



# ASECA CHANNEL

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## Editorial

The social problems affecting Adivasi communities are plenty and are being realized and analyzed from time to time by the insiders as well as the outsiders. Gradually people are becoming sensitive towards the emerging and changing scenarios. The concern and the concept though are varying over a period of time but the consolation part is that people do think about the affairs of the society and are open to do something for the betterment. Over a period of time, a society is bound to be influenced at a macro level economically, politically and socially. The effect of such influence many a times is perceived as intrusive. There are efforts from the outside community to influence the Adivasi community in different as well as diverse ways. Adivasi community is besieged with myriad realities, which are hard to absorb and assimilate within the normal way of life and existence.

It is a fact that there are many social organizations that are contributing in their own way for the betterment of the society and the welfare of the people. Community centric organizations are there and it is a fact that the numbers are sizable which is a positive sign. The outcome of initiatives taken by these organizations quite often are not reported or under reported. The core issues, however, are seen as not being addressed properly. The core issues are always linked to the principle of equality, equal opportunity, emancipation and empathy. Always, it is seen that leaders for the good work are in deficit. To work for the collective welfare is very difficult as people generally do not understand the requirements as these do not impact their day-to-day life. Collective problem is long term and it is not being felt by common people as they are

primarily concerned with the daily as well as short term issues. The long term goals and the associated issues or initiatives always are being undertaken by the intelligentsia from within or outside the community. The approach taken or perceived by the intra community people differs in definite direction vis-a-vis the methods and approach taken by the outside people. It is observed that intra community consciousness has been in the rise and people have started to think about the future and future course of action. The result is coming though not in a great way.

The inter as well as intra community dialogue is required to understand various trends, traits of and the problems being faced by any community. There are, however, many outside interferences, which try to influence the way of life and even have been successful in changing the course of their life. The small and simple society has become the laboratory for others to implement their own agenda and process to weaken the intra bond in the society in the name of mainly religion. The organized people have been trying to assimilate tribal society to a process, which is not part of the usual life of the latter and thus disturb the original identity. The identity crisis is becoming serious due to the reality that people who are being told to abjure many traditional practices and adopt a new format but leaving them to claim their original identity which is recognized on the basis of traditional practices. So there is a serious mismatch and the new outside thought process has been synonymous to divisive force, which is only creating division within the particular society.

The mechanism and machinery of such design is very difficult to understand. The

absence of organized institutions within the community and by the respective community people is the main deficiency in achieving collective welfare.

The numbers of organizations usually do not help in realizing the goal and aspirations of any community. It is the soundness and quality of organizations, which delivers in a better way. It is observed that the society, which has channelized its efforts and energy, is able to place itself in a better way. It is the leadership of the people, which has brought together many ideas and ideals under a common roof.

The fruits out of such collective wisdom and resources have always been sweet and visible. The process to strengthen the traditional institutions is one of the most important approaches, which need proper attention and appreciation. The strengthening of traditional or social institutions has been achieved by the progressive communities whereas others are lacking in that direction. All cannot achieve this goal as it is difficult to achieve but whoever are in a position to achieve should at least give it a try.

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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 August 2016 issue}

### **XXXVII. The Charitable Jogi.**

Once there was a very poor man with a large family; and when his eldest son grew up he tried to arrange a marriage for him. He selected a bride and arranged matters with her relations but then he found that he had no money to pay for the performance of the marriage ceremonies. So he tried to borrow from his friends and from money lenders, but no one would lend him anything. So he proposed to the bride's relatives to only have the betrothal that year and the marriage the year after, but they would not agree and said that the marriage must be then or never.

Just then a Jogi came to his house to beg and he told the Jogi all about his difficulties and asked for help; the Jogi took pity on him and gave him twenty rupees which was all that he had collected by begging.

Now this Jogi had two wives at home and he thought that he would get a poor reception from them if he returned empty handed, so he picked up two stones and wrapped them up in two pieces of cloth. And when he reached home his wives welcomed him and brought out a bed for him to sit on and asked about his adventures and when they saw the bundles they wished to know what was inside and they opened them before him and behold the stones had turned into gold. When the Jogi saw this he wished that he had picked up three or four stones instead of only two and he understood

that Chando had given him the gold because he helped the poor man.

This is why no money lender will refuse a loan if one is asked for for the performance of a marriage and money so borrowed is always paid back punctually. When the Jogi came back the next year the poor man paid him the twenty rupees.

### **XXXVIII. Chote and Mote.**

Once upon a time there were two brothers Chote and Mote; they were poor but very industrious and they got tired of working as hired labourers in their own village so they decided to try their luck elsewhere. They went to a distant village and Chote took service with an oilman and Mote with a potter on a yearly agreement. Chote had to drive the oil mill in the morning and then after having his dinner to feed the mill bullock and take it out to graze. But the bullock having had a good meal of oilcake would not settle down to graze alone but kept running after all the herds of cattle it saw, and Chote had to spend his whole time running after it till he was worn out and he was very soon sorry that he had taken up such hard service; and was quite resolved not to stay on after his year was up.

Mote was no better off; the potter overworked him, making him carry water and dig earth from morn to night and for all he did he got nothing but abuse.

One day the brothers, met and Mote asked Chote how he was getting on. Chote answered "Oh I have got a capital place; all the morning I sit at my ease on the oil mill, then I have a good dinner and take the bullock out to graze and as it has had a good meal of oilcake it lies down without giving any trouble and I sit in the shade and enjoy myself." Then Mote said "I am pretty lucky too. I have to fetch three or four pots of water, then I have my dinner and a rest and then I have to dig earth and knead it. Still I cannot say that I have so little work as you; will you change with me for three or four days, so that I may have a rest?"

Chote gladly agreed and each brother thought that he had got the better of the other. In the morning while Mote was driving the oil mill he was very pleased with his new job and when he had to take the bullock out to graze he took a bedstead with him to lie on. But directly the bullock got outside the village it rushed off bellowing towards some other cattle and Mote had to run after it with his bedstead on his head, and all the afternoon the bullock kept him running about till he was worn out.

Meanwhile Chote was no better off; his unaccustomed shoulders were quite bruised with constantly carrying water. At the potter's house was a custard apple tree and it was believed that there was money buried at the foot of the tree; so as Chote was a stranger, the potter told him to water the earth by the tree to soften it, as it was to be used for pottery. Chote softened the earth and dug it and as he dug he uncovered pots of rupees; so he covered them up again and dug the earth elsewhere. And at evening he went and proposed to Mote to run away with the money. So at midnight, they went and dug it up and ran off home. As they were not pursued, they felt safe after a month or two, so they spent the money in buying land and cattle, and their cultivation prospered, and they became quickly rich.

### **XXXIX. The Daydreamer.**

Once an oil man was going to market with his pots of oil arranged on a flat basket and he engaged a Santal for two annas to carry the basket; and as he went along, the Santal thought "With one anna I will buy food and with the other I will buy chickens, and the chickens will grow up and multiply and then I will sell some of the fowls and eggs and with the money I will buy goats; and when the goats increase, I will sell some and buy cows, and then I will exchange some of the calves for she-buffaloes, and when the buffaloes breed, I will sell some and buy land and start cultivation and then I will

marry and have children and I will hurry back from my work in the fields and my wife will bring me water and I will have a rest and my children will say to me 'Father, be quick and wash your hands for dinner,' but I will shake my head and say 'No, no, not yet!'"— and as he thought about it he really shook his head and the basket fell to the ground and all the pots of oil were smashed.

Then the oilman abused him and said that he must pay two rupees for the oil and one anna for the pots: but the Santal said that he had lost much more than that and the oilman asked him how that could be: and the Santal explained how with his wages he was going to get fowls and then goats and then oxen and buffaloes and land and how he came to spill the basket and at that the oilman roared with laughter and said "Well I have made up the account and I find that our losses are equal, so we will cry quits;" and so saying they went their ways laughing.

### **XL. The Extortionate Sentry.**

There was once a sentry outside a Raja's palace who would let no one go in to sell anything to the Raja until they first promised to give him half the price they received from the Raja, and the poor traders had to promise, for their livelihood depended on selling their goods. One day a fisherman caught an enormous fish and he thought that if he took it to the Raja he would get a big price for it.

So he went off to the palace, but when he came to the gate the sentry stopped him and would not let him go in, until he promised to give him half of what he got, and after some argument he had to promise. So he was admitted to the Raja's presence and when the Raja asked what was the price of the fish, the fisherman said "A hundred blows with a stick."

The Raja was very astonished and asked the meaning of such a request. Then the fisherman said that the sentry had extorted a promise that he should get half the price and he wanted him to get fifty blows. At this the Raja was very angry and he had the sentry beaten with one hundred stripes and dismissed him.

### **XLI. The Broken Friendship.**

Once upon a time there was a Raja and his Dewan and they each had one son, and the two boys were great friends, and, when they grew old enough, they took to hunting and when they became young men they were so devoted to the sport that they spent their whole time in pursuit of game; they followed every animal they could

find until they killed it, and they shot every bird in the town.

Their parents were much distressed at this, for they thought that if their boys spent all their time together hunting they would grow up unruly and ignorant; so they made up their minds that they must separate the young men so that they would not be tempted to spend so much time in sport, but would be able to learn something useful; they scolded the youths and told them to give up their friendship and their hunting, but this had no effect. Then the Raja told the villagers that he would reward any one who would break up the friendship, and the villagers tried their best but effected nothing.

There was however an old woman in the village who one day said, "If the Raja gave me ten rupees I would soon put a stop to their friendship." This came to the ears of the Raja and he exclaimed "What is ten rupees to me! bring the old woman to me and I will give her ten rupees, if she can put an end to this friendship." So the old woman was brought trembling before the Raja and on being questioned undertook to break up the friendship if she were properly rewarded; and when this was promised she asked for two men to be given to her and she took them to her house and there she made them sling a bed on a pole, such as is used for carrying a man on a journey and she hung curtains all round it and drew them close and inside, on an old winnowing fan, they put some rotten manure from a dung hill.

Then she made the two men take up the bed and she fetched a drum and she paraded all through the bazar beating the drum with the bed following behind her. She told the two carriers not to answer any questions as to what was in the bed. Thus they passed out of the town and went in the direction in which the two young men had gone hunting. When these heard the sound of the drum and saw the two men carrying

the bed they ran up to see what it was and told the carriers to put it down that they might look inside; so the bed was put on the ground and the Raja's son peeped inside the curtain, but as he caught the smell he jumped back and the Dewan's son asked what was the matter and he said "it stinks: it is dung." The Dewan's son would not believe him and also looked to convince himself; then they both asked what the meaning of this was: the old woman said that she would explain the meaning of it but only to one of them, and the one who had heard could tell the other.

So she made the carriers take away the bed and she called the Raja's son aside saying "Come I will tell you what it means" then she put her arms round the neck of the Raja's son and put her lips to his ear and pretended to whisper to him, but really she said nothing; then she let him go and followed the carriers. The Dewan's son at once ran to his friend and asked what the old woman had told him; the Raja's son answered "She told me nothing at all, she only pretended to whisper." The Dewan's son would not believe this and pressed him to tell, saying "We have been friends for so long and have had no secrets from each other, why won't you tell me this? if you refuse to tell me there is an end of our friendship," but the Raja's son persisted that he had been told nothing and proposed that they should go and ask the old woman if it were not so; but the Dewan's son said that that was no good because the old woman and the Raja's son had plainly made a plot to keep him in the dark. The quarrel grew hotter and hotter, till at last they parted in anger and each went to his own home and from that time their friendship was broken off.

And being separated they gave up hunting and took to useful pursuits. Thus the old woman earned her reward from the Raja.

*(To be continued...)*

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