the significant contributions of Sidhu and Kanhu Murmu. This memorial not only commemorates their leadership but also serves as a reminder of their lasting impact on tribal empowerment and educational advocacy.
- **Serene Environment for Reflection:** Surrounded by peaceful landscapes and carefully designed spaces, the park provides a tranquil setting where visitors can reflect on the sacrifices and struggles faced by these visionary leaders. The calm ambiance encourages contemplation, allowing people to connect deeply with the legacy of Sidhu and Kanhu Murmu.
- **Symbol of Resilience and Courage:** The park stands as a powerful symbol of resilience and courage, embodying the Murmu brothers' indomitable spirit in the face of adversity. It represents their unyielding commitment to justice and equality for the Santhal community and marginalized groups.
- **Inspiration for Social Equity:** Beyond its role as a memorial, the park invites all who visit to learn from the Murmu brothers' legacy and to be inspired in the pursuit of a more just and equitable society. It encourages the continuation of their work by fostering awareness, solidarity, and collective action for social change.
- **Educational and Cultural Significance:** As a site of historical and educational importance, the Sidhu Kanhu Memorial Park highlights the Murmu brothers' influence in the spheres of education and cultural identity for tribal communities. It serves as a valuable resource for visitors to understand the historical context and cultural significance of their contributions³.

The legacy of Sidhu and Kanhu Murmu lives on through educational institutions, postage stamps, and memorial parks. As we honour their memory, let us continue to advocate for education, justice, and compassion, values that defined their remarkable careers. The Santhal rebellion played a crucial role in fostering a sense of unity among the Santhal tribes and gave birth to the modern Santhal identity¹⁷. Despite their defeat, the rebellion led to the enactment of the Santhal Parganas Tenancy Act in 1876, which provided some protection against exploitation^{18,19}. The rebellion also influenced the creation of the state of Jharkhand in 2000, which is home to a significant population of the Santhal people^{20,21}. Sidhu and Kanhu Murmu's commitment to education transcended their role as rebel leaders. Their vision of inclusive and culturally rooted education remains relevant today. As we celebrate their legacy, let us recognise the transformative power of education in shaping a just and equitable society. The legacy of Sidhu and Kanhu Murmu extends beyond their role in the Santhal rebellion. Through educational institutions, memorials,

literature and national recognition, their contributions continue to inspire and educate future generations. Their fight against oppression and their efforts to protect their community's way of life remain an important chapter in Indian history, highlighting the enduring spirit of resistance and unity.

Conclusion

The educational legacy of Sidhu and Kanhu Murmu is a profound testament to the transformative power of education in shaping a more just and equitable society. Their revolt against British colonial rule and the oppressive zamindari system not only drew attention to the importance of social justice but also underscored the significance of education as a potent tool for empowerment and societal progress. Sidhu and Kanhu Murmu recognized that true liberation could not be achieved without access to knowledge, and they took it upon themselves to lay the foundation for educational reform within the Santhal community and beyond. The Murmu brothers' vision for education was deeply rooted in the idea that learning should be accessible, inclusive, and culturally relevant. Their efforts extended beyond the battlefield of physical resistance to encompass the long-term development of their people through intellectual and cultural empowerment. They worked tirelessly to establish schools that would cater specifically to the needs of the Santhal community, promoting the use of tribal languages in education to ensure that knowledge was not only imparted but also preserved and respected within the community's cultural framework. This initiative was revolutionary at a time when indigenous languages and knowledge systems were often marginalized and suppressed under colonial rule. In addition to establishing schools, the Murmu brothers were pioneers in organizing teacher training programs, recognizing that quality education required well-prepared educators who understood both the cultural context and the unique challenges faced by their communities. Their advocacy for inclusive education was groundbreaking, as they sought to break down barriers that had historically excluded marginalized groups from accessing knowledge and learning opportunities. By doing so, they laid the groundwork for future educational reforms, not only within the Santhal community but also in wider Indian society.

The lasting impact of their work can be seen today in the establishment of institutions such as Sidhu Kanhu Murmu University, which serves as a beacon of higher education for marginalized communities. This university stands as a testament to their enduring influence and commitment to education as a tool for empowerment and progress. Additionally, the recognition of their contributions through the erection of monuments and the issuance of commemorative stamps ensures that their legacy continues to inspire future generations. Their contributions to education have not only preserved and promoted indigenous knowledge systems but have also influenced national educational policies in independent India. The Murmu brothers' emphasis on education as a means to achieve social, economic, and political progress continues to resonate, serving as an enduring source of inspiration for marginalized communities across the country. Their legacy underscores the importance of providing education that is inclusive and rooted in the cultural realities of the people it serves. As India moves forward in its efforts to build a more just and equitable society, the principles embodied by Sidhu and Kanhu Murmu offer valuable guidance. Their belief in the power of education to transform

lives remains a powerful reminder of the need to continue expanding educational opportunities for all, particularly for disadvantaged and marginalized groups. Their vision for a society in which education is a tool of empowerment, equality, and justice continues to inspire ongoing efforts to ensure that everyone has access to quality, inclusive education. By keeping their legacy alive, India can ensure that the vision of Sidhu and Kanhu Murmu a vision of a just, educated, and equitable society remains a driving force in the country's progress.

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Conflict of Research

The authors declare that they have no competing interests in relation to this research on the educational legacy of Sidhu and Kanhu Murmu. The study is conducted independently and solely reflects the scholarly analysis of the historical contributions of these leaders to the Santhal community and their role in advancing educational access. No external funding, sponsorship, or affiliations have influenced the research outcomes. The interpretations and conclusions presented are based on available historical records and scholarly literature, with an emphasis on accuracy and cultural representation. While historical documentation and colonial records pose interpretative challenges, the authors strive to honor the legacy of Sidhu and Kanhu Murmu through an unbiased, academically rigorous perspective on their educational and social impact.

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