

SOCIAL EXCLUSION OF MANG GARUDI COMMUNITY IN MAHARASHTRA

A DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSIS[#]

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ABSTRACT

Caste is a source of power and its position in social hierarchy plays very vital role especially while dealing with inclusive development. Identity of Mang Garudi as a Scheduled Caste is dim in socio-political domain. Essentially, labelling theory, Senian approach to social exclusion and Ambedkar's philosophical roots of equity and social justice have immensely been the important proponents to understand the exclusion phenomena. Despite being categorised as a Scheduled Caste (SC) in Maharashtra, it has not drawn the attention of social science and therefore remains an unexplored social group. Their identity is still dim in socio-political domain.

The objective of this present article is to comprehend Mang Garudi's socio-economic backwardness leading to the exclusion. The article shows that the socio-economic backwardness drags the Mang Garudi into the exclusionary domain of society. Their language, religious and customary practices and taboos reveals the distinct identity. Beef-eating is part of their regular food habit and pattern. Practices such as *Devsasi*, *Jogava* and *Potraj* are still continued. Patriarchy is extremely dominant within and outside the community. The caste panchayat plays a significant role while dealing with questions of justice. They are recipients of smaller quantity of benefits of government schemes. Dominantly based on quantitative approach, this paper is a descriptive analysis.

Key Words: Caste, Culture, Discrimination, Socio-Economic Backwardness, Social Exclusion.

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I measure the progress of a community by the degree of progress which women have achieved

Dr. B. R. Ambedkar

Introduction

Caste is a source of power and its position in social hierarchy plays pivotal role especially while dealing with inclusive development. However, the caste inferiority often confronts discrimination. In Indian social structure, caste identity is attached to a person since birth. Irrespective of ability of lower castes, their social mobility is often exacerbated attempts are made to keep them at lowest rank in the hierarchy. Ghurye (1969) has defined six major distinct characteristics of caste including restriction on marriage, occupation, feeding and social intercourse, civil and religious privileges, segmental division of society and hierarchy. By and large, these characteristics are prevalent in present context. Social Scientists state that the existence of caste is continued for the last many centuries, though its consciousness is developed and strengthened after colonial era. However, after India's independence, to accomplish social justice, caste based discrimination is removed and human rights have been guaranteed in the forms of safeguards under fundamental rights and directive principles of the Constitution of India (Jodhaka 2012). The Constitution of India guarantees equity and social justice, and explicitly recognises that no citizen shall compel to face the discrimination on the ground of caste, religion, race, sex, ethnicity and so on. Practicing untouchability is considered as a punishable offense. According to article 46 in the directive principles, the state shall promote with special care the educational and economic interests of the Scheduled Castes (SCs) and shall protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation.

The British Government had brought in the Criminal Tribe Act (CTA) 1871 in which certain tribes were identified as the criminals. The Bombay Presidency had formed the committee under the chairmanship of Dr. K. B. Antrolikar, then MLA, in 1949. The objective of this committee was to remove the stigma on the ex-criminal tribes and work on their rehabilitation. The committee stated that the Mang Garudi could be coined as a Nomadic Tribe (NT) and accordingly they should be offered the educational and employment facilities. Mang Garudi was then labelled as the ex-criminal tribe (Antrolikar 1950; Chavhan 2004). However, the CTA was abolished on 31 August 1952 after independence of India (Antrolikar 1950; Madane 2017).

On the contrary, in 1928, the Starte Committee¹ was constituted to study the backward classes of India. The committee recommended that the backward classes were classified into three different categories – for instance a) Depressed Classes, b) Aboriginal and Hill Tribes, and c) Other Backward Classes (GoMH 1986). The recommendations of this committee were accepted by the

¹ The Government of Bombay had appointed the committee under the chairmanship of Mr. O.H.B. Starte, then I.C.S. in British India therefore known as Starte Committee.

Government and the lists of the backward classes were prescribed under the Government Resolution dated 29 May 1933 and 23 April 1942. The Mang Garudi was classified as “depressed classes²” as per the resolution of government (GoMH 1986). The SC category was created based on the major criteria of untouchability. According to Thade Committee³, since Mang Garudi had a nomadic nature they had to bank upon the crimes for their livelihood specifically in Marathwada (one of the socio-political regions in Maharashtra). This community was engaged in liquor and prostitution to survive. According to Thade Committee, since the community was considered as untouchables it had been categorised as SCs in the State of Maharashtra. The community was known as *Mhashi Bhadre* (shaving buffaloes). Therefore, their traditional occupation was to remove the body hair of buffaloes. They were also engaged in stealing the buffaloes assigned them to rear (Singh 1993; Thade Undated).

The Antrolikar Committee confirmed that the Mang Garudis sheltering in Mumbai were liquor addicted and women were also engaged in prostitution (Antrolikar 1950). Idate Committee⁴ had not included the Mang Garudi in the study as the caste was not from the NT category. However, it was focused on their deteriorated and extensively worse socio-economic condition. According to it, instead of labelling them as Mang Garudi, they could be called as *Shibari* for which their representatives demanded (Idate 1999). The NT as a category is unrecognised by the policy makers in the last 70 years of independence (Bhosale and Lashkar 2017). According to the law of 1935 of the British Government, the SCs as a nomenclature was brought in regular administrative practice. In colonial era, Mang Garudi was considered as a NT engaged in petty crimes. However, this caste is categorised as a SC in Maharashtra after independence. In short, their caste identity is continuously changed from colonial era to the modern context. Therefore, their identity seems to be dim in socio-political domain and remain excluded.

According to Census of India (2011), the SC population in India is 16.60 percent whereas the Maharashtra State has recorded 11.81 percent. As noted earlier, the Mang Garudi is one of the SCs in Maharashtra having population of 39993 (approximately 0.30% of the total SCs). Their population is mostly scattered in Maharashtra. This community is the most backward compare to other SCs enlisted in Maharashtra. Thus, the community is being neglected. Therefore, there is need of looking at the theoretical underpinnings around this phenomenon.

² After GoI Act 1935 in British India, it was popularly known as SCs.

³ This study group was constituted by the Department of Social Welfare of Maharashtra State Government for making common list of various nomadic tribes during the 3rd Five Year Plan (1961-1966). This group was known as Thade Committee.

⁴ This committee was formed during Shivsena-BJP alliance led government in 1990s, aiming to study the issues of NT and De-Notified Tribes.

Caste, Social Exclusion and Mang Garudi

The labelling theory describes that deviant behaviour is not only successfully defined as labelled as deviant, but also the community comes to accept a self-image or self-definition as a deviant role. It draws attention to deviance as the outcome of social imputation and the exercise of social control (Abercrombie, Hill and Turner 2006). Mang Garudi's engagement in petty crimes was defined as deviant by others. Even, they accepted that their ancestors were the deviant. For this reasons, they were tagged as 'secondary deviant' because their act was defined as anti-state in the British regime. Contrary, social exclusion captures the idea of being excluded from the benefits of society. The citizens are unable to exercise the right and responsibilities, even 'public policies' are directed to accentuate the inequalities (Abercrombie, Hill and Turner 2006). Senian Approach says that 'being excluded' from social relations leads to other deprivation which further limits the living opportunities. Instrumentally this sometimes also leads to very bad results. Social exclusion would depend on the exact nature of the causal processes involved. This approach includes 'Active and Passive Exclusion' that may have much wider relevance in Asia (Sen 2000).

Social exclusion leads to losses of self-reliance, self-confidence and psychological and physical health (Sen 1999). Caste system is an active exclusion that excluded certain lower castes from economic sphere (Sen 2000). Socio-economic backwardness of Mang Garudi, therefore, highlights extreme forms of social exclusion alongwith less support from State institutions. Thus, justice may invoke to 'lower strata of society' – specifically lower caste, as far as democratic rights and shared opportunities of political participation is concerned (Sen 2000).

However, Senian approach gives limited understanding while dealing with the caste based discrimination. Why is Mang Garudi being excluded on the basis of caste status? Applying Ambedkar's philosophical roots of equity and theoretical basis of social justice, one could elaborate caste as the reality which creates the basis of exclusion of particular castes from the social interface and domains of development. In brief, caste plays an important role. Justice can be realised through Liberty, Equality and Fraternity as conceptualised by Ambedkar who adds that 'anything that you will build on the foundation of caste will crack and will never be as a whole' (Ambedkar 2010).

Chavhan (2004) studied the caste panchayats (councils) of Mang Garudi using participant observation and in-depth interviews with key informants. The inquiry revealed that once being notified as ex-criminal tribe, the stigmatisation continued even after India's independence. He further explained that the community had a codified language called '*Parushi*'. The community was considered as a sub-caste of Matang community (one of the SCs in Maharashtra) (Chavhan 2004; Singh 1993). However, the former had a lower status and the latter did not practice inter-caste marriage and inter-dinning with the former ones. The Mang Garudi women had lower status compare to men.

Rituals pertaining to marriage, death, conflict issues and punishments were dealt by caste panchayat. Singh (1993) also stated some of the additional characteristics of the community that their surnames resembled to their clan names. '*Akshay Trutiya*' was their core festival. Even, economically and culturally the buffaloes had a quintessential status in their lives. Still, the Mang Garudi community is independent on the basis of two criteria – removing the body hair of buffaloes and the ex-criminal label. However, the studies are limited and the characteristics and identity of this community are unexplored, less-focused yet and rarely got any attention in the study of social sciences in modern context.

Being nomadic in nature, secondary status of women, lack of means of livelihoods and deeply embedded in customs and tradition and stigmatisation as ex-criminal tribe – these factors lay the foundation of their socio-economic backwardness. The government policies attempt to bring them into inclusive growth process. However, lack of documents and caste certificate are the major hindrances. For instance, lack of caste certificate deprives them the benefits of government schemes. With this backdrop, objective of the present article is to comprehend the Mang Garudi Community's socio-economic backwardness leading to the exclusion. To accomplish the objective following methodology is adopted.

Methodology

In 2015, three workshops at different location in Maharashtra – in Pune, Nashik and Gondia were organised aiming to understand the issues of Mang Garudi. The workshops were attended by representatives from across Maharashtra. Under the study, Pune district was purposively selected as highly populated areas of the Mang Garudi (GoMH 2008; Census of India 2011). Census Survey of the total families of Mang Garudi had been covered along with Group Discussions (GDs) and observation. About 1273 families were covered under the survey. About 83.20 percent are married respondent, only 2.30 percent are unmarried respondent, whereas proportion of divorcee, widow and deserted women is about the 13.5 percent of the total number of respondents. About 9 GDs were conducted in different location of the district. Some help from the activists of the community had been sought to establish the initial contact. Well-educated field investigators were appointed to collect data. Training programme was also imparted to train the field investigators.

The data collection was completed from 15 September 2015 to 29 October 2015. A one-day consultation meeting of the representatives of the community was held in March 2016 as to get their feedback on the draft report. Location for instance, urban and rural is an independent variable applied. Univariate and multivariate analysis had been applied and the data analysis had been completed using SPSS.

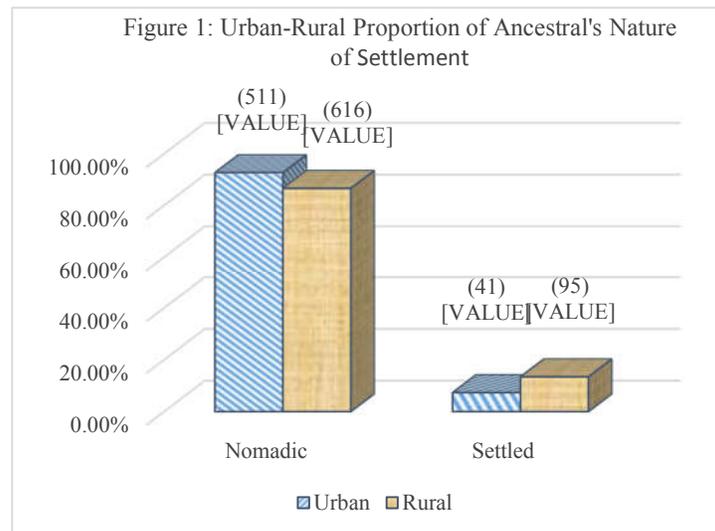
Study Area Profile

Maharashtra is second largest state in terms of population in India, having a geographical area about 3.08 lakh sq. km. The state has 36 districts, which are divided into six revenue divisions namely Konkan, Pune, Nashik, Aurangabad, Amravati and Nagpur (GoMH 2017). According to Census of India (2011) the state has about 9.3 percent population of the total population of India. SC population of the state is 11.81 percent as noted earlier. Pune is the cultural and historical place of Maharashtra. It is the second largest district of the state and covers 5.10 percent of the total geographical area of the state (COP Undated). According to Census of India (2011), in the district, out of the total population, about 9.82 percent in rural area and 14.25 percent in urban area SC population is recorded (GoI 2011). Mang Garudi's distinct cultural identity, status of women, social interface and exclusion from the benefits of the government schemes is discussed at length.

Discussion and Analysis

Cultural Identity

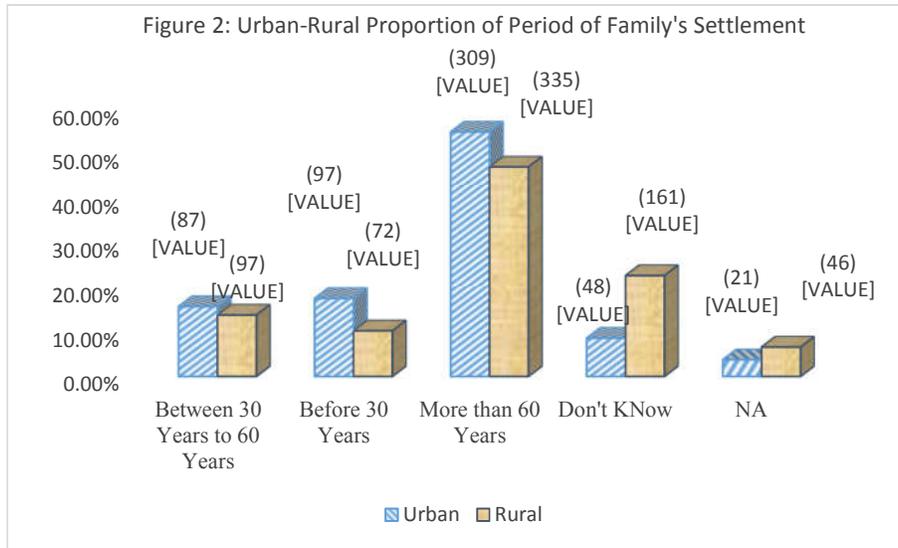
The Mang Garudi has a distinct cultural identity that expels them from 'inclusive growth'.



Source: Primary Survey

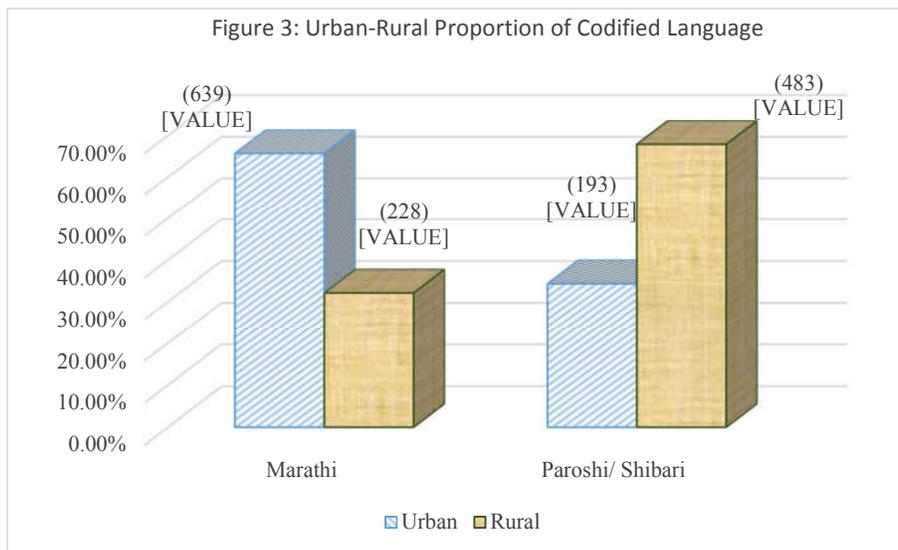
The community members felt that their ancestors roamed in search of livelihood. However, there was no reference in government record as such (CSSS 1999). Figure⁵ 1 indicates that the Mang Garudi community was nomadic in nature. About 92.70 percent of the total families in urban area and about 86.60 percent families in rural area have mentioned their ancestors' were unsettled nomads. The proportion of settled ancestors is very less.

⁵ Number given in brackets in all the figures (1-21) indicates the frequency.



Source: Primary Survey

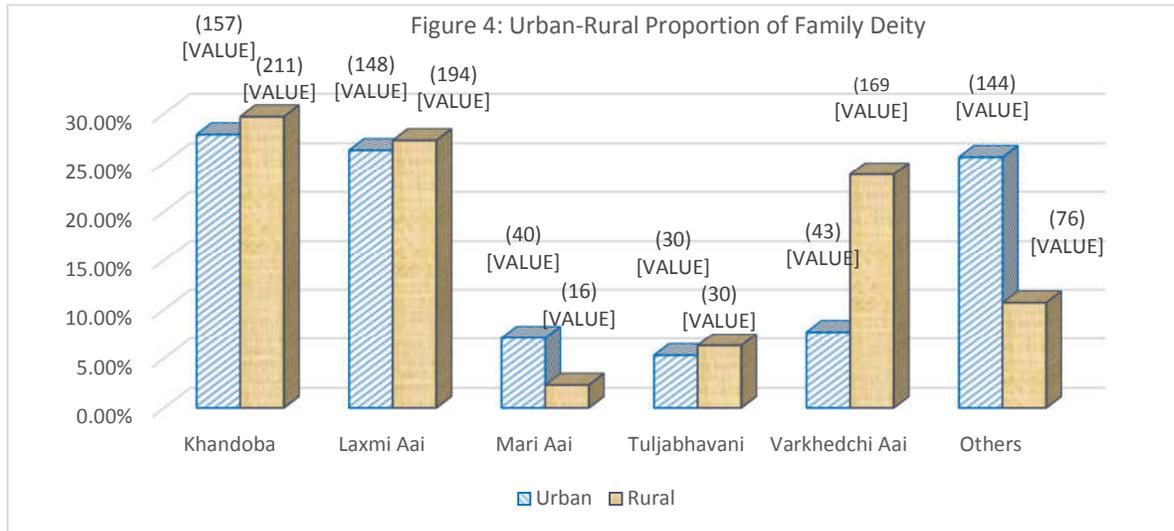
When it was asked about the period of family's settlement, we received different responses. Figure 2 shows that about 55 percent of the families in urban area and 47.10 percent of families in rural area are now settled for more than 60 years ago. About 15.50 percent families in urban and 13.60 percent families in rural area have settled between 30 years to 60 years period, whereas about 17.30 percent families in urban and 10.10 percent families in rural area settled 30 years ago. Contrary, about 8.50 percent families in urban and 22.60 percent families in rural area have no idea of their period of settlement.



Source: Primary Survey

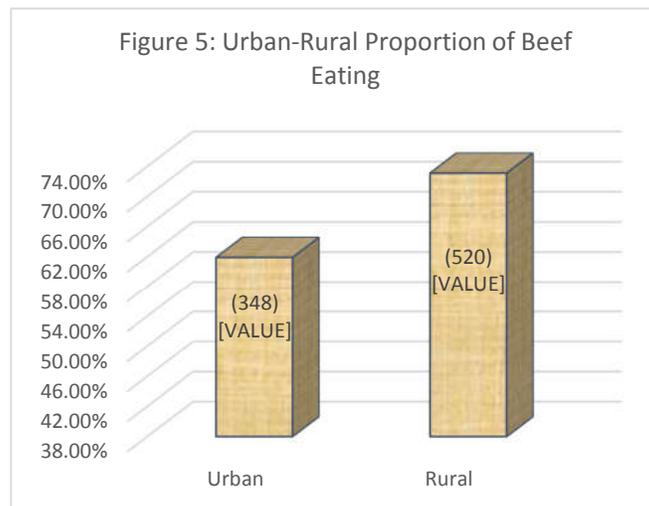
Though Marathi is mother tongue of the Mang Garudi, still they speak *Shibari* as a codified language. During data collection, it was reported that they were using both the codified languages – *Paroshi and Shibari*. According to them both languages were the same. The *Shibari* is the synonyms to Mang Garudi. They, therefore, are called as *Shibari* (Idate 1999). Figure 3 reveals that about

67.90 percent families in rural and 34.30 percent in urban area speak Paroshi or Shibari. Whereas about 65.70 percent families in urban and 32.10 percent families in rural areas speak the Marathi. Marathi is dominant language in Urban Mang Garudi community. Paroshi is a codified language that is mostly similar to Matang Community’s ‘Ambujvay’ language. Paroshi was used at time of illegal activity intending to prevent from others (Chavhan 2004).



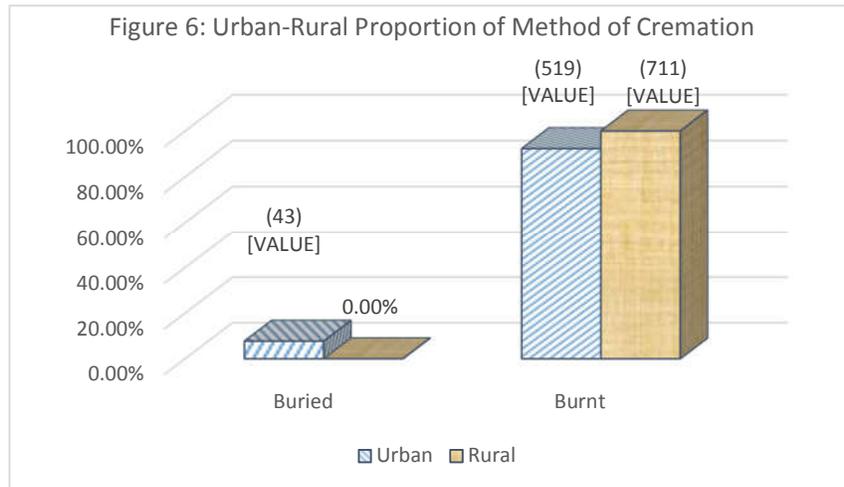
Source: Primary Survey

The community has a belief in its family deity. The figure 4 shows that *Khandoba*, *Laxmi Aai*, *Varkhedchi Aai*, *Mari Aai*, and other local Gods are believed to be its family deities. Approximately 29.70 percent families in rural and about 27.90 percent families in urban area believe Khandoba as their family deity. About 26.30 percent families in rural and 27.30 percent families in urban area responded Laxmi Aai as their family Goddess. Worshiping these deities and all the rituals are regularly followed. Animal sacrifice is also a common practice during fair and on other auspicious days.



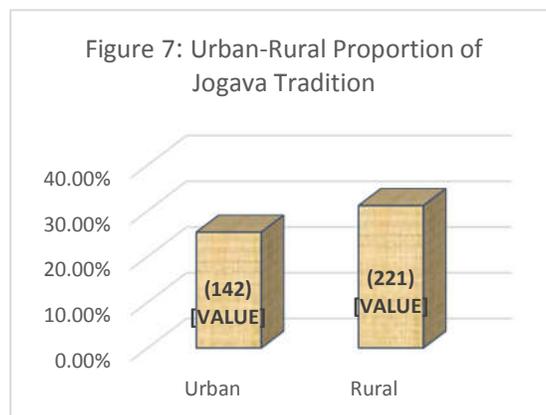
Source: Primary Survey

The Community substantially relished beef. Besides, other vegetarian food including jowar, millets and pulses were commonly used. Some people consumed alcoholic drink (Singh 1993). Figure 5 shows that in urban area about 61.90 percent families and in rural area 73.10 percent families consumed beef as a traditional common food. Thus, irrespective of geographical area the cultural practice of eating beef is dominant. Moreover, it was reported that poor economic condition, lack of livelihood options and nomadic nature were the factors responsible in which they were forced to eat whatever was available to fulfil their hunger. They also had habit of eating the chicken and flesh of goat. It was reported by one of the activists that even on Akshay Trutiya, the community members eat beef.



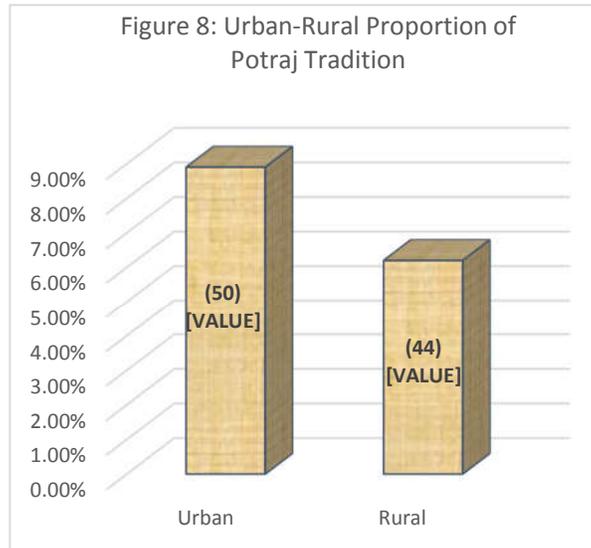
Source: Primary Survey

Traditionally, as a part of cremation, the Mang Garudi buried the dead-body and observed seven days mourning. The dead-body was carried in *Zoli* (cloth-bag) by two men (Singh 1993). In contemporary context, the community require the land for buried which is primarily either unavailable or limited. As a result, other community's practice of burning is reluctantly imitated. Figure 6 indicates that almost 100 percent families in rural and about 92.30 percent families in urban area have embrace the practice of burning while cremation.



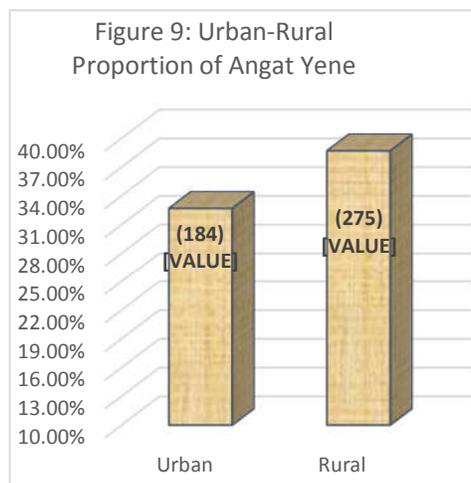
Source: Primary Survey

Figure 7 reveals that about 25.30 percent families in urban area and 31.10 percent families in rural area have the Jogava tradition in which persons do visits to houses and gather flour, oil, salt, etc. to satisfy the hunger. It is kind of begging performed traditionally. It was observed that this practice was prominent in Baramati and Manjari of Pune district. This practice is prevalent during *Navratra* (Goddess) festival.



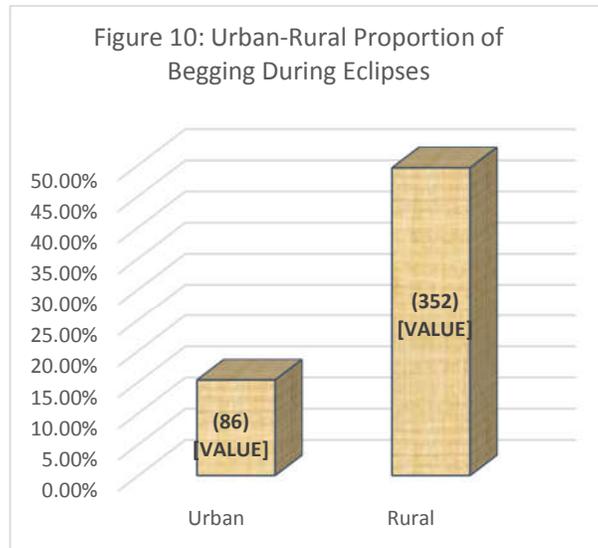
Source: Primary Survey

Figure 8 shows that the practice of *potraj* (a boy is devoted to the diety) is still existent among Mang Garudi Community. About 8.90 percent families in urban area and 6.20 percent families in rural area follow this practice. It was reported that the community members vowed the diety that if their wishes would fulfil for instance a person would have a male child, then that child would be devoted to the diety as a Potraj. The boy for his lifetime becomes the Potraj. His duty is to beg alms on the name of diety and meets his livelihood. He is compelled not to cut the hair since the birth.



Source: Primary Survey

The Mang Garudi has the traditional practice of *angat yene*⁶. The belief is that their family deities enter into the body and the divine power solves all sorts of problems. During this, the people also vow to the deities. It was also observed that very often the women embraced this practice. Figure 9 reveals that about 32.70 percent families in urban area and 38.70 percent families in rural areas have this practice. Practice of *angat yene* is interconnected with other associated practices. For instance, the figure 8 can be referred as how the people's vow resulted in practicing the potraj system while practising *angat yene*.



Source: Primary Survey

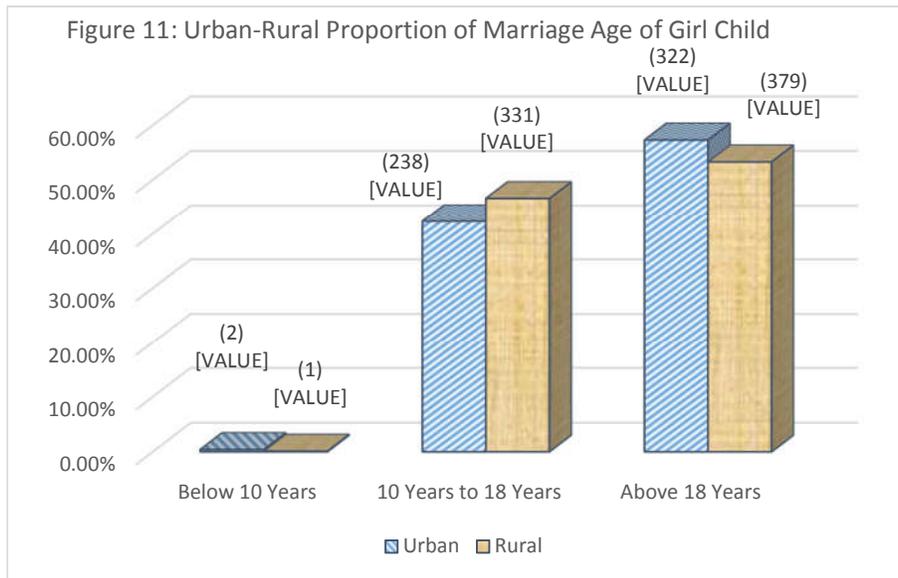
The practice of begging alms during solar and lunar eclipses is prevalent in Mang Garudi community. Figure 10 shows that about 49.50 percent families in rural and 15.30 percent families in urban areas beg during the eclipses. There is a belief that it is mandatory among the Mang Garudi that they should beg the alms during the solar and lunar eclipses. While doing so, a Mang Garudi says, '*De Daan, Sutte Girhan*' (means – give alms, get rid of eclipse). Even, this practice is eulogised by the upper castes as they also have a belief that if they donate the alms during the eclipses, they will get rid of their problems and sorrows.

Status of Women

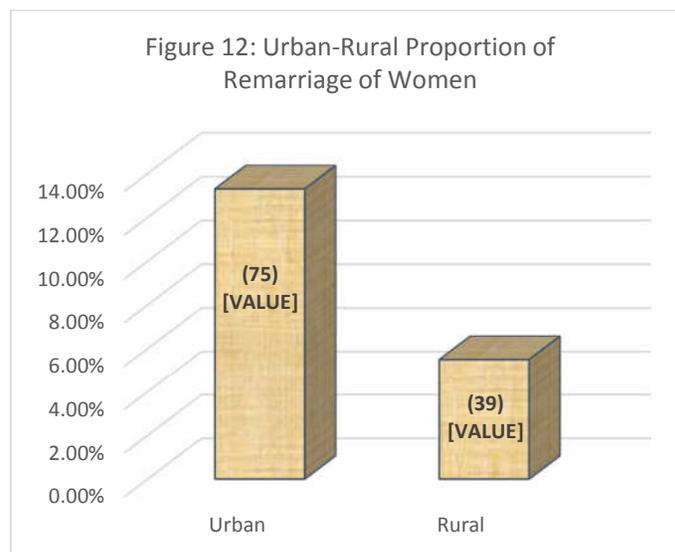
Figure 11 shows that the proportion of women marriage is the more in the age above 18 years in both urban (57.30 %) and rural (53.30 %) area. However, the proportion of girl child marriage between 10 years to 18 years is also noticeable – about 42.30 percent in urban and 46.60 percent in rural area. Thus, child marriage affects the education and overall development of girls. It happens

⁶ It is believed that a man or woman is to be possessed by the deities who speak through the body.

because of superstitions, unawareness and pressure from the clan and caste panchayat.

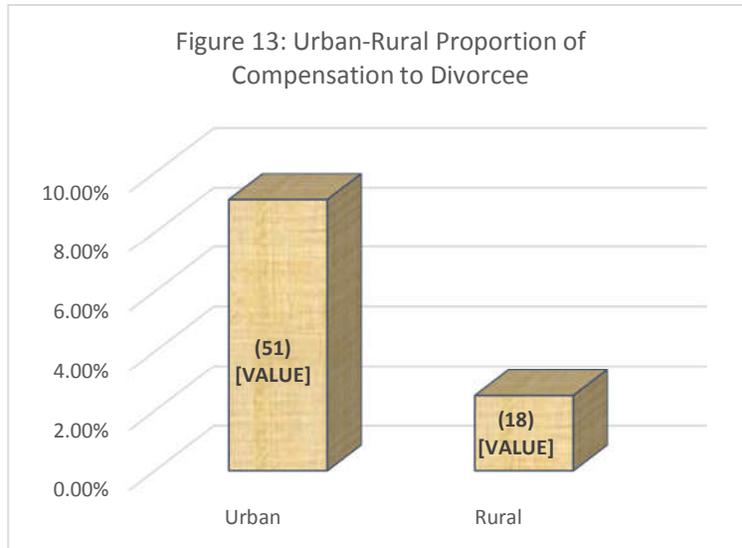


Source: Primary Survey



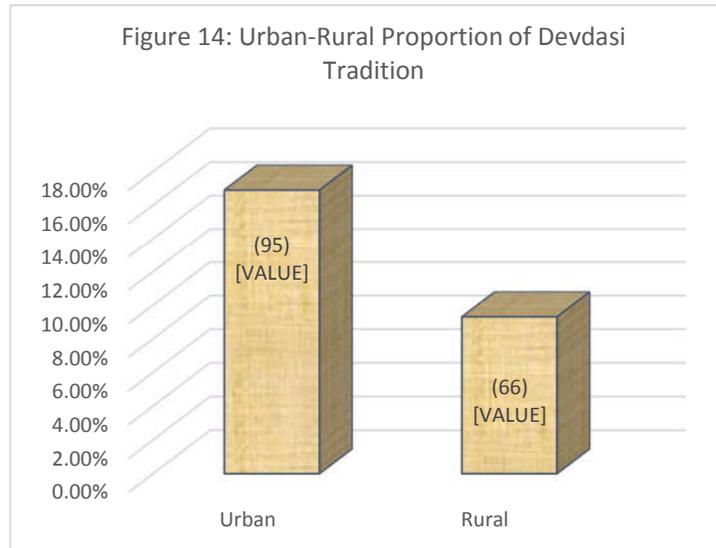
Source: Primary Survey

With certain conditions by caste panchayat, remarriage was permitted to younger widows who had no offspring. Such marriage was called as a 'Mehatur' (ceremony that had no equal reputation as marriage) carried out in dark time. Therefore, this practice had less respect in society (Chavhan 2004). However, figure 12 indicates that only 13.30 percent families in urban area allow the remarriage of women (widows and divorcees). This proportion is almost negligible in rural area (5.50 percent). Thus, the women's remarriage is nearly forbidden.



Source: Primary Survey

Figure 13 indicates that about 9.10 percent families in urban and 2.50 percent families in rural areas women have received the compensation after divorce. This proportion is quite meagre and shows the vulnerable situation of women divorcees. Women do not take any legal help for claiming maintenance due to lack of awareness of their rights.

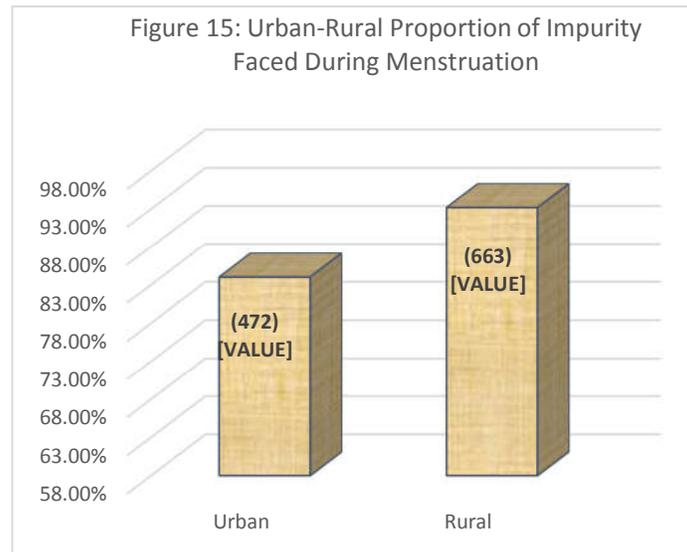


Source: Primary Survey

Figure 14 reveals that about 16.90 percent families in urban area and 9.30 percent families in rural area have connected to *devdasi*⁷ tradition. It shows the sexual exploitation of Mang Garudi women. According to Starte Committee, this tradition should be banned by enforcing legal provisions (Starte 1950). In 2005,

⁷ *Devdasi* literary means marrying girl to the deity and it is also known as force prostitution with legitimisation on the basis of religion and social practices.

Maharashtra Devdasi System Abolition, Act was promulgated with the objective to abolish the devdasi tradition and rehabilitate the women.

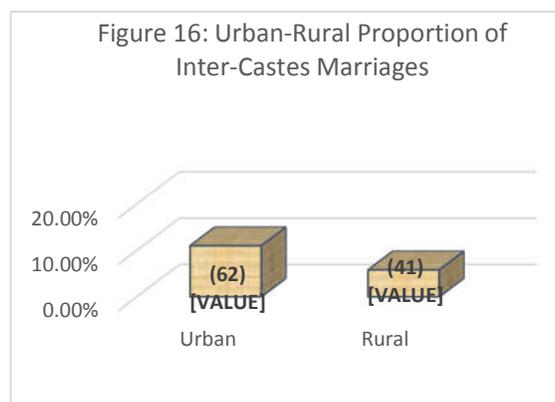


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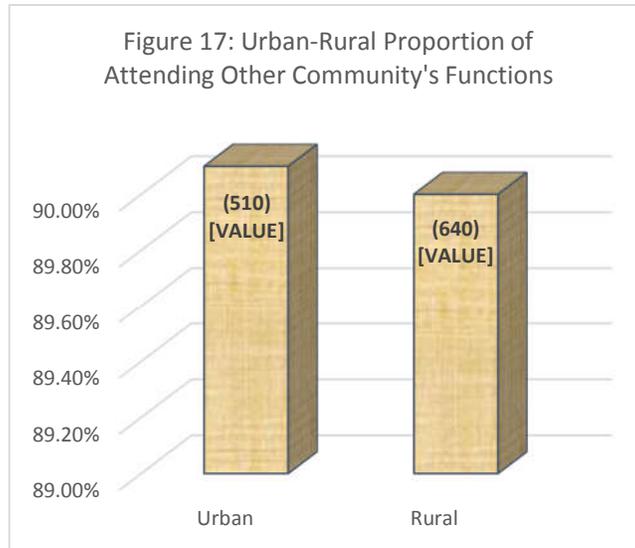
During menstruation period women are considered as impure. Cooking, worship and other religious rituals are prohibited to women. However, they are allowed the domestic cleaning including washing cloths and vessels and so on. Figure 15 indicates that about 93.20 percent families in rural area and 84 percent families in urban area practice impurity during menstruation. The notion of purity and pollution is a widespread.

Social Interface and Exclusion from the Benefits

The Mang Garudi was predominantly endogamous. The marriage was settled through negotiations (Singh 1993). However, in recent times, the inter-caste marriage is observed. For instance, figure 16 shows that about 11 percent families in urban areas have performed inter-caste marriage. On the contrary, only 5.80 percent families in rural area have such practice. Though the figures are meagre, to some extent, it is worth stimulating to lead ‘remove the caste bias’ (Ambedkar 2010).

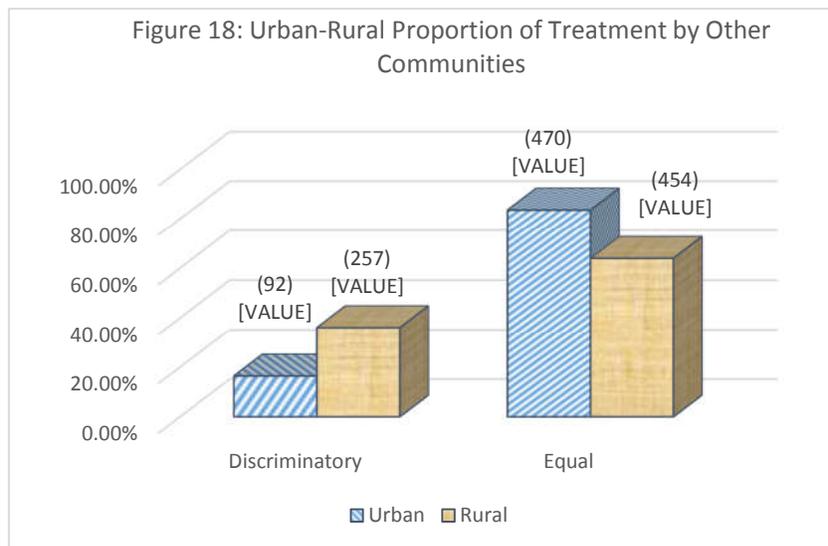


Source: Primary Survey



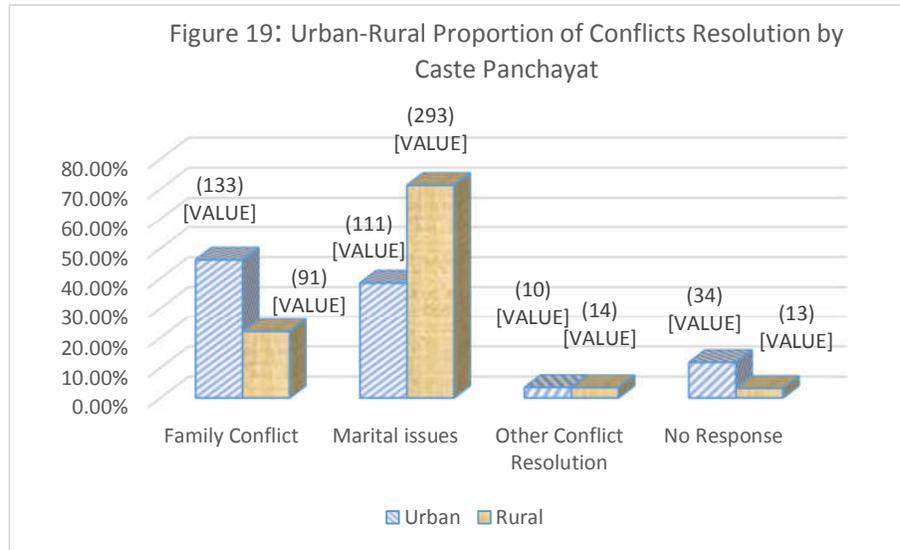
Source: Primary Survey

Mang Garudi also participate in other community’s social functions. Figure 17 indicates that about 90.70 percent families in urban and 90 percent families in rural area attend the social functions organised by other castes. Interestingly the proportion of participation is almost same in both areas.



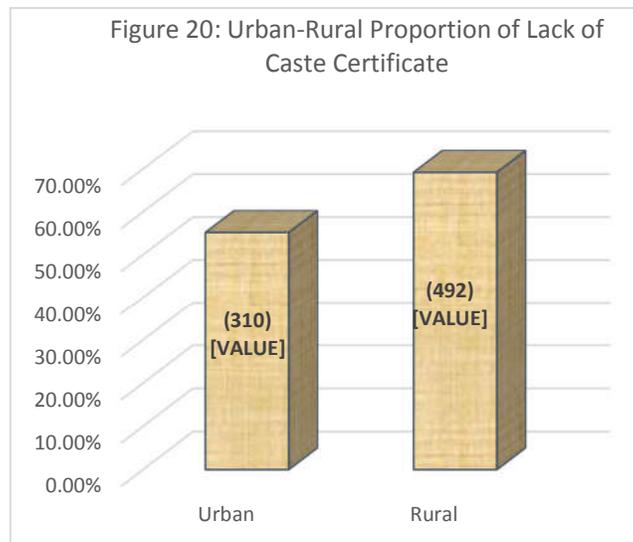
Source: Primary Survey

While participating in other community’s social functions, figure 18 shows that about 36.10 percent families in rural area and 16.40 percent families in urban area have faced discriminatory treatments from other communities. In short, urban area provides the more egalitarian spaces for social interface. The respondents also reported that they received discriminatory treatments because they were ex-untouchables and erstwhile there was restriction on inter-dinning.



Source: Primary Survey

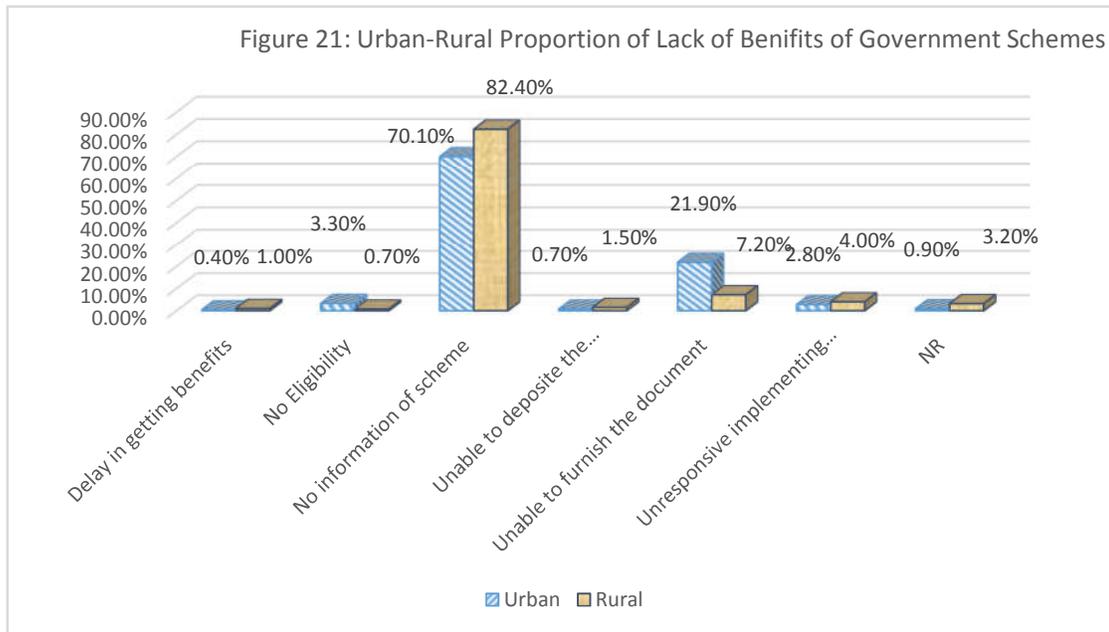
A woman who had an illicit relationship outside the community was expelled from the community. The caste panchayat used to severely punish such women (Singh 1993). The caste panchayats recently have no stronghold over the members, no resolution for strict punishments and thus have very restricted role. Contrary, they are engaged in resolving family conflicts, marital issues and resolving other conflict. Figure 19 shows that about 71.30 percent families in rural area resolve their marital problems through caste panchayats, whereas in urban area this proportion is about 38.50 percent. About 46.20 percent families in urban area and 22.10 percent families in rural area resolve their family conflicts through caste panchayats. Apart from these, the caste panchayats have less engagement in other issues.



Source: Primary Survey

Caste certificate is indispensable to avail benefits of government schemes through reservation. Because of nomadic nature and low rate of education, it is

very difficult for the Mang Garudi to furnish essential documentary evidences. The government has made caste certificate mandatory for benefits under reservation policy. Accordingly, it is mandatory for the Mang Garudi too. However, in many cases they are unable to furnish certain evidences and the certificates. The government is helpless to extend benefits under any schemes without caste certificate. For this reason, they get excluded from the government benefits as 'unfavourable inclusion' (Sen 2000). Figure 20 shows that about 69.20 percent families in rural area and about 55.20 percent families in urban area have no caste certificate. Therefore, the rural families are more vulnerable compare to urban families.



Source: Primary Survey

Figure 21 shows that about 70.10 percent families in urban area have no information of schemes whereas this proportion is the more high (82.40 %) in rural families compare to urban families. Also, about 21.90 percent families in urban area and about 7.20 percent families in rural area are unable to furnish the documents therefore they are excluded from the policy gains.

Conclusion

The study shows that the Mang Garudis have a distinct cultural identity and it was considered as ex-criminal tribe. However, changing nature of their administrative categories (ex-criminal, NT, SC) affected their inclusive development. In the overall process, they remained deprived and 'being excluded'. Their ancestors were nomads and they are rapidly settled after India's independence. The rural area has more number of Paroshi/ Shibari speaking families compare to urban area. These are their codified languages prominently using for secrete conversations or during illegal activities. The community members have a belief in their family deities. They substantially relish beef,

apart from chicken and meat. Their cremation practice has changed overtime and now they imitate the practice of burning the dead-body. The community is basically engaged in traditional practices such as Jogava, Potraj, *Angat yene*, begging during eclipses.

Women are severely exploited. Women cannot take the decision regarding their life. Patriarchal attitude is entirely responsible for the subordinate state of Mang Garudi women in society. This is a serious concern while viewing it from the viewpoint of women's liberation. Girl child marriage, Devdasi, remarriage, compensation after divorce and pollution faced during menstruation are powerful pointers that patriarchy is quite dominant within and outside the community.

Some practices mentioned earlier proportionately seem to be high in rural area. The urban spaces are relatively egalitarian atmosphere and thus the proportion of inter-caste marriage is slightly higher. Even, the caste panchayat's role is different in rural and urban settings. It mostly exists to resolve the conflicts of the community members.

Policy paralysis is one of the fundamental causes that the community is 'being excluded'. The community is remained more vulnerable and excluded due to lack of documentary evidences. Therefore, there is an urgent need to guarantee social protection where they are least excluded and face lesser adversities. Simultaneously, in long run, there is a need for adopting ways of 'Annihilation of Caste' as suggested by Ambedkar.

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