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Editorial

Every big event has a modest beginning. For big things to happen there has to be many small as well as major initiatives. Initially it looks surprising to deal with such issues, but with the passage of time it seems practicable and possible. Some kind of result is being realised and for that realization to happen one has to infuse required and desired resources. The way one thinks and the way one wants to have the future depends upon the quantity and quality of resources that are being invested in the process. Without appropriate resources one cannot think of realising good results or at least right kind of result. Every initiative requires good deal of resources and for that reason every society, community or social formation invests required resources for their overall wellbeing. Some initiatives are intra community and some are directed for inter community peace and harmony. But it is seen that people or group of people are relentlessly in pursuit of good future and for that good future to take a shape, they invest their time, resources and energy to see that desired results are forthcoming. The collective decision and fruit of collective endeavours can be seen at many places. The places of worship are good and solid examples where people have demonstrated how gigantic and self sufficient institutions can be created with the will and wealth of the people. The social institutions need social care. Some social groups have already identified these aspects as important areas for social intervention whereas many social groups are yet to start thinking about the future and security of their institutions. The people who have understood the requirement have already in the process of creating viable and creditworthy institutions whereas those who are yet to appreciate their institutions are lagging behind in such approach and initiatives. The level of discipline, depth of dedication and quality of the disciples shape the dimension of the structure and status of the institutions. The institutions can be made viable, self sustainable and free from all outside influences so as to be able to give protection as well as to be the torch bearers of the concerned societies.

Whenever information on such institutions are being made available, promptly questions come to the mind regarding requirement of such institutions in other less privileged groups in and around us. If institutions are required for the welfare of the groups, the similar institutions are also required by other groups which are not having such institutions.

There are institutions may be loosely integrated in various social groups for their continuance and advancement. But the degree of development of such institutions is the point of concern. With the continuing state of affairs, it will be seen that those institutions which have wherewithal will continue to prosper and the have nots would be decimated further. The minority or the less organised community will be deprived of the fruits of development and internal bonding emerged out of the process of strengthening of the social/ traditional institutions.

Therefore, it is a natural conclusion for every society that they should also pursue the path followed by others and continue to consolidate their existence in order to bring in some correction in their society for their own benefits and betterment. The tribal community in India are not seen to be engaged in the development of their own systems and institutions. It is seen that they are yet to feel and appreciate the requirement. The haves from this group are in the midst of confusion and have nots though are presently following the norm, practice, rites and rituals are yet to realise the requirement. The divergent intra group aspirations are coming in the way for development of a unique and uniform agenda.

Many tribal community can be taken as an example for demonstrating this phenomenon. The age old institutions are still continuing as an independent unit and the unit size is the village. The village level institutions are, however, not integrated to form even a block level institution. The formation of a district level, State level and National level institution is a distant dream. The necessity of an independent social

identity and global aspirations cannot be fulfilled with the current state of traditional institutions.

The requirement is always there to avail guidance, support and services from the traditional institutions. But these are not being developed collectively. The collective wisdom and vision are yet to be deployed for laying bedrock for creation of viable institution(s). In the process, the institutions which are providing low cost services will be a thing of the past taking in to account diverse influences from various quarters. The difference in approach and value system for time and money will be the serious aspects considering the asymmetric and unequal intra community development.

The resource is not a constraint but the willingness and a sense of belongingness is. For example take a case of an international social group having around one crore population. This group can do a lot provided they are being guided and advised properly. Out of the population of about one crore, one

lakh population is practising daily worship and are the followers of strict regimen in terms of time and temperament. On a modest calculation, the amount spent per year comes to rupees five crore considering each spending a meagre five hundred rupees (which is much more in actual) per annum. One would be astonished to find out that this amount is not being spent on their own deities and for that matter for the upgradation of their own systems and institutions. One should not be surprised that with the deployment of such amount, this group could also create places of worship with gold plated structures. But, such things are not happening and initiatives are also remote to make such things happen. There are voices being heard now-a-days for the initiatives to streamline and bring in some discipline in the social life so that in the near future some kind of good things could be realised. The need of the hour is to connect and create so as to correct the present state of affairs which is long overdue.

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 October 2014 issue}

XVII. Kuwar and the Raja's Daughter.

There was once a rich merchant who lived in a Raja's city; and the Raja founded a school in order that his own children might have some education, and the boys and the girls of the town used to go to the school as well as the Raja's sons and daughters and among them the rich merchant's son, whose name was Kuwar. In the course of time the children all learned to read and write. In the evenings all the boys used to mount their horses and go for a ride.

Now it happened that Kuwar and the Raja's daughter fell in love with each other and she wrote him a letter saying that if he did not marry her she would forcibly install herself in his house. He wrote back and begged her not to come to his house as this would be the ruin of his family; but he said that he would willingly run away with her to a distant country, and spend his whole life with her, if she would overlook the fact that they were of different castes; and if she agreed to this they must settle to what country to go.

Somehow news of their intention got about, and the Raja was told that his daughter was in love with the merchant's son. Then the Raja gave orders that his daughter was not to be allowed to go outside the palace, and the merchant spoke severely to Kuwar and neither of them was allowed to go to the school any more. But one day the princess went to the place where the Raja's horses were tied up and among them was a mare named Piyari and she went up to the mare and said "You have eaten our salt for a long time, will you now requite me?" And Piyari said "Certainly I will!". Then the princess asked "If I mount you, will you jump over all these horses and this wall and escape?" And the mare said "Yes, but you will have to hold on very tight." The princess said "That is my look-out: it is settled that on the day I want you you will jump over the wall and escape." Then she wrote a letter to Kuwar and gave it to her maid-servant to deliver into Kuwar's own hands, without letting anyone know: and in the letter she fixed a day for their elopement and told Kuwar to wait for her by a certain tree. So on the day fixed after everyone was asleep Kuwar went to the tree and almost at once the princess came to him riding on

Piyari; he asked her how she had escaped and whether she had been seen and she told him how the mare had jumped over the wall without anyone knowing; then they both mounted Piyari and drove her like the wind and in one night they passed through the territory of two or three Rajas and in the morning were in a far country.

Then they dismounted to cook their rice, and went to the house of an old woman to ask for a light with which to light their fire. Now this old woman had seven sons and they were all robbers and murderers; and six of them had killed travellers and carried off their wives and married them. When Kuwar and the princess came asking for a light the seven sons were away hunting and when the old woman saw the princess she resolved to marry her to her youngest son, and made a plan to delay them; so she asked them to cook their rice at her house and offered them cooking pots and water pots and firewood and everything necessary; they did not know that she meant to kill Kuwar and unsuspectingly accepted her offer. When they had finished cooking Kuwar asked the old woman whether she lived alone and she told him that she was a widow but had seven sons and they were all away on a trading expedition. The old woman kept on looking out to see if her sons were returning, and she had made an arrangement with them that if she ever wanted them she would set fire to a small hut and they would come home at once when they saw the smoke rising. But before her sons came back Kuwar and the princess finished their meal and paid the old woman and mounted Piyari and galloped off. Then the old woman set fire to the hut and her sons, seeing the smoke hurried home. She told them that a beautiful girl had just left who would make a suitable wife for the youngest of the brothers. Then the brothers tied on their swords and mounted their horses and went in pursuit. Kuwar and the princess knew nothing of their danger and rode on happily, but presently they heard horses neighing behind them and looking round, saw men riding after them with drawn swords. Then the princess said to Kuwar "Our enemies are upon us; do you sit in front and let me sit behind you, then they will kill us both together. If I am in front they may kill you alone and carry me off alive." But while they were thinking of this the seven brothers caught them up, and began to abuse them and charge them with having set

fire to the house in which they had eaten their rice, and told them to come back with them at once. Kuwar and the princess were too frightened to answer and they had no sword with which to defend themselves. Then the robbers surrounded them and killed Kuwar, and they said to the princess "You cannot stay here all alone; we will take you back and you shall marry one of us." The princess answered "Kill me here at once, never will I go with you." They said "We shall take away your horse and all your food, will not that make you go?" But the princess threw herself on the dead body of Kuwar and for all they could do they could not drag her off it. Then the murderers said to the youngest brother "She is to be your wife: you must pull her away." But he refused saying "No, if I take her away she will not stay with me, she will probably hang herself or drown herself; I do not want a wife like that, if any of you want her, you can have her." But they said that it would not be right for one of them to take a second wife while their youngest brother was unmarried, and that their mother intended him to marry this girl; if he would not they would kill her there and then. But the youngest brother had pity on her and asked them to spare her life, so they took away her horse and her food and everything that she had and went away and left her there.

For a day and a night the princess lay there weeping and lamenting her dead Kuwar and never ceased for a moment. Then Chando said "who is this who is weeping and what has happened to her?" And he sent Bidhi and Bidha to see what was the matter; they came and told him that a princess was weeping over the body of her dead husband and would not leave him though she had been robbed of everything she had. Then Chando told them to go and frighten her, and if they could frighten her away from her husband's dead body he would do nothing, but if she would not leave him then they were to restore him to life. So they went and found her holding the dead body of her husband in her lap and weeping; and they first assumed the form of tigers and began to circle round her roaring, but she only went on weeping and sang—
"You have come roaring, tigress:
First eat me, tigress:
Then only will I let you eat the body of my lord."

She would not quit the body nor run away from fear of the tigers, so they slunk away and came back in

the form of two leopards, and prowled round her growling; but she only sang

“You have come roaring, leopardess
First eat me, leopardess

Then only will I let you eat the body of my lord.” and as she would not fly from them they slunk away and came back in the form of two bears, but the princess only sang the same song; then they appeared as two elephants; and then as two huge snakes which hissed terribly but still she only wept; and in many forms they tried to frighten her away but she would not move nor leave the corpse of Kuwar, so in the end they saw that all the heart of the princess was with Kuwar and that even in death they could not be separated, so at last they drew near to her in the form of human beings and asked her why she was crying, as they had heard her weeping from a long way off, and had been filled with pity for her lamentations. Then the princess said “Alas, this youth and I are from such and such a country and as we loved and our lives were bound up in each other we ran away together hither, and here on the road he has been killed and the murderers have left me without my horse or food; and this is why I weep.” Then Bidhi and Bidha said “Daughter, rise up and we will take you to your home, or we will find you another husband; this one is dead and cannot be restored to you; you will find another; come arise, you have but one life,” But the princess answered “No I will not go and leave him here. I will not leave him while my life lasts; but I pray you if you know of any medicine that might restore him to life, to try it.” Then they answered “We know something of medicine and if you wish we will try to cure him;” so saying, they ground up some simples and told the princess to spread out a cloth and lay the dead body on it and to put the head which had been cut off into position, and then to

cover it with the cloth and hold the head in position; so she did as they bade, and they rubbed the medicine on the body and then they suddenly disappeared from her sight.

Then in a few moments she saw Kuwar’s chest heave as if he were breathing; thereupon she shook him violently and he rose up and said “Oh, what a long time I have slept,” but the princess said “Do not talk of sleep; you were killed and two men appeared from somewhere and applied medicine and brought you to life again;” then Kuwar asked where they were and she told him how they had disappeared without her knowledge.

Then they rose up and went in search of food to a village where there was a bazar, and they tried to get employment as servants; but the people advised them to go to the capital city where the Raja lived, and there if no one would take them as servants they could get employment as coolies on a big tank which the Raja was excavating. So they went there, and as they could not get employment as servants they went to work at the tank with the common coolies and were paid their wages at the end of the week and so managed to live. Kuwar’s desire was to somehow save five or six rupees and then build a little house for themselves.

Now although the tank had been dug very deep there were no signs of any water. Then the Raja ordered the centre post to be planted in hopes that this would make the water rise; and he told the coolies not to run away as he would make a feast to celebrate the making of the tank and would distribute presents among them, and at this the labourers were very pleased.

{To be continued....}

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