



# ASECA CHANNEL

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## Editorial

Migration problem of the tribal young people has become a serious matter of discussion. The concern is alarming because many young people are missing in the very distant places in the States of Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka etc. The exodus is not limited to the Southern States but equally people are migrating to the places in the Northern States also. The working place and the security status is also not known to the family members. They either were being taken to these distant places through middlemen or through the peer groups who are being equally lured to such places. Some even flee without the knowledge of the family members under the fear that family members would oppose such journey. There are instances where few young people never came back to the villages and they disappeared mysteriously. The family members could not trace them as they also do not know their whereabouts. The situation back home is also not that conducive nor they command monetary power to go and look out for their near and dear ones. Some family members file application in the local police and also try to highlight the issue through print media. The alacrity on the part of the authority is very lukewarm and there appears to be neither serious concern nor any demonstratable approach in finding out the missing people or solution to this problem. It is a fact that the working condition and terms and conditions are very harsh. These semi-literate or illiterate young people are trapped in a situation from where it is very difficult for them to come back to their roots nor they have such facility to free themselves from the clutches of their masters who have only interest in getting works done with a bare minimum salary structure and least possible expenses on their living places. It is told that these migrant labourers are being subject to a work schedule of more than twelve hours and that also they are forced to work in a dangerous and most unhygienic conditions. They do not have the courage to express their agony fearing brutal and ruthless reprisal from the goons being maintained by the masters or factory owners.

Initially these young masses are lured with great promises to make their life prosperous and peaceful. They are being told that they will be looked after nicely and their welfare would be the most priority. But with the passage of time, all promises turns sour

and usual scene is to confine them inside the boundary wall of the factory and seldom they are being allowed to inter mingle with people or to interact with the local or nearby populace. The situation becomes such that they fail to find themselves amidst the cultured or more civic people. The living condition as well as their social isolation make their existence miserable. Over a period of time they become too mechanical and situation converts them unsocial and unfriendly. Their exposure to hazardous substance and condition equally make them prone to various diseases.

Always a general question asked why people migrate to such distant places. The answer is due to push factor most of the times. Push factor means, people migrate to urban places due to acute and actual poverty. Pull factor attracts people to new places as these places throw open opportunity to high earning and modern infrastructural amenities. Many a times it is because of pull factor that people expect good life and environment. The middlemen also lure them with promises for a better life and handsome earning. But due to the fact that they are unorganized and with nil or primary education standard find them helpless in a location which is alien culturally and linguistically. They depend on the mercy of the middlemen who had brought them to such an unknown place. As they cannot read nor talk with the local people, their freedom becomes captive to the sweet will of the middlemen. The life becomes miserable and some even die in the far off places where their near and dears from the native places cannot also reach due to obvious difficulties including monetary, illiteracy and different cultural set up. They actually disappear from the world without being recognized or counted. The numbers are swelling day by day and there is very little hope that something can be done to make this practice a thing of the past. It can be expected that same persons who are toiling day and night in inhospitable or dangerous working conditions can also work hard and earn for their livelihood. There is a definite requirement to aim for balanced development all across the country. Opportunity is also available in the countryside and exodus to the metro cities or to the industrial centres is not the panacea or an easy route to prosper. Hard work always pays and can make a person self reliant and independent.

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**TRIBAL PROFILE AT A GLANCE - MAY 2013**  
**SOURCE: MINISTRY OF TRIBAL AFFAIRS, GOVT. OF INDIA**

{Continued from February 2014 issue}

Number of households having MGNREG job card per 1000 households, per 1000 distribution of households by status of getting work in MGNREG works and average number of days, got work during last 362 days for each household social group						
Household social group	Number of households having MGNREG job card per 1000 hhds.	Average number of days worked during last 365 days in MGNREG works by hhds that got MGNREG work	Per 1000 distribution of households by status of getting MGNREG work			
			Got MGNREG work	Sought but did not get MGNREG work	Did not seek MGNREG work	All (incl. n.r.)
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
ST	541	42	398	197	363	1000
All social groups	347	37	242	193	538	1000

Source: Report No. 543 of NSS 66<sup>th</sup> round, 2009-10

{To be continued...}

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**Folklore of the Santal Parganas**

Translated by **Cecil Henry Bompas** of the Indian Civil Service, 1909

{**ASECA CHANNEL intends to publish the stories in order to familiarize the stories among the general public for their better appreciation**}

{Continued from February 2014 issue}

**VI. The Jealous Stepmother.**

There was once a man whose wife died leaving him with one son and after a year he married again. The second wife was very jealous of the son and she told her husband that she would not stay with him unless he killed the boy; at first he refused but she insisted and then he said that he was frightened to do the deed, but she might kill the boy herself if she liked. She said, "No: he is your son and you must kill him; if he were mine I would do it. You need not be frightened; when you take him out ploughing make him drive the front plough, and you sharpen your plough pole to a point and drive it into him from behind and kill him and then it will seem to be an accident." So the man promised and made a sharp point to his plough pole but whenever they ploughed, the son drove his plough so fast that the father could not catch him up and so the boy was not killed; then the woman abused her husband and said that he was deceiving her. So he promised to finish the

business the next day and told her to give the boy a good hot breakfast before they started, so that he might receive one last kindness, and he said that they must find some other way of killing him because all the ploughing was finished; but his wife told him he could plough down their crop of *goondli*, the bullocks would stop to eat the *goondli* as they went along and so he would easily catch up his son. Accordingly the next morning father and son took out the ploughs and the boy asked where they should plough, and the father said that they would plough down the field of *goondli*. But the boy said "Why should we do that? it is a good crop and will be ripe in a day or two; it is too late to sow again, we shall lose this crop and who knows whether we shall get anything in its place?"

And the father thought 'What the boy says is true; the first crop is like the first child, if I kill him who will support me in my old age? Who knows whether my second wife will have children. I will not kill him however angry she

be;’ so they unyoked their ploughs and went home. He told his wife that he would not kill the boy and scolded her and ended by giving her a beating. Then she ran away in a passion but he did not trouble to go and look for her and in a few days her father and brothers brought her back, and her husband told them what had happened and they also scolded her and told her to mend her ways.

## VII. The Pious Woman.

There was once a very pious woman and her special virtue was that she would not eat or drink on any day until she had first given alms to a beggar. One day no beggar came to her house, so by noon she got tired of waiting, and, tying in her cloth some parched rice, she went to the place where the women drew water. When she got there she saw a Jugi coming towards her, she greeted him and said that she had brought dried rice for him. He said that omens had bidden him come to her and that he came to grant her a boon: she might ask one favour and it would be given her. The woman said: “Grant me this boon - to know where our souls go after death, and to see at the time of death how they escape, whether through the nose or the mouth, and where they go to; and tell me when I shall die and where my soul will go to; this I ask and no more.” Then the Jugi answered, “Your prayer is granted, but you must tell no one; if you do, the power will depart from you.” So saying he took from his bag something like a feather and brushed her eyes with it and washed them with water. Then the woman’s eyes were opened and she saw spirits—*bongas*, *bhuts*, *dains*, *churins*, and the souls of dead men; and the Jugi told her not to be afraid, but not to speak to them lest men should think her mad; then he took his leave, and she returned home. Now in the village lived a poor man and his wife and they were much liked because they were industrious and obedient; shortly afterwards this poor man died and the pious woman saw men come with a palankin and take away the poor man’s soul with great ceremony. She was pleased at the sight and thought that the souls of all men were taken away like this. But shortly afterwards her father-in-law died. He had been a rich man, but harsh, and while the family were mourning the pious woman saw four sipahis armed with iron-shod staves and of fierce countenance come to the house and two entered and took the father-in-law by the neck and thrust him forth; they bound him and beat him, they knocked him down and as he could not walk they dragged him away by his legs. The woman followed him to the end of the garden and when she saw him being dragged away, she screamed. When her husband’s relatives saw her screaming and crying they were angry and said that she must have killed her father-in-law by witchcraft, for she did not sit by the corpse and cry but

went to the end of the garden. So after the body had been burnt they held a council and questioned her and told her that they would hold her to be a witch, if she could not explain. So she told them of the power which the Jugi had conferred on her and of what she had seen, and they believed her and acquitted her of the charge of witchcraft; but from that time she lost her power and saw no more spirits.

## VIII. The Wise Daughter-in-Law.

There was once a rich man who had seven sons, but one day his wife died and after this the family fell into poverty. All their property was sold and they lived by selling firewood in the bazar. At last the wife of the eldest son said to her father-in-law. “I have a proposal to make: Do you choose one of us to be head of the family whom all shall obey; we cannot all be our own masters as at present.” The old man said “Well, I choose you,” and he assembled the whole family and made them promise to obey the wife of his eldest son.

Thereupon she told them that they must all go out into the fields and bring her whatever they found. So the next day they went out in different directions and the old man found some human excrement and he thought “Well, my daughter-in-law told me to bring whatever I found” so he wrapped it up in leaves and took it home; and his daughter-in-law told him that he had done well and bade him hang up the packet at the back of the house. A few days later he found the slough of a snake and he took that home and his daughter-in-law told to tie a clod of earth to it to prevent its being blown away, and to throw it on to the roof of the house.

Some years after the Raja of the country was ill with cancer of the face and none of the *ojhas* could cure him. At last one *ojha* said that there was only one medicine which could effect a cure, but he saw no chance of obtaining it and that was human excrement 12 years old. Then the Raja sent messengers throughout the kingdom offering a reward of 200 Rupees to any one who could supply excrement twelve years old; and when a messenger came to the village where this family lived the daughter-in-law produced the packet which the old man had brought home and received the reward of 200 Rupees; and they were all delighted at making so much money by what the old man had brought home in jest.

And again it happened that the son of a Raja was bathing and he left his gold belt on the bank and a kite thought it was a snake and flew off with it. The prince was much distressed at the loss but the Raja told him not to grieve as the kite must have dropped it somewhere and he would

offer a reward of a thousand rupees for it. Now the kite had soon found that the belt was not good to eat and seeing the snake's skin which the old man had thrown on to the roof of the house, it dropped the belt and flew off

with the skin; and the daughter-in-law picked up the belt and when criers came round offering a reward she produced it and received the money. And they praised her wisdom and by this means the family became rich again.

### IX. The Oilman and His Sons.

There was once an oilman with five sons and they were all married and lived jointly with their father. But the daughters-in-law were discontented with this arrangement and urged their husbands to ask their father to divide the family property. At first the old man refused, but when his sons persisted, he told them to bring him a log two cubits long and so thick that two hands could just span it, and he said that if they could break the log in two, he would divide the property; so they brought the log and then asked for axes, but he told them that they must break it themselves by snapping it or twisting it or standing on it; so they tried and failed. Then the old man said, "You are five and I make six; split the log into six." So they split it and he gave each a piece and told them to break them, and each easily snapped his stick; then the old man said "We are like the whole log: we have plenty of property and are strong and can overcome attack; but if we separate we shall be like the split sticks and easily broken." They admitted that this was true and proposed that the property should not be divided but that they should all become separate in mess. But the father would not agree to this for he thought that people would call him a miser if he let his sons live separately without his giving them their share in the property as their own, So as they persisted in their folly he partitioned the property.

But in a few years they all fell into poverty and had not enough to eat nor clothes to wear, and the father and mother were no better off; then the old man called all his sons and their wives and said "You see what trouble you have fallen into; I have a riddle for you, explain it to me. There are four wells, three empty and one full of water; if you draw water from the full one and pour it into the three empty ones they will become full; but when they are full and the first one is empty, if you pour water from the three full ones into the empty one it will not be filled; what does this mean?" And they could not answer and he said, "The four wells mean that a man had three sons, and while they were little he filled their stomachs as the wells were filled with water; but when they separated they would not fill the old man's stomach."

And it was true, that the sons had done nothing to help their father and they were filled with shame and they agreed that as long as their father lived they would be joint with him and would not separate again until he died.

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