



# ASECA CHANNEL

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## Editorial

It is commonly recognized as well as believed that backwardness can be overcome through sheer determination and dedication to hardwork. The backwardness may be at individual level or at collective social level. In both the scenarios, the eradication is possible provided there is a strong interplay of inspiration, motivation and mutual cooperation. The engagement of people decides the future course of action and as such their destination. The approach through positive energy and activities always contributes towards shaping a healthy future. The negative energy and actions result in chaos, animosity and reaction. It is commonly observed that people who are organized and disciplined are leading good life whereas individual or a society which is yet to define a way of life in a proper way is somehow not in the same position vis-à-vis the former one. The tribal society is undergoing changes due to various internal as well as external influences. The internal influences guided by learned intellectuals have been boon for that society as they progress and live together through a proper system and with distinct understandings. The other societies who are yet to organize themselves together through a learning and guidance process remain at the receiving end as there is nobody to show them the right path or tell them what is good or bad for them.

In the absence of a section of learned person in a society, it is very difficult to carry on and achievement of progress and prosperity become the casualty. The collection and combination of good people in any society is required for upward mobility and progress. Any society which is lacking such people or does not have regard for such people is destined to suffer as good Samaritans for that society become nonexistent. The social formation and institution in any simple society has been source of consolidation and strength. The societies which are not able to form any social institution have been pushed to the margin and gradually they faced the

fury of extinction. It becomes very difficult to maintain the language, culture of that society and its continuity.

For preserving and propagating cultural values and systems, people come together to promote the same. It is commonly observed that unless a social system is nurtured, it will lose its potential to inspire the society and its people. It is the resolve of the members of that particular society which is instrumental in presenting that society before other societies, formations in a better way. The identity becomes paramount and people start to give importance on the basis of images created for the society. The image creation, consciousness and communication together contribute towards positioning a society in a better way. The giving back to the society is also accomplished through contribution or participation in a process of strengthening a society.

The more the concern of the members of the society towards image creation, the more is the recognition it gets from other societies. The contribution of members of different social groups differs both in extent and content. Some feel and contribute religiously whereas other remain dormant in their approach even though they see the environment created by others is conducive to creation of a dignified society.

The cause of inaction and ineffectiveness may be due to ignorance and lethargy. The very essence of influence of immediate neighbouring society is observed as some people grow through mutual cooperation, collective action and contribution. At the same time, others remain indifferent to such thinking and process of mutual benefits. This is a strange reality wherein possible answers or explanations are not found.

It is a common belief that collectively so many things can be achieved in life. But that spirit of collectivism should be there. The examples are many

where people organized themselves to create institutions, monuments which are instrumental in enduring the cultural values and systems throughout the ages and inspire one generation after another. The adivasi society is dangerously lacking this trait of creation of social institutions and structures. There are major tribal groups in India which are numerically as well as financially sound. They have every favourable conditions on their sides, but yet far away from creation of any social institutions which could have been used for guiding the particular society at present as well as during the future also.

Many a times questions are raised regarding fewer surpluses available with the tribal, small or marginal societies. But fact is that small contributions

become formidable and sizable provided numbers of contributors are favourably large. The paradox of the matter is that in every society there are people who are in a position to contribute also do not come forward. Rather, every time the requirement is discussed, debated and doubted. The real action was nil in the past and is missing for the present time.

In any social existence identity crisis do come and it is the discerning people who need to come forward and face the challenge. The wish of the people is paramount and shapes the future of any society. The level of concern is the backbone of any society for its positioning.

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## **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}**

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**{Continued from June 2016 issue}**

After this the master made up his mind to get rid of Ujar, but he was in a fix: he could not dismiss him because of the agreement that if he did not continue to employ him so long as he was willing to serve for one leaf full of rice a day he was to lose a hand and an ear. So he decided to kill him, but he was afraid to do so himself for fear of being found out; so he decided to send Ujar to his father-in-law's house and get them to do the job. He wrote a letter to his father-in-law asking him to kill the bearer directly he arrived before many people knew of his coming and this letter he gave to Ujar to deliver.

On the way however Ujar had some misgivings and he opened the letter and read it; thereupon he tore it in pieces and instead of it wrote a letter to his master's father-in-law in which his master was made to say that Ujar was a most valuable servant and they should give him their youngest daughter in marriage as soon as possible. The fraud was not found out and directly Ujar arrived he was married to the youngest daughter of his master's father-in-law. A few days later the master went to see how his plan had worked and was disgusted to find Ujar not only alive but happily married.

So he thought that he would entice him into the jungle and kill him there; with this object he one

day invited Ujar to come out hunting with him, but Ujar suspected what was up and took a hatchet with him; and directly they got to the jungle he fell behind his master and cut him down with his hatchet and then went home and told his wife's relations that his master had got tired of hunting and had gone back to his own home; no doubts were raised about his story and he lived on happily with his wife till he died at a ripe old age.

### **XXXI. The Poor Widow.**

Once there was a poor widow who had two children; she lived by daily labour and if she got no work any day, then that day they had to go without food. One morning she went out to look for work and a rich woman called her and asked if she wanted a job; she said "Yes, that is what I am looking for," then the rich woman said "Stay here and pick the lice out of my hair, and I will pay you your usual wages and give you your dinner as well." So the poor widow agreed and spent the day picking out the lice and at evening the rich woman brought out a measure of rice to give her as her wages and, as she was measuring it, she felt her head itch and she put up her hand and scratched and pulled out a large louse.

Then she got very angry and scolded the widow and said that she would pay her nothing as she

had not done her work properly and she turned her out. Then the widow was very unhappy for she had nothing to give her starving children and she wished that she had stuck to her usual work. When she got home and her children began to cry for food, she remembered that she had seen some wild *saru* (vegetable) growing in a certain place; so she took a basket and a sickle and telling her children not to cry went out to gather it. It was dark and lonely and she felt frightened but then she thought of her children and went on and gathered the *saru*, and returned home crying because she had nothing better to give her offspring. On the way she met an old man who asked her why she was crying and she told him all her story. Then he told her to take the herbs home and chop them all up and to put some in every basket and pot she had and to cook the rest for supper. So when she got home she did as she had been directed and when she came to take the herbs which she had cooked out of the pot, she found that they had turned into rice, and she and her children ate it with joy. The next morning she found that every pot and basket into which she had put the herbs was full of rice; and from that time she prospered and bought goats and pigs and cattle and lived happily ever after.

But no one knew where the old man came from, as she had forgotten to ask him.

### **XXXII. The Monkey and the Girl.**

Once upon a time the boys and girls of a village used to watch the crops of *but* growing by a river, and there was a Hanuman monkey who wished to eat the *but*, but they drove him away. So he made a plan: he used to make a garland of flowers and go with it to the field and, when he was driven away, he would leave the flowers behind; and the children were pleased with the flowers and ended by making friends with the monkey and did not drive him away. There was one of the young girls who was fascinated by the monkey and promised to marry him. Some of the other children told this in the village and the girl's father and mother came to hear of it and were angry and the father took some of the villagers and went and shot the monkey. Then they decided not to throw away the body, but to burn it like the corpse of a man. So they made a pyre and put the body on it and set fire to it; just then the girl came and they told her to go away, but she said that she wished to see

whether they really burned him like a man. So she stood by and when the pyre was in full blaze, she called out "Oh look, what is happening to the stars in the sky!" at this every one looked up at the sky; then she took some sand which she had in the fold of her cloth and threw it into the air and it fell into their eyes and blinded them.

While they were rubbing the sand out of their eyes the girl leapt on to the pyre, and was burned along with the monkey and died a *sati*. Her father and brothers were very angry at this and said that the girl must have had a monkey's soul and so she was fascinated by him; and so saying they bathed and went home.

### **XXXIII. Ramai and the Animals.**

Once there was a blacksmith who had five sons and the sons were always quarrelling. Their father used to scold them, but they paid no heed; so he got angry and one day he sent for them and said: "You waste your time quarrelling. I have brought you up and have amassed wealth; I should like to see what you are worth. I will put it to the test: I will give you each one hundred rupees, and I will see how you employ the money; if any of you puts it to profitable use, I will call him my son; but if any of you squander it, I shall call him a girl." So they went forth with the money and one bought buffaloes and one bought horses and another cattle, each according to his judgement, and brought them home. But the youngest son, who was named Ramai, soon after he started, found some men killing a cat and he begged them not to kill the cat, but let him have it and he bought it of them, and going on he found some men killing a dog which they had caught stealing and he bought it of them to save its life. By and bye he came to some men hunting an otter and he asked what they were doing, and they said that the otter ate the fish in a Raja's tank and so they were going to kill it; and he asked them to catch it and sell it to him, and promised to take it away where it could do no harm; and they did so. Then he went on and came to some men who were killing a young black snake and he saved that also, and then returned home with his four animals, and he tethered the cat and the dog and the otter in the yard and he put the snake into a pot with a lid on and hung it in the cow shed.

When his father saw Ramai's animals, he was very angry and jeered at him and said that he had no more mind than a woman; and especially he told him to throw away the snake at once, if he did not want it killed. So Ramai took down the pot with the snake in it, and the snake said: "Take me to my father and mother and they will reward you, and when they ask what you would like, take nothing but the ring which is on my father's hand: it is a magic ring and has the property that it will give you whatever you ask."

So Ramai took the young snake to its home and its father and mother were very grateful and asked what reward he would accept: and he said he would take nothing but the ring, so they gave it to him. On the way home he thought that he would test its virtues: so he bathed and spread out a cloth and then prayed: "Oh ring, give me some luncheon," and behold he saw a nice lunch heaped up in the middle of the cloth. He ate it joyfully and went back home, and there he found that his father had killed the other animals and he reproached him; but his father said: "They were useless and were only eating their heads off, why should not I kill them?" Ramai answered: "These were not useless, they were most valuable animals, much better than those my brothers bought; if you asked my brothers for a gold palace they could not make you one, but I could do so at once, thanks to the snake, and I could marry a princess and get anything else I want."

His father said that he would like to see him try: so Ramai asked the ring for a gold palace and immediately one appeared in their garden. Then his father was very repentant about having killed the other animals. But Ramai's boast that he could marry a princess got abroad and the Raja heard of it and as he was glad to have so rich a son-in-law, he gave him his daughter in marriage. And with his daughter the Raja sent elephants and horses, but Ramai sent them back again, lest it should be said that he had become

rich through the bounty of the Raja; and by virtue of the ring they lived in wealthy and prosperity.

#### XXXIV. The Magic Bedstead.

Once upon a time a carpenter made a bedstead, and when it was ready he put it in his verandah. At night he heard the four legs of the bedstead talking together and saying: "We will save the life of anyone who sleeps on this bedstead and protect him from his enemies." When the carpenter heard this, he decided not to part with the bed for less than a hundred rupees. So next day he went out to try and get this price for the bed, but people laughed at him and said that no one could pay such a price but the Raja; so he went to the Raja and the Raja asked why he wanted one hundred rupees for a bedstead that was apparently worth only five or six annas. The carpenter answered that the bed would protect its owner from all enemies; the Raja doubted at first but as the man persisted in his story, he agreed to buy the bed, but he stipulated that if he found the story about it not to be true, he should take back his money.

One night the king lay awake on the bed and he heard the legs of the bed talking, so he lay still and listened: and they said that the Raja was in danger and that they must try to save him. So one leg loosened itself from the bed and went away outside and it found a tiger which had come to eat the Raja, and it beat the tiger to death, and then came back and fixed itself into its place again. Soon a second leg said that it would go outside; so it went and that leg met a leopard and a bear and it beat them to death and returned. Then the third leg said that it was its turn, and it went outside and it found four burglars digging a hole through the wall of the palace, and it set upon them and broke their legs and left them lying there.

*(To be continued...)*

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