Dalit Folklore:

Identity and Critical Interpretation

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Dalit term is defined as ‘masses exploited and oppressed economically, socially, culturally, in the name of religion and other factors’. They are ‘traditionally connotes wretchedness, poverty and humiliation. Hence the term has become derogatory. The non-Dalits, therefore pose the question: why should we call ourselves Dalits?’ (1)

In this scenario the section of people who have been oppressed from centuries together and they have been deprived up from their rights have been isolated from the mainstream and developed their own identity through their own culture and tradition. The root cause of this isolation and deprivation is varna and caste system prevalent in Indian society. The general people have been given an innocent understanding that this caste system has been created by God. As a result, in the name of God, (who is an unquestionable character), His creation will be appreciated and accepted by all. In fact this discrimination is a creation of some opportunist group. Reality is that ‘Varna and caste came to be determined on the basis of birth. This was because the ruling class wanted to ensure for itself the exclusive possession of wealth, power and higher social status, and also because they did not want the sorrow, misery and servitude imposed on the oppressed to be transferred to the other sections of the society. (2)

The Indian society is consisting of more than 6000 different castes. The structure of the typical Indian village is usually determined as per the population of the different caste living in that particular village. Since long centuries the dalits have been living with the insulted identity which they have derived from their caste to which they belong.

Origin of Caste

As regards to the origin of the present caste system it has been accepted fact is that Varna system is the mother of caste system.

In this regard Dr, B.R.Ambedkar has said: “The root of untouchability is the caste system, the root of caste system is religion attached to Varna and ashram, and the root of Varnashram is Brahminical religion, and the root of Brahminical religion is authoritarianism or political
power. Untouchability is only an extended form of caste and, therefore, without abolition of caste there is no hope of abolition of untouchability”. (3)

During the period of Manu in 185 BC(4), who is recognized as the architect of the social constitution, in the form of “Manu Smrutee” or “Manu Sanghita” has been codified and documented the state social law to mobilize the society. The entire Sanhitaa speaks very high about one caste “Brahmin” and very low and humiliating statement, attitude and behavior about “Sudra” This documentation not only has described about the origin of Varna but also about the origin of caste. An example can be given from the Smrutee on origin of caste.

The Chandala has been originated by the offspring produced by a Brahmin mother and Sudra father. Offspring from Sudra father and Vaishya mother is called Ayogaba who becomes the carpenter. Offspring from Brahmin father and Viashya mother gives to Nishad, otherwise called fisherman.(5)

In this way the caste system has been developed and spread in thousands in course of time.

Dalit folklore: A way to an ancient history.

Dalit folk, especially in western part of Odisha is very rich and has contributed to the mainstream society a lot in the form of Ganaa/Domb baza with various kinds of rhythms imbibed in it. Along with this their dance, songs, arts, craft, customs, rituals, festivals are unique and remarkable.

The folklore of this area speaks different about the origin of dalit community. It says that, they have been originated from the king Lakhanbandhi Nagbanshi Raja Dungi Chuhan. Raja Dungi Chuhan had four sons named Gang, Gaagrang, Jadu and Kadam. Now a day these four brothers are termed as Gond, Gandaa, Gauda and Kondh respectively. The descendants of these four brothers are subsequently known as different community (6). If we look back to the origin of above mentioned individual community, one can see the distinct and clear cut similarity among them. This similarity strengthen about their origin from same source in the long past. However, in course of time, they have been divided in to many castes which sustained for a long period in the society even up to till to day.

During British rule when there was demand for special provision for the deprived class people, to allot the percentage of reservation based on their population, an enumeration regarding the number was thought of in the name of census in the year 1911. Since then they were put in the scheduled caste category to have special provision. Subsequently these Gang, Gaagrang, Jadu and Kadam have been broadly classified in official term as
Scheduled Caste (*Ganaa*), Scheduled Tribe (*Gond* and *Kondh*) and Other Backward Caste (*Gauda*) in Odisha (7).

The people those who were had the strategy and conspiracy to rule over these people, they have termed different names in to different community/castes and subsequently that become the social tradition. The folk tales regarding descendants of four brothers have social as well as historical importance which needs attention and exploration of the experts in this field.

Duma: An identity of Dalit

The descendants of the four brothers believe in worshiping Duma in their Pidar. Pidar is the sacred place inside the house where the souls of the forefathers are being worshiped. Duma is the soul or Jee of a dead person. In the cultural tradition of the dalit there is strong believe that after the death of a person the *atma* or soul does not go to heaven as it is there in the tradition of Hindu believe. Instead, it remained in the earth along with the family members, where he/she was belonging earlier. Therefore on 10th day of death i.e. on *Dashaha* the departed soul from body is again invited to the house in a ceremonial ways. In this particular day all the near and dears, relatives are invited to witness the occasion.

It is not known that, particularly where the soul remains after departure from the body i.e in between the day of the death and dashaha(10th day). However, there is believed in the community that within this period the soul remains in some branches of the tree, most preferably in banyan tree. Hence, all the daily use materials like food, brush (stick), water etc are being offered to the departed soul, following the day of burial, until *dashahaghar* regularly in a routine manner.

The daily need food materials is given usually in a bifurcated way called *Delaabaat* so that from any direction wherever he /she temporarily remains can come easily and receive the offerings. Even the relatives bath in the pond by completely immersing their body dedicating to the dead persons which is called *bood*. In this way they perform all the daily activity on behalf of the dead person.

The 10th day or *dashaghar* is one of the important days. They think that this day should be celebrated in such a joyful manner that as if it should symbolize like marriage function, which he /she had enjoyed during his/her own marriage in life carrier.

In a grand function with *Ganaa Bajaa* (music party) the family members go to that particular *Delaabaat(bifurcated way)* along with the relatives to invite the *Duma*. Elder son plays a vital role because he is
the person who usually catches and brings the Duma to the Pidar. A particular spot is cleaned in the bifurcated way to worship. Here, worship is made by offering different kinds of consumables in powder form by the aged and senior persons of the community or the community priest. As per the custom and belief, the Duma usually comes in the form of ant, insects etc. which is caught by the elder son under the guidance of the aged persons and then kept inside the new pot covered with new cloth. As new Duma is invited and placed in the Pidar, he/she is given optimum regards in the process. The eldest son, who usually catch the Duma, come to the Pidar of his house by walking on the new thread which is spread over, up to the Pidar. As they believe, this new thread symbolizes the new cloth or mat where dumma puts his/her feet over it.

The background of spreading of new thread in the name of cloth is that the Domb/Ganaa were once the weaver community. Even, today, in some area of western Odisha, Ganaa family earn their livelihood, out of weaving. In some parts of the coastal Odisha this community known as a Tanti or Tantipana professionally known for their skillful weaving. They had abundance of new cloth once; therefore they pay great respect by spreading new cloth for the new Duma.

This Duma is kept inside the Pidar and in the next day it is identified that ‘in whose feet Duma has come’ to the family. Usually as per the customs of the community the Duma come either in the shape of paddy, paw of the elephant or paw of the cat.

The community is called Domb/Dumb because they practice Duma puja or believe in Duma. They are also called Lakheghar Samaj (a community of lakh family) because the no. of threads those are used in the weaving of a cloth is many or uncountable. Uncountable or many symbolizes lakh in the mind of academically illiterate Ganaa community.

Duma after being enshrined in the Pidar is worshiped regularly in the different occasions and festivals. Nuakhai is a popular festival in the western part of Odisha which is simply a Duma Puja. In the Nuakhai only the new food materials produced either in the crop field or in the forest are first offered to the Duma and than these are treated as fit for human consumption. The concept is this community is from primitive origin. Once the Duma was ordinary human being in the long past and during that period they have discovered all these eatables from the nature. To show obligation for these discoveries their subsequent generations offers their first eatables to those ancient Duma, who have been worshipped in Pidar in the name of Devi/Devada (God/Goddess) from time immemorial. There after the family members starts eating.

Here, the Duma is not simply a myth or folklore rather an identity of the community, converted to their culture in due course of time. This culture is totally antagonistic in nature with regards to the Aryan culture. In the Aryan cultures the departed soul goes to heaven, where as in the dalit culture departed souls again come back to the Pidar and worshipped by the same family members. No priest is needed for Duma Devi/Devata as it is
required in the temple. This is because in the true sense, Dumas are not Devi /Devat, rather they are the forefathers of the community.

Music: A part of life

It is invariably seen that music, dance and songs is the part of life of the dalit community. In Western Odisha, South Odisha and Coastal Odisha, a kind of music is being drummed by Ganaa or Domb or Hadi community people respectively. Structurally this music has three different forms-

1. Murri Baza (Music without horn)
2. Singh Baza (Music along with horn)
3. Dhap Baza

*Murri Baza* is very popular in coastal Odisha where as *Dhap Baza* is in Southern Odisha and *Singh Baza* in Western Odisha. Usually *Murri Baza* comprises of 5 major instruments called *Nishan, Mahuri, Dhol, Tasha* and *Gholghola*. The structure and shape of the instrument in brief can be described in the following manner.

1. **Nishan.**
   A cone shaped instrument, made up of iron. It is covered with cow skin where from the different kind of rhythms come. On the leather cover the two *Chemtha* (leather stick) is being beaten to produce desired rhythms.

2. **Dhol**
   It is a kind of cylindrical, drum shaped instrument. From both the side it is beaten and two different kinds of rhythms is produced from both the side.

   The hollow wooden drum is covered with cow skin in one end and goat skin in opposite end. The drummer uses his hand directly in the side where goat skin is covered, where as, one special kind of stick called *Dhol Khadi* is being used to drum in the side, where cow skin is covered. Usually the drummer hangs this instrument in his neck and drum in a dancing position.
3. Tasha

This is also a kind of ‘kitchen pan’ type instrument made up soil. It is usually prepared by potter. It’s open side is covered with calf skin. This instrument is usually drummed by using two sharp and thin bamboo stick. This instrument is also being hanged in the neck of the drummer while in use.

4. Mahuri

It is an instrument just like Sahnai. This instrument gives the direction to the other three instruments as the harmonium does in the modern music and accordingly different rhythms are produced and musical movement goes on.

5. Gholghola

It is an additional instrument with dumbbell shaped hollow one, made up of either by iron or steel. Inside this instrument some small iron or stone balls are kept, which when shake produces sound. It is perhaps the new instrument added to the original music set since 40-60 years.

When Dhol is being replaced by the Dhap, then it is called Dhap Baza. Dhap is a kind of complete circular instrument. The width of the circular wood is around 6 inch. Here, one side is open and other side of the instrument is covered with calf skin. In this case also, the drummer hangs the instruments in one of his shoulder and drums the music, through a small piece of thick wooden stick called Dhap Kahadi in one hand, and in other hand, he uses small bamboo stick. Both the sticks go hand in hand to produce rhythms.

Singh Baza is called as music of battle. There is a folktale in the community that this was a common music of Ravan, the king of Lanka. They say, when king Ravan was going for any battle, the drummer use to drum and dance with this music before he starts his journey for battle Here, along with earlier said 5 instruments, additional two instrument called Sigh Luhuti (which acts as a head), is required. Sing luhuti is a smaller form of Nishan where two sharp Singh (horn shaped iron rod) are fitted in a horizontal way, in opposite direction. Earlier they were using horns of hyena and buffalo but now days they are using Singh (horn) made up of iron. This is being tied in the waist of the dancer. The dancer is called Singhliaa. Mostly this two Singhliaa (dancer with horn) drum very less but dance more. By the way of dance they show different poses such as piercing of the horn to the counterpart, , lifting of water full iron pot and bi-cycle etc, with the help of incisor teeth. They also lift the coin, blade, stitching needle etc, with the help of eyelid. Apart from the above kind of poses, they also show the attack and how to defend the attack by counter part, treating him as enemy. In this way so many, one to one fighting poses with lot of gymnastic posture are demonstrated which symbolizes war situation. This
demonstration motivates the viewer to participate in any challenge. May be the demon king Ravana of the Ramayana was using this music to warm up and motivate his soldier before any war.

Removing the skin from the dead animal is a scientific skill. The process of drying the skin needs another scientific skill and knowledge. Displacing the dead animal from village premises is a work, done by the untouchables, which the dalit community people have been doing since centuries till today.

There is a great relation with musical instruments and skin of dead animals. It seems that prior to the use of skin in the musical instruments, music must have been formed. This statement is of course supported by the folktale and story of the community. Determination of the type of skin of different animal for use in different instrument is a tedious job. This experiment must have taken thousand years in the process of permutation and combinations. Finally, they might have adopted to use the cow skin in *Nishan* and calf skin in *Tasha* and so on.

This *baza* is locally known as *Gana baza/Domb baza/Hadi baza*. Its enjoyable and attractive rhythms might have won the heart of other community and hence all the community hiring the *baza* and utilize, enjoy in different functions and festivals. The name symbolizes the primitiveness of that community. This may be the cultural property of a particular community which gives its identity as well.

The people of *Domb/Ganaa* community sing drum and dance through out day and night in the occasion like marriage ceremony, and other festivals. Most of the people can sing the songs and almost all the people are able to dance. The form of music is being articulated by the type of song, the singer sings. The most popular group of songs are *Dalkhai, Jaiphula, Baria, Rasarkeli, Kashi kadali, Chapkarati*, etc. By the way of singing different songs asks for different kind of rhythms.

Example of some of the songs along with their related music can be given below as

**Rasarkeli Songs (Odia Version)**

Rasarkeli re……..  
Baate baate jaauthili  
Maadideli haada,  
Tate aane paali jara  
Mote laage dara,  
Chhadi dia dhabaaghara naagara  
Chhadaaibi jara rasa jaachaalija re…….
Jaa chaali jaa Saalebhataa naagara
Panjaraa dhurkuta rasa ..... 
Jaa chaali jaa re........

(8)

Oh ! sweet play
While going on the road
I stepped over a bone,
You are suffering from fever and I afraid of it
Please leaves your concrete house
I will relieve you from fever
Oh sweet play.

Music played for this song can be quoted in the following manner

For this song though four musical instruments i.e Nishan, Dhol, Mahuri and Tasha are being basically used. However, the grammar rhythm is given below only for Nishan in the form of word.

Gi   jaan   gi  jaan  gi jaan  gin
Gin   jaa naa    jaa naa  ,  janaa janaa , gaadaan (9)

While beating the Nishan with the help of leather Chemthaa (stick), the drummer usually drums 8 Chemthaa in left hand and 10 Chemthaa in the right hand to complete a round of music Paar( one round is called Paar). This round is repeated 3 to 4 times at a stage without interruption.

Similarly, a rhythm used for Devi / devat can be given in the following manner. In case of Devi/Devata Paar usually song is not sang. The Par is known to both the bajaniaa and Devi/Devata. Hence, accordingly the music is played and the Devi/Devata dances. An example of Bhima Budha is given

Ja na ja na  gidna  gin
Gin jana  jana gidna gin (10)
Here, in the left hand 6 times is beaten over the Nishan and in right hand 9 times is beaten to complete the round. This round of music goes continuously for a longer period until the devat desires to stop.

These songs are sung in their own language. It is not known that who has written these songs. However some of the people are there in the community called Geet kudia or Gahank(Singer), who usually sings more and more number of songs, especially in the festive occasions restlessly. This is not their business but definitely it is their practice and fascination and demand of the community. These people are the instant poet, who can immediately frame a song by observing a situation, incidence, happenings and reproduce it, in the favorable rhythms which attract the mass.

It is learnt from the culture and tradition of the Domb /Ganaa community is that, these community people are the real inventor of these musical instruments, variety of songs and different poses of dances. One can realize about the fact from the instrument and the kind of skin they have been using and the work entrusted by the society since time immemorial. What we see today is the finished and saturated version of music.

Now a day, it is seen that the musical instrument manufacturing company have been preparing different kind of Dhol,Tasha etc. But they are not using the original skin of calf, goat, and cow etc. rather using synthetic materials. Therefore the commercial drummers are not able to produce the sweet musical tone as it would have been produced by the skin. Hence the importance of the Ganna baza is detoriating gradually and band parties are filling the space.

There are particular rhythms for particular Duma. These rhythms are called Par which is well known to the Gana/Domb drummer. Hence, accordingly the Domb musicians, as per the requirement, produce the rhythms and satisfy the need of Devi/Devata for their dances along with other activity. There are number of instances where the Devi/Devata stand over the Dhol /Nishan and dance .This events proves the relationship of Devata with musician community.

Birtiaa: Running encyclopedia of dalit community

Birtiaa are the specially designated persons, who use to move from village to village and family to family. They have lot of social importance and responsibility in the Ganaa or Domb community. They usually visit villages, when there is a social gathering like marriage, death ceremony etc. In this occasion they sing
various kinds of songs with *Dambaru*, a special kind of musical instrument. The common theme of the songs are usually the origin of the community, ancestral rituals they have been performing, livelihood earning pattern of past, problems and sorrows of the community and how they got this instrument from lord Shiv to use for the betterment of the society.

In the past Sudras were denied to have access over the mainstream education. Hence, they had no option but to document their own literature and culture in a written form. Probably for this reason these communities might have assigned some persons, who will keep the entire cultural and traditional customs of the community in their memory and transfer the same in the different social gathering so that more and more people can understand, internalize and remember about themselves and their ancestor. It is in a practice from generation to generation to make the community people aware about their own culture and literature (11)

An example of oral poetry can be cited here for better understanding. The content of poetry is as below,

“*Ganaa* or *Domb* or *Pana* communities are the weaving communities. Once upon a time they were earning their livelihood out of the weaving business. This is related regarding the instrument they use in weaving. A lady is narrating her domestic problem in this poetry

“Please purchase a weaving machine

For me

Please help me in spinning and

In thread joining

Please help me to sort the cotton,

My dear

Give me ring for my ear

Ornament (Guna) for nose.

Give cloth for my waist

Ring for toe

Please tie the ‘bue’ thread
Another stanza of the same poem speaks about the protest of the woman against the torture of the man:

Younger and elder brother-in-law
Took me holding my hand
They did not take rice
I prepared cake for them
Brother-in-law
Please get up and take rice
I have prepared a tasty curry of gourd
I will go with you Raigarpatna
If you beat me so,
How long I will live
Can you see the fire wood inside the hearth?
And cautiously beat me
Or else
I may not live for a longer period (12)

This kind of poetry they narrate and sing by beating the Dambaru (a musical instrument) in the early morning of a house they visit and social gathering. All the people listen and even make some quarry about their culture and tradition.
Cultural heritage in dalit community, especially of western Odisha is remarkable. Its rich tradition speaks about their social structure, anthropological importance and uniqueness in maintaining identity.

The uniqueness adhered in different rituals performed in marriages; death ceremony witnesses many things which are not seen in the culture of so called upper caste. In dalit community it starts right from the early age of the girl. Usually girl child before being attending her puberty, she has to attend a ritual called Kanabara. Without Kanabara if any girl gets her maturity, the community people don’t prefer to take her as a bride. Therefore it is performed prior to getting her maturity. In this tradition a miniature form of marriage is being performed with a dummy groom with all formality which is performed in the normal marriage. This is totally opposite to the Brahminical culture where they perform thread ceremony to the young male child.

Buasen anaa is another tradition, which is also applicable in the case of a bride; whose marriage date is fixed with a bride-groom before the marriage. In this case, if Nuakhai like great festival etc. falls in between, then the girl is usually invited to the would be in-law’s house. In this situation, of course the bride is not allowed to share bed with her future husband but she is allowed to take part in the normal traditional worship and other related activity. After the festival is over again the girl goes back to her parent’s house. This tradition of bringing the would be daughter-in-law to her would be father-in-law’s house is called Buasen anaa.

During the marriage ceremony, the groom wears a khagalaa(a kind of ornament used in the neck by the women made up of silver) or holds a piece of metal. The tradition speaks that during marriage the groom wears turban and uses good cloths, as a result the Indra of heaven becomes jealous and kills with his Bajra. Therefore, to protect himself from the Bajra the dalit groom holds metal or wears Khagala.

This tradition of the dalit instigates the readers to open some of the pages of history and epics. The history and purana speaks that the Aryan invaded India and finally defeated the aboriginals called Asura or Non-aryans and ruled over them. While ruling over, if any problem was occurring they were calling Indra the king of heaven (Devata) through performing Yagyan. “Indra was the biggest intruder devatas, in his physique and strength too. Being repeatedly defeated at the hands of the Assur, kings of Bharatvarsa, the vandal invaders, the Arya devatas, decided to choose the strongest amongst them as their warlord. And Indra was appointed as the military commander-in-chief of the Devatas. Then started the saga of the series of wars and battles between the Assura and the foreign invaders under the leadership of Indra” (13). To solve the problem the Indra was coming to this land and killing the Ashura the so called enemies with his arms called Bajra. To day’s dalit being the Ashura of the past, they may be keeping metals to protect themselves from the Bajra of Indra.
Again, there is a system in this community that, during marriage, instead of giving dowry the bride’s father receives some money from the groom’s father. This money is called harza. This is, on the other way, a kind of selling of girls. The groom’s father gives money, because one adult member is being added to their family to earn. Now a day a handsome of money is not given but to maintain the tradition and custom, even one rupee is also given in the name of harzaa which is legalized by the society.

Similarly, soon after a child is born, its parental duma is determined by the family head or community priest. The community people believe that a child is born along with inheriting some characters of, any one fore-father and accordingly that child is treated and honoured in different festivals and occasions. This speaks that the soul of death person does not go to heaven, rather it again come to newborn’s body and sustain in the world.

In the genetic science the character of some one is being determined by two ways i.e. through genotypic and phenotypic character (14). May be in the name of Duma, they determine the phenotypic character of a new born child. However, it is sure that they don’t know the word “phenotypic character” as well as scientific principle behind it but were performing the scientific activity in the name of customs.

Godhanaa Khaal: A step towards scientific sanitary measures

This is another typical tradition found in the dalit community of Odisha. In this case when a child is born, mother of the child is kept in a separate room of a house called Pilaahaari Ghar(birth place). Generally, all the outsiders even some of the households are not allowed to enter in to this room and touch the new born baby. They think that, if all the outsiders will touch and see the new born child, the bad eye of the viewers may reduce the health of the child. As a result, if some body enters and touches, he /she are treated as unclean and needs to have a special bath. This process is called Chirkitia. As such it is a scientific fact that, if the entire outsider will touch the newborn they may transmit some contagious disease which they may be having with them. To avoid this disease transmission they have adopted this method as customs.

To remain safer from this kind of unforeseen situations, they prepare a special kind of temporary place by covering with bushes for bathing of both newborn child and mother. No one is allowed to use this special bathing place except mother and new born child. Adjacent to the bathing place a drainage tank is dogged, where all the used water and waste of the genital tract after giving birth are stored. Digging of this particular tank is carried out either by husband or in the absence of husband; brother-in-law (younger brother of husband).This
waste storage tank is called Godhna Khal. Until the newborn attains at least seven days, this tank is being used and after that it is buried and not required to use further.

They think that all the dirt of mother’s womb as well as of newborn’s body should not be thrown out hither and thither. They should be kept in one place so that disposal will be quick and comfortable. Sanitary measures can be ascertained from this cultural tradition of the community.

During this period, mother is always advised to drink, cooked juice of horse gram. She is also advised to use turmeric over the entire body while bathing. This may be a primitive idea of the community but when mother gives birth to a child, she requires protein rich diet to compensate the loss. Horse gram is a grain and having lot of protein in it. Dalit community people must not know the scientific protein content of the horse gram but they know the advantage of it. This concept may be an undocumented research of long centuries at their level.

In the similar way, turmeric has got antiseptic quality. During giving birth, lot of aberrations in the genital tract occurs which can be prevented by applying turmeric over the body. This is also an undocumented research of the community.

Marhaa Nishan: A means of communication

“Music is a means of communication” was a tradition of Domb /Ganaa Community. Marha Nishan(Death Drum) is one of the best examples of this statement.

When some body dies in a village, it becomes very difficult to inform all the near and dear to attend the burial ceremony. Therefore, they had discovered a means to inform all the relatives of the nearby village through drumming Nishan. In this case, a Nishan drummer goes to the top of the house (to use this top of house as a mobile tower) and drums the instrument in a particular rhythm, which is recognized by the society people. This system is called Marha Nishan. Whoever listen this rhythms belonging to the same community, they could able to know that some body has died from their own community. They believe that the sound of the iron Nishan covered with skin goes very faster and longer distance. This is being recognized by the people of other village or even people from same village engaged in other work in different place (15). These rhythms as a customary moral responsibility which instigate them to come to the village. They identify the direction of the sound and accordingly immediately rush to that village to attend the burial ceremony. This rhythm of musical instrument gives information, and promotes the social risk and responsibility of the persons.
Pitaa Bhaat: Discovery converted in to tradition

There is a tradition that if some body dies in some one’s family, they don’t cook food for consecutive three days. During this mourning period the neighbors provide food for them and show their condolence. The neighbors cook the food and add some *neem* leaf in it which is called *Pita Bhaat* or bitter rice.

In the same way a small branch of neem leaf is also used to repel the fly from the dead body waiting for arrival of the relatives for burial. Flie helps in formation of maggot by defecating in the dead carcass. Therefore neem leaf is used to keep away from defecation of fly

Neem is a medicinal plant. This plant has been intermingled with the culture of the dalit society which may be a primitive discovery converted in to tradition since time immemorial.

Dalit women and their place in the society

Dalit women play vital role in the family as well as in the community. She is the person who actually takes the responsibility of maintaining the family. They are not dominated as like the women of other community. Some of the cultural events and instances thereon can be cited to visualize the place of woman in dalit community.

One of the most primitive and primary cultural identities of dalit community is Duma puja. This is mostly worshiped in the different festivals, in different occasions of the year. While worshiping, the eldest women of the family play a pivotal role. For any kind of praying and worship this community, need not require any priest in the pidar; rather the eldest daughter-in-laws of the house act as main priest. After her formal worship, male members along with other members of the family go and pay their respect to the duma.

Dalit woman make her own male choice for marriage and not compelled by her family members. Even *Paisaamudi* or *Udhuliaa* marriage is a form of marriage where a girl choice her partner and straight way goes to the in-laws house. This incidence is declared in the society later on and legalized by the same society members with some fines and other social negotiations. This is, of course, not a regular form of marriage, however this system is not banned by the community rather they validate it in a formal way and give respect to the option of the woman.
Again, she also acts as one of the important work force in the family and earns equal amount of money as the man does. Therefore, in the process of marriage *Harza* is paid to the bride’s fathers.

Remarriage is a common phenomenon in the society. Usually the widow prefers or family members of the widow give preference to the widow to marry her brother-in-law, if suitably available. In case, the age gape between widow and brother-in-law is more or the brother-in-law is already married then option becomes open. In this case widow can marry any one as available in the community. Other young male also don’t hesitate to accept widows/divorcesee which is a common tradition of the community.

Cultural harmony Vs. Caste hegemony

Domb is a community which is seen in almost all part of the undivided India (Pakistan and Bangladesh). There are more than 6000 caste in India. The prominent and dominated in respect of population of untouchable caste are Domb, Pana, Ghasi, Chamar, Hadi, Dhoba, Kandara, Bauri, Namasudra in Orissa.

If we look to the culture of above untouchable castes along with some tribes, we can see lot of similarity in it; although they live in different geographical location. They are also interdependent in earning their livelihood and cultural celebration. In Odisha the *Chamar* people do the leather wok. Leather /skin are being used in different musical instrument which the *Ganaa/Domb* presently brings from the *Chamar* community. *Ghasi* is another untouchable caste. They prepare the *Mahuri* instrument. The base part of the *Nishan* is made up of iron which is being taken care by *Blacksmith*. The base part of the *Tasha* is prepared by the potter.

Earlier, all these different parts relating to *Ganaa/Domb* baza was being prepared by *Ganaa/Domb* or untouchables of the past. In course of time when more and more division of the caste went on, some of the minor group from the untouchable might have alienated and formed sub-group like *Ghasi* and *Hadi* etc. This sub-group though might have separated and identified as a caste in the hierarchy, may be still involved in manufacturing the baza. As a result, in the contemporary time although *Domb/Ganaa* people drum the music but musical instrument is prepared with collective effort of multi caste and culture. Earlier all these caste were known as Sudra.

These untouchable castes may be of same origin but in the hierarchy structure presently they are counted as higher and lower caste and hate each other. The so called lower untouchable castes are from sudra community which has already been established in varna system.
In the mass function also the cultural unity is very much visible. Whenever there is any festival, the entire village people irrespective of castes worship the village deity. In these instances either the Gond or Kondh or Gardener community people act as priest and the Ganaa/Domb community bazania drum the music. Here, both the drummer as well as priest is indispensable and interdependent. The place where worship is donning is called Gudi. In the Gudi premises in fact caste supremacy is not considered on the basis of high or low, rather the devi/devata touch, embrace the untouchables and even dance over the musical instrument. There is no discrimination in Gudi in the name of caste which specifies the cultural harmony of different community. But the same people show different attitude, when they come back from the Gudi premises and manifest their caste hegemony.

Therefore, a communal effort is existed to build up a cultural heritage of dalit community which reflects the cultural harmony of caste though caste hegemony in a brahminical form is clearly distinct.

A common Origin

Though caste hierarchy is very much rampant and atrocities are common in day to day life, still culture speaks that different castes belongs to SC/ST/OBC are of same origin. Many Duma Devi/Devatas are same and usually worshiped by most of the SC/ST/OBC communities. These Devi/Devatas are Mahalakhama, Budharaja, Bhima Budha, Mangal and many others. Mahalakhma is worshiped both by Ganaa as well as Gouda community. In Ganaa community some of the family enshrine Mahalakhama as pidar devata whereas in Gouda community it is worshiped as a community devata. Similarly Budharaja, otherwise known as Budhadeo is being worshiped by both Gond and Ganaa community. Again Bhima Budha is common to Ganaa, Goud and Gond. In the same way Patneswari, Mangla are worshiped in Ganaa community and the same duma is worshiped by Gond, Gouda and other touchable and untouchable community. There is number of examples which can be cited from different sudra community. Typically, either for the Devi or Devata or deity of the above said community (Sudra), usually the Ganaa/Domb music is required and drummed by the Ganaa/Domb people. The desired rhythms needed by the Devi/Devata are only known and recognized by this community people. Even a complete form of an instrument like Nishan and Dhol is kept inside the recognized temple like Samaleswari, Patneswari, Manikeswari although the visitor having leather belt in waist are prohibited to enter in to the temple.

Worship of bow is seen both in the Ganaa (caste), Kandara(caste) as well as Kondh(tribe) community, which speaks about the similarity in their origin.
Surname: A caste identity

Surname plays a great role in identifying the caste in India. Animal, Bird, Metal, Matter, Place, Reptile are the totem of the dalit, adivashi and other backward castes of India. There are certain surnames which are commonly used by both SC/ST/OBC like Sunani, Bag, Nag, Naik, Chhatria, Hati, Majhi, Jena, Patra etc. These are as similar as devi/devat Duma worshiped in their respective Pidar. In case of upper caste Gotra determines the origin of a clan. Gotra are usually happened to be the name of Rishi like Bhardwaj, Kashyap, Bashista etc. Therefore, to avoid inbreeding, in the family of so called higher caste; who are identified as per their Gotra, don’t arrange their marriage within the same Gotra. In their case surname is not important. Even though surname is same but the Gotra is different then they go for marriage which is recognized by the society. In case of dalit community the girls and boys having same surname is not allowed for marriage, as they are treated as brother and sister. They mean, same surname of people, may be of different geographical location are counted themselves, are from single source of origin.

Even the people from different castes like SC/ST/OBC having same surname treat one another as brother. This speaks about their same source of origin and may be of same community, they were belonging, before the caste division in the society.

Therefore, surname not only determines the caste but also speaks about the unity among the community which has been fragmented in the name of caste.

Conclusion

Dalit folklore in the form of music, dance festivals, worship, songs etc gives rise to unique originality of dalit. The cultural tradition proves regarding the primitiveness of the community. Anthropological and Historical events can be derived from each of the cultural events, if interpreted properly. Unfortunately, the caste identity of dalit has pushed them to such an insulted heinous area of the society that their noble culture and traditions are undermined in all spheres. The entire cultural heritage has become untouchable and placed in an unidentified
space as like their caste. However, the folk of dalit is not simply a folk but a running evidence of their originality and identity. This altogether, gives rise to communal harmony and similarity among dalit, tribes and OBCs in spite of rampant caste hegemony and hierarchy.

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