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A study of religious myths and legends of Dusadh

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Abstract

Most of the Dusadhs, if questioned about their religion, will persistently ever that they are orthodox Hindus, and in proof of this claim will refer to the fact that they employ Brahmans and worship the regular gods. In most of the districts, indeed, degraded Kanaujia or Maithil Brahmans serve the caste as priests in a somewhat irregular and intermittent fashion, being paid in cash for specific acts of worship and for attendance at marriages. Many Dusadhs, again, belong to the Sri Narayani sect, and some follow the PANTH, or doctrine of Kabir, Tulsi Das, Gorakhnath, or Nanak. This enthusiasm for religion, however, like the Satnami movement among the Chamars of the central provinces, appears to be a comparatively recent development induced in the main by the desire of social advancement and existing side by side with peculiar religious observances, survivals from an earlier animistic form of belief, traces of which may perhaps be discerned in current Hindu mythology.

Keywords: Religious myths and legends of Dusadh orthodox Hindus

Introduction

Their tribal deity Rahu has been transformed by the Brahmans into Daitya or Titan, who is supposed to cause eclipse by swallowing the sun and moon. Though placed in orthodox pantheon as the son of the Danava Viprachitti and Sinhilia, Rahu has held his ground as the chief deity of the Dusadh. To avert diseases, and for fulfilment of vows, sacrifices of animals and the fruits of the earth are offered to him, and in this a Dusadh Bhakat or Chatiya usually presides. On special occasions a stranger form of worship is resorted parallels to which may be found in the rusticult of the Roman villagers and the voteries of the phoenician diety. A ladder; made of green bamboos and rungs of sword blades, is raised in the midst of the pile of buming Mango wood, through which the Bhakat walks barefooted and ascends the Ladder without injury. Swine of all ages, ram, flour and rice-milk (Khir) are offered up and after that the worshippers partake of a feast and drink enormous quantities of ardent spirits.

The Dusadhs of Darbhanga and north Bhagalpur, who have bound themselves by a vow to offer the fire sacrifice to Rahu (Rah Baba) must build within a day a thatched hut (Gabbar) measuring five cubits by four and having the doorway facing the east. Here the priest or Bhakat (Bhagat), himself a Dusadh; who is to officiate at the next days ordeal must spend that night sleeping on the Kusa grass with which the floor is strewn. In front of the door of the hut is a bamboo platform about three feet from the ground, and beyond that is dug a trench six cubits long, a span and a quarter wide and of the same depth, running east and west. Fire places are built to the north of the trench, at the point marked the trench is filled up with mango wood soaked in Ghee, and two earthen vessels of boiling milk are placed close to the platform. The Bhakat bathes himself on the north side of the trench and puts on a new cloth dyed for the occasion with turmeric. He mutters a number of mystic formulas and worships Rahu on both sides of the trench. The fire is then kindled, and the Bhakat solemnly walks three times round the trench keeping his right hand always towards it. The end of the third round brings him to the last end of the trench, where he takes by the hand the Brahman retained for this purpose on a fee of two new wrappers (Dhoti) and calls upon him to lead the way through the fire. The Brahman then walks along the trench from east to west, followed by the Bhakat. They walk bare footed on the fire and at last Khir is distributed among the people as 'Prasad'.

The people of Dusadh community also worship 'Gauraiya' or Goraiya Baba, a Dusadh bandit chief is, who is their other deity. At Sherpur; near Patna, is a Shrine of Goraiya, locally known as Goraiyasthan which is 6 Ian from Danapur Maner road. All scheduled castes offer meals, the unclean sacrifice a Swine or several young pigs and poor out spirits on the ground

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there. Another deity Salsesh, or Salais, said to have been the porter of Bhimsen, and afterwards, a formidable robber in the Morang or Nepal Terai, is invoked, with a pig being killed, and rice; Ghee, sweetmeats and spirits. Bandidei, Motiram Karu, Karva Bir, Jagda Ma, Kali, Pathreshwari, are the other deities of the Dusadh in the study area.

The Dusadhs consider Phul Dak as one of the gods. Phul Dak was their prominent god and he was by caste Shudra, he was very pious, honest, and sincere. He was an employee of the field of Singh Bhavan, a Landlords or Zamindar and by caste a Rajput. Phul Dak was working in the field of Sri Singh Bhavan as an agricultural labourer. One day Sri Singh Bhavan's daughter was collecting grains in the field. She has directed Phul Dak to help her to lift a bundle of grains. As they were lifting together the bundle of grains their foreheads touched and the vermilion (SINDOOR) which was applied on her forehead as the custom got smeared and she became very angry with Phul Dak. When she reached home, she narrated the entire episode and Sri Singh Bhavan misunderstood and believed that Phul Dak misbehaved with his daughter. Sri Singh Bhavan immediately rushed to the house of Phul Dak, slaughtered him and dumped his body in a well. One of the Rajput women (Thakurain) called Champa happened to come to the Shudra's house and saw Sri Singh Bhavan throwing the body of Phul Dak into the well. Sri Singh Bhavan cut the body of Thakurain - Champa into pieces and threw them into the same well. Then he covered the well with mud both Phul Dak and Champa began to show their power, therefore, they came to be worshipped as divine power in the scheduled castes society. In Bihar, they are especially concentrated in the middle Ganga plain, mostly as agricultural labourers, having no claim of ownership of land; when they encountered the entrenched Brahminical Hinduism; they were deprived from all human dignity and placed at the bottom of the society. They are however brave, sincere and hard working people of the society.

According to a most popular legend of the Dusadh community, one Choarmal, a Dusadh himself, was a great fighter and warrior, and fought against other upper sections of the society and was cunningly murdered. He is considered as one of the pioneer god of the Dusadhs. This community has established a tradition of braveness in the kingdom Pandavas, and as watchmen of villages, and display a strong sense of solidarity, but lacking in integration with the dominant sections of the society, they have tended to sink lower. With lack of literacy and their socio-economic conditions being very low, the hardly supplement their low income and food requirements by hunting and catching snails and rats. They live in small colonies at the outskirts of the village. Both habit and poverty join to make them the most scantily dressed people in the village. They, indeed, face a lot of difficulties to survive.

The Dusadhs are one of the most important scheduled castes in Bihar. They form 26% of the scheduled caste population in the state. They mostly concentrate in the districts of Darbhanga, Begusarai, Saharsa, Madhepura, Araria, Khagaria, Munger, Lakhisarai, Patna, Rohtas, Aurangabad, Siwan and Gopalganj. There is a good concentration of them in the district of Saran; and they are mostly landless and lead precarious life. They rear pigs, and poultry. They relish rats & snails. Drinking and gambling are their common recreations. They are divided into eight sub-castes - Kanaujia, Magahiya, Bhojpuria, Pailwar, Kamar or

Kanwar, Kuri or Kurin, Dharhi or Dhar, Silkhota or Sirota and Bahalia.

The Dusadh of the Saran district like those of other parts of the state are economically poor and socially neglected, and educationally extremely poor and backward.

The Indian society is a mosaic of heterogeneous society divided into different caste and sub-caste. In social geography, the aims and objective of this branch of Geography, deals the analysis, and description of the spatial pattern and causative processes of the attributes of social groups, categories, and its phenomena in a specific space and their interaction in the definite unit lead to the formation of the social space, which is palpable; real, and perceptible. Buttimer described Social Geography as "The study of the area (spatial) patterns and functional relations of the 'social groups in the context of the social environment, the internal structure and external relations of their of the nodes of social activity, and the articulation of various of social communication. Western has also defined the social geography as "The identification of different regions of the Earth's surface according to association of social phenomena related to the total environment."

After going through an intensive study about the Socio-economic character of the scheduled castes, it has been found, that till now there is a great scope of research on scheduled castes of Bihar State. A few writers and scholars have made some significant and valuable contributions in this field, outside Bihar, there have been many writers and research is socio-economic, and politico-cultural aspects of the scheduled castes in India. However, most of such studies on scheduled castes have been made in a generalized fashion, while some research work has done specially on community of the country. Some books throw light on all aspects of the scheduled castes, while other highlight a particular aspect of life of scheduled caste. Such as reservation, social status, economic condition etc., besides these some scattered information about the community are also found in different government offices, and official documents, such as the reports of the commission for scheduled castes and scheduled tribes, District Census Handbook, District Gazetteers etc. These are authentic sources, through which we are able to find relevant informations.

Prof. Sachida Nand Sinha has tried to present social status, social mobility and social transformation of the scheduled castes in Bihar. He has also thrown light on various aspects such as professional aspects and distribution of the different sub-castes of the scheduled castes of Bihar. He has systematically examined all the social customs, traditions, beliefs, and all other social characteristics of Chamar, Dusadh, Mushahar, Dhobi, Pasi, etc. of Bihar state, which is regarded as the most important common sub-castes of the scheduled castes. His field of work was not only concentrated in rural population of scheduled castes, but he has also tried to compare and correlate the scheduled castes population of rural and urban areas on different aspects such as level of education among them and different types of labourers and their occupations. He has also tried to compare and provide broad informations about all the sub-castes of the scheduled caste of Bihar. The Chamar and Dusadh are the important sub-castes of the scheduled castes. Prof. Vidyarthi has tried to highlight all the aspects of the scheduled castes. His study is based on the scheduled castes of Chotanagpur region as well as the Magadh region. He

pointed out on micro-level and skillfully the social and economic life of the scheduled castes population. He has also drawn our attention towards the religion and political aspects of the scheduled castes. He has further evaluated the impact of different social welfare schemes and constitutional safeguard introduced for the upliftment of the scheduled caste community. He has come to the conclusion the achievement of these measures is not to the desired extent.

Dr. Singh has highlighted the social life of this community making a study about the equality, reservation and discrimination.

Government of India, Ministry of Home Affairs has highlighted the representation of the scheduled castes in services and related problems. Their various educational problems and socio-economic aspects have also been highlighted through this report.

Hon' Mungeri Lal Commission- for scheduled castes and scheduled tribes has highlighted the socio-economic problems of different sub-castes of the scheduled castes.

Francis Buchanan - has highlighted the socio-economic and educational problems of scheduled castes, and Mr. Buchanan has scholarly studied the each and every sub-castes of scheduled caste and their problems.

Francis Buchanan - has given a detailed description of social, educational, cultural and economic condition of the scheduled castes and different sub-caste. He has given a detailed note on the Chamar and Dusadh.

Walter Crooke - has highlighted the scheduled castes and their sub-castes. The writer has gone through questionnaires and studied in detail about the problems of scheduled castes. His contribution in this field is a guide line for the all scholars.

H. H. Risley - has divided the scheduled castes into different sub-castes, with their problems in each field of their life and he had further studied about the specific sub-castes of scheduled castes, such as the Chamar and Dusadh. His study on the Chamar and Dusadh are very rich and guideline for further study for the scholars and social scientists.

Russel and Hira Lal - has gave a detailed micro-level note on the scheduled castes and sub-castes also. His stepwise and sub-caste wise analysis is very clear showing socio-economic problems of the Dusadh.

E.A.H. Blunt has contributed a valuable study about the scheduled castes and their sub-castes. He has studied the caste system, its impact on scheduled castes and economic problems of this community.

The Indian rural society, in the terms of its production - organization system, is constituted of the four socio-economic classes of the agriculturists, the artisans, the service castes, and the landless agricultural labourers. The first category of agriculturists comprises two types of people. The one among them are those who own the agricultural land, but do not cultivate it themselves, but get it cultivated by tenants and labourers, and others are those who own the land and cultivate it themselves. This category combines with the artisans and service castes to constitute the 'Jajmani' system". In traditional Hindu society is divided into different castes, sub-castes, sex, faith, races, clan, and so on. This division is also divided into upper caste and lower castes, among the lower castes some of the caste of Shudra, (Scheduled castes) are treated as out castes, that is Dusadh, Chamar and Dom. The Dusadh is a well-known figure of Indian institutional society, found in each and

every parts society and also found in each and every parts of Indian territory, with their specific traditional work.

Conclusion

A lot of constitutional safeguards and welfare measures have been launched for the around development and drastic changes in the existing socio-economic conditions of the weaker section of the society. In spite of all these provisions and arrangement the desired level of progress of this community, i.e. the Dusadh has not been achieved. A few or some impact have been found on their socio-economic condition. There is still much to be done for their all kinds of development. To find out those barriers imposed by so-called caste system and concept of purity and pollution will be another important aspect of the present study.

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