

SOCIO- ECONOMIC STATUS OF HARANSHIKARI (A DENOTIFIED TRIBE) WIDOWS IN SETTLEMENT AREA OF BAGALKOT CITY



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Abstract:-

In male dominated societies of the world women have been subjected to gruesome atrocities that has affected them physically, emotionally, sexually and morally. Particularly, if a woman is facing the unfortunate state of widowhood in a patriarchal society like India, she is being considered as a social stigma. They are excluded culturally, socially, economically and legally. At one hand they lost their husband and at the other hand they have to face discrimination of various kind and degree. In context of this line of thought, the present paper is an earnest attempt to describe the vulnerability of widows in Haranshikari community of Bagalkot city. The paper concludes by advocating an urgent need for policy intervention for positive

inclusion of this largely excluded section of the society.

Keywords:

Socio- Economic status , settlement area , emotionally, sexually and morally.



INTRODUCTION

Widows are more than victims; they are mothers, caregivers and heads of households. Widows of all ages and their children should be treated as full and equal citizens and their rights should be protected. National laws and policies should be guided by the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Though women today are being increasingly recognised as important, powerful and meaningful contributors towards the socio-economic development of a nation but countless women continue to be the victims of torture, violence and large scale deprivation, amongst them the condition of widows is quite thought provoking. Again, as widowhood is viewed from the perspectives of religion, custom and faith, many a times it is found that a Hindu widow with upper caste withstands a lot of torture, agony and multiple deprivations in the sphere of food, clothing, fashion, taste, preference and aptitude and financial security.

Widows are socially disadvantaged sections in any society. Faces several social, economic, emotional and cultural deprivations. A serious lack of public concern and adequate information is not available. Research studies are also scanty. Very little substantive as well as technical work on widowhood, divorce and remarriages has been done so far. In India, where, remarriages and the socio economic status of widows are low, a clear understanding of the trend over time and the current situation of widows in various parts of the country is required.

The concerns of widows cannot be dissociated from those of other single women, or indeed from those of women in general. Widows do experience special difficulties and deprivations, convicted, inter alia, with the restrictions that are imposed on their lifestyle and the persistence of negative social attitudes towards them. In the context of social science research, it is right to give attention to widowhood as a particular cause of deprivation. And, in the context of social action, it is right to organise and support widows in their specific demands (e.g., relating to pensions, property rights and other entitlements). But this does not mean that action has to take the form of working for or with widows in isolation from other women.

Widowhood in India is often described as a definitive and tragic moment in a woman's life—one in which her identity is stripped away with the death of her husband. As early as the second century BCE, the Laws of Manu, an influential text in Hindu scripture, had created a set of structured gender relations in the Brahmin caste. Included in the text are the statutes that a widow must remove all excess adornments, observe fasts, eat limited meals each day, forgo hot foods, replace the red sindoor on her forehead with ash from her husband's funeral pyre, and observe tonsure. The same text also pronounces that a woman who is widowed cannot remarry. The ideal Hindu widow remains with her in-laws—a result of the patrilocal system of marriage in most of India—embodying this state of holy asceticism. This system of marriage places women in a situation of vulnerability after their husband's death, particularly if they do not earn income: they can neither reintegrate with their parental family, nor do they necessarily receive adequate support to live contentedly in their husband's village.

Concept of widow: Mukesh Ahuja defines a widow as “one who has no issue and who has been widowed one or two years of her marriage or she may be one who becomes a widow after a period of five to ten years and has one or two small children to support or she may be one who is above 50 years of age.

Widowhood is a crisis in a woman's life, involving new social adjustment for the family as well as for her. The life of the women whose husband dies while she is alive has been institutionally made miserable by the norms of patriarchy. She faces emotional trauma, familial exploitation and social stigma. She has to adjust with in-laws, find some job for supporting her young children, adjust with sons and daughters-in-law, and has to face the male gaze seductive overtones and even molestation attempts.

Problems of widows came to be regarded as inauspicious and had to suffer great disabilities. Many widows committed 'Sati' voluntarily to avoid inhuman sufferings at the hands of their relations including sons. They did not receive any sympathy from society.

The greatest danger that can overtake a woman is widowhood, says Ramayana. Within twelve days of widowhood, the sindoor and bindi in her forehead are smudged, her bangles, nose-ring, the coloured sari and mangalasutra removed. Her long black tresses are cropped short. Among the orthodox Brahmin widows, in the south, they must shave their heads. A white sari will replace her coloured one. A widow is ill-omen. She is not allowed to attend marriages in some villages in the south. A prostitute is given a higher status in our society than a widow. The differing forms that violence against widows takes are known. Yet there is astonishingly very little data available. The fact that they do not appear in statistics is: “not attributable solely to technical difficulties, it reflects, above all the lack of interest and consideration from which they suffer, as a result of which they do not yet enjoy the fundamental right to be included correctly in censuses.

According to 2001 census 6.9% of women in India are widows.

Every fourth household in India has a widow.

45 million women are widows. The numbers are only increasing due to armed conflicts, natural disasters, communal riots and the traditional marriage patterns.

Only 28% of widows are eligible for pension; only 11% actually receive it.

40 million widows are without pension.

Haranshikari Widows in Bagalkot city settlement area :

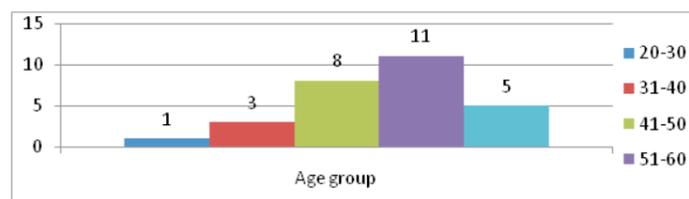
In 1876 settlement area was established in Bagalkot city (Karnataka state) by British government for the criminal tribes of this part. This settlement area was meant for four communities. Haranshikari community is one among them. Haranshikari community is one of the denotified tribe of north Karnataka.

According to the survey there are 28 widows among 168 Haranshikari families living in the settlement area of Bagalkot city and all 28 widows information were collected by the researcher.

This section provides data analysis on the profile of Haranshikari widows living in settlement area of Bagalkot city and it covers the details of their age, educational status, income, occupation etc.

1)Age wise classification of widows

20-30 years	31-40 years	41-50 years	51-60 years	> 61 years	Total
1	3	8	11	5	28



Age wise classification of widows: This section divides the widows into three groups based on their age – young (upto 40 years), middle aged (from 40 to 59 years), and old (from 60 and above years). The widows in the age group of below 40 years are treated as ‘young’, the widows in the age group of 40-59 years are treated as ‘middle aged’ and the widows in the age group of 60 years and above are treated as ‘old’. The present minimum age of the widow is 20 years and the maximum age is 81 years.

It is clear from the table that middle aged widows constitute the highest number at 19 out of 28 followed by old (5) and young (4) widows. The young widows constitute 14.28 % and are in active reproductive age group. The middle aged and young widows together called as economically active women and hence they are able to earn for their livelihood on their own, if there are opportunities. The old widows constitute 17.8 % and they are the dependants on others, because their age does not permit them to participate actively in income earning activities.

2)Age at marriage

5 – 10 years	11 – 20 years	Total
07	21	28

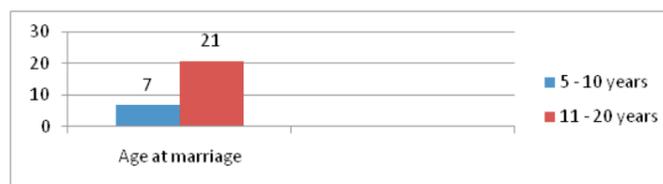
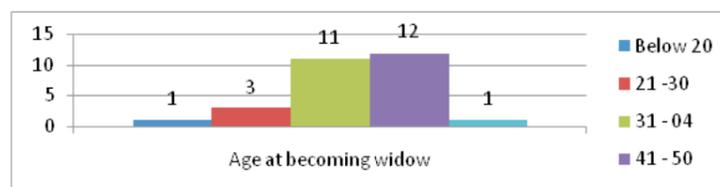


Table shows that 75% widows were married below 20 years. 25% of widows were married in their child hood. It shows that early marriage is very common in Haranshikeri community. Child marriages might be the possible reason for this early widowhood.

3)Age of widow at the time of her husband expired

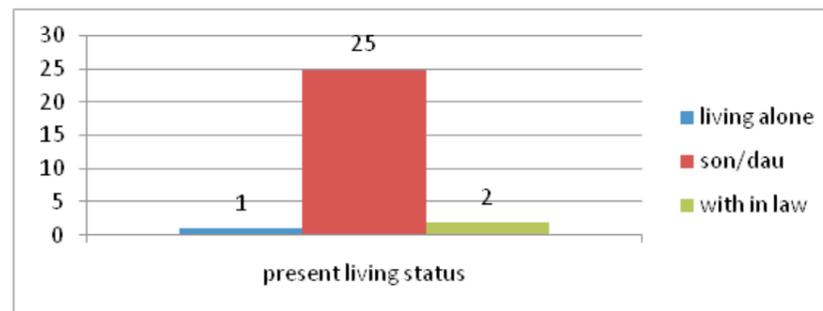
Below 20 years	21 – 30 years	31 – 40 years	41 – 50 years	Above 51 years	Total
1	3	11	12	1	28



It is clear from the table that majority of widows (more than 53%) have become widows while they were in the active reproductive age group, i.e., below 40 years of age. Since the average life span of an Indian is more than 55 years even during 1980s and 1990s, it can be presumed that the child marriages might be the possible reason for this early widowhood. Further, the society doesn't allow remarriages of widows in India, particularly in Hindu religion and this might be another reason for prevalence of more number of young widows.

4) Living status of the widows at present

Living alone	With son/ daughter	With in law	Total
1	25	2	28



Possession of children: The possession of children – sons and daughters – has been considered as symbol of motherhood and it is considered as an asset in most of the cases in Indian society. The general feeling is that children will not exclude widow mother from the family as against the in-laws. It is clear from Table that more than 85% of widows have possess sons and daughters and this might be the reason for widows living with children.

5) Level of education among the widows

Illiterate	Primary	Total
26	2	28

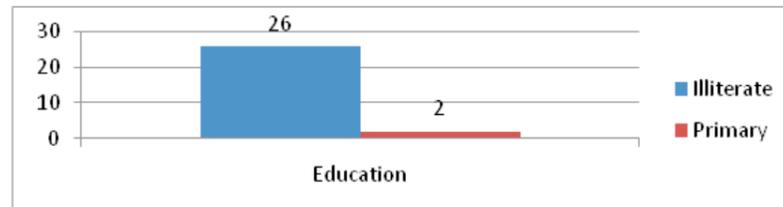
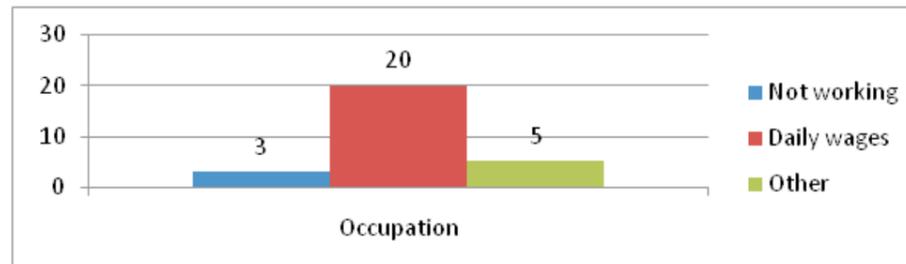


Table shows that the level of education is very much poor among the widows of Haranshikari community. It is clear from the table that 92% of the widows are illiterate, only 8% have completed primary education, This situation indicate that majority of the widows does not have minimum education to understand the present day modern economic and social life of the human beings. Therefore, it can be inferred that the sample widows does not have minimum knowledge to live independently a comfortable life and they have to face the problems in modern society. Lack of education is their main weakness.

6) Occupation

Not working	Daily wages	Other	Total
3	20	5	28



It is clear from the table and graph that daily wages workers are the highest number followed by workers in other field in that order. This distribution of widows based on their works indicate that they have been involved not only in lower income generating occupations, but also in insecure occupations. There is no guarantee that they will have continuous secured employment and income in these occupations throughout the year. Therefore, there is a need for look into their incomes from these occupations in order to assess their standard of living. 10% of widows are not working because of their age factors.

7) Monthly income

<1000 Rs	Rs 1000 – 2000	Rs 2000 – 3000	Total Rs
5	15	8	28



Distribution of the widows based on their monthly income In this section, the study considered that monthly income of Rs.1000 and Rs.2000 as poverty lines respectively for the poorest of the poor and BPL widows in Haranshikari community. It is clear from the table that about 17% of the widows earn less than Rs.1000 per month and hence they are considered as the poorest among the poor. Similarly, it is observed that more than 53% of widows earn less than Rs.2000 per month and hence they are considered as poor.

CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction The Following are the conclusion & recommendations, which have been drawn from the results of the interviews & interactions with the widow / key personnel and field observations by the researcher.

The general awareness for the physical and mental well-being of widows will greatly improve the image of widows. A special scheme for the socio-economic upliftment of widows should be set up. The status and rights of widows could be promoted and raised when their economic rehabilitation is made possible.

The analysis on the daily incomes of widows concludes that most of the widows involved in daily wage labour activities are in the poorest income group. On the other hand, little number of the widows involved in other works like collecting plastic from garbage. Therefore, there is need for providing self-employment opportunities or employment in the organised sector to the widows in order to empower them. Hence the specific measures/ strategies to be carried out/ implemented by those concerned are scripted below:

Provide financial assistance for establishing community based aid centres and rehabilitation centres for the widows • Provide reservation for educated widows in Government jobs. Sponsor location specific studies for designing appropriate programmes for the welfare of the widows. State Government Introduce special loans and schemes for widows. NGOs Organize a series of awareness programmes for building up their confidence, Conduct vocational training programmes for the widows.

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