

Dalit of Odisha: A Case Study of the Dombos in Rayagada District

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ABSTRACT

The term "Dalit," in Sanskrit is both a noun and an adjective. As a noun, Dalit can be used for all three genders, masculine, feminine and neuter. It has been derived from the root word "Dal" which means to crack, split etc. The word 'Dalit' has come to mean that things or persons come under, the category of downtrodden, scattered, crushed, destroyed etc. The listed 93 Scheduled Caste communities of Odisha are known as Dalit in Odishan social system. But, in fact, the untouchables among the Scheduled Castes are the Dalits. The Schedule Caste and Schedule Tribes comprise about 16.6 % and 8.6 %, respectively of India's population (according to the 2011 census). There are total population in socially untouchables and economically poor in the lowest point of social structure in Odisha. After of independence of India, their social, political, education justice, economic status has not been changed as expected. The examination and analysis of present status of Dalits will be made through empirical study. The outcome of this study will draw a clear picture of the position of Dalits in Odisha and it will motivate government and non-government agencies to take initiative to promote Dalits.

KEYWORDS: Dalit, Scheduled Caste, Downtrodden, Scattered, destroyed

INTRODUCTION

The term "Dalit," in Sanskrit is both a noun and an adjective. As a noun, *Dalit* can be used for all three genders, masculine, feminine and neuter. It has been derived from the root word "dal" which means to crack, split etc. The word 'Dalit' has come to mean that things or persons come under, the category of downtrodden, scattered, crushed, destroyed etc. The term "Dalit" has also its parallel in **Hebrew** with the root "dal" means, weak, poor, helpless etc. *Dalits* have been the most degraded, downtrodden, exploited and the least educated people in our society. They have been socially, culturally, economically and politically subjugated and marginalized through three thousand years of our history and remain so, even after half-a-century of protective discrimination (as Scheduled Caste) under the aegis of the Government of India. The Schedule Caste and Schedule Tribes comprise about 16.6 % and 8.6 %, respectively of India's population (according to the 2011 census). The Constitution of India, introduced after the country gained independence included measures to improve the socio-economic conditions of *Dalits*. Besides abolishing untouchability, these include the reservation system, a means of positive discrimination that created the classifications of Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and Other Backward classes (OBCs). Communities that were categorised as being one of those groups were guaranteed a percentage of the seats in the national and state legislatures, as well as in government jobs and places of education. The system has its origins in the 1932 Poona Pact between Ambedkar and Gandhi, when Ambedkar conceded his demand that the *Dalits* should have an electorate separate

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from the Caste Hindus in return Gandhi accepting measures along these lines. In 2001, the quality of life of the *Dalit* population in India was not similar to that of the overall Indian population, on metrics such as access to health care, life expectancy, education attainability, access to drinking water and housing. In 2010 *Dalits* received international attention due to a portrait exhibition by Marcus Perkins that depicted Dalits.

Odisha, a State in the union of India where in 51,311 villages and around 4,19,74,218 population are living (Census 2011). Rich in history and geography, the State is today one of the poorest states in the country. There are 22.85 percent of Odisha's population belong to Tribal communities and around 17 percent population are belonging to Scheduled Caste in this State. The people are accustomed to celebrate a succession of festivals with great gusto round the year and are also reputed for producing by indigenous methods unique handicraft and excellent artefacts. Scheduled Caste population of the district constitutes 13.92 percent and among them the major Caste group is *Dombo* (76.12 per cent), within the Dalit community, there are many divisions into sub-castes. *Dalits* are dividing into leather workers, street sweepers, cobblers, agricultural works and manual "scavengers". The latter group, considered the lowest of the low and officially estimated of dead animals, and cleaning human excreta. Approximately three-quarters of the country's four million people who are bonded labours or *Dalits*. Their job rarely provided income for *Dalits* to feed their families or to send their children to school. As a effect, many *Dalits* are needy, uneducated and illiterate.

In Odisha, the *Dom*, *Dombo*, Duria, Pano etc belong to Schedule Caste community. The total number of 93 Castes are there (Census 2011) in Odisha. *Dombo* is the major community under Schedule Castes in Rayagada district. *Dom / Dombo* in Oriya *Dom / Dombo* are recognized as particularly vulnerable groups among the Schedule Castes. The *Dombo* is considered inferior in social status to the sanction of Antera Oriya *Dom* of the Caste *Dom / Dombo*. About 80 percent population belong to Dalit communities in Rayagada district out of the total population. Where the Schedule Caste communities are 20 percent and Schedule Tribes are around 60 percent. The livelihood status of the Schedule Caste communities is intermediaries, lenders and small traders in tribal area of this district. The women empowerment is very weak in this area. The women of the Schedule Caste communities go to sale the necessary goods of people to every village and door to door. This is the main source of livelihood of women in this a district. The relationship between *Dongaria* and *Dombo* is symbiotic. They is also living by wages-earning, excepting a few household, who depends on cultivation and agricultural labour. But major portion of their annual income comes from agricultural labour. Almost all household derive income by adopting agricultural labour as main or subsidiary occupation. Thus it is appropriate to consider agriculture labour as their main occupation. Besides wage-earning and cultivation, they also earn through other activities, like Drum-beating, small business in nearby weekly markets, rickshaw pulling and engaging themselves in trading animals, like Cow, Buffalo, Bullock, etc. Some of them also collect raw hides and supply them to tanners through middle men. In this district in recent past, the *Dalit* were treated low caste with the stigma of untouchability. Their lowest status in the caste hierarchy and untouchability played a significant role in arresting the progress and development of said community. Generally the *Dalit* live together in separate ward which is usually located at the outer area of a town of the main hamlet or village where upper Caste People live. The stigma of untouchability which is attached to them deprives them of using water from the same source used by higher Caste groups in the villages. The influential and established higher Caste groups never allow the *Dalit* to take water from the existing Tube-wells and wells in the village. Thus they face lot of problems in getting drinking water. Rice is staple food of these communities. They are fond of non-vegetarian dishes, but they required sufficient quantity and quality of rice. Therefore rice is there primary food and constitutes major item of their daily meals. The cooked vegetable, fish or meat are eaten as curry with rice. But quantity and quality of curry varies from house to house based on their economic condition. In the rural area, of this district the wages and employment situation is not up to the mark. They do not get ample opportunities for occupational mobility. As their economic status is low and educational attainment is not satisfactory shifting from the traditional occupation is very rare. In the Present study in the village, it is evident that quite a small number of persons engage in Drum beating and rope-making, small business. Service and labourer except agricultural activities.

Objectives of the Study

1. To education the History and socio-cultural life of the *Dalit* communities of Rayagada District.
2. To style an analytical study of the economic and Social status of Scheduled Caste in Rayagada District.

3. To provide suggestion for protection against exclusion and discrimination in the present society by encouraging their effective participation in the general Economic, Social and Political processes in the country.

Research Methodology

The study will be based on primary source materials like, Government Reports, various agreement made by Government of India etc. and Secondary sources like, books, journals, articles, Internet, Newspapers etc. The Seminar Library of the P. G. Department of History, Parija Library and Ancient Indian History, Culture and Archaeology, Department Utkal University, Bhubaneswar, Centre for Ambedkar Studies, Utkal University, the Harekrushna Mahatab State Library, Bhubaneswar, Odisha State Museum, Bhubaneswar, will be quite helpful in collecting the relevant materials. The Libraries in Hyderabad and New Delhi will be visited for the collection of data for the proposed research work. For the collection of Government documents concerned offices or libraries of the Government Department will be visited. Internet will also be an important source of information for present research. An empirical historical method will be adopted for the present research work.

Conclusion:

Dombos, (*Dalit*) despite their education and a amount of economic advancement are unable to improve their status by their individual efforts most of them in spite of more than two decades of government efforts to improve their economic and social position, remain desperately poor. Semi-literate or illiterate, subject to discrimination and economic exploitation and with no realistic prospect for improvement of their condition. Relishing the significance of education and occupation as mechanisms of status determination and power the central government as well as the statue government diverted broth money and efforts to strengthen the programmer of education and occupational upliftment of the *Harijans*. In contemporary Odisha, *Dalits* have been victims of voidance and atrocities. They have been killed and their females are raped. They are victims to loot and their houses are set on fire. They are also denied minimum wages.

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