

WHAT IS IT ALL ABOUT?

My village, Ghaghmunda, was a sleepy small village. It is still so. Finding it in a map is difficult. It is on the tip of the horn of Jharkhand (old Bihar) which is wedged between Chhattisgarh (Old Madhya Pradesh) and Orissa, the same old one — it has escaped being bifurcated. History had left it alone. The Renaissance, the Industrial Revolution and other developmental processes, which transformed the world, had bye-passed it. In my young days it had no road, no electricity, no telegraph or telephone, no transport, no school or hospital. The nearest bus-station was thirty-two miles away and the nearest rail-head, that too of the narrow gauge, about eighty miles away. The situation has changed somewhat in past sixty years but not much.

We had some land and lived well. It was a carefree life. No one thought of a career or future. However, change was in air. My father could sniff it. He decided to give us some education. He hired three tutors - a Pundit, a Munshi and a Pehelwan. Pundit and Munshi were to impart the Three Rs, reading, writing and arithmetic and the Pehelwan (wrestler) was to tone up our muscles. They did their best within their limitations. But for Netarhat, I would have lived the life of the Noble Savage of Rousseau.

I, sometimes, wonder whether that life would have been preferable! However, fact remains that Netarhat opened the brave new world to me and my classmates, most of whom had grown in similar circumstances. What we became and what we are today, we owe it to Netarhat. This makes Netarhat something very special to our hearts; something very precious, very valuable.

People — family members and non-Netarhatian friends, often wonder why the Netarhat Old Boys never tire of talking about their Netarhat days whenever and wherever they meet. The reason is that the Netarhat experiences rejuvenate us and make us feel young again.

I, too, relish talking about my Netarhat days. Some of my friends urged me to pen them lest my experiences get obliterated by the march of time. Initially I was hesitant. These experiences were

nothing extra-ordinary though to me, personally, these had tremendous significance. In a very subtle and indiscernible way the Netarhat days had shaped my thoughts and attitudes.

It is not an autobiographical account. I am in it but it is not about me. I am only the observer. The experiences were common to all. Trinath of the following pages can be easily substituted by anyone else - Shailoo, Sattoo, Raj Kumar, Mithilesh, Eric, Gabriel or Razi. Since I happen to be the narrator I figure a little more often than others here and there.

Things have changed considerably at Netarhat. Now it has come to be fully and properly established. The young students of today may find it difficult to visualize how things were half-a-century ago. Hopefully this book will enable them to have a peep into the past of their alma-mater.

For Old Boys — who are literally old now, this little book should open the flood-gates of the yore.

With these pious hopes I present Netarhat Days' to the readers.

