

Socio-Economic and Political Processes and Balmiki Marginalisation

4.1: Introduction

In different religions Balmiki community is known by different names, the leading is 'chusa' and 'Balmiki' from Punjab who were the one to first assign itself with Valmiki. In Rajasthan, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh all know them as 'Churhas'. Apart from this Balmiki Lalbegi, Malkana, Dom, Dumar, Hela are some other well-known Balmiki communities.

Where did the name 'Bhang' come from? It is a matter of research. How did they origin? It is hidden in past according to researchers the occupation of Balmiki were to clean toilets. This was assigned to them by Muslim rulers. These researchers are strong supporter of Hinduism. Based on this background the very famous Amritlal Nagar wrote "*Nachyo Bahut Gopal*" a novel where Nagar first introduced the idiom "*to make a Balmiki/Balmiki by Fortune*". But he never pointed toward the Untouchability issue prevalent in Indian Society. Not only Nagar, but many others had faced this condition this is evident because in some places Balmiki community resided in large numbers but in some areas like Kumayun, Maharashtra they had no existence.

Bhagwandas had same mentality. He says that Balmikis are large quantity towards west of Northern India. And when Brahmanism started originated in these lands, Balmikis were looked as if they were disgusting.¹ He further argues that sages were beaten to make Balmikis and then the monsters become rich.² He believed that the followers of Buddhism were made Balmiki, today some are called Balmiki, some Dom and some Der.³ The origin of the word

¹ Das, Bhagwan. (1973). *Valmiki Jayanti aur Bhangi Jaati*. New Delhi: Dalit World Library. Pp. 10.

² Ibid. Pp. 2.

³ Ibid. Pp. 6-7.

Balmiki is itself mind boggling for regional occupation, this word may be used. Arun Thakur and Mohammad Khadas in their book '*Narak Safai*' says that the people who make holders out of Bamboo in Gujarat are called Balmiki. It is applicable because one needs to hemp the bamboo so 'Balmiki' is appropriate.⁴

According to Enthovin's glossary, those who don't follow and respect the upper class are boycotted and made Balmikis.⁵ According to Sridhar Venkatesh Kathkar, due to the occupation of cleaning toilets, this occupation was made and it is very obvious that there will be people from different religions. The number of Balmikis in Mumbai is quite prevalent. Apart from them, Churha, Halalkhor are also the part of Balmikis. Balmikis are considered as the backward classes in Darjeeling. There may be several valid reasons as in why they accepted the occupation of cleaning.⁶ It is negligence, which is why this community is bound and to maintain this, scholars, writers and politicians play an important role.

It is mentioned in Bombay Gazetteer that Balmikis/Balmikis are prevalent since 2000 years.⁷ Based on Hindutva mentality there were no Balmikis prior to Muslim rule. This evidence are provided by scholars with full supports, they ignore the evidence of '*Surit Balmiki*' during area of Buddhism even in Jainism there is a mention of toilet cleaner '*Bansor*', which clearly depicts that this caste was there in India prior to Islamic rule. These Scholars had the confidence to ignore these facts.

Here it is the undeniable truth that English men in their troops give importance to Balmikis which is why they are spread in North India. According to Athovin dictionary, Balmikis must have arrived in Northern Indian with soldier troops.⁸ In Pune, there are different colonies and

⁴ Thakur, Arun., & Khadas, Md. (1996). *Narak Safaie*. New Delhi: Radhakrishna Publication. Pp. 23-24.

⁵ Enthovin, R. E.(1920). *Tribes and caste of Bombay*. 3 Vols. Bombay Government. Vol. I.

⁶ Ketkar , Shridhar Vyankatesh. (Ed.). *Maharashtrian Repository*. Segment- 4.

⁷ Bombay Gazetteer, 8th segment, Pp. 157.

⁸ Enthovin, R. E.(1920). *Tribes and caste of Bombay*. 3 Vols. Bombay Government. Vol. I.

panchayats of Balmikis/Balmikis. The head of all these panchayat is called '*Brigade Panchayat*', they got this name from army because of the growing number of soldiers, Balmikis felt the need of faster development.⁹

Dharmanand Kausambi also believes that they must have developed '*surits*'¹⁰ where Balmikis are born. There are mentioned about it in their stories characteristics and also there he says "I was born in a lower caste and the financial condition of my family was so pathetic that we could not afford food for ourselves. My job was fixed and it was Balmiki people mistreated me, still I behave nicely to them".¹¹

Dr Bhimrao Ambedkar has also briefly discussed about Surits. Apart from Surit, Shwapak,¹² *Chandals* were also allowed in Buddhist community.¹³ As mentioned earlier there were some castes which were restricted in Jainism. Dharmanand Kosambi in his book "Lord Buddha and his teachings" mentioned about Jainism not taking lower caste and States just like in case of caste, order and body are considered different from polluted. Similar, to it machua, jungit, and other backward classes are different deliberately. Whoever shows game with ropes, sticks and other animals are considered very low in order. Even if they are capable they won't be allowed in Jainism.¹⁴

The motive behind providing this is to make everyone aware of the fact that Bansors were related to rearing of pigs and are associated with Balmikis. Balmikis are still being found in Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh.

⁹ Arun Thakur and Md Khadas- *Narak safaie*.

¹⁰ Hindi word, English translations means *good Knowledge*.

¹¹ Dharmanand Kausambi- *Introduction to Buddhist culture*, Mumbai, Mangesh Narayan Kulkarni, 1926. Pp. 254-286

¹² Shwapak is one who eats the meat of dog. Also see Mande, Prabhakar. (1983). *Gaongadyabaheer*. (Marathi). Aurangabad: Godavari Prakashan.

¹³ DR Bhimrao Ambedkar- *Lord Buddha and his religion*. Pp. 146.

¹⁴ Dharmanand Kausambi- *Bhagwan Buddha aur unke darshan*. Pp. 227.

In Indian culture what we are carrying as a winning sign of perpetual importance, it isn't that innocent. It is not a result of mutual understanding and love between two people. We can hear the screams of tortured, molested people. In the name of sacrifice several people were molested for several years, they were forced to sacrifice their life. They were made a victim of pride and were forced to become the slaves and worker of the upper classes.

Several Dalits and women were tortured mercilessly and force to believe them that they were considered as animals. These people had no right on themselves. They were born with no control on their body. They were forced to accept the fact that this was their way of life and had no scope for freedom. They were asked to fear God and threaten to make sacrifices. This is so unfair that some cruel men would control the life of other lower castes and were forced to accept this. These cruel men enjoyed this fact and satisfaction.¹⁵

Balmiki community originated from a bog of this cruelty. There is no sign of happiness, instead only pain for generation. No end to this story, so many lives were lost in this, still there was no discussion about.

If one focuses on the content of Indian literature, culture and other, then the condition is clear. Dr Govind Sadashiv Ghurvey writes, in Chandhyog Upanishad it is mentioned that if any person has given the leftover food of the yajna to the evil, then he is equivalent to whatever is sacrificed on contrary, it is disgusting to offer food to evil because they are degenerated and equal to dogs and pigs.¹⁶

As per the investigation regarding *Chandals* in Vedic literature, they are casteless people and it is necessary to further investigate about them to know Balmikis and their problems. This is an essential clan who is also called and 'Antya Vasayin'. Vashisht has said a Vaishya girl to

¹⁵ Rajendra Yadav- *Kaha ho raha hoga Suryoday*, Indraprasth bharti, July-September, 1991.

¹⁶ Ghurye, Govind Sadashiv. *Caste, Rank and Business*. Delhi: Rajpal and Sons. Pp. 194.

be daughter of *Shudra* man. According to the Manu, Antya wasayin is the illegitimate child of *Shudra* and Casteless women. Their job is limited up to the cemeteries. According to a research he/she is recognized as a *Chandal*. Both Boudhayan and Vashist mention about these two Clans.¹⁷

Patanjali, a sage who produced prominent theories some 150 years ago stated his explanation of *Swapach* Clan. However the occupation of *Swapach* during his time isn't stated. The Patanjali in his composition doesn't mention about *Swapach* based on the social backwardness in this example. In this example, he mentions about Mantripa Clan. We are also aware of the fact that Kautilya deprived *Chandal* of the rights. But Manu really mentioned that *Swapach* and *Chandal* should be kept in one clan and treated equally. Manu mentioned that these people should live outside the village, were the wrap of dead bodies, eat in broken utensils, and wear ornaments made of steel and use dogs and donkeys as their wealth. There were people who were restricted to enter the villages. These people cremated those dead bodies for which no one claimed.¹⁸

Not only did Manu throw them out of the villages, town and slums but he also made some rules and works, only specified for their clan. This is the reason why these people had to face social backwardness.

Vivekanand Jha accept the fact that *Chandal* were considered as the lowest in *Shudras* for which they were a victim to insults and the conventional society consider them as the lowest caste in the society.¹⁹ In the holy book *Aapatstamb* it is mentioned that the one who steals gold or kills a Brahmin in his previous birth is born as a *Chandal*.²⁰

¹⁷ Dr Govind Sadashiv Ghurye. *Caste, Rank and business*. Delhi: Rajpal and Sons.Pp. 194.

¹⁸ Dr Govind Sadashiv Ghurye. *Caste, Rank and business*. Delhi: Rajpal and Sons.Pp. 195.

¹⁹ Vivekanand Jha. *Origin of Chandal and Untouchables:History*. January. 1992. Pp. 24.

²⁰ Aapatstamb Dharmasutra-II, 1.26.

But according to other holy books like *Boudhayan Goutam* and *Vashisht* it was believed that *Chandals* were a result of coming together of two peoples or other two different Clans that was the *Shudra* men and the Brahmin women. These holy books stated that the kids born out of *Shudra* men and Brahmin women were considered *Chandal*. However, this principle is very contradictory. This is confirmed that *Chandal* as a clan can never be born out of *Shudra* man and Brahmin women.²¹

The only motive behind these principles and conclusions go to keep *Chandal* away from the Aryan Clan. Words like '*Antya, Antyoni, Antyavasin*' were used to describe *Chandals*. From these entire words one can relate to the effective isolation of the *Chandals*. All this effective references and concept brought the isolation of *Chandal* in the society. These people were forced to believe that they were inferior and for this reason they were mistreated.

Mayin in his novel 'Ancient Law' had mentioned about the destructive caste system of the Indian society and it strongly opposed that.²² Similarly sharing in his novels Hindu tribes and castes had also strongly opposed the caste system.²³ In writing of Shruty, the word is used to refer slaves. Trigdev in his book had mentioned about the lower caste. These lower castes were actually the opponents of Aryan clans and they were badly defeated by Aryan, after being defeated by the Aryan, these lower clans were made to work for them. In Brahman books, it is mentioned that *Shudras* were created to serve the upper caste. The position of *Shudras* in the Brahmin books are equivalent to the position in other Holy text therefore this is quite exemplary of *Shudra* being eventually the serving Clan.²⁴

²¹ Vivekanand Jha. *Origin of Chandal and Untouchables-History*. January, 1992. Pp. 25.

²² Main. *Ancient Law*. (New Edition, 1930).Pp. 17.

²³ Shering. *Hindu Tribes and Castes*. Pp. 293.

²⁴ Dr Pandurang Vaaman Kale. *History of theology*. (3rd Edition. 1980). *Shudra tu kaaryed hasya krit ma kritmev. Dasyamev hi srishtosau brahmasya swayanbhava*. Also see, Manu-8.413. Pp. 112.

The Caste system has also been discussed in the book *Arthashastra* written by Kautilya. Kautilya also stated that *Chandal* should reside somewhere around the cemetery grounds. He says- "yatha *Chandalod* pansach *Chandalana* yevo pa bhagyo nanyeshaam" which means the water of the well of *Chandal* is only meant for them and not for someone else. Kautilya has also compared *Chandal* to two tribes like Baburico shabro and pulinda.²⁵ Kautilya has ranked them based on the property.²⁶ And it is from here that we learn that *Chandals* belong to the *adivasi* tribes. Prabhati Mukherjee has recognized Ptolemy's written '*condloy*' as the *Chandals*. Eventually, the caste system is a result of disgusted feeling towards the other inferior people.

R.N. Dandekar has mentioned that the principle of Manu was a communal hatred and a feeling of revenge.²⁷ Actually, the main aim of Manu was to make *Chandals* the outer caste hence, he mentioned that they should live outside villages so that all their behaviours are just related to themselves. A Brahmin or a Kshatriya could anytime seal the properties of the *Chandal* and hence they were very insecure and helpless.

Valmiki in his *Ramayan* has stated that no one is a result of world Shankar meaning that no one is born out of two different caste. In holy books like Bhagavad Gita and others, efforts were made to put the backward classes into the 5th rank of the caste system.

Even in Buddhism, the *Chandals* are mentioned as the inferior class of the society. Also in the Vedic literature they are treated as disgusting and the inferior class of the society. They always resided outside the village and were made to live towards the west of the areas. Even today when the population of these people are growing we can find them residing outside the village of the town in small slums near dirty areas towards west. The occupation of *Chandal*

²⁵ Kautilya, *Arthashastra* II, 1.5-6.

²⁶ Kautilya, *Arthashastra* IV, 10.2.

²⁷ R N Dandekar. *The Age of Gupta and other Essays*.

since generation was to sweep.²⁸ There is a mention of *Chandal* in mythologies. W J C Rose has mentioned *Chandal* as the sleep in class. Chinese Traveller Fa hien had also mentioned about the *Chandals* in his book that when they entered the place to clean they used to make people aware of their coming by blowing whistle so that people would know about their entrance and move out in order to ignore being touched by them.²⁹ Manu says that *Swapach* and *Chandal* have the same occupation to clean the city.³⁰ In 12th century Hemchandra had mentioned that *Chandals* used to keep a stick on the hands to threaten people to stay out of the touch.³¹

It is necessary to mention here that Fa Hien came to India in 5th century and Hemchandra wrote about the conditions of the *Chandal* in 12th century. In both these eras the situations of the *Chandal* were the same which proves a fact that *Chandal* homemade inferior and their occupation movers limited since ages.

Historic Kashmiri Brahmin Kalhan stated that is King Chakraborty fell in love for a donga women and disputes arose. Both these women were masters in the art of singing. King was so madly in love with them that he gave *Hansi* the title of queen. Here, Kalhan expresses his grief and says that people and ministers forced themselves to work for the "*shwapaki*" or lower caste queen and also ate her defiled food. Kalhan expresses his heartfelt deep grief and states that maybe there wasn't any strong god during that era or else a lower caste woman would have never been able to attain such a position.³² This alone cannot be stated as the mentality of Kalahan but it is a result of the suppression that was faced by the Balmiki society which was mentioned in the Vedic literature. Kalhan also mentions about the bravery

²⁸ Dr Govind Sadashiv Ghurye. *Caste, Rank and Business*. Pp. 197.

²⁹ Records of Buddhist Kingdoms, Introduction, Laig, Pp. 43.

³⁰ Manu, 10.5-56.

³¹ Hemchandra. *Desi Naam Mala*..

³² Kalhan-Rajtaringini VI, Pp. 192.

of the *swapak* soldiers but with grief. He mentions about a *Chandal* and says that in *Suksh* region, he killed Jajja, a kidnapper in a battle in middle of 750 BC.³³

Kalhan also mentions about an engineer during the rule of Avanti Burman. He says that during the reign of Avanti Burman there was a problem and there was not anything that could be done to get out of it. It was during this time that engineer Suyya came to the rescue and built a dam across the river. It was from this instance that there were possibilities of irrigation. This protected the village from drought and also helped in the development of Kashmir.³⁴

According to Albruni, *Doms* and *Chandals* were meant to clean the villages and do other dirty works. However, the other occupation of *Doms* was to perform music.³⁵

In Punjab occupation of the *Doms* were to entertain people by performing music and dance. They also work with jute and fibre. However in regions of Garhwal and Kumaon they did the work of a farmer and used to earn their livelihood. Therefore in these regions they are also called as artisans. However in Bengal this, caste arose as the caste who used to do the dirtiest works. Even for their religious matters no Brahman would come to perform. No one works for them. In 1959 the number of *Doms* in West Bengal was 110000. Their main occupation was to clean toilets. However similar castes were there in Punjab known as *Churha*, in Rajasthan and Bombay known as Balmiki, Balmiki or Mehtar, in Bengal they were known as Hari, Mehtar, Hela and Balmiki and in Orissa they are called Hari.³⁶

Describing about domari and *Chandal* Arjuna said they were related to all the dirty work they were associated with cleaning the villages according to them due to their occupation they

³³ Kalhan-Rajtaringini VI, Pp. 475-477.

³⁴ Kalhan, Rajtaringini V, Pp. 71-120.

³⁵ Albruni, India.

³⁶ Ghurye, Govind Sadashiv. *Caste, Rank and Business*. Delhi: Rajpal and Sons.

were kept in a different cast.³⁷ Apart from Albruni, Muslim writers such as Marwadi and Gardezi have the same mentality that *Dom* and *Chandal* were of the same clan. Even Chinese Traveller Hieun TSang agrees to mentality of Albruni and says that during that era, backward classes were forced to stay out of the villages and when they used to enter the village they used to make loud noises so as to make people aware of their entrance. People use to avoid being touched by them.

If religious texts are to be believed then *Chandal* were born in lower caste that were considered inferior in the society and were forced to live out of the villages. They are still prevalent today but the situation today is kind of different. Even today when everything is so much developed, some educational institutions, medical colleges, engineering colleges force the Dalit students other backward class of the society to live in separate hostels. Hieun Tsang and Gandhi had the same argument for lower caste communities. The harshness towards the backward society is a result of the politics. It has been mentioned about this society in Bhanbhatt's words famous book Kadambari.

Albruni also provided one significant information, that *Doms* and *Chandal* were very much classified in the field of music and dance. He also stated about Hari's that they were better than others when compared to the cleanliness.³⁸ Even Kalhan doesn't deny the fact that these people were very much intelligent when it came to singing.³⁹ In the Vishnu *Dharmasutra* it is mentioned that the original occupation of the *Chandals* were to hang people.⁴⁰ Whereas Parashar states that these people had no such occupation, their main occupation was to clean the society.⁴¹

³⁷ Albruni, India.

³⁸ Albruni, India.

³⁹ Kalhan, Rajtaringini.

⁴⁰ Vishnu Theology.

⁴¹ Parashar.

Manu had compared *Chandal* and other backward classes of the society. He had made some specific rules and laws for them which were totally inhuman. According to him *Chandal* should wear clothes out of the wrap of dead bodies. They cannot enter the village during the day. They could only enter during the night.

Jai Prakash Valmiki, also known is a famous writer from Jaipur who believed that Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Punjab, Haryana, Maharashtra, and other places may have different cleaning classes who called themselves as Mehtar, Chura and Balmiki/Valmiki but they consider themselves to be one class because their 'gotra' matches to one another. The rituals are same their food habits are same, even their occupations are same. They are labourers in fields in villages, they make holders out of bamboo, and they rear pigs and are present in huge number in municipalities for cleaning work.⁴² Jai Prakash Valmiki believes that the *Diya* clan in Rajasthan is also of generation of dump. These people like other clean the roads, make bamboo holders and most of their behaviours are quite similar to that of Balmikis and Mehtars.⁴³

In 1931 the *Chandal* clan was recognized as scheduled tribes under Madras. However in 1935 Indian government recognized these people residing in Madras and Orissa as the scheduled tribes. Even in Rajasthan these people have been started to recognize as the scheduled tribes and castes.⁴⁴ Based on the evidences and conclusions it could be stated that this society was suppressed since ages but still it has been able to exist in such conditions . History has given inhuman behaviour towards this society. The upper class has done everything unusual to keep this people tied down to the ropes of inhumanity but still these people try to rose even when they are chained down. They aim to keep the society clean but

⁴² Jayprakash Valmiki, *Samyantar*, October 2005.

⁴³ Jayprakash Valmiki, *Samyantar*, October 2005.

⁴⁴ Shah, Vimal P. *The Education Problems Of Scheduled Caste And Scheduled Tribes School And College Students*. New Delhi: Pp. 42-43.

still they are treated with insult and disgust. And the feeling to come out of this hell of ill treatment is still there. They still aim to be free.

4.2: Balmiki Community and Saint Valmiki

Balmiki society accepts Valmiki as their God. Especially in Punjab there are several temples and *dharamshalas* (Spiritual dwelling) of Valmiki. Even in foreign countries where these people reside, they have made up temples and offered statues of Valmiki. 12 kilometres from Amritsar, a Valmiki ashrama (hermitage) is situated. It is said that in this place, Valmiki had taught Luv-Kush the art of arms. In this place, the kitchen of Sita is also situated. Discussions are made in different topics. Here, those questions need to be discussed which are often asked regarding Balmiki society and Saint Valmiki. It is often said that the Balmikis could never be successors of Valmiki, because he was the great composer of *Ramayana* while Balmikis belong to the lowest strata of society. The confidence of the people of this community had been crushed by the upper class. They are very talented, brave and hardworking, yet they couldn't establish themselves in the society. The one's who were able to do so, were criticized and neglected. Hence they started to move away from this culture and changed their identity. There are several international music composers, singers, actors, writers, who have kept their identity hidden. Hence, Balmiki community isn't much appreciated.

There is lack of information regarding the life history of Saint Valmiki, composer of *Ramayana*, and whatever is available, is too less for drawing a conclusion. There is no information regarding Valmiki in *Ramayana*. Although in different events of *Ramayana*, we get to know that Valmiki wrote *Ramayana*.

Dr. Jacobi says that *Ramayana* was written between 5th century, 6th or 8th century AD.⁴⁵ A.A McDonald believes that on the basis of the usage of Pali language and other evidences, Valmiki might have written *Ramayana* around 4th century AD.⁴⁶ AB Keith also believes that *Ramayana* was written in 4th century AD.⁴⁷ But M Winternitz says that it was composed before 3rd century AD.⁴⁸ Father Camille Bulcke says that there are high chances that *Ramayana* was written around 300BC. This can also be proved by that in Panini there is no mention of main characters like Ram, Dashrath, Bharat, Hanuman, Lakshmana, Sugriva, Vibhishan and others. He doesn't even mention about Valmiki. Although the story of Ram would have been popular that time due to the mention of Kaikeyi, Kaushalya and Shurpnakha. We also get other details.⁴⁹

In Taittiriya Pratishakya (1930) published by Madras university, the Valmiki has been mentioned in three distinct places. However this is quite different from *Aadikavi* Valmiki.⁵⁰ This is the opinion of A. Wecher and H. Yacobi. Hence, this proves that the name Valmiki was quite popular in the ancient era. Therefore, we should not be astonished if we get to hear the name of Valmiki belonging to different people in various places.

A.C. Das also believes that while Mahabharata was attempted, Guruvanshi, the followers of Vishnu made a list which has mentioned Valmiki. Hence, it can be said that Suparna Pedigree were the nomadic Aryan tribe of Sapta Sindhu (land of 7 rivers) region.⁵¹ Only in '*Drona*' feast and '*Shanti*' feast of Mahabharata, Valmiki is considered as poet. Apart from this in '*Shanti Parv*', Bhargav is mentioned as a poet while in '*Anushasan Parv*', there is a mention

⁴⁵ H. Yakobi, *Das Ramayan*. Pp. 101.

⁴⁶ A.A McDonald- *History of Sanskrit Literature*. Pp. 309.

⁴⁷ Father Camille Bulcke, *Ram Katha*, Hindi Council, Prayag University, Allahabad, 4th edition (1st edition-1905). Pp. 25.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ H. Wecher. *Ramayan*. Pp.17. Also see, H. Yakobi, *Das Ramayan*. Pp. 66.

⁵¹ AC Das, *Trigvedic*. India, Pp. 65, 148.

of Valmiki. Hence, in a number of occasions of Mahabharata, there is a mention of Saint Valmiki.

Some scholars believe that during the composition of '*Baal Kand*' of *Ramayana*, the identity of Valmiki spread. Hence he is considered the contemporary of *Ramayana*. In '*Bal Kand*', we get a distinct introduction of the origin. In Tapasavi, Muni, Maharshi, Valmiki listens about *Ramayana* from Narad. After that he converts it into a story and makes Kush-Luv learn it by heart. They praise *Ramayana* everywhere even in the court of Ram.⁵²

Similarly in (Uttarakhand) Lakshmana leaves pregnant Sita in the ashram of Valmiki and asks her to take rest there as he was a Brahman and friend of Dashratha.⁵³

Later, Sita gives birth to Luv-Kush in the ashram of Valmiki. There, they were taught *Ramayana* by Valmiki. They recited it at the palace of Ram. Rama called Sita after hearing this. In front of the assembly, Valmiki gives the proof of chastity of Sita. In this circumstance, he says that he was the tenth son of Prechta who had been meditating since many years.⁵⁴ He puts stress on the fact that he has never done any sin.⁵⁵ This proves that the story of Valmiki being bandit was completely false.

Valmiki mentions about Chyavan Rishi in two distinct parts of *Ramayana*, firstly in '*Sagar Katha*' of, Balkand) then '*Lavan Vadh*' of Uttarakaand. However, there is no evidence that the relation between the two in these parts but, in Uttarakaand, Valmiki has been related to the Bhargavas since he was the tenth son of Prechta. Later on, Valmiki got the title of Bhargav. In Mahabharat, Bhargav has been called the composer *Ramacharit Manas*. It

⁵² Valmiki Ramayan- Baalkaand, Canto 1-4, Geeta press, Gorakhpur.

⁵³ Valmiki Ramayan- Baalkaand, Canto 47.

⁵⁴ Valmiki Ramayan- Baalkaand, Canto 96.

⁵⁵ Valmiki Ramayan- Baalkaand, Canto 96, Shloka 20.

appears as if he is Valmiki because the verse in which it has been mentioned is somewhat similar to the verses in *Ramayana*.

In later compositions, Valmiki is mostly considered as Bhargav. For example, in Vishnu Purana and Matsyapurana, Bhrigu had been named Varun. In Shatpath Brahman, it had been mentioned that Bhrigu was the son of Varun. In Bhagwat puran, it has been mentioned that the wife of Varun (prechta), Charshni had two sons Valmiki and Bhrigu. Hence it can be said that due to the infusion of Valmiki and Chyavan genealogy, Valmiki got the title Bhargav. The origin of Valmiki was the formicary of termites. Hence, the rumor spread that Valmiki's came out of *Valmik*. Similar kind of story was popular about Bhargav Chyavan. In '*Aryanyak Parv*' of Mahabharata, it is mentioned that Bhrigu's son Chyavan was so lost in meditation that the termites covered his body and he was unaware of it. Princess Sukanya rescued him and also later on married him. These briefs are obtained from Bhagwat Purana, Padmapurana, Skandha Purana and Devi Bhagwat Purana.⁵⁶

It is believed in the cases of both Chyavan and Valmiki that they were covered by termites, hence their stories are also pretty similar. On one hand, Valmiki got the title of Bhargav, while on the other Chyavan was associated with the story of Ram. In Kritivas Ramayan, Valmiki was considered to be the son of Chyavan. Ashvaghosh in his book, '*Buddha Charit*' says that Valmiki completed the epic, which Chyavan had failed.⁵⁷

Another tradition is seen in Indian folklores, which says that Valmiki was a bandit. It is believed that before composing *Ramayana*, he was a bandit. Neither does this story have any proof, nor any argument. Even its antiquity is doubtful. Its origin is first found in Skandh

⁵⁶ Father Kamil Bulke- RamKatha, Pp.28.

⁵⁷ Ashvaghosh- Buddha Charit.

Purana. Most of the details in this are that of 8th century. A number of interpolations were added to it, whose era of composition is unknown. Even RC Hajara, agrees to it.⁵⁸

According to Manjula Sahdev, there is no evidence of Valmiki being a bandit in the literature prior to 6th century; Infact there was no mention of the word 'Valmiki'. She also says that during that time, Valmiki was a scholar, and revolutionary. After clear research of Valmiki's *Ramayana*, it can be said that Valmiki would have been a contemporary of Shankaracharya. He spent most of his time near the Tansa River where he composed *Ramayana* and also gave shelter to Sita.⁵⁹

Similar story is there in Mahabharata, where Valmiki said to Yudhisthira that during an argument, the Saints called him '*Brahmadhan*' which made him a sinner. Hence, he took refuge under Shiva who freed him from all, his sins and said that he could be famous.

There are four stories regarding Valmiki in '*Skanda Purana*'. In Vaishnav segment during the month of Baisakh, there is a mention of an unnamed person. He calls on to Ram and as a result, he gets a blessing that in his next birth, he would be born in Valmik genealogy and become Valmiki.⁶⁰

In Avantya nobility of Avanti segment, the story of Agnisharma is prevalent. It is said that he was a bandit, who once happened to meet seven saints. He wanted to kill them. The saints sent him to ask family, if they would like to be a part of his evil deed. His family members refused. Agnisharma returned to them and on their advice, started chanting. The seven saints

⁵⁸ RC Hajara- Mythical Records, Pp. 165.

⁵⁹ Sahdev, Manjula. *Maharishi Valmiki: Ek Samikshatmak Adhyayan*. Punjabi University: Patiala.

⁶⁰ Skand Puran- *Vaishnav Khand, Vaishak maas Mahatmay*, Chapter 21.

returned to the same place after 13 years and found Agnisharma's body covered with termites. They took him out, named him Valmiki and asked him to write Ramayan.⁶¹

In Naagar segment, there is the story of a Brahman named Loha Jangh. He was very responsible towards his family. In case of famine, to feed his family he became a bandit, then the same story of seven saints happens as in previous one. The saints advising him to chant and later become Valmiki.⁶²

Same kind of story is there in Prabhas segment. Vaisakh, the son of a Brahman named Shanimukh used to feed his family by theft. He met the seven saints, then his family refused to become a part of his sin, later on, he meditated continuously while his body was covered with termites. The seven saints on their return named him Valmiki and predicted that he would compose *Ramayana*.⁶³

The most popular of the tales is found in '*Ayodhya Kand*' of Ramayan. Ram, Lakshman and Sita reach Chitrakut, all tired took suggestion from Valmiki regarding their residing place. After solving their problems, he tells his own stories to them.⁶⁴

He used to live with Kiradits, and since he was always around shudras, he became a Brahmin only by birth. His sons were born out of the womb of a shudra. Under their influence, he also became a robber and always had bow-arrow with him; then same story of seven saints. Even Tulsidas describes it in two of his dohas.⁶⁵

We get a number of tales from '*Tatva Sangarha Ramayana*' about Valmiki which can be assimilated to a number of unworldly events. In '*Rajya*' of '*Anand Ramayana*,' we get a

⁶¹ Skand Puran- *Avanti Khand*, *Avantya nobility*.

⁶² Skand Puran- *Naagar Khand*.

⁶³ Skand Purana- *Prabhas Khand*.

⁶⁴ Adhyatam Ramayan- *Ayodhya Kand*, Canto-6, Shloka-42-88.

⁶⁵ Tulsidas- *Ramcharitmanas- Baal Kaand*, Doha 19 and 21.

number of brief stories in which we get an explanation of the previous three births of Valmiki. In the first birth he was a Brahman, in the second birth he was a huntsman, whereas in the third, he was the son of Krinu when he did meditation and finally became Valmiki.

In “*Kritivas Ramayana*”, we find an escalated form of “*Adhyatam Ramayana*”. The name of the Huntsman was Ratnakar, and he was the son of Chyavan. Instead of the seven saints, there was Brahma and Narad. On the advice of Bramha, Ratnakar took a bath in the river. As soon as he sees the river, he becomes still. Then, Bramha suggests Ratnakar to chant the name of Rama.

Based on another tale, W. Cook says that God had sent Guru Nanak to Valmiki. On the request of Guru Nanak, Valmiki asked his wife, if she would sacrifice her life for him. She refused. Valmiki then went to Gadha Mountains of Chandal Gadh (Chunar, Uttar Pradesh) and resided there as a hermit.⁶⁶

From the above mentioned stories, the relation between Valmiki and Balmiki community has been proved, which is being continued since many years. In Bhaktmaal, Valmiki has been termed as '*shwapach*'.

In 5th century, just like Ram, Valmiki is also considered as an incarnated form of Vishnu. Vishnu Purana was composed in 5th century. In the 5th segment of this, it has been mentioned that in Yetra era, Vishnu was to take birth as Valmiki and write *Ramayana*. In the third segment, there is a mention of worshipping Valmiki. In '*Pratibha Lakshman*,' the statue of Valmiki has been described.⁶⁷ In Vridambh Purana's (13th century) middle segment (Chapter-11), Sati blesses Vishnu that he would compose an epic in the form of Valmiki. The

⁶⁶ W. Cook- *Tribes and Castes*, Part-1, Pp. 262-263.

⁶⁷ Vishnu Dharmottar Puran, 1st segment, Third segment, Pratibha Lakshman, Shloka 64.

statue of Valmiki in the Valmiki temple of the Indonesia portrays it as an incarnated form of Vishnu. It is based on a belief of Indian mythology.

There are many arguments regarding the era in which *Ramayana* was composed. H. D Sankliya believes that *Ramayana* was composed in the 5th century.⁶⁸ But some scholars refuse to acknowledge it. Among them is D.C Sarkar who believes that it was composed during 3rd Century BC, the central segment whereas the '*Bal kand*' and '*Uttarakhand*' was composed in the 2nd century.⁶⁹

P.V Kane believes the *Ramayana* wasn't composed before 300 to 200 BC, and the Epic took its present form during 200 BC.⁷⁰ Winternitz believes *Ramayana* got its present formed during the second century. B. B Lal, the head Indian History Researcher in his '*Naya Puratav*' 15th to 17th October, 1988 said *Ramayana* must have been composed round second century BC to 3rd Century BC, the events whereas of 700 BC.⁷¹

Dr Md. V. Shah says that it is mentioned in Skand Purana, Valni despite being Brahmin, Valmiki grew up among Kiraat. In other places, his origin is said to be '*Triyagyon*,' but according to folk tales, he was Kiraat, later on he became Brahman. However, the shocking fact is that there is no mention of Valmiki in the '*Rishi Mandal*'. He was not librated, but he has been given the title of Aadi Kauri.⁷²

Hence, from the above mentioned stories, it clear was that Valmiki despite his achievements was scared of popularity and always tried to become small. If he was considered a Saint, then why wasn't he librated. Hence, this proves that he was kept out of Brahmin society. Whatever

⁶⁸ H.D Sankliya- The Ramayan in Historical Perspective, Delhi 1982, Pp. 173.

⁶⁹ D.C. Sarkar- I.S.R VIII, Part 1-2, July 1981 and January 1982, Pp. 172.

⁷⁰ P.V Kane- I.S.R-I, 2nd edition, Pune, 1968, Pp. 396, 402.

⁷¹ B.B. Laal- *Historicity of the Mahabharata and Ramayana: What has archaeology has to say in the matter?*

⁷² M.V Shah- *Bharatiya Sanskriti mein Shudro ka Yogdaan*, Consentience, Part 60, 1980, *Dalit Literature Special Issue*, Editor- Mahip Singh, Chandrakant Bandivedkar.

the stories are, reality is that he is given the stature of God in Balmiki society. His temples were made they celebrate ‘Prakat’. But there are some scholars who refuse to accept it. One such scholar is Bhagwan Das who says that for the backward classes and Balmikis, the word Valmiki was first used in 1935.⁷³ In Valmiki *Ramayana*, there is a verse,⁷⁴ in which he invokes God and says that he had been meditating for thousand years. He has never done any sin. He prays to make Sita, sinless, so that he can even be pure and he gains the results of his deeds. From this verse, what is doubtful is whether Valmiki was a bandit or not. How this tale became popular in the religious truth is a matter which is to be considered. It is possible that Valmiki was related to ‘Dasyu’ class, and later on the meaning of Dasyu, became contemporary, and the meaning changed to Bandit. Just like the tribes of the jungles, the holy texts and scholars played an important role to make it popular, which was used to spoil the reputation of Aadikavri. This belief came to be proved from the following facts. He is a saint but not librated. Secondly, in the whole history, only Valmiki has the guts to show ‘Shambuk-Vadh’. Even Tulsidas doesn't mention about this is Ramcharit Manas. This relates Valmiki to backward classes. The doubts of Bhagwan Das are portrayed in a different manner. He says that the Valmiki whom the untouchables accepted as their God, his identity is unknown. Maybe he belonged to the Balmiki and was related the job of cleaning. It is believed that he died in Thanesar near Kurukshetra, where there is the ‘Samadhi’ of Shar Balmiki Baba. To prove about Churha caste of Punjab and fill up the gap, Pandit Amichand Sharma in 1930 wrote a book named ‘Valmiki-Prakash’ which puts an effort to prove the relation of the Saint Valmiki of Churha caste.⁷⁵ According to many scholars, some people of Punjab accepted Valmiki, apart from tales, they have no written record. According to the census of 1891 &

⁷³ Bhagvandas- *Valmiki Jayanti aur Bhangi Jaati*, Pp. 18, Dalit World Library, Delhi 1973.

⁷⁴ Valmiki Ramayan, Uttar Kaand, Canto-96, Verse- 18,24.

⁷⁵ Bhagvandas- *Valmiki Jayanti aur Bhangi Jaati*, Dalit World Library, Delhi 1973, Pp. 34.

1901, there were only 6105 Balmiki, whereas Lalbegis were 163751. Total population was 414532, in which there were Hela, Dhanuk, and phatharfod, etc.⁷⁶

Shri Priyadas Prabhit wrote a composition Bhaktmaal (Shri Nabhaji) which was published in 1914 by Tejkumar Book Depot, Lucknow. Even an edition of it was published in 1951. Bhaktmaal was composed around 1639. In this composition, a comment was made of Shri Nabhaji that he belonged to Dom genealogy. In some places, he is also referred to belong in Balmiki society especially in Uttar Pradesh. But Priyadas Prabhit says that the saint Shri Nabhaji was born in a Dom family but in western countries, the people don't know what a Dom is. Those who don't know think that Dom is a synonym for Balmikis but calling that Nabhaji was a Balmiki would be wrong.⁷⁷

In the book '*Shri Valmiki Sarbhang Jaati Bhed*', one of the names of God is said to be Valmiki. It is also said that Valmiki and Ganga used to wash away the sins of people. Hence, they are always referred as Repository of Salvation. Therefore, they are brother-sister. As per another story, one of the three sons of Varun was raised by a Balmiki woman. So, Balmiki people accepted his on their '*guru*' teacher. It also states about the origination of Valmiki society In Joseph Yaliyath, it has been identified as the truth.⁷⁸

So, from the above mentioned facts the conclusions which are drawn clearly states that Balmiki and Valmiki are equivalent to each other. In many states of India, temples of Valmiki are constructed. There are several temples Amritsar, Jalandhar, Bithoor, Haridwar, Rishikesh, Chandigarh, Fatehbad (Haryana), Hissar, Kurukshetra, Sannor (Patiyala), Rooskee, Panchkuiya (New Delhi), Bolni(Meerut), Bahina, Chitrakut Dhaam, Kankhal (Haridwar), Sitamadi, Bagpat(Meerut) Darjeeling (West Bengal) and others. The pilgrimage of Amritsar is the most old and popular.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Shri Priyadas Prabhit- Bhaktmaal Tika, Pp. 43.

⁷⁸ Joseph Thaliyat- Notes on Scavenger Caste of North Madhya Pradesh, Anthropos, 56, 1981, Pp. 790

4.3: Methods of Worshipping and Religious Beliefs

Balmiki (Valmiki), Churha, Lalbegi, Halalkhor and others were Hindus as well as Muslims. Muslim Bhangis were known as Sheikhs and Halalkhors. Based on religious beliefs, the Churha Bhangis of Punjab were neither Hindus nor Muslims. They mainly worshipped Lalbegi. The method of worshipping Lalbegi is known as *Kursinama*. Some people call God Lalbeg as Balshah Noori Lalbeg, whereas some called him Balmiki. They used to plait to Balmiki.

Churhas don't construct temples; instead they make small hidings of two and a half bricks where they light the lamp. In some places they have created high rising platforms like those of Gol Gumbaaz and Buddhist Stupas. However, they never called it a temple. It was their ritual to sacrifice hen. Then, all the blood of hen was collected in a utensil after sacrificing it, with the help of a mess, blood was sprinkled all over the houses. They believed that sprinkling blood would drive away evil forces and ill health. Once in a year, a cock was sacrificed too. In the colonies of Churhas "*Baabe ka thaan*" was made by joining two and a half bricks.⁷⁹

Lalbegi and Churhas worshipped Maayi, Masani, Naklinayin, Paun and Mayi Madaran. They also worshipped Googapir. Such worshippings were prevalent in Western Uttar Pradesh and Haryana. The main Gods of Paun culture are Sambal Singh, Nathmal, Kesalmal, Jeetmal, Harisingh. All these Gods were of the same genealogy. They even had a sister whose name was Sedo and other two cousin sisters were Naathiya and Shyam Kaur. Among all of them, Kalwa Paun had a significant position.

It was customary to offer pigs and goats and alcohol to the Paun Gods. A place of worshipping was made within the room where two and a half brick fireplace and made a

⁷⁹ Bhagwandas- *Valmiki Jayanti aur Bhangi Jaati*, Pp. 20.

thaan. It was in this *thaan* that the lamp was lighted and the Gods were worshipped. Five or Seven Poun Gods were worshipped and the same number of lamps highlighted. Flames were brought up by Patang by applying ghee in the holocaust. The head of the family invoked the Poun Gods to come into their homes. If the Flames became liked it and write it meant that the Gods had entered their home. Chapatis were offered to the God. These offerings are made as per the number of the Paun gods present in the *thaan*, either five or seven. The cooked meat of pork and mutton were placed on the chapatis. Seekh kebabs were also offered. All these were placed on the chapati. One or two bottles of alcohol were also offered. Once the flame lighted all these were placed in front of it. The offerings of chapatis with meat and alcohols were paid to the flame. After the process, the sacrament was distributed among the family members. The chapatis and the cooked meats were given as a sacrament first to the ladies of the family, then to the other members. Alcohol was offered to the elder members of the family as a sacrament. The rest of the sacrament was distributed among neighbours.

Ramprakash Gautam of Kanpur said that in his house Nagarsen Bulaki, Kali, Durga, Nathiya and Miya Badshah were worshipped. Ram Singh of Chandigarh said that in his family Shyamkor Astabali was worshipped. Although in different families Bawri, Karsier, Indrabhat and Masani of Jewar were also worshipped.

In Gurgaon there is a temple of a goddess whom the Valmiki society calls as Masani Mayi Gurgaon, in this Temple, piglets are offered as sacraments. It is said that in this temples Jaats and Brahmins also come and offer the piglets as sacraments.

There are some Bhagat who were blessed by the Pawn Gods and whenever they appear, they pray for Ma Hidimba. The temple of Hidimba is located in Himachal. Hidimba is the wife of Bhīma from Mahabharata and the mother of Ghatothkach. As per a Bhagat Ghatothkach is actually the Madani Paun God. The female God who were worshipped are actually yoginis

and were named according to the places they resided in. Like - Nyavwali Mayi, Mayi Masani from Gurgaon, Mayi Madaran, etc

However in Paun Gods Kalwa Paun has a special place. It is said that there are 52 Kalwa pauns. They are also named according to the places they reside in. Like Kalwa Khardauni from Khatauli belonged to somewhere near Meerut. Wherever it was proved by the Bhagat, their name was given accordingly.

In the popular book Juthan there is a mention about such traditions. It states that in Valmiki communities whenever someone used to fall ill instead of taking them to the hospital they used to follow all kinds of superstitions. Whenever the disease took a serious note, the Bhagats were called and suggestions were taken from them. During this time two or three singers and Dholak players used to come with the Bhagat and used to play songs in a different tone. It was believed that by the songs of God was invocated and appeared within the Bhagats. Such an atmosphere was created by this song that anyone would start dancing to it. Special words were used in this song so that the God can be invocated immediately.

As soon as the Bhagat started dancing, all the music was stopped. And as the Bhagat started moving it was believed that the God had appeared within him. The God used to tell his name and greeted everyone. The elder member of the family used to come in front of him and told the god about the sufferings of the diseased. Then the god used to touch the patient and use to give several ways by which they believe the patient would be cured.⁸⁰

There are a number of Gods who were worshipped in the Valmiki society. Along with Sambal Singh, Mohammed Sayyed was also worshipped. Mohammed Syed was offered white cock as a sacrament. The same offering was made to Totapeer.

⁸⁰ Omprakash Valmiki- Juthan, Pp. 52-53.

These Gods were worshipped on a daily basis. Lamps were lighted in the *thaan* and Hookah was offered. For some time the Hookah was kept on the *thaan*. However, after sometime the elder member of the family took some puffs from this hookah.

The Goddesses were also worshipped along with the Gods. However these Goddesses were worshipped independently, different from those of the Paun Gods. These Goddesses were known by the names of different places. They were call maayi. Some of the famous of them were Niyavale wali maayi(Muradabad), Bhojpur wali. It is believed that they are the different forms of Mahakali. Maayi Madaran is worshipped in the Saharanpur district of Muzaffarnagar. Then there is Mayi Dhootni. Maayi Basanti belongs to Raiwala of Dehradun. It is believed that she is very peaceful in nature. Male piglets are offered to her. Sacred meals are offered as sacraments of Mayi Dhootni. The sacrament consists of sweet dishes, kheer and puri. The whole family took part in it. The whole family goes to the journey for Mayi Basanti.

In several families, kheer was offered as a sacrament to Gangaram. Mansaram Saktaram Manand Dhobi kusumiya also worshipped Gods and Goddesses.

The Bagars are closely related to Churhas. Every year they set out on a pilgrimage and on their return, feasts are thrown. Several families worship Bawariya Gods. It is believed that he was a disciple of Gorakhnath. Churhas consider Gorakhnath, Manchandarnath, Jalandharnath and Balkatanath as their ancestors, which proves the fact that they were related to the Nath ancestry. “Nanga Puja” was very popular in this society. Wheat and sweets were mixed to make tikka or *nanga bhog*. It is said that Nanga Pujas were conducted prior to Gods.

Sambal Singh, Hari Singh, Jeetmal, Kesarmal and Nathmal were five brothers known as the Bawariye. It is believed that they acquired the power of 56 Kalwas from Gogapeer, and the power of 64 Joginis from Kalidevi of Ganganagar, Rajasthan. And in Medi they acquired the

place of Goga Jaharpeer. These are the five residing places of Bawariyas. Gorakh tila is also located here.

According to some worshipping method it is also believed that this society is related to the Buddhism. These methods passed from the Nath and Sidha but for to the advancement of time and the oppression by Hindu society, it got lost. They couldn't keep their social and religious traditions bound together and hence lost their existence. Hindu society oppressed it and it got extinct. To gain respect these people keep wandering from one religion to another. Sometimes they follow Sikhism and sometimes Islam. And when they don't get shelter within any religion, they build up the temples of their own gods and starts worshipping them. But till date it has not been able to raise its voice against the prohibitions made by the Hindu society. Most of the priests of Valmiki religion when asked about the relationship between their religion and Hinduism, prefer to remain silent. They have nothing to say of it. They are only concerned about the sacraments that are made to gods.

Once upon a time the Lalbegis existed in many numbers. They were mostly found in the Hindi speaking provinces of North India such as Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Vidarbha, Punjab, and Rajasthan. Some Bhangis belong to the Lalbegi's religion and Valmiki caste. Girvan had elaborated about the religion of bhangis in his book 'Night Broom'. The famous writer of Urdu Maulana Altaf had also mentioned about the bhangis of this province in his book which is the North Eastern Province. It has now transformed to Punjab, Haryana and Delhi.

According to folk stories it can be concluded that the Lalbegis originally belonged to Ambala and Rawalpindi. Varish Shah, the writer of Heer had also talked of Churha caste and Lalbegi religion in his compositions.

Varish Shah belonged to the Jhang province. Mussalis and Kutana caste used to do the work of Bhangis in this region. They had an influence of Muslim culture. They used to do Roza and Namaz.

The kind of language used in *Kursinama* of Lalbeg wasn't that of Jhang but of Ambala and Doab.⁸¹ According to Bhagwan das, there is an influence of Punjabi in the sections. However, the next section has the Ambala influence. The language is similar to that of Jalandhar. There is a connection in their culture as well as language. One section has the influence of Karnal and Ambala.⁸²

Baalshah was the son of Santosh Rishi, Santosh Rishi of Sharapadat Rishi. Sharapadat Rishi was the son of Ainak Trik. Trikhik was the son of vikhik. Vikhik of Mahadev. And Mahadev means Shiv Aut. Aout Khanda was of alakh purush. Alakh purush was the son of Shakti and Shakti is the son of Agam purush.⁸³

Valmiki was worshiped as god and his birthday is also celebrated all over India as *Valmiki Jayanti*. Bhavadhas (the religious society of God Valmiki) was set up in Punjab by Rishi Nath Ratnakar in 24th May, 1964. Devsingh Asur, Viresh Motilal Bilal, Dasratn Ravan have a major role to play in this. But prior to this, a religious society was established in Ludhiana in 1960 by V S Dayal.

Later on, Bhavadhas was changed to *Aadi Dharm Samaj*, and Dasratn Ravan had an important role in this. Bhavadhas attempted to bring together the Valmiki society. But they were successful only in the religious sphere. They could not give it a form of protest. Many of the rituals performed were similar to the Brahmin culture. They started naming the demons. They do not worship Rama from Ramayana but the text of Ramayana is holy and

⁸¹ Chand, Achutank, May 1927, Pp. 137.

⁸² Chand, Achutank, May 1927, Pp. 137.

⁸³ Ibid. Pp. 138.

pious religious text to them. The role of these institutions couldn't be neglected on the social level. Under the leadership of V. S. Dayal several institutions were formed that stopped that torture on the people of this community. These institutions provided loans to the needy people of the society. The interest paid was almost negligible.

Same institution has been working in Jalandhar. It is playing an important role in the field of education. The name of the institution is Kamleshwar Valmiki Educational Trust, Jalandhar. This institution has not only been providing education in the towns and cities but also in the rural areas. Their programmes are continuously spreading education. On 23rd November 2009 Rajkumar Bhatthi had carried on the same program to spread education and tramped on the road from Amritsar to Delhi. He spread the information about the importance of education in every village. This institution also played an important role in opening tuitions for B.Ed and PCS. In such Institutions the rural students were given much importance.

4.4: The Balmiki Harijan Sangh

One distinct feature of the day to day life of the Balmikis in Darjeeling is that the social life of the community works out in close connection to some of the traditional and organizational wings established long time back. The socio-cultural practices and ways of living are moreover designed by these wings. The community members adhere to the norms and practices of these wings and hence have become the administrative and legal pillars of Balmiki society and behaviour.

The Balmiki Harijan Sangh is the most important organizational society among the Balmiki community in Darjeeling. This community association was established in 1948, under the West Bengal Societies Registration Act, 1961.⁸⁴

⁸⁴ Letter: To the Secretary, Balmiki Harijan Sangh. From The Registrar, Registrar of Societies, West Bengal, (Memorandum No. S/1120. Dated: July 3, 1982).

The formation of this Sangh was primarily for the betterment and upliftment of the community against the unequal and unjust society based on the caste factor prevalent then in Darjeeling Hills. It came out as an association based on the ideas that it was necessary to be in close contact of the entire community in the alien territory which was however never accepted by the other hill societies. At the outset the Sangh started its functioning office in the Municipality Quarters which has been allotted to them at Harijan Barrick (Room No.9 and 10). Later on the Sangh got its own land at 13, Khan Bahadur, Dr. Abdul Aziz Road.⁸⁵ In the 1982, the Darjeeling Municipality permitted the Sangh to construct two storied building for Adult Education, Rest House, Library and Club for the Harijans, under section 317 of the Bengal Municipal Act XV of 1932.⁸⁶

The Balmiki Harijan Sangh worked on the pure democratic processes since its inception. Regular elections were held for the formation of the Governing Body, and also formation of every governing body was informed to the district and state authority.⁸⁷ The portfolios were distributed on the basis of individual's qualification and ability to work consciously and responsibly for the community. The governing was composed of President, Vice President, Secretary and Co-secretary, two Treasures along with Executive members whose responsibility was to actively and enthusiastically work for the community without fulfilling their personal desires through Sangh. These elected members were highly respected by the community members. Their activities were accountable to the community as a whole.

General meetings of the Balmiki Harijan Sangh were called on periodical basis. These meetings were attended by the entire community member. It had been the responsibility of

⁸⁵ Letter :To Whom It May Concern, Registration Assesses to Balmiki Harijan Sangh. Plot holding No. 36. Dated: December 9, 1981.

⁸⁶ Letter: To the Secretary, Balmiki Harijan Sangh. From The Municipal Engineer, Darjeeling Municipality. Dated: December 3, 1982.

⁸⁷ Letter: To the District Magistrate, District Court, Darjeeling. Information of Newly Elected Governing Body of Balmiki Harijan Sangh. Darjeeling. Dated: September 01, 1990. Ref. No. 24/1 (9091) BHS.

the Sangh to inform about the agendas before hand to the members so that better discussions could be held in the meeting. Apart from general it had been the responsibility of the Sangh, to call upon the yearly meeting, where only the yearly reports and yearly audit was to be presented before the members.⁸⁸

4.5: Chaudhury Sanstha

The Balmiki community had restrained its social practices as carried out by their forefathers, similar to their original homeland in the north western parts of India. The community has sticks to the strict standards of the rank ridden society and has held the *Chaudhuary system*⁸⁹ of caste position and association even in contemporary era. ‘Chaudhary Sanstha’ is an important administrative wing of the community since pre-independence. It has been one of core pillar which holds and binds the community together. It is an organizational wing within the community where in five members are chosen to represent and address the entire matters and things that persists within the community. These *Chaudhuries* are administrators and are elected areas wise, and is also hereditary in nature. After the death of the *Chaudhury* the eldest son inherits the position of his father. As such the other members from the community could not get the opportunity to become the *Chaudhury* of the community.

Being at the apex of the community the *Chaudhuries* assert themselves to represent the collective determination of the community. The Chaudhury Sanstha takes cares of all the issues with the community. The ideas and concepts of the Sanstha of incredibly good quality when it was started, it kept the mutual understanding and to establish justice within the community. The fundamental nature of Sanstha and the stringency towards the cultural and

⁸⁸ Notice for Yearly meeting, Balmiki Harijan Sangh, Darjeeling. Dated: July 16, 1993.

⁸⁹ Chaudhury are elected areas wise, in Darjeeling they follow nine biras(meaning areas) at present there are five nine chaudhury in 32 wards of Darjeeling Municipality area. See, Balmiki, Lekhranj, *Balmiki Community in Darjeeling Hills: A Socio-Economic Profile*, in Journal of Political Studies, Vol. 7, March 2013, The Registrar: University of North Bengal. Also See, Lekhranj Balmiki. (2011). “*The Balmiki Community In Darjeeling: Caste Consciousness.*” in Terence Mukhia (Ed.). *A Multi-Disciplinary Perusal*. Darjeeling: Kalpa Griha Publications.

conventional ritualistic practices towards the community members. By which the Sanstha could maintain the unity and reliability within the society itself. It was meant to tackle or handle almost all the community issues and situations as well as resolving the social life of an individual or the community as a whole. It had doomed for the betterment of the community but in owing to the course of time it had proved to have unenthusiastic impacts.

The *Chaudhuries* have controlled the Balmiki society and have been carrying out customary practices of pre-independence days. Child marriages (especially in case of female), confinements on dowagers remarrying and masterminded marriage (arranged) rehearses are still taken after broadly. These unconstructive impacts in one logic have occurred in parallels to the self-interests of the 'Paanch'⁹⁰ members. The interests of these Paanchs later became the practice of the Chaudhury Sanstha, which later created negative impacts or influence up the community members leading to disregard to this particular organizational wing.

The conception of *Izzat*⁹¹ has been deeply narrow down by the *Chaudhuries*. From the very early age the children are discouraged for inter-caste marriage. The Chaudhuries Sanstha, looks down upon those who attempt inter-caste marriage. According to the ideology of the Sanstha one who is born in the community, whether male or female, it is the duty and responsibility to get married within the community itself. Here, for them 'Jaat Ki Roti Jaat Ko, Aur Jaat Ki Beti Jaat Ko.'⁹² In this connection the community head does not provide any scope for welcoming of new member (outcaste) in the community, which means they have segregated themselves from other communities in the hills,

⁹⁰ The Chaudhuries are also called Panchs, meaning total number of administrators in Chaudhury Sanstha in Hindi which means *paach* (Five in number).

⁹¹ The honour or good reputation of a person, family, or group of people. <http://www.macmillandictionary.com/dictionary/british/izzat> Accessed on 28.12.2012 17:30 hrs.

⁹² English translation: the food of the community should be for the community members, and the daughter of the community should be marriage within the community.

Contrary, if such cases arise the performer (offender) will be socially excluded from the community. The community *Chaudhuries* declares ‘*hukka pani bandh*’⁹³ for such a member with entire family. As such the member with entire family is socially boycotted by the entire community. Again, for inclusion the member has to pay the penalty known as *Daand*⁹⁴ to the *Chaudhury Sanstha* including the whole of the community members both in cash and kind, along with the onetime meal and drinks to the members. There have been certain cases when the member from community going for inter-caste marriage has been socially boycotted and was made to pay *Daand* for his inclusion in the community.

In 2006 the *Chaudhury Sanstha* made an announcement saying that, those who have married other caste are supposed to pay a *Daand*, by the 31st of December, 2006.⁹⁵ And as a concession the amount of cash paid as *Daand* was kept Rs. 1100 and from 01st of January, 2007 it would be converted into Rs. 11000. As a result of the announcement the members those who had went for inter-caste marriages, started to pay the *Daand* as soon as possible within the due date.⁹⁶ This was the time when maximum assortment was done by the *Chaudhury Sanstha* for their personal desires and the members of the community were exploited within the community itself. Hence, the headmen (*Chaudhuries*) of the community

⁹³ In case if the inter-caste marriage takes place the member is not allowed to enter the other community members house. Moreover, he/she with the entire family is not invited or not allowed to participate in any ceremony of the community. As such the member/family is isolated or excluded within the community. The community members are not allowed to have any kind of relations with that family.

⁹⁴ *Daand* is a penalty paid by the member to *Chaudhury Sanstha* including whole community both in cash and kind, and proper meal with drinks has to be offered and also has to apologies in front of the community members. The *Chaudhuries* has to be informed regarding the payment of the *Daand*, and accordingly they finalize the date and day for the payment. Within the given date the person has to invite the entire community member for *Daand*. The person has to pay a certain amount of cash to the *Chaudhury Sanstha* (till 2006, the cash was 1100 rupees) along with proper meal, such pork, roti and rice, and drinks are also offered to the *Chaudhuries* and community members.

⁹⁵ Shri Anil Balmiki. (Safai Karamchari. Darjeeling Municipality. Ghoom). Personal Interview. Darjeeling. December 23, 2012.

⁹⁶ Shri Kailash Ram Harijan. (Safai Karamchari. Chandmari). Darjeeling. Personal Interview. Darjeeling. December 31, 2012. Shri Kailesh Ram Balmiki, who paid the *Daand* because he had married an outcaste; during the given year (2006) the *Chaudhuries* has given concession, supposed to pay Rs 1100 with proper food and drinks were offered to the whole Community.

misused their powers and positions, for the sake of the guiding and restricting the community from losing its identity and *Izzat* in an alien territory.⁹⁷

Lack of information among the members of this community is the biggest drawback for their upliftment. When the Chaudhury Sanstha was exploiting the community members based on the inter-caste marriages, the Government of West Bengal came out with the proposals regarding functioning of Adult Education Centre and Inter- Caste Marriage under P.C.R. Act⁹⁸, which was sanctioned by the Government of India, who release central share of fund on the account thereof.⁹⁹

Irony with this community is that when government was introducing and appreciating the inter-caste marriages, they were segregating themselves from the main stream. Although, the Balmiki Harijan Sangh send the name for the grants, for those members who went for inter caste marriages. This initiative was taken under the leadership of Mr. Nirmal Sarwan, General Secretary of the Sangh, who immediately responded to the government.¹⁰⁰

Thus, the *Chaudhury Sanstha* has auxiliary subjugated the entire Balmiki population with its reciprocal reimbursement caucus and policy. The complexities of the framework have constituted a genuine hindrance to the Balmikis common advance in Darjeeling.

⁹⁷ Lekhraj Balmiki. (2013). '*Darjeeling Municipality And The Case Of The Balmikis*', paper presented at ICSSR sponsored National Conference: Scavenger Communities: Problem, Dynamics And Way Forward. Organised by Centre For Study Of Social Exclusion And Inclusive Policies, Tata Institute Of Social Sciences, Mumbai. 16th – 17th September, 2013.

⁹⁸ The Protection of Civil Rights (PCR) Act, 1955.

⁹⁹ Letter: To the Secretary, Balmiki Harijan Sangh, Darjeeling. From, Special Officer, Scheduled Caste and Tribe Welfare, Darjeeling Government of West Bengal. Inviting Proposal regarding Functioning of Adult Education Centre, During 1990-91. Dated: December 06, 1990. Memo No. 1301 (10) TW.

¹⁰⁰ Letter: To The Special Officer, Scheduled Caste and Tribe Welfare, Darjeeling Government of West Bengal. From the Secretary, Balmiki Harijan Sangh, Darjeeling. (Reply to the Inviting Proposal regarding Functioning of Adult Education Centre, During 1990-91. Dated: December 06, 1990.) Dated: December 14, 1990. Ref. No. 45(90-91) BHS.

4.6: Four Gharanas and their Ideologies

Believing in different Gurus or spiritual teachers had added a distinct feature in the Balmikian culture, which has given rise to different wings or agencies in the community. There are four Gharanas, with which Balmikis are associated as their sources of beliefs. These four Gharanas are Balmiki, Nanak, Nath and Kabir, which reflect the importance of their culture in Darjeeling.

The gurus of these Gharanas are followed as their spiritual teachers or preachers.

Valmiki has been followed by the majority of the Balmikian, besides that they also follow the preaching's of Saint Kabir, Nath and Nanak. The Balmikis those who are following Guru Nanak as their Gharana, are mainly from Punjab. They believe in the teachings of Guru Nanak, which result in forming their ideological belief. Similarly, the other three are also followed by the Gharanas and preach their religious ideologies.

This performance of following different ideological belief has proved the diverse culture within the Balmiki community. They celebrate the birthdays of their respective Gurus, though they belonged from different cultural background. While celebrating the *Jayantis* (birthdays) of their Gurus, the other Gharanas do participate in the performances.

Even though these forms of practices had been imperative for the Balmikian cultural aspect in binding these ideological Gharanas with each other, with the changing of time and with the beginning of education and modernity these aspects do not seize consistent to people in the existing period. Though slow in but the steady frequency and intensity towards the participation has been decreasing.

4.7: Wedding

This principle of caste system is also applicable for weddings. Manu is against inter-caste marriage, marriage is allowed but not in reverse order. Marriage is allowed only in the equality of social status. A Brahmin can have inter-caste marriage but the lower caste, can never marry a Vaishya, Ksharitya or Brahmin. Kshatriya can marry a Vaishya and Shudra woman but not Brahmin women. Manu says that for twice born people his first marriage needs to be with that of his own cast but if a situation arises where he has to marry for second time, he can marry women below his caste.¹⁰¹ Manu also says that a Shudra women can always be a wife of Kshatriya, Brahmin and Vaishya. A Vaishya woman can always be a wife of Kshatriya, Vaishya and Brahmin, Kshatriya women can always be a wife of Brahmin, Kshatriya but a Brahmin woman should be a wife of Brahmin.¹⁰²

4.8: Position of Women in the Community

Balmiki women are considered equal in family matter, participate in social and religious matters on an equal footing and contribute to the family income.¹⁰³ But in social sphere womenfolk has no high respect in the Balmiki Community. The family is patriarchal in its character and women could not enjoy enough liberty. Male child is more desirable. There has been no such instance when girls could mix freely with young men, its treated as shameless or a sin. Married women cannot take equal part in the religious performance. Moreover, the married women are kept in 'ghunghat/ghoonghat'¹⁰⁴. Ghoonghat is compulsion for the

¹⁰¹ Manusmriti- 3.12.

¹⁰² Manusmriti- 3.13.

¹⁰³ Singh, K.S. (2010). *The Scheduled Castes*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press. Pp. 235-243.

¹⁰⁴ The Sari developed long with one end used to cover the chest, the head and the face. This enabled ladies to work in the fields close to men or even ride a stallion like men. Customarily, in a few sections of India, ladies

women section and has been defensible aphorism that it shows respect to the elder's male section. The dumpy appraisal of females in Balmiki community can be followed to various interrelated monetary, lawful, social, political, and institutional elements. Ladies' destitution is exacerbated by standing and ethnicity-based separation, as the position framework characterizes access to assets and openings, leaving ladies more burdened than men at each level. Ladies have unequal access to nourishment, instruction and human services, constrained chances to win salaries, limited access to and control over beneficial assets, and couple of compelling lawful rights. They are additionally hindered by an absence of attention to their lawful rights and openings.

Constant such kind of concerning praxis against the women within the Balmiki community has led to the exclusion by other section of people in hills, where the women benefit from maximum civil liberties and emancipation, and to a great extent verbal in political spheres.¹⁰⁵ They are kept private in the domestic works of the households. Male section has prohibited women from taking education in order to continue male domination in the community. In this context Hindu religious text has given a number of concessions to men but has imposed severe restrictions on women. Sub-castes endogamy and lineage exogamy are the marriage rules. Adult marriage and monogamy are prevalent and most marriages are negotiated. Vermilion, finger-rings, toe-rings and noise pins are the marriage symbols for the women. Divorce is not allowed. Families are most often nuclear in nature. Property passes from father to sons and the eldest son inherits the office and titles that were held by his father. Women have specific roles in economic, social and ritual spheres and in mundane, marriage and death. Birth pollution is observed. The marriage rituals are performed at the bride's place and

are expected to have a Ghoonghat before the family senior citizens and men, with the exception of spouses and close family individuals.

¹⁰⁵ Lekhraj Balmiki. (2012). *'The Second Wave of Gorkhaland Movement and the Marginalized: A case study of Balmiki Community in their Diaspora'*, paper presented at UGC sponsored National Seminar: Regional Movements: Identity Question And National Integration: Contextualizing India's Growing Regional Assertions. SAP (DRS Phase-II) University of North Bengal 15th -16th March, 2012.

her parents host the marriage feast. The marriage is consummated at the groom's residence. They cremate their dead and dispose of the mortal remains in holy waters. Death pollution is observed.¹⁰⁶ As such women have been left behind with the limited role to play both in social and economic spheres.

A noteworthy issue among the Balmikis is debt. A typical saying of the Bhangis is that 'they are conceived paying off debtors, live in the red and will pass on in the red'. Community impost has been restrained and is given more significance within the community. They cannot be exception as a large amount of money is needed to perform many customs such as *Sindara*,¹⁰⁷ *Pilachawal*,¹⁰⁸ *Sagai*¹⁰⁹ *Dowry*¹¹⁰, *Bhaat*¹¹¹, *Chuchak*,¹¹² *Chaati Ki Raat*,¹¹³

¹⁰⁶ Singh, K.S. (2010). *The Scheduled Castes*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press. Pp. 105-112.

¹⁰⁷ *Sindara* is a ceremony performed by father-mother for their daughters both in cash and kinds, by offering the daughters with new cloths, ornaments, fruits-sweets and also in cash.

¹⁰⁸ The date of marriage is settled in the wake of counseling the minister. The insinuation of the proposed date of marriage is sent to the groom's dad through a letter which is sprinkled with turmeric glue asking for him to accompany marriage party on the delegated day.
http://revenueharyana.gov.in/html/gazeteers/kurukshetra_2009/Chapter_III.pdf accessed on 12.12.2012 at 2:30 am.

¹⁰⁹ *Sagai* is the most critical preparatory service required with marriage. Previously, it was settled through the organization of family. *Naai* (Barber) yet now it is settled either through relatives or dear companions. At the point when the father of a young lady wishes to pledge her, he makes enquiry for an eligible male of rumored family. By and large, horoscopes of the male and the young lady are coordinated to guarantee similarity. Prior, the male and the young lady never got the opportunity to meet each other before marriage. Choice of proper match was the sole duty of the guardians. Be that as it may, now the act of the male endorsing the young lady himself, especially in urban zones, is picking up ground. When everything is settled, the *sagai* function is performed at male's home with religious and social festivities. On the delegated day, the father of the young lady went with his relatives goes to the male's home with desserts and different endowments. In a basic service, he applies *tilak* on the temple of the male and offers a few cash to him and his close relatives. By and large, desserts, organic products, money and different endowments are displayed by the young lady's father to the male on this event relying on his monetary and societal position. Moreover, cosmetics pack comprising of *bindi*, *sindoor* and *glass bangles* and so forth along with a few desserts is sent for the young lady as a token of *sagai* from the male's side which is offered to the young lady by the elderly women of her family. This gives a flag to the relatives and the villagers with respect to the engagement of the young lady. This service is called *Maangbharai*. On return, they are offered endowments comprising of garments and money as a token of *shagun*.
http://revenueharyana.gov.in/html/gazeteers/kurukshetra_2009/Chapter_III.pdf. accessed on 12.12.2012 02:30 am

¹¹⁰ Dowry is the most important feature which has really handicapped the community. They try and give as much as possible to the in-laws in both cash and kind. There is a competition within the community members and show-off which does not allow them to overcome them out of their loans.

¹¹¹ *Bhaat* is a ritual performed by the Mamas (uncles) of both the bride and groom one night before the marriage, in which the uncle has to pay both in cash and kind to their individual side of the bride and groom. Individual family members and relatives are given clothes with cash to honour them. In the end the uncles are offered with meal in return.

¹¹² *Chuchak* takes place when the new baby is born. In the event of a male tyke, she hangs some branches of mango leaves at the highest point of the external entryway of the house. At that point *chuchak dhuwai* (washing the mother's areolas) is for the most part performed by the sister-in-law of the ladies. She washes her areolas

Jadulla (Mundan),¹¹⁴ *Moncha*,¹¹⁵ etc. Moncha is a ritual which is performed after the death of the family head (father/grandfather). The Mocha has to be decided by the *Chaudhuries of the Community, declaring it as Naw-beda-aar-paar*,¹¹⁶ where all the members of the community participate for *Pagdi*¹¹⁷ from all over Darjeeling district. This has resulted in being good customers and easy victims/prey for the moneylenders¹¹⁸ and the economically stronger communitys who charge them with high rate of interest.

There has been little push to counteract such velvety social traditions, avoidance and to reintegrate the individuals who have progressed toward becoming avoided through joblessness. Likewise, prompt consideration should be given to learn these kinds of practices, and to maximize awareness orientation programmes so that they can sustain in monetary and societal spheres.¹¹⁹

with warm water and got money related endowments or some brilliant trimmings. After this function, bosom bolstering begins.

¹¹³ Chaati-ki-Raat takes place with new born baby (specially in case of male-baby). On the 6th day, *Chhatti* function is performed when every one of the individuals from the family keep wakeful all through night. It is for the most part trusted that the Goddess of destiny composes the destiny of the new conceived child on this night. On the tenth day, *havan* is performed for filtration of the house. *Ganga Jal* (hallowed water of the waterway Ganga) is sprinkled in the house. The tyke is frequently named on this day. The Brahman proposes the name. The name of the tyke as proposed by Brahman was relatively last previously however it isn't really restricting nowadays. Be that as it may, a few guardians still want to adhere to the underlying word proposed by the family cleric.

http://revenueharyana.gov.in/html/gazeteers/kurukshetra_2009/Chapter_III.pdf. accessed on 12.12.2012 02:30 am

¹¹⁴ The parents decide when the new baby is suppose to have a first hair cut, normally they keep it with odd number e.g. one, three or five years. *Jadulla* is related with parents Kul Davata, where they offer a pair of pigs to their holy Goddesses. After the worship is over the baby has his/her first hair cut by the priest.

¹¹⁵ When the male head of the family expires they go for *Moncha* decided by the *Chaudhuries*, and the headship is shifted to the eldest son of the family concerned.

¹¹⁶ This phrase is used to call upon all the members of the community along with entire family and relatives, its some kind of open invitation.

¹¹⁷ *Pagdi* is a turbon which has to be put on by the Chaudharies and relatives to the next head in the family specially in case of elder son who takes the charge of the family.

¹¹⁸ In most cases these moneylenders belong to the Upper Caste. However, money lending business cuts across the caste association in the sub-continent wherein the moneyed class continues to control the business of lending and earning interest on the principle amount. The Afgnahis for instance have been traditionally a ready source of liquid cash for the cash trapped individuals.

¹¹⁹ Lekhraj Balmiki. (2013). '*Darjeeling Municipality And The Case Of The Balmikis*', paper presented at ICSSR sponsored National Conference: Scavenger Communities: Problem, Dynamics And Way Forward. Organised by Centre For Study Of Social Exclusion And Inclusive Policies, Tata Institute Of Social Sciences, Mumbai. 16th – 17th September, 2013.

The condition of Balmiki community is pathetic. Since the vast majority of the general population, from the community are uneducated. Social shades are malice in the community. Destitution conceives an offspring to various things including liquor abuse, spouse beating, betting. The vast majority of the kids can't go to class. The young lady kids turn out to be a piece of the calling for traditional work.¹²⁰ Dropout cases from schools can be notice. At a very early stage the children start helping their parents in profession.

In case of education they hardly get best schools and colleges, because of economic problems. Moreover, the mental setup of carrying out the occupation of parents has made them least interested in higher education. This has brought about virtual segregation of community from whatever is left of the general public and in ceaseless grasp of superstition and backwardness. The youngsters keep on suffering as guardians discovered brief period to go through with them and their rank and geological disengagement let to facilitate underestimation in the schools. The truth is not withstanding when freely untouchability has been dispensed with yet standing framework is in particular pervasive and no one would deny it. The other certainty is that everyone thinks about *Dom*, *Mehtar*, *Bhangis* and *Helas* and such terms, criticizing them may search for an edified society however proceed by and by. Youngsters, acquire, these terms from their folks and thusly these communities confront racial biases from each one. It is thusly, not amusing that names of their territories seal their destiny as zones are constantly specified with the community names thus names like *Harijan Bustee*. They remind us how rough our framework was versus the untouchables. The very establishment of the separation in India is station framework, which malign Dalits and hurt

¹²⁰ [Swachchakar Dignity](http://swachchakar.blogspot.in/2007/02/manual-scavenging-in-uttar-pradesh.html): Manual Scavenging in Uttar-Pradesh Status of manual scavengers in Gorakhpur, Uttar-Pradesh By Vidya Bhushan Rawat, Social Development Foundation, Delhi, Ram Bhuvan, Jan Kalyan Sansthan, Chauri Chaura, Kirti Singh, Social Development Foundation, Delhi Thursday, February 22, 2007.
<http://swachchakar.blogspot.in/2007/02/manual-scavenging-in-uttar-pradesh.html>. Accessed: 25.02.2013 20:29 hrs

the very respect and pride of a person, which are fundamentals for his development and advancement.

Literacy rates among the Balmikis have been low down for the reason that they cannot meet the expenses of it, though they have scrutiny edification favorably. Balmikis favour formal education for their boys and girls who study up to graduate and postgraduate levels depending upon the individual aptitude and circumstantial constraints. In maximum cases it can be seen that female child education is given less importance as they are treated *Paraya Dhan*.¹²¹ Arrangements for the study of the girls are conspicuous by its absence. However, in late years, particularly in urban regions of Darjeeling town, girls are being educated at primary level.

They are further disadvantaged by a lack of awareness of their legal rights and opportunities. Constant such kind of practices against the women within the Balmiki community has led to the exclusion by other section of people in hills, where the women benefit from maximum civil liberties and emancipation, and to a great extent verbal in political spheres.¹²² The complexities of the framework have constituted a genuine deterrent to Balmikis common advance in Darjeeling. The pattern today is toward the disintegration of the manufactured boundaries between the positions. The seriousness of the rank structure of the Hindus was broken, all things considered, amid the age of British lead in India.¹²³ But the commitment of the child to take after the calling of his father is as yet authoritative; men being from low standing have not ascended to high positions and places of power; and banning, in any case,

¹²¹ As per Indian Tradition, a girl is wedded out to a boy who is her Pati (husband). The parents brought up the girl child to her adulthood to wed out to her in laws in a different home. Though she was given birth by a couple, she will be living her valued period of rest of the life with her husband not with her parents. It seems that she has been given birth and brought up to handed over to another party. So, a girl is called Paraya Dhan. (The girls are considered Laxmi, the Goddess of Money).

¹²² Lekhraj Balmiki. (2012). '*The Second Wave of Gorkhaland Movement and the Marginalized: A case study of Balmiki Community in their Diaspora*', paper presented at UGC sponsored National Seminar: Regional Movements: Identity Question And National Integration: Contextualizing India's Growing Regional Assertions. SAP (DRS Phase-II) University of North Bengal 15th -16th March, 2012.

¹²³ Mathew Atmore Sherring, *Hindu Tribes And Castes as Represented in Benaras, 3vols.* Calcutta: 1872-1881. *The Tribes and Castes of the Madras Presidency.* London:1909.

loss of rank, is another major issue as it may some time ago have been. Likewise, the standing framework was now and again erupted from inside by clerical factions, most quite the ascent of Buddhism, itself a response from, and challenge against, the excruciating subjugation of the standing framework.¹²⁴ The administration has not by any stretch of the imagination got itself free of the station framework however it might claim to have decimated the untouchability at any rate on the papers. Along these lines, it is basic for the administration to make its arrangement in a thorough way and not react to a circumstance on absolutely specialized way.¹²⁵

4.9: Gotra (Clan)

The meaning of Clan is to belong to the same tribe. It also means the Bahir vivahi clan, meaning that they should marry outside the similar clan. The Hindi word for clan is 'gotra'.¹²⁶ As per Rahu Sanskritayan, *gotra* means the solution for protection of cows. It may be place or protecting communities. Cows were once the wealth of Hindu Aryans. This is the reason why the similar descendant's community or clan belongs to same *gotra*. The period, in which the Europeans started rearing of animals, rearing of cows was already prevalent in India. Though we have very less information about this period. Vishwamitra Bharadwaj and all other clans belonged either to the *gotra* era or 'Pitrasatta' era. All there Clans resided near Rishi Ganga before 1500 BC. And were also there during the Dastra or Samantwadi era. It is possible Kuwa (Kabul) and Suwastu (swat) valleys had people living in the areas, during *Gotra* and Pitrastta era when it was buffered off commonly.¹²⁷

¹²⁴ Jaideva, Paramanshi. (2002). *Dalits In Early Buddhism*. Delhi: Kalpaz Publications. Also see, Ambedkar, Dr. B.R. "Buddhism and Communism", *National Seminar on Marx, Ambedkar and Polarization of Oppressed and Exploited Classes in India*. New Delhi: Sanjivayya Institute of Socio-Economic Studies, 1991. Also see, Ambedkar, Dr. B.R. (1957). *The Buddha And His Dhamma*. Bombay: Siddharth College Publications.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Damodar Dharmanand Kosambi, *Ancient Indian Culture and Heritage*, Pp. 114.

¹²⁷ Rahul Sankrityayan- *Human society*, 1986, Pp. 20.

According to famous scholar DN Jha, Aryans came to India in the form of semi-nomads. Animal rearing and farming was their basis to earn economic living. Animal rearing was the most important part of their economic life. There were battles between different clans for the cows. 'Gavisthi' word was famous for these wars, which meant searching of cows. The impact of animal rearing on Aryan society can be determined by the fact that the people who lived with cows in the same 'Gosht' belonged to the same clan. Later on, they were considered blood related, similarly this word was praised by the Clans. Daughters were called 'duhitti' because she did the job of taking out milk. For food both cows and buffaloes were killed. Guests were served delicious meat of cows and buffaloes. This is the reason why in Vedic Era the word '*godahan*' (killing of cows) was also very famous.¹²⁸

The information of killing of cows is gathered by the works of Damodar Dharmanand Kosambi. He believes that a lot of information is gathered from the holy books. Such rituals were done to serve as offering to gods. All such traditions were done near the fire which was considered Holy. The tradition of these holy rituals became more serious and prevalent as time passed on. Since, the number increased, the number of killing animals also increased. And thus nowadays it is hard to trust. The most essential animal which could be sacrificed were humans, buffaloes and horse but almost all kind of animals were sacrificed.¹²⁹

This section mostly discusses of the Clans, especially Valmiki, Bhangis, Churha and others sub caste. These clans are different from that of Brahmin. Some Clans even match to that of the Kshatriya Rajput. According to Doctor Ambedkar, Shudras are Aryans, or mixture of two or more cultures. These questions were prevalent in those days. Back in the ancient Era they belonged in the 4th rank or the last rank yet they were discarded by the three upper caste. Even if it is believed that they were not Aryans, but due to business purposes they met with

¹²⁸ DN Jha- *Ancient India: An outline*, Pp. 21.

¹²⁹ Damodar Dharmanand Kosambi- *Ancient Indian Culture and Heritage*, Pp. 115.

Aryan, got married to them and used to socialize with the other three upper communities. In some matters they earned a lot of profits and came near to those of Brahmins and Kshatriya. In short, they mixed well along with the people of upper caste just like England's Celtic tribes got transferred into Anglo-Saxons. The proof of their other identity was completely removed.¹³⁰

Dr Ambedkar in his book says that Shudras didn't have a different caste, they belong to the Indian Aryan communities Kshatriya rank.¹³¹

The list is given in the book Patit Puraskar and tries to prove that the clans of Balmiki society were Kshatriyas. The list contained - Bais, Khairvaar, veer, Gujjar, Sowa, Dado, Yaduvanshi, Kachwah, Kinwaar, Thakur, Bhojpuri, Taank, Rawat and many more.¹³²

For marriage some regions gave preferences to matching of '*chitki bundaki*' while in Punjab Haryana and Uttar Pradesh, Clans were matched.

The clan of the bride must be different from that of the groom's, father's, mother's and grandparent's. For example if the mother belongs to Kesla father belonged to Khaiswaal, and grandmother belong to Panta, the girl should not belong to any of these. If the clan of the girl matches to any of these three Clans, marriage would not take place. This was a very strict rule that could not be opposed.

Clans can be resident specific. There are some Clans which belonged to the same place but due to continuous migrating, literacy and other factors the same Clan was called by different names for example, Piwaal, Pihal and Paahiwab. Some Clans can be found like sauda-saudai-sudha-sood, etc. and Chandalia - Chinaliye, Chancha, Chandra, Chandril, etc. There are some

¹³⁰ Baba Saheb Dr Ambedkar- Sampurna Vadmay, Section-1, Introduction, Pp. XXI.

¹³¹ Baba Saheb Dr. Ambedkar- *Who were the Shudras?* 1946

¹³² Ithaven- *Tribes and Castes*, 1872

Clans who knowingly adopt differences so that they can move away from the feeling of hatred and inferiority. For example Birlan became Birla, Chauthel and Chautala became Chutela.

The community has been summed up into Valmiki society from different communities such as Churcha, Valmiki, Hela, Bansod. This is reason why their Clans also became associated to Bhangi. Some others also joined themselves into new community.

4.10: Economic Life of the Balmikis

Throughout the years Balmikis have turned into an urban community in Darjeeling and speak to a significant number of the vagrant non-local Nepali talking communities. With the presentation of septic toilets, the act of conveying buckets of feces on their heads is gone yet despite everything they work to clear blockages in sewers where they are half submerged in rotteness. The shame remains, they are yet related to the work and are still considered as untouchables and stereotyped as ‘Jamadar’.¹³³ As such the community is stereotyped to have a place and speak to the classification of sweepers, safai karamacharis, etc. given that encounter they have dependably been minimized and regarded as out caste economically, socially, politically.

Table: 4

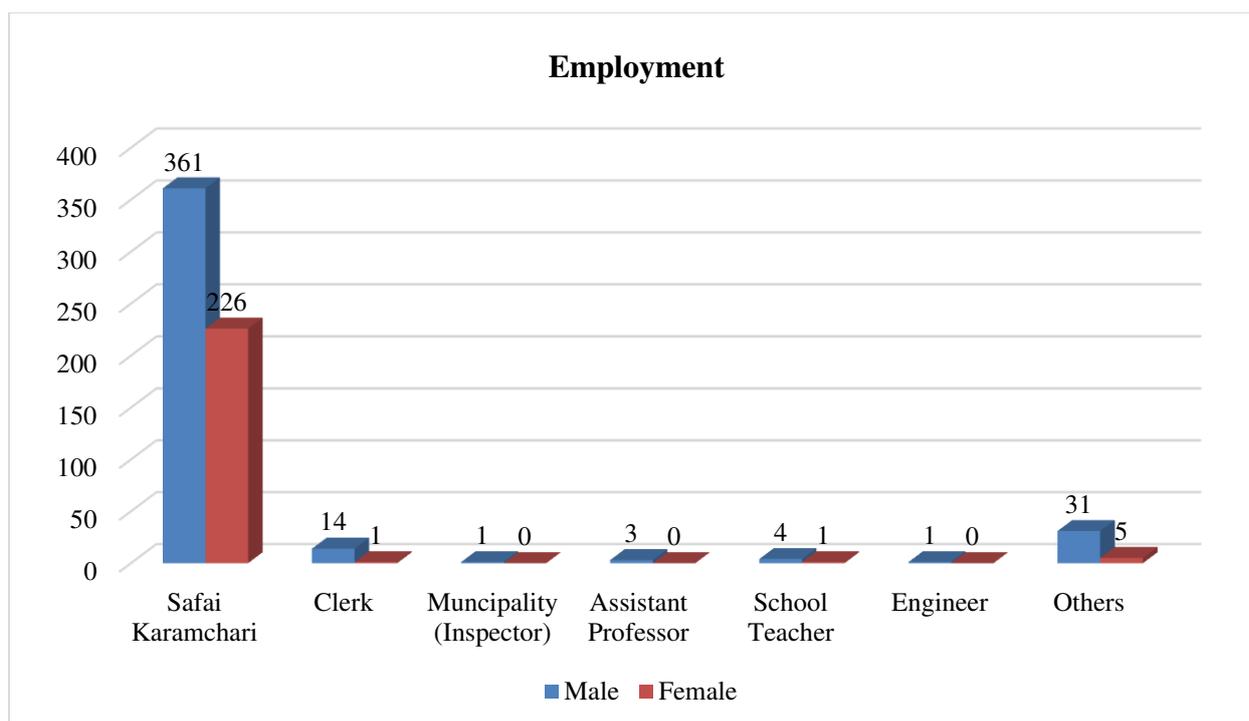
Balmiki Employments in Darjeeling, Kalimpong and Kurseong

	Male	Female	

¹³³ According to Oxford Dictionaries Jamadar is a person who sweeps homes or offices as job. <http://oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/jamadar> Accessed on 12.12.2012 at 1: 10 am. See, Sharma, Balchandra. (1962). *Nepali Shabda Kosh*. Royal Nepal Acedamy. Pp. 366. Also see Ralph Lilley Turner, (1931). *A Comparative And Etymological, Dictionary Of The Nepali Language*. London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trybner & Co., Ltd..Pp 209, ‘where Jamadar has been defined as the lowest Commissioned Gurkha or Indian rank in the Indian Army’. Also see Rai, R.B. “*Jiten Mitra: Sab Bhandra Youge Purano Commissioner*”, in Gurung, Madan Kr., & Bhutia, Passang. (Ed.). (2000). *Souvenir. Darjeeling Municipality 1850-2000*. Darjeeling: Darjeeling Municipality. Pp.41. also see Lekhraj Balmiki. (2011). “*The Balmiki Community In Darjeeling: Caste Consciousness.*” in Terence Mukhia (Ed.). *A Multi-Disciplinary Perusal*. Darjeeling: Kalpa Griha Publications

	Permanent	Casual	Permanent	Casual	Total
Safai Karamchari	293	68	145	81	587
Clerk	14	-	-	01	15
Municipality (Inspector)	01	-	-	-	01
Assistant Professor	03	-	-	-	03
School Teacher	03	01	-	01	05
Engineer	01	-	-	-	01
Others	07	24	01	04	36

Figure: 3 Employments



As the table (above) shows, the post of ‘safai karamchari’ inducts a major share of total employment in Darjeeling. Other professions like Clerk, Assistant Professor, Engineer are negligible in comparison in this respect. However, a closer look at this figures with respect to gender reveals a skewed pattern against women in this area. Firstly, there are much fewer

women compared to males in all the posts mentioned. Secondly, the share of casual workers among females are much higher than that of males, which also means males are more likely to get a permanent job than any of these posts that females. It can also be noted that women are not getting jobs in more socially respected jobs like engineers and teachers.

With the development of Darjeeling Township, they were employed by the municipality to work as the sweepers/safai karmachris in the Conservancy Department. But with the creation of septic lavatories, the act of conveying pails of fertilizer on their heads is gone yet they still work to clear blockages in sewers where they are half submerged in foulness.

They have a relatively high, steady salary¹³⁴, retirement benefits, and so forth.¹³⁵ But still for this stable remuneration (permanent job) they have to pay inducement¹³⁶ to the Officer In Charge in the municipality of Conservancy Department. Thus, the tendency of corruption and exploitation of the Balmikis is very high in the Darjeeling Municipality. Besides, this they have been regular victims by the section supervisor, who are paid *Bhanja*¹³⁷ both in cash and kind. Still, this kind of practices has never been reported by the victims neither to the authority in the municipality nor to the police. But even though their relative well-being is a source of envy, and their job is almost hereditary.

Now a good number of them serve as sweepers in public and private sector establishments. They have shifted from serving some households on contract basis to being in regular service. Moreover, they have also been found in some unorganized sectors such as sweeping the

¹³⁴Regular monthly Basic pay ranges from Rs 9000-Rs 12000, only if the employ is permanent in Darjeeling Municipality. Source: Staff Statistic Report Of Darjeeling Municipality As On 01.04.2012.

¹³⁵Deliege,Robert. (2001). *The Untouchables of India*. New York: oxford International Publishers Ltd. (Translated from French by Nora Scott).

¹³⁶In 1998, the people those who were given permanent (made permanent) posts according to the Municipality Order, were asked to pay Rs. 2000 individually, this part has been interviewed on the field survey with the Balmiki Harijan Sangh member. One of the employ named Lila Dev was withheld as she refused to pay the bribe for her permanent post. Similarly, in the year 2006, the amount was increased to Rs. 10000- 30000 depending on the capacity of the employ for being permanent.

¹³⁷Bhanja is bribe paid to the supervisor of a particular section by the Safai Karamchari.

upper caste houses and cleaning toilets which they term as *tekhas*,¹³⁸ and in spite of positive action programmes, their participation in the public sphere is low. More than 80% of the Balmiki population¹³⁹ is dependent on the municipality for their livelihood. Though they have a regular source of income but their living standards has not been uplifted because of their social and cultural practices where huge amount of money is squander. In some cases they even have to sustain their families in their native homeland thus, their economic condition at stake.

The predisposition against them is all things considered that regardless of whether a portion of the general population having a place with Balmiki people group who need to leave the work discover it about difficult to get an option job. It likewise mirrors that there is for all intents and purposes no passage of this group in the administration segment and also other work. It obviously implies that while in the sanitation work of the districts there is a one hundred percent booking for them, there is for all intents and purposes no push to delink them from this tradition and restore them somewhere else. Furthermore, by just broadcasting that legislature has prohibited toilets won't bring out of the bedlam that the social framework has perpetrated upon them. One is that there is as yet searching and other grave certainty is that non-attendant Safai Karmcharis is developing. That implies on account of moderately better pay rates and contract framework, those with associations in the higher ups land the position while the issue of cleaning and going down the seepage and sewage line. Despite the way this is most abused and cruel work that any human could do, the ladies keep on doing it due to budgetary emergency. We as a whole realize this does not by any stretch of the imagination bring them any cash. The catastrophe is that even the plans for poor don't contact them. The

¹³⁸ Tekhas are unorganized sectors where the community men/women members work as sweepers and earn his/her family livelihood. They are paid very low wages and sometimes both in cash wage and kinds during festivals.

¹³⁹ See, Staff Statistic Report Of Darjeeling Municipality As On 01.04.2012.

individuals who are knowledgeable, and their number is exceptionally constrained, don't land position as per their training. The plan of the legislature has additionally underestimated them on the grounds that the issue is tended to from a financial perspective and not a socio-social issue without sufficiently giving thought to their restoration. In this calling, a dominant part of specialists are ladies. They leave to work in early hours of the morning without having the tea and return late toward the evening. Amid that essential period, no one is at home to deal with their kids. They need to bring themselves bringing about their failure to go school.¹⁴⁰

There are two prevalent traditions in Indian society- donation and forced labour. Forced labour is applied on Dalits whereas donation is applicable for Brahmins and temple associations. Without doing any physical labour, the Brahmins are endowed with so much of donation; it seems as if there is no need to do any work. It is believed that India is land of farming and agriculture but if any Brahmins tries to do the job of farmer, it is considered an ignominious act and the Brahmin would be considered inferior. In the Kumaon region of Uttarakhand, the sections are decided on the same basis. Maybe for this reason, the people who consider physical labour to be an important aspect of life are considered to be inferior. Not paying wages, after making them work is the forced labour. This is prevalent since thousands of years and is the main reason of illiteracy and misery of Balmikis. Because of this tradition of forced labour, they are bound to live such a life. All their self-confidence, ambitions, bravery and chivalry got lost in the pages of history. They couldn't even save their memories. All the holy texts and religious texts have played a major role in increasing their misery. You would get several books about donation where the importance of it has been mentioned but you won't get any text about forced labour on any language. Although, the

¹⁴⁰ [Swachchakar Dignity](http://swachchakar.blogspot.in/2007/02/manual-scavenging-in-uttar-pradesh.html): Manual Scavenging in Uttar-Pradesh Status of manual scavengers in Gorakhpur, Uttar-Pradesh By Vidya Bhushan Rawat, Social Development Foundation, Delhi, Ram Bhuvan, Jan Kalyan Sansthan, Chauri Chaura, Kirti Singh, Social Development Foundation, Delhi Thursday, February 22, 2007
<http://swachchakar.blogspot.in/2007/02/manual-scavenging-in-uttar-pradesh.html>. Accessed: 25.02.2013 20:29 hrs

book 'Begar-Kuli-Pratha' by Shekhar Pathak is available in Hindi language. Where Balmikis were made to become slaves of forced labour and were exploited every time.

Forced labour began with the stereo-typical mentality of the rural people, which ended with the protests of Dr Ambedkar. However, the spurn tradition is still prevalent even today in some urban and rural areas. It has been criticized by Premchand in his book "Saddgati" and portrayed it as inhuman. In the story, the exploitation of Balmikis has been shown in a dreadful manner.

Balmiki society has been going through ruins and been struggling through a painful life which isn't visible to the upper class people. It is due to the overlook of people that they consider themselves inferior. Every step of the way, they are forced into believing this that they were born to a Bhangi family due to their poor deeds. This has been repeated so many times, it appears to be a truth, but it is all an intrigue.

Balmikis are placed in the lowest strata of the caste system. They have forgotten that instead of doing all the dirty works they do, they should protest against it, which they haven't. This is all a planned intrigue which is found even today. It is unpleasant situation which if taken lightly will lead to dark future of Bhangis. It will be difficult to get out of it. The inferior mentality of the people had made them weak. They have not only destroyed the self-confidence of Balmikis but have also destroyed their power of analyzing. The dreadful scene of this condition was seen in Peshwa rule. When a Bhangi entered the village, sounds were made to make the upper caste aware that a Bhangi is entering the village. The food that they were given for their job was tied at the end of bamboo and given, so that the shadow of the Bhangi doesn't touch the person and make him impure.

The exploitation culture is continuous in this society. These people were treated in the most inhuman way in Darjeeling in relation with their occupation. There are many such incidents

against which no objections are made. Similarly, in they put double labour for simple payment. It is a matter of argument considering the harsh and tough situations there. In many municipal and governmental associations, the labourers were delayed in paying.

But the health association, during the season of travelling appoints a dozen of scavengers far away. They aren't even paid properly. Half of the actual amount is paid that too after years of their job. This is prevalent since ages. In this way, the associations take the advantage of their helplessness and make them forced labourers.

As per the facts of the report published in Navbharat Times 1994 that when the scavengers ask for an increase in that payments then they were asks either to work like that, or leave without taking the remaining payment.

This society has been pushed into the hell of the society and this is proved by the historic and religious facts. First of all the holy books and the memoirs deprived them of education. Divock repeated from speaking and learning Sanskrit. As per Manusmriti a Brahmin can consider the property of a Shudra as his own because according to them Shudras have nothing of their own, all the properties can be ceased by the owner anytime.¹⁴¹ In reality Shudras should never collect properties no matter what, even if it's for their benefits because if a Shudra collects his property and becomes rich then it is a pain to a Brahmin.¹⁴²

The same kind of practice has been observed in the Bhangi society. Some control then by the political motives whereas some control them by their religious motives.

The normal income of a sweeper in any private Institution of municipalities or any government institution is from rupees 3000 rupees 5000. This is the reason why a bit of change is observed in the economic condition of the sweepers. There are many such families

¹⁴¹ Manusmriti, Chapter 8, Verse 417.

¹⁴² Manusmriti Chapter 10, Verse 119.

who have come out of the past and saw bright futures. They send the kids to school and colleges and through this some have even grown by studying hard. Some became clerk some became teaches and some engineers. But the work of contractors is just increasing and hence it seems that this dream will always remain a dream.