



# ASECA CHANNEL

(A monthly Journal from All India ASECA)

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ASECA CHANNEL, ALL INDIA ASECA & MAJHI MOHOL WISH HAPPINESS, PEACE, PROSPERITY AND QUALITY LIFE FOR THE NEW YEAR TO MEMBERS, SUBSCRIBERS, WELL WISHERS, CONTRIBUTORS AND THEIR FAMILY MEMBERS.

## Editorial...

The arrival of Santals in the national capital dates back to more than four decades. Other communities from all over the country also have migrated to Delhi and National Capital Region (NCR) in different years. It is observed that along with them cultures, Gods, Goddesses, temples and institutions etc. also have been brought along. There are institutions, temples and structures representing various States, communities, groups and formations. Even Delhi is blessed with the arrival of cultures from the foreign soils. Like other communities, groups, Adivasis in general and Santals in particular have been deprived of worshipping their Gods and Goddesses due to non-availability of a Sacred Place for performing religious practices and Cultural Complex for preservation and propagation of their culture. The non availability of minimum essential requirement like having a cultural complex with minimum amenities has made these communities isolated from each other due to absence of a common place. It is commonly observed that communities migrated to Delhi or nearby places in the NCR from all over India have developed Sacred Places, Cultural Complexes according to their requirements. Adivasi people might be thinking on this issue, but till date no place has been developed nor a definite proposal has been prepared. Therefore, it is high time to discuss on this

issue so that some ideas, possible approaches could be firmed up.

It is genuinely felt that Adivasi Cultural Centre / Complex should be developed urgently in Delhi or NCR either through the Government initiative or if that is not forthcoming through the collective initiative of the people. There is an effort though in a small way like Ho community which has developed at least a common facility where members can exchange dialogues and discuss about their culture, social life.

It is unequivocally expected that Santal people residing at Delhi or NCR will have to take the initiative for creation of Sacred Place/ Cultural Complex, which will have a national character and importance. Considering the enormity of challenge, consent of the local people will be required first to assess the need, feasibility, mood, method and modality. In order to have an initial opinion on the proposal to develop a Sacred Place (Jaher) and Cultural Complex, efforts should be made to seek consent/views from the known people in Delhi and NCR areas. On the basis of feedback, future action plans could be worked out. It will also be necessary to approach people from outside Delhi and NCR areas for money, mental and material support. It will not be out of place to mention that a piece of land should be purchased first as per the requirement. Going by the prevalent rate of land in Delhi, a minimum corpus of Rs. 1

crore will be required to be created so that either Government would be approached for allotment of a land orto purchase land as per requirement. It is universally acknowledged that tough assignment/target what is not achievable by a single or few persons, can be achieved when people are togetherand work collectively.

As an initial endeavour, attempt must be taken to elicit consent on the proposal. The initial consent/views on this important issue will form the backbone for feasible and suitable future course of action.It is pertinent also to mention the following reasons for setting up Jaher and other facilities in New Delhi or NCR areas for Santals:

1. To find a sacred place for the worship of Santal’s Gods and Goddesses.
2. To create a possibility for integration of Santals on a national level.
3. To pursue issues of Santals collectively before the authorities after detailed discussion and also to facilitate stay for a longer period in Delhi to pursue the causes.

4. To create facilities so that participants of this initiative as well as common people can be benefitted during short or long visit to the National Capital for hospitalization, education, interviews, short stay before settling down at Delhi, Supreme Court, Tribunals, Ministries and other official works etc.
5. The organization will seek to serve and unite Santal people all around the world.
6. To work as a liaison agency dealing with different places of the Country and embassies of the Countries having Santal population.
7. To develop a place for preservation and propagation of culture.
8. To act as an institution for Santals’ emancipation and unity at Delhi as well as at national level.
9. To help in propagation of national integration.
10. To inspire the next generation and have an address for Santals in Delhi.

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## Folklore of the SantalParganas

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}

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*{Continued from December 2015 issue}*

### XXV. How Sabai Grass Grew.

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At midday the girl went down to her brothers with her best cloth and all herjewellery on; and when they saw their victim coming they could not keep from tears. She asked them what they were grieving for; they told her that nothing was the matter and sent her to draw water in her new water-pot from the dry tank. Directly the girl drew near to the bank the water began to bubble up from the bottom; and when she went down to the water’s edge it rose to her instep. She bent down to fill her pot but the pot would not

fill though the water rose higher and higher; then she sang:—

“The water has risen, brother,  
And wetted my ankle, brother,  
But still the *lota* in my hand  
Will not sink below the surface.”

But the water rose to her knees and the pot would not fill, and she sang:—

“The water has risen, brother,

And wetted my knees, brother,  
But still the lota in my hand  
Will not sink below the surface.”  
Then the water rose to her waist and the pot would  
not fill, and she sang:—

“The water has risen, brother,  
And wetted my waist, brother,  
But still the lota in my hand  
Will not sink below the surface.”  
Then the water reached her neck and the pot would  
not fill; and she sang:—

The water has risen, brother,  
And wetted my neck, brother,  
But still the lota in my hand  
Will not sink below the surface.”

At last it flowed over her head and the water-pot was  
filled, but the girl was drowned. The tank however  
remained brimful of sparkling water.

Now the unhappy girl had been betrothed and  
her wedding day was just at hand. On the day fixed  
the marriage broker came to announce the approach  
of the bridegroom; who shortly afterwards arrived at  
the outskirts of the village in his palki. The seven  
brothers met him, and the usual dancing began.

The bridegroom’s party however wished to know  
why the bride did not appear. The brothers put them  
off with various excuses, saying that the girl had  
gone with her friends to gather firewood or to the  
river to draw water. At last the bridegroom’s party  
got tired of waiting and turned to go home in great  
wrath at the way in which they had been treated. On  
their way they passed by the tank in which the girl  
had been sacrificed and, growing in the middle of it,  
they saw a most beautiful flower. The bridegroom at  
once determined to possess this, and he told his  
drummers to pick it for him; but whenever one of  
them tried to pick it, the flower moved out of his  
reach and a voice came from the flower saying:—

“Take the flower, drummer,  
But the branch you must not break.”  
and when they told him what the flower sang the  
bridegroom said that he would try and pick it  
himself; no sooner had he reached the bank than the

flower of its own accord floated towards him and he  
pulled it up by the roots and took it with him into the  
palki. After they had gone a little way the palki  
bearers felt the palki strangely heavy: and when they  
looked in they found the bride also sitting in it,  
dressed in yellow garments; for the flower was really  
the girl who had been drowned.

So they joyfully took the happy couple with  
drumming and music to the bridegroom’s house.

In a short time misfortune befel the seven brothers;  
they fell into the deepest poverty and were forced to  
earn what they could by selling leaves and sticks  
which they gathered in the jungle. As they went  
about selling these, they one day came to the village  
where their sister was living and as they cried their  
wares through the streets they were told to go to the  
house where the marriage had taken place. They went  
there, and as they were selling their leaf plates their  
sister saw and recognised them; they had only ragged  
loincloths on, and their skins were black and cracked  
like a crocodile’s.

At the sight their sister began to cry. Her friends  
asked what was the matter and she said a straw from  
the thatch had run into her eye, so they pulled down  
some of the thatch; she still went on crying and they  
again asked what was wrong; she said that she had  
knocked her foot against a stone in the ground; so  
they dug up the stone and threw it away. But she still  
went on weeping and at last confessed that the  
miserable-looking leaf-sellers were her brothers.  
Then her husband’s parents told her to be comforted,  
and they gave the brothers oil and bade them go and  
bathe and oil their bodies: but the brothers were so  
hungry that when they got to the bathing place they  
drank the oil and ate the oil cake that had been given  
to them; and came back with their skins as rough as  
when they went. So then they were given more oil  
and some of the household went with them and made  
them bathe and oil themselves properly and then  
brought them to the house and gave them new clothes  
and made them a feast of meat and rice. According to  
the custom of the country they were made to sit down  
in order of age and were helped in that order; when  
they had all been helped and had eaten, their sister  
said to them “Now brothers you come running to me

for food, and yet you sacrificed me in the tank.” Then they were overwhelmed with shame: they looked up at the sky but there was no escape there; they looked down at the earth; and the earth split open and they all ran into the chasm. The sister tried to catch the youngest brother by the hair and pull him out, calling “Come back, brother, come back brother, you shall carry my baby about for me!” but his hair came off in her hand and the earth swallowed them all up. Their sister planted the hair in a corner of the garden and it is said that from that human hair, *sabai* grass originated.

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

Once a merchant’s wife and a Raja’s wife were both with child and one day as they bathed together they fell into conversation, and they agreed that if they both bore daughters then the girls should be “flower friends” while if one had a son and one a daughter then the children should marry: and they committed the agreement to writing. A month or two later the Raja’s wife bore a daughter and the merchant’s wife a son. When the children grew up a bit they were sent to school, and as they were both very intelligent they soon learnt to read and write. At the school the boys used to be taught in an upstairs room and the girls on the groundfloor. One day the boy wrote out a copy of the agreement, which their mothers had made and threw it down to the girl who was below.

She read it and from that day they began to correspond with each other; love soon followed and they decided to elope. They fixed a day and they arranged that the boy should wait for the girl under a *turu* tree outside the town. When the evening came the girl made haste to cook her parents’ supper and then, when they went to bed, she had as usual to

soothe them to sleep by rubbing their limbs; all this took a long time and the merchant’s son soon got tired of waiting, so he sang to the tree:—

“Be witness be witness for me ‘Turu tree’  
When the Raja’s daughter comes.”

and so singing he tied his horse to the roots of the tree and himself climbed up into the branches, and sitting in the tree he pulled off and threw down a number of twigs. Late at night the Raja’s daughter came; she saw the horse tied and the twigs scattered on the ground, but no other sign of her lover. And at last she got tired of waiting and called the *Turu* tree to witness, singing:—

“Be witness be witness for me ‘Turu tree’  
When the merchant’s son comes.”

As she finished her song the merchant’s son threw down a large branch to her, so she looked up and saw him sitting in the tree. Then she climbed up to him and began to scold him for putting her to the pain of waiting so long. He retorted “It was you who made me anxious by keeping me waiting.” “That was not my fault: you know how much work a woman has to do. I had to cook the supper and put my parents to bed and rub them to sleep. Climb down and let us be off.” So they climbed down from the tree and mounted the horse and rode off to a far country. On the road the girl became very thirsty but in the dense jungle they could find no water, at last the merchant’s son threw a stone at hazard and they heard it splash in a pool; so they went in the direction of the sound and there they found water but it was foul and full of worms and the girl refused to drink it. She said that she would only drink water “which had a father and mother.

{To be continued....}

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