



AboutUs: <http://www.the-criterion.com/about/>

Archive: <http://www.the-criterion.com/archive/>

ContactUs: <http://www.the-criterion.com/contact/>

EditorialBoard: <http://www.the-criterion.com/editorial-board/>

Submission: <http://www.the-criterion.com/submission/>

FAQ: <http://www.the-criterion.com/fa/>



ISSN 2278-9529
Galaxy: International Multidisciplinary Research Journal
www.galaxyimrj.com

Social Status of Women in Jammu Region: As Described in Folk Literature (18th To 19th Century)

Anuradha Choudhary

Assistant Professor,
Dept. of History,
Govt. Degree College Bishnah,
Jammu (Jammu and Kashmir) India.

Article History: Submitted-31/01/2020, Revised-26/02/2020, Accepted-27/02/2020, Published-29/02/2020.

Abstract:

The human society is a continuous and complex institution. It carries through its evolution all the products and by products of every age and evolutionary stage. The result is that every society possesses the beliefs and traits of the by-gone ages, along with the characteristics of the present in our hill society also the same social atmosphere prevails. The status of women in our society has undergone various changes from time to time and with the change of rulers. Although, efforts have been made in the past as well as in the modern society to confer equal status to the women, yet in certain parts and regions of our country and in our state, the position of a women in the society is not at par with that of man and the birth of the girl child is still considered to be a curse. Our aim is to find the roots of most of the ill- thinking and social evils related to women which are still persisting in the Jammu region.

Keywords: girl child, Jammu, men, social evils, society, status, women.

Introduction

The present work is undertaken in the light of the fact that there is hardly any literature available to throw light on the life of women of Jammu region highlighting their socio-economic and cultural aspects. Jammu region continued to be dominated by the Dogra rulers and as a consequence the whole region was influenced by the Dogra culture. The history of the position and status of women is of vital importance for knowing any culture or civilization. It is pertinent to mention that till date no endeavour has been made to ascertain the position of the women- folk in the Dogra society, which is spread over a wide region.

The changing social set up is so imperceptible that it is hardly noticeable at a particular point of time, and has therefore to be gleaned from the ballads, folk songs, archaeological remains and other objects bearing some information about the past of any part of human society.

Position of women as described in folk literature

According to Encyclopedia Britannica “the ballad is a short narrative folk song.” In dogri we have a number of ballads of which most of them are now available only in fragmentary form and only a few are full-length composition. Dogri ballads are distinguished by two separate terms- Baran and Karakan. The ballad type which comprised memorial verses are called Karakan and held sacred to the memory of certain saints and martyrs.

Woman’s married life as described in Baras:

The life of a married woman seems to be full of hardships and inconveniences as marriage took place at an early age. The young bride, because of being inexperienced in domestic work, was usually derided hard by the mother-in-law. Mother-in-law’s cruelty towards daughter-in-law is not only proverbial but unfortunately actual in the Duggar society. Mother-in-law’s cruelty towards bride sometimes led to unhappy incidents.

One of the Baras mentioned these circumstances: the mother-in-law’s cruelty led to murder of daughter-in-law. First she ill-treated the daughter-in-law, Bua Amro.

“kanay ,bolli laye sasun nay
kanay chand takai”

She also taunted Amro

“kamm nein tukey karnay pabey,
Paijan pukki pakaie
Kaney dain khua loaie “

This outrageous ill-treatment compelled the daughter-in-law to retort so that the mother-in-law was out of senses with rage, pushed the young bride into the large ukhal and pounded her head into pulp with the pestel.

Woman-man relations: As described in folk ballads

In the Dogra ballads love sentiments are narrated in somewhat suppressed form as compared to those of the neighbouring Punjab where folk –songs and ballads abound in exuberance of such sentiments no doubt love has strongest appeal in the life of an individual and enjoys ascendance over all other feelings. Love often preaches revolt against the ancient and Dogras by their outlook and social submissiveness was not capable of that transgression. Among the few indigenous ballads of the Dogra delving on man-woman relations the ballads of sunni and bukhu is popular in the Chenab valley. They belonged to the gaddi caste living in the same village. In early age the boy and girl used to graze cattle together and developed deep love for each other. Their mutual attachment to each other grew stronger as they grow young. However, when the fact of their love became known to the people they were looked upon by the village community. Once when the river was in spate a mischievous boy misinformed bukhu that sunni had been drowned. There upon bukhu jumped into the flood and was washed away. When sunni learnt of this incident she also jumped into the river and was drowned. This ballad is popular among the gaddi people even today.

So the types of society and the social thought and the cultural picture cannot be taken to belong to the time and age of the actual happening.

Custom of sati as described in Dogra folk ballads

The most pathetic as well as heroic element of social history in the duggar region has been the performance of sati which was a common tradition among all classes of Dogras. The dogra being a martial community was used to the tradition of sati since their known history. The heroic death of soldiers, generals and rulers was a common occurrence in this region .the spouses of these heroic soldiers, chiefs and rulers invariably committed sati and in most of such cases their memorials in the forms of samadhis and dahries were raised.

The duggar is known for sati-samadhis and hardly there will be a village without stories of some satis who lived in the past. Such satis preferred to remain unknown and some of these are being worshipped only by their families and have been relegated to the status of families' deities. But some of the satis immolated themselves after great events. The most of the common recurring event of the duggar was performance of sati on the death of a husband or a son and it is natural that a large number of bars should have been composed landing these satis.

The sati bars which have been remained popular and still exist have been woven around violent incident which prove the fact that satis were usually performed in the spree of sudden emotions. Usual to such violent deaths satis took place, women performed satis not only for their husbands but equally fervently for their sons. In the case of bawa jitto, his minor daughter bua kauri became sati on the pyre of her father. It is therefore not only the fidelity of a wife which drove Dogra women to perform sati, but it was the deeper emotion under the situation and the great affection which induced women to become sati for their blood relations. There is another authentic event of this nature which shows the force of an emotional situation. This was dati Lado's sati incident. The girl had been betrothed to Balla, a Brahman of Prabha village, when Bhalla came to celebrate the marriage party, some enemies of Lado's family killed the bridegroom outside the village. When the girl Lado, who had not yet been ritually married, learnt of this tragic news, she could not control the human emotion which surged in her and she burnt herself alongwith Balla's dead body and became sati. The situation was highly moving and naturally people were driven to raise a memorial for both of them. This unusual incident was told and retold till same Jogis composed their bar.

The ballad of dati tripta, who was the wife of a Brahman minister of Raja Raipur, is also full of a great emotional situation. Raja Raipur was the ruler of the principality of Ambaran. His Brahman minister went to his in-law's house accompanied by his wife. In his absence the courtiers poisoned the ears of the raja against the minister. On his return the minister learned the whole situation and came to know about the displeasure of the raja against him. When he was about to leave for the court he asked his wife to perform sati if the raja would kill him. When he reached the darbar he succeeded in clearing all the doubts of the raja and the raja was pleased with him. But at that time some horses shift and tumult arose there causing much confusion. The wife of the Brahman minister thinks it as a signal for the death of her husband and set her house on fire and threw herself in the flames. In this way she obeyed the command of her husband. The event aroused the sympathy and veneration of the royal house and common people and dati tripta began to be worshipped by the ruling families. This ballad also shows men's superiority over their wives and fidelity of women towards their men folk.

The events which led to suicide or self immolation were of the nature of ill-treatment or disgrace caused by the relatives or compulsion under social conditions.

The element of murder

There are a few ballads which narrates the events of the murder of wives by their husbands. One of such ballads is that of a woman Seoti was killed by her husband. Her husband named Kiker Singh was a soldier in Maharaja Gulab Singh's army and was posted at Gilgit. A mischievous person wrote him a letter imputing false blame of adultery against his wife. Kiker Singh wretched with rage and when he found opportunity to return to his house he killed his wife on his first occasion. Later on the truth was revealed to him and he was very sorry for killing his innocent wife. A Samadhi was raised in her name at the spot where she was killed and she became an object of worship.

The ballads on sati, suicide and murder have shown that samadhis and thans were constructed in reverence to the deceased. The departed souls were usually worshiped there. This was done probably to pacify the wrath of the departed soul who might have uttered curses under the circumstances. The people of the duggar in general seem to have been afraid of the evil spirits and their power to do immense harm to the people. They also seem to have believed that the raising of thans and dehries for the departed soul could serve as security against the evils which such spirits could cause. Particularly, it was done in the case of those who were ill-treated and compelled to perform sati or commit suicide or were violently murdered. In the case of noble persons who scarified their lives for a noble cause or for the welfare of the people temples and samadhis were raised out of reverence for them. Such persons were not only worshiped but their names and deeds were perpetuated in bars and karaks which were framed by the jogis and bards.

Conclusion

The irresistible conclusion one comes after peeping through the social, political, economic, art and literature as prevalent in Dogra society in the medieval period is that whatever the region the woeful tale of the woman in all spheres of life has been almost identical with minor discrepancies with the end of the child-hood and advent of the adulthood the most important aspect of life, especially of the woman-folk is marriage. The longest spell in the life of a woman is her married life. This would of course be included in the treatment of the bride, wives status in relation to husband, apotheosis of the mother, marital ideal place before the couple, husband's slacker in following the married life. As part from her family affairs, the status of woman in public, religion and her proprietary rights i.e. inheritance, and of course the most

important aspect of the woman which one can't forget to talk of when one talks of women, is the dress and ornaments. The most important aspect of the study about women is as to what is the general attitude of the society about the woman. The role of the women in all spheres of life was basically dependent upon the requirements and whims of man. We have seen that the women of the Dogra society in the period during study were under an obligation to perform an evil forced on the women named sati and it would become apparent that this evil was encouraged by the men folk as this was considered as a sign of social status of the family as well as of the husband. On one hand the number of women committed sati considered as social status for husband and another reason as that the young women who were widowed may not lead adulterous life. The root cause of this male dominance over the women and further her plight was lack of education to the women folk.

The condition of the women started improving with 18th to 19th centuries; Mughal emperor Jahangir too prohibited the immolation of Muslim women, intermarried age between Hindu and Muslim. Although, the woman was started to be treated as an equal but yet was not considered to be identical to men. However, the womenfolk were elated over their improved status in the society. The most enviable position of our region was that of a wife the true consort of a man in every respect.

‘a home without a housewife is a desert and man without a wife though rich and prosperous is as powerless as a poor man.’

The performance of religious rites was not possible unless a man is accompanied with his wife. Above all a woman in the capacity of a wife is to become the creator, the very basis of world's existence. She also regards as the better half of a man. At last presenting the ideas of Gandhiji to whom – ‘man and woman are of equal rank, but they are not identical. They are a peerless pair, being supplementary to another, each helps the other so that without the one the existence of other cannot be conceived and therefore, it follows as a necessary corollary from these facts that anything will impair the status of either of them will involve the equal ruin of them both.’

Works Cited:

A.S. Altekar, ‘The Position of Women in Hindu Civilization’ Delhi, 1978 pp.3.

L.K. Tripathi, ‘Position and Status of Women in Ancient India Varanasi, 1992 pp-77

Diwan Kirparam's 'Gulabnama', Delhi 1977, pp.104

Encyclopaedia Britannica, volume 9, 1768 pp 520

Gadagal, Surinder, 'Murh Block Dey Shaheed', Dogri Sanstha, Jammu, 1977 pp. 54

Dogri Shiraza 60, April-May 1981, pp.11-12

Prabakar, Sansar Chand, Dogri Shiraza, 79, 1984, academy of art, culture and languages, Jammu, pp.2-15

Nirmohi Shiv, 'Duggar Key Lokgathain,' Radhakrishna Anand and Company, Jammu 1982 pp.161-162

Nirmohi Shiv, Jammu, 1982 pp. 159-161

Shastri, Ramnath, 'Dogri Lokgeet', Dogri Sanstha Jammu, 1968, pp. 3-12

Goswami, Om, 'Dugger Key Kul Devta', Hamara Sahitya, 1980, academy of art, culture and languages, Jammu pp.33

Frederic Drew, The Jammu and Kashmir Territories (Reprint in Delhi, 1971)

Bingley, Cunningham and Charak, Introduction to the History and Culture of the Dogras,76-78.

Jammu Archives, Old Persian Records, file no. 215/a of 1961, 1-3

Sanjit Kumar Khajuria, 'Social Evils among Hindus in Jammu Region' (1800-1947) unpublished M.Phil Dissertation University of Jammu. 1985

S.D.S Charak, 'History and Culture of Himalayan States' Volume 4 pp. 136

Bahadur K.P. 'History, Caste and Culture of Rajputs', ESS Publications Delhi 1978 p. 182-183.

Pathik, J, Cultural Heritage of the Dogras, p. 126.

Ganesh Das Badehra's 'Rajdarshani' pp. 169

Sureshta, 'Social-Cultural Aspects of Ballads of Jammu- Kangra Region,' a PhD Thesis , University of Jammu 1991.