



ASECA CHANNEL

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Editorial

General perception and actual ground realities quite often do not match and as such it is always advisable to know and understand the ground realities. For understanding a ground reality one needs to have on site or practical experience. Without right kind of exposure and in depth knowledge, it is not easy to realize and appreciate the actual issues. Santal society has been following a particular social order and it is also undergoing certain changes in its social milieu as change is inevitable. But concern is raised on the nature, quality and direction of change. The nature, quality and direction are very difficult to narrate and equally what is wrong or right is not that easy to be decided or announced. It is something which requires in depth analysis of issues, facts and mature understanding. The changes which are seen, which are expected or are thought of, need to be complementary to each other otherwise, the conflict in two schools of thoughts would be enough to misguide the population and source of misinformation.

From time immemorial, it is followed that social affairs are the responsibility of the traditional village panchayats (committee) and the committee formed with the consent of the villagers take part in various social administration affairs and also take decisions with a sole intention to resolve contentious issues. The decision making process, however, has not been unique or identical in nature. Many a times, the decision is influenced by many factors and quality of delivery of judgment as such suffers. Over a period of time, the traditional village committees are not in sync with the present day demand as their exposure is limited to the village level only. The better-educated people are not interested to take part or take responsibility, as there is no matching remuneration associated with such post or responsibility. As such all the time, a majhi heading a committee is not in a position to take decision and deliver the verdict as per the modern day expectation.

The present day trend is that the people who are not the best among the available lot have shouldered the

social responsibilities. One can observe this mismatch during any social functions where people who are performing social rites or complying with the traditional customs are easily recognizable. The people who are well off or better educated are not shouldering the responsibilities or are not participating in such events. If they happen to involve themselves due to compulsion or unavoidable circumstances remain merely as spectator. There is no initiative to overcome any inconsistencies that are being faced or any requirement to introduce new practices, development in the ongoing process so that others can be benefitted from the experience or realization. Due to this gap in transfer of knowledge or lack of sincere move to bring in fresh air, society is not being benefitted at all from the new kind of knowledge people are acquiring through modern education or present process of intermingling with various groups of people.

A new proposal is in the circulation now-a-days to create the association or federation of the village headmen and to develop the same through partnership and participation. The present system of creation of associations by the people other than the actual village headmen need to change. Till date, the policy is to create the association and invite them (village headmen and/or other members) to participate and follow. This has to change. Now the village headmen and other members will create and manage the associations to be followed by other people in the society through support and participation and partnership. The problems being faced by the society are then only be addressed and establishment of such associations by the grassroots people would receive acceptance by administrative and political process. This new paradigm needs wider consultation and better understanding. Unless present problems are being tackled by the villagers the value system and other elements of bonding together are going to be gradually weakened and in the process the time is not far when Santal society would find itself in an extremely low position to address various issues with suitable or alternate solutions.

Obituary



Ram Chandra Baske

(12-01-1959 to 28-03-2015)

(Born at Jagannathpur, post: Baiganbadia, Dist: Mayurbhanj, Odisha)

The news of sudden demise of Ram Chandra Baske came as a total surprise and it took time to accept the hard reality. As the news poured in, it was a state of disbelief that it has actually happened. God has cut short the journey of an amiable person and it had to be accepted may be He has some other assignment for him. During his entire life he tried hard to strive for excellence and to see the Santal society reach a respectable level through hard work as well through a partnership. He had long and vital plans in the future so that some concrete steps could be taken in the direction of social mobility and upliftment.

As part of social responsibility he was instrumental in organizing Santal population in the South particularly in the State of Tamil Nadu by forming an organization in Chennai and discharged his duties as the President of that organization. He was actively associated with All India ASECA and contributed immensely for the overall development and progress of the society. His activities were not confined to only Santal society, but he was also equally involved in many social/cultural activities. He is survived by his wife and a son. His death is an irreparable loss not only to his near and dear ones but equally to the society also. All India ASECA deeply mourn his untimely departure from this world and at the same time pray God to shower his soul an eternal peace. We also pray God to give enough strength to the family members to bear this irreparable loss.

ADIVASI SOCIO RENAISSANCE ASSOCIATION (ASRA) organized a village level conference on the Birth anniversary of Saonta Guru Shyam Sundar Hemram on 10th April 2015 at Khadisole Jamuna, Post: Deulia, via: Barsahi, Dist: Mayurbhanj, Odisha – 757 026. Participants from various blocks namely Badasahi, Betnoti, Khunta, Baripada, Kuliana, Bangiriposi, Bisoi, Jamda had reached to attend participate in the meetings.

All were in agreement that there are issues pertaining to the social affairs and quick and immediate attention is required to ameliorate the social status and save the society from further deterioration. There are many initiatives in the society here and there but due to lack of co-ordination and proper co-operation desired results are yet to be realized. The meeting on the social affairs was followed by the award giving ceremony and an overnight opera as part of cultural event. The participation and this kind of initiatives at the village level was lauded by the participants and guests and all wished that this initiative should continue in the future also.



The awardees are flanked by other guests and the office bearers of ASRA. From left {Mr. Santosh Kumar Behera (Guest), Mr. Hadibandhu Mohapatra (Guest), Mr. Chandrai Hansdah (Guest), *Mr. Sanatan Marandi (Awardee)*, *Mrs. Gayamani (Murmu) Beshra (Awardee)*, *Mr. Bajun Murmu (Awardee)*, *Mr. Gobinda Marndi (Awardee)*, *Mr. Shankar Murmu (Awardee)*, Mr. Prabhat Kumar Jena (Guest), Mr. Sadashiba Soren (Secretary), Mr. Suratha Murmu (President) and Mr. P. C. Hembram (Advisor) at the back side}

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 March 2015 issue}

XXII. Lita and His Animals.

Then Lita went on, and by-and-bye came to a village where the villagers were hunting an otter in a tank; they had made a cut in the bank and had let out all the water. Lita went to them and asked what they were doing; they said that they were hunting for an otter which had been destroying the Raja's fish and the Raja had promised them a reward if they killed it, and they had driven it into the tank and were draining off the water in order to catch it. Then Lita offered to buy it of them if they brought it to him alive; so when they caught it they brought it to him and he gave

them money for it and continued his journey with the cat and the otter. Presently he saw a crowd of men and he went up to them and asked what they were doing: and they told him that they were hunting a rat which was always gnawing the Raja's pens and papers and the Raja had offered a reward for it, and they had driven it out of the palace, but it had taken refuge in a hole and they were going to dig it out. Then Lita offered to buy it from them as he had bought the other two animals and they dug it out and sold it to him.

He went on and in the same way found a crowd of men hunting a snake which had bitten many people:

and he offered to buy it for twenty rupees and when they had chased it till it was exhausted, they caught it alive and sold it to Lita. As his money was all spent, he then set off homewards; and on the way the snake began to speak and said: "Lita, you have saved my life; had you not come by, those men would certainly have had my life; come with me to my home, where my father and mother are, and I will give you anything you ask for; we have great possessions." But Lita was afraid and said: "When you get me there you will eat me, or if you don't, your father and mother will." But the snake protested that it could not be guilty of such ingratitude and at last Lita agreed to accompany it when he had left the other animals at his home.

This he did and set off alone with the snake, and after some days they reached the snake's home. The snake told Lita to wait outside while he went and apprized his parents and he told Lita that when he was asked to choose his reward he should name nothing but the ring which was on the father-snake's finger, for the ring had this property that if it were placed in a *seer* of milk and then asked to produce anything whatever, that thing would immediately appear. Then the snake went on to his home and when the father and mother saw him they fell on his neck and kissed him and wept over him saying that they had never expected to see him again; the snake told them how he had gone to the country of men and how a reward had been set on his head and he had been hunted, and how Lita had bought him from the men who would have killed him. The father snake asked why he had not brought Lita to be rewarded and the snake said that he was afraid that when they saw him they would eat him.

But the father and mother swore that they could not be guilty of such ingratitude, and when he heard this

the snake went and brought in Lita, and they entertained him handsomely for two days; and on the third day the father snake asked Lita what he would take as his reward. Lita looked round at the shining palace in which they lived and at first was afraid to speak but at last he said: "I do not want money or anything but the ring on your finger: if you will not give me that, I will take nothing; I saved your son from peril and that you will remember all your lives, and if you give me the ring I will honour you for it as long as I live." Then the father and mother snake consulted together and the mother said "Give it to him as he asks for it" so the father snake drew it from his finger and gave it to Lita and they gave him also some money for his journey back; and he went home and found the other three animals safe and sound waiting for him.

After a time his father said that Lita must marry; so marriage go-betweens were sent out to look for a bride and they found a very rich and beautiful girl whose parents were agreeable to the match. But the girl herself said that she would only marry a man who would build a covered passage from her house to his, so that she could walk to her new home in the shade. The go-betweens reported this, and Lita's father and brothers consulted and agreed that they could never make such a passage, but Lita said to his father: "Arrange the match; it shall be my charge to arrange for making the covered passage; I will not let you be put to shame over it." For Lita had already put the ring to the test: he had dropped it into a *seer* of milk and said "Let five *bharias* of parched rice and two *bharias* of curds appear" and immediately the parched rice and curds were before him; and thereupon he had called out "The snake has worthily rewarded me for saving his life;" and the cat and the otter and the rat overheard what he said.

{To be continued...}

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