

Concept Note

Adivasi Nostalgia | A series of songs on Bygone Days

- By Dr. [Boro Baski](#) in collaboration with [Sunder Manoj Hembrom](#)

Adivasi view stands as a fundamental contradiction with the idea of 'modern development' being promoted by the state. Modern development is constant that compels us to live in the future whereas Adivasis love to live in the present and the inspiration of living is always derived from the past. The Adivasi existence with linguistic and cultural identity depends on our traditional way of life. The more we assimilate ourselves with the 'mainstream' the more vulnerable our identity will be. We are in search of a middle path.

Since time immemorial, we Adivasis have been preserving and transmitting our cultural heritage through oral literature of folklore, dance, music and songs to strengthen our collective memory. A great part of our life revolves around our past love, happiness and despair that came through war, natural calamities and displacement from our ancestral land. This collective memory gives us the inspiration to move on with life as it comes.

Considering the strength of Adivasi nostalgia my friend Sunder Manoj Hembrom and I are going to present a series on the songs of Santal bygone days. We have consciously selected the songs that cover the various moods and Santal mentality, our despair and joyful way of life. We have also tried to strike a balance between the tradition and modernity. The name of the series is Sedae Katha Sedae Din - Old Memories of Bygone Days.

The story behind the title song-

Sedae Katha Sedae Din - Old Memories of Bygone Days.

There is a story behind the song. It was at the end of my university days at Shantiniketan. with the support of our village organization, Ghosaldanga Bishnubati Adibasi Trust, a Santal folk group 'Kulhi Dhuri'- Dust of the village road was formed and it consisted of talented Santal singers and musicians like Gokul Hansda, Baidyanath Murmu, Soban Tudu, Shoba Tudu, Sibua Saren, Bimol Baski, myself and our manager Biswanath Kisku. We used to travel around singing Santali traditional and inspirational songs in the local village fairs, Hool commemoration and various social occasions in various parts of Birbhum district and even in bordering Jharkhand and Orissa. Later on the group was renamed as "Sañge Bariat", which included two more talented Santal musicians, [Monoranjan Murmu](#) and [Babul Mardi](#).

One day Sakam Hansda (name changed), a college student much junior to me, came up to me and asked, "Boro da can you write a song on my lost love?" I was taken aback for a second and asked him to narrate his story. He said, "I loved a girl in my class but she got engaged to a diku, a non-Santal boy, before I could express my feelings to her. The incident got repeated with the second girl and she too left me for a diku. Now I am broken and do not know how to get over this mental agony and concentrate on my studies. So please compose a song on that and sing it on the stage near Shantiniketan. This will help me to overcome my pain." I asked him, "Did you ever express your feelings?" He replied "No." I asked him what was so unique in his story then, as hundreds of one sided lovers suffer in this world and nobody would sympathize with him. "But to me this experience of emotion is unique!" Sakam shot back. I got little irritated and thought of telling him to better channelize his emotion of love towards his education and make himself worthy enough to be proposed by girls themselves. But realizing his mental state I consoled him saying, ok, I shall try. Sakam was a first generation Santal boy who had come to study in Shantiniketan from the village. Having been exposed to beautiful, well dressed Santal girls who had grown up in mixed culture and spoke Santali in Bengali accent and culturally are neither fish nor fowl, his natural infatuation began to grow towards them. His inability to cope with them made him feel inferior. In the village he never heard anybody saying 'I love you' to a girl one was in love with and he struggled to express his feelings to them and failed repeatedly. He did not have enough money to get close to them by taking them to fancy restaurants. He saw the boys with money have an advantage in winning the hearts of the girls and that made him angry and helpless.

This song was written a decade ago and is dedicated to Sakam Hansda, a passionate lover who did not get his due recognition. I have sung this song on several stages near Shantiniketan which I have inserted in this video as clippings. Few years back I met Sakam in Poush Mela and with great surprise asked him, how he was doing? He said, "Boro da, after completing my masters in geography I cleared NET and later WBCS grade-C but did not take those jobs. Now I am the additional district inspector of schools." I curiously asked him, "what about your marriage?" "Several proposals of marriage came to me but nobody suited me." Sakam replied softly. I was happy to hear of his academic success but felt equally sorry that his search for a woman of love was still on.