

A REVIEW OF HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF SAINI CASTE IN NORTH AND GOWDAS IN SOUTH, LINGAYATH

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Abstract

The Sainis believe that their ancestors were Yadav as and that it was the same lineage in which Krishna was born. In the 43rd generation of the Yadav as there was a King known as Shoor or Sur, the son of King Vidartha. King Shoor had a son named 'Sain'. It was in the name of these, rather and son, that the community was popularly known as Shoorsaini or ,ursaini. It continued to be recognized as such for another five generations until Krishna took over the reign of the dynasty. Even during Krishna's time, the common people were known as Shoorsainis. The Shoorsaini Kingdom is believed to be located near Mathurg in Uttar Pradesh (Singh, 1994:430), The Saini or Sayani are generally also known as Mali. According to respondents, they are called Saini, because they say that they are the descendants of Maharaja, Soor Sen, They celebrate the jayanti of Maharaja Soor Sen on 22nd December every year. According to another source, the Sainis are originally Mali and lived principally in the Mathura district, When Mahmud of Ghazni invaded India, the ancestors of the Saini went to Punjab and finding the land fertile, settled down here (Singh, 1996:601). A caste of domestic and market gardeners in all India except the South (Hutton, 1946:288). They are divided broadly into two subgroups. Hindu and Sikh. They have claimed to have served in the sena (army) of Lord Krishna and having fought the great war of the Mahabharata; they believe they got their name from sena (Singh, 1994:43C).

Keywords: Saini, Mobility, Political Aspect, Local Regional level, Backward

Introduction

In the Historical origin of Sainis it is believed to be from the King Shoorsaini but the residents of the village, Dhirmajra, think in another way and understand that the Saini community has originated from the King Bhagirath. There are two views about the origin of Sainis one from the records i.e. from the King Shoorsaini and the other from the persons of villages of Saini i.e. from the King Bhaginath. One of the main explanations for different names by which the Sainis are known had been caused by adverse political circumstances in history. While many powerful kings were responsible for naming the community after them, the constant invasions by the Mughals of the Hindu dominated states, and the consequent need to keep themselves unidentified, compelled the community members to move from one place to the other, take up different occupations and thereby be identified by different names associated with the vocation. During the Muslim invasion of Rajasthan, many Rajputs projected themselves as Malis and thus could save their lives and honor, but as and when the need arose they considered themselves as true Rajputs, took up military service also. It was in this perspective that some trace the origin of the word 'Saini' Sena or army in need (Singh, 1994:431).

SAINI COMMUNITY DURING ZAMINDARI PERIOD

Prior to the enforcement of U.P. Zamindari Abolition and Land Reforms Act, 1950 (Act of 1950), in the district, Saharanpur, majority of Sainis lived at socially and economically low standards. They worked as labourers, tenants, sharecroppers etc. They owned almost no land for farming. They had to work for farming on zamindaris'

land, largely Muslim Rajputs and under the pressure of zamindars even their living places were not fixed because zamindars took a large share of production from farmers as revenue or share and these Sainis some times were not able to give the revenue. As a result of this zamindars evacuated them in many a times. Therefore, these persons had to find work at another places in the area of other zamindars. Thereby their places of living and working were also not fixed, they shifted many a times (Saharanpur Gazetteer, 198]: 245).

In Saharanpur division, zamindars belonged mainly to Muslim community, therefore, zamindars used to torture these Sainis who belong to Hindu religion. They used Sainis for agriculture, cultivation of vegetables and cutting grass from jungles. Most of them were also working as tenants and sharecroppers on the lands of these Muslim zamindars. They were suppressed not only as tenants, sharecroppers and forced labourers but also because they were Hindus working largely on the lands of Muslim Zamindars (Saharanpur Gazetteer, 1981:286).

SUB-DIVISIONS OF THE SAINI CASTE

The Saini in Haryana are generally known as Deshwale or Bagri. While Deshwale Saini claim to be the original residents of Haryana, Bagri Saini are said to have migrated mainly from Rajasthan, In Haryana, they are mainly concentrated in the districts of Hissar, Mahendragarh, Kamal and Kurukshetra, in Rohtak and Bhiwani also, they found in large numbers (Singh, 1994:432).

A native of Dhirmajra» Sh. Phagan Singh*, 73 years old, stated: 'Saini had divisions in the village named Bhagirti Saini and Gola Saini. We are Gola Saini and considered of higher social status in comparison Bhagini. We possess larger land and better in economic, educational and occupational position than Bhagirti.

The Saini also had broadly two divisions, which were of a fluid nature in the Saharanpur district, Bhagirti Saini and Gola Saini. In fact, such a division was based mainly on the area of their origin. However, their social settings were also different and accordingly, Gola Saini considered them higher in social status as compared to Bhagirti Saini. Gola Saini says 'Saini' word is especially for us and 'Mali' for Bhagirti. Four main explanations were generally offered for this:

- (i) The Mali were not as rigid as the Sainis in accepting food from members of other castes;
- (ii) Mali women were found working as agricultural labourers which was not the case with the Saini women;
- (iii) Educationally, occupationally and economically, the Sainis were far better placed than were the Mali, and
- (iv) Sainis were landowners and own large lands as compared to the Mali (Saharanpur)

Conclusion

For understanding the first question some specific issues related to their social background, before independence, like their landlessness condition and working as tenants, share-croppers, labourers etc. under Zamindari System, their temporary habitats have been studied. In the second question, some specific issues related to Zamindari Abolition and Land Reforms, about ownership of land, and their improved social status have been studied. The third question has included specific issues like participation in democratic processes their land holdings, impact of reservation policy in occupations at a local-regional level. The fourth question takes note of specific issues like economic, occupational, educational and political achievements that determined their social mobility. These have been studied in a micro-setting which reflect the processes and achievements of status minutely.

Terms and Concept/Operational Definitions

Some concepts or terms have been used in the study. These have been operationally defined here in the manner these have been used.

(i) **Caste:** An institution of considerable internal complexity, which has been oversimplified by those seeking an ideal type of rigid hierarchical social satisfaction, based on extreme closure criteria. Andre Beteille (1980) describes a caste as 'a small and named group of persons characterized by endogamy, hereditary membership and a specific style of life which sometimes includes the pursuit by of a particular occupation and is usually associated with a more or less distinct ritual status in a hierarchical system, based on concepts of purity and pollution'. Using this conception thus, Sainis is a caste in the present study which has all the distinct attributes of caste and socially recognized by all others as a distinct caste.

(ii) **Social Mobility:** The movement usually of individuals but sometimes of whole groups between different positions within the system of social stratification in any society is conceived as social mobility. It is conventional to distinguish between upward and downward mobility, and intergenerational from intra generational or mobility. The present study has focused on vertical upward mobility of Sainis in terms of social, occupational, educational and political dimensions.

(iii) **OBCs:** The Backward Castes Commission determines the criteria to be adopted in considering whether any sections of the people in the territory of India (in addition to Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes specified by notifications issued under Articles 341 and 342 of the constitution) has been treated as socially and educationally backward castes and in accordance with such criteria, prepare a list of such castes setting out also their approximate numbers and their territorial distribution. Sainis come under Other Backward Castes category as specified under the above criteria. Thus, 'Saini' is a Backward Caste as per the above provisions.

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