



# ASECA CHANNEL

(A monthly Journal from All India ASECA)

Website: [www.allindiaaseca.org](http://www.allindiaaseca.org)

E-mail: [contact@allindiaaseca.org](mailto:contact@allindiaaseca.org)

Volume: XV Issue: 2 February, 2016

Annual Subscription Rs50/- Single copy Rs5/-

## Editorial

Marriage has been an important function and organization of bonding together at personal as well as group or community level. This is a fundamental institution from where two people get a recognition as well as approval to live together peacefully and with dignity. The recognition from the society is paramount in an alliance from time immemorial. The society also accords recognition to various forms and formats of the marriage. In all societies, there are norms of acceptance as well as refusals, which are thought to be based on long-term relation and experience with such other groups. The norms, perceptions and behaviour, which interplay in different societies, form the basis of such social interaction and participation. The institution of marriage is based on mutual acceptance of different societies and usually believed to have been based on the principle of providing protection and privilege to each other.

The interaction of the members of different communities under a common platform like social gathering, religious practices are some of the traits, which bring two families or two communities together. The language, equal or similar social status, beliefs, social practices also give rise to social consolidation and construction. Due to these factors though marriage is a personal affair has incorporated the approval of the society towards shaping a community identity or social philosophy. This difference in thought process that is individualistic versus collective has been the bane for the inter caste marriage. In many parts of the country as is being reported regularly, inter caste marriage is not seen in good taste and it is also observed that people

react violently and even the process ends in a bizarre episode of murder.

Like any other social formations and divisions, tribal people also have norms and practices regarding the institution of marriage. Inter tribal or inter caste marriage is still not an accepted norm by the respective societies and thus is a rare happening once in a blue moon in the tribal society. Due to this reality any such alliance draws reactions of various magnitude. The news of inter caste marriage of a daughter of a Minister in Odisha had drawn attention from far and wide corners. Arguments, counter arguments followed by sharp reactions from the community in which he belongs.

Identity is shaped out of the defined corners of the society and this is the reality for which people cannot find a justification. The essence is not the mutual consent of the individuals but the mutual consent between or among the societies. As long as societies in general are not in a position to accept each other equally, the problem attached with inter caste marriage will persist.

Now question is asked where to position two people solemnizing alliance which is not approved by the respective society or if this problem is extended further where to position the concerned immediate families. It is argued that due to mutual love and affection people defy the age old norms or practices and the respective societies fall in line and in some cases it is seen that these two individuals are left with no support from either the family or the society. Some accepts the reality on the basis of changing and

emerging social situations whereas others cannot accept such alliance and even perform the last rites of the persons in question. There is nothing wrong or right in such acceptance or reaction. It is purely based on perception and way of life at individual or collective level. The Santal society in particular has some prescriptions for such happenings and it is performed or put to practice at the time it is deemed fit. It becomes pertinent to mention that in the case of a boy, Santal society has accepted the offspring out of such wedlock but without giving sanction to such alliance. The daughters are, however, not exonerated and family is let off after observing some social processes and procedures. In the case of Santal society marriage is recognized when the process is completed amidst and in front of the society and traditional heads.

The question now asked is who will judge or make an analysis of this kind of development in the society. The demonstrations and reactions are not the panacea. The question remains whether people who are making noise are actually the authorized persons. The state of affairs of the Santal traditional system is not that rosy as is being believed or it should have been. The interest of a society which is international in nature, cannot be managed by and through a localized system. The traditional system needs a better structuring with proper system and resources in place. In the absence of proper systems and procedures, the society is being further subject to dissident and division as reasons or causes are not being analyzed or understood.

It is needless to point out the consequences as these are known to the persons who are taking a decision. It is altogether not an issue whether the decision was taken in haste or with proper analysis. In some cases the events are analyzed and in other cases the issues remain secondary and other factors become primary. In a situation when a father sides with a daughter knowing fully well about the consequences, points to a fact that he has also become the party to it with the knowledge

that there is a price attached to this decision. Everybody who has some knowledge about the society knows the implications and consequences in the later date. But things are happening as if these are destined in this way.

Due to the interaction of adults in a free society, people take decisions with or without the knowledge of stringent prohibitory sanctions. Acknowledging the fact that troubles lie ahead, the affected parties perform rites and try to convince the rest regarding the requirement of the decision. As this type of development is seen in the persons who are better off in terms of position and education, thorough discussion and proper dialogue is required to understand the issue and requirement.

There are so many issues which confront Santal society today. Let the intelligentsia should not confine itself only to covertly or overtly condemn this emerging trend but to take note of other issues as well which is coming in the way of Santals' progress and solidarity.

Time and again it is urged to strengthen the traditional systems and institutions. But it is seen that nothing concrete is taking shape. The society is deprived of much needed guidance and direction. Due to this lack of connect in various strata of society, this unique society is far behind the expected level of development. The reason, why this society with solid number behind it and with bold character is lagging behind, has to be found out and it is not that difficult to find solutions to overcome the problems. There is a need for formation of a sound group to at least initiate dialogue in various level and strata of the society. The work has already begun and it is taking time to take a shape as the support from the expected quarters is not forthcoming. There is always a way if will is profound and relevant. For a good work, people are always there and it is time only which will tell the success story of the initiative and exchange of dialogue process.

---

## 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 2016 issue}

### XXVI. The Merchant's Son and the Raja's Daughter.

\*\*\*

So they went on their way, and after a time they came to a number of crows holding a meeting and in the midst was an owl with its head nodding drowsily; it was seeing dreams for them; every now and then a crow would give it a shove and ask what it had dreamt, but the owl only murmured that it had not finished and went off to sleep again. At last it said "I have seen a gander and a goose go down into a river and swim about in it."

The merchant's son and his companion went on and presently came to a river in full flood, which was quite uncrossable; on the far bank was a cow lowing to a calf which had been left on the bank where they were. When she saw them the girl began to sing:-

"The cow lows for its calf  
The calf bleats for its mother:  
My father and mother  
Are weeping for me at home."

When he heard her lament like this the merchant's son exclaimed

"You women are all alike, come let us go back."

"How can we go back now?" answered the girl "You of course can pretend that you have been hunting; but we women lose our character if we are hidden by a bush for a minute."

So as they could not cross the river by themselves, a goose and gander carried them across on their backs. As they went on the merchant's son asked the girl how far she would like to go, a six days' journey or a six months' journey. He told her that in the six months' journey they would only have fruits and roots and such like to eat and water to drink, but the six days' journey was easy and free from hardship.

The girl chose the six days' journey, so they went on for six days and came to a stream on the banks of which stood a cottage in which lived an old woman. Before they went up to it the girl told her lover not to eat any rice given to him by the old woman but to throw it to the fowls; then they went and asked to be allowed to cook their food there; now the old woman had seven unmarried sons, who were away hunting at the time, and when she saw the Raja's daughter she wished to detain her and marry her to one of her sons. So in order to delay them she gave them a damp stove and green firewood to cook with; she also offered the merchant's son some poisoned rice but he threw it to the fowls, and when they ate it they fell down dead.

The girl could not make the fire burn with the green wood, so they hurried away as fast as they could without waiting to cook any food. Before they started however the old woman managed to tie up some mustard seed in a cloth and fasten it to their horse's tail, so that as they rode, the seed was spilt along the road they took. When the old woman's sons came back from hunting she greeted them by saying: "Why did you not come back sooner? I have just found a pretty wife for you; but I have tied mustard seed to their horse's tail and it is being scattered along the road: in one place it is sprouting in another it is flowering; in another it is seeding and in another it is ripe; when you get to the place where it is ripe you will catch them." So the seven brothers pursued the two lovers and caught them up, but the merchant's son cut down six of them with his sword; the seventh however hid under the horse's belly and begged for mercy and offered to serve them as groom to their horse. This man's name was Damagurguria; they spared his life and he followed them running behind the horse; but he watched his opportunity and caught the merchant's son unawares and killed him with his sword.

Then he told the girl that she belonged to him and she admitted it and asked that she might ride behind him on the horse, so Damagurguria mounted and took her up behind him and turned homewards. He could not see what the girl was doing and

they had not gone far when she drew his sword and killed him with it.

Then she rode back to where the body of her lover lay and began to weep over it. As she sat there a man in shining white clothing appeared and asked what was the matter; she told him Damagurguria had killed her lover. Then he bade her stop crying and go and wet a *gamcha* he gave her and come straight back with it without looking behind her and then pick a *meral* twig and beat the corpse with it. So the girl took the *gamcha* and went and dipped it in a pool but, as she was bringing it back, she heard a loud roaring behind her and she looked back to see what it was; so the stranger sent her back again to the pool and this time she did not look round though she heard the same roaring. Then the stranger told her to join the severed head to the body and cover it with the wet *gamcha*; and then, after waiting a little, to beat the body with the *meral* twig. So saying he disappeared. The girl carefully complied with these instructions and to her joy saw the merchant's son sit up and rub his eyes, remarking that he must have been asleep for a long time. Great was his astonishment when he heard how Damagurguria had killed him and how he had been restored to life by the help of the stranger in white. This was the end of the lovers' troubles and they lived happily ever after.

{To be continued...}

**FROM:**

*If undelivered please return to:*  
**ALL INDIA ASECA,**  
 SFS Flat No. 326, Pocket 10,  
 Sector 11 (Extension), Rohini,  
**Delhi - 110 085.**

• **Editor:** Purna Chandra Hembram • **Published and Printed** by Kuanr Chandra Kisku on behalf of All India Adivasi Socio Educational and Cultural Association (Registered), New Delhi • **Printed** at S. K. Enterprises, B- 975, Mangol Puri, Delhi 110 083 and published from SFS Flat No. 326, Pocket 10, Sector 11 (Extension), Rohini, Delhi 110 085.