

► Dalits Bar Doms From Using Water

HARIHARPUR, Sept 23: Local Dalits have barred a Dom family of Hariharpur from fetching water from the only well in the area for not being a Hindu.

A year-and-a-half ago Birendra Mallik's (Dom) lost his father Baleswor, 40, after he drank water from a paddy field as he was not allowed to drink water from the well. Rekha Mallik, the deceased's daughter-in-law vividly remembers the incident, "all of us had gone to a relative's marriage.

While returning, my father-in-law asked for water, but I wasn't allowed to fetch water from the well. Finally I got some water from the paddy field and gave him. That very water cost his life," A few months after the incident, Baleswar's brother, Sankar too lost his life for a similar reason.

"We've been fetching water from another locality for daily usage," Rekha said, adding, "Four months ago, we had gone India to attend our sister's marriage. When we returned home after 16 days, I went to around half-a-dozen homes asking for some water. However, no one had pity. Finally, we drank water stored 16 days ago from a pitcher and spent the night."

Twenty kilometer north of the district headquarters, almost 50 families from Musahar, Mandal, Mahara, Muslim and other communities drink water from the same well. However, the Dom family has been barred from fetching water from the well. "Filling water is far-fetched. Even if a small child touches the well while playing, they come to loot our home," Rekha said.

Since the Dom community isn't Hindu, we won't allow them to fetch water, Suraji Sada (Musar), a local said. Other locals too said that as long as their leader doesn't permit the Dom family to fetch water, they wouldn't allow either. Local Administration and Police, however, are still unaware of the problem.

Dr Kamleshwar Sinha, Chief District Officer ,said that if there are such problems, it should be solved.

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