

Balmiki Community in Darjeeling Hills: Socio- Economic Profile

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Abstract

The present attempt tries to explore the socio-economic profile of the Balmiki community which has been engaged with their traditionally assigned occupation as scavengers and sweepers/ Safai Karmcharis¹ in the Darjeeling hills. Being a subaltern community, the Balmikis represent a strange case of community yet to come out of the traditional fold.

Key Words: Balmiki, Scheduled Caste, Subaltern Community, Socio-Economic, Municipality

1. Introduction

“Balmiki²” and not “Valmiki” is the often preferred way of spelling by people from the Darjeeling. The *Balmiki* Community (also known as “*Bhangi*”³) in Darjeeling Hills, migrated from Rajasthan, Haryana, and Uttar Pradesh etc.⁴ The characteristics of *Balmiki* community include rigid, hereditary membership in the caste into which one is born; the practice of marrying only members of the same caste (endogamy); restrictions on the choice of occupation and on personal contact with members of other castes; and the acceptance by each individual of a fixed place in society.⁵ The *Balmikis*’ has been perpetuated by the Hindu ideas of *Samsara* (reincarnation) and *Karma* (quality of action). According to their religious beliefs, all people are reincarnated on earth, at which time they have a chance to be born into another, higher caste, but only if they have been obedient to the rules of their caste in their previous life on earth. In this way *karma* has discouraged the *Balmiki* people from attempting to rise to a higher caste or to cross caste lines for social relations of any kind.⁶

1.1 Brief History of Balmikis in Darjeeling

The '*Balmiki*', a Dalit community numbering 6,300⁷ is one of the socially stigmatized groups in three sub-divisions of Darjeeling district and totaling 529,000⁸ in the state of West Bengal. The history of the *Balmiki* in Darjeeling is as old as the establishment of the Hill station. During the colonial period they were brought from Alwar⁹ (Rajasthan) to remove human excrement and clean the town of Darjeeling. Thus the migration of the *Balmiki* from their native villages to the hill station of Darjeeling overlaps with the growth of the Municipal body post 1850s.¹⁰

With the establishment of Darjeeling Hills, the Balmikis were brought by the Britishers from western India to work as manual scavengers. During the post independence period, Balmikis as, scavengers carried night soil on their heads for their livelihood. Thus the migration of the *Balmiki* from their native villages to the hill station of Darjeeling overlaps with the growth of the Municipal body post 1850s.¹¹ They were employed as sweepers in the Darjeeling Municipality, as daily wage earners. A separate locality was created especially for the Balmikis near the dumping ground known as '*Harijan Barrick*' which is properly known as '*Jamadar Line*'. They were provided houses with single room and a kitchen with no toilet facility, by the Municipality. With larger families it has been very difficult to stay in such single houses. Moreover, the municipal authority hardly takes any initiative for repairing or maintenance of these municipal quarters. Due to this, workers are suffering from various illnesses, including respiratory diseases, urinary tract infections and a range of skin diseases, eye disorders, gastrointestinal ailments, and even lung cancer. Furthermore, these workers had no access to basic amenities such as adequate housing, drinking water or electricity.¹² Over the years they have become an urban community in Darjeeling and represent a substantial number of the migrant non-native Nepali speaking communities.

1.2 Social Structure of the Balmikis

The Balmikis are divided into various sub-castes and exogamous lineages. They recognize themselves as *Sudras*.¹³ The community has retained its social practices as carried out by their forefathers, similar to their original homeland in the north western parts of India. The community adheres to the strict norms of the caste ridden society and has retained the *Chaudhury system*¹⁴ of caste organization even in contemporary times. 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 *Chaudhuries* have controlled the community and have been carrying out customary practices of pre-independence days. Child marriages (especially in case of female), restrictions on widows remarrying and arranged marriage practices are still followed widely within the community.

The notion of *Izzat*¹⁵ has been greatly developed by the *Chaudhuries*. From the very early age the children are discouraged for inter-caste marriage. Accidentally, if such cases occur the performer (offender) will be socially excluded from the community. The community *Chaudhuries* declares *hukka pani bandh*¹⁶ for such a member with the entire family. As such the member with his/her's entire family is socially boycotted by the entire community. Again, for inclusion the member has to pay the penalty known as *Daand*¹⁷ 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, 2006.¹⁸ 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. 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 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.¹⁹

Thus, the *Chaudhury Sanstha* has auxiliary subjugated the entire Balmiki population with its reciprocal reimbursement caucus and policy. The complexities of the system have constituted a serious obstacle to Balmikis civil progress in Darjeeling.

Balmiki women are considered equal in family matter, participate in social and religious matters on an equal footing and contribute to the family income.²⁰ But in social sphere womenfolk have no high respect in the Balmiki Community. The family is patriarchal in its character and women could not enjoy enough liberty. Male child is given more importance. There has been no such instance when girls could mix freely with young men, which is treated as shameless or a sin. Married women cannot take equal part in the religious performance. Moreover, the married women are kept '*ghunghat/ghoonghat*'²¹. *Ghoonghat* is compulsion for the women section and has been used defensible aphorism, which is a mark of respect to the elder's male section. The

stumpy grade of women in Balmiki community can be traced to a number of interrelated economic, legal, cultural, political, and institutional factors. Women's poverty is exacerbated by caste and ethnicity-based discrimination, as the caste system defines access to resources and opportunities, leaving women more disadvantaged than men at every level. Women have unequal access to food, education and health care, limited opportunities to earn incomes, restricted access to and control over productive resources, and few effective legal rights. 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.²² 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. Subcastes 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 nose 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 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.²³ As such women have been left behind with the limited role to play both in social and economic spheres.

A major problem among the Balmiki is debt. A common saying of the Bhangi is that they are born in debt, live in debt and will die in debt. Social customs has been restrained and is given more significance within the community. 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*,²⁴ where all the members of the community participate for *Pagdi* ²⁵ from all over Darjeeling district. This has resulted in being good customers and easy victims/preys for the moneylenders²⁶ and the economically stronger groups who charge them with high rate of interest.

There has been little effort to prevent such creamy social customs, exclusion and to reintegrate those who have become excluded through unemployment. In addition, immediate attention needs to be provided to ascertain these kinds of practices, and to maximize awareness orientation programmes so that they can sustain in monetary and societal spheres.²⁷

The condition of scavenging community is miserable. Since most of the people from the community are uneducated, social evils are prevalent in the community. Poverty gives birth to different things including alcoholism, wife beating, gambling. Most of the children cannot go to school. The girl children become part of the profession.²⁸ Dropout cases from schools can also be noticed. 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 resulted in virtual isolation of community from the rest of the society and in continuous grip of superstition and backwardness. The children continue to suffer as parents found little time to spend with them and their caste and geographical isolation led to further marginalization in the schools. The fact of the matter is even when publicly

untouchability has been eliminated yet caste system is very much prevalent and nobody would deny it. The other fact is that everybody knows about Dom, Mehtar, Bhangis and Helas and such terms, denigrating they may look for a civilized society yet continue in practice. Children, inherit, these terms from their parents and in turn these communities face racial prejudices from every one. It is therefore, not ironical that names of their localities seal their fate as areas are always mentioned with the community names hence names like *Harijan Bustee*. They remind us how crude our system was vis-à-vis the untouchables. The very foundation of the discrimination in India is caste system, which denigrate Dalits and hurt the very dignity and pride of an individual, which are essentials for his growth and development.

A literacy rate among the Balmikis is low because they cannot afford it, though they view education 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*.²⁹ Arrangements for the study of the girls are conspicuous by its absence. However, in recent years, especially in urban areas 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.³⁰ The complexities of the system have constituted a serious obstacle to Balmikis civil progress in Darjeeling. The trend today is toward the dissolution of the artificial barriers between the castes. The severity of the caste structure of the Hindus was broken to a great extent during the epoch of British rule in

India.³¹ But the obligation of the son to follow the calling of his father is still binding; men being from low caste have not risen to high ranks and positions of power; and excommunication, however, loss of caste, is another serious problem as it might formerly have been. In addition, the caste system was from time to time burst from within by ecclesiastical schisms, most notably the rise of Buddhism, itself a reaction from, and protest against, the intolerable bondage of the caste system.³² The governance has not really got itself rid of the caste system though it may claim to have demolished the untouchability at least on the papers. Therefore, it is essential for the government to make its plan in a comprehensive way and not respond to a situation on purely technical way.³³

1.3 Economic Life of the Balmikis

Over the years Balmikis have become an urban community in Darjeeling and represent a substantial number of the migrant non-native Nepali speaking communities. With the introduction of septic latrines, the practice of carrying buckets of excrement on their heads is gone but they still work to clear blockages in sewers where they are half submerged in filth. The stigma remains. They are still identified with the work and considered untouchable and stereotyped as the “*Jamadar*”.³⁴ In other words the community is stereotyped to belong and represent the category of sweepers, *safai karamcharis*, *Jamadar* or sanitary workers. Given that experience they have always been marginalized and treated as outcasts socially, economically and culturally.

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 latrines, the practice of carrying buckets of excrement on their heads is gone but they still work to clear blockages in sewers where they are half submerged in filth. They have a relatively

high, steady salary³⁵, retirement benefits, and so forth.³⁶ But still for this stable remuneration (permanent job) they have to pay inducement³⁷ 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*³⁸ 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 upper caste houses and cleaning toilets which they term as *tekhas*,³⁹ and in spite of positive action programmes, their participation in the public sphere is low. More than 80% of the Balmiki population⁴⁰ 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 bias against them is as such that even if some of the people belonging to Balmiki community who want to leave the work find it nearly impossible to get an alternative job. It also reflects that there is virtually no entry of this community in the government sector as well as other labour work. It clearly means that while in the sanitation work of the municipalities there is a one hundred percent reservation for them, there is virtually no effort to delink them from this tradition and rehabilitate them elsewhere. And by merely proclaiming that government has banned toilets will not bring out of the chaos that the social system has inflicted upon them. One

is that there is still scavenging and other grave fact is that absentee Safai Karmcharis is growing. That means because of relatively better salaries and contract system, those with connections in the higher ups get the job while the issue of cleaning and going down the drainage and sewage line. In-spite of the fact that this is most ill-treated and inhuman work that any human could do, the women continue to do it because of financial crisis. We all know that this does not really fetch them any money. The tragedy is that even the schemes for poor do not reach them. ⁴¹

Those who are well educated, and their number is very limited, do not get job according to their education. The scheme of the government has further marginalized them because the issue is addressed from an economic viewpoint and not a socio-cultural problem without giving enough thought to their rehabilitation. In this profession, a majority of workers are women. They leave to work in early hours of the morning without even having the tea and return late in the afternoon. During that crucial period, nobody is at home to take care of their children. They have to fetch themselves resulting in their inability to go school.⁴²

1.4 The Political Position of the Community with Special Reference to Political Participation.

The *Balmiki* community under the auspices of *Balmiki Harijan Sangh*⁴³ is mobilizing the disposition of progress to protect their rights and raise their concerns. The Sangh has been taking the initiative for the upliftment of the community. Though migrated but they have projected themselves and who claim to be a gorkhey(gorkha), are now active in awareness and upliftment of the community though the pace is low. Looking back to the history of this gorkhey Balmikis, they are now the part of Darjeeling hills like other communities (gorkhey Marwari, Gorkhey Bhutias, and others). Almost three generation of Balmikis live in Darjeeling and they participate in every festival of the Darjeeling hills. The Balmikis have witnessed both the complex

transitions comparing the First Wave (1980s under Subhash Ghising) and Second Wave (Post 2007 under Bimal Gurung) in the Gorkhaland movement in Darjeeling Hills. In the first wave of the Gorkhaland movement however, the Balmikis were either politically unaware or socially not in a position to identify themselves within the majority of the hill people. They didn't have any awareness of education or alternative employment, because of which they were ignored by the majority Gorkhey. But, in the Second Wave of Gorkhaland Movement (Post 2007) under Bimal Gurung, the Balmikis got an opportunity to show their majority and participate in the movement. Over the past 20 years, an emerging Balmikis identity and social consciousness has created a new political consciousness among them. Their consciousness is by no means limited to the SCs. It has begun to symbolize a much broader sector of the oppressed and hitherto excluded social strata. It is based on an attempted, though by no means realized solidarity and discriminated Balmiki people. Their consciousness has made a political assertion though slow in nature. Thus, the oppressed Balmikis have begun to realize their power. This new spirit of independence among the Balmikis is not confined only to the socio-economic but also political phenomenon in Darjeeling hills. This together with the logic of fresh realignment of political party Gorkha Jan Mukti Morch (GJMM) has made the Balmikis the new pivotal players in Hills politics. The Balmikis and the other marginalized communities hold immense political potential, if only they can be brought together as a powerful force, this is the case when Mr. Bimal Gurung welcomed the marginalized community for a common cause of Gorkhaland. The impact of the Balmiki Participation in Gorkhaland Movement on the Community itself is twofold. First, material and political gains in the aftermath of the Gorkhaland movement. The hope of allocation of benefits to the community derived by way of the arrangements post movement; and that their political participation would enable them to be more politically conscious with potential leadership skills

so as to be capable of forming, performing and marketing their own claims and conditions in future politics. Secondly, the negative impact is largely a perceived threat of being further marginalized in future by the dominant identities in control of power and allocation of resources.⁴⁴

Though they are traditionally Manual Scavengers and the only exception is the post of a sweeper. But by supporting the movement they have proved that being a son or a daughter of safai karmchari, they don't want that it should be restricted, that he/she should have equal opportunity to dream well and to be in high positions. Accepting better future for the coming generation of the Balmikis this dissenting voice might led for better governance.⁴⁵

1.5 Conclusion Observation

In recent years considerable strides toward eradicating unjust social and economic aspects of the caste system as practiced in India have been made through educational and reform movements.⁴⁶ Despite several official attempts to improve the status of members of the lowest caste, the Dalits remain '*oppressed people*'.⁴⁷ The *Balmikis* as Dalits thus remain the '*lowest of the low*', in the hierarchical ordering of social positions in the Hindu Caste order. By taking up the jobs that nobody else will do, the *Balmiki* provide the most crucial service to the society and therefore help our civic system survive. Yet the society seldom takes notice of them. In fact, instead of giving them the dignity of labour that they deserve, the society treats them as filthy and polluting. And the only time that *Balmiki* are in news, is when the community is attacked/ostracized by the '*higher*' castes. Other times the community is practically invisible and unheard.⁴⁸ Balmikis, who are pushed towards margin systematically from the past in the name of religious/cultural practice, and social order, are still victimized in the society. Despite the legal

provision of equality too, the society is not completely free from the influence of long run practice of caste based discrimination. Protecting the rights of marginalized and vulnerable people is probably the most overlooked and disregarded area of human rights in India.

Sanitizing scavengers' work environment does not always guarantee liberation from the stigma that has been attached to the community for so long. The government of India needs to review the schemes to ensure that they successfully benefit the target group in a sustainable manner. Moreover, it should not be ignored that it is crucial to mobilize scavengers so as to attain higher-education and employment opportunities other than sweeping.⁴⁹

Notes and References

¹ Scavenger means and includes a Safai Karamchari wholly or partially employed for manual handling of human excreta and includes his dependents. Safai Karamchari means a person engaged in, or employed for any sanitation work and includes his dependents. http://www.stscodisha.gov.in/pdf/scheme_sc_st_NSKFDC.pdf Accessed on 12.12.2012 3:30 hrs.

² The title of Balmiki (or valmiki) was affected by Balmikis (or Valmikis) to distance themselves from the manner in which they had been constructed, historically, as the lowest caste strata of the untouchables; as the sweepers, or scavengers (for an overview of the manner in which this initially occurred, see: Mahar, P.M. 1960, *Changing Religious Practices Of An Untouchable Caste*, Economic Development And Cultural Change. Vol. 8, no.3, pp. 279-287).

³ “*Bhangi*”, is another widely used Hindi term to denote the ‘*Balmiki*’ meaning ‘one addicted to drinking *bhang*’ (a drink made from marijuana leaves). See, Lekhraj Balmiki. (2011). “*The Balmiki Community In Darjeeling: Caste Consciousness.*” in Terence Mukhia (Ed.). *A Multi-Disciplinary Perusal*. Darjeeling: Kalpa Griha Publications. Also see. Sharma, Rama. (1995). *Bhangi, Scavenger In Indian Society: Marginality, Identity, and Politicization of the Community*. New Delhi: M.D. Publications Pvt. Ltd.

⁴ C.f. Lekhraj Balmiki. (2011). *Ibid*. Also see. Sharma, Rama. (1995). *Ibid*.

⁵ Shyamlal. (1992). *The Bhangi: A Sweeper Caste, Its Socio-Economic Portraits: With Special Reference to Jodhpur City*. Bombay: Popular Prakashan. C.f. Lekhraj Balmiki. (2011). “*The Balmiki Community In Darjeeling: Caste Consciousness.*” in Terence Mukhia (Ed.). *A Multi-Disciplinary Perusal*. Darjeeling: Kalpa Griha Publications. Also see. Sharma, Rama. (1995). *Bhangi, Scavenger In Indian Society: Marginality, Identity, and Politicization of the Community*. New Delhi: M.D. Publications Pvt. Ltd.

⁶ Sachidananda. (2002). *People At The Bottom: A Portrait Of The Scavengers*. Delhi: Concept Publishing Company.

⁷ People-In-India Profile. <http://www.joshuaproject.net/south-asia-districts.php?rog5=IN2801> Accessed: 31.08.2012 20:30hrs

⁸ People-In-IndiaProfile.<http://www.joshuaproject.net/peopleprofile.php?peo3=16399&rog3=IN>
Accessed: 31. 08.2012 20:31hrs

⁹ Gurung, Madan Kr. “*Darjeeling Municipality: Then And Now*” in Gurung, Madan Kr., & Bhutia Passang. (Ed.). (2000). Souvenir: *Darjeeling Municipality 1850-2000*. Darjeeling: Darjeeling Municipality. Pp.29.

¹⁰ 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.

¹¹ 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.

¹² Asian Human Rights Corresponding School: Asian Human Rights Commission . Lesson 2: *An Examination of the situation faced by Dalit communities working as manual scavengers and manhole workers as well as the plight of Dalit women*.
<http://www.hrschool.org/doc/mainfile.php/lesson65/231/> Accessed: 25.02.2013 21:35 hrs.

¹³ Shudra, also spelled Sudra, Sanskrit Śūdra, the fourth and lowest of the traditional *varnas*, or social classes, of India, traditionally artisans and labourers. The term does not appear in the earliest Vedic literature. Unlike the members of the three *dvija* (“twice-born”) *varnas*—Brahmans (priests and teachers), Kshatriya (nobles and warriors), and Vaishya (merchants)—Shudras are not permitted to perform the *upanayana*, the initiatory rite into the study of the Vedas (earliest sacred literature of India). The Shudra *varna* includes a wide spectrum of endogamous status groups with dominant, landowning groups at one end of the scale and near-untouchables at the other. These variations derive from the belief that certain behaviour patterns and occupations are polluting, a concept that gave rise to a distinction between “clean” and “unclean” Shudra groups; for example, washers, tanners, shoemakers, sweepers, and scavengers were once relegated to the status of untouchable. As evidence of group mobility in the caste system, some observers have pointed out that many castes claiming Kshatriya and Vaishya status gradually emerged from the Shudra class. <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/571589/Shudra> Accessed: 28. 09.2013 12:23hrs

¹⁴ Chaudhury are elected areas wise, in Darjeeling they follow nine biras(meaning areas) at present there are nine chaudhury in 32 wards of Darjeeing Municipality area. See Lekhraj Balmiki. (2011). “*The Balmiki Community In Darjeeling: Caste Consciousness*.” in Terence Mukhia (Ed.). *A Multi-Disciplinary Perusal*. Darjeeling: Kalpa Griha Publications.

¹⁵ 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.

¹⁶ 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.

¹⁷ 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.

¹⁸ This part has been interview with Shri Kailesh Ram Balmiki, a person who was compelled to pay the *Daand* because he married a female from other caste.

Personal interview with 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.

¹⁹ 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.

²⁰ Singh, K.S. (2010). *The Scheduled Castes*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press. Pp. 235-243.

²¹ The Sari grew in length with one end used to cover the bosom, the head and the face. This allowed women to work in the fields beside men or even ride a horse like men. Traditionally, in some parts of India, women are supposed to have a Ghoonghat in front of the family elders and men, except husbands and close family members.

²² 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.

²³ Singh, K.S. (2010). *The Scheduled Castes*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press. Pp. 105-112.

²⁴ 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.

²⁵ 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.

²⁶ 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 Afnahis for instance have been traditionally a ready source of liquid cash for the cash trapped individuals.

²⁷ 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.

²⁸ Swachchakar Dignity: 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

²⁹ 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).

³⁰ 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.

³¹ 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.

³² 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.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ 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.

³⁵ Regular 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

³⁶ Deliege,Robert. (2001). *The Untouchables of India.* New York: oxford International Publishers Ltd. (Translated from French by Nora Scott).

³⁷ In 1998, the people those who were given permanent (made permanent) posts according to the Municipality Order, were asked to may 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.

³⁸ Bhanja is bribe paid to the supervisor of a particular section by the Safai Karamchari.

³⁹ 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.

⁴⁰ See, Staff Statistic Report Of Darjeeling Municipality As On 01.04.2012.

⁴¹ Swachchakar Dignity: 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

⁴² Swachchakar Dignity: A Cry for Change (Documentry) *Badlav Ki Chah* . Sunday, September 24, 2006. <http://swachchakar.blogspot.in/2006/09/cry-for-change.html>. Accessed 25.02.2013 20:40 hrs

⁴³ Balmiki Harijan Sangh was established in 1948, Registration No.:- 3/38713.

⁴⁴ Lekhraj Balmiki. (2013). “*Dissenting Voices, Transformation and People’s Assertions in East and North East India Unheard Voice: Balmiki Community in Darjeeling.*” in Pradip Kumar Sengupta and Manas Chakrabarty (Ed.). (2013). *Dissenting Voices, Collective Actions and Politics of Assertions: A Pan- Indian Perspective*. Kolkata: Levant Books.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Rajawat, Mamta. (2006). *Dalits: Role of Education*. New Delhi: Anmol Publications Pvt. Ltd. Also see, Wilfred, Felix. (2000). *Dalit Empowerment*. Bangalore: NBCLC.

⁴⁷ Ambaikar, B.M. “*Contribution of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar to Evolution of Jural Postulates in India.*”, in K.N. Kadam (Ed.). (1993). *Dr. B.R. Ambedkar: The Emancipator Of The Oppressed*. Bombay: Popular Prakashan.

⁴⁸ C.f. Lekhraj Balmiki. (2011). “*The Balmiki Community In Darjeeling: Caste Consciousness.*” in Terence Mukhia (Ed.). *A Multi-Disciplinary Perusal*. Darjeeling: Kalpa Griha Publications. Also see. Sharma, Rama. (1995). *Bhangi, Scavenger In Indian Society: Marginality, Identity, and Politicization of the Community*. New Delhi: M.D. Publications Pvt. Ltd. Also see, Gurung, Madan Kr., & Bhutia, Passang. (Ed.). (2000). *Souvenir:Darjeeling Municipality 1850-2000*. Darjeeling: Darjeeling Municipality. pp. 87-90.

⁴⁹ Maya Suzuki. *Indian Government Strategy Against Caste Inequality: “Liberating” Untouchables In The Context Of Welfare Schemes*, in Journal of Political Science and Sociology No.12. pp 65-83.

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