



Transitions In status of Holar Caste Women of Western Maharashtra : A Historical Study

Mr. Umakant Annappa Hattikat
Research Scholar,
Department of History,
Shivaji University, Kolhapur

Abstract: -

The Indian social system is patriarchal or patriarchal in nature. Due to the patriarchal system, the position and status of women in the society is always secondary. Even so, the position and status of women in India is linked to the caste system. Therefore, despite the male-dominated social system, there is a lot of difference in the position and status of women of different castes in India. In Maharashtra, 59 castes have been included in the Scheduled Caste category as directed through the Department of Social Justice. Accordingly, in the Scheduled Caste category list the 'Holar or Vhalar' caste found on 26th number and this is a very important caste. According to the census report of 2011, their total population of Holar Caste is found to be 1,08,908. A historical survey has been taken through this research article regarding the exact transitions of women status of Holar community in Western Maharashtra during the pre and post-independence period.

Key words :-

Census, Sex Ratio, Scheduled Caste Category, Holar or Vhalar

Introduction

After examining the Indian census report, it is observed that the population ratio of women is decreasing day by day as compared to men. The total sex ratio Holar Community of Scheduled Caste was very high. According to the 1961 Indian census, the sex ratio is as follows. Accordingly, Mahar-968, Mang-962, Chambhar-964, Bhangi-855, Dhor-937 and Holar-980 are found.”¹ According to the census report of 2011, the total population of Holar community is 1,08,908 out of which total male population is 55,491 and female population is 53,417. (Ref :-2011 Population Census Report) An important reason for the higher sex ratio of women in the Holar community is that there is not much distinction between girls and boys and in

the past, even if it was considered inauspicious or a little sad for a girl child to be born, she was not ridiculed.

Position of women

The position of women in society was based on caste. The position of the caste in which the woman belongs in the society is the same, the family position of the woman is secondary like in other societies. As patriarchal system is the hallmark of Indian society, men always find themselves in the first position. As a result, due to the related system, the women of the Holar society have got a secondary position during that time. Although the social position of women in Holar society is secondary, she always has an important place in family life. As the traditional occupation of the Holar community was Musician, it was seasonal in nature. The reward for Musician service was very meager. Apart from that, due to the lack of self-owned land, agricultural labor was also in very low wage. At the same time, most of the Holar community was prone to addiction. Therefore, poverty was mostly found in Holar community. In order to maintain the economic balance, women also had no choice but to work. The women of the Holar community used to do the cooking, child rearing along with agricultural labour, collecting cow dung and other household chores. In those days, she used to get a meager amount of 5 to 6 rupees in exchange for farm labour. Women are given great importance in social and religious occasions.² In the post-independence period, the Hindu Inheritance Act of 1956 has given women equal rights in property in terms of family.³ In the Holar community of western Maharashtra, radical changes have taken place in the family position of women. In terms of women's empowerment in the post-independence period, the protection provided by Indian laws and the positive policies adopted by the government for the advancement of women, apart from the radical decision of free education for women, the educational development of women found more or less found in every community. Due to educational progress, the traditional exploitative mentality of women has changed and women have started coming to the streets for their demand and rights. These related issues have also affected the women of the Holar community in western Maharashtra. Holar community leader Ms. Nirmala Bavikar during an informal discussion, she expressed her thoughts about the exact changes that took place in the post-independence period among the women of the Holar community in Western Maharashtra. According to her, earlier the women of the Holar society lived a narrow mindset life in accordance with the established social order. Her life was limited to 'hearth and child'. But in the current situation women of Holar community have started learning. They have started becoming active participation in politics and social causes. But this

quantity is found to be minimum. There is a need to make the women of the Holar community aware of their rights and for that effective organization and social, political and educational awareness is intended through that. The traditional mentality of the society and social constraints are the important factors that hinder the progress of women in the Holar society. Various organizations of the Holar community are working for women's rights but they also lack female leadership. Connecting the women of the Holar community of rural western Maharashtra with politics and social cause movement appears to be the main challenge. But it was observed that there is a continuous positive change.⁴ In an informal discussion with social activist Neeta Awate, the social status of holar society women in Western Maharashtra society was reviewed. According to her, the status of women was very poor during the pre-independence era. At that time, the practices of purity and impurity of women existed in society at large. Earlier the women of the Holar community were tied to the yoke of social bonds. In it, *Shivata-Shivati* had to be observed during menstruation. During the intervening four to five days, she was kept isolated or separated and food prepared by her hands was also forbidden during that time. However, although there has been flexibility in the practice over time, it has not been destroyed. The practice of Jogatin and the practice of keeping Jata is still found in the society. In urban areas women are found to be more in education stream as compared to rural areas. Majority of the population of Holar community is found in rural areas. As a result, majority of the female population is also located in rural areas. Due to the traditional mentality of the rural social system, poverty, lack of education, etc., various undesirable practices associated with women still exist in the Holar community. Even though the law has given an egalitarian perspective in the social position of women, it is not found to be implemented in the rural villages. The Holar Samaj practitioners and organizations working in Western Maharashtra need to create awareness among them.⁵

Although the Holar community in western Maharashtra is an important community in rural villages, it is neglected by the established system. The Holar community, who have been traditionally engaged in the business of Musician, earn their livelihood by serving Musician in the Gavgada. Since music is an integral part of cultural life, the Holar community is also the direct bearer of various cultural folk arts in the village. Among them Jogatin practice is mainly a folk art. The Jogatin practice was prevalent in the Holar community of western Maharashtra in the past. According to Mr. Namdev Aiwale, the Jogatin practice is found to exist even today in the Holar community mostly in the rural areas.⁶ According to Dr. Somnath Kadam, "Jogtin is a woman with a 'Jag' (Pardi) on her head, with a *bhandara-vibhuti* on her forehead. She begs for alms by singing

songs of the goddess and accompanying her by playing the jogti chundake.⁷ The Jogatin of the Holar community earns her living by singing the praises of Yallama Devi from village to village or begging for alms. According to Mangal Bhandge, the worshiped deity of the Jogtins of most of the Holar communities in Solapur and Sangli districts of western Maharashtra is Adishakti Yallama of Jat taluka in Sangli district.⁸ The Holar community was largely illiterate during the pre-independence period. Therefore, superstitions and superstitions existed in the society to a large extent. An important reason for leaving Jogatin or Jogata is the great faith of the Holar community on God. The practice of Jogi or Jogatin is faithfully practiced in the Holar community of Western Maharashtra in the past and still to some extent in order to get rid of the great troubles that have come to the house, if the family does not have a baby boy in the house, by asking the vow that the first or subsequent child will be given to the goddess. In the post-independence period, the respective practice has largely reduced, but it is not found to have been destroyed. During the actual site visit, it was observed that this practice is widespread in Solapur, Sangli area of Western Maharashtra, which is located in the Karnataka – Maharashtra border region. According to Prof. Dr. Bira Parse, “In the villages of Solapur and Sangli districts bordering Karnataka, social and educational backwardness, traditional mentality and lack of reformist outlook are mostly attributed to radical causes.”⁹

Conclusion :-

The women of the Holar community of Western Maharashtra are meant to adopt a scientific and reformist approach and basically it is mandatory for women to come in the stream of education. Apart from that, it would be a conjecture to say that their traditionalist mentality cannot be broken. Through education, their traditional mentality can be left behind and move towards modernity. For that, it is very important to create social awareness and enlightenment through the social organizations working for the upliftment of the Holar society in Western Maharashtra and the accomplished women of the society.

References and Footnotes :-

1. Kulkarni B. A., “Census of India-1961”, Vol-X, Maharashtra part V-A, scheduled castes and scheduled tribes in Maharashtra – Tables”, Government central press, Bombay, 1964, page no. 34.
2. Bhanu B. V. (ed.), People of India: Maharashtra, Part II, Popular Publication, Mumbai, 2000, page No 816.
3. Ramalinga Kumbhar, Dhandola : Free Publishing House of Indian Potters, Kolhapur 2009, p. No. 218.
4. Informal discussion. Mrs. Nirmala Bavikar, Mr. Po. Bavi T. Madha, Dist. Solapur, Dt. 26/08/2018
Time- 11.12 AM
5. Informal discussion. Nita Awte, Res. Pune, Dt. 26/08/2018 Time- 09.12 AM
6. Interview Shri. Namdev Aiwale Res. Nazre Tal. Sangola, Dist. Solapur. Date 30/04/2019 Time-9.00 AM
7. Dr. Somnath Kadam, “History of Matang Samaj”, Aruna Publications, Latur, First Edition, 2015, Page no. 162.
8. Informal discussion Mangal Bhandage, (age-59 years), Md. Po. Bhalwani, Mangalvedha, Dist. Solapur, Dt. 02/05/2019, Time- 9.00 AM in the morning
9. Informal Discussion – Prof. Dr. Bira Parse, Res. Barshi, Barshi, Dist. Solapur, Date 25/08/2018 : 12:00 PM.