

The Role of Women in Traditional Institution among the Jamatia of Tripura.

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ABSTRACT: *The Jamatiatribe constitutes the third largest tribe of Tripura. The Jamatia tribe has their own customs, traditions and rules regarding succession, marriage, descent, etc. The Jamatiaare patrilineal. Jamatiaais a tribe of Tripura, having distinct feature of Mongoloid Origin. Their language is KoK-Borok, which is a language of Tibeto-Burman family. This paper attempts to study the role of women in the traditional institution among the Jamatiaof Tripura. According to Crook (2005), a traditional institution refers to all those forms of social and political authority which have their historical origin in the pre-colonial states and societies. Women in the Jamatiacommunity were confined to the four walls of the house. Women are treated as non-permanent member of the society. Women on the other hand were left to the background. With the arrival of the adult franchise they were given a platform where they were able to raise their voice and participate in decision making. Therefore, this paper tries to give a glimpse of the role of women played in the traditional institution and its changes due to influence of modern developments.*

KEYWORDS: *Traditional Institution, Jamatia, Status of women, Political Status, religious status.*

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I. INTRODUCTION:

Traditional institution may be difficult to define and categorize it into social, cultural, political and economic institutions since tradition in any given society is a composite whole of it (Synniang, 2010). Traditional institution is synonymous to traditional leadership which is defined as including “those political, socio-political and politico-religious structures that are rooted in the pre-colonial period, rather than in the creations of the colonial and post-colonial states. Traditional leaders can include kings, other aristocrats holding offices, heads of extended families, and office holders in decentralized polities, as long as their offices are rooted in pre-colonial states and other political entities” (Ray, 2003: 2). In traditional institution men played an important role in decision making in the society.

According to Debbarma (1986:22), “from the etymon ‘Jamati’- which in Bengali or Urdu means assemblage- the tribe name ‘Jamatia’ is supposed to have been derived”. The Jamatias were one of the pure branches of the Tripuris. They were in the ancient period, predominant in the army of Tripura (Singha). According to other opinion Jamatia is conjugation of two Kokborok words, 'Jama,' means tax and 'twiya' means no need to pay any tax. It is fact that the men of this clan were used to engaged in Tripura royal force as soldier by the kings of Tripura during the rule of Manikya Dynasty.

JamatiaHoda is a community base institution; it is a traditional institution which has no written record it is passed down in the form of oral tradition. The JamatiaHoda system shows the co-existences between the age-old tradition and modern democracy among the Jamatias. The Hoda is the apex socio-administrative institution of the Jamatia Community. It is also the supreme council of the Jamatia Community. It is independent, impartial, non-political, social Organization, which determines the social custom and practice of all religious rite of the community. The supreme head of the Jamatia is known as Hoda Okra. The post in Hoda Okra is not hereditary; they are selected by the people of the community. The structure of JamatiaHoda is a three-tier system. At the lowest level is the luku (village level), intermediary level is moyal (regional level) and at the apex is the Hoda. The JamatiaHoda work to ensure justice, peace, discipline and overall development of the community at all level (Jamatia, 2007).

II. MATERIALS AND METHODS USED:

The study was both qualitative and quantitative methods. The village survey was used to collect quantitative data. Data has been collected from the field sites that represent the three tiers of the JamatiaHoda. Observation as a tool of data collection is employed. A schedule was also prepared for data collection. Interviews, both structured and non-structured had been carried out with executive members of Hoda as well as the general populace. Fieldwork will also include the key informants interviews and case studies. Fieldwork has been carried out in village called Kuar Kami, district Gomati, Tripura. Mechanical aid was also used such as

camera, tape recorder, etc. Secondary data will be collected from available literature in books, journals, research report, etc.

III. FINDINGS:

In undertaking fieldwork, it has been found that women's participation in the socio-political and religious level is both numerically and substantively insignificant. The reservation quotas for the women's development in the socio-political administration of the JamatiaHoda were pursued to certain extent. Jamatia society is a patriarchal society. The JamatiaHoda works in a three tier system. On the highest level is Hoda, on intermediary level is Moyal, which composite of 18 villages and on the lowest level is the Luku which is a village council. Only married women who is above 35 years of age participate in the traditional institution. The traditional institution among the Jamatiaof Tripura are very much influence by the modern system of adult franchise. Most of the women are seen doing the household chores and the cultivation. Even within the household and outside the family all the decisions are made by the male.

Status of Jamatia Women

The dictionary meaning of the term status is state, condition or standing. In popular parlance, status means the position or rank in relation to others. It may also mean a rank in the hierarchical order. Thus, the word status may have various meanings and it may vary from country to country, people to people, or tribe to tribe. Status depends largely on the qualities or attributes which are considered essential in a particular society. The status of an individual in tribal society, division of labour between the sexes is scrupulously maintained. A status is a position in a social group or grouping in relation to another positions held by individuals in the same group or grouping. The status is a position which is either ascribed or achieved. Ascribed statuses are acquired at birth without regard for individual ability. Achieved statuses are those which are more or less thrown open to competition.

One can speak of the society problems of men without involving the family, but one cannot speak of women, without dealing with their family functions (Mies, 1980). Women's position and status was considerably higher during the early Vedic period than the later periods; but it does not affect the general status picture, for during no historical period did women enjoy equal position or status with men (Lodha, 2003). The statuses of Jamatia women are not equal that of men, but it differ from family to family. However, average of women status are very low then that of women. The status of women is always known by the status of her husband. If man holds high post in the traditional institution then the wife also gets equal respect from the society. The Jamatia society is strictly patriarchal, the system which call "Santai" and therefore, men are more powerful in taking any authoritarian decision. The father as the head of the household occupies the control position in family. Lineage and decent are tried through the father's line and so the society is patrilineal. Women are not eligible for the post of "Chokdri", MoyalSardar or Hoda okra", because women are not well familiar with social rules and regulations (Bhattacharjee, 1983).

In decision making: When it comes to decision-making in society, women have no voice. In all three tier system of JamatiaHoda women participation and decision-making is still negligible. However, with the advancement of education the outlook of people has become broader. However women decision-making in the traditional institution is not encourage. In decision- making man lead the role where as women were left behind. The Jamatia women are not allowed to take part in the decision making of the social gathering, however, decision making within the household differ from family to family.

Economic position of women: The economic position of Jamatia women is at the low level because it is always believed that men are the bread-winners of the family. They are confined to the four walls of their house and do the agricultural activities. Even though the Indian Constitution State that there should be no discrimination to any citizen of India on the base of gender. However, in reality there is discrimination in the payment of labour wages, men are always paid more than women. But generally the position of the Jamatia woman is the same as that of husband's. She is a hard worker and works harder than a man in many respects. But still, her status is recognized by the position of her husband. Usually, the male dominates over the woman. The rule of Jamatia women in the economic area of the family is very important. The Women helps the male members in different agricultural activities such as weeding, transplanting, harvesting etc. and also the Jamatia women spend their whole lives in performing household such as: She prepares food and cleans the house, fetches water and fuel, clean domestic utensils and clothes, weaves their clothes of daily use in their indigenous looms. Also, Jamatias women are collecting fire wood, feeding pigs and poultry and carding cotton and brewing liquor (wine). But they never challenge the superiority of the men. Women also earn money by rearing pigs, brewing rice beer, etc. still their income is never respected as that of men. Whenever the woman wants to spend money on her personal needs she had to seek permission from her husband.

Political Status:

Political participation means not only exercising the right to vote, but also power sharing, co-decision making, co-policy making at all levels of governance of the state. Political participation is broadly defined as being a process through which individual plays a role in political life of his/her society, has the opportunity to take part in deciding what the common goals of that society are and the best way of achieving these goals. Political participation refers to actual participation in these voluntary activities by which members of the society share in the selection of rulers and directly or indirectly in the formulation of public policy. In the olden days women had no share or role in the political and administrative set-up of the Jamatiasociety. Women are not allowed to become village headman or regional head or the Community chief. In olden days not even a member of the Hoda. They are not allowed to attend any kind of meetings which are related with the decision making. However, with the introduction of the adult franchise, women got the opportunity to raise their voice and some of them even become the executive members of the JamatiaHoda. Though, at present women are allowed to attend the meetings and became the member of the Hodabut still their number negligible and their voice are still unheard.

Religious Status:

TheJamatias priest is neither inherited or appointed nor imported any formal training. He is in born and has imbibed himself a divine vision to become a priest. A priest carried out his services through various modes and methods of divination, which are spiritually evolved out of conventions and practices. The process of rituals, ceremonies and sacrifice, which are prescribed by the priest, are generally evolved out of convention and practices throughout the generations. The power and status of a priest is purelyprofession depends on the ability and the knowledge that he gained through his own consistent efforts. In the matter of religious rites the status of a woman is much lower than of a man. The women are prohibited to becoming anOchai (traditional priest) of their community. In some rituals women are not allowed to attend, especially when women are on their menstrual period they are not allowed to enter in the hearth area or any sacred area for women are treated as unholy during this period.

IV. CONCLUSION:

In the olden days women had no share or role in the political and administrative set-up of the Jamatiasociety. Jamatia society being a patriarchal and patrilineal society it is mainly dominated by the men. The main role of the women in the traditional institution is that they have to agree and follow the decision of their partner. The role of women is unseen in the public sphere such as maintaining of the house and no unmarried or widower can hold any position in the JamatiaHoda.

However, with the introduction of the adult franchise, women got the opportunity to raise their voice and some of them even become the executive members of the JamatiaHoda. Even though women are given opportunities in the field of socio-political and religious but they could not utilised it without their male partner. Women always need the help of men they cannot make decision by themselves;it can be in the political sphere or decision making for the family. But with the development in education women are no longer confining to their four walls of house.

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