

SATNAMI SAMAJ: CHALLENGING RURAL CASTE INSTITUTION IN CHHATTISGARH

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Abstract

SatnamiSamaj is almost living in rural Chhattisgarh (India). It has separate social institutions from Hinduism. Satnamis have own Bhandari and Satidar (ritual priest) who are conducting the entire social functions such as marriages, death ceremonies, religious rituals and nomination of a new born baby in the society. All these changes were really challenging for the Satnamisamaj which comes after long social and religious Satnami movement. Its credit goes to Guru Ghasidas and his followers during the early 19th Century. Satnamisamaj had been rejected to caste hierarchy. Though, change is a continuous process hence rural caste institutions have been changing. Books, articles, internet and others useful secondary resources have been used to complete the research paper.

Keywords: *SatnamiSamaj, Rural, Caste Institution, Chhattisgarh*



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Introduction: Any rural society is living in Indian villages. Earlier, rural India represents a few numbers of people who were lived together in natural setting and practices together for food arrangement and against of outsider forces. Agriculture was the main occupation of the rural society in Chhattisgarh, India. But, nowadays rural society is going to change rapidly maybe there are so many factors. Hence, we can take two major factors like natural factors (migration, famine etc.) and social factors. These two factors cover all the causes of change of social institutions in India. But, here we will discuss caste institution (a social factor) in Chhattisgarh, India. Where Satnami is a caste but doesn't consider casteism and rejected the Brahmanism, superiority caste institutions.

In Chhattisgarh, Satnamisamaj comes under the Scheduled Castes from the point of constitutional classification. The Satnami is estimated to be 70-80 percent of the Scheduled Castes population and it is 12 percent of the whole population of Chhattisgarh. However, caste discrimination cannot be denied on seeing the previous caste-wise census. Due to being

from the Scheduled Castes category, they face the difficulties and inhuman of Hindu social institution like caste and religion.

Indian caste society has been most dangerous and unique social institution around the world. Dangerous in the sense, caste is a very complex system, hierarchy, nation of pure and impure, cruelty never can leave once you got by birth, and you have to suffer whole life within caste identity. You have to insult any part of the country; sometimes you have to lose his/her life or dignity and so on. All are these losses because of the only caste. So, in 21st Century we have to think seriously, otherwise, we can't even imagine what consequences will have to suffer.

Satnami Samaj: In Chhattisgarh, Satnamisamaj has come into existence in early 19th Century. Guru Ghasidas was a founder of Satnamisamaj. Satnamis are followers of the '*Satnam*' and called themselves Satnami. Guru Ghasidas regards his ideal, therefore, Satnami tries to follow his teaching and walk on the path of truth. Satnamisamaj never believes on the caste system. Instead of this, they accept to assimilate messages of Guru as "*MankheMankheEkSamanAay*".

Satnamisamaj is also known for some prohibition on food like meat; liquor also prohibited some vegetable chili, tomato, lentils, brinjal etc. Satnamisamaj had been rejected these kinds of food practices because the founder of the Satnami community had been teach earlier and take oath from the side of follower of *Satnam*. That time higher castes people were practices untouchability with lower castes along with the Satnami. They were considered untouchables because from *Shudra Varna* several castes joined themselves and become Satnami. But, most of the time who were practicing untouchability in rural India even they belong to an untouchable (*Shudra Varna*). But, in truth, it was also a politics with downtrodden people. Satnamisamaj is understood that divide politics therefore, they don't discriminate with other castes because Guru Ghasidas taught them about humanity almost 150 years ago.

What is a Caste Institution? It is a part of the social institution like family and religion. But, caste is an unequal and unique institution which determines and maintains hierarchy. Some caste always determines superior and pure another side largely castes are determines lower and filthy. In actual, the caste system is a caste institution. That follows certain rigid tradition as the caste system; it's called a caste institution.

How works Caste Institution: This point is very interesting because of its system unique in the world. Therefore, here we will focus and discuss on Indian caste institution.

Caste institution works on based on the *Varna Vyavastha*(four hierarchal steps). Namely, Brahman, Kshatriya, Vaishyas, and Shudra, according to this *Vyavastha* from left to right three (Brahman, Kshatriya, and Vaishyas) Varna have power and rights in different sections but Shudra excluded forever for everything. Shudra doesn't have rights to the property, education, religious chant, good clothes, and sandals etc. but they will do cleaning works always without question. Brahman was superior of this *Vyavastha*.

“Ascribed” and “Achieved” this two sociological and anthropological terms, explain the *Varna Vyavastha* that how one person can be by birth superior and achieving other thing have to do hard work. Here, my point is that, if the person wants to be a success, and they don't have the rights to move forward work hard and keep the property then he is forced to do the works badly like an animal, then how can one improve? For instance, a student becomes an engineer by working hard then it is his achieved status because he did hard work for gain the position another side ascribed status gives birth from fathers side it means, father the Shudra then the child will be the Shudra if father the Brahman then the child will be the Brahman. Here, no matter for knowledge, character or lazy.

In Indian society, the occupation also used to determine the pure-impure among the people. This was the stigma for human society that was later transformed into castes. To which we see people still working according to their caste in our daily life. This shows that the caste is a dangerous disease that divides the entire human society into a mentally pure-impure person, which inhibits social development. As well as giving rise to fierce adverse consequences, the lives of many ordinary citizens are also eliminated. Challenging such evil among the society, it is a very big revolution.

Challenging Rural Caste Institution: Rural India is the main source of the caste where every people divided in the caste hierarchy. Not only hierarchy even purity and impurity. Satnamisamaj has not even escaped from this social stigma in Chhattisgarh. These incidences have been happening some years ago. That is nowadays stopped nevertheless can't be denied it. Satnami movement is previous that stood against of caste atrocities and discrimination. This revolutionary movement has been provided dignity and respectful life even several rights to downtrodden people. The consequence, Satnamisamaj have been independent regarding social, cultural and religious rituals. Though, Satnami itself conducts ceremonies, no need of Brahmin priest during the marriage or any other social programs.

Every rural society has their own social institutions like kinship, marriage, family and religion and caste system which function certain rules and regulations. For the being member

of the marriage institution, you have to marry a woman. But, in case of caste institutions, people are itself been members. The social institution is a method and systems that govern social functions through certain laws and customs established in the society. However, in some Indian societies, such social institutions have attained the place. This is proving dangerous for humanity. There is some examples marriage (endogamy), religion and caste. The creation of these social institutions was made to operate the human and social system smoothly. But their rigors and fanaticism promote social problems and stereotypes. Choubey says, "The methods, methodologies, and procedures accepted by society can be called institutions of rules."

Satnamisamaj stumbled in two sides: one is casteism and second is British system. Despite its Satnamisamaj jumped in large number into the country's freedom movement. Dedication and scarification of Satnamisamaj were really challenging in an unfavorable situation. But, Satnamis did not go back as if no one cares about life.

Conclusion: In Chhattisgarh, caste institution is too deadly especially in rural areas. Every caste separated and segregated to each even person to person. People maintain caste wise distance in everyday life. They don't want to involve from different castes during happy or sorrow of family. Therefore, their result is very scary because people lost their sense and do deadly attacks to each other. Their bad effects are always threat.

Satnamis are mostly living in rural Chhattisgarh. Satnami is an agricultural society. Their livelihood depends on agriculture but nowadays their occupation is going to change due to contact of the education and small business. Satnamisamaj has separate social institutions from Hinduism. Satnamisamaj has own Bhandari and Satidar (ritual priest) that are functioning whole social system like marriages, death ceremonies, religious rituals and so on. In Satnamisamaj, this change came from Satnami movement in Chhattisgarh. Guru Ghasidas was a founder of the movement in early 19th Century. Satnamisamaj's ideology has totally against of the caste system. Satnamis have been denied all kinds of Brahmanical ideas and concept and Satnamis also strictly criticized of the caste system.

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