

Changing Status of Women in Bhalavalikar Gauda Saraswath Brahmin Community: A Sociological Study on Dakshina Kannada District

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Abstract

Change is a universal in nature. In a changing situation, women in the Bhalavalikar Gauda Saraswath Brahmin community are no longer confined to traditional beliefs, but try to maintain a balance between tradition and modernity. Traditionally, women's contribution to the society was limited and controlled by men. However, in the modern society status of women has changed tremendously and is making its greatest impact in the community. The objective of the present study is to highlight the changing status of women in the present society. The present paper examines the changing status of women with respect to four major societal institutions, namely; family, marriage, economy, education, and the political institution. It is based on field survey carried out in four Taluks of Dakshina Kannada district, where the Bhalavalikars are more in number. The study is both qualitative as well as quantitative in nature. By adopting simple random sampling method, 200 respondents were selected for the present study.

Keywords: Change, Bhalavalikar Gauda Saraswath Brahmin community, Simple Random Sampling, Family, Marriage, Education, Economy, Political institution.

INTRODUCTION

The status of women in modern society is undergoing a significant change, moving towards more equality and empowerment, but challenges still exist. Traditionally, women's roles were primarily confined to domestic sector, but modern India witnesses increasing women's participation in education, employment, and politics. The study deals with the analysis of changing status of women among Bhalavalikar Gauda Saraswath Brahmin community. Bhalavalikar Gauda Saraswath Brahmins are a part of the Saraswath Brahmin community, who were believed to have lived on the banks of the River 'Saraswathi' in north western India. It is said that they migrated to Goa through sea routes in search of green pastures in around 700 BCE from North India. But they left Goa when the Portuguese conquered Goa in 1510 due to religious persecution and migrated to Southern Maharashtra in the North, Dakshina Kannada District of Karnataka and Kerala in the South (Pai, 2007). In order to understand the changing

status of the women in Bhalavalikar Gauda Saraswath Brahmin community of Dakshina Kannada district of Karnataka which is under the study, the researcher had gathered data through field survey. The status of women in any society consists of their social roles, access to educational opportunities, healthcare, job opportunities and political participation. Therefore, the changing status of the women in the Bhalavalikar community is measured on the basis of type of family, marital status, inheritance of property, education, occupation and political participation. The basic objective of this paper is to examine the changing role of women in Indian society.

Review of Literature:

Sundari, S.R (2023) in her study said that the changing roles of women in family structures reflect a broader societal shift toward individual autonomy, gender equality and the recognition of women's diverse contributions within the family and beyond. These changes bring about positive implications on women's empowerment, family dynamics, and the promotion of more inclusive and equitable societies.

Shashikala, T (2023) in her study explained how women are an instrumental in bringing about social change in modern India. Earlier, women's role was confined to domestic sector; she was seen only as a homemaker who was confined to cooking, cleaning and looking after their children. Today women along with managing office work, they successfully multitask at home too. Empowering women is a fundamental right of women and is the most effective tool for development of society as well as changing her status in the society.

Vijaya, S. (2024) in his work said that though changing status of women in India reflects tremendous progress in social, economic, and political rights compared to historical periods, challenges such as discrimination and societal expectations still persist. Further, he analysed status of women at two rural and urban levels.

Objective:

To analyse the changing status of women in the Bhalavalikar Gauda Saraswath Brahmin community.

Research Methodology:

Selection of the Study Area:

The present study is about Changing Status of Women in the Bhalavalikar Gauda Saraswath Brahmin community of Dakshina Kannada district. The study has been carried out in four taluks of Dakshina Kannada district, namely Puttur, Sullia, Bantwala and Belthangady. These taluks from the district are chosen due to the fact that higher number of Bhalavalikar population is concentrated in these taluks.

Sample of the Study:

The present study is confined to four taluks of Dakshina Kannada district of Coastal Karnataka. A simple random sampling method is used for selecting the sample from each taluk of the district. The population of the community is higher in number in Sullia, Puttur, Bantwala and Belthangady taluks when comparing to other taluks of Dakshina Kannada district. Therefore 200 respondents have been selected on the basis of simple random sampling. The table below indicates the distribution of sample size of the study.

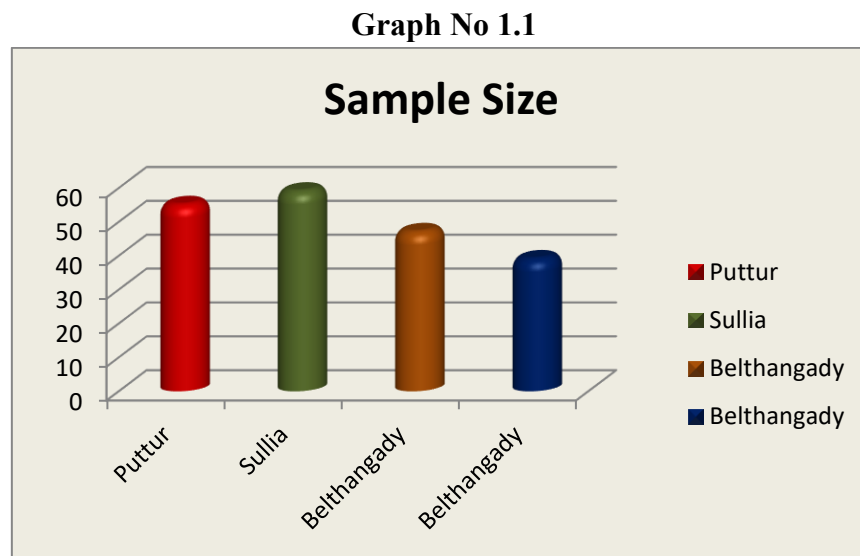
Table No 1.1 SAMPLE SIZE

Sl No	Name of the Taluks selected for the	Sample Selected	Percentage
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	study		
1	Puttur	55	27.5
2	Sullia	59	29.5
3	Belthangady	47	23.5
4	Belthangady	39	19.5
	Total	200	100

Source: Field Survey 2024

The graphical representation of the table is given below.



Graph No. 1.1 shows the sample size of the respondents of four Taluks of Dakshina Kannada district. Out of 200 respondents 55 (27.5%) respondents are selected from the Puttur taluk, 59 (29.5%) from the Sullia taluk, 47 (23.5%) from the Belthangady taluk, and 39 (19.5%) from the Bantwala Taluk.

Tools and Techniques of the Study:

The study includes Primary as well as Secondary sources of data. The structured Interview Schedule is adopted in order to collect data from 200 respondents of the community. The interview schedule contained both closed form and open-ended questions. The data pertaining to changing status of women in the community was gathered from the women members of the household. Secondary data has been gathered from the journals, books, articles and reports.

Discussion:

For the sociological understanding of any community, collecting information about changing status of women is very much essential. In order to understand the changes in the status of women among Bhalavalikar Gauda Saraswath Brahmin community, in the present study different indicators like of structure of family, marital status, inheritance of property, education, occupation and political participation are analysed.

Table 1.2 Age group of the Respondents

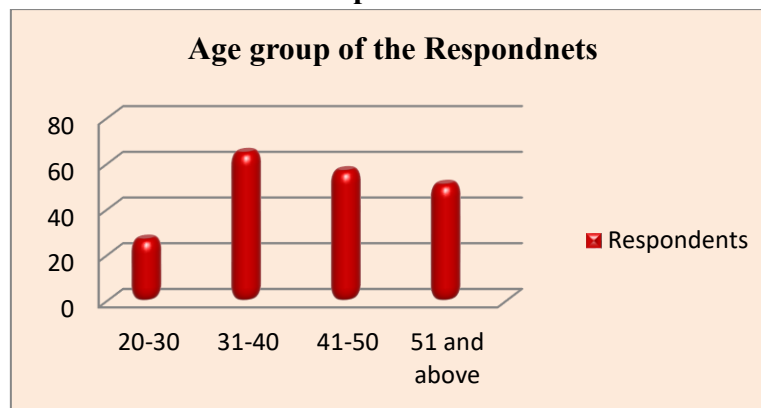
Sl No	Age group	Respondents	Percentage
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1	20-30	27	13.5
2	31-40	65	32.5
3	41-50	57	28.5
4	51 and above	51	25.5
	Total	200	100%

Source : Field Survey 2024

The graphical representation of the above table is given below.

Graph No. 1.2



Graph No.1.2 shows the number of respondents selected for the study on the basis of their age. Out of 200 respondents 27 (13.5%) respondents have been taken from the age group of 20-30 years, 65 (32.5%) respondents have been selected from the age group of 31-40 years, 57 (28.5%) respondents have been selected from the age group of 41-50 years and 51 (25.5%) from the age group of 51 and above years.

Structure of Family:

One of the significant factors which determine the status of women is the type of family where she lives in. Generally, when comparing to nuclear family, women have less decision making power in joint family. This is mainly because of multiple people living together in joint families adhering to the norms of the family. Nuclear family plays a significant role in enhancing the status and power of women within the family. It provides greater mobility, autonomy and privacy when compared to the joint family system.

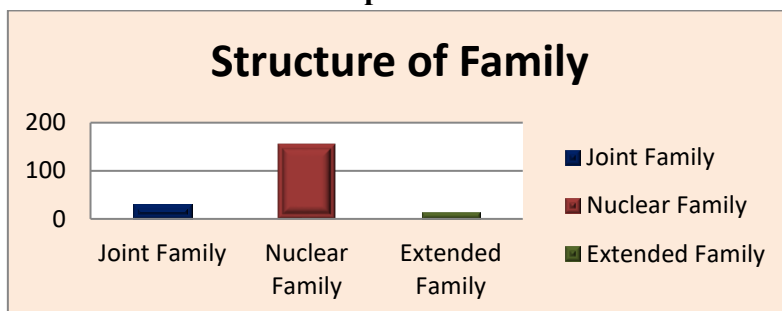
Table 1.3 STRUCTURE OF FAMILY

Sl.No	Family	Respondents	Percentage
1	Joint Family	31	15.5
2	Nuclear Family	155	77.5
3	Extended Family	14	7.0
	Total	200	100

Source: Field Survey 2024

The graphical representation of the above table is given below.

Graph No 1.3



The figure No 1.3 indicates that out of 200 respondents interviewed 31 respondents (15.5%) belong to Joint family. 155 respondents (77.5%) belong to Nuclear family and 14 respondents (7.0%) belong to extended family. The study shows that the majority of Bhalavalikars reside in Nuclear families. In such families, women participate more actively in decision-making and sharing household responsibilities. This rise in nuclear families is the result of urbanisation process, increase in educational and employment opportunities of women in the community which contributed to change in their status.

Marriage System:

The Bhalavalikar Gauda Saraswath Brahmin community practice Monogamous form of marriage. The study shows that many Social evils which are associated with marriage institution like Sati system, child marriage and Dowry Practice have been completely banned in the community. There are no cases of polygamous marriages. The number of widow remarriages and divorces are increasing which shows that there are no restrictions for these practices in the community.

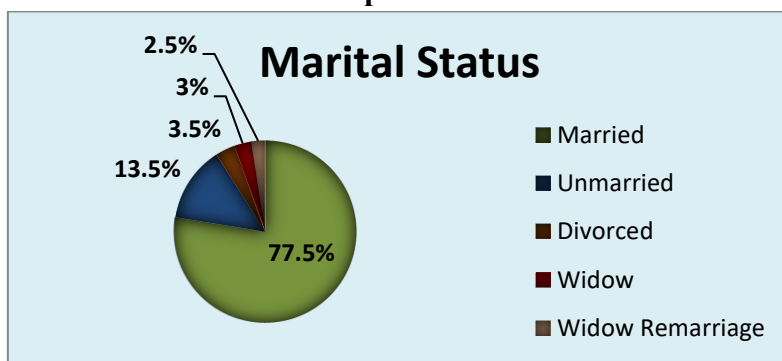
Table No 1.4 MARITAL STATUS

Sl No	Marital Status	Frequency	Percentage
1	Married	155	77.5
2	Unmarried	27	13.5
3	Divorced	07	3.5
4	Widow	06	3.0
5	Widow Remarriage	05	2.5
	Total	200	100

Source: Field Survey 2024

The graphical representation of the above table is given below.

Graph No 1.4



The Graph No. 1.4 gives details of marital status of women in the Bhalavalikar Gauda Saraswath Brahmin community. The study shows that 77.5 per cent of the respondents are married. 13.5 per cent of the respondents are unmarried and 3 per cent are widows. 3.5 per cent are divorced and the percentage of widow remarriage is 2.5.

Inheritance of Property:

The Hindu Succession Act of 1956 grants women equal right to inherit property from father, husband or other relatives. It is a major step taken towards empowering women and changing their status in the society. The table given below indicates the property rights of women in the community.

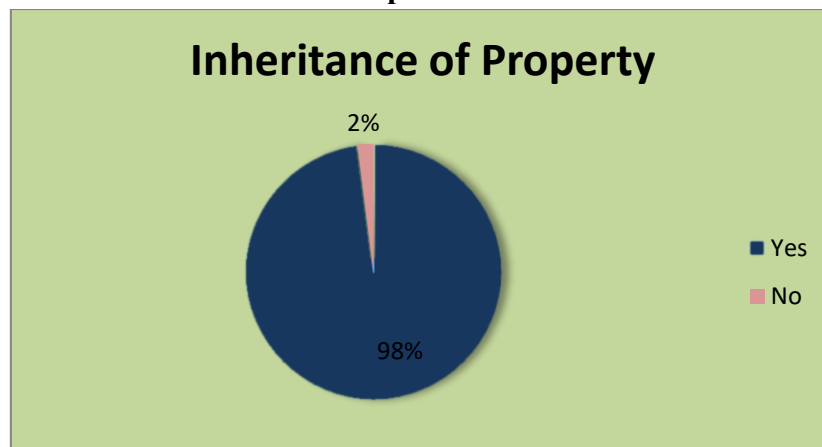
Table No 1.5 INHERITANCE OF PROPERTY

Sl No	Particulars	Respondents	Percentage
1	Yes	196	98
2	No	04	02
	Total	200	100

Source: Field Survey 2024

The graphical representation of the above table is given below.

Graph No 1.5



The above data reveals that, out of 200 respondents, 196 respondents (98%) have agreed that they have equal right over their ancestral property and remaining 04 (02%) respondents revealed that they do not have equal rights over their ancestral property. Since majority of women in the community have right over their ancestral property, it indicates their changing status in the community.

Decision Making Power:

Decision making power is one of the major indicators of changing status of women within the family. Bhalavalikar women are respected in their families. . From the study it is found that 98% of women in Bhalavalikar community are consulted while making major decisions in the family. This helps to understand the women's freedom to express their opinion within the family.

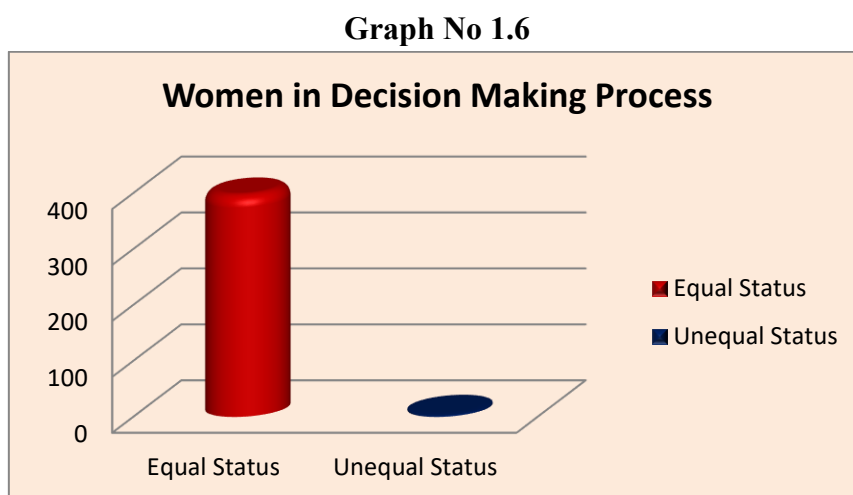
Table No 1.6 WOMEN IN DECISION MAKING

Sl No	Particulars	Women in Decision Making	Percentage
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1	Yes	196	98
2	No	04	02
	Total	200	100

Source: Field Survey 2024

The graphical representation of the above table is given below.



From the above data it is clear that women in the Bhalavalikar community have equal status when comparing to men. Women in the community have a lot of individual freedom and both men and women collectively take decisions regarding various matters of the family. The above graph shows that out of 200 respondents, 196 respondents agreed that they are also consulted while making major decisions in the family. The decision making power of women in the Bhalavalikar community gives a clear picture about the changing status of women with in the community.

Education:

Education is considered as a key factor in bringing about changes in the standard of life of people. It is evident from many research studies that education is a most powerful factor which brings about changes in the lives of women. It is a fundamental right that provides opportunities for enhancing socio-economic status. Education plays a significant role in improving the quality of life, social awareness and economic status of women in the Bhalavalikar community. Table 1.7 shows the level of education of the respondents of the community.

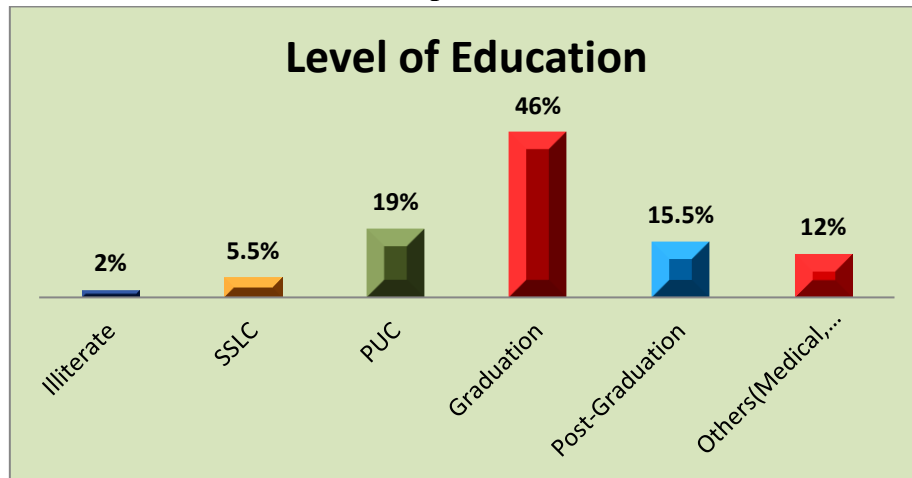
Table No 1.7 LEVEL OF EDUCATION OF THE RESPONDENTS

Sl No	Level of Education	Respondents	Percentage
1	Illiterate	04	2.0
2	SSLC	11	5.5
3	PUC	38	19.0
4	Graduation	92	46.0
5	Post-Graduation	31	15.5
6	Others(Medical, Engineering, IT)	24	12
	Total	200	100

Source: Field Source 2024

The graphical representation of the aboe table is given below.

Graph No 1.7



Graph No. 1.7 indicates the different levels of education of the respondents of the study, which enabled the researcher to derive the educational status of women in the Bhalavalikar community. Out of the total 200 respondents, only 4 respondents (2.0%) are illiterate, 11 respondents (5.5%) are educated up to SSLC. 38 respondents (19%) got PU education. Next to it, 92 respondents (46%) are graduates, 31 respondents (15.5%) perceived post-graduation and 24 respondents (12%) got medical and technical education. The study shows that education level of the women in the community is high which contributed to enhance their status in the society.

Occupation:

The quality of life and status of a person directly depends on his/her earnings. To bring about change in the status of women, economic empowerment is an indispensable step. The study reveals that women in the Bhalavalikar community are entering into all kinds of professions like teaching, engineering, medicine, business, politics, etc. The following table indicates the occupational distribution of the respondents in the community.

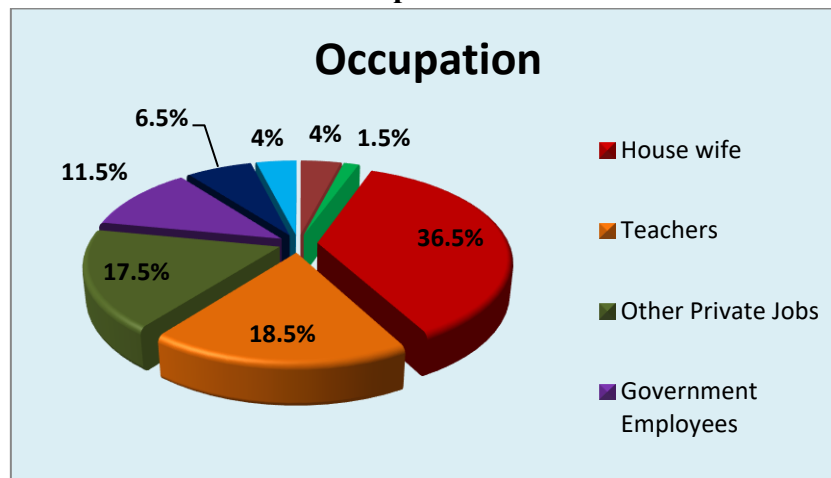
Table No 1.8 Occupational Status of the Respondents

Sl No	Occupation	Respondents	Percentage
1	House wife	73	36.5
2	Teachers	37	18.5
7	Other Private Jobs	35	17.5
5	Government Employees	23	11.5
8	Professional	13	6.5
6	Business	08	4.0
3	Bank Employees	08	4.0
4	Political	03	1.5
	Total	200	100

Source : Field Survey 2024

The graphical representation of the above table is given below.

Graph No 1.8



The Graph No 1.8 reveals that 18.5 per cent of respondents are Teachers, 17.5 per cent of the respondents are engaged in other private jobs, 11.5 per cent of the respondents are serving in government sector, 6.5 per cent are professionals, 4 per cent are engaged in business, another 4 per cent in Banking sector and 1.5 per cent are serving in political sector. Though only 1.5 per cent of women in Bhalavalikar community hold position in local self-government, there is a room for further improvement in representation at higher levels of political institutions. In the study area it is found that 36.5 per cent Bhalavalikar women are not formally employed but actively participate in the domestic sector.

Findings:

1. The study indicates that the 77.5 per cent of Bhalavalikar women live in Nuclear families which enable them to participate more actively in decision-making process.
2. The study explores that 98 per cent of women in the community have equal rights over their ancestral property which indicates their status in the community.
3. The study reveals that 98 per cent of women agreed that both men and women collectively take decisions regarding various matters of their family which indicates their changing status in the community.
4. The study shows that education has played a major role in changing status of women in the community. Women of Bhalavalikar community are getting all kinds of education such as graduation, post-graduation, medical, technical, professional, etc.
5. The study also exhibits that like men, the women of this community are also working as Teachers, Professors, Entrepreneurs, Engineers, Lawyers, Doctors, Bank Employees, Dancers, Musicians, politicians, etc. Their participation in the economic and political institution shows their changing status in the community.

Conclusion:

The study investigates the changing status of women in the Bhalavalikar community with respect of her role in family, education, economy and politics. Women in the Bhalavalikar community equally participate in family management, education, economy and political institution. Education is a major factor which brought about changes in the status of women. It enabled women to enter the workforce, contribute to household income and engage in decision-making process within the family. At present, like men, the women of this community entering into all kinds of professions like Teaching,

Engineering, Entrepreneurs, Lawyers, Doctors, Bank Employees, Dancers, Musicians, etc. It shows that Bhalavalikar women have equal status in the community. The changes in the status of women among the Bhalavalikar Gauda Saraswath Brahmin community can be analysed considering the major changes that have taken place in areas like family, marriage, education, occupation, political participation and awareness of their rights, etc.

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