ORIGINAL RESEARCH PAPER

Linguistics

DOM: A LESSER-KNOWN LANGUAGE OF A SCHEDULED CASTE SPEECH COMMUNITY

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ABSTRACT

'The totality of the utterances that can be made in a speech community is the language of that speech community' (Bloomfield 1933, Language) Language is a means of communication used by a group or a community living in a society. There is therefore an interesting relationship between society and language. Such relationship can be analyzed in terms of reasons for dialectal differences, speech communities and their attitudes, cultural levels and variations etc. Language has sounds, words, sentences and meaning. We in this paper tried to focus on some characteristics of Dom language especially in its grammatical categories, sentence formation and meanings.

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Dom community is a Pan Indian and oldest Scheduled Caste community. They also found in all states of India in same or different names. The Scheduled Castes in Odisha constitute 17.13% of the total population of the state and they are around 706,000 in numbers as per 2011 Census data.

The reference of Dom may be traced from *Charya*— a textual representation of *Odisha,* that was composed in seventh century by *Sahajia* followers of Buddhism. This community is also found in all over India known as *Dom, Domri, Dum,* and *Dom* as enlisted by Government of India. Scholars are having identified them as an Indo-Aryan group who has a rich musical tradition. Subsequently, this community also has its own language variety as they have that in other states of India, what is getting extinction now-a-days. 'The domas or dombas are mentioned in Sanskrit literature as living by singing and music. The form domba seems to be the oldest one, it occurs in Varahamihira's Brihatsamhita(ixxvii,33), which belongs to sixth century, several times in Sanskrit works hailing from Kashmir such as the Kathasaritasagar of Somadeva and the name of the caste is accordingly old. The base from which it is derived is perhaps onomatopoeic compare Sanskrit dam, to sound, damaru,drum. It is probably not Aryan' (Grierson, 1922,143)

SCSTRI has mentioned that Dom people speak Odia only that partly correct because '*Dom*'s who are dwelling in *Kalahandi, Koraput, Nawarangapur, Balangir, Ganjam, Gajapati, Kandhamal,* and *Phulbani* districts only have the different language that is varied greatly not from *Odia* but the language spoken locally . They or their neighbors identify their language as '*Dom Kata*', or the *Dom* language. As this language only exists in spoken form what is rapidly getting extinct. It has influenced by local *Odia* that is spoken in given regions, and the variations are found in grammatical, semantic as well as in vocabulary level in all the districts.

Some semi-scholarly works have also been published on *Dom* language and literature by the members of this community.

One of the pioneer attempts is *Dom Bhasar Lokakti* (Folk say in *Dom* Language) by Khetrabasi Manseth which was published in 2000; he has also compiled a book on folktales of *Dom* language entitled as *Hun Marile Kahe* (Narrated When Responded) in 2007, published by Central Sahitya Akademi, New Delhi. In addition to this, another work has been published in 2009 by Gopinath Bag entitled as *Dom Sanskruti* (Dom Culture) where he has discussed on *Dom* language, and in same vein another book has been published by Basudev Sunani in the same year that is *Dalit Sanskrutira Itihas* (History of Dalit Culture), and which discussed discusses about *Dom* language therein. Recently and research work has been published by ATLC Kandhamalara Dom Sanskruti(2019) of Khetrabasi Manseth where the scholar has been discussed about Dom language in a long chapter separately.

Keeping these in mind, it is important to document this language as it is still in spoken form by the people of this community so to draw an attention as an example of wide linguistic tradition of our country. It will also help to reestablish the linguistic identity of this community among them those are put out of articulation as influence of modernity or other dominant *lingua franca* of the state.

Some features of Dom Language: Some features like pronoun, verb, and gender and gender-verb agreement are discussed in this joint paper-

Pronoun- Pronoun is a 'term used in the grammatical classification of words, referring to the closed set of items which can be used to substitute for a noun phrase (or single noun) '(David Crystal, 2008; 391)

Personal Pronoun- Personal Pronouns are pronouns that are associated primarily with a particular grammatical person – first person, second person or third person. Personal Pronouns may also take different forms depending on number, grammatical or natural gender, case and formality. Nominative Pronouns in Western Odisha are generally 'mui'(1st sing.), tui(2nd sing.) etc but in Dom the third person singular pronouns are so(masculine), sai (feminine) and somene/ homene(masculine familiar) and saemene/ haemene(femininefamiliar) for example- so golo(he went), sae gali(she went), somene galen(they went/ masculine) etc. It is important to notice that the plural marker- mene is only used by Dom people. They have no other plural marker except mene that is used for both inanimate and animate i.e gachhmene(trees), gaemene(cows), chiamene(chicks) etc. Similarly possessive forms also different accordingly i.e teir(her), tar(his). The accusative form also teike(to her), take(to him), someneke/homeneke(to them/ masculine),

saimaneke/haimaneke(to them feminine). The highest honorific term in Dom language is tame. But perhaps this one is later development because no elder person found using this pronoun.

Relative Pronoun- Relative Pronouns of Dom Language 'jun' also different from local language spoken in Western Odisha 'jen'(singular), jenmankar(plural) that is 'jeu' (singular) and 'jeumankar'(plural). For example- jun jun bazaar jaetasnikla go, tui junka jagil achis sae ketebele acti etc.

Interrogative Pronoun- There are two sets of interrogative pronouns corresponding to animate and inanimate nouns. The animate pronoun is kun-who, similarly the inanimate is kaen-same as spoken form of Western Odia. The paradigm of'kun' is similar to 'jun' Nominative- kun/kune(singular), kunmene (plural) Accusative-kunke(sing.) kunmeneke(pl.) Genitive/ Oblique-kunarne/kunarti(sing.), kunmenkarne/ kunmenkarti(pl.)

Demonstrative Pronoun- In Dom o/ho(masculine), ae(feminine),is used as demonstrative pronouns in proximate or present on front of the speaker and so (mas.) and sae(fem.) for remote or absent in front of the speaker for animate .like- o kune (this(prox.)who), who is this/ ho hologe kaen karache(that-man there what doing) what he is doing there.

Indefinite Pronoun- It refers to an entity or class of entities which is not capable of specific identification. In Dom , indefinite pronoun(kun), can be used to express the idea of no body, none etc.

Case- Case is a grammatical category determined by the syntactic or semantic function of a noun or a pronoun. The term case refers to a category of nouns where the heads of the nouns in a sentence show certain grammatical functions. Crystal/1985 defined case as ' a grammatical category used in the analysis of word classes to identify the syntactic relationship between words in a sentence through such contrasts as nominative, accusative etc' Case is both a syntactic category and morphological category in any language. A distinction is made between morphological and abstract case in generative linguistics. Abstract case is a universal property, but overt morphological realization of abstract case varies cross-linguistically. Grammatical cases in Dom language have been discussed here. Dom employs several overt makers on nominals to show certain grammatical functions i.e nominative gatak(sing.), me/ne/ti(sing.),menkarne/menekarsatun(pl.). Nominative Case-In Dom language , nouns are overtly marked for nominative case. Ex- o haria kaen balache/ that person what saying- what is he saying. Accusative Case-The accusative suffix is primarily used for denoting the direct object of a transitive verb. Accusative case in Dom language is marked by the morphemes 'ke' Genitive / Obliques Case- Genitive Case is a case in which the referent of the marked noun is the possessor of the referent of another noun. In Dom , genitive affix is either attached to nominal forms or pronominal forms as shown in the following examples here- joekhadi bhansine rakleachen matchbox has kept on the hearth., gachti phul phutlona flowers bloom on tree. Locative Case- Locative case is a case that expresses location at the referent of the noun in marks. Dom language employs the suffix- loge/ thane/ ti/ ne to indicate the locative case. Ex- am bua khalane ache/ my father is in harvesting field. Dative Case- Dative Case is a case that marks indirect objects(for language in which they are held to exist) or nouns having the role of recipient (as of things given), or beneficiary of an action or possessor of an item. Dom employs the morpheme 'ke' to indicate dative case- ex-mita take gatak phul deli/ Mita gave a flower to him. Puni asche go gharduarke lipuchha karapakaha/ full moon is coming smear the home and nearby area. Bhok lagache bua kauke jainta/ hunger feeling father eating go. Instrumental Case- Instrumental Case is case that the referent of the noun it

marks is the means of the accomplishment of the action expressed by the clause. Ablative Case- It is a case that expresses a variety of meanings which include instrument, cause, location, source, time etc. Dom employs the markers ke/un/ne to indicate ablative case.

Verbs-Dom has sakalde/ to collect, ninde/to take, chhekde/to block, tamadde/to search, etc yet there are some verbs which are closely related with Odia verbs like jaede/to go, and bring, karde/to do, ghende/ to buy etc.

Gender- Dom has two lexical genders masculine and feminine, they don't have neuter gender. However it is grammatical with third person singular pronoun and modifies the verb in Present Perfect, Past Simple, Past Continuous, Past Perfect and has exception in Present Simple , Present Continuous and Future Perfect. Gender distinction can be found in kinship terms, and in most cases suffixes are added to noun bases or after deletion of a certain phoneme at word final position to make male and female distinction.

CONCLUSION-
what discussed in this paper is a preliminary one with limited data. Though , some scholars like Gopinath Bag, Basudev Sunani, and Khetrabasi Manseth have done scholarly work on this language. Still, Dom or the people who are recognised as untouchables were always abandoned by intellectuals. Sir George Grierson documented their speech as Gypsy language particularly called dialect or argot. In Modern Indian Linguistic studies specially in Linguistic Survey Of India (LSI), by Language Division , Government Of India, no attempt has been made to document lesser known languages. This joint paper is an attempt to draw linguist attention to have look therein.

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