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Editorial

Issues and information connect people together. Integration is a process which fosters brotherhood and solidarity among the members of a community at micro level and people at the macro level. Day by day, the thread of belongingness and oneness among Santals are being allowed to be weakened and in the process there emerges a new kind of thought process which is of course not in sync with the age old belief, uniqueness and cultural bonding. The forefathers had devised some arrangements through which people flock together at some or same place which was acting as a platform and also a mechanism to bind people together as well as to instill among them a sense of belongingness and solidarity. Individualism was not the order of the day and the emphasis was on the virtues of collectivism and to complement the coexistence with each other. The annual meeting of the Santals during the emersion of "Durib – pieces of forehead" was a mix of religious as well as cultural function to congregate. The pristine practice has been continuing till recent time as a collective function and commemoration, but in the recent times it is being experienced that people are making this arrangement as per their time and convenience. The very essence of merging together at some point and same occasion has been diluted to the extent that the function has been customized and curtailed as part of a ritual to anyhow complete the process and performance.

It is not the solitary example of disintegration but in other fields of social interaction also there seems to be the tendency to remain aloof from each other through a practice of groupism. Professionals have chosen to identify themselves within the same group and also urge to interact with the same level of people and the common link is missing whereby all levels of people in the society can mingle freely and exchange their feelings towards strengthening bonds and brotherhood. The burgeoning hiatus in the society may not be felt for the time being, but the days are not far which will become a permanent feature resulting into a point of no return. The deed of present will shape the foundation of the future. The variety and virtues of the past have influenced the collective Santal life and social milieu. The culture which has been transferred from one generation to another has

been the cornerstone and people relate themselves and rely upon one another has been the process to remain together, prosper and flourish for a better life.

The integration aspects of social life are covertly or overtly being diluted and it is gradually being sensed that there are many shades of thought process which shape such multi-directional approach. The seriousness attached to any occasion is bound to suffer as the occasions are shared through disjointed participation and half hearted appreciation. Mass participation and practice are being seen as one of the cultural traits of any community and Santals are also not an exception. The practice and prominence of individualism are bound to act in a diverse direction and sooner or later result in a situation which will be felt by one and all with remorse and repentance. The intelligentsia in the community is yet to see the danger or hear the alarm of disintegration process as there is any visible example from any quarter to work on the issues of unification. Time and again, the feelings are being shared among the people but there always is a dearth of initiative and information sharing. The priority is yet to be accorded to such a process or formation which will act as a harbinger of a better social order for the realization of the common goal and purpose of life.

The intra community dialogue is necessary for the peaceful, powerful and purposeful co-existence of the members of a particular community. There has to be a growing restlessness in the community to form a discerning group with the right earnestness which will bring together people for a common cause and concern. Time is the essence in all endeavour and various groups in the Santal community should shed their cocoon of limited area and aura to work together in search of solid solidarity and fellow feeling for a better life and identity.

There has been an initiative to organize the traditional institutions in a formidable way to show the community a better path to follow and emulate the age old and time tested traits of social control and consolidation. The traditional institutions and persons are inseparable and as such should be linked with each other through a proper support system and with an increasing sense of sharing and caring.

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 January 2015 issue}

XX. Kara and Guja.

Presently they sat down in the shade of a banyan tree by the side of a road and along the road came a Raja's wedding procession; when Kara and Guja saw this they climbed into the tree and took the tiger's paunch up with them. The wedding party came to a halt at the foot of the tree and some of them lay down to eat and the Raja got out of his palki and lay down to sleep in the shade. After a time Kara got tired of holding the tiger's paunch in his arms and whispered to Guja that he could hold it no longer, Guja told him on no account to let it go but at last Kara got so tired that he let it fall right on the top of the Raja; then all the Raja's attendants raised a shout that the Raja's stomach had burst and all ran away in a panic leaving everything they had under the tree; but after they had gone a little distance they thought of the goods they had left behind and how they could not continue the journey without them, so they made their way back to the banyan tree.

But meanwhile Kara and Guja had climbed down and gathered together all the fine clothes and everything valuable and taken them up into the tree. And Kara took up a large drum which he found and in one end of the drum he made a number of little holes: and he caught a number of wild bees which had a nest in the tree and put them one by one into the drum. When the Raja's attendants came back and saw that there were two men in the tree, they called out: "Why have you dishonoured our Raja? We will kill you." Kara and Guja answered "Come and see who will do the killing." So they began to fight and the Raja's men fired their guns at Kara and Guja till they were tired of shooting, and had used up all their powder and shot, but they never hit them. Then Kara and Guja called out "Now it is our turn!" And when the Raja's men saw that Kara and Guja had nothing but a drum they said "Yes, it is your turn." So Kara and Guja beat the drum and called "At them, my dears: at them my dears." And the wild bees flew out of the drum and stung the Raja's men and drove them right away.

Then Kara and Guja took all their belongings and went home and ever after were esteemed as great Rajas because of the wealth which they had acquired.

XXI. The Magic Cow.

There was once a Raja who had an only son named Kara and in the course of time the Raja fell into poverty and was little better than a beggar. One day when Kara was old enough to work as a cowherd his father called him and said "My son, I am now poor but once I was rich. I had a fine estate and herds of cattle and fine clothes; now that is all gone and you have scarcely enough to eat. I am old and like to die and before I leave you I wish to give you this advice: there are many Rajas in the world, Raja above Raja; when I am dead do you seek the protection of some powerful Raja." As there was not enough to eat at home Kara had to take service as goat-herd under a neighbouring Raja; by which he earned his food and clothes and two rupees a year. Some time afterwards his father died and Kara went to his master and asked for a loan of money with which to perform his father's funeral ceremonies, and promised to continue in his service until he had worked off the loan. So the Raja advanced him five rupees and five rupees worth of rice, and with this money Kara gave the funeral feast. Five or six days later his mother died, and he again went to the Raja and asked for ten rupees more; at first the Raja refused but Kara besought him and promised to serve him for his whole life if he could not repay the loan. So at last the Raja lent him ten rupees more, and he gave the funeral feast. But the Raja's seven sons were very angry with their father because he had lent twenty rupees to a man who had no chance of paying, and they used to threaten and worry Kara because he had taken the money. Then Kara remembered how his father had said that there were many Rajas in the world, Raja above Raja, and he resolved to run away and seek service with the greatest Raja in the world. So he ran away and after travelling some distance he met a Raja being carried in a palki and going with a large party to fetch a bride for his son; and when he

heard who it was he decided to follow the Raja; so he went along behind the palki and at one place a she-jackal ran across the road; then the Raja got out of his palki and made a salaam to the jackal. When Kara saw this he thought "This cannot be the greatest Raja in the world or why should he salaam to the jackal. The jackal must be more powerful than the Raja; I will follow the jackal." So he left the wedding party and went after the jackal; now the jackal was hunting for food for her young ones, and as Kara followed her wherever she went she could find no opportunity of killing a goat or sheep; so at last she went back to the cave in which she lived. Then her cubs came whining to meet her and she told her husband that she had been able to catch nothing that day because a man had followed her wherever she went, and had come right up to their cave and was waiting outside. Then the he-jackal told her to ask what the man wanted. So she went out to Kara and asked him and Kara said "I have come to place myself under your protection;" then she called the he-jackal and they said to him, "We are jackals and you are a man. How can you stay with us; what could we give you to eat and what work could we find for you to do?" Kara said that he would not leave them as all his hopes lay in them; and at last the jackals took pity on him and consulted together and agreed to make him a gift as he had come to them so full of hope; so they gave him a cow which was in the cave, and said to him: "As you have believed in us we have made up our minds to benefit you; take this cow, she will supply you with everything you want; if you address her as mother she will give you whatever you ask, but do not ask her before people for they would take her from you; and do not give her away whatever inducements are offered you."

Then Kara thanked them and called down blessings on their heads and took the cow and led it away homewards. When he came to a tank he thought he would bathe and eat; while he bathed he saw a woman washing clothes at the other side of the tank but he thought that she would not notice him, so he went up to the cow and said "Mother, give me a change of clothes." Thereupon the cow vomited up some nice new clothes and he put them on and looked very fine. Then he asked the cow for some plates and dishes and she gave them; then he asked for some bread and some dried rice, and he ate all he

wanted and then asked the cow to keep the plates and dishes for him; and the cow swallowed them up again.

Now the woman by the tank had seen all that had happened and ran home and told her husband what she had seen and begged him to get hold of the wonderful cow by some means or other. Her husband could not believe her but agreed to put it to the test, so they both went to Kara and asked where he was going and offered to give him supper, and put him up for the night and give grass for his cow. He accepted this invitation and went with them to their house and they gave him the guest-room to sleep in and asked what he would have to eat, but he said that he did not want any supper,—for he intended to get a meal from the cow after every one was asleep. Then the man and his wife made a plot and pretended to have a violent quarrel and after abusing each other for some time the man flung out of the house in a passion and pretended to run away; but after going a short distance he crept back quietly to the guest-room. Hanging from the roof was the body of a cart and he climbed up into that and hid himself, without Kara knowing anything about it. When Kara thought that every one was asleep, he asked his cow for some food and having made a good meal went to sleep.

The man watching up above saw everything and found that his wife had spoken the truth; so in the middle of the night he climbed down and led away Kara's magic cow and put in its place one of his own cows of the same colour. Early the next morning Kara got up and unfastened the cow and began to lead it away, but the cow would not follow him; then he saw that it had been changed and he called his host and charged him with the theft. The man denied it and told him to call any villagers who had seen him bring his cow the day before; now no one had seen him come but Kara insisted that the cow had been changed and went to summon the village headman and the villagers to decide the matter: but the thief managed to give a bribe of one hundred rupees to the headman and one hundred rupees to the villagers and made them promise to decide in his favour; so when they met together they told Kara that he must take the cow which he had found tied up in the morning.

Kara protested and said that he would fetch the person from whom he had got the cow and take whichever cow he pointed out. Telling them that they

were responsible for his cow while he was away, he hastened off to the cave where the jackals lived. The jackals somehow knew that he had been swindled out of the cow, and they met him saying “Well, man, have you lost your cow?” And he answered that he had come to fetch them to judge between himself and the villagers: so the jackals went with him and he went straight to the headman and told him to collect all the villagers; meanwhile the jackals spread a mat under a peepul tree and sat on it chewing *pan* and when the villagers had assembled the jackal began to speak, and said: “If a judge takes a bribe his descendants for several generations shall eat filth, in this world and the next; but if he make public confession, then he shall escape this punishment. This is what our forefathers have said; and the man who defrauds another shall be thrust down into hell; this also they have said. Now all of you make honest enquiry into this matter; we will swear before God to do justice and the complainant and the accused shall also take oath and we will decide fairly.” Then the village headman was conscience stricken and admitted that he had taken a bribe of one hundred rupees, and the villagers also confessed that they had been bribed; then the jackal asked the accused what he had to say to this: but he persisted that he had not changed the cow; the jackal asked him what penalty he would pay if he were proved guilty and he said that he would pay double. Then the jackal called the villagers to witness that the man had fixed his punishment, and he proposed that he and his wife should go to the herd of cattle, and if they could pick out the cow that Kara claimed it would be sure proof that it was his. So the jackals went and at once picked out the cow, and the villagers were astonished and cried. “This is a just judgment! They have come from a distance and have recognised the cow at once.” The man who had stolen it had no answer to give; then

the jackal said: “You yourself promised to pay double; you gave a bribe of one hundred rupees to the headman and one hundred rupees to the villagers and the cow you stole is worth two hundred rupees that is four hundred rupees, therefore you must pay a fine of eight hundred rupees;” and the man was made to produce eight hundred rupees and the jackal gave all the money to the villagers except ten rupees which he gave to Kara; and he kept nothing for himself.

Then Kara and the jackals went away with the cow, and after getting outside the village the jackals again warned Kara not to ask the cow for anything when anyone was by and took their leave of him and went home. Kara continued his journey and at evening arrived at a large mango orchard in which a number of carters were camping for the night. So Kara stopped under a tree at a little distance from the carters and tied his cow to the root. Soon a storm came up and the carters all took shelter underneath their carts and Kara asked his cow for a tent and he and the cow took shelter in it. It rained hard all night and in the morning the carters saw the tent and wondered where it came from, and came to the conclusion that the cow must have produced it; so they resolved to steal the cow.

Kara did not dare to make the cow swallow the tent in the day time while the carters were about, so he stayed there all the next day and at night the cow put away the tent. Then when Kara was asleep some carters came and took away the cow and put in its place a cow with a calf, and they hid the magic cow within a wall of packs from their pack bullocks. In the morning Kara at once saw what had happened and went to the carters and charged them with the theft; they denied all knowledge of the matter and told him he might look for his cow if he liked; so he searched the encampment but could not see it.

{To be continued...}

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